Thinking Through Antinomies:

An Enquiry into Manfredo Tafuri's Historical Method

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Abstract:

The following thesis addresses Manfredo Tafuri's historical and critical method. It considers a selection of studies conducted by the Italian historian at different moments of his intellectual trajectory, and it scrutinizes how his unorthodox approach succeeded in challenging established architectural accounts and in exposing the ideologically constructed figure of the architect. The thesis takes its points of departure from Fredric Jameson's interpretation of Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co's book *Modern Architecture* as a story of sequential failed attempts to resolve the contradiction between the city and the building (or more abstractly, between totality and individual work). Expanding on Jameson's reading, it illustrates how, in the selection of works considered, Tafuri organises his narrative around pairs of (apparently) antinomic terms such as plan and Plan, image and fragment, rule and licence, reality and utopia. Central to the thesis is also the charting of the theoretical and political encounters that shaped Tafuri's mode of thinking.

Chapter One focuses on Tafuri and Italian Workerism. It investigates how the Frankfurt School-inflected critique of planning initiated by the founder of Workerism Raniero Panzieri inspired Tafuri's own reading of urban planning. It also looks at the way Tafuri extended the critique of intellectual labour advanced within the frame of the Italian Marxist journal *Contropiano* to the domain of architecture. Chapter Two tackles Tafuri's analysis of the use of fragment and fragmentation in the work of the Venetian etcher Giambattista Piranesi and in that of the 20th-century avant-garde. It contends that Tafuri's exploration of the meaning of the fragment in works dating from different historical moments is intended to reveal the effect of capitalist development on the communicative potential of form. Chapter Three takes its lead from the 1977 text 'The Historical "Project"', in which Tafuri establishes a set of guidelines for the historical research which will inform his study of Renaissance architecture in the following years. It scrutinizes how the application of this method allows Tafuri to challenge established historical accounts of the Renaissance such as that of Rudolf Wittkower. Finally, Chapter Four returns to Tafuri's earliest

interventions in the post-war Italian architectural debate. Whereas the first part considers journal articles on the question of the replanning of Rome, the second focuses on a selection of texts addressing the discussion over the new urban scale and architectural neo-realism.

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Introduction

> *The more we perceive problems as worldwide and intergalactic, the more the fear of the world demands a retreat into details, a retreat resembling that of architects.*
>
> Manfredo Tafuri, 'For a Historical History'[1]

> *The peculiar difficulty of dialectical writing lies indeed in its holistic, 'totalizing' character: as though you could not say any one thing until you had first said everything; as though with each new idea you were bound to recapitulate the entire system.*
>
> Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*[2]

In an academic setting where thematic approaches prevail, a monographic thesis on an architectural historian may seem a strange endeavour. The risk of appearing 'hagiographic' obliges the writer to ponder every endorsement, keeping a critical attitude constantly alert. In writing this thesis I have tried to maintain such an attitude without being led astray by the writing process itself. Nor does my subject, the work of the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, invite celebratory tones or over-familiarity. To approach Tafuri's writing in search of models for thought or action would have meant betraying one of the keystones of his own method: 'implicated though it may be in the objects and phenomena it analyzes', he writes 'historical

[1] Manfredo Tafuri, 'For a Historical History (1994)', *Casabella*, 619-620 (1995), 144-152 (p. 151). Amended translation.
[2] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form. Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 306.

criticism must know how to balance on the razor's edge that separates detachment and participation'.[3]

It must be clarified here that the ultimate subject of this thesis is not, as misleadingly suggested above, the oeuvre of Manfredo Tafuri as such. The exclusion of certain important texts and the disregard for chronological order make it apparent from the outset that no comprehensive intellectual biography is intended here. Rather, this thesis focuses on Tafuri's historical-critical method, and explores how its employment succeeded in undermining established historical narratives and in exposing the ideological veil covering the figure of the architect. The thesis considers both the texts belonging to Tafuri's most openly militant phase, and the ones where political aspects appear less prominently. In so doing, it intends to show that the guiding principle of Tafuri's methodological approach remained largely unchanged, regardless of the variety of themes and historical periods that he tackled.

At various points in this thesis I will express my disagreement with regard to Tafuri's positions, and by means of a contextual reading I will show that what could be taken as interpretative reductiveness was often the effect of theoretical partisanship. In different sites I will also point to his apparently inappropriate use of the definitions and concepts borrowed from other theoreticians such as Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. However, I will concomitantly advance the hypothesis that this was part of a conscious mode of writing that sought to rework and resignify terms, irrespective of philological accuracy.

One the main sources inspiring this thesis is Fredric Jameson's literary analysis of Tafuri's work. In particular, I am indebted to his interpretation of Tafuri's and Francesco Dal Co's book *Modern Architecture* as a story of sequential failed attempts to resolve the contradiction between the city and the building, or more

[3] Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Garde and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (1980), trans. by Pellegrino D'Acerno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1987), p. 11.

abstractly, between totality and individual work.[4] Endorsing and expanding on Jameson's argument, in each chapter I place emphasis on couples of (apparently) antinomic terms around which Tafuri organised his historical narratives. These are: plan and Plan, image and fragment, rule and licence, and reality and utopia.

Since Tafuri's death in 1994, two monographs on his work have been published. The first of these, Marco Biraghi's *Project of Crisis*: *Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture* provides a broad and dense introduction to the thought and working methods of Manfredo Tafuri, exploring how this framework informed his studies of contemporary architecture.[5] Tafuri is best known in the Anglophone world for his attempts to unmask architecture's complicity with capitalist ideology. In recent years, his collaboration with the philosopher Massimo Cacciari and his polemics against the shortcomings of the housing policies of Austromarxism and the Italian Communist Party, have caught the attention of British academics such as Gail Day,[6] David Cunningham, David Goodbun and Peter Osborne,[7] to name only the most prominent. With the exception of Goodbun, none of these scholars are, strictly speaking, architectural historians or critics. What unites them is a shared interest in the relationship between capitalism and form, which they address with reference to

[4] Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (1976), trans. by Robert Erich Wolf (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979).
[5] Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis: Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013). Originally published as *Progetto di crisi: Manfredo Tafuri e l'architettura contemporanea* (Milan: Christian Marinotti Edizioni, 2005).
[6] It must be noted that Day's analysis of Tafuri's work predates all others. Day's 1996 PhD thesis included a chapter on Tafuri's and Cacciari's interpretations of negativity. Gail Ann Day, *Political Transformations and the Practices of Cultural Negation in Contemporary Art Theory* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1996). The thesis provides the basis for her subsequent *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[7] In April 2014, Peter Osborne gave a seminar at the University of Paris 8 on the theme 'History and Contemporaneity', largely drawing from Tafuri's text 'The Historical "Project"'. 'The Historical "Project"' was originally published in 1977 in *Casabella* and later included as an introduction in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Il "progetto" storico', *Casabella*, 429 (1977), 11-18.

Marxist theory. Consequently, their research on Tafuri tends to privilege his most explicitly Marxist texts, often at the expense of the other philosophical influences that shaped his thought. *Project of Crisis*, in contrast, draws attention to Tafuri's inclination to combine a wide range of philosophical sources, highlighting both his intellectual curiosity and the resulting near-impossibility of classifying his work. Although Biraghi does consider Tafuri's relationship to Marxism, in fact, he does not present it as the defining characteristic of the oeuvre.

The limit of the book lies, in my view, in its choice to focus almost exclusively on Tafuri's discourse, severing his figure from the surrounding political and intellectual scenario. Contrary to Biraghi's work, my thesis adopts a contextual approach. This is particularly evident in chapter one, which situates Tafuri's texts in the framework of the Marxist journal *Contropiano*, and in the final part, which instead examines his early articles for the architectural magazine *Casabella continuità*, emphasising their connection to the phenomenologically-inflected line of his editor Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

The second important monograph on Tafuri is Andrew Leach's *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History*, a book largely based upon his doctoral research.[8] Leach's investigation is grounded in the assumption that Tafuri's work has largely been viewed through the lens of his reknown *Architecture and Utopia*,[9] as a corrective to which the author wants to call attention to 'the breath of [...][his] contribution to the history and historiography of architecture' more broadly.[10] Leach is primarily concerned with Tafuri's theorisation of 'architectural history and architectural history research'. In addressing this theme he takes as a starting point Luisa Passerini's interview with Tafuri, suggesting a correlation between specific decisions made in the course of Tafuri's life – above all, that of privileging historical over architectural

[8] Andrew Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History* (Ghent: A&S/books, 2007).
[9] Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia. Design and Capitalist Development* (1973), trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1976).
[10] Andrew Leach, *Choosing History: a Study of Manfredo Tafuri's Theorisation of Architectural History and Architectural History Research* (unpublished PhD thesis, Ghent University, 2006), p. XIII.

practice – and 'his consideration of architectural history's disciplinarity'.[11] The book also brings to the fore Tafuri's key sources of inspiration, focussing in particular on Walter Benjamin and Sigmund Freud.

Leach's study was important for my own research and constitutes an unrivalled secondary source for anyone wishing seriously to engage with Tafuri's work. As Leach does, I address Tafuri's theorisation of architectural history and historical method, but I allow more room for the analysis of its 'implementation'. The implicit point of departure for my study is a set of guidelines laid out by Tafuri in the concluding chapter of his *Theories and History of Architecture*, tellingly titled the 'The Tasks of Criticism'. Here he writes:

> One can accept or reject a certain chain of historical facts only after having put the questions: what does it tell us about the hidden reasons determining architectural choices, and what present contradiction does it bring to light? Does that historiographic hypothesis manage to pose new *positive doubts* or is it not rather superfluous, consolatory or taken for granted? And in its probing into the structures of the phenomena does it take into account from the beginning the subjective deformations of the critic?[12]

For Tafuri, historical research needs to carry a demystifying function, both towards the appearance of buildings – he speaks of 'going beyond what architecture *shows*, in order to examine what it *hides*'[13] – and towards consolatory historical narratives that had crystallized over time. '[T]he de-mythisation carried out by criticism' also bears on architectural practice: it 'appeals to the responsibility of the planner, asking him to make conscious, analytical, and verifiable choices'.[14] This approach stands in direct

[11] Ibid., p. XV.
[12] Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (1968), trans. by Giorgio Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980), p. 230.
[13] Ibid., p. 176.
[14] Ibid., p. 234.

opposition to what Tafuri calls 'operative criticism', a type of criticism that tends to project history onto the future, replacing analysis with prefabricated judgements to be used in the service of present poetical tendencies.[15]

Tafuri devotes his career to sharpening the tools of historical criticism, 'constantly check[ing], renew[ing] and eventually revolutionis[ing them], as dictated by the changing historical contingencies'.[16] He does so by drawing inspiration from a wide spectrum of sources and continually breaching architecture's disciplinary borders.[17] One of the central assumptions underpinning all his work regards the inextricability of architectural language from other systems of meaning. 'The contents of architectural language', he writes in 1968, '*contain* meanings derived from disciplines outside architectural planning, but not exclusively from them'.[18] This sentence is no mere hint at the peculiar position of architecture between the sciences and humanities, but it sets out to establish that in the architectural context 'typologies', 'techniques', 'the production relations' and 'relations with nature and with the city' can 'assume a symbolic dimensions', breaking through 'the limits within which every one of these components plays its own role in the historical context'.[19]

As I mentioned earlier, this thesis looks at the way Tafuri's historico-critical method has been applied to the study of Modern, pre-Modern and Renaissance architecture. Each chapter focuses on one of Tafuri's case studies, exploring how – in accordance with the criteria set in *Theories and History* – it brings to the fore new 'contradictions' and 'new *positive doubts*', thereby challenging dominant narratives and disclosing the changes that the architect's labour underwent within the pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production.

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[15] Ibid., p. 141.
[16] Ibid., p. 172.
[17] Tafuri expands on his point in 'L'unità della storia', *Casabella*, 423 (1977), 34-35. We will discuss this article in the conclusion.
[18] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 203.
[19] Ibid., p. 227.

Chapter one considers the relation between Tafuri and Italian Workerist theories through a reading of his late 1960s articles for the Marxist journal *Contropiano*. It argues that the workerists' heterodox Marxist critique of economic planning and of the role of intellectuals offered Tafuri the tools to address the changing function of architecture – and of the plan – under a neo-capitalist regime of production. Tafuri reveals the structural nature of the crisis of architectural theory and practice, calling into question the consolatory 'utopian flights' attempted by many of his colleagues. Chapter two attends to Tafuri's analysis of the use of fragment and fragmentation in the work of the Venetian etcher Giambattista Piranesi and in that of the 20th-century avant-garde. The first section of the chapter considers Tafuri's distinctive reading of Piranesi, illuminating the multiple meanings he attaches to the artist's work. The second part looks at Tafuri's analysis of the actualization of Piranesi's the *Carceri* in the work of Sergei Eisenstein, and more broadly at avant-garde artists' use of the fragment. I will argue that Tafuri's investigation of the meaning of the fragment in works dating from disparate historical moments sets out to show the impact of capitalist development on the communicative potential of form. The fragment thus emerges at once as a device able to disrupt the consoling and coherent image of the past and as embodiment of a temporary state of disorder opening the way to a new phase of recomposition. Furthermore, the chapter shows how the combined analysis of Piranesi's writings and drawings allows us to bring to light the artist's capacity to foresee the emergence of a new art and artistic subjectivity predicated on the primacy of bourgeois reason. Chapter three begins by closely examining 'The Historical "Project"', in which Tafuri refines his definition of the tasks and the tools of the historian, turning to a new set of references including Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, The School of the Annales and Carlo Ginzburg. The second part of the chapter shows how a combination of methods drawn from these thinkers allows Tafuri to reconsider established accounts of Renaissance architecture that posit an unmediated correspondence between pre-existing cultural or religious texts and the physical form of buildings attributed to architects. In the final section dedicated to

Renaissance Venice I will draw attention to Tafuri's analysis of the increasing division of roles between the architect and manual workers in the construction of buildings, and of the concurrent prevalence of abstract principles over practical experience. The fourth and final chapter returns to Tafuri's early interventions in the Italian architectural debate of the post-second world war period. The first part explores journal articles denouncing the short-sightedness of politicians and architects involved in the replanning of Rome, while the second one reviews some of Tafuri's texts addressing two major themes of the Italian architectural debate of the time: the new urban scale and architectural neo-realism. I will stress the proximity between Tafuri's positions and those of his colleagues, and I will read it as an index of an aspiration to create a united front that was both professional *and* political. I will also argue that Tafuri's interventions testify to a conception of publishing as a political act. Ultimately, I will examine how a convergence of phenomenological and Marxist theories allows the historian to reveal the pitfalls both of theories of design that emphasise architectural typology and of those – such as neorealism – that privilege formal variation.

The thesis has required the translation of a vast array of texts that are still only available in the original language. This undertaking has itself inevitably obliged me to probe into Tafuri's writing, whose notorious complexity has troubled architectural students and translators, often inducing the latter to paraphrase his elliptical expressions in a way that distorts their original meaning.[20] Tafuri's 'style', I argue, must be considered in the light of a debate over the changing role of intellectuals in the emerging neo-capitalist economy, and the need to address these changes *aesthetically,* that arose in Italy in the 1960s. Crucial in the development of the debate was the publication in 1962 of a special issue of the cultural magazine *Il Menabò*,[21] dedicated to the analysis of the relationship between literature and

[20] In the thesis I point out (and amend) inaccurate translations in a few instances.
[21] 'Il Menabò di letteratura was a literary review founded in 1959 by Italo Calvino and ElioVittorini, which published ten issues, irregularly, with Einaudi before

industry.[22] Tafuri's reference to the 1962 journal issue in an article for *Casabella continuità* testifies to his familiarity with the discussion it contains.[23]

Among contributors to the 1962 *Il Menabò* issue was literary critic and writer Franco Fortini, whose writings on the avant-garde, as will be shown more fully in chapter one, prove to be of crucial importance for Tafuri's own research.[24] The nexus between Fortini and Tafuri has been already explored by architectural historian Pier Vittorio Aureli, but what concerns me here is their respective styles of writing, an aspect that Aureli leaves largely unexplored. In the *Il Menabò*'s essay 'Astuti come colombe' ['Cunning as Doves'][25] Fortini repeatedly and forcefully criticises works of literature privileging immediate representations of neocapitalist industry, arguing that 'industry is not *a* theme' but 'the manifestation of *the* theme called capitalism'.[26] By this he meant that the task of representing capitalism required the writer to go beyond the material 'objects' and physical spaces associated with capitalistic production and to look instead at the way this mode of production penetrates into lives and reshapes both subjective self-perception and perception of the world. A seemingly abstract and obscure literary form was for him the only one to render the profound and wider-ranging nature of the capitalist revolution: 'speaking about industry – writes Fortini – is like speaking about his [the writer's] deepest ego, and

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closing in 1967. The term "menabò" is a technical expression in the language of publishing for a draft page layout, the equivalent of paste-up'. Alberto Toscano in Franco Fortini, *A Test of Powers. Writings on Criticism and Literary Institutions*, trans. by Alberto Toscano (London: Seagull Books, forthcoming). I have excerpted this sentence from the still unpaginated and unpublished manuscript.

[22] The issue contains some of the most insightful reflections to date on the problem of 'how to represent capitalism'. Alberto Toscano, who has addressed this question more recently, discussed the debate on the journal in a paper delivered at Historical Materialism Rome in September 2015.

[23] I will return to this point in chapter four.

[24] I will address the Fortini-Tafuri nexus in its connection to the avant-garde in chapter one.

[25] Franco Fortini, 'Astuti come colombe (1962)', in *Verifica dei poteri* (Turin, Einaudi: 1989). I will return to this in chapter four.

[26] Fortini, *A Test of Powers. Writings on Criticism and Literary Institutions*, unpaginated manuscript.

therefore [...] only a long chain of metaphors can take on the risk of that discourse'.[27] Fortini's words here may contribute to an understanding of Tafuri's oblique way of writing about architecture. In close correspondence to Fortini's interpretation of the task of literary critic, the historian avoids presenting architectural forms as an immediate reflection of capitalism, attempting instead to chart more covert relations between the two. Significant in this regard, is his reading of avant-garde art and architecture under capitalism as means of sublimating the anxiety of the metropolitan condition.

Also common to Fortini and Tafuri is a will to define for their writing a form corresponding to the radical intent of its content. Despite the shared aim, however, their respective strategies could not be more different. Fortini declares his intention to invent 'a new form of estrangement' – inflected by Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* but unlike it – in which 'truth' will be concealed under apparently innocent forms. This will make it possible to deceive the 'enemy' while gratifying those who 'asked for' truth:

> Then in what I write, or others will, there may be, like the thin metal file hidden in the lifer's bread, a metallic part. May only he who has asked for it and thus deserved it be able to take it into his possession. Smuggled in a shape that all, enemies included, can communicate; but destined only for him and those like him.[28]

Tafuri takes an opposite path. He opts for a dense and allusive mode of writing that casts doubt on the false transparency of scientific language, and immediately discourages those readers unwilling to unravel the his historical 'constructions'. Furthermore, criticism, he writes: 'has to renounce systematic expression in favour of a compromise with daily contingencies. Its model should be the journalistic

[27] Ibid., unpaginated manuscript.
[28] Ibid., unpaginated manuscript.

extravaganza rather than the definitive essay which is complete in itself'.[29] Tafuri's 'style' combines allegorical expressions, references going beyond the architectural realm, and a reluctance to make any definitive and conciliatory conclusion. As will be shown fully in later chapters, however, the rejection of a finished systematic form will not correspond to renunciation of narrative structure, but rather emphasises the irremediable incompleteness of every critical undertaking. As Tafuri will write in his *Modern Architecture* 'If our research is meant to demonstrate one thing it is precisely the impossibility of giving the final word on a determinate point in history'.[30]

[29] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 153.

[30] My translation of 'Se qualcosa la nostra ricerca intende dimostrare è proprio l'impossibilità di porre, a un determinato punto della storia, la parola fine', Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura Contemporanea* (1976), (Milan: Electa, 2009), p. 382.

Chapter One:
Tafuri's Double Plan

1. The Avant-Garde as a Partial Utopia of the Plan

> *The unpronounceable avant-garde is the other face of mass gossip.*[31] *The connection between the neo-avant-garde and the bourgeois capitalistic order becomes organic and explicit after having been, for the historical avant-garde, only implicit and indirect.*
>
> Franco Fortini, 'Due avanguardie'[32]

The emergence of a neo-avant-garde in 1960s Italy, coupled with its urge to assess its goals, had the effect of once again bringing the avant-garde to the fore, and igniting a debate on its limits and 'posthumous' effects. It is not my aim to examine this debate in-depth, and nor do I wish to focus on the singular contribution of Franco Fortini. The first part of sentence that opens this chapter is not in fact quoted from the original text 'Due avanguardie' ['Two Avant-Gardes'], but from the preface of the second English edition of Tafuri's *Theories and History*. As we will shortly see more clearly, what prompts Tafuri to include the above citation is his interest in the relationship between the avant-garde and capitalism. Similarly to Fortini, Tafuri refrains from considering neo-avant-garde's complicity with capitalism as a novelty, instead seeing it as the ultimate stage of a process that started a long time before, and in which the avant-garde played a central and catalyst role.[33]

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[31] Franco Fortini quoted in Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. XVII.

[32] My translation of: 'La saldatura fra neoavanguardia e ordine borghese-capitalistico diventa organica ed esplicita dopo essere stata, per l'avanguardia storica, solo implicita e indiretta'. Franco Fortini, 'Due avanguardie (1968)', in *Verifica dei poteri* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989), p. 62.

[33] Fortini acknowledges the early-twentieth-century avant-gardes' complicity with capitalism, but he contends that with the advent of the neo-avant-garde this link became tighter. Tafuri, instead, is more cautious about setting the one against the other, or defining their relationship in Oedipal terms. On Fortini and Tafuri consider Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development: Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri's Critique of Architectural Ideology'. It must be noted

In the first part of this chapter, I will examine Manfredo Tafuri's understanding of the avant-garde by taking into account his writings on Dada and De Stijl, which appeared in the Marxist journal *Contropiano*, *Materiali Marxisti* (1968-1971)[34] as well as his essay on the Russian avant-garde, included in the collective volume *Socialismo, città, architettura, URSS 1917-1937* (1971) [*Socialism, City, Architecture, USRR 1917-1937*].[35] Other scholars, before me, have already addressed this topic, but unlike them, I will here consider it in relation to the theme of the present chapter: Tafuri's notion of the plan.[36] Before we proceed to examine this nexus, it is thus essential to provide some preliminary information on this topic.

Throughout his writings, Tafuri alludes to two different kinds of plans. A first one, normally in the lower case, refers to architecture proper, and indicates the drawing that defines the guidelines for urban development. Conversely, the second, upper-case one, is endowed with a more immediate politico-economical connotation, and points to a profit-maximising scheme; to a 'capitalist Plan'. This latter, I will later argue, should be read in the light of the debate carried on in the 1960s by workerism, an Italian heterodox-Marxist current that emerged in conjunction with the advent of neo-capitalism and the concomitant cycle of factory struggles.

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that Aureli's article does not pay particular attention to Tafuri's and Fortini's readings of the avant-garde.

[34] *Contropiano*, *Materiali Marxisti* was founded in 1968 by literary critic Alberto Asor Rosa and philosophers Massimo Cacciari and Antonio Negri; it continued appearing until 1971. While not an architectural magazine, it included a number of contributions commenting on important moments in the historical avant-garde and Italy's pressing urban problems.

[35] Manfredo Tafuri (ed.), *Socialismo, città, architettura URSS 1917-1937:Il contributo degli architetti europei* (Rome: Officina, 1971).

[36] See in particular: Tomas Llorens, 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-garde and History', *Architectural Design*, 51 (1981), 83-94; Gail Day, *Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); 'Art, Love and Social Emancipation: on the Concept "Avant-Garde" and the Interwar Avant-Gardes', in *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, ed. by Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2004), pp. 303-337.

The distinction between the 'plan' and 'the Plan' that Tafuri implicitly established might at first sight appear untenable. It is common knowledge that since its inception, normally associated with Ildefons Cerdà's nineteenth-century project for Barcelona, urban planning has been conceived as a tool for wielding political control through the reconfiguration of urban space and its uses.[37] And more recently, geographer David Harvey had highlighted how urban redevelopment initiatives such as Haussmann's nineteenth-century project for Paris were responses to crises of accumulation, besides being stratagems allowing for easier surveillance of the city.[38] Tafuri is certainly not unaware of the inherent politico-economical implications of urban planning, yet he contends that an unprecedented shift took place in the history of this discipline with the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the subsequent implementation of Keynesian economic politics. From that moment onwards, urban planning and architecture fully lost their already partial autonomy, instead becoming an appendage of a wider and more potent Plan of capital.

But how does Tafuri link his research on planning with the twentieth-century avant-garde? The genesis of this association can be found in his *Theories and History*, but it was in his essays for the Marxist magazine *Contropiano* – partly thanks to his encounter with the work of literary critics Franco Fortini and Alberto Asor Rosa, and indeed the philosopher Massimo Cacciari – that his analysis was further expanded, and the nexus between the avant-garde and the Plan brought to light.[39]

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[37] Ildefons Cerdà, *Teoria generale dell'urbanizzazione*, trans. by Ada Ceruti (Milan: Jaca Book, 1985).

[38] See David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

[39] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica', *Contropiano*, 1 (1969), 31-79; 'Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico', *Contropiano*, 2 (1970), 241-281. The former was later translated into English as 'Towards a Critique of Architectural Ideology', trans. by Stephen Sartarelli, in *Architectural Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 2-35.

At the core of Tafuri's argument lies the conviction that the avant-garde, in its 'destructive' as much as its 'constructive' form, evokes an ideal of order congruent with the authoritarian aims of capitalist planning. Tafuri first explains this complicity by means of a dynamic account through which the original meaning accorded to avant-garde formal mechanisms undergoes radical transformation. He explains that what was initially conceived as an attempt to counter the impoverishment brought by capitalism, such as Constructivism's assemblage of abstract forms and industrial materials, or De Stijl's use of simplified geometry and primary colours, was subsequently recuperated by capitalism in a sublimated form. The dismembering of form into elementary units took on a wholly different meaning, becoming the token of surrender to the 'new poverty' imposed by the capitalist production regime; and their subsequent, disjointed, recombination was just an illusory endeavour to sublimate that condition.[40]

In his review of Dada, Tafuri drops the dynamic scheme that he adopted in order to read the avant-garde's 'constructivist' strand, and instead seeks to grasp what lies behind the artistic form's immediate appearance. This engenders an unusual reading of Dada's penchant for absurdity and chaos as both a way to denounce the unfulfilled rationality of the capitalist project, and a call for that same rationality. In simplified terms, Tafuri suggests that we understand Dada's disruption of common sense and cultural conventions as a disguised signal of – and underlying demand for – order and stability.

I started this chapter by picking out a reference to Fortini in the preface of Tafuri's *Theories and History*, which I have read as an evidence of a connection between their respective theories of the avant-garde. As I explained, the link regards the avant-garde's tendency to mimic and strengthen the same capitalist culture that it thought it was fighting against. I now propose to leave these homologies asides, and to pause to look at those aspects that distinguish Tafuri's analysis, paying close

[40] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 20.

attention to the question of dialectics – a concept which will be pivotal in our analysis of the historian's critical method.[41] If we reconsider their writings on the avant-garde focusing on this particular aspect, their positions appear to diverge considerably. For Fortini, the avant-garde 'fails' because it does no more than replicate the antithesis between rationality and irrationality that has characterized bourgeois culture since its inception. The avant-garde 'seeks shelter in one or the other of these extremes, or it experiences them simultaneously', he says, but never manages to 'resolve' this opposition through a process akin to Hegelian sublation, which would allow for the affirmation of a higher degree of reality.[42] In other words, within avant-gardist art, the negative is present only as static element, but not as an operative force able to prompt a qualitative transformation of immediate reality. For Fortini, the avant-garde's failure seems to lie in its 'dialectical' shortage.

From Tafuri's perspective, on the other hand, De Stijl develops by following a dialectical movement that culminates in a moment of sublation, where negativity is endowed with a new form that makes it tolerable to the capitalist system. His analysis combines Hegel's dialectic with Freud's notion of sublimation, casting doubt on readings of the dialectic that accord sublation the capability to retain an 'effective' negative force.[43] The development of the avant-garde would thus entail both a preservation *and* a displacement of the negative, in a manner akin to the instinct-sublimation process which Freud says permits the edification of human civilisation.[44]

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[41] On Tafuri's (and Massimo Cacciari's) relation to Hegelian dialectics the most accurate work to date is the chapter 'Looking the Negative in the Face: Manfredo Tafuri and the Venice School of Architecture' in Day, *Dialectical Passions*, pp. 70-131.

[42] My translation of 'L'avanguardia si rifugia in uno o nell'altro estremo o li vive simultanealmente'. Fortini, 'Due avanguardie', in *Verifica dei poteri*, p. 60.

[43] Here I am referring to Fortini. For a comparison between Hegel's dialectic and Freud's sublimation, see Clark Butler, 'Hegel and Freud: A Comparison', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*', 36.4 (1976), 506-522. For Butler, however, both dialectics and sublimation retain the moment of negation.

[44] On the Freudian notion of sublimation, see section two in Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), trans. by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2000); 'Civilization and its Discontents (1930)', in *The Standard*

The connection to psychoanalysis can be further grasped in Tafuri's interpretation of Dada's transgression. Here there transpires a reference to Freud's theory of negation, according to which the content of repressed ideas can access consciousness *only* on condition that is denied.[45] Implicitly drawing on this thesis, Tafuri comes to infer that what might superficially appear an open refusal of the *status quo*, instead points to its very opposite.

We should note that Tafuri's writings pre-dated by a few years Peter Bürger's 1974 *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, which became a canonical text for a generation of scholars addressing this theme.[46] The two accounts differ considerably on a number of aspects, and Bürger's certainly passes a kinder judgment on the avant-garde's achievements. Still, there is an interesting and previously unnoticed 'parallel' between them, regarding the usage of the notion of Hegelian dialectic to explain the avant-garde's development and its ultimate failure. Bürger maintains that the avant-garde proposed the sublation of art in the Hegelian sense of the term, for it wanted not simply to tear down art but to transfer it to the praxis of life, where it would have continued to exist in a different form. But within a bourgeois society, such an integration into the praxis of life would have been possible only on the condition of losing its radical power, giving rise to what Bürger calls a 'false sublation'.[47] Writing in a manner that recalls Tafuri's strident critique, Bürger asks whether 'a sublation of the autonomy status can be desirable at all', considering that a capitalist regime does not allow for a 'true sublation' to materialize.[48]

Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. by Joanne Riviere (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961).

[45] 'Thus the content of a repressed image or idea can get through consciousness, then, on condition that it is *negated*. Negation is a way of aknowledging the repressed'. Sigmund Freud, 'Negation', in *The Penguin Freud Reader,* ed. by Adam Phillips (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 96.

[46] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (1974), trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[47] Ibid., p. 54.

[48] Ibid., p. 54.

However, the originality of Tafuri's contribution to the theory of the avant-garde lies, I think, less in his employment and hybridizations of philosophical concepts than in his attempt to relate its process of 'domestication' to the development of the capitalist city.[49] Earlier we described Tafuri's review of Dadaist and De Stijl's artistic endeavours as responses to a generic condition of impoverishment and the apparent rationality occasioned by the expansion of capitalism. If we now want to fully comprehend the nexus between the avant-garde and the plan, we have to make clear that Tafuri considered this condition as specific to a metropolitan type of life that had emerged at the turn of the 20th century. Tafuri refers in multiple sites to the texts of Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel, where the modern city is described as a space dominated by money-economy and a frenetic commodity exchange, and where a new intellectualistic and calculating subjectivity has emerged.[50] The more or less evident appeals to order that De Stijl and Dada made, as described above, are therefore interpreted as a reactions to a capitalist entropy which finds its privileged terrain in the modern city. From this analysis, the avant-garde emerges as an urban phenomenon,[51] always presupposing the city as its 'reference value'.[52]

The elements that tie together the artistic avant-garde, the city and the plan are gradually becoming apparent: the avant-garde's plea for urban order lays the foundation for the emergence of the plan, which in turn becomes a tool for regaining control over a city gone astray. The following passage from Tafuri's 1969 article lays bare these connections: 'while De Stijl and Bauhaus, — the former in a

[49] I am not referring here to the interaction between art and architecture within avant-gardist movements – a theme largely addressed by scholarly literature – but to the relationship between Western avant-gardist art and the capitalist metropolis in the twentieth century.
[50] Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life (1903)', in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2010).
[51] It is interesting to note a proximity between Tafuri and art historian Carlo Giulio Argan with regard to this point. Late in his career, Argan developed a conception of the history of art bound up with the history of the city. See Carlo Giulio Argan, *Storia dell'arte come storia della città* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1983).
[52] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 19.

sectarian manner, the latter in eclectic fashion — introduced the *ideology of the plan* into a *design* method that was ever more deeply linked to the city as a productive structure, Dada, through absurdity, demonstrated the necessity of the plan without ever naming it'.[53] Either explicitly or implicitly, the avant-garde invokes the image of plan, and in this way contributes to building what would soon become the ideology of capitalist planning.

It is worth noting that the association between avant-garde and plan has a precedent in a couple of essays on Piet Mondrian that historian Giulio Carlo Argan – one of Tafuri's reference points in the arts – wrote in the early 1950s.[54] Argan uses the term 'plan' to stress Mondrian's effort to think each element in relation to others, so as to bring an asymmetrical composition into balance. He furthermore contends that the creators of neo-plasticist paintings intended them as a means to sharpen human perception and consciousness, and that as such these works had a programmatic aim akin to that of architectural plans. Whereas Argan, however, seems to limit himself to discerning an analogy between art and architecture, which he interprets optimistically, Tafuri goes deeper, and seeks to understand how art's cry for a plan might relate to contemporary trends in capitalist development. More than so, he sheds some light upon the way in which art, design and architecture interact within this process of development, leading to the affirmation of the ideology of capitalist planning. He explains, for example, that the role of the artistic avant-garde stops where the one of design and architecture begins: if the former just invokes the image of the plan, disciplines most directly entrenched in economic processes such as design and architecture, act as vehicles for its implementation.[55] Before going on to discuss architecture, Tafuri pauses on the crucial and intermediary role played by

[53] Ibid., p. 19.
[54] Giulio Carlo Argan, 'Mondrian (1953)', in *Salvezza e caduta nell'arte moderna. Studi e note II* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1964), pp. 122-130.
[55] Seen from today perspective, Tafuri's analysis appears incredibly prescient of the role that art would come to play in processes of urban gentrification from the 1970s onward, and of the subsequent deployment of public art projects as a regeneration strategy.

design, and specifically of Bauhaus, for which he coins the definition 'decantation chamber of the avant-gardes'. Through design, artistic movements' contributions are 'tested against the demands of the reality of industrial production'.[56] As a result, their 'utopian vestiges' fade away, and ideology, having been 'superimposed', instead becomes integral to the real cycles of production.[57]

A similar fate befalls architecture. Tafuri takes us to the core of the matter by quoting a statement by Ludwig Hilberseimer that defines architecture in terms of an interplay between the elementary units of housing and the planimetric structure of the city.[58] What he wants to make apparent is the disappearance of the single dwelling space intended as an identifiable, discrete object, and its conversion into an anonymous unit of a productive line that coincides to the totality of the metropolitan space. He writes:

> In the rigid articulation of the production plan, the specific dimension of architecture, in the traditional sense of the term, disappears. As an 'exception' to the homogeneity of the city, the architectural object has been completely dissolved.[59]

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[56] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 20.
[57] Ibid., p. 20.
[58] Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Groszstadtarchitektur* (Stuttgart: Hoffmann, 1927). Ludwig Hilberseimer's writings appeared in Italy for the first time in 1967. See Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Un'idea di piano* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1967).
[59] This is a paraphrasing of Hilberseimer's observations in *Groszstadtarchitektur* which Tafuri quotes immediately after: 'As great masses have to be shaped according to a general law, dominated by multiplicity, ... the general case, the rule, is emphasized while the exception is set aside, the nuance obliterated. Measure reigns, forcing chaos to become form, logical, univocal, mathematical form', 'The need to shape a heterogeneous and often gigantic mass of materials in accordance with a formal law equally valid for each element implies a reduction of architectural form to its most formal, necessary, general need: a reduction, that is, to cubic, geometrical forms, which represent the basic elements of all architecture'. Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 22.

For Tafuri, such a scenario corresponds to the moment in which architecture starts to point 'toward something other than itself'; an other which amounts to the 'Plan of capital'. This, in turn, occasions a dead-end situation, for if the only way architecture can pursue its pre-established goals is by linking itself 'to the [economic] reorganization of the city', it is evident that its sphere of action will be drastically curtailed. Hilberseimer's proposal clearly demonstrates how, regardless of the designer's original intentions, architecture's integration within the processes of economic restructuring has reached the point where formal choices are only variables dependent on these processes.[60] To play a bit with words, we can say that in order to continue to be, architecture has to become something other than itself, but this will ultimately result in its own demise. Tafuri elsewhere describes this process as a reversal of a subject / object relation between urban planning and the Plan of capital: 'once the Plan came within the scope of the general reorganization of production', – he says – 'architecture and urban planning would become its objects, not its subjects'.[61] Paradoxical as this might appear, Tafuri regards the dead-end situation we have just outlined as a moment of 'possibility', because it offers architecture the opportunity to perform the only truthful gesture of negation, that of ceasing to exist. In a Heideggerian fashion, mortality is thus mobilised as the condition for free action *in* the world.

The great refusal Tafuri seems to hope for will remain a missed opportunity. From the end of the 1920s, architecture would take on a political role on the side of capital, turning into 'the planned reorganization of building production and the city'.[62] As architect Francesco Dal Co wrote in an article for *Contropiano* that would inspire Tafuri's own text, architects felt that it was no longer sufficient to think and

[60] Ibid., p. 24. It is important to point that Hilberseimer was a staunch opponent of the speculative trend informing construction, housing form and housing production. His elemental design was conceived as an antidote to what he calls 'aesthetic speculation'. See Richard Anderson, 'An End to Speculation', in Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Metropolisarchitecture* (New York: GSAPP Sourcebooks: 2012).
[61] Ibid., p. 21.
[62] Ibid., p. 21.

work for the death of the discipline, but it had become necessary for this death to acquire a 'political' significance. [63] Viewed from Dal Co and Tafuri's uncompromising perspective, the politicization of architectural practice corresponded to the refusal to acknowledge its own defeat.[64]

2. Tafuri in Context

By rereading the history of the early avant-garde in the light of the development of twentieth-century capitalism, Tafuri called into question historical accounts that saw the principal cause of its demise in the advent of political totalitarianism.[65] In response to a general lack of concern for political economy amongst architectural historians, he seeks to demonstrate that a study of the poetics of modern architecture cannot leave this aspect aside. As we will see shortly, at the risk of bordering on economism, he goes as far as to establish a homology between the architectural avant-garde and the politics of interventionism in John Maynard Keynes's *General Theory*.

Tafuri's *Contropiano* articles contain countless references to classics of political and economic theory, articles from contemporary Italian Marxist journals, and other texts appearing in previous issues. Such a cross-breeding certainly testifies to the historian's intellectual ambition, but it often made his project difficult to access for a contemporary architectural readership. In addition, the republication of the *Contropiano* essays in a shortened version in the 1973 book *Progetto e Utopia*, completely cut off the connections between Tafuri's work and his contemporaries',

[63] Francesco Dal Co, 'Note per la Critica dell'Ideologia dell'Architettura Moderna: da Weimar a Dessau', *Contropiano*, 1 (1968), 153-170. Francesco Dal Co was a member of the Istituto Universitario of Venice directed by Tafuri and a collaborator of the Marxist journal *Contropiano*.

[64] Ibid., p. 170. The nihilist stance detectable in Tafuri's 'Towards a Critique of Architectural Ideology' is here made explicit. The choice between survival or silence alludes to the philosophical research of Wittgenstein and Heidegger. For a in-depth exploration of Italian Left-Heideggerianism see Matteo Mandarini, 'Notes Towards a Critique of Left-Heideggerianism in Italian Philosophy of the 1970s', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 5.1 (2009), 37-56.

[65] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 28.

with the effect of making his writing incomprehensible to most. Fredric Jameson pointed to this problem already in 1982, at a conference held at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. Still, in the paper he delivered he did little to re-historicize Tafuri's contribution, and associated his trenchant critique of utopianism with a form of political despair.[66]

More recently, art historian Gail Day has looked into Anglo-American academia's elision and misreading of the politics that informed Tafuri's writings, paying particular attention to Jameson's case.[67] In an article for *Historical Materialism* journal, Day contends that Tafuri's work has been evacuated of 'its motivating impulse', by those who, like Jameson, 'believed they were continuing the same broad critical project [...] [and] situated themselves as amongst the staunchest critics of their own culture'.[68] Meticulously charting the debate carried on by the American journal *Oppositions* and the Revisions study-group in the 1970s and '80s, Day shows that American interpreters used Tafuri's politically-engaged writings to work out their own intellectual and political commitments. So it happened that '*by way of* an insistence of politics',[69] Tafuri's thinking was 'remapped and in the process transformed into something alien with respect to their original [political] context'.[70] Day tries to counter the Anglo-American misreading by paying close attention to the political conflicts and theories that distinguished the Left in Italy in the 1960s-70s, and by examining how this latter have permeated Tafuri's thinking. Her recontextualizing effort is of remarkable precision, but it forgets to note one

[66] Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', paper presented at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York in 1982; published in *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, ed. by Joan Ockman et al. (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), pp. 51-87.
[67] I refer both to Gail Day, 'Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz, Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism', *Radical Philosophy*, 133 (2005), 26-38 and her subsequent 'Manfredo Tafuri, Fredric Jameson and the Contestations of Political Memory', *Historical Materialism*, 20.1 (2012), 31-77.
[68] Day, 'Manfredo Tafuri, Fredric Jameson and the Contestations of Political Memory', p. 33.
[69] Ibid., p. 42.
[70] Ibid., p. 37. The word 'political' is mine.

aspect which could have further challenged Jameson's portrayal of Tafuri as an incorrigible pessimist. If we compare the *Contropiano* articles and *Architecture and Utopia*, we see that his most openly 'militant' contribution to the journal, 'Intellectual Labour and Capitalist Development', was excluded from this latter volume.[71] I think that the reason for this omission lies in the fading-away of political momentum, which was reflected in the splitting or cessation of the political and cultural collectives that had given rise to journals like *Contropiano*. This is important because it shows that what Jameson and his acolytes tended to see as an inherently defeatist position, was in fact a response to a set of politico-historical changes.

Our brief foray into the secondary literature confirms that having a certain knowledge of the historical and political context from which Tafuri's work stemmed is a key condition for understanding the compass that guided his project. As such, before I return to his texts and continue our investigation of his notion of the plan, it is important to look at the politics of planning in post-war Italy and at its critique at the hands of the members of workerism, the heterodox-Marxist current to which the founders of *Contropiano* were affiliated. This will serve to lay the groundwork for the subsequent and final part of the chapter, where we will look closely at how the politico-theoretical proposals of three key figures of workerism – namely Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri and Raniero Panzieri – informed Tafuri's concept of the plan.

2.1. The Italian Politics of Planning and Its Critique

Once the frantic reconstruction period following the end of WWII came to an end, organic and controlled economic development began to represent a key point of Italian political debate, especially among the exponents of Christian Democracy (DC) – at the time, the country's predominant ruling party. In the same years, furthermore, the United States demanded that countries participating in the Marshall

[71]Academic Felice Mometti notes that a number of expressions and passages in the *Contropiano* articles were altered in *Progetto e Utopia*. See Felice Mometti, 'La crisi come progetto. Architettura e storia in Manfredo Tafuri', <http://www.marxau21.fr/index.php/textes-thematiques/culture/175-manfredo-tafuri-la-crisi-come-progetto> [accessed 6 February 2015].

Plan devise a long-term economic programme,[72] to be presented to the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) in 1948. It is worth noting that the objectives at the core of this scheme such as the optimisation of the labour-force and Italy's integration into the international market would reoccur in the Vanoni Plan, the first planning proposal put forward by the Christian-Democratic government in 1954:

> [we have] to open the Italian economy to a global market, through Europe's trade liberalization

And further,

> The goal [is the] overcoming of our chronic unemployment, by balancing income and the expenditure growth rate.[73]

The appearance of a politics of planning can be therefore considered as the outcome of two combining factors: the internal urge to coordinate economic development after a phase of deregulated reconstruction, and the American demand for supervising the politico-economical choices of the countries that benefited from the USA's post-war financial support.

The Vanoni Plan was perhaps the first attempt in the history of Italy at formulating a unitary national economic policy based on Keynesian premises.[74] As

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[72] Siro Lombardini, *La programmazione, idee, esperienze, problemi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967), p. 17.

[73] Excerpted from the speech delivered by the Christian Democratic party's secretary Alcide De Gasperi at its 1954 congress, as he presented the Vanoni Plan. Quoted in Manin Carabba, *Un ventennio di programmazione 1954-1974* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1977), p. 16.

[74] Lombardini, *La programmazione, idee, esperienze, problemi,* p. 34. For a reading of Vanoni Plan as a Keynesian manoeuvre, see Franco Osculati, 'Ezio Vanoni e i doveri dei cittadini', *Rivista della scuola superiore dell'economia e delle finanze*, 4 (2005). <http://www.rivista.ssef.it/www.rivista.ssef.it/site4e8e.html?page=stampa&idpagestampa=20031218171824103&edition=2005-04-01> [accessed 7 February 2015].

well as the creation of four million jobs, the scheme envisaged achieving a balance of payments and shortening the gap between the north and south of the country, while maintaining a 5% annual increase in national income.[75] Due to the non-restrictive nature of the plan, however, very little attention was paid to the formulation of the more concrete political tools needed for its fulfilment.[76]

It was only after the mid-1950s that the question of planning took on political force, especially within the Socialist Party (PSI).[77] The flourishing of this debate coincided with a phase of revising the Party's ideological position, and its subsequent detachment from the hitherto allied Communists (PCI). This shift was largely promoted by the politician Pietro Nenni, whose so-called 'politics of things' – epitomised by the adage 'do what you have to do, and what can happen will happen'[78] – entailed an emphasis on the tactical moment to the detriment of any idea of *telos*.[79] On the basis of this pragmatic approach, at the 31st Congress of the Socialist Party in 1955, Nenni proposed entering into a dialogue with the Christian Democrats. Only one year later, the Soviet occupation of Hungary would have provided the political alibi for such an alliance, and reshaped the borders of the entire left-wing scene.

The phase which followed the Hungarian invasion was crucial in the process of dismantling the political paradigms which had until then sustained the Communist project. For example, in his *Riforme e rivoluzione*[80] former PCI member Antonio

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[75] Ibid., p. 30.

[76] Lombardini maintains that the plan was intended as a 'theoretical study and therefore abstract in its first sketches, and *politically not constraining*'. Ibid., p. 43.

[77] The debate mainly took place in the pages of the journals 'Passato e presente', 'Tempi moderni', 'Critica sociale' and 'Il mulino'. Its main figures were Alessandro Pizzorno, Roberto Guiducci, Antonio Giolitti, Fabrizio Onofri and Lucio Lombardo. See Daniele Balicco, *Non parlo a tutti. Franco Fortini intellettuale politico* (Rome: Manifesto Libri, 2006), p. 130.

[78] My translation of 'fai quel che devi e succeda quello che può'.

[79] Giampiero Mughini, *Il Revisionismo socialista. Antologia di testi 1956-1962* (Rome: Savelli: 1975), p. 24.

[80] Antonio Giolitti, *Riforme e rivoluzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1957), p. 23. Giolitti's *Riforme e rivoluzione*, and Giulio Preti's *Praxis ed empirismo* were the

Giolitti contended that 'even if the tools till now employed by reformism were inadequate', reformism as such could still be considered a valid way to socialism.[81] This stance implied the demise of the historical antinomy between reformism and revolution, and the establishment of a cooperative relationship between the working class and the state. At its core lay the old belief that economic development and technical progress were inherently rational, and could combine to unleash the conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production. From this short gloss, we can deduce that the idea of planning put forward by Giolitti and many other PSI members had very little do with the socialist example. A passage from a speech delivered by politician Riccardo Lombardi makes this distinction unequivocal:

> [...] public companies [were conceived] within the Italian scene as operating within a market economy. An economy, therefore, where the coordination of managerial decisions happens ex-post, through the mechanism itself and through the system of prices, and therefore not an entirely planned economy, where instead the coordination happens ex-ante, namely in the phase of planning.[82]

The debate over planning resulted in the La Malfa note, an appendix to the general report on the country's economic situation that this minister prepared in 1962.[83] The note emphasised the need for a policy of planning that included *all* political actors, and defined a set of practical tools to effectively implement the scheme. Soon after, with the creation of the Commission for National Programming (CNPE), where state

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theoretical manifestos of the politics of planning championed by the PSI. I owe this point to Balicco, *Non parlo a tutti. Franco Fortini intellettuale politico*, p. 130.

[81] Giolitti in Pietro Lezzi, *Pagine Socialiste* (Naples: Guida, 2002), p. 94.

[82] Riccardo Lombardi, 'Schema di relazione introduttiva', *Convegno del Psi sulle partecipazioni statali Roma,* 3-4 Maggio 1959, p. 7.

[83] The 'Nota aggiuntiva alla Relazione generale sulla situazione economica del Paese 1961', < http://www.fulm.org/doc/2974/nota-aggiuntiva-20140326125800.pdf > [accessed 7 February 2015].

functionaries and technicians sat together with trade union representatives, Giolitti's aspiration to include the working class in the development of the democratic plan was finally realised.

Whilst the centre-left governing coalition was trying to give concrete form to the politics of planning, workers' protests begun to flare up throughout industrial plants in the north of the country. At the time wages in Italy were amongst the lowest of all European countries, and had remained almost unchanged for more than a decade in spite of the great increase in the gross national income, which had given rise to major investment possibilities, and unprecedented capitalist accumulation.[84] The long-term regime of capitalist exploitation, further aggravated by the increasing automatisation of production, had prompted waves of discontent and protest at the end of the 1950s. These struggles were distinct from earlier ones, given workers' relative independence from the PCI's and the unions' mediating function, and the general inclination to spontaneous forms of conflict. The shift could mainly be ascribed to the emergence of a new kind of industrial proletariat in the wake of the massive migratory flow of unskilled workers from the South of Italy to Northern industrial districts. Unionized workers were replaced by thousands of people with very little knowledge of large-scale mechanized mass production and organized struggles, who were soon renamed the *operai massa* [mass wokers]. Trade unions, for their part, proved unable to grasp the changes that neo-capitalism brought to the processes of capitalist exploitation, and underestimated the demands at the heart of the new factory workers' multifaceted insubordination. For all these reasons, from the early 1960s, they accepted the government's invitation to take part in the commission of national programming – the Plan of capital – with the effect of dramatically curtailing their political autonomy.

[84] From Ruggero Spesso's intervention at the conference 'Tendenze attuali del Capitalismo Italiano', held at the Gramsci Institute in 1962. Quoted in Vittorio Rieser, 'Salario e Sviluppo nella politica nella CGIL (1961)', *Quaderni Rossi*, 3 (1978), 211-236.

In response to the increasing distance of trade unions from the workforce, and to the bureaucratisation of left-wing parties, a group of young PSI and PCI dissidents began to coalesce and operate outside the framework of institutional politics. Their political work initially aimed at recording the new and still-opaque working-class subjectivity, using interviews and questionnaires [*conricerca*]. The collective 'mapping' took the form of a journal, the *Quaderni Rossi*, whose publication marked the beginning of a new strand within Marxism, later known as *operaismo*.[85] The group's activity was not limited to sociological research, but tried to merge direct enquiry and militancy with theoretical speculation, challenging the idealist heritage that still endured at the core of Italian Marxism. The inspiration for this anti-idealist move came from the work of philosopher Galvano Della Volpe,[86] who after World War II was among the first proponents of a new Marxist school of philosophy hostile to the influence of Hegel, calling for direct engagement with the letter of Marx's texts (which at the time in Italy tended to be filtered through Soviet lenses).[87] One of the main concerns of Della Volpe's philosophical project was

[85] Though in the most recent years a number of texts on workerism have been made available to an English readership by militant website like libcom.com, their historical accuracy remains patchy. The most comprehensive and meticulous overview of the history of workerism available in English is Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*, (London: Pluto Press, 2002). It is also worth mentioning Michele Filippini, *Leaping Forward. Mario Tronti and the History of Political Workerism* (Maastricht: Jan Van Eyck Academie, 2012) and Maria Turchetto, 'From "Mass Worker" to "Empire": the Disconcerting Trajectory of Italian Operaismo', in *Critical Companion to Contemporary Marxism,* ed. by Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 285-308.

[86] Galvano Della Volpe, *Logica come scienza positiva* (Florence: D'Anna, 1950). Amongst the secondary literature on Della Volpe available in English, I would highlight Mario Montano, 'On the Methodology of Determinate Abstraction: Essay on Galvano Della Volpe', *Telos*, 7 (1972), 30-49. The work of his student Lucio Colletti was also a very influential source of workerism. See in particular Lucio Colletti, *Marxismo e Hegel* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 1969). For a concise introduction to the work of Lucio Colletti in English, see: 'Introduction to Colletti', *New Left Review*, 56 (1969), 18; and 'Lucio Colletti. A Political and Philosophical Interview', *New Left Review*, 86 (1974), 3-28.

[87] Colletti, 'Lucio Colletti. A Political and Philosophical Interview', p. 8.

the reassertion of Marx's notion of 'determinate abstraction', which he reinterpreted, in the wake of the Galilean method, as a circular process going from the concrete to the abstract and then back again to the concrete.[88] The employment of this circular method sought to eschew both vulgar empiricism, by dissociating the concrete from the immediate, and idealism, through a historical verification of abstract economic categories.

For workerists, the writings of Della Volpe and his student Lucio Colletti were a springboard for rethinking their ideas on political militancy and the figure of the intellectual. This occurred as much as through the revision of the relation between theory and praxis, as through the heterodox usage of scientific methods and the blurring of disciplinary boundaries. In describing the workerist period, literary critic Asor Rosa recalls the open refusal to accept the 'rules of the game' of the cultural debate of the time. This refusal was performed, he explained, by instrumentally using disciplines' scientific-technical apparatuses while dismissing their established 'values'.[89] Bourgeois sociology was thus turned into a *conricerca*, a research activity jointly led by workers and militants, in which the moment of inquiry was already part of the work of political construction.[90] A similar revision and dismantling was applied to other disciplines, such as literature:

> [...] for us, the analysis of literary materials does not imply that the analysis has to take place in the ambit of literature; rather, the task of the Marxist researcher engaged in a certain type of work is to associate an analogous

[88] The Marxian definition of determinate abstraction – though Marx does not use this exact pair of terms – can be found in the introduction to Karl Marx, *Grundrisse, Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)* (1857/8), trans. by Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1973).
[89] Alberto Asor Rosa, *Le armi della critica. Scritti e saggi degli anni ruggenti (1960-1970)* (Turin, Einaudi: 2011), p. LXI.
[90] For a description of *conricerca* see Raniero Panzieri, *Lotte operaie nello sviluppo capitalistico*, ed. by S. Mancini (Turin:Einaudi, 1976); Franco Momigliano, 'Possibilità e limiti dell'azione sindacale', *Quaderni Rossi*, 2 (1962), 99-115.

process of disaggregation to both the object of study and the disciplinary tools employed.[91]

Asor Rosa cites a few examples of research that put the workerist methodological 'revolution' into practice, including Tafuri's articles for *Contropiano*.[92] The continuous interspersion of architecture and art with philosophy, political theory and economics – which, as we have begun to see, is characteristic of Tafuri's work – matches up with what the literary critic considers the 'work of the Marxist researcher'. Just as in Asor Rosa's description, the Roman historian 'dissected' his object of study, and in so doing he revealed that architecture was tending towards something other than itself – to what workerists had before him called the Plan of capital.

The genealogy of the critique of planning within workerist discourse coincides with the earlier phase of *Quaderni Rossi*. Already in the first issue of the journal, sociologist Raniero Panzieri deployed the analytical instruments developed in Marx's texts to tackle the imbrication of technology, science and power within the emerging neo-capitalist organization of production.[93] But it was in 1963, with the publication of the third issue of the magazine – titled 'The Plan of Capital and [the]

[91] My translation of: 'la trattazione dei materiali letterari non comporta per noi di conseguenza che letterario debba essere l'ambito entro il quale la trattazione si muove, anzi: nel fare un certo tipo di lavoro sara compito del ricercatore marxista di associare ad un analogo processo di disgregazione sia l'oggetto che studia sia lo strumento disciplinare, con cui lo studia'. Alberto Asor Rosa, *Scrittori e popolo, il populismo nella letteratura contemporanea* (1965) (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), p. 6.
[92] The others are Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Il punto di vista operaio e la cultura socialista', *Quaderni Rossi*, 2 (1962), 117-130; Umberto Coldagelli and Gaspare de Caro, 'Alcune ipotesi di ricerca marxista sulla storia contemporanea (1963)', *Quaderni Rossi*, 3 (1978), 102-108.
[93] Raniero Panzieri, 'Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel Neocapitalismo (1961)', *Quaderni Rossi*, 1 (1978), 53-72.

Working Class' – that the expression 'Piano del capitale' [Plan of capital] was finally coined, becoming a keyword of workerism.[94]

Whereas *Quaderni rossi* privileged a scrupulous Marxist analysis of the emerging neo-capitalist organization of production, the subsequent workerist magazine *classe operaia* would opt for a militant approach and the use of a combative language, well encapsulated in its ubiquitous slogan 'NO AL PIANO'.[95] These tactical and linguistic variations reflected the government's advance in the implementation of the politics of planning. We should remember that the release of *classe operaia* (1964), coincided with the trade unions' and government's ratification of an agreement on the state control of wage increases ['la politica dei redditi'].[96] The journal therefore expressed the escalation of the political conflict between workers and the state, and the urge to intervene to hamper, or just set back, the governmental manoeuvres now underway. However, by the time – only few years later – that the slogan 'NO al PIANO' inspired Asor Rosa, Negri and Cacciari in choosing to name their new editorial project *Contropiano*, the struggle against the plan had already lost its momentum. As anticipated above, shedding some light on the development of events and workerism's political responses will allow us better to understand – in the following part of the chapter – how Tafuri's discourse relates to its time.

3. Tafuri's Plan and Workerism

3.1. Eyeing the Future as Present. Tafuri, Negri and Le Corbusier

Earlier in the chapter I alluded in passing to the homology that Tafuri establishes between Keynesian interventionism and the poetics of modern architecture. If we are

[94] Mario Tronti, 'Il piano del capitale (1963)', *Operai e capitale* (1966) (Turin, Einaudi: 1977), 60-85.
[95] See in particular: Luciano Ferrari Bravo, 'Ceto politico e piano', *classe operaia*, 4 (1965), 21-23 (p. 287); Pierluigi Gasparotto,'Blocco politico anti-piano', *classe operaia*, 1 (1966), p. 327; Umberto Coldagelli and Alberto Pietrucci,'Il capitale ha il suo piano', *classe operaia*, 3 (1967), 14-22 (p. 364).
[96] For a workerist critique of the 'politica dei redditi' see Anon., 'I sindacati inaugurano la politica dei redditi', *classe operaia*, 7 (1964), 19 (p. 19).

fully to grasp this parallel, however, we need to situate it in the context of the *Contropiano*, and take a detour into a 1968 article by Antonio Negri, upon which Tafuri's understanding of Keynesian theories appears to rest.[97] The article in question, 'Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State post-'29', explores the modes in which the industrial proletariat's discovery of its class autonomy had contributed to reconfiguring the modern state and its relationship with capital. In harmony with the privileging of labour and production so distinctive of workerist analyses of capitalism, the article revisits the history of the modern state's development with a focus on the working class:

> Unless we grasp this class determinant behind the transformation of capital and the state, we remain trapped within bourgeois theory; we end up with a formalised sphere of 'politics' separated from capital as a dynamic class relation. We must go beyond banal descriptions of 'the process of industrialisation'; our starting point is the identification of a secular phase of capitalist development in which the dialectic of exploitation (the inherent subordination and antagonism of the wage-work relation) was socialised, leading to its extension over the entire fabric of political and institutional relations of the modern state. Any definition of the contemporary state that does not encompass these understandings is like Hegel's 'dark night in which all cows appear grey'. [98]

Negri draws a connection between the partial failure of capital's response to the Russian revolution and the theories elaborated ten years later by John Maynard Keynes, which inspired Roosevelt's New Deal. He explains that the attempt to repress the working class by means of technological innovations succeeded only in

[97] Toni Negri, 'Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State post-'29 (1968)', in Toni Negri, *Revolution Retrieved. Writings on Marx, Keynes, Capitalist Crisis and New Social Subjects (1967-83)* (London: Red Notes, 1988), pp. 3-21.
[98] Ibid., p. 5.

the short run, for workers proved capable of recomposition at a higher level. This partial failure made it clear that handling the class struggle was no longer only a matter of recognising the working class's autonomy, but it had become necessary to understand how this latter could be controlled *politically*. According to Negri, Keynes sought, in part, to offer a solution to this problem. When in the *General Theory* he speaks of 'demand', he is not thus only referring to an abstract economic category, but to an effective subject for the most part coinciding with the working class. Seen from this perspective, the proposal of boosting aggregate demand in response to the 1929 crisis, was also an attempt to control the class advancing them. same demands.

Keynesianism, writes Negri, consisted of a *strategic* 'interiorization of the political element within economy', for it managed to thwart the working-class struggle for power by 'controll[ing it] [...] within a series of mechanisms of equilibrium that [...] [were] dynamically readjusted from time to time by a regulated phasing of "incomes revolution"'.[99] In other words, the state would adjust its intervention constantly, balancing the forces in play and thereby preventing the emergence of worker unrest. For Keynes, only such a condition of stability paradoxically obtained by means of a 'permanent revolution' could have restored the market confidence lost after the 1929 crash.

In Tafuri's view, the urgent need to eradicate all uncontrollable risk that might endanger the future was exactly what Keynesianism and the avant-garde had in common. Just as the capitalist system neutralized the threat posed by the working class by incorporating it, bourgeois art and architecture sought to 'dispel anxieties by understanding and *internalizing* its causes'.[100] In the field of architecture, this process involved expunging its visionary component, and the discipline's transformation into

[99] Ibid., p.7.
[100] My italics. Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 6.

a bare 'instance of form'.[101] Tafuri speaks of a shift from utopia to the reality of the Plan:

> Architecture as the *ideology of the Plan* is swept away by the *reality of the Plan* the moment the plan came down from the utopian level and became an operative mechanism.[102]

To help us unpack the multifaceted implications of this sentence, I propose to juxtapose it with a longer and more clearly passage from architect Francesco Dal Co's 1968 article for *Contropiano*, addressing the very same issue:

> Utopia becomes an element internal to the 'real', and sees the time required for its implementation progressively shortened, to the point that now, in a phase of highly mature capitalism, it finds all its instances embraced in the very same moment of their formulation. And this is due not to these instances' attributes, but to the fact that they are performed, managed and realized by the state, a social function, as elements of the dialectical overcoming of the contradictions of the management of the class struggle. In a situation of this kind, rationalist architecture could not give birth to a new form of utopia – not because it had exhausted its ability to contest and prefigure, but because this contestation and prefiguration, as elements perfectly integrated into the dialectic of the real, were already part, in the very moment in which they posited themselves, of a process of overcoming of the contested 'data'. This was an overcoming that took the form of prefiguration in order to eliminate contradictions: utopia already appeared 'politically' impossible.[103]

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[101] My translation of 'istanza di forma'. Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia. Architettura e sviluppo capitalistico* (1973) (Bari: Laterza: 2007), p. 3.
[102] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 24.
[103] My translation of 'L'utopia diviene elemento interno del "reale", e vede sempre più progressivamenete ridotti i propri tempi di attuazione, tanto che ora, in una fase

There is a lot at stake in both these passages. For Tafuri, the dissolution of the modernist idea of the plan and planning amounts to a process of 'coming back to earth', through which the utopian drive that hampered architecture's efficiency, is swept away by a new all-encompassing capitalist rationality (the Plan). Dal Co detects the same transformation, but he looks more closely at its unfolding, and at the way in which this latter relates to the emergence of a new political scenario characterized by the shortening of the lapse of time between the positing of utopian proposals and their implementation. In this context, he notes, architectural visions and gestures of negation are surpassed in the very moment of their formulation, and instantaneously turned into 'element[s] internal to the "real"'. From a situation in which the plan *pointed towards* utopia, without showing the path which leads to it, we are catapulted into a new situation where the Plan has become identical with that very same path.

Tafuri's and Dal Co's analysis share some premises of Jameson's reading of Herbert Marcuse's theories of utopia, while coming to a rather different conclusion.[104] As contended by Jameson, in *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse implicitly detects a shift in the understanding of the concept of utopia across the course of the twentieth century. Whereas in the past the latter amounted to 'a flight from the real' which risked deflecting revolutionary energy into fictitious gratifications, with the advent of late capitalism, it is practical thinking that becomes a form of acquiescence

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altamente matura del capitalismo, trova accolte le proprie istanze nel momento stesso della formulazione, e ciò non per i particolari attributi delle istanze stesse, ma in quanto essi svolgono, gestite e ralizzate dallo stato, una funzione sociale, come elementi del superamento dialettico delle contraddizioni della gestione della lotta di classe. In una tale situazione particolare l'architettura razionalista non poteva dar vita a una nuova forma di utopia, non perchè essa avesse esaurito le proprie capacità di contestazione e di prefigurazione, ma in quanto la constestazione e la prefigurazione, come elementi perfettamente integrati alla "dialettica del reale", facevano già parte, nel momento in cui si ponevano, di un processo di superamento del "dato" contestato, superamento che si concretizzava nella prefigurazione per eliminare contraddizioni: l'utopia risultava ormai "politicamente" impossibile'. Dal Co, 'Note per la Critica dell'Ideologia dell'Architettura Moderna: da Weimar a Dessau', p. 159.

[104] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Enquiry into Freud* (1955) (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1966).

to the system.[105] Marcuse responds to what Jameson renames a 'dialectical reversal' of the notion of utopia by appealing to a recuperation of the utopian idea in its 'original form', as the image of a 'radically other' world. Tafuri and Dal Co, on the contrary, call into question both the 'original' forms of utopianism and their contemporary versions, by revealing their tacit equivalence. In their reading, as we saw earlier, the avant-garde's prefigurative force did not engender any effective rupture, but paved capitalism's way, pointing out where it must go.

Referring to architecture proper, Tafuri sees Le Corbusier as the designer who more than any other succeeded in putting into practice Keynes's recommendation.[106] For the Swiss-French architect, he writes, 'the absolute of form lies in the full realization of a constant victory over the uncertainty of the future, achieved through the assumption of the *problematic* position as the only guarantee of collective salvation'.[107] He then goes on to explain how Le Corbusier has translated Keynes's teaching architecturally, by reviewing his Plan *Obus* for the city of Algiers. His analysis begins by addressing the scale of the project, and its attempt to incorporate 'the entire anthropogeographic landscape'.[108] Tafuri emphasises the architect's aspiration to infringe the conventional boundaries of architecture, and to

[105] Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 111.
[106] Le Corbusier's reformist attitude is, indeed, no mystery – we need only to recall that he ended his essay 'Architecture or Revolution' with the sentence 'Revolution can be avoided'. See Le Corbusier, *Towards an Architetcure* (1923), trans. by John Goodman (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008). It must be stressed that Tafuri goes further than associating his architecture and writings with a reformist line, and seeks to establish a link with Keynesianism. On Tafuri and Le Corbusier consider Hélène Lipstadt and Harvey Mendelsohn, 'Tafuri and Le Corbusier', *Casabella*, 619-620 (1995), 86-95; 'Philosophy, History and Autobiography: Manfredo Tafuri and the Unsurpassed Lesson of Le Corbusier', *Assemblage*, 22 (1994), 58-103. Tafuri would return to the work of Le Corbusier in the mid-1980s: Manfredo Tafuri, 'Machine et Mémoire: la città nell'opera di Le Corbusier', *Casabella*, 502 (1984), 44-51 and 503 (1984), 44-51. Our study only takes into account the section dedicated to the work of the Swiss architect in Tafuri's 1969 article for *Contropiano*.
[107] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 34.
[108] Ibid., p. 27.

extend its influence beyond the spatial ambit. The plan was designed to grant the inhabitants the possibility of introducing a number of variants, but without letting them transgress the overarching framework: 'within the meshes of the larger structures', he observes, 'the broadest freedom of insertion of the preformed residential element' becomes possible.[109] The study of a preliminary sketch reveals, furthermore, that the Swiss-French architect went so far as to predict the addition 'of eccentric, eclectic elements' at odds with the original configuration.[110] Tafuri interprets these design choices as evidence of a broader strategy directed at including the inhabitants in the co-planning of the city, and at a number of points in the text, he insists on the 'active' and 'critical' type of participation that this requires. Here, he implicitly points to a break with the 'inattentive reading' of architectural objects described by Walter Benjamin, and to the need to involve all social strata:

> The subject of the urban reorganization is a public that is called upon and made a critical participant in its own creative role. Through theoretically homogeneous functions, the vanguard of industry, the "authorities", and the users of the city become involved in the impetuous, "exalting" process of continuous development and transformation.[111]

Le Corbusier's demand for the participation and commitment of the entire society as a single, peaceful 'whole', brings to mind the cooperation strategy adopted by Italian planning policies. Here, we have the city and its users in the place of the factory and the workers, but the role that architecture plays in rendering the functions of these categories 'theoretically homogenous' bears more than a little resemblance with the conciliatory line that the Italian trade unions were then embracing. Despite its focus on Le Corbusier, this section of the text can be considered a warning addressed to all contemporary architects. As we will see more clearly later on in this

[109] Ibid., p. 27.
[110] Ibid., p. 27.
[111] Ibid., p. 27.

chapter, it intended to draw attention to the role of architects – and intellectuals more generally – within the new conditions established by the capitalist system of production.

In support of his argument, Tafuri quotes a description of the Van Nelle Factory from Le Corbusier's *La ville radieuse*, from which the architect's reformist view transpires:[112]

> It is to this point that, through a new form of administration, one should lead, purify and amplify the contemporary event. Tell us what we are, in what way we may be of use, why we work. Give us plans, show us the plans, explain your plans. *Make us united* … If you show us the plans and explain them to us, the propertied classes and the hopeless proletariat will cease to exist. In their place will be a society of belief and action.[113]

Alhough Tafuri adds only a short commentary to the above quote, I would maintain that it is worth expanding on, for it contains a number of elements that allow us better to understand in what sense, from his perspective, Le Corbusier's approach epitomized architecture's surrender to the Plan of capital. I want to bring into focus the passage from the second sentence – 'Tell us what we are, in what way we may be of use, why we work' – to the third – 'Give us plans, show us the plans, explain your plans'. Here, Le Corbusier seems to be referring to a generic 'we', but on consulting

[112] The Van Nelle Factory was designed by Johannes A. Brinkman and built in Rotterdam from 1926 to 1930.

[113] Le Corbusier in Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 34. Le Corbusier devotes considerable attention to the 'plan' throughout his writings, and in a similar fashion to Tafuri he plays on its double meaning. As architectural historian Jean Louis Cohen has argued, for Le Corbusier '[the plan,] on the one hand, in the field of representation, it signifies the horizontal projection of a building or an urban ensemble; on the other hand, in the field of organization, it implies a concerted strategy of modernization'. Jean Louis Cohen, 'Introduction', in Le Corbusier, *Towards an Architecture* (1923), trans. by John Goodman (London: Frances Lincoln, 2008), pp. 1-78 (p. 10).

the paragraph from which the sentence has been excerpted, it becomes apparent that 'we' stands for the specific class of 'workers'. In the same text, Le Corbusier also emphasises the workers' lack of cognizance of the goal of their own labouring activity: 'the full and cruel meaning of our present state of awareness' – he writes – is that '*we don't know why we work!*'.[114] He then goes as far as to argue that the cause of society's division into classes lies in the workers' exclusion from knowledge, and he thus insists on the need to disclose the modes of industrial production and the experience of labour. There is, indeed, some truth in the thesis that society's division into classes rests upon the concealment of what labour really is, but in Le Corbusier's sentence, this comes along with the naive conception that capitalism could be aimed at the attainment of collective wealth. To claim that exposing the anatomy of industrial labour would suffice to abolish class division is to presuppose that the problem does not lie with capitalism per se, but with the form it has taken – its opacity. In this framework, architecture is called upon to unveil capital's organization, and its congruity with the will of the capitalist-commissioner is the yardstick for judging its aesthetic and 'emancipatory' value. To borrow Tafuri's lexicon, architecture's main goal is approximating the Plan of capital as best it can.[115]

If we continue reading Corbusier's chronicle, Tafuri's thesis meets with further confirmation. We might consider, for example, his appreciative description of the use of glass as a building material:

> The glass begins at sidewalk or lawn level and continues upwards unbroken until it meets the clean line of the sky. The serenity of the place is total. *Everything is open to the side*. And this is of enormous significance to all those who are working, on all eight floors, *inside*. Because inside we find

[114] Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City* (1933) (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 176.
[115] I have to make clear that my analysis of Le Corbusier's position rests on the passages from *The Radiant City* quoted by Tafuri. Elsewhere in the book Le Corbusier adopts a decisively more combative tone, still his reading of the mechanisms of capitalistic exploitation lacks precision. This is the object of Tafuri's criticism.

> a poem of light. An immaculate lyricism. Dazzling vision of order. The very atmosphere of honesty. Everything is transparent; everyone can see and be seen at work.[116]

From Le Corbusier's perspective, the choice to make the internal and parietal walls transparent was unequivocally aimed at reducing the knowledge-divide among the people working within the industrial plant. As Tafuri saw things, conversely, this formal strategy carried a different meaning. A few years later, in his *Modern Architecture*, the historian would suggest that the structure of the building camouflages real forms of exploitation inherent to the capitalist organization of labour:

> The long parallelpiped with alternate courses of cement and glass, interrupted in modular manner by tense vertical blocks counterposed dialectically by the curving office block, is a tribute to the potentialities of modern labor. Its architecture is the product of a clearly thought-out program linking construction to the needs of production: inside, the rooms, with elegant mushroom pillars seen through the windows, were laid out strictly on the basis of the organization of the work. An *open structure* to the maximum degree, wholly adaptable to all kinds of further development, its identifying quality is its process of functional simplification. The rationality of the organisation of labour is expressed in the brilliant clarity of an atmosphere intended to restore the reality of production relations. This is a reality that disappears and becomes inaccessible precisely in the measure that architecture, as a perfectly disposable space, proposes an Enlightenment integration of man and machine. [117]

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[116] Ibid., p.179.

[117] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'Perfettamente adattabile ad ogni ulteriore sviluppo, *struttura aperta* al massimo grado, essa identifica la propria qualità con un processo di semplificazione funzionale, mentre la razionalità dell'organizzazione del

3.2. The Russian Avant-Garde and The Plan. Tafuri and Tronti

From 1968 to 1970, the University of Venice Institute of Architecture (IUAV), at that time directed by Manfredo Tafuri, undertook a research on the relation between the Mittel-European avant-garde and Soviet planning policies.[118] The study culminated in an international conference held in Venice in 1970, which involved the participation of former workerists Alberto Asor Rosa and Rita di Leo, as well as a number of renowned architects from all over Europe.[119] The conference and its proceedings[120] followed up on Tafuri's work for *Contropiano*, and sought to extend his research on the plan to also include the Soviet Union. After shedding light on the inextricability of the plan and capitalism in post-war Western countries, Tafuri asked whether there had been a similar link under state capitalism in the Soviet Union from 1921 to 1928. This research query would lead him to challenge the association between socialism and the plan that communist orthodoxy had taken for granted.

The papers delivered at the 1970 conference were collected the following year in the book *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*. This volume begins, notably, with a long quotation from Mario Tronti's *Operai e capitale* [*Workers and Capital*], a book which collates the philosopher's contributions to the

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lavoro si esprime nella cristallina solarità di un ambiente che mira a riscattare la realtà dei rapporti di produzione: una "realtà" che scompare e diviene inaccessibile proprio nella misura in cui l'architettura, come spazio perfettamente disponibile propone un'illuministica integrazione tra uomo e macchina'. Manfredo Tafuri, Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura contemporanea* (Milan: Electa, 1979), p. 218. It is interesting to observe that in the English translation of the book, the Marxian espression 'relations of production' has been replaced by 'rational organization of the work', altering the whole meaning of the sentence. Tafuri, Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*, p. 225.

[118] See the 'Premessa', in *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 7.

[119] The complete list of participants included: Alberto Asor Rosa, Bruno Cassetti, Giorgio Ciucci, Francesco dal Co, Marco de Michelis, Rita di Leo, Kurt Junghanns, Gerrit Oorthuys, Vítězslav Procházka, Hans Schmidt and Manfredo Tafuri.

[120] I am are referring to the volume *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937. Il contributo degli architetti europei*.

workerist journals *Quaderni Rossi* and *classe operaia*:[121]

> The Bolsheviks had proved for the first time that it was possible to defeat capitalism, with resolution, in a frontal attack. They transposed the revolution from books into things, from theory to praxis. But they did not have a clear concept of the working class and of its highest organizational needs. They are our physiocrats. Their *Tableau économique* is the 'construction of socialism in one country'.[122]

After this, Rita di Leo offers a historical chronicle of the period between the institution of the NEP and the implementation of the first Five-Year Plan. Di Leo's and Tronti's texts delineate the theoretical frame for the subsequent essays by Tafuri, Dal Co and Asor Rosa, which instead centre on the Russian avant-garde, and on the role of intellectuals within Soviet Russia. In this part of the chapter, we will look at the way in which Tafuri and Asor Rosa related artistic developments to the unfolding of political events, and we will show how Tronti's criticism of the Bolsheviks informed Tafuri's understanding of the crisis of the avant-garde and its link to the ideology of the Plan.

In his contribution to *Socialismo, città, architettura*, Tafuri sets out to explore Russian formalism, with a focus on the internal causes that may have contributed to its demise. His study, we should make clear, was not intended to prove the inevitability of the avant-garde's failure, but to shed light on a specific artistic development, in which the 'original' aporetic nature of the movement – the one that

[121] Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (1966) (Turin: Einaudi, 1977).
[122] My translation of 'I bolscevichi hanno dimostrato per la prima volta che era possibile battere, con risolutezza, in campo aperto, il capitalismo. Essi hanno trasportato la rivoluzione dai libri nelle cose, dalla teoria alla pratica. Ma essi non avevano un chiaro concetto della classe operaia e dei suoi bisogni più alti di organizzazione. Sono loro i nostri fisiocratici. Il loro *Tableau économique* è la "costruzione del socialismo in un paese solo"'. *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937,* p. 11.

lent it its demystifying force – was progressively dropped. Tafuri's reading places particular emphasis on the contradictory nature of the formalist poetic, which he associates with an incongruity between means and ends. For example, he maintains that the technique of estrangement was not limited to unveiling the atrophying effect of capitalism over human cognitive and perceptive capacities, but also sought to recuperate the 'lost meaning' of the sign, and as such betrayed the movement's formalist ambition:

> The *creation of form* as a promised land of the subjective victory over alienation, then; this is what formalists theorize, and this is the latent *content* of their scientific analysis.[123]

By setting the word 'content' in italics, Tafuri wants to draw attention to the formalists' inability to operate on a pure formal level as they had intended. The need to denounce on-going processes of commodification and impoverishment was realized through a communicative act, even if it was reduced to a pure signal. Later in the text, he argues that the avant-garde's failure to circumscribe its activity to form derived from a broader, human sense of guilt for not being able to dominate the universe of production. The adoption of a 'psychoanalytical' perspective, using the concept of 'guilt', allows him, in a second moment, to operate a conceptual reversal linking formalism to productivism. His reasoning can be summarised as follows: the sense of guilt for being severed from the 'real' world latent in the formalists' experiments, at some point takes precedence, inducing artists to integrate their work into production:

> To transform a technique into a formal constructive method, throwing into

[123] My translation of 'La *creazione di forma* come terra promessa della vittoria soggettiva sull'alienazione, dunque: questo è ciò che i formalisti teorizzano, questo è il *contenuto* latente delle loro analisi "scientifiche"'. *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 47.

> production the same theory that had revealed the aporia of the productivist avant-gardes, turning the 'negative value' of formal analysis into 'positive' theory – such was the bind which the Opojaz group for the large part, and the 'left-wing' of Soviet art in its totality, would not be able to escape from 1925 onwards.[124]

Tafuri situates this shift in the context of the New Economic Policy (NEP) instituted by Lenin after the Russian Civil War and identifies a pair of conjoined factors which he considers to have an impact on the artistic turn to heteronomy. These are: the replacement of the category of class with that of the proletariat, and the exaltation of socialist organization. In Tafuri's reconstruction, the introduction of the NEP coincides with the emergence of the proletariat as a new political subject. This latter takes up the task of restoring a non-alienated form of labour by fully adhering to the plan, understood as the socialist form of organization *par excellence*:

> Only organised socialism accepts the plan as the organic expression of the mystical colloquium between the masses and the new technological universe: only in this context can this colloquium signify the new truth of the final 'achievement' of the social division of labour. The 'communist city' – Gan says it explicitly, and after him El Lissitzky and all the European technicians engaged in the real construction of that city would repeat it to the point of exhaustion, from Hannes Mayer to Hans Schmidt – is the specific place for

[124] My translation of 'Trasformare una tecnica di indagine in un metodo costruttivo della forma, rovesciare nella produzione la medesima teoria che aveva rivelato le aporie delle avanguardie produttiviste, ribaltare il valore "negativo" dell'analisi formale in teoria "positiva": questo è l'equivoco cui il gruppo dell'Opojaz in gran parte, e l'ala "sinistra" dell'arte sovietica nella sua totalità, non riuscirà a sfuggire dal '25 in poi'. *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 55.

the social manifestation of the Plan, just as the 'bourgeois city' is the place for subjectivist contradictions and the 'anarchy of production'.[125]

Once again, the plan serves to appease workers and capital, this time by concealing behind a presumed cohesive force the exploitative mechanisms that are still at work in a phase of economic transition. Referring to Boris Kushner, Tafuri interestingly talks of a shift from the fetish of technique to the myth of organization.[126]

It is crucially important to note that Tafuri's chronicle does not present the replacement of the class with the proletariat and the triumph of the plan as the inevitable effects of the introduction of the NEP, but rather as the result of the Bolsheviks' misunderstanding of 'its inherent dialectic'. This stance, which Tafuri reiterates at various points in the essay, is telling of his indebtedness to Mario Tronti's Leninist-inflected politics, and justifies the quotation at the beginning of the volume. We shall remember that one of the pivotal aspects of Tronti's thought, and of workerism more broadly, was its belief in the strategic ambivalence of the working class vis-à-vis capital, of which it represents an inimical, and simultaneously constitutive, component.[127] Fighting capital thus means opposing its

[125] My translation of 'Solo il socialismo realizzato ammette il Piano come espressione organica del colloquio mistico fra le masse e il nuovo universo tecnologico: solo in esso quel colloquio può significare la nuova verità della "raggiunta" fine della divisione sociale del lavoro. La "città comunista" – Gan lo dichiara esplicitamente, e dopo di lui lo ripeteranno fino ad esaurimento El Lissitzky e tutti I tecnici europei impegnati nella costruzione reale di quella città, da Hannes Meyer ad Hans Schmidt – è il luogo specifico della manifestazione sociale del Piano, come la |città borghese", è il luogo delle contraddizioni soggettivistiche e dell'"anarchia della produzione"'. *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 58.

[126] Tafuri owes this reference to architect Vieri Quilici, whose *L'architettura del costruttivismo* is an important source for his contribution to *Socialismo, città, architettura*. See Vieri Quilici, *L'architettura del costruttivismo* (Bari: Laterza, 1969).

[127] 'The working class *does* what it is. But it is, at one and the same time, the *articulation* of capital, and its *dissolution*'. Mario Tronti, 'The Strategy of Refusal', trans. by Red Note, in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. by S. Lotringer and C.

ability to incorporate workers' antagonism, instead affirming the working class as an independent class-for-itself within capital:

> The working class should materially discover itself as a *part* of capital, if it then wants to oppose itself to *all* capital. It has to recognize itself as a *part* of capital, if it then wants to present itself as its *general* antagonist. The collective worker is opposed not only to the machine, as fixed capital, but to labour-power, as variable capital. It has to make an enemy of capital, but also, therefore, of itself, insofar as it is a part of capital.[128]

My argument here is that when Tafuri talks of the dialectic inherent to Lenin's NEP, he does so with reference to the contradictory role of the working class within capital, as spelt-out by Tronti. Although the political philosopher's name does not figure amongst his references, his theories provide the basis upon which Tafuri builds his thesis of the decline of the avant-garde. A paragraph in the text makes this parentage unmistakable:

Marazzi (New York: Semiotext(e), 1980), pp. 28-35 (p. 29). My summary of Tronti's mainly work rests upon his *Operai e capitale*. Amongst the main secondary sources consulted the most relevant have been Cristina Corradi, *Storia dei marxismi in Italia* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2005), Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven, Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Riccardo Bellofiore and Massimilano Tomba, 'Quale attualità dell'operaismo', in Steve Wright, *L'assalto al cielo: per una storia dell'operaismo* (Rome: Edizioni Alegre, 2008), pp. 291-306.

[128] My translation of 'la classe operaia deve scoprire materialmente se stessa come *parte* del capitale, se vuole contrapporre poi *tutto* il capitale a se stessa. Deve riconoscersi come un *particolare* del capitale, se vuole puoi presentarsi come suo antagonista *generale*. L'operaio collettivo si contrappone non solo alla macchina, in quanto capitale costante, ma alla forza lavoro stessa, in quanto capitale variabile. Deve arrivare ad avere come nemico il capitale totale: quindi anche se stesso in quanto parte del capitale'. Mario Tronti, 'La fabbrica e la società (1962)', in *Operai e Capitale* (1966), (Einaudi: Turin, 1977), pp. 39-59 (p. 55).

> The double face of productive labour – entirely within the development of capital, and at the same time against it – is eliminated in the ideology that identifies the class and the Plan. This is in fact what Ehrenburg, El Lissitzky or Vesnin indicate, when they immediately involve the proletariat in the project of 'collective liberation' to be realized by means of planned development.[129]

Tafuri argues as follows: the working class was reduced to a functional component of the plan as a result of politicians' unwillingness to accept the class's partial extraneousness to the capitalist development of production still necessary during the transition to socialism. Tafuri extends this reasoning to artistic labour, and reads the avant-garde's decision to intervene in the reconfiguration of the modes of production as further proof of its general refusal to acknowledge this transitory situation – what he calls the 'dialectics of the NEP'. Thus the avant-garde adhered to the ideology of work without, in Tafuri's words, questioning the 'ultimate meaning of the organization and rationalization of work *per se*' in that specific economico-political conjuncture.[130]

Tafuri's account of the Russian avant-garde is certainly ungenerous and in several places rather patchy.[131] Numerous works of academic research have shown

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[129] My translation of 'La doppia faccia del lavoro produttivo – tutto dentro lo sviluppo e contemporaneamente in lotta contro di esso – viene annullato nell'ideologia che identifica classe e Piano. È proprio questo, infatti, che Ehrenburg, El Lisičkij o i Vesnin indicano con il loro immediato implicare il proletariato nel progetto di "liberazione collettiva" da realizzare con lo sviluppo pianificato'. *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 60.

[130] My translation of 'il significato ultimo dell'organizzazione e della razionalizzazione del lavoro *in sé*'. Ibid., p. 71.

[131] My research on the Russian avant-garde mainly relied on the following sources: Catherine Cooke (ed.), 'Russian Avant-Garde, Art and Architecture', *Architectural Design*, 53 (1983); Catherine Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde. Theories of Art, Architecture and the City* (London: Academy Editions, 1995); Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Boris Arvatov,

that the aim of productivism was not, as their analyses seem to imply, just the integration of art into industrial production, but the occasioning of a mutual interchange between artistic and non-artistic labour. Productivism beseeched artists to deal with problems related to the fabrication and the material of works of art, in the attempt to undermine their detached, idealistic position, and simultaneously prompted workers to appropriate artistic means from which they had been traditionally excluded, and thereby refound a new form of *practice* different from purely repetitive factory work.[132] Tafuri's and Asor Rosa's essays dismiss the mutual exchange between artistic and non-artistic labour envisioned by productivists, and therefore fail to grasp the ambition of their proposal in its entirety.

. At the same time, however, the choice to adopt a workerist perspective, allows them to bring to the fore a couple of important aspects which have tended to be overlooked by more partisan accounts. First, they pay particular attention to the specific economic conditions under which the avant-garde existed, emphasising artistic labour's partial entrenchment in capital during the phase of the NEP, regardless of the emancipatory intent embedded in its productivist, heteronomous form.[133] More than this, they point up that the process of reconfiguring labour was still initiated by artists, even though these latter tried to level it to forms of non artistic-labour by stressing issues of structure and matter. In theie view, therefore, the prefiguration of

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Christina Kiaer, 'Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing (Towards the Formulation of the Question)', *October*, 81 (1997), 119-128; *Art Into Life: Russian Constructivism 1914-1932*, ed. by Richard Andrews and Milena Kalinovska (New York: Rizzoli, 1990); Kerstin Stakemeier, 'Entkunstung. Artistic Models for the End of Art' (unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 2012).

[132] For an accurate and sympathetic account of productivism, with a focus on its thorough refashioning of the concept of production, see the first chapter in Stakemeier's 'Entkunstung. Artistic Models for the End of Art'.

[133] Referring to the work of Wood, Kiaer, Gassner and Gillen, Stakemeier instead argues that the attempt to integrate art and life had came to an end with the institution of the NEP, for this latter 'deprived them of their economic substance'. Stakemeier, p. 51. The work of Gassner and Gillen she refers to is Hubertus Gassner, Eckhart Gillen, *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und sozialistischem Realismus: Dokumente und Kommentare: Kunstdebatten in der Sowjetunion von 1917-1934* (Cologne: DuMont, 1979).

the extinction of the traditional forms of intellectual labour was just a way for intellectuals to manage the 'death of their art', preserving their idealist role as 'consciousness of humankind'.[134]

3.3. The Autonomy of the Plan

In Tafuri's less known *Contropiano* essay 'Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico' [Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development], the Plan acquires the status of a fully autonomous 'object'. The multiple layers of meaning of this text, which lacks any reference to architecture proper, are very hard to grasp without a familiarity with workerism. This, together with the exhaustion of the political scenario from which the text emerged, are probably the reasons that led Tafuri to include only a few parts of the original essay in his *Architecture and Utopia*. The text's loose connection to architectural history, however, brings into relief the polyvalence of the concept of the plan, together with Tafuri's ambition of situating architecture within a broader theoretical and political landscape.

This latter aspect was brought to the attention of English-speaking academia by Fredric Jameson in his 1982 *Architecture and the Critique of Ideology*. The text in question is replete with countless brilliant insights, one of which appears of particular relevance to our examination of the Tafurian plan in the context of his 1970 article. I am referring to Jameson's reading of Tafuri's work as an example of 'dialectical history', a concept that follows from the notion of 'dialectical criticism' elaborated in his *Marxism and Form*. Dialectical history designates a specific approach to cultural analysis that seeks to undermine the 'constitutive presuppositions […] of the specialized disciplines', by means of what Jameson calls 'dialectical reversals', discursive operations that unexpectedly reveal 'the existence […] of an *Other* of the discipline'.[135] In his 1982 text, Jameson quotes an excerpt on Mies Van de Rohe's and Philip Johnson's Seagram Building from Tafuri's and Dal Co's *Modern Architecture* in which the architectural historians draws attention to the

[134] Tafuri, *Socialismo, città, architettura, Urss 1917-1937*, p. 64.
[135] Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 61.

image of the surrounding city reflected onto the external walls of the edifice. The passage is treated as an evidence of Tafuri's proneness to addresses the 'other or exterior' of architecture; an 'other', specifies Jameson, which is dangerously 'coeval with history and society itself', and therefore deemed to prompt the 'dialectical reversal' we alluded to above, menacing architecture's disciplinary certitudes:[136]

> [...] if the outer limit of the individual building is the material city itself, with its opacity, complexity and resistance, then the outer limit of some expanded conception of the architectural vocation as including urbanism and city planning is economic itself, or capitalism in the most overt and naked expression of its implacable power.[137]

Keeping his analysis in mind, we can argue that the ambivalence of the notion of the plan – its constantly touching the other of architecture, subjecting itself to broader politico-economic determinations – is perhaps one of the most illuminating proofs of a dialectical discursive form described by Fredric Jameson.

It is certainly in 'Intellectual Labour and Capitalist Development' that the dialectical reversal of plan into Plan is described to the fullest dramatic effect, as it can be glimpsed in the following passage:

> The Plan, on the one hand, identifies itself with the institutions that sustain its existence, while, on the other, it posits itself as an autonomous institution.[138]

To fully understand this sentence, we need to briefly refer back to the part of this chapter where I described the planning policies advanced by Italy's DC-PSI coalition

[136] Ibid., p. 62.
[137] Ibid., p. 62.
[138] My translation of 'Il Piano tende da un lato ad identificarsi con le istituzioni che ne sostengono l'esistenza, dall'altro a porsi come specifica istituzione esso stesso'. Ibid., pp. 247-248.

in the early 1960s. As I mentioned earlier, the government brought about the establishment of a series of commissions (what Tafuri here defines the 'institutions' of the plan) charged with devising economic programmes for different sectors of production. Such a model of governance in turn engendered a progressive detachment of executive power from political control, which is what Tafuri suggestively defines as the plan's autonomization from the very same 'institutions that sustain its existence'.

I think we need to take Tafuri's words with a pinch of salt here, and consider his description as a prefiguration rather than an accurate analysis of the Italian political scenario at the end of the 1960s. Despite the fact that this prediction rested upon a set of concrete warning signs, partly due to the deflation of the economic boom, it failed to become fully 'real'.[139] Tafuri radicalizes the analysis that Tronti advanced in his essays 'La fabbrica e la società' ['Factory and Society'] and 'Il piano del capitale' ['Capital's Plan'] a few years earlier, combining it with contemporary researches on automation and cybernetics. However, in order to understand the causes underpinning what Tafuri describes with alarm as the Plan's 'self-governance', it is still necessary to delve into these texts.

Both 'La fabbrica e la società' and 'Il piano del capitale' mount a close inspection of the dynamics of capitalist development. In them, Tronti observes that the advancement of capitalism coincides with the tightening of the production-distribution-exchange-consumption circle, and foresees a scenario in which the relation between capitalist production (the factory) and the bourgeois state (society) could become wholly organic. The last stage of the capital's unfolding would amount to a situation where 'the social relation becomes a *moment* of the relation of production', which is to say that 'all society depends upon the factory and the factory

[139] My knowledge of the development of planning policies in Italy mainly relies on Lombardini's and Manin Carabba's accounts.

extends its exclusive dominion over the entire society'.[140] This process of 'socialization of capital', Tronti explains, brings about unprecedented accumulation, and a progressive detachment of capitalists from their means of production. In support of his argumentation he alludes to what Marx defines the 'Entkapitalisierung' [decapitalization], a process by which, due to increasing centralization, small owners get absorbed by bigger ones, giving rise to the figure of the 'collective capitalist'.[141] In so doing, Tronti brings to light how the expropriation of individual beings and their means of production is as much the point of departure as the goal of capitalist development, prompting a paradoxical situation where capital becomes an autonomous 'general social power' [potenza sociale generale] and the collective capitalist is reduced to a 'simple agent, functionary, and "mandatory" aspect of this power'.[142] This is the point, he concludes, where the 'fetishization of capital has practically won', and the state coalesces with the collective capitalist, occasioning a 'fetish-capital erected as a political state inside its own society'.[143] We are, therefore, no longer in a situation where the state regulates capital; rather, it is capital that now starts to govern the state. Viewed from the perspective offered by Tronti, the politics of planning appears clearly designed to sustain monopoly capitalism, and not – as its proponents claim – to harmonize social inequalities. The Plan emerges, unequivocally, as the tool through which the collective capitalist exerts its control over a new and highly-socialized economy.

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[140] My translation of 'tutta la società vive in funzione della fabbrica e la fabbrica estende il suo dominio esclusivo su tutta la società'. Tronti, 'La fabbrica e la società', *Operai e capitale*, p. 51.

[141] Marx quoted in Ibid., p. 69.

[142] My translation of 'semplice agente, funzionario, "mandatario" di questa potenza, neppure più suo rappresentante, ma commissario diretto a potere limitato'. Ibid., p. 71. Tronti's analysis finds a precedent in Friedrich Pollock's description of state capitalism. See Friedrich Pollock, 'State Capitalism its Possibilities and Limitations', in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1990), pp. 71-94.

[143] My translation of 'capitale feticcio eretto a Stato politico dentro la sua stessa società'. Ibid, p.71.

The autonomization of the Plan to which Tafuri refers is the ultimate effect of the process through which capital becomes detached from its owners, as examined by Tronti a few years earlier. However, by the time that Tafuri's essay was published, the implementation of the politics of planning had already ceased to be a government priority, and the vividly-evoked full autonomization of the Plan in fact never saw the light of the day. The marked futuristic tone of text is in part ascribable to the numerous references to authors and theories belonging to the field of cybernetics. The transformation of the Plan into an 'automaton', for example, is presented as the effect of the introduction of dynamic models of control, which rest on operational codes producing their own systems of evaluation – what Tafuri calls 'the language[s] of the Plan'.[144]

> Shifting from the use of static models to the elaboration of dynamic models has been the first step towards the capitalist updating of the use of the Plan's techniques. At this moment, the science of the Plan is pursuing the goal of further overcoming this phase, in order to reach a full availability in the realization of a global management of planned development.[145]

> The dominion of total Capital thus realizes itself, outside any logic extraneous to its own direct mechanisms. It is stripped of any external justifications for the increasing realization of concrete tools for intervention, absolutely

[144] Ibid., p. 267.
[145] My translation of 'Passare dall'utilizzazione di modelli statici all'elaborazione di modelli dinamici è stato un primo passo dell'aggiornamento capitalistico nell'uso delle tecniche di piano: superare ulteriormente tale fase, per raggiungere una piena disponibilità nella realizzazione di una gestione complessiva dello sviluppo pianificato, è l'obiettivo che in questo momento la scienza del Piano va proseguendo'. Tafuri, 'Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico', p. 260. In support of his argument, Tafuri refers to a number of texts by Giorgio Ruffolo and Pasquale Saraceno which argue for the replacement of sectorial programming with an all-encompassing plan. None of this, however, would ever see the light of day.

> independent of any abstract ethical purpose, any theology, any 'imperative to be'.[146]

We may reasonably ask what space is left to architects and to intellectuals in general, within the scenario that Tafuri relates. The answer we are offered is not a consoling one, and points towards an exacerbation of the already gloomy conditions prompted by the advent of Keynesianism. Architects are no longer the 'technicians of the Plan' acting in compliance with its rules, as described in the 1969 *Contropiano* essay, but are now *acted upon* by it. Human agency has fully dissolved into what Tafuri calls the 'subject of development'.[147] From this pronouncement there transpires his debt to Karl Marx's 'Fragment on Machines', a text of pivotal importance for workerist thought.[148] Tafuri here seems to posit a parallel between the transformations affecting the architect's and the factory employees' labour on account of the *en masse* introduction of machinery. Just as workers' activity was, according to Marx, 'determined and regulated on all sides by the movement of the machinery' and therefore reduced 'to a mere abstraction of activity', the work of architects comes to be fully regulated by the Plan.[149]

The destiny of art and architecture in a context where 'nothing remains external to the Plan' is to become its extension – parts of its language. Referring once

[146] My translation of 'Il dominio del capitale complessivo si realizza così al di fuori di ogni logica estranea ai propri diretti meccanismi, privo di giustificazioni esterne alla realizzazione crescente degli strumenti concreti di intervento, nella più assoluta indipendenza da ogni astratto fine "etico", da ogni teologia, da ogni "dover essere"'. Ibid., p. 248.
[147] My translation of 'annullare il soggetto umano nel Soggetto dello sviluppo'. Ibid., p. 255.
[148] The text appeared in the fourth issue of *Quaderni Rossi,* and was translated by Renato Solmi. On workerist readings of the 'Fragment on Machines' see Riccardo Bellofiore and Massimiliano Tomba, 'The "Fragment on Machines" and the Grundrisse: The Workerist Reading in Question', in *Beyond Marx, Theorising the Global Labour Relations of the Twenty-First Century,* ed. by Marcel van der Linden and Karl Heinz Roth (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
[149] Marx, *Grundrisse*, p. 693.

again to Franco Fortini, Tafuri invites us to reconsider the literary neo-avant-garde's experiment in automatic writing in light of the changes brought about by the robotisation of production and the emergence of machine languages. 'The pretence, already of the avant-garde and after, in the 60s, of the neo-avant-garde, to present itself [its activity] as a *labour on the word* [lavoro sulla parola], as a critical experimentation of the articulation of language, has to be measured' – he writes – 'against the reality of the concrete and productive labour on the new possibilities of programmed communication'.[150] Similarly, he concludes, the transformation of contemporary cities into 'broadcasters of continuous messages codified *in the form* of the languages of programming',[151] testifies to the extension of the language of the Plan into the urban space.

3.4. Technology, Plan and Class Domination. Panzieri and Tafuri

The search for a genealogy of the critique of planning in workerist discourse compels us to go back to its 'founder' Raniero Panzieri. Initially trained as a sociologist, Panzieri was politically active in the Italian Socialist Party until 1953, when he was expelled for opposing the governmental accord with the Christian-Democratic party. He then moved to Turin to work with the publisher Einaudi together with Renato Solmi, a historian and translator who sought to introduce Theodor Adorno and Marx Horkeimer's work to an Italian readership, having himself attended their seminars. The details that I here provide are important for understanding the theoretical

[150] My translation of 'L'analisi semantica del linguaggio, a sua volta, ha stimolato il sorgere – o, meglio il risorgere – di un'ideologia dell'avanguardia artistico-letteraria. La pretesa, già delle avanguardie e poi, negli anno '60, delle neo-avanguardie, di porsi come *lavoro sulla parola*, come sperimenazione critica dell'articolazione del linguaggio, va quindi misurata con la realtà del concreto e produttivo lavoro sulle nuove possibilità di comunicazione programmata'. Tafuri, 'Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico', p. 267.

[151] My translation of 'emittente di incessanti messaggi codificati *nella forma* dei linguaggi di programmazione'. Ibid., p. 269.

influences underpinning Panzieri's project.[152] Although many of the Frankfurt School's exponents' works would not be translated until after Panzieri's premature death in 1966, his proximity to Solmi and his collaboration with Einaudi exposed him to a number of texts and theories that significantly informed his sociological work. If we consider his seminal 'Relazione sul neocapitalismo' ['Report on Neocapitalism'],[153] for example, one of the first texts where he examines in detail issues related to state capitalism and planning, we encounter several references and allusions to the researches of Friedrich Pollock, Theodor Adorno and Georg Lukács.

Panzieri's analysis of planning sits within a wider politico-theoretical project targeted at challenging the Italian Communist Party's apology for technological and scientific development. In a pair of long and meticulously structured essays published in *Quaderni Rossi,* he called attention to the relation between class domination and technology:

> [...] the capitalist use of machinery is not, so to speak, a mere distortion of, or deviation from, some 'objective' development that is in itself rational, but it determines technological development [...][154]

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[152] The Frankfurt School members' works translated by Solmi for Einaudi include: Theodor Adorno's *Minima Moralia. Reflections From Damaged Life* in 1954, Friedrick Pollock's *Automation. A Study of its Economic and Social Consequences* in 1956 and Theodor Adorno's and Marx Horkeimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in 1966. On the reception of the Frankfurt School in Italy, consider: Emilio Agazzi, 'Linee fondamentalli della teoria critica in Italia' in *L'impegno della ragione. Per Emilio Agazzi*, ed. by Mario Cingoli, Marina Calloni and Antonio Ferraro (Milan: Unicopli, 1994), pp. 311-389; Stefano Petrucciani, 'La *Dialettica dell'illuminismo* cinquant'anni dopo. Note sulla ricezione italiana', *Nuova Corrente*, 121-122 (1998), 133-154; Carlo Galli, 'Alcune interpretazioni italiane della Scuola di Francoforte', *Il Mulino*, (1973), 648-671.

[153] Raniero Panzieri, 'Relazione sul Neocapitalismo (1961)', in *La ripresa del Marxismo Leninismo in Italia* (Rome: Nuove Edizioni Operaie, 1977).

[154] Amended translation from <https://libcom.org/library/capalist-use-machinery-raniero-panzieri#footnoteref24_pej4nj0> [accessed 2 March 2016]. Originally from Raniero Panzieri, 'Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel Neocapitalismo (1961)', *Quaderni Rossi*, 1 (1978), 53-72 (p. 55)

Panzieri grounds his argument in Marx's texts, and explains that in *Capital* both technology and science are described 'as a mode of existence of capital', essential to the maximization of profit:

> [...] 'science, the gigantic natural forces, and the mass of social labour' ... are 'embodied in the system of machinery, and...together with it, they constitute the power of the "master"'.[155]

The employment of Marx's theories allowed Panzieri to bring to the fore the authoritative character of the organizational methods and techniques of neo-capitalism. He demonstrated that the plan combined with it a function of direction and command over the totality of labour-power, which coerced individual wage-labourers.[156] Furthermore, he shedded light on the function of the plan within the process of appropriation of the cooperative character of labour. Marx in the first volume of *Capital* had argued that the capitalists benefited from the effect of workers' combined force despite they purchased individual labour-power. Panzieri expanded on Marx's thesis, and sought to prove that planning was essential to such mechanism of appropriation:

> [...] the worker, as owner and seller of his labour-power, enters into relation with capital only as an *individual*. Cooperation, the mutual relationship between workers, only begins with the labour process, but by then they have ceased to belong to themselves. On entering the labour process they are incorporated into capital. As co-operators, as members of a working organism, they merely form a particular mode of existence of capital. Hence the productive power developed by the *worker socially* is the *productive power of capital*. The *socially productive power of labour* develops as a free

[155] Marx in Ibid., p.55.
[156] See Ibid, p. 56, and 'Plusvalore e pianificazione. Appunti di lettura del Capitale (1964)', *Quaderni rossi*, 4 (1978), 257-277 (p. 264).

> gift to capital whenever the workers are placed under certain conditions, and it is capital which places them under these conditions.[157]

By directly referring to Marx's text, Panzieri reminds that cooperation amounts to an 'historical form peculiar to the process of capitalist development', and he simultaneously brings to light the link between capitalism and planning.[158] His syllogistic reasoning can be summarised as it follows: if we accept the Marxian thesis according to which cooperation is a determining feature of capitalist development that occurs 'when numerous workers work together side by side in accordance with a plan', it logically follows that plan and planning too are forms peculiar to capitalism.[159] His study had a significant impact on the Italian left, for it disclosed that trade unionists and politicians had fallen prey to the 'fundamental mystification' according to which labour's social productive power was immanent to capital.[160]

Panzieri's return to the letter of Marx undermined a number of assumptions that institutional Marxism seemed to have taken for granted. His unveiling of the structural link between cooperation, planning and capitalism, for example, came together with a revisiting of the Leninist thesis regarding the opposition between the rationality of the factory and the anarchy of society. Panzieri admits that the factory-versus-society dichotomy was theorized by Marx himself in the first volume of *Capital*, but he simultaneously recalls that in an 1858 letter to Engels revolving around the structure of the book, Marx had hinted at a fourth section corresponding

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[157] Amended translation from <https://libcom.org/library/capalist-use-machinery-raniero-panzieri#footnoteref24_pej4nj0> [Accessed 2 March 2016]. Panzieri, 'Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel neocapitalismo', p. 53.
[158] My translation of 'La cooperazione è la *forma fondamentale* del modo di produzione capitalistico'. Panzieri, 'Plusvalore e pianificazione', p. 263.
[159] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1976), p. 443.
[160] Panzieri, 'Plusvalore e pianificazione', p. 261.

to a last phase of capital's development called 'stock-option capital', where capitalism could 'trespass into communism'.[161] By taking into consideration the entirity of Marx's *oeuvre*, together with its inherent openness and incompleteness, Panzieri demonstrates that his analysis of capitalist development does not exclude the possibility of overcoming the dichotomy between factory and society, and the extension of the former's 'rationality' (in the guise of the plan) also to embrace the latter.

Although Tafuri's writings lack any direct reference to Panzieri, his idea of the plan, as I have tried to explain, is deeply rooted in the study that the sociologist conducted. We should also remember that this latter provided the basis for a number of crucial workerist texts to which Tafuri does explicitly make reference. Leaving any philological criteria aside, it is interesting to observe that Panzieri's and Tafuri's research converges on one of the aspects that other workerists mostly overlooked; namely, the question of 'false' rationality of capitalism, a theme that itself reveals (to come back full circle) Panzieri's indebtedness to the Frankfurt School and Georg Lukács.[162] This lineage is most apparent in his 'Relazione sul Neocapitalismo', in a subsection tellingly entitled 'contraddizione tra razionalizzazione e calcolo economico globale' ['contradiction between rationalization and global economic

[161] Ibid., p. 272.

[162] On Panzieri and the Frankfurt school, see Andrea Cavazzini, *Enquête ouvrière et théorie critique Enjeux et figures de la centralité ouvrière dans l'Italie des années 1960* (Liège: Press Universitaire de Liège, 2013); Maria Grazia Meriggi, 'Raniero Panzieri e il "francofortismo": Il movimento operaio dall'apologia del piano "socialista" all'analisi di classe', *aut aut*, 149/150 (1975), 91-230. In her essay, Meriggi emphasises the originality of Panzieri's work, but she recognizes that it was Adorno that first intuited the '*political* nature of the plan', Meriggi, 'Raniero Panzieri e il "francofortismo": Il movimento operaio dall'apologia del piano "socialista" all'analisi di classe', p. 112. Significant references to the plan in Adorno can be found in *Minima Moralia* (Verso: London, 2005), p. 124, and in the chapter 'Culture and administration' in *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001). Panzieri's analysis is also indebted to the study on state capitalism conducted by Friedrich Pollock.

calculation'].[163] Here, Panzieri first describes the process of labour rationalization occurring within the industrial plant, and then passes to examine what takes place outside the factory, in the organization of the labour market at a global scale:

> [...] [it] is organically impossible for capitalism to establish an accordance between rationalization and quantification and the global economical process. Because capitalism is fragmented, is made of many companies, and any company can imagine rationalization only as a deformed form of totality, each company can represent only a false rational totality. In actual fact, it is a particular – I would say, hypertrophic – rationality that presents itself and tends to impose itself upon the global process as an absolute rationality, as rationality as such. In other words, we have an exaggerated rationalization of partial processes, and consequently a growing relative irrationality of society at a global level.[164]

Panzieri seems to be ventriloquizing the Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness*, and indeed he quotes a passage from this work immediately afterward. In the book in question, the Hungarian philosopher drew attention to the formal nature of bourgeois reason: '[the] rationalisation of the world appears to be complete, it seems to penetrate the very depth of man's physical and psychic nature' – he writes – but 'is

[163] My translation of 'Contraddizione tra razionalizzazione e calcolo economico globale'. Panzieri, 'Relazione sul Neocapitalismo', p. 186.

[164] My partial translation of 'Quale è la caratteristica generale dei processi di razionalizzazione, dell'applicazione universale del principio di calcolo nel capitalismo? Che esiste per il capitalismo una organica impossibilità di far coincidere la razionalizzazione, la quantificazione con il processo economico globale. Perchè il capitalismo è spezzato, è fatto da tante imprese, ogni impresa si può rappresentare la razionalizzazione soltanto in forma deformata come totalità, è una falsa totalità razionale quella che ciascuna impresa può elaborare. In realtà una razionalità particolare, vorrei dire ipertrofica, che si presenta e tende a imporsi al processo globale come razionalità assoluta, come razionalità in sé. Cioè abbiamo una razionalizzazione esagerata dei processi parziali, e in conseguenza una crescente irrazionalità relativa nella società globale'. Panzieri, 'Relazione sul Neocapitalismo', p. 188.

limited, by its own formalism'.[165] This occurs, he explicates, because 'a system of general laws' is imposed from above without comprehending the rationality of the particular, which will thus perceive the general rationality as other to itself, and henceforth as false, or, to use Panzieri's words, 'deformed'. For Lukács as much as for Panzieri, isolated rational structures (such as individual companies), are totally incongruous to the whole economic system.

A similar thesis appears to sustain Tafuri's argument about the plan's failure to structure the capitalist metropolis. In his chronicle, contemporary cities remain 'aggregate of parts' traversed by economic contradictions that derive both from the conflicts amongst different class interests and the parasitic mechanisms of ground rent.[166] With an great lucidity Tafuri shows how under a capitalist production regime, each part of the city, even in accomplishing the most rational of forms, will always be only haphazardly connected to the others.

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As we mentioned earlier, Panzieri's name never appears in Tafuri's writings, but his work did provide the grounding for many of the theses he advanced in his *Contropiano* articles. In this chapter we have proceeded backwards; firstly we noted the ambivalence of the term 'Plan' in Tafuri's texts on 20th-century artistic and architectural avant-gardes, then we looked at the immediate references that could help illuminate the broader meaning of this word, and finally we attended to the texts from which the workerist debate over capitalist planning had originated. Other researchers before me have considered the links between workerist theory and Tafuri, but none has explored in depth how his usage of the term 'Plan' owed to this tradition of thought, or looked into the proximities between Tafuri and Panzieri. This chapter sought to make clear that in Tafuri's writing 'Plan' alluded to a specific form

[165] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (1923), trans. by Rodney Livingstone (London: The Merlin Press, 2010), p. 101.
[166] Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 25.

of coercive rationality which was essential for the maintenance of state capitalism, and this infiltrated into the arts. A further aim was to show how workerist analysis of intellectual labour offered Tafuri a toolbox for critically examining the transformation the architect's profession had undergone. The contextual reading pursued in this chapter also intends to present Tafuri's questioning of disciplinary boundaries as an emanation of his Marxist-inflected totalising view of society.

Chapter Two:

A Whole Made of Fragments

1. Introduction

Tafuri's understanding of fragment, main theme of this second chapter, stands in apparent opposition to the theme explored in the first part of the thesis. While the plan – whether in the upper – or the lower-case sense – implies an aspiration to totality and homogeneity, the fragment has been associated, since the Romantic period, with an antithetical set of meanings.[167] In Tafuri's writings, however, things are not quite as polarized.

It is important to establish from the outset that the fragment was never Tafuri's direct object of study. Rather, it emerged in the 1960s as a key concept in the articulation of the relation between architecture and history as he understood it. This is perhaps best seen in the major historiographical work of that period, *Theories and History*, and in particular in the chapter of the book tackling the problem of anti-historicism that Tafuri sees as pervading contemporary architectural culture. The chapter in question seeks the sources of this phenomenon, rejecting a priori any immediate association with the 20th-century avant-garde's famous rebuff of the concept of tradition. Tafuri decides instead to go further back in time in search of early 'symptoms', throwing readers with little warning into the *Quattrocento*, and in particular the work of Renaissance architects Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti. In the interesting and unusual interpretation that follows, the origin of anti-historicism is associated with the work of Brunelleschi and more precisely with his attempt to actualise history by deploying linguistic and symbolic codes referring explicitly to the example of antiquity. In Tafuri's reading, Brunelleschi imbues his buildings with references to what he regards as positive moments of history, then sets these same buildings against a city saturated with Medieval and Romanesque elements. This gesture reveals the intention to promote a specific conception of the world, marking a shift towards the figure of the architect-intellectual and towards an idea of architecture as 'text' built on citations in the form of fragments. For Tafuri,

[167] I refer in particular here to Schlegel's notion of the fragment. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

Brunelleschi is responsible for the conversion of architectural edifices into ideological tools, extending the internal rational order of the edifice to the surrounding urban fabric and doing away with the non-hierarchical paratactic form of the latter. The fragments of a lost and flawless past coalesce into buildings, making them that models that the city must approximate.

In *Theories and History*, fragments stand for portions of time congealed into architectural forms, whose function is analogous to that of citations. This holds true, however, only for some of the architects examined in the historical survey. In almost every century from the *Quattrocento* onwards, Tafuri identifies two mutually opposed uses of the fragment. This latter could serve to recall moments of the past in the attempt to restore them, or conversely to undermine false certainties dominating the present. The first of these tendencies is exemplified by Brunelleschi, the second by the work Leon Battista Alberti, the *pastiches* of Francesco Borromini and the fractured cityscape of the Venetian etcher Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Tafuri seems to see a 'filial' relation between the latter pair. Borromini is the first to introduce 'in the Classicist world, a genuine *experience of history*'; Piranesi continues the undertaking little more than a century later with an expanded set of tools.[168]

The initial part of this chapter addresses Tafuri's reading of the fragment as a critical tool, with an exclusive focus on the writings on Piranesi. Two main reasons underlie this thematic choice. First, although Tafuri identifies in Borromini's oeuvre a number of aspects that will later reappear in Piranesi, he contends that the work of art (and architecture) becomes 'self-aware' and critical with the latter: only at this point does the deployment of fragment emerge as a fully conscious critical act. Tafuri apparently ascribes to Piranesi's work the power to anticipate the 19th century shift from a conception of art as intuition to one of art as criticism, as theorized by Hegel in his *Aesthetik*.[169] Second, Tafuri assigns to Piranesi's work a crucial role in

[168] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 20.
[169] An investigation of Hegel's influence on Tafuri's *Theories and History* is beyond the scope of this chapter, but the question certainly merits further scholarly attention.

20th-century artistic and architectural developments, establishing a relationship of simultaneous continuity and discontinuity with the avant-garde.[170] Piranesi therefore represents a uniquely interesting entry point for an analysis of Tafuri's complex interpretation of the fragment.[171]

The second part of the chapter will examine Tafuri's juxtaposing of Piranesi's fragmentation to avant-garde montage technique, and his analysis of Eisenstein's appropriation of the *Carceri*. We will look closely at the relation Tafuri establishes between Piranesi and the avant-garde, while placing emphasis on the distance that in his view remains between the two. This juxtaposition will help to clarify what I have called 'the relative value of the fragment': a conception of fragment and fragmentation – and more generally of form – that cannot be separated from those techniques' broader historical and political context.

The third and final part will examine Tafuri's turn to Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia in his reading of the splintered compositions of Piranesi and of the avant-garde. We will argue, however, that the reference to Foucault does not entail compliance with the latter's philosophical project. Rather, it attempts to signal a triple failure: that of Piranesi, of the avant-garde and of Foucault himself.

In the first chapter Tafuri argues that Hegel's thesis of the death of art is simultaneously a prophecy and a diagnosis of what occurred in the 19th century. See *Theories and History*, pp. 28-29. In later chapters, furthemore, he repeatedly alludes to 'irony' in a way that recalls the Hegelian notion of irony as vanity [*Eitelkeit*].

[170] It must be noted here that Tafuri also attributes to Borromini's *bricolage* a 'prophetic' aspect, but he does so only once. Ibid., p. 31.

[171] A third reason for the restriction of my focus to Piranesi is that scholarly literature on Tafuri's study of Borromini already exists. See Andrew Leach, 'Francesco Borromini and the Crisis of the Humanist Universe, or Manfredo Tafuri on the Baroque Origins of Modern Architecture', *Journal of Architecture*, 15.3 (2010), 301-355 and his *Choosing History*. Though only tangentially related to the present topic, it is also worth mentioning Andrew Leach, 'Manfredo Tafuri and the Age of Historical Representation', in *Walter Benjamin and Architecture*, ed. by Gevork Hartoonian (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 5-21.

2. Fragment as a Critical Tool: Tafuri on Piranesi

Brief references to Piranesi can be already found both in *Theories and History* and in the *Contropiano* essays, but Tafuri's major text on the work of the Venetian etcher only appeared in 1971. The article 'G. B. Piranesi: L'architettura come utopia negativa' ['G. B. Piranesi: Architecture as Negative Utopia'] was first published in the journal *Angelus Novus*, a Benjamin-inspired publication co-founded by Massimo Cacciari in 1964.[172] The essay has since then been reissued twice, first in French in 1974 and again in 1980 as the opening chapter of the book *The Sphere and Labyrinth*. Both the underlying arguments and the structure of the text remain largely unchanged over this time, but as we shall see later, each version includes minor amendments and additions that reflect significant shifts in Tafuri's intellectual biography. Other essays about Piranesi to be addressed in this chapter are: 'The Dialectics of the Avant-garde: Piranesi and Eiseinstein' (1972),[173] a relatively short piece assessing Eisenstein's appropriation of Piranesi's the *Carceri*, and 'Il Complesso di Santa Maria del Priorato sull'Aventino "Furor Analiticus"' ['Santa Maria del Priorato Church on the Aventino Hill: "Furor Analiticus"'],[174] a text of 1978 devoted to the study of Piranesi's only architectural works of importance.[175] The text that follows addresses the articles in the list above simultaneously, reorganizing

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[172] Manfredo Tafuri, 'G. B. Piranesi: L'architettura come utopia negativa', *Angelus Novus*, 20 (1971), 89-127. As Andrew Leach notes, the text was first presented to a conference at the Accademia delle Scienze one year before its publication. Leach, *Choosing History*, p. 249.

[173] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Piranesi, Eisenstein e la dialettica dell'avanguardia', *Rassegna Sovietica*, 1–2 (1972). Later republished as 'The Dialectics of the Avant-garde: Piranesi and Eiseinstein', *Opposition*, 11 (1977), 72-80, and as part of the *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. In the chapter we will refer to the latter.

[174] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Il complesso di Santa Maria del Priorato sull'Aventino: "Furor Analiticus"', in *Piranesi. Incisioni, rami, legature, architetture* (Vicenza: Neri-Pozza, 1978), pp. 78-87.

[175] I also consulted Manfredo Tafuri, 'Borromini and Piranesi: La città come "ordine infranto"', in *Piranesi tra Venezia e L'Europa: atti del convegno internazionale di studio promossi dall'istituto di storia dell'arte della Fondazione Giorgio Cini per il secondo centenario della morte di Gian Battista Piranesi,* ed. by Alessandro Bettagno (Florence: Leo S.Oschki, 1983), pp. 89-101.

their content around three thematic axes corresponding to what I retain are the main critical functions assigned by Tafuri to Piranesi's use of fragment. Respectively: criticism of the image of the past formed in the present, criticism of the present, and lastly, criticism of the future.

2.1 Criticism of the Image of the Past Formed in the Present

The polarity between an affirmative (or ideological) and a critical use of fragment is used by Tafuri to organise the entire history of architecture from Renaissance to contemporary times. So if Borromini stands opposed to Alberti during the Renaissance, in the late 15th century it will be the turn of Tibaldi and Alessi against Peruzzi, and in the Baroque that of Bernini against Borromini. Such neat distinctions sometimes barely appear tenable, but the method reflects Tafuri's ambition to forge a concept of history capable of challenging progressive approaches to historical writing. For Tafuri, architecture always establishes a relation with its past, either by seeking to reaffirm an idealized and remote image of antiquity, or, more critically, by juxtaposing remnants of the near past to contemporary forms.[176] The thesis of the persistence of these opposed attitudes throughout centuries recalls the division of the avant-garde into 'destructive' and 'constructive' strands examined in chapter one, and more broadly it indicates a certain dialectical mode of thinking. In describing Tafuri's work, his former student and colleague Georges Teyssot recalls that:

> Whatever he was writing about – Rome in the 15th century, Venice in the 16th century, Piranesi in the 18th century – he was always looking for a battle. If there were two powers he was happy, because the notion of the dialectic was preserved. It was always the opposition between one and another, like Borromini against Bernini.[177]

[176] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 18.
[177] George Teyssot and Paul Henninger, 'One Portrait of Tafuri', *Any*, 25-26 (2000), 10-17 (p. 14).

Teyssot is right to note Tafuri's obsession with oppositional scenarios, but he too easily equates his erstwhile teacher's understanding of dialectics with that of Hegel, failing to recognize Tafuri's rejection of the final moment of *sublation*. By contrast, this aspect is singled out with precision by Frederic Jameson in his study of the narrative structure of Tafuri's and Dal Co's *Contemporary Architecture*. According to Jameson, this book presents the history of modern architecture as a succession of failed attempts to resolve the contradiction between individual buildings and the surrounding city: 'Its telos', he writes, is 'not exactly the place of the solution, but the search for the right way to grasp its inevitable failure'.[178] In turn, this peculiar discursive mode challenges the cult of innovation that distinguishes high modernist theory, for it replaces a conception of the new as stylistic invention with one amounting to 'a creative response to the contradiction itself'.[179]

When the narrative structure of the first chapter of *Theories and History* is examined in the light of Jameson's insight, another level of meaning transpires. Not only does the book appear as the site where what could (albeit improperly) be called Tafuri's theory of fragment begins to be thematized, it is also here that 'fracture' and 'collision' serve for the first time as new paradigms for the rethinking of architectural historiography.

As we mentioned earlier, Tafuri introduces the theme of the fragment for the first time in his study of Francesco Borromini. In the work of the Baroque architect, he observes, the typological synthesis is disturbed by the insertion of:

> [...] a *bricolage* of modulations, of memories, of objects derived from Classic Antiquity, from Late Antiquity, from the Paleo-Christian , from Gothic, from Albertian and utopistic-romantic Humanism, from the most varied models of sixteenth century architecture. They span from the spatial permeations of

[178] Fredric Jameson, 'From Metaphor to Allegory', in *Anything,* ed. by Cynthia Davidson (New York: Anyone Corporation, 2001), pp. 24-36 (p. 29), p. 29.
[179] Ibid., p. 30.

> Peruzzi to the anamorphic contractions of Michelangelo and Montano, to the anthropomorphic decorativism of Pellegrini, to the attempts at linguistic renewal by Vignola and Palladio.[180]

At the end of this remarkably long list, Tafuri is anxious to specify that Borromini's search for citation does not correspond to a random amassing of styles. The insertion of Medieval and Gothic references amounts to a deliberate polemic against the unquestioned validity of classical codes, signalling the architect's willingness to *verify* historical sources empirically by 'plunging into history, [...] getting involved with it [,] and soiled by it'.[181]

The use of the expression 'to soil oneself' [sporcarsi] interestingly calls to mind the adage 'by soiling you find' [col sporcarsi si trova], inserted by Piranesi into the frontispiece of the *Raccolta di alcuni disegni del Barbieri da Cento detto il Guercino*. This term may not have been intended as a reference to Piranesi's etching, but it curiously anticipates the link between Borromini and Piranesi that Tafuri later established. Not unlike the Borrominian pastiche, which Tafuri reads as a threat to the alleged superiority of classical architectural standards, Piranesi's portrayal of the surviving remnants of Roman monuments in the *Campo Marzio* would challenge an idealized image of antique Rome:

> Since Roman antiquity [Piranesi's *Campo Marzio*] is not only a reference charged with ideological nostalgia and revolutionary expectation, but a myth to be contested, every form of classicist derivation is treated as mere fragment, deformed symbol, broken hallucination of an "order" wasting away.[182]

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[180] Ibid., p. 19.
[181] Ibid., p. 20.
[182] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 10.

Later, in his 1971 essay for *Angelus Novus*, Tafuri will advance a similar thesis with regard to the *Carceri*. Here he argues that Piranesi does not simply rely on his sources but treats them as 'points of reference with which to open up a fierce polemic'.[183]

This, however, seems primarily to be Tafuri's own understanding of the projects. In the dedication to Nicola Giobbe in the 1973 edition of *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*,[184] which Tafuri curiously quotes in his text for *Angelus Novus*, Piranesi expresses his appreciation of Roman architecture, praising its 'absolute perfection'.[185] We get the feeling that Tafuri is transposing his reading of Borromini onto Piranesi's work regardless of the latter's commentary. This seems still more disorienting given that Tafuri bases his study as much on Piranesi's writings as on the drawings and architectural projects, stressing their thematic cohesion: the 'ambiguous evocation of the *Iconographia Campi Martii* – he maintains – is a graphic monument to late Baroque culture's openness towards the late revolutionary ideologies, just as the *Parere sull'architettura* is its most pointed literary testimony'.[186]

In my view, however, Piranesi's statement is not enough to undermine Tafuri's thesis, the merit of which lies in its demonstration that the Venetian etcher was as much aware of the grandeur of the past as of its irretrievability. The text reads Piranesi's etchings as a demonstration that history is accessible *only* in fragmentary and ruinous form, and considers the archaeological survey of the remaining monuments in the *Campo Marzio* not as an expression of yearning for what is no longer available, but rather as a tribute to what fiercely manages to survive.

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[183] As already mentioned, the essay of 1971 appeared in English translation in the collection *Sphere and the Labyrinth*. I will quote from this edition where the original text has not been altered. *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 26.
[184] The original title is *Prima parte di architettura, e prospettive inventate, ed incise da Giambatista Piranesi Architetto Veneziano fra gli Arcadi Salcindio Tiseio*, but Tafuri refers to it as *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*.
[185] Ibid.,, p. 28.
[186] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 10.

Another interesting case where the use of the fragment would fall under the remit of what I earlier called 'criticism of the image of the past formed in the present' is Piranesi's proposal for the church of Santa Maria del Priorato, located on the Aventino hill in Rome. What makes this case particularly interesting for our purposes is the way Tafuri interprets Piranesi's attempt to solve (or rather to face) a set of specific constraints inherent in the project. We are told from the outset that Piranesi was commissioned to renovate a church originally built on the hill in 939 A.D., a task requiring the architect to cope with a number of already existing architectural structures. In response to these conditions, Piranesi decides to strip the existing edifice of any objective historical value (Tafuri talks of de-historicization of the sources), putting it on the same level as the new architectural components of his own design.[187] To challenge the elementary form of the fifteenth century façade, for example, he decides to juxtapose a decorated attic on top of the fronton.[188] Tafuri's reading draws attention to a design method that rebuffs any a priori certitude and all instrumental hierarchy between styles and epochs: 'no data [...] in his reconstruction or inventions – he says – [...] everything must be "recomposed", even that which presents itself as evident'.[189] The outcome is a scenario dominated by a 'conceptual homogeneity between the archaeological relics and built (or designed) architecture', in which the idealized notion of the past attached to the antique ruins is called into question.[190]

According to scholar Andrew Leach, Tafuri's emphasis on Borromini's and Piranesi's fragmentation is indebted to Walter Benjamin's 'prizing of this same device'.[191] Leach bases his argument on the transcripts of a series of lectures at the

[187] Tafuri, 'Il complesso di Santa Maria del Priorato sull'Aventino', p. 80.
[188] Ibid., p. 82.
[189] My translation of 'Nessun "dato", infatti nelle sue ricostruzioni o invenzioni: tutto è da "ricomporre"; persino ciò che è presentato come del tutto evidente'. Ibid., p. 80.
[190] My translation of 'l'omogeneità concettuale fra reperto archeologico e architettura costruita (o progettata)'. Ibid., p. 80.
[191] Leach, 'Francesco Borromini and the Crisis of the Humanist Universe', p. 330.

IUAV in 1979, in which Tafuri tries to connect Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* to the Roman architectural baroque and Borromini.[192] Although the seminar focused exclusively on Borromini, Leach seems to suggest that Tafuri reads Piranesi's work from the same Benjaminian perspective. This, I would argue, provides Leach with further justification for his own Benjamin-inflected reading of Tafuri's whole oeuvre.[193]

For, example, Leach transposes 'Benjamin's recognition of the arbitrariness of the historian's knowledge of the past' into 'Tafuri's idea of the provisionality of "facts" of knowledge, and of the historian's need to resist those images that reassure the present on false grounds'.[194] Tafuri's prizing of Piranesi's fragmentation serves as evidence of this proximity, in that the fragment is used to symbolize an idea of historical knowledge that accepts the past's inherent complexity and resists its reduction to a discrete image.[195] The dialectic that Tafuri – through Piranesi – establishes between fragment and image of the history of the city also alludes, for Leach, to a second dialectic between architectural practice and discipline. Whereas discipline in his view comprises an 'image of knowledge, a formalisation of theories

[192] I consulted both the Italian and English edition of the book. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1928), trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 2009); Walter Benjamin, *Il dramma barocco tedesco* (Turin: Einaudi, 1963). On Walter Benjamin and *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* I also looked at Graeme Gilloch, *Critical Constellations* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002) and to the afterword to the Italian edition of the book by Cesare Caeses.

[193] See Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing History* and his 'Manfredo Tafuri and the Age of Historical Representation'. The first Benjaminian reading of Tafuri's work was offered by Carla Keyvanian in 'Manfredo Tafuri's Notion of History and Its Methodological Sources' (unpublished master thesis, MIT, 1992). Drawing from her thesis Keyvanian has lately published the following article: 'Manfredo Tafuri: from the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories', *Design Issues*, 16 (2000), 3-15. Whereas Keyvanian's account relies mainly on the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* and the *Arcades Project*, Leach takes into account a wider range of Benjamin's works.

[194] Leach seems to implicitly refer to thesis 16th where Benjamin accuses historicism for giving an '"eternal image" of the past'. Leach, *Choosing History: a Study of Manfredo Tafuri's Theorisation of Architectural History*', p. 181; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn and ed. by Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 252.

[195] Ibid., p. 181.

and material', 'practice […] sets aside formalised knowledge by enacting a direct engagement with the material'.[196]

Andrew Leach was not the first to delve into the Benjamin-Tafuri connection. In the early 1990s Carla Keyvanian had already identified the theoretical proximity between Tafuri's account of the historian's practice and a number of key themes of the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* and the *Arcades Project*.[197] Keyvanian's analysis, however, seems mainly to focus on the two writers' proximity, whereas Leach seeks to bring to light a set of subtle yet substantial divergences that testify to Tafuri's creative appropriation of Benjamin's thought.[198] In order to do so he examines Benjamin's *Theses*, asking whether and to what extent each of them correlates to Tafuri's notion of history. To consider Leach's meticulous comparison in full here would risk taking us beyond the scope of our argument, but I want to expand on a single aspect that pertains to the theme of this section. In doing so I will propose an interpretation that differs both from Leach's and from Keyvanian's.

Among the questions addressed by Leach, we find, unsurprisingly, Benjamin's messianic understanding of history. We shall recall that the *Theses* sets forward an idea of history whose 'highest metaphysical state' does not coincide with the ending point in a path of progress, but might occur at any moment.[199] Such a notion rests on the belief that the present is endowed with a redemptive power upon

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[196] Ibid., p. 262.

[197] Andrew Leach's analysis of Benjamin's influence on Tafuri is not limited to the latter's understanding of history, but it also encompasses many other aspects of his oeuvre. See 'The Era of Historical Representation', in Leach, *Choosing History: a Study of Manfredo Tafuri's Theorisation of Architectural History*.

[198] It must be said here that although Keyvanian does associate Benjamin's notion of history with 'operative history', she does not link this latter to Tafuri by referring to his stark criticism of operative history in *Theories and History*: 'There is no doubt that Benjamin's notion of history is an operative one. For him, the parts in history that hold revolutionary potential must be identified and extracted in order to be used for their political significance ("which is the only way of doing them justice")'. Keyvanian, 'Manfredo Tafuri's Notion of History', p. 42.

[199] Walter Benjamin,'The Life of Students (1914-1915)', trans. by Rodney Livingstone, in *Selected Writings v.1, 1913-1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1996), pp. 37-47 (p.37).

which 'the past has a claim'.[200] Under specific circumstances, therefore, moments in past holding revolutionary potential can resurface, providing the stimulus to action in the present.

On this specific aspect, Leach observes, Tafuri seems to take quite a different position: he 'challenges Benjamin's collection of the future as too hopeful, or at least too invested with a specific hope' and instead he shatters 'the messianic moment into an infinite series of possibilities'.[201] This distance is most clearly seen in Tafuri's interpretation of the French revolutionaries' habit of dressing up as ancient Romans, as described by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Whereas for Benjamin this practice exemplifies a positive 'actualization' of the past,[202] for Tafuri it is an exaltation of history qua history, and it represents the culmination of the anti-historicist approach inaugurated by Brunelleschi.[203] Far from providing an incitement to action in the present, this kind of citationism falls under the remit of what Tafuri calls 'operative history', an attempt to bend the past to present needs and thereby to justify and preserve the existing state of affairs.

Although I endorse Andrew Leach's argument, I think his analysis of Tafuri's understanding of the relation between past and present requires further investigation. Leach is right in maintaining that Tafuri eschews the idea of putting the past at the service of the present, but we need to keep in mind that this doesn't mean Tafuri opposes the practice of reference to the past in the present as such. It all depends on the purpose underpinning the act of citation. From Tafuri's standpoint, citations (in the form of architectural fragments) should be used to contradict the present by undermining its false image of the past; for Benjamin, by contrast (at least apparently) citations must support the present, or better, the moments of

[200] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn and ed. by Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 245-255 (p. 246).
[201] Ibid., p. 182
[202] See the XIV thesis in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 252-253.
[203] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, pp. 24-26.

revolutionary possibility arising in the present. At first sight the two positions could not seem more different, but a closer examination of Tafuri and Benjamin reveals a certain convergence. Both writers endorse the use of citations to disrupt the present, but for Tafuri this disruption aims to break down present ideological veiling (the 'image'), whereas for Benjamin the same disruption serves a more radical undoing of the entire political order. Benjamin's notion of history is not, as Keyvanian argues, 'an operative one', at least in the sense Tafuri intends this term, precisely because the actualization of the past that Benjamin advocates is in no way intended to justify the present in its entirety: rather, it endorses those particular forces that might have the power to subvert the existing state of affair.[204] Tafuri's idea of history and Benjamin's – and more specifically their respective ideas of the relation between past (in its fragmentary form) and present – are therefore closer together than either Keyvanian or Leach seems to believe.

One final question should be brought into focus before we move on to the next part of the chapter. I have argued that Tafuri endorses a critical use of fragment, as distinct from its ideological deployment by Brunelleschi, and we have treated such critical practice as the result of deliberate choices. At this this point I would suggest returning to Tafuri's *Theories and History* and looking more closely at a passage that could disturb our initial assumption, expanding our interpretative frame. In the first chapter of the book, Tafuri compares the Medieval period to a 'spectre', suggesting its restless resurgence and disturbing effect. We are told that Medieval architecture keep reappearing in the form of fragments, haunting the dreams of later periods that accept the false completeness of the present-day image of the past and refuse to acknowledge those details' historical existence. The reference to the concept of phantasmagoria prompts us to think that the inclusion of Medieval forms in Borromini's and Piranesi's work resulted not just from their intentional choice but from the playing out of forces exceeding individual human control. Tafuri appears to

[204] Keyvanian, 'Manfredo Tafuri's Notion of History', p. 42.

combine Aby Warburg's idea of history of art as punctuated by the continuous emergence of archetypical images (which he calls *Pathosformeln*) with Sigmund Freud's theory of a human need to repress desires and impulses at odds with social order. Implicitly (and loosely) drawing on both authors, Tafuri likens the fragment to a repressed portion of a subject's history that demands recognition.[205] Yet here we are dealing not with individual biographies but the history of an entire civilization,[206] of which architecture represents one manifestation.[207]

2.2. Criticism of the Present

We shall now move to what in the initial outline I identified as the second critical function associated with Piranesi's fragmentation, 'the criticism of present'. In this part we will draw mainly from Tafuri's 1969 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', his 1971 'G. B. Piranesi: L'Architettura come Utopia Negativa' for *Angelus Novus* and the slightly amended version of the same text included in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.[208] This section and the one that follows on Piranesi's fragmentation as criticism of the future will gradually bring us back to contemporary architecture and to its relation to capitalism, as discussed in chapter one.

Tafuri first refers to Piranesi's predictive role in the initial part of his 1969 essay, where he seeks to identify the sources of the ideological entanglements of modern and contemporary architecture within Enlightenment thought. These range from the 'formation of the architect as ideologue of the "social"', 'the individuation of the proper area of intervention in the phenomenology of the city' and 'the role of form as persuasion in regard to the public, and as self-criticism in regard to its own

[205] According to Freud, however, repressed desires remerge under a different guise, such as in an inverted form. See Freud, 'Negation', pp. 96-100.
[206] What Warburg, following from Jung's notion of a collective unconscious, would call 'social memory'.
[207] My understanding of Aby Warburg's notion of *Pathosformel* and 'social memory' mainly relies on Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Phaidon,1986).
[208] In the chapter we will mainly refer to this latter unless specified.

concerns'.[209] Tafuri's historical survey, which takes as its starting point Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Observations sur l'Architecture*, shows how 18th century naturalism's assimilation of the city to a natural object sought to conceal the 'manifest dichotomy between urban and rural reality', pretending 'that there was no gap between the valorization of nature and the valorization of the city'.[210] Enlightenment architects thus played on the rhetoric of nature to bypass structural considerations, and in so doing they anticipated the ideological role associated with modern architecture.

If in the light of this brief elucidation we now juxtapose theories of the *city as a forest* (Robert Castell, Laugier and Francesco Milizia) to the fragmented bird's-eye views of the *Campo Marzio,* we begin to get a sense of the radical difference between their propositions, and of the reasons why Piranesi's representations would carry critical force. Whereas Enlightenment architects' projects tended to assimilate the city to nature, legitimizing a physiocratic 'natural law' ideology that in turn served to disguise the effect of nascent urban capitalism, Piranesi's *Campo Marzio*, as Tafuri notices, erases almost all natural presence except the Tiber river, whose sinuous shape concurs with urban fragmentation. Unlike the work of his contemporaries, then, Piranesi's etchings confront us with the image of Rome as an 'anti-naturalistic *manufatto*' deprived of any ordering principle.[211] The etchings' concealed target, writes Tafuri with reference to Cacciari, is the '"naive dialectic" of the Enlightenment', a form of the dialectic that acknowledges negation and contradiction only in the 'matter' it wants to transform, but not as its constitutive component.[212] By revealing the substantiality of the negative to the system, Piranesi would thus disclose the 'ingenuous' form – insofar as unaware of itself – of 18th century dialectics.[213]

Piranesi's multifarious work is praised highly by Tafuri for its ability to give

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[209] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', pp. 7-8.
[210] Ibid., p. 8.
[211] My translation of 'manufatto antinaturalistico'. Tafuri, 'G. B. Piranesi: L'architettura come "utopia negativa"', p. 106.
[212] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 36.
[213] Massimo Cacciari, 'Dialettica e tradizione', *Contropiano*, 1 (1968), 125-152.

voice to the pervasive and structural negativity concealed by the etcher's contemporaries. The dilapidated architectural ruins and fragmented maps of the *Campo Marzio* series, the labyrinthine and illogical compositions of the *Carceri*, the unresolved dialogue between Protopiro and Didascalo in his *Parere sull'architettura*, along with the two conflicting sides of the altar of Santa Maria del Priorato, are all manifestations of Piranesi's refusal of the reconciled vision of the world dictated by the Enlightenment. In Tafuri's own words, Piranesi's work demonstrates the "sleep of reason" that produces monsters' but that '"reason awake" can also create deformity, even when the goal at which it aims is the Sublime'.[214] The restless fragmentation of Piranesi's oeuvre indexes the loss of organicity unexpectedly ensuing from full adhesion to the principle of reason.

In the *Angelus Novus* essay, fragment and fragmentations function as key concepts for the reading of Piranesi's oeuvre. For each of the works considered, Tafuri seeks to show how the feeling of 'dissolution of the whole' is delivered through various media and formal solutions. In the *Magnifico collegio*, in the *Carceri* and in *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*, for example, Tafuri notes a refusal to organize representation around a centre.[215] Likewise, in the second table of *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*, he observes that:

> [...] the elliptical courtyard, which seems to constitute the *focus* of the organism, is seen, in the reconstruction of the plan, to be deliberately inserted as a spiral into the continuum of the columns; while in the 'ancient temple invented and designed in the manner of those which were built in honour of the goddess Vesta', the outer circle winding around the Pantheon, the directrix of the stairways and the Corinthian colonnade prov[ed] to be off-centre in relation to one another and dislocated onto independent rings.[216]

[214] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 10.
[215] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 30.
[216] Ibid., p. 27.

The same can be observed in his description of the *Magnifico collegio*, where:

> The centrality of the composition, with its successive and independent rings, projects outwards from the circular space of the grand staircase subdivided into eight flights, which among the organisms 'that are in search of their own role' within the concentric structure is, significantly, one of the minor spaces. Actually, as one proceeds gradually from the center towards the periphery of the composition, the dimension of the rooms seems to grow progressively larger, while their geometrical structure becomes increasingly more differentiated and articulated.[217]

The disappearance of the centre and the montage of independent parts according to the law of contiguity generate, in turn, the illusion of an endlessly expandable space. Tafuri uses formal dissolution and the ensuing effect of spatial infinity as a yardstick to categorize Piranesi's work: the *Magnifico collegio* 'constitutes a kind of gigantic question mark on the meaning of architectural composition',[218] the *Carceri* bring the crisis of the architectural object to its extreme,[219] and finally the *Campo Marzio* extends this process beyond individual works of architecture, to invest urban structure as a whole.

Due to its formal and thematic radicalism, the *Campo Marzio* holds a significant position within Tafuri's work. In his 1971 essay the architectural historian seeks to describe 'the very heart of the structure' of the etchings by means of an interesting array of synonymous expressions all pointing to a sense of irretrievable fragmentation.[220] The *Campo Marzio* is simultaneously depicted as 'formless heap of fragments colliding one against the other', 'an area […] represented according to a

[217] Ibid., p. 30.
[218] Ibid., p. 31.
[219] Ibid., p. 31.
[220] Ibid., p. 34.

method of arbitrary association […] whose principle of organization exclude any organic unity',[221] a 'formless tangle of spurious organisms', and 'the "triumph of the fragment"'.[222] Tafuri notices that what might at first sight appear an anthology of architectural types is in fact an ensemble of models 'based on an *exception* that very effectively gives the lie to the *rule*'.[223] 'Typology', he writes, 'is [initially] asserted as an instance of superior organization, yet the configuration of the individual types tends to destroy [its][...] very concept'.[224] This can be best inferred, he continues, from Piranesi's decision to reduce 'to minor, almost unrecognizable, incidents' those few monuments like Hadrian's Tomb, the Pantheon and the Theatre of Marcellus that have a 'basis in reality'.[225] The only elements that could set a norm are thereby deprived of any autonomy or paradigmatic value and dissolved in the 'continuum of fragments'.[226] This serves two purposes at once: it exposes the impossibility of devising architectural forms that comply perfectly with norms, and at the same time it denounces the uselessness of such 'breathless pursuit of exceptional structures'.[227] In Tafuri's reading, then, Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* demonstrates that both typological fixity and plasticity, when pursued to their ultimate ends, result in the disappearance of the city 'as a *place of Form*'. [228]

Tafuri's analysis of the *Carceri* testifies, again, to his understanding of dialectics as a process that eschews *sublation,* preserving a restless opposition between its opposing terms. In the inextricability of chaos and order, rule and exception, fragmentation and cohesion that characterizes Piranesi's work, Tafuri identifies the persistence of this conflict, which he renames 'dialectics of

[221] Ibid., p. 34.
[222] Ibid., p. 35.
[223] Ibid., p. 35.
[224] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 10.
[225] Ibid., p. 35.
[226] Ibid., p. 35.
[227] Ibid., p. 35.
[228] Ibid., p. 36.

contradiction'.[229] Two of the projects examined best attest to this irresolution: plate IX of the first series of the *Carceri*, and the Altar for S. Maria of the Priorato. In the former, the 'randomness of the episodes, the lawless intertwining of superstructures, [and] the undermining of the laws of perspectives' coexist 'with constant allusions […] to the 'austerity and organicity Etruscan and Roman architecture'.[230] In the altar the same polarity is expressed by the neat differentiation between its two sides. Whereas on the front side we find the classical *topoi* of Piranesian design, such as the 'variation' and 'summation' of elements, on the back every narrative unexpectedly disappears, leaving space to 'the striking abstraction of the pure geometric volumes'.[231] For Tafuri the altar is 'a mechanism that flaunts its duplicity',[232] while simultaneously disclosing, by means of its compactness, the interdependence of its two sides, the 'plus dicere' and 'minus dicere'.[233] Here, and not 'in the still ambiguous metaphors of the *Carceri*', lies what Tafuri defines the 'authentic *horrid* of Piranesi', the concrete proof that the 'reduction to zero' of architecture's symbolic and communicative attributes (its 'silence'), 'is the inevitable consequence of the "constraints" on variation'.[234]

2.3. The Criticism of the Future

Tafuri's use of the word 'horrid' may at first seem slightly inappropriate, and in the English translation perhaps bathetic. But if the sentence is read in context it becomes clear that the term – converted here from adjective to noun – is a stand-in for 'horror vacui'. What Piranesi's sphere ultimately discloses is the 'nullification of the signified', and horror is the feeling that ensues. From here we arrive at the core of Tafuri's understanding of Piranesi and his work: '[T]he problem – he asserts – turns out the be that of language' […] [,] the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio* [and we can

[229] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 11.
[230] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 26.
[231] Ibid., p. 48.
[232] Ibid., p. 48.
[233] Tafuri,'Il Complesso di Santa Maria del Priorato sull'Aventino', p. 86.
[234] Ibid., p. 49.

certainly add the Altar of the Priorato] unequivocally attack "language insofar as it is a mode of acting upon the world"'.[235] In support of his first statement Tafuri refers again to philosopher Massimo Cacciari, but the excerpt he selects is too short to help in illuminating his reasoning. It is therefore worth making a short detour into Cacciari's work, in order to see the extent to which the philosopher informed Tafuri's understanding of Piranesi regarding the theme of language.

In a series of essays published in the journals *Contropiano* and *Angelus Novus*,[236] which later provide the basis for the three important books *Metropolis* (1973), *Krisis* (1976) and *Pensiero Negativo e Razionalizzazione* (1977) Cacciari undertakes a critique of Hegelian dialectic: [237]

> The form of the dialectic is the form of the negative that is affirmed positively – the recoverable contradiction.[238]

And later:

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[235] Ibid., p. 34.

[236] In particular: Cacciari,'Dialettica e tradizione'; 'Sulla genesi del pensiero negativo', *Contropiano*, 1 (1969), 131-200; 'Vita cartesii est simplicissima', *Contropiano*, 2 (1970), 375-400; 'Note sulla dialettica del negativo nel tempo della metropoli (saggio su Georg Simmel)', *Angelus Novus*, 21 (1971).

[237] Massimo Cacciari, *Metropolis. Saggio sulla grande città di Sombart, Endell, Scheffler e Simmel* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1973); *Krisis, saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976); *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Venice: Marsilio, 1977). It should be recalled here that Cacciari wrote the preface to the Italian edition of the collection of Simmel's essays on aesthetics, Georg Simmel, *Saggi di estetica* (Padova: Liviana, 1970). At the beginning of *Metropolis*, furthemore, Cacciari explains that the content of the book was discussed at length during the architectural seminars directed by Tafuri at the IUAV from 1970 onwards.

[238] Cacciari, 'Sulla genesi del pensiero negativo', p. 131. Translated in Mandarini, 'Notes Towards a Critique of Left-Heideggerianism in Italian Philosophy of the 1970s.', p. 39.

> [...] Its [dialectic] truth is the whole final system in all its becoming: its function, then, is to functionalize within the system any ideological moment, any "subjective" element, to make for itself all what is within itself.[239]

It is important to recall that this critique has a specifically political sense, in that what Cacciari sees as the capacity of the dialectic to recuperate positively all that is internal to itself is also a structural feature of bourgeois political economy. To devise a philosophical position that refuses the positivization implicit in dialectical thinking was therefore a way to take stand against a determinate political-economic configuration. It is to this end that Cacciari concocts what he calls 'negative thought', namely a 'thought that sets out to determine the irrational and the non-functional [*non-razionalizzabile*]', and to demystify the totalizing ambitions of Hegelian dialectics.[240]

Cacciari's first sources of inspiration are Schopenhauer, Kirkegaard and Nietzsche, then in a later phase he turns to the sociological writings of Simmel and Benjamin, where he detects an attempt to explore the negative through the urban theme. Cacciari contends that in their descriptions of the modern metropolis, the negative is fully internalized, because 'the subject feels deep within himself the gravity of his task of "demystification" [...] [and] of acquiring a tragic awareness of the given'.[241] His despairing verdict draws on Simmel's definition of the blasé type, a new metropolitan subject who has interiorized the money economy to the point of losing 'the feeling for value differences'. In this 'surrender' to the laws of economic exchange presciently described by the German sociologist, he glimpses a parallel with his own attempt to bypass the functioning of dialectics. To abandon one's own

[239] My translation of 'La sua [della dialettica] verità è il sistema finale del tutto nel suo concreto divenire: il suo sforzo è appunto quello di funzionalizzare nel sistema ogni momento ideologico, ogni elemento "soggettivo", di rendere per sé ogni originario in-sé'. Cacciari, 'Sulla genesi del pensiero negativo', p. 138.
[240] My translation of 'il pensiero che ricerca la determinazione dell'irrazionabile, del "non-funzionalizzabile"'. Ibid., p. 138.
[241] Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: on the Philosophy of Modern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 9.

alterity to capital spontaneously appears to him the only way to sabotage the assimilation of difference from which the capitalist dialectic draws its force.

The metropolis described by Cacciari, following Simmel and Benjamin, is a place where the bourgeois ego has lost its autonomy and thought its rationalizing dominance over being. As Cacciari sees it, the rationalizing dominance of human thought did not present itself immediately but was 'constructed [...] through an *ergo* charged with ethical intent and responsible for civilization'. It was, in other words, a dominance associated with individual duty.[242] Here Cacciari connects the loss of autonomy of the bourgeois Ego in Modernity to language's loss of power over the world:

> Language – he argues – does not dominate any *thing*; it exists in relation to *nothing*. Its structure, the laws of its rationality, its form, have no specific *significations*; they do not communicate directly with anything. […] Here the collapse of duty is the collapse of the whole structure of values: values become precisely that about which one is unable to speak.[243]

These considerations allow a better understanding of Tafuri's description of the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio* in terms of attack on language's ability to 'act upon the world'. We can also begin to grasp the connection between the content of this section and its title: 'fragment as a criticism of the future'. Tafuri turns to Cacciari's theories to read works of art that were produced by Piranesi *before* the advent of modernity, ascribing to their use of 'fragmentation' a prophetic insight into the crisis of subjectivity and the loss of agency of language that would occur a century later with the rise of bourgeois society.[244] He furthermore relates Piranesi's 'predictive

[242] Ibid., pp. 56-57. The reference here is to the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am – in which being appears as the logical outcome of thinking.
[243] Ibid., p. 57.
[244] Tafuri explicitly speaks of 'Piranesi's *prophecy* of the bourgeois city as an "absurd machine"'. Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 14.

power' to the particular position of the latter in the history of artistic development, namely to his being '*no longer universalizing*' but '*not yet bourgeois*'.[245]

Allusions to the dissolution of language in relation to Piranesi's work appear in Tafuri's writing from 1971 onwards, supporting our hypothesis of his theoretical debt to Cacciari. By the end of the *Angelus Novus* article, Tafuri discerns in almost all Piranesi's works – from the *Carceri* to the Altar of St. Maria of the Priorato – what he calls 'the silence of form', and he seeks to examine how this 'silence' is rendered differently each time. Regarding the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio,* for example, he argues that the final divorce of the architectural 'signs from their signifieds' results from a combined effect of the violence exerted over architectural organisms and the distortion wrought on the laws of perspective: [246]

> The obsessive articulation and deformation of the compositions no longer correspond to an *ars combinatoria*. The clash of the geometric 'monads' is no longer regulated by any 'pre-established harmony'; and, most important, it demonstrates that the only meaning this paradoxical casuistry can refer back to is pure geometry, in the absolute semantic void that characterizes it.[247]

Only few lines later, Tafuri speaks of 'an architecture bereft of the signified, split off from any symbolic system, from any "value" other than architecture itself'.[248] In his description of the Altar of St. Maria of the Priorato, he focuses instead on the bareness of the back side of the altar – the 'minus dicere' opposed of the 'plus dicere' of the decorated front – and on the sphere emerging from it. The sphere is the locus where the 'absolute void', 'the silence of the things "by themselves"', 'the tautological affirmation of the pure sign […] turned solely back onto itself', are finally 'spoken

[245] Ibid., p. 18.
[246] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 40.
[247] Ibid., p. 40.
[248] Ibid., p. 40.

out' in all their 'brutal nakedness'.[249] If the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio* were the 'demonstration *ad absurdum*' of the 'nullification of the signified', the sphere coincides for Tafuri with 'the terminal point […] of Piranesi's research', the arrival at 'absolute void'.[250] At the end of the text, after repeatedly invoking such concepts as emptying out, dissolution, evacuation and self-referentiality, Tafuri employs the word 'negative' for the first time. There is no elucidation of the term here, nor any explicit reference to Cacciari, but it is hard not to see an allusion to the latter's 'negative thought'. Consider for example the following sentence:

> The *Carceri*, the *Campo Marzio* and the *Cammini* thus reveal Piranesi's recognition – dramatic but for this very reason 'virilely' accepted – of the inherence of the Negative within the process of becoming [divenire].[251]

'Negative' appears in upper case, as though designating a specific notion of negativity, and it stands for something 'inherent in the process of becoming' [inerenza del negativo al divenire]. Negation is thus associated with a movement, likely a 'dialectical movement', but one in which its presence is to be regarded as ineradicable and not reducible to a transitory condition destined to develop into its opposite. This allusion once again confirms Tafuri's understanding of Piranesi as a precursor of the disenchanted attitude described by German sociologists like Weber and Simmel, and later re-elaborated in Cacciari's study of negative thought.

Before concluding this section we cannot avoid touching on what is perhaps the most prescient of the critical insights Tafuri associates with Piranesi's fragmentation. This requires us to examine Tafuri's reading of Piranesi's *Parere sull' architettura*, a fictional dialogue between two characters, Didascalo and Protopiro,

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[249] Ibid., p. 49.
[250] Ibid., p. 49.
[251] Amended translation from Tafuri, *Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 54. The translator renders 'Negativa' as 'aberrant' and 'divenire' as 'the real'.

embodying a proto-romantic and a rationalist respectively. Piranesi sets one against the other in the attempt to reflect the polarization of the 17th century debates over the suitability of historical references and criteria for design. Protopiro objects to all use of ornament and calls for a return to the platonic models of ancient Greece (something akin to a '*proto*type', and the echo in his name is no accident). Didascalo, meanwhile, seeks to convince his 'opponent' that any given order contains numberless variations, to the point that it is impossible to differentiate with certitude between one order and another. Furthermore, he warns Protopiro of the potentially pernicious effects which could derive from his stubborn search for absoluteness. Tafuri focuses on this last point in his essay of 1971. He quotes a long passage from the *Parere* in which Didascalo deliberately (and provocatively) pushes Protopiro's functionalistic logic to the extreme:

> Let us observe the walls of a building both from the inside and from the outside. Those at the top terminate in architraves, and with all the rest that goes up there; and under these architraves are disposed for the most part semi-diametric columns or pilasters. Now I ask, what holds up the roof of a building? If it is the wall, then this has no need of architraves; if it is the columns of pilasters, then what does the wall do? Come, signor Protopiro, what do you want to knock down? The walls or the pillars? You do not answer? Then I shall destroy everything. Cast aside, 'Buildings, without walls, without columns, without pillars, without friezes, without cornices, without vaults, without roofs, space, empty space, bare countryside ….'[252]

Didascalo shows how the rigid application of Protopiro's utilitarian logic could lead to a complete *dismemberment* of the architectural edifice. Here Piranesi's 'fragmentation' takes the form of a restless 'taking away' of what *appears* inessential – although it is not – for the survival of the building. The law, originally conceived

[252] G. B. Piranesi in Tafuri, Ibid., p. 44.

as a constructive principle, turns back on itself to the point of becoming the cause of architecture's annihilation. An annihilation that ultimately engulfs the quality of architectural labour:

> Let us suppose – he has Didascalo say [it is Tafuri who is writing here] – that the world, although it disdains anything that does not vary from day to day, were gracious enough to put up with your monotony, to what state would architecture be reduced? A un *vil métier où l'on ne feroit que copier*, a certain Signore has said: and so that would make you others not only mediocre, extremely mediocre Architects, as I have just said, but even less than brick layers. They, after all, after doing the same piece of work repeatedly, will have memorized the procedure and will have another advantage over you: their mechanical ability; in fact you will cease to be Architects, since those seeking to build would be foolish to ask an architect to do what a bricklayer could do for them at much less expense.[253]

Tafuri sees in this passage more evidence of Piranesi's prescience. The description of architectural labour reduced to *vil métier* would in fact prefigure the expropriation of the intellectual qualities of design which will be prompted by mass exigencies of a new bourgeois commitment.[254] Only few lines later Tafuri goes so far as to say that both the 'reduction of intellectual work to abstract repetitive work'[255] and the distinction between architecture and bare building (made more a century and a half later by Adolf Loos), are *already completely* presaged in Piranesi's dialogue. This apparent allusion to workerist theories of the proletarianization of intellectual labour suggests that almost two decades after the exhaustion of the movement (the reference reappears in the version of the text included in the *Sphere and the Labyrinth* in the '80s) Tafuri had not abandoned its political framework, at least in his reading of

[253] G. B. Piranesi in Ibid., p. 45.
[254] Ibid., p. 45, amended translation.
[255] Ibid., p. 45.

changes affecting labour in architecture. The reissue of the Piranesi essay at the beginning of the '80s, in fact, makes the analysis appear all the more prescient.

3. The Relative Value of Fragment, from Piranesi to the Avant-Garde

The subtitle of the *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* – 'Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s' – hints at a connection between avant-garde currents and the research on the Venetian etcher. The first part of the book consists, we said, of a marginally revised version of Tafuri's *Angelus Novus* essay, plus an article on Eisenstein's study of the *Carceri*, the text of which is included at the end of the chapter as appendix. In what follows we shall look into this particular connection, untangling what in the title I called the 'relative value of fragment'. Our brief account of Tafuri's contrasting judgements on the work of Brunelleschi and Borromini already indicated an understanding of the fragment that is not fixed or inherently positive. Fragment/fragmentation, like everything in the Tafurian universe, may contribute either to the undermining of historical certitudes or to the restoration of conservative propositions. It may also perform these two opposing functions at once, as in the case we intend to discuss here. Tafuri's comparative analysis of Piranesi's diluted cityscape and the avant-garde technique of montage brings to light the possibility of this coexistence. More specifically, as we shall see, it demonstrates how 20th the century avant-garde made it apparent a number of contradictions already latent in the oeuvre of Piranesi.

Throughout Tafuri's writing, several passages invoke Piranesi directly as an antecedent of 20th century avant-gardist art, but almost none of these expands on the nature of this relation.[256] The sole exception, on which this section will largely draw, is a long paragraph in the essay 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', where Tafuri unexpectedly juxtaposes Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* and Picasso's *Dame au*

[256] See in particular 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 14; and *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 44.

Violon.[257] It is interesting to observe that the same connection was made by Eisenstein much earlier in the text included in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. Tafuri seems therefore to draw inspiration from Eisenstein's analysis, while endowing it with a radically different meaning, as we will see later in the chapter.

In 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', Tafuri seeks to show the connivance of art and architecture in capitalist development from 18th century to the present, generally maintaining a chronological sequence. Within this structure Piranesi logically appears among the first cases examined, but he unexpectedly reappears at the very end of the text, in the section dedicated to the avant-garde. This move, I argue, has the specific function of emphasising the etcher's genealogical role with respect to 20th-century art and architecture in general, and specifically the transformation of art into a critical and programmatic activity:[258]

> It is here – writes Tafuri – that the links holding the great tradition of bourgeois art together in a single whole become more concretely manifest. We can now see how our initial consideration of Piranesi as both theorist and critic of the conditions of an art that is *no longer universalizing and not yet bourgeois* serves to shed light on the problem. [...] Both Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* and Picasso's *Dame au Violon* are 'programmes'.[259]

Tafuri's analysis of Piranesi's and Picasso's work suggests a link between programmatic intent and formal fragmentation. The dismembering of organic forms and their subsequent reassembly in new composite structures observable in the works of both artists is for him the formal *vehicle* through which a certain programmatic, critical and problematic attitude is expressed. Tafuri does not speak of fragmentation here, however, but of the 'technique of shock', likening Piranesi's work to an *ante-litteram* manifestation of the experience of shock theorized by Walter Benjamin two

[257] The official title of the painting is *Femme au Violin*.
[258] Tafuri,'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 18.
[259] Ibid., p. 18.

centuries later.[260] But Piranesi's work, he emphasises, is no more than the first 'symptom' of this phenomenon, still bearing a radical potential. As he puts it, although 'both [Piranesi and Picasso] discover the reality of a machine-universe', '[Piranesi's] eighteenth-century urban project makes that universe abstract and recoils in horror from its discovery, while Picasso's canvas works entirely within it'.[261] Tafuri's juxtaposition of Piranesi and Picasso is thus twofold: on the one hand it shows how processes associated with the 20th-century avant-garde began much earlier, while on the other it reveals the 'relative value of fragment', that is, an understanding of forms that varies according to broader political and economic changes, or more precisely according to the 'room for manoeuvre' that artistic expression gains through these changes.

It is worth taking a closer look at the parallel Tafuri draws, in order to unpack the meaning he assigns to the word 'programme'. As mentioned earlier, his analysis is based on Benjamin's theory of shock, but the latter is no more than a point of departure:

> Benjamin closely links the decline, in industrial labour, of *skill* and *experience* — still operative in handicrafts — to the experience of *shock* typical of the urban condition. [...] [Yet] Despite the pointedness of his observations, Benjamin does not link — either in his essays on Baudelaire or in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' — this invasion of the urban morphological structure by the modes of production with the response of the avant-garde movements to the question of the city.[262]

Tafuri decides to explore what has been left unexplored by the German philosopher, and he comes to argue that the avant-gardist decision to place the shock experience at

[260] Ibid., p. 18.
[261] Ibid., p. 18.
[262] Ibid., p. 17.

the centre of its work was merely a way of displacing and relieving the shock that people underwent in real life, allowing them to function effectively under a capitalist regime.

Yet this is still not enough to account for Tafuri's parallel. Why would Piranesi's *Campo Marzio* and Picasso's *Dame au Violon* amount to a 'programme'? Tafuri explains that the latter is not simply a one-off attempt to sublimate the shock experienced by its maker, but it indicates an ambition to define a new 'mode of behaviour'.[263] 'Cubism as a whole', he asserts, tends to define the laws of 'subjective reactions within the objective universe of production'.[264] Here lies its 'programmatic' element. We can now finally grasp the shift in the meaning of the fragment between Piranesi and the avant-garde. Where Piranesi's 'eighteenth-century urban project recoils in horror after having made the machine-universe visible', the avant-garde transforms a reaction of fear into a modus operandi establishing a proper 'theory of the fragment'. By extending the scope of Tafuri's comments on Picasso to contemporary architecture, Marco Biraghi has pointed out that his analysis reveals a shift in the field of possibility conceded to architects: 'what [was] acceptable to Piranesi in an early phase of capitalist development […] – he contends – is for the architects of late capitalism transformed into a complete impracticality'.[265] The gradual loss of the critical power attached to formal devices like the fragment bears witness to the impossibility of transgression that typifies advanced capitalism.

The same thesis reappears in the essay addressing Sergei Eisenstein's study of Piranesi.[266] The text in question takes a critical stance towards the Russian director, showing how his turn to Piranesi was motivated by the need to find historical justification for his cinematic poetics. Eisenstein would distort Piranesi's etchings by subjecting them to 'ecstatic transfiguration', a technique involving the exaggeration of the internal compositional lines of the image to the point of causing its 'explosion'.

[263] Ibid., p. 18.
[264] Ibid., p. 18.
[265] Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, p. 37.
[266] Manfredo Tafuri,'The Historicity of the Avant-Garde: Piranesi and Eisenstein', in *The Sphere and Labyrinth*, pp. 55-64.

Piranesi's *Carcere oscura* is likewise broken into parts and distorted in a way akin to formalist poetry, then in a second moment recomposed to make up a '*cinematic phrase*'.[267] Eisenstein justifies his operation by arguing that he has merely brought to the surface several formal functions already implicitly present in earlier series of drawings. His work would therefore bring out a concealed genealogical legacy.

The Russian director also links the formal shift occurring in Piranesi's work to a broader development towards abstraction leading from Piranesi to the 20th-century avant-garde. Tafuri examines the trajectory plotted by Eisenstein, and pauses on its terminal point, Picasso's *Guernica*, which Eisenstein associates to a return to the *pathos*.[268] Such a passage, he contends, illuminates Eisenstein's appropriation of Piranesi: 'In his essay on the *Carceri*, – he writes – it is evident that the route he [Eisenstein] traces from *Piranesi* to *Guernica* is in reality a closed circle. From *Guernica* he returns to the *Carceri*'.[269] Eisenstein's reading of *Guernica* would reveal the urge to reinstate the alliance between the autonomy of form and figurative values initially opposed by the avant-garde, going back to a mode of representation like that of Piranesi, where the 'crisis of the object' was not yet fully achieved:

> [In Piranesi's work] One stone may have 'moved off' another stone, but it has retained its represented 'stony' concreteness. A stone has hurled itself across into angular wooden rafters, but the represented 'concreteness' of both has been preserved untouched….The concrete reality of perspective, the real representational quality of the object, is not destroyed anywhere.[270]

Eisenstein's attempt to recuperate the totality of form through Piranesi is particularly troubling for Tafuri, because it coincides with the rise of the neo-populist ideology that accompanies the launch of the first two Soviet five-year plans. The retreat from

[267] Ibid., p. 56.
[268] Ibid., p. 61.
[269] Ibid., p. 63.
[270] Eisenstein quoted in Ibid., p. 61.

formal autonomy thus reflects the demise of the communist project and the return to an interim condition where artistic expression must at least partially validate linguistic forms. However, reference to Piranesi is not in itself enough to bring back to life the dialectic of form and content realized in his work. To restate the thesis advanced at the beginning this section, the meaning and potential of formal device – in this case those of the 'fragment' – are inextricable from the historical-economic context they arise in.

4. 'Ceci n'est pas un fragment'. From Negative Utopia to Heterotopia

In his *Angelus Novus* essay Tafuri quotes a long sentence from Piranesi's *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*, where the Venetian etcher denounces the limitations that the politics of 18th century Rome imposed on the exercise of the architectural profession. The targets of Piranesi's criticism are the Roman aristocracy and public authorities, who ignore the need for an urban policy based on investment in great public works, in turn causing architecture to lose its original magnificence and ambition. This provides Piranesi with justification for his retreat from built architecture and his turn to drawing, etching and writing: 'no other option is left to me, or to any other modern Architect, – he says – than to explain his own idea through drawings'.[271] Such a move has a double effect. While it reclaims from 'Sculpture and Painting the advantage that […] they have in this respect over Architecture',[272] it also frees the latter 'from the abuse of those who posses wealth' and presume to control its functioning. In other words, Piranesi 'upgrades' applied art to fine art with the aim of freeing it from the constraints on its actual practice that existed during his lifetime. A move that might be said to prefigure the utopian proposals put forward by radical architects in the 1970s.

Tafuri does not make that connection himself, but it is tempting to speculate that Piranesi's withdrawal from architecture resonated in his mind with the visionary landscapes sketched at the time by his colleagues, towards which he didn't spare his

[271] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*., p. 29.
[272] Ibid., p. 29.

criticism.[273] In a sense that anticipates the radical architecture of the 1970s, Piranesi 'present[s] an alternative that departs from actual historical conditions [...], but only in order to project into the future the bursting forth of present contradictions'.[274] For reasons we will soon elaborate better, Tafuri is keen on observing that, contrary to what might be thought, the appeal to imagination was absolutely congruent with the spirit of enlightenment, in so far as it constituted one of the fundamental tools of scientific development on which 18th culture rested. In his account, moreover, utopianism appears in different forms and with varying 'intensity' throughout Piranesi's work. While *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*, for example, endorses utopianism almost uncritically, the *Carceri* embodies a shift towards what Tafuri calls 'negative utopia'.

Negative utopia is by no means Tafuri's own creation, but an expression first used (in this strict form) by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, to which Tafuri repeatedly – albeit implicitly – alludes throughout his text of 1971. Adorno associates utopia with negation again in the '60s in a discussion with his fellow philosopher Ernst Bloch, but the two concepts are paired here quite differently, in a way that has little in common either with *Dialectic of Enlightenment* or with Tafuri's interpretation.[275] It should be noted that Adorno merely coined the term 'negative utopia' and did not expand on its implications, while it is Tafuri who gives new life to the expression, without ever losing sight of Adorno's and Horkheimer's definition of it as a that 'to which every form of coercive

[273] Consider for example Manfredo Tafuri,'Design and Technological Utopia', in *Italy*: *the New Domestic Landscape*, *Achievements and Problems of Italian Design*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), pp. 388-404 (p. 125).
[274] Tafuri, *The Sphere and Labyrinth*, p. 29.
[275] 'Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradiction of Utopian Longing (1964)', in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature,* trans. by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 1-17 (p. 10).

power always tends'.[276] Earlier in this chapter we noted that Tafuri construes the consumed buildings and broken urban landscapes pictured by Piranesi as premonitions of the calamitous effects of the constraining force of reason. In the text considered, therefore, the concept of 'negative utopia' does not amount to utopia's direct antipode (i.e. dystopia), but stems directly from utopia whenever the latter is implemented in full.[277] It is as this point that utopia's perfect order collapses, making room for fragmentation, conflict and incompleteness.

'Negative utopia' is only one of the expressions Tafuri uses to describe the utopianism of Piranesi's later work. The others are 'utopia of subjective negation' and 'utopia of dissolved Form'.[278] Although Tafuri seems to regard them as synonymous, 'utopia of subjective Negation' and 'utopia of dissolved Form' echo Cacciari's study of the metropolis more strongly than Adorno and Horkerimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The allusion to subjects' powerlessness to act on the world ('subjective negation') in such a way as to endow it with form clearly resonates with Cacciari's study of the loss of individual agency brought about by modernity. Tafuri makes the connection manifest by declaring the greatness of Piranesi's negative utopia to lie in the 'refusal to establish alternative possibilities [i.e. that of contradiction as absolute reality]' and in the artist's willingness to show that 'in the crisis […] *we are powerless*, and the true "magnificence" is to welcome freely this destiny'.[279] The complete formal disintegration depicted in works such as the *Carceri*, the *Campo Marzio*, and the *Cammini* ultimately has a double meaning in Tafuri's account. If on an immediate level, as we said, it alludes to the contradiction inherent in the real, and in so doing it stands against the ideal synthesising views of

[276] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), trans. by John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), p. 69.
[277] Fredric Jameson has discussed this in his *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005).
[278] Tafuri, *The Sphere and Labyrinth*, p. 34 and 54.
[279] Ibid., p. 54.

enlightenment proponents, on a second level it manifests 'the absolute "solitude" [...][of] the subject who recognizes the relativity of his own actions'.[280]

Whereas in his essay of 1971 Tafuri seeks to describe Piranesi's attempts to challenge the synthesizing ambition of utopian thinking through concepts such as 'negative utopia' and the variations discussed above, in the updated version of the same text included in the *Sphere and the Labyrinth* in 1980 the author invokes Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' for the first time.[281] The addition of this new term to Tafuri's conceptual toolbox is evident in the replacement of the original title – 'G. B. Piranesi: L'Architettura come Utopia Negativa' – with '"The Wicked Architect": G. B. Piranesi, Heterotopia and the Voyage'. In addition, in the later version Tafuri adds an entirely new paragraph in which the work of Piranesi and Canaletto is paralleled to heterotopia. Tafuri had made this juxtaposition once before, in a *Lotus* magazine article of 1976 from which the paragraph added to the chapter of the *Sphere and the Labyrinth* is excerpted. As I shall argue in this final part of the chapter, for a very brief period in the mid-'70s Tafuri saw Foucault's heterotopia as a viable image-concept representing the unstable relation between parts and whole, signifiers and signifieds, that was first revealed by Piranesi then subsequently by the avant-garde. We shall see, however, that just as the avant-garde – and in part also Piranesi – failed to push this critique to its very end, the concept created by Foucault will prove unable to convey a truthful alternative to the false synthesis of utopian thinking.

Although brief references to Michel Foucault can already be found in *Theories and History*, it is only from the mid-'70s that Tafuri examines the French writer's work in detail. The occasion was provided by a seminar on Foucault that Tafuri and his colleagues organised at the Istituto Universitario in 1977, which was followed by a small publication titled *Dispositivo Foucault*.[282] In recalling that period, French

[280] Ibid., p. 54.
[281] Ibid., p. 63.
[282] Franco Rella (ed.), *Dispositivo Foucault* (Cluva: Venice, 1977).

architect Georges Teyssot – a symposium participant himself – points to Tafuri's shift from utopia to heterotopia:

> In the department of Venice it took them long time to rid themselves of the notion of utopia. This notion persisted till the 1976 when Tafuri published a French translation of his superb essays […] 'Piranesi, a Negative Utopia in Architecture' [...]. Subsequently Tafuri discovers there is something else at the root of utopia, the exact meaning of which signifies a nonplace. Yes, he had read Foucault's definition of heterotopia, but he hadn't really grasped it. Later, Tafuri transformed his Piranesi title to 'G. B. Piranesi and Heterotopia' (in the *Sphere and the Labyrinth*), thus equating his first notion of negative utopia, which was derived from Adorno's negative thinking, to a new notion of heterotopia. It was this equation that didn't work, especially because the negative utopia was that of one artist, Piranesi, while Foucault's heterotopias were never the production of subjective wills. I had written on the concept of heterotopia, and we went through a real conflict because of what I was saying: 'No Tafuri, you transform your negative utopia by picking up and borrowing the word from Foucault, but you don't accept the Foucauldian implication of this notion, and all the consequences of this shift'. Heterotopia means another place, and a place other; a different place, a place within places. This notion fully understood led to an important reflection on the discontinuity of places and spaces. Society is composed of different places, and those sites are determined by doors, backdoors, window and a whole array of spatial devices. You don't enter a heterotopia like you would enter any building. It is this very mechanism that rules and orders this other space, that operates on society. For Tafuri, the negative utopia would be certainly Borromini's churches or Piranesi's church of Santa Maria del Priorato in Rome, because he was interested in the tragedy of a builder who builds very little. Foucault's

> heterotopias were heterogenous places within society, while Tafuri's negative utopias were impossible oeuvres, forlorn failures, and tragic mishaps.[283]

There is, indeed, some truth in Georges Teyssot's account. Tafuri establishes a link between Piranesi, Canaletto, the technique of montage and heterotopia without providing an exhaustive definition of the concept or of his own understanding of it, leaving it to the reader to wonder what specific features form the basis of this homology. However, while Tafuri uses the concept coined by Foucault without engaging in depth with its broader philosophical context, he had not – as Teyssot argues – misinterpreted its meaning. Teyssot's criticism betrays *his* own reductive cognizance of heterotopia, in that it seems only to take into account its spatial/temporal application, which was explored by Foucault in a second moment'.[284] Tafuri instead refers to the term as it is first used in the preface to *The Order of Things*,[285] where Foucault sets out to enquire into the changes of the episteme in Western thought since the Renaissance. In this framework the term is employed to indicate the absence of any 'common ground' between different classes of things, and more broadly it implies the breaking off of the mirroring reciprocities of language and facts that distinguishes the 17th-18th century episteme. For Tafuri the works of Piranesi, Canaletto and the technique of montage are 'heterotopic', in so far as they express, through aesthetic means, the irreconcilable split between signified and signifier.

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[283] Teyssot and Henninger, 'One Portrait of Tafuri', pp. 13-14.
[284] I refer to Foucault's use of heterotopia in his 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias (1967)', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22-27. The text, originally titled 'Des espaces autres', was presented by Foucault at the conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales in 1967.
[285] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of Human Sciences* (1966), (London: Routledge, 2002), p. XIX.

If the rationale for Tafuri's application of the concept of heterotopia to the work of Piranesi and the 20th century avant-garde is to be grasped in full, I would argue that his contribution to the *Dispositivo Foucault* conference must be taken into account along with that of his colleague Massimo Cacciari. Tafuri's text does not hinge on heterotopia as such but it discusses in broader terms some of the main aspects of Foucault's philosophical project, ranging from his revamping of Nietzsche's notion of genealogy to his inquiry into the relation between knowledge and power. Tafuri is certainly intrigued by some of the philosopher's theoretical propositions, and he prizes highly the attempt to shed light on the ubiquitous nature of power, together with its inextricably enmeshment in language. In paticular, he is concerned with the coexistence of a multiplicity of discourses establishing different regimes of truth, that traverse, divide and discipline society. Still, he contends that Foucault fails to consider the process of the fragmentation of powers-discourses thoroughly, overlooking their potential collision, and the transformation of the space in between them into what he calls the 'space of conflict' [spazio dello scontro].[286] Tafuri shows reluctance to discard completely the connection between power and physical reality completely, fearing that political friction will vanish unless a certain materiality is preserved. His emphasis on the notion of conflict also illuminates, albeit implicitly, a major philosophical pitfall in Foucault's theory of power. As French philosopher Alain Badiou has recently argued, a theory of power as relation that refuses the dialectical schema (i.e. the relation of contradiction) precludes any 'distinction between terms and relations', and therefore lacks a founding logic.[287] Tafuri concludes the text warning about a possible link between Foucault's theories and the re-emerging of a metaphysical notion of power.

[286] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive', in *Dispositivo Foucault* (Venice: Cluva, 1977), 37-45 (p. 44).
[287] Alain Badiou, *The Adventure of French Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 98-99.

To get a full sense of Tafuri's warning we need to turn to Cacciari's contribution to the same volume. Here Cacciari opposes to contemporary philosophical attempts that try to resolve the crisis of dialectics by replacing it with notions of dispersion or dissemination, arguing that the idea of power as pervasive and omnipresent underpinning the theories of Foucault or Deleuze, can paradoxically lead to the restoration of its totalizing dimension – power is nowhere but *everywhere*:

> Precisely to the extent that the Political is not problematized in its specific post-dialectical dimension, the discrete, dispersed, 'rare' multiplicities that Deleuze speaks of ultimately reappear in the role of the One. The modern topology 'that no longer assigns a privileged position to the source of power' (Deleuze) nonetheless speaks only of *non*-politically articulated (or dis-articulated) Power – the anarchic dispersal of the Political, understood solely as disciplinary technique, connives in a fetishistic conception of Power. This is obvious, I think, in the Deleuze-Foucault dialogue. 'Who speaks and who acts? Always a multiplicity...?' says Deleuze at the outset. But power continues always to be treated as 'totalization' – not 'politically' [...] Power is exercised in a disciplinary way – but its 'dispersal' is something more like the *ramification* of one of its strategies, a Will to Power. Hence: there are different politics, but there is one *Power*.[288]

[288] Mine and Matthew Hyland's translation of: 'Le molteplicità discrete, disperse, "rare" di cui parla Deleuze, proprio nella misura in cui il Politico non è stato fatto oggetto di problema, nella sua specifica dimensione post-dialettica, finiscono per riapparire col funzioni dell'Uno. La topologia moderna "che non assegna più' ad un posto privilegiato la fonte del potere" (Deleuze) parla però solo del Potere, *non* politicamente articolato (o dis-articolato) – la dispersione anarchica del Politico, inteso solamente come tecniche disciplinari, convive con una concezione feticistica del Potere. Ciò risulta evidente, a mio avviso, nel dialogo tra Deleuze e Foucault. "Chi parla e chi agisce? È sempre una molteplicita…?" dice Deleuze all'inizio. Ma il potere continua ad essere sempre trattato come "Totalizzazione" – non "politicamente". […] Il Potere si esercita in modo disiciplinare – ma la sua "dispersione" è piuttosto *ramificazione* di una sua strategia, di una Volontà di

I want to argue that this passage by Cacciari points towards the answer to our initial question concerning the reasons for the parallel between Foucault's heterotopia, the work of Piranesi and the avant-garde. Let us return for a moment to the article for *Lotus* magazine where this parallel is posited most clearly. Early in the text Tafuri refers to the definition of heterotopia in *The Order of Things*, and he criticises Foucault for failing to grasp that the 'devastation of language is a subterfuge for safeguarding a principle of synthesis in which a new solidarity rules among the fragments of order disordered'.[289] In a second moment he identifies a similar dynamic in the Dadaist collages of Schwitters and Paul Citröen, where fragments are 'compelled to clash with one another' on a common and unifying field of the canvas.[290] Tafuri reads Foucault's philosophical project through Cacciari's lenses, and then he establishes a parallel between its pitfalls and those inhering, albeit to largely different degrees, to Piranesi's and the avant-garde's work. In his view, neither Foucault's, Piranesi's nor the avant-garde's proposals manage to keep the promise of a multiplicity and heterogeneity of powers or meanings, but they all presage the risk of a return to reconciliation and unity.

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In this chapter, I dropped the contextual approach adopted in the initial part of the thesis and narrowed my focus to Tafuri's writings. I conducted an in-depth exploration of Tafuri's study of Piranesi, paying attention to both his methodological and thematic choices. I dedicated considerable space to his examination of Piranesi's commentaries on the labour of the architect, an aspect overlooked by the available literature. Additionally, I placed emphasis on the multifarious meanings that Tafuri

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Potenza'. Massimo Cacciari,'Il problema del politico in Deleuze e Foucault', in *Dispositivo Foucault* (Venice: Cluva, 1977, 57-69 (p. 61)

[289] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Ceci n'est pas une ville', *Lotus*, 13 (1976), 10-13 (p. 11).

[290] Ibid., p. 11.

associates with Piranesi's work, and I interpreted such multiplicity of perspectives as an acknowledgement of the complexity of the process of conversion between artistic forms, ideologies and history. Throughout the chapter I have stressed the appreciative judgement that Tafuri forms of Piranesi, without however overlooking the passages that critically address the latent ideological messages of his work. I want to argue, in conclusion, that Tafuri's interpretation of the ideological aspects of Piranesi's oeuvre resonates with T.J. Clark's thesis regarding art's ability to work through its own ideological content, giving it a form that at 'certain moments is [...] a subversion of ideology'.[291] In the last part of the chapter I considered Tafuri's comparison between the uses of the fragment in different moments in art history, and I explored the relation he establishes between their anti-ideological function and broader political and economic changes.

[291] Timothy J. Clark, *Image of the People, Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 13.

Chapter Three:

'The Historical "Project"' in Theory and Practice

1. From the 'Space of Conflict' to 'The Historical "Project"'

In the last part of the previous chapter we looked at Tafuri's and Cacciari's attempt at getting to grips with the work of Michel Foucault, through a close examination of their essays for the publication *Dispositivo Foucault*. We contended that in 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive' Tafuri offers an ambivalent assessment of the French philosopher's project,[292] and we paid particular attention to his thesis as to the lack of a 'space of conflict', understood as a site where multiple powers could incessantly collide so as to prevent any return to mere singularity.[293]

In this third chapter, we will expand on the 'space of conflict'. We will argue that this latter finds its concretization in what Tafuri calls 'The Historical "Project"', a proposal for a historical method presented in an eponymous article the same year as *Dispositivo Foucault* was published.[294] While in the preceding chapters we looked at Tafuri's analysis of the avant-garde's domestication of negativity, in the text that follows we will instead show how historical research, if conducted according to the criteria set out in the 1977 essay, can retain a critical (read: negative, conflicting) element. One might reasonably wonder if this division does not simply mimic a classic opposition between practice and theory, where theory is regarded as the true site of criticality, and practice the inevitable betrayal of all radical theoretical propositions. This is not exactly the case, however, for Tafuri does not set theory

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[292] In support of Tafuri's criticism, it is worth recalling that in a 1976 interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, Foucault argued that the dialectical framework does not allow us to get to the core of historical struggles, for it prevents from grasping their 'aleatory and open' reality. Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del Potere*, trans. and ed. by Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), p. 9. Unlike Tafuri, furthermore, Foucault sharply rejected the Marxist notion of ideology, arguing that it was 'difficult to use' due to its being in virtual opposition with something else considered to be 'truth', its necessary reference to a subject, and its subordination to something else operating as an economic and materialist determinant. Ibid., p. 12.

[293] Tafuri, 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive', p. 44.

[294] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Il "progetto" storico', *Casabella,* 429 (1977), 11-18. Published in English as 'The Historical "Project"', *Opposition*, 17 (1979) and later in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. Throughout the chapter I will refer to the latter edition.

against practice, but rather distinguishes between two *different forms* of practice. As Teresa Stoppani argues, for Tafuri history is not 'a discourse applied ex-post to architecture', but amounts to a proper 'form of making'.[295] A similar argument has been advanced by Andrew Leach in the Satrian-inflected conclusion of his *Choosing History*. In the part of the book in question, Leach reads Tafuri's opting for history in light of Sartre's notion of intellectual work as a form of 'practicing resistance' grounded in decisions that amount to moments of active self-determination.[296]

Regarding the structure of our chapter, while in its first part we will probe into the theoretical sources of 'The Historical "Project"', in the second part we will look at its application, considering a set of writings that collectively make up his 'Renaissance research'. It was this research that occupied the last decade of Tafuri's intellectual career, mainly being elaborated through *L'Armonia e i conflitti* (1983), *Venezia e il Rinascimento* (1985), *Ricerca del Rinascimento* (1992) and the monographs *Raffaello architetto* (1984), *Giulio Romano* (1989) and *Francesco di Giorgio Martini* (1993).[297] It is worth specifying that the method outlined in 'The Historical "Project"' was not solely applied to the study of the Renaissance, but in this latter we can discern a resemblance between research method and outcomes, which we consider particularly relevant to our own research framework. It seems as if in Tafuri's study of fifteenth to sixteenth century architecture, the 'space of conflict'

[295] Teresa Stoppani, *Paradigm Islands: Manhattan and Venice. Discourses on Architecture and the City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 37.
[296] See Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History*, pp. 252-253.
[297] The only texts available in English among those listed are: *Venice and the Renaissance,* trans. by Jessica Levine (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1989); *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and Manfredo Tafuri (ed.), *Giulio Romano*, trans. by F. Berry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). This chapter also takes into consideration the following essays: 'Discordant Harmony from Alberti to Zuccari', *Architectural Design*, 49 (1979), 36-44; 'La norma e il programma. Il Vitruvio di Daniele Barbaro', *I dieci libri dell'architettura tradotti e commentati da Daniele Barbaro* (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1987), pp. XI-XL.

would find full materialization both in the approach he adopted and in the picture he offered of this period.

2. 'The Historical "Project"' and its Sources

'The 'Historical "Project"' was first published in the architectural journal *Casabella* in 1977, and a few years later it was included as a preface to the *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. The main aim of this important text was to define a set of guidelines for historical research, without any pretence of certifying an exact method. The essay displays the torment of any historical research that sets itself the goal of getting closer to truth, while knowing that this will always remain out of reach.

Foucault's thesis as to the plurality of power is certainly one of this essay's main theoretical sources. At the beginning of the text, for example, Tafuri declares 'extinct' the immediate identification between power (implicitly understood as a 'defined space of power') and knowledge,[298] and urges historians to grapple with a complex web of interlinked powers 'run[ning] through and cut[ting] across social classes, ideologies, and institutions'.[299] No longer, then, is there a single history – he proclaims – but a 'history written in the plural'.[300] And no longer is there a single historical 'origin', but multiple beginnings. His immediate reference points, here, are Nietzsche's debate over the concept 'origin', and Foucault's revamping of the same theme in his 1971 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'.[301] In this latter, Foucault refers in

[298] The English translation of the sentence to which I refer does not retain its original meaning: 'spentosi il sogno di un sapere che si identifichi immediatamente con il potere' is rendered as 'with the fading away of the dream of knowledge as a means to power', but it would be better translated as 'with the fading away of the dream of knowledge completely identified with power'. Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 3.

[299] Ibid., p. 5.

[300] Ibid., p. 5.

[301] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, trans. by Robert Hurley and others, ed. by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), pp. 343-268. In 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive' Tafuri accuses

appreciative terms to the arguments that sustain Nietzsche's rejection of the notion of historical origin. One of the main problems related to this concept, he explains, it is that it implies the existence of a perfect, coeval state where everything is already present *in nuce*, and of which the historical process represents just a predictable unfolding. It thus devalues history, and its never fully predictable development.

As against such an understanding of origin, Foucault proposes to adopt the concept of 'genealogy', which he describes as a search for 'numberless beginnings', attentive to 'maintain[ing] passing events in their proper dispersion'.[302] It is hard not to see a parallel, here, with a passage in 'The 'Historical "Project"' where Tafuri describes the work of the historian as guided by the pursuit of the 'hidden [...] intertwining of phenomena that demands to be recognised as such'.[303] Both Foucault and Tafuri seem to be willing to hold on to the dispersion and the heterogeneity of multiple historical 'beginnings'.

This intent also signals, I would like to stress, a recognition of the indeterminacy and rootlessness of history.[304] As a matter of fact, in his 1971 text, Foucault writes that the genealogist who 'refuses to extend his faith to metaphysics' and 'listens to history' will understand that behind things there is not a 'timeless and essential secret', but rather a lack of essence, or better, a type of essence 'fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms'.[305] Referring to the Nietzsche of the *The Dawn of Day*, Foucault sardonically concludes by saying that a genealogical approach to history allows us to discover that reason 'was born in an altogether "reasonable" fashion – from chance'.[306]

Foucault of distorting Nietzsche's understanding of genealogy, but he refrains from providing any explanation in support of his critique.

[302] Ibid., p. 374.

[303] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 3.

[304] In the last page of *Interpreting the Renaissance*, Tafuri explicitly talks of the 'unfounded' and 'rootlessness' of the human historical condition. Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 258.

[305] Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p. 371.

[306] Ibid., p. 371.

The space that Tafuri accords to Foucault at the very beginning of 'The 'Historical "Project"' should not lead us to think that he had revised his seminal position on the French philosopher's work. The perplexities expressed in 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive' in fact resurface in Tafuri's hypothesis of a 'history written in the plural', where he makes explicit the risk of a 'reconsacration of the microscopically analyzed fragments as new units autonomous and significant in themselves'.[307] In these lines, we can make out a subtle but significant difference from the critique he had advanced in his earlier essay for *Dispositivo Foucault*. Whereas in that first text Tafuri saw the ubiquitous notion of power as bearing a danger of a return to a metaphysical dimension – this being a power that is nowhere *but everywhere* –, here the problem lies with the reaffirmation of the hermetic compactness of power at a lower scale. Tafuri aptly reasons that the problem of the 'synthesis' of power cannot be solved solely by way of dematerialization or fragmentation. It is necessary to make a further step. After having asked himself 'how to pass from a history written in the singular to one in the plural', he now wants to understand 'what allows [one] to pass from a history written in the plural[,] to a questioning of that very plurality'.[308]

In order to understand how Tafuri responded to this question, we need to refer back once again to 'the space of conflict', a notion that Tafuri had only sketched out in his brief essay on Foucault, and which here finally achieved some degree of concreteness. It is in fact in the historiographical field that Tafuri identifies the site of conflict, and forces it to 'speak'. Studying the specific reasons and modes that determine the interaction and the collisions between the many powers that 'run through and cut across social classes, ideologies, and institutions', is the only way to avoid both the fetishization of an overall power, and the process of pulverization leaving each single nucleus of power intact. To get back to our question, it is the only way to investigate 'the very plurality' of history.

[307] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 5.
[308] Ibid., p. 5.

Leafing through Tafuri's works dedicated to the study of the Renaissance published after 'The Historical "Project", we continually stumble across expressions comparing the making of history to an orchestrated process of collision between different narrative threads. At the beginning of the *Venice and the Renaissance*, for example, Tafuri declares that he will choose, as a point of observation, 'the nodes where events, times and mentalities intersect',[309] and in the preface to *L'armonia e i conflitti*, we read that the research will be pursued not by way of the aggregation of data, but through the intersection of multiple storylines:[310]

> [...] the historian's work aims at the reconstruction of that *interaction*: the plurality of centres that the analysis has to take into account presupposes the capacity to modify the way in which we approach each of them, starting from the question of how they intersect.[311]

Understanding history as the scrutiny of 'the space of conflict' is also a way to challenge artificial disciplinary boundaries. In 'The "Historical "Project"' Tafuri draws a parallel between the partition of knowledge into distinct fields and the distance that separates words from things, and reads them both as instruments of domination reflecting the capitalist division of labour. One of the aims of his research is precisely that of challenging these fictitious interstices, probing 'what appears to be a *void*, [and] trying to make the absence that seems to dwell in that void speak'.[312] In the introduction to *L'armonia e i conflitti*, for example, Tafuri metaphorically tears apart his object of study – the Venetian church of San Francesco Della Vigna – and links its fragments to events that are 'only apparently

[309] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance,* p. X.
[310] Antonio Foscari and Manfredo Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti: la chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna nella Venezia del '500* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), p. 7.
[311] My translation of 'il lavoro dello storico punta alla ricostruzione di quell'*interagire*: la pluralità dei centri di cui deve tener conto l'analisi presuppone la capacità di modificare i modi di approccio a ognuno di essi, a partire dal problema della loro intersezione'. Ibid., p. 8
[312] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 13.

"external" to it', forcing them to 'talk spurious languages'.[313] Seen in this light, the work of the historian is fated to lead, as Tafuri puts it, to the crisis of already-given techniques, turning history into 'a project of crisis'.[314]

From the passages quoted above, we can evince that the writings belonging to Tafuri's 'Renaissance project' maintained the combative aim of his more 'openly' political *Contropiano* period. In the commemorative issue of *Casabella* published immediately after Tafuri's death, Alberto Asor Rosa argued that the 'sense of total disenchantment' which followed the termination of the *Contropiano* project, prompted Tafuri to get as close as possible to the '*certainty of the datum*'.[315] Asor Rosa establishes a close link between Tafuri's 'political' and 'historical' phase, positing the critique of ideology as the *possible and necessary* condition for the 'discovery of "philology"'. After the eradication of all mystifications, the logical follow-up – of which Tafuri's work represents a significant example – could not but be the scrupulous study of 'the mechanisms of reality', through the most refined employment of 'the instruments of *objective* enquiries'.[316]

When Asor Rosa speaks of 'disenchantment' in relation to Tafuri's approach, he is referring to a unique sceptical disposition leading him to a continuous verification of the results of his own research: 'The Historical "Project"' – says Tafuri – 'is a matter of insisting on the rigour of the research process,

[313] My translation of 'vicende solo "apparentemente" esterne' and 'lingue spurie'. Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 4. We encounter a similar statement in 'Architettura e storiografia': 'Thus we are obliged to mount a constant operation of dismantling the object of our research. Which presupposes, therefore, the chemical examination of these quicksands, analysing them using reagents of an opposite nature'. My translation of 'Siamo quindi obbligati a una costante opera di smontaggio, nei confronti dell'oggetto della nostra ricerca. La quale presuppone, dunque, l'esame chimico di quelle sabbie mobili, la loro analisi fatta con reagenti di natura ad esse opposta'. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Architettura e storiografia. Una proposta di metodo', *Arte Veneta*, XXIX (1975), 276-282 (p. 276).
[314] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 13.
[315] Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Critique of Ideology and Historical Practice', *Casabella*, 619-620 (1995), 28-33 (p. 33).
[316] Ibid., p. 33.

continually verifying itself'.[317] The action of dismantling, breaking and tearing apart one's own object of study, exemplified by the study on San Francesco della Vigna, is in fact always followed by a patient and scrupulous work of re-composition, which constitutes the true 'critical act'.[318] Tafuri draws from Carlo Ginzburg's and Adriano Prosperi's comparison of the work of the historian to a 'gioco di pazienza', literally a jigsaw puzzle. A jigsaw puzzle, they specify, which never leads to the exact recomposition of the original historical scenario, since 'only some of the pieces are available' and 'more than one figure can be made from them'.[319] Combining Ginzburg's and Prosperi's definition with Freud's notion of 'interminable' analysis, Tafuri describes the historical research as a never ending process.[320]

If the activity of piecing together the historical fragments adding up to the 'critical act' requires continuous verification, we might then ask what are the methods and the criteria that govern this process. The first place to look for an answer is perhaps 'Architettura e storiografia. Una proposta di metodo', an essay anticipating some of the themes later expounded in 'The Historical "Project"', where Tafuri attempts to establish a series of methodological limits for architectural historiography. In the text in question, Tafuri is not afraid of advancing resolute propositions: the 'sole valid parameter for recomposing the mosaics of pieces resulting from analytical decomposition' – he maintains – is 'the intersection of

[317]My translation of: 'Il "progetto" storico è tale se non rinuncia al rigore del procedimento e alla continua autoverifica'. Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 9.
[318] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 15.
[319] Carlo Ginzburg and Andriano Prosperi quoted in Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 1.
[320] Tafuri's link to a Freudo-Marxist tradition has already been addressed by Andrew Leach in the chapter 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' in his monograph *Choosing History*. Leach however specifies that the epistemological traces leading to both Freud and Marx in Tafuri's work are so 'heavily filtered by a number of highly variable facts that a scientific form of intellectual historiography is impossible'. Ibid., p. 159. I must also stress that Leach's analysis fails to include Tafuri's reading of the avant-garde amongst the instantiations of his (heterodox) Freudo-Marxist approach.

intellectual work and conditions of production'.[321] Such an argumentation logically derives from a specific theoretical premise: the identification of architecture with a 'peculiar form of intellectual labour that places particular emphasis on a range of directly productive activities'.[322] Tafuri seeks to grasp the true nature of architects' labour, coming to a definition which in turn also obliges him to rethink the labour of the architectural historian. If architecture is 'a peculiar form of intellectual labour that places particular emphasis on a range of directly productive activities', the task of architectural history has to be that of charting the way in which the dialectics between concrete (or 'intellectual') and abstract (or 'directly productive') labour evolve over time. To get back to our initial point, we can conclude that the essence of this exchange – understood as the way in which design choices trigger, delay or hamper transformations of the modes of production – is precisely the sole criterion for selecting and assembling the pieces of the historical jigsaw puzzle. Tafuri further elucidates his proposition by means of a comparison resonating with Benjamin's famous statement on the relation between the work of art and the means of production.[323] He maintains that the approach advanced in his 1975 text seeks to give an insight into those moments in which design choices '*contain* [my italics] the premises of an institutional reform in the management of the city, or directly place demands on that management and the transformation of the modes of production in the construction industry'.[324] It is by adopting this method that Tafuri illuminates the

[321] My translation of 'L'intreccio di lavoro intellettuale e condizioni produttive mi darà, in tal caso, l'unico valido parametro per ricomporre il mosaico dei pezzi risultanti dallo smontaggio analitico precedentemene compiuto'. Ibid., p. 277.
[322] For an insightful study of Tafuri's use of Marxian categories for interpreting the labour of the architect consider Felice Mometti, 'La crisi come progetto'.
[323]Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer (1934)', trans. by Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings v.2, Pt. 2, 1927-1934*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1996), pp. 768-782.
[324] My translation of 'contenga in sé le premesse di una riforma istituzionale nella gestione delle città e dei territori, o inisista direttamente su quella gestione e sulla trasformazione dei modi di produzione edilizia'. Tafuri, 'Architettura e storiografia', p. 280.

link existing between the emergence of the Plan and the avant-garde's sublimation of the negativity pervading the modern metropolis.[325]

A few years later, both in 'The Historical "Project"' and the article 'The Uncertainties of Formalism: Victor Shklovsky and the Denuding of Art' appearing in *AD Magazine*, Tafuri seems to have slightly revised his initial take on the question of historical method.[326] I say 'slightly' because 'the intersection of intellectual work and conditions of production' are not rejected as a parameter, but they cease to be the 'only' one as in 'Architettura e storiografia'.[327] A further noticeable change regards the importance accorded to the object of analysis in shaping the method: 'what determines the modes of [...] [the method's] transformation' – Tafuri maintains – 'is always the material on which it [the historian's work] is operating'.[328] Such a statement does not signal a radical methodological reversal, as it might at first sight appear, but instead amounts to a typically Tafurian attempt to instate a dialectical moment, this time within the historical analysis itself. The relation between the object under examination and the methods applied has to be one of reciprocal influence, where each pole simultaneously 'determines' and is 'determined' by the other. Tafuri does not employ the word 'influence' to depict this dynamic, but instead talks of an 'irreducible tension';[329] a tension which he judges to be intimately 'productive', for it engenders a ceaseless work of redefinition of both historical narratives and critical tools.[330]

Tafuri also calls for a continuous sharpening of the instruments of criticism, by which he is not only referring to their 'updating', but to a much more demanding journey *à rebours* back to their genesis aimed at a renewing their foundations,

[325] Ibid., p. 277.
[326] Manfredo Tafuri, 'The Uncertainties of Formalism: Victor Shklovsky and the Denuding of Art', *Architectural Design*, 51 (1981), 73-77.
[327] Tafuri removes the word 'sole' from the sentence used in 'Architettura e storiografia'. Tafuri, 'Architettura e storiografia', p. 15.
[328] Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 12.
[329] Ibid., p. 3.
[330] Ibid., p. 3.

without any pretence of recuperating some presumed 'original meaning'. The activity of the historian entails a perennial labour of 'refoundation', directed towards the expunction of the ideological contaminations encrusted on the analytical instruments.

For Andrew Leach, the interest Tafuri's writings show toward the relation between historical materials, historiographical methods and the ideological dimension of the historian's work, indexes a certain correlation with Jacques Le Goff's and Pierre Nora's *Faire de l'histoire*, which was released only a year before 'Architettura e Storiografia'.[331] Leach bases his argument on an interview by Luisa Passerini, where the architectural historian makes explicit his interest for the work of the Annales school.[332] This affiliation becomes patent in some of his early 1980s and '90s works dedicated to the study of the Renaissance, where Tafuri loosely adopts Fernand Braudel's *longue durée* method.[333] This latter demanded an extension of the 'chronological space' of historical analysis, which up till then had predominantly been confined to single events. The adoption of this new perspective made it possible to show that sets of organized and established mentalities and behaviours – what Braudel calls 'structure' – were able to survive even the most forceful historical ruptures, continuing to govern the long-term course of events.[334] Such a 'structure', in Braudel's view, performed a double function: on the one hand it supported – in the sense of 'permitting to continue to exist' – historical transitions, on the other it retarded their completion:

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[331] Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, *Faire de l'histoire. Nouveaux problèmes, nouvelles approches, nouveaux objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

[332] 'When I began to read Lucien Febvre, I felt an emotional transport towards this person'. 'History as a Project (1992)', trans. by Denise Bratton, *Any*, 25-26 (2000), 10-70 (p. 53).

[333] There are numerous references to the authors of the Annales school throughout *Interpreting the Renaissance*, *Venice and the Renaissance* and *L'armonia e i conflitti*. In the preface to *L'armonia e i conflitti*, for example, Tafuri openly declares that unchanging mindsets will be confronted with historical 'breaks', and immediately after this he refers to Lucien Febvre. See Tafuri, Foscari, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 8.

[334] Fernand Braudel, *On History* (1969), trans. by Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 31.

> In any case, it is in relation to these expanses of slow-moving history that the whole of history is to be rethought, as if on the basis of an infrastructure. All the stages, all the thousands of stages, all the thousands of explosions of historical time can be understood on the basis of these depths, this semistillness. Everything gravitates around it.[335]

The employment of a *longue durée* perspective revolutionized approaches to thinking about historical development, and called into question the validity of some of the temporal criteria that contemporary disciplines used to chart and gauge change. In the field of economics, for example Braudel argues, the *long durée* view made it possible to see regularities and the invariances that a reading focussed on cycles, intercycles or structural crises had up till that point tended to hide.[336] It is important to emphasise that for Braudel economics was not just one example amongst others, but the ambit where his historical method could achieve – he says in his 1958 essay – 'its most notable successes'.[337]

It is tempting to think that Tafuri was aware of this claim when he decided to apply Braudelian ideas to his study of the Renaissance. If architecture is a discipline linked to 'directly productive activities', as he resolutely argues in 'Architettura e storiografia', then Braudel's *longue durée* strikes us as a particularly suitable method for inquiring into its historical development. This will become apparent in the last part of the chapter, when we will look into Tafuri's analysis of the dialectic between *inventio* and *consuetudo* in fifteenth-century Venice. We need to bear in mind, however, that his application of Braudel's *longue durée* was not strictly orthodox, but often hybridized with other methods and sources. In *Interpreting the*

[335] Ibid., p. 33.
[336] Ibid., p. 32.
[337] Not by chance, a few years later he would embark on a magisterial historical work on the relation between capitalism and material life in the pre-industrial modern era. See Fernand Braudel *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme XV-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Colin, 1967).

Renaissance's chapter on the Sack of Rome, for example, Tafuri appears to combine (or rather amend) the *longue durée* with a seemingly Blochian idea of multiple temporalities: 'Our task – he writes – [...] is to grasp the consequences of the event in relation to the different temporal orders (*diversi tempi*) that it involves. It therefore becomes essential to explore the plurality of the historical moment under consideration, projecting it beyond its own temporal limits while problematizing theses of continuity and rupture'.[338]

The sources underpinning Tafuri's historical method are, we have seen, numerous and varied, ranging from Braudel, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Le Goff and Nora to the Italian Carlo Ginzburg. If up till now we have mainly explored Tafuri's link with the Annales School, in the last part of this section we will turn to his relation to Ginzburg and the microhistorical approach with which the Italian historian tends to be associated. Before me, Carla Keyavanian and Andrew Leach have already tackled this theme, but both their accounts, despite their distinctive rigour and insight, are far from exhaustive.[339] I must admit, however, that I inadvertently approached the Ginzburg-Tafuri relation with the same question as Andrew Leach poses in his book, in the chapter dedicated to analyzing the sources of Tafuri's historiography. Like Leach I asked myself to what extent Tafuri's appreciation of Ginzburg's work 'translate[s] into an adherence to the methodological principles of *microstoria*', but my search for an answer took me elsewhere.[340] My first move had been to look for Ginzburg's definition of microhistory, with the prospect of comparing it to the methodological choices deployed in *L'armonia e i conflitti*, the book published as part of the Einaudi series 'microstorie' directed by Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi. In a second moment, I would have then extended this comparison to Tafuri's other works dedicated to Renaissance architecture.

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[338] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p.158.
[339] Keyvanian, 'Manfredo Tafuri: From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories', p. 6.
[340] Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History*, p. 188.

My choice did not prove a successful one, however, at least at the very outset, for the only definition of microhistory provided by Ginzburg that I could find was dated 1993, ten years after the publication of Tafuri's 'microhistorical' work. The problem was not that I could not access the seminal text setting out the terms of this historical approach, but rather that 'microhistory', as Ginzburg himself maintains in his 1993 essay – jokingly titled 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It' – was adopted as the title for the Einaudi series 'without asking [him] what it meant literally'.[341] If this genre's methodological principles were in fact only clearly spelt out at the end of this book series, then it does not make much sense to wonder to what extent Tafuri's work adheres to them.

Ginzburg's famous 1976 book *The Cheese and the Worms* implicitly tended to be regarded as a 'model' for the series, but even here there was no clear attempt to define this historical genre, and the term *microstoria* does not appear anywhere in the book.[342] In the preface Ginzburg calls into question the way in which scholarly literature has attempted to interpret 'popular culture', and he advances a counter proposal based on a 'circular' relation between the cultures of the dominant and of the subordinate classes. If we look through the books published between 1981 and 1991 by Einaudi, however, we soon realise that Ginzburg's seminal consideration is insufficient for defining the genre, and it is not even clear that it can be applied to all these books, starting with Tafuri's. As we will better see later on in this chapter, Tafuri's study of San Francesco della Vigna did not centre on the reciprocal influences between the cultures of opposite classes – even if only for the reason that architecture is a product of dominant classes, as we are reminded in *Contropiano* – but on the way in which the interaction of a set of cultural, economical, geographical factors acts on the design and on the implementation of architectural artefacts. Tafuri

[341] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1993), 10-35 (p. 10). Keyvanian wrongly attributes the coining of the term 'microhistory' to the Italian historian. See Keyvanian, 'Manfredo Tafuri: From the Critique of Ideology to Microhistories', p. 7.

[342] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (1976) (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

was, indeed, influenced by Ginzburg's work, but like the other contributors to the series, he forged *his own* definition of microhistory, taking advantage of the confusion surrounding this term.

Given these premises, I would like to suggest a different way of looking at the intellectual and methodological proximity between Ginzburg and Tafuri. Instead of mapping possible parallels between Ginzburg's 1970s-'80s microhistorical works and Tafuri's research on Renaissance architecture, I would like to 'instrumentally' use Ginzburg's 1993 text to illuminate some of the features that distinguish Tafuri's historical approach. At first glance, this might sound something like a contradictory move, but that is not exactly the case. Underscoring a consonance between Ginzburg's retroactive definition of microhistory and Tafuri's historiographical approach does not amount to advancing the unrealistic claim that a text written in 1993 impacted on a set of books written beforehand. Rather, it allows us to reveal how Tafuri's *L'armonia e i conflitti*, as well as the other titles belonging to the series, contributed to the development of this category. A passage in Ginzburg's 1993 essay implicitly confirms our argument, by disclosing the historian's inability to draw any neat line between his seminal understanding of the term and the expanded meaning this latter had acquired over time:

> Both the boundaries of the group to which I belonged and my own boundaries of self seemed retrospectively shifting and uncertain. To my surprise I discovered how important to me were, unknowingly, books I had never read, events and persons I did not know had existed. If this is a self-portrait, then its model is Boccioni's paintings in which the street leads into the house, the landscape into the face, and the exterior invades the interior, the "I" is porous.[343]

Amongst the many aspects of the question examined by Ginzburg in his inspiring

[343] Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', p. 34.

essay, there are two that I would like to investigate in relation to Tafuri's work. The first regards Ginzburg's choice to include, within the historical narration, the hesitations and the silences of both the protagonists and the historians, turning in this way 'the search for truth', into a 'part of the exposition of the (necessarily incomplete) truth attained'.[344] In other terms, the research process, together with all its faults and limitations, comes to reflect (or anticipates) the incompleteness of its outcome. This point resonates highly with Tafuri's understanding of the interminability of historical research, understood as an effect of the unattainability of truth.

There is another, subtler, parallel to draw between Ginzburg's inclusion of silences and Tafuri's interest for the inbuilt. I contend that when Ginzburg refers to the inclusion of 'silences' in his narration, he has a specific idea of this term in mind. Unlike Foucault, his interest does not lie in the gestures and the discourses that produce exclusion, censorship and silence, but in the *subjects* upon which censorship and exclusion are enforced.[345] If we take it for granted that architectural history centres on objects rather than on subjects, we might find it hard to see any link with his work on this point. But this does not fully hold true, especially in the case of Tafuri, for whom architectural objects are always repositories of human histories.[346] In the preface to *Venice and the Renaissance*, for example, Tafuri expresses the need to interrogate unrealized projects for the reasons for their defeat.[347] The historian is thus called upon to cross-examine all that survives of the design process in the archives, in the attempt to 'reconstruct', piece by piece, '"other" cities' that failed to see the light of day.[348] The goal is not to reverse the judgement of history by establishing the primacy of the inbuilt over the built, but shedding light on the often-concealed reasons that prompted certain forms to emerge instead of others.

The second aspect of Ginzburg's text I wish to relate to Tafuri's work regards

[344] Ibid., p. 24.
[345] Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, p. XVIII.
[346] 'History is not about objects, but instead is about men, about human civilization'. Tafuri and Ingersoll, 'There is No Criticism, Only History', p. 97.
[347] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. XI
[348] Ibid., p. XI

the question of scale. This latter is already embedded in the definition of microhistory, where the prefix 'micro' gives us an indication of the size of the field under examination. The term has also been considered to be indicative of the genre's privileged focus on local stories and anonymous individual characters, following in the wake of *The Cheese and the Worms*. As we learn from Ginzburg's 1993 text, however, this corresponds to a fairly reductive understanding of the historical genre. Expanding a great deal on a number of points advanced in the preface to *The Cheese and the Worms*, Ginzburg rebuffs the too-simplistic association of microhistory with local history, and argues that it allows to access to global historical dimension.[349] To explain how this occurs, he draws from Siegfried Kracauer's *History: The Last Things Before the Last*.[350]

In the book in question, Kracauer contends that what can be discerned by means of a microscopic perspective, cannot be easily transferred to a macro level, for 'the contexts established at each level are valid for that level but do not apply to findings at other levels'. [351] The German cultural critic sheds light on the 'fundamentally discontinuous and heterogeneous' nature of reality, and explains how this determines the conditions inherent in changes of scale.[352] Given these premises, however, how can the micro and macro possibly be related? Building on Kracauer's suggestion, Ginzburg proposes a constant movement 'back and-forth between micro and macro history, [...] close-ups and extreme long shots, so as to continually thrust back into discussion the comprehensive vision of the historical process through apparent exceptions and cases of brief duration'.[353] The historian holds to Kracauer's text, and goes as far as to say that this latter still today constitutes 'the best

[349] In the preface, Ginzburg refrains from considering the Italian miller protagonist of 'his' historical account as a 'typical' peasant.
[350] Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (1969), ed. by Paul Oskar Kristeller (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995).
[351] Ibid., p. 134.
[352] Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It', p. 27.
[353] Ibid., p. 27.

introduction to microhistory'.[354]

If we now return to Tafuri, and we think about the way in which he attempts to connect the architectural object to its context, we will not find it inconsistent with Kracauer's proposition. In *L'armonia e i conflitti*, for example, the authors' perspective continuously shifts from the church of San Francesco della Vigna to the broader frame of the city of Venice, and again back to the church. In the preface to the book, Tafuri curiously discloses that their philological enquiry had obliged them 'to *shift* [spostare] the analysis and to take into account the entire urban context'.[355] I say 'curiously' as it looks like the leaps towards to the macro perspective had resulted from microscopic examination. And it is just as significant that Tafuri and Foscari speak of 'shifting' rather than of 'transposing'.

A further inversion occurs a few lines later. The authors explain that the shift to the 'entire urban context' entails posing a set of questions regarding the organization of urban planning and the role of the architect in the sixteenth century, but at the same time they add that these same questions had to be answered by adhering to the specific Venetian context.[356] Echoing Ginzburg's Kracauer-inflected description of microhistory, Tafuri turns the continuous shift between the microscopic and the larger contextual dimension into one of the organizing principles of his narration.

3. 'The Historical "Project"' in Practice

While in the first part of the chapter we looked into Tafuri's 'definition' of 'The Historical "Project"' by identifying its many reference points, in this second part we will consider the way in which this project was applied to the study of the Renaissance, paying particular attention to its outcomes. In particular, we will see

[354] Ibid., p. 27
[355] My translation of 'spostare l'analisi e a prendere in considerazone un intero contesto urbano'. Tafuri, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 4.
[356] My translation of 'rimanendo aderenti allo specifico del contesto veneziano'. Ibid. p. 5.

how this peculiar approach to historical research allowed Tafuri to arrive at a picture of fifteenth to sixteenth century architecture undermining accounts offered by established Renaissance scholars like Rudolf Wittkower, Carol William Westfall, Jules Michelet or Jakob Burckhardt, ultimately substantiating Asor Rosa's argument concerning the consistency between Tafuri's critique of ideology and the later philological phase. It is in fact partly thanks to his philological approach, as we will see shortly, that the historian succeeds in illuminating the ideological aspects embedded in dominant readings of Renaissance culture. Tafuri's 'unveiling' effort would in turn provide the groundwork for the construction of 'another Renaissance', as the title of this section suggests. Before passing to examine in detail two specific case studies, we will pause half-way between historical 'theory' and 'practice', and present the main distinguishing outlines of Tafuri's interpretation of fifteenth and sixteenth-century culture more broadly. We must make clear from the outset that Tafuri does not set up a methodological frame *a priori*, but in the preface to his *Interpreting the Renaissance*, his last book before he dies, he tentatively condenses some of the hypotheses he had elaborated across his more than ten years of study of the Renaissance. 'In Search for Paradigms: Project, Truth, Artifice' – the title he chooses for this text – further reminds us of the transient nature of his conjecture.

3.1. Constructing *Another Renaissance*: Methodological Premises

3. 1.1. Contra Wittkower and Analogy

Just as in *Theories and History,* the 'Renaissance project', and in particular his final magisterial work *Interpreting the Renaissance*, Tafuri sets out from the identification of a theoretical 'adversary'. If in his 1968 work his enemy was the operative use history of his colleagues Bruno Zevi and Sigfried Giedion, in his writings on Renaissance it was the turn of Rudolf Wittkower's 'architectural principles'.[357]

[357] In *Theory and Histories* Tafuri identifies a lineage of 'operative historians' starting with Giovanni Bellori and culminating with Zevi and Gideion. With regard to Gideion, for example, he underlines that his constant attention to the present brought him to forcibly link modern architecture to the past. To substantiate his point he

Wittkower's *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* had enjoyed considerable success in the post-war period, to the point of becoming an essential work of reference for the architectural culture of the time.[358] For Tafuri, however, this book's fortunes were less an index of its rigour or novelty than a display of the nostalgia for 'the old principles' which permeated the architectural culture of the time.[359] In stark opposition to Wittkower's approach, therefore, he decided to refrain from focussing on the formation of norms, and adopted a new perspective bearing 'on areas of historical analysis that [...] [the German art historian had] left unexplored'.[360] In particular, he decides to attend to Wittkower's analogical approach.

We shall recall that in the *Architectural Principles*, Wittkower establishes a direct link between cosmological theories and Renaissance culture. In his account, Renaissance architects gave up on 'apply[ing] to a building a system of ratio of [...] [their] own choosing', and comply with a universal system of proportions reflecting the cosmic order.[361] His verdict leaves no room for doubt:

> The conviction that architecture is a science, and that each part of a building, inside as well as outside, has to be integrated into one and the same system of mathematical ratios, may be called the basic axiom of Renaissance architects.[362]

It is not hard to imagine that a system of perfect correspondences like the one advanced by Wittkower would have made Tafuri suspicious – it is, perhaps, one of

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refers to Gideion's reading of the empiricism and anti-schematism of the Sistine plan as anticipation of the 'free and open experience of the form that the modern city has introduced into our vision', and he enlists a number of aspects that this historiographical approach leaves uncharted. Tafuri, *Theory and Histories*, p. 151.

[358] Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (1949), (London: Academy Editions: 1988).

[359] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 3.

[360] Ibid., p. 3.

[361] Wittkower, *Architectural Principles*, p. 104.

[362] Ibid., p. 104.

the historical accounts most remote from what Tafuri considers as being his own 'model': Ginzburg's and Properi's *gioco di pazienza*. He therefore decides to enquire into the relation that exists – if any – between Renaissance architecture and the principle of analogy, in order to test the rigour of Wittkower's argument. The first problem arising from his endeavour regards the association of analogical thinking with Renaissance culture more broadly. Drawing on both primary and secondary sources, and in particular from the studies of Leo Spitzer, Henri de Lubac and Foucault, whose *The Order of Things* – Tafuri recalls – opened with a discussion on this theme, the Roman historian shows that the roots of analogism in fact stretch back to antiquity.

More so, his philological analysis led him to doubt the centrality of analogy to Renaissance design in as a whole. For example, in a key text on the theory and practice of Renaissance architecture such as Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, he draws attention to the lack of any reference to 'the analogical topos'.[363] And through a scrutiny of a set of fifteenth to sixteenth-century architectural projects, he shows that the same ideal models were used to justify the most diverse types of buildings, and that this tended to happen *a posteriori*. Lastly, he discovers that the 'legitimizing citations' were often produced by ecclesiastics and humanists, for except in a few rare cases architects had received only a rudimentary education which excluded them from debates over metaphysical questions.[364] Combining all these findings, Tafuri begins to undermine the very foundations of Wittkower's historical construction.

3. 1. 2. Philology as a New Philosophy: the Influence of Eugenio Garin

In Tafuri's study on the Renaissance, we find several citations from Eugenio Garin, an Italian philosopher widely acknowledged as an authority on the cultural history

[363] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance,* p. 15.
[364] Ibid., p. 16.

and philosophy of that epoch.[365] Garin was certainly a reference for Tafuri, as for many at the time looking into questions related to Renaissance, but I think that there is an interesting proximity between the two which goes beyond their mutual interest in this period. I want to argue that the resemblance between the philosopher and the architectural historian works both ways around, and that one of the constitutive aspects of Garin's project, his urge for the historicization of theory, resonates highly with Tafuri's thought.

In his study of the Renaissance Garin started to call into question the distinction between philological and philosophical knowledge. Drawing from Vico's *verum-factum* principle, according to which gaining access to the truth coincides with knowing how something is made (*Verum ipsum factum*), Garin comes to consider Renaissance philology as a form of philosophy, no less important than the classical philosophical tradition:[366]

> This philosophy [of great logical-theological systems], which was dismissed in the age of humanism as vain and useless, was replaced with concrete, specific, definite studies, both in terms of the moral sciences (ethics, politics, economics, aesthetics, logic, rhetoric) and the sciences of nature, which, cultivated *iuxta propria principi* (according to their own principles) beyond

[365] Eugenio Garin (Rieti 1909 – Firenze 2004), taught the history of medieval philosophy (from 1949) and, from 1955, the history of philosophy at the Florence University. From 1974 to 1984 he was Chair in Renaissance History at Pisa's Scuola Normale Superiore.

[366] Garin's reference to Vico has been discussed, amongst others, by Massimiliano Biscuso in 'Lo storicismo integrale di Eugenio Garin', *Giornale di Filosofia*, July 2010,<http://www.giornaledifilosofia.net/public/filosofiaitaliana/scheda_fi.php?id=72> [accessed 1 May 2016]. Gianbattista Vico exposes the *Verum-Factum* in his *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians Unearthed fromthe Origins of the Latin Language,* trans. by L. M. Palmer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

> any binds or *auctoritas*, thrive at every level in a manner unknown to 'honest' but 'obtuse' scholasticism.[367]

As Garin's quote reveals, Renaissance authors' urge to verify the reliability of sources had significant political, or we could even say anti-ideological, implications: 'without the [...] rhetoric of Guarino, Valla or Poliziano [...] – he writes – the authorities ever have been thrown off their pedestal, nor would Aristotelian logic have been understood for what it is'.[368] The emergence of a specific philological form of philosophy allowed for the demystification of crystallized dogmas and an understanding of the historical contingency of philosophical doctrines. Unquestioned documents were replaced, writes Garin, by the risk 'of an adventure where everything [was] [...] in darkness', yet 'still possible'.[369]

From his account there transpires an image of the Renaissance as an epoch of uncertainties, restless questioning and self-questioning, that correlates with Tafuri's analysis of Albertian architecture. A sentence in *L'umanesimo italiano* strikes us as plainly Tafurian: 'unfortunately the temptation to transform an antithesis into an explanation, confusing a negation for a positive determination, has seduced all-too

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[367] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'A quella filosofia [delle grandi sistemazioni logico telogiche], che viene ignorata nell'età dell'umanesimo come vana ed inutile, si sostituiscono indagini concrete, definite, precise, nelle due direzioni delle scienze morali (etica, politica, economica, estetica, logica, retorica) e delle scienze della natura che, coltivate *iuxta propria principia*, al di fuori di ogni vincolo e di ogni *auctoritas*, hanno in ogni piano quel rigoglio che "l'onesto", ma "ottuso" scolasticismo ignorò'. Eugenio Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano. Filosofia e vita civile nel rinascimento* (Bari: Laterza, 1990), p. 10.

[368] My translation of 'senza la cosiddetta retorica dei Guarino, dei Valla, dei Poliziano, e di altri cosifatti "pedanti", le "autorità" non sarebbero mai state rovesciate dai loro piedistalli, né la logica di Aristotele sarebb, stata vista per quello che è'. Ibid., p. 15.

[369] My translation of 'non c'è più un testo – dato per sempre – da chiosare; non c'è più – li' dinnanzi – la verità da illustrare: c'è il rischio di un avventura dove tutto è, sì, oscuro, ma tutto, ancora è possibile'. Ibid., p. 14.

many historians of Renaissance culture'.[370] The philosopher expresses the urge to undermine the dominant interpretation of fifteenth and sixteenth-century culture, which appears more a response to the need for conciliation than an analysis resting on historical proofs. As we mentioned before, what links the two authors, beside the resemblance in terms of the image their respective research ultimately provides of the Renaissance, is a more profound urge to 'historicize' thought. Just as moving from Vico's *Verum Factum* principle Garin comes to conceive philology and philosophy as reciprocally validating forms of knowledge, Tafuri emphasises the impossibility of disentangling architectural criticism from history. As the title of a 1986 interview with Richard Ingersoll tells us: 'There is No Criticism, Only History'.[371]

3. 1. 3. A Rather Functionalist Notion of Language

We have seen that Tafuri was largely sceptical of theories positing the correspondence between Renaissance architecture and the harmonic principles of humanism. Indeed, for him the problem was not basing one's own research on Renaissance treatises, but the specific use of this material that one could make. The relation amongst fifteenth and sixteenth-century theories and architectural objects was only thinkable as refracted and disturbed by countless factors. Against a model that 'naively' claimed to discern aesthetic theories within works of art, Tafuri proposed a research based on the concept of 'diffused mentalities', which he defined as 'metalanguages [that] obliquely travers[ing] the spaces of architectural language, conditioning their organization and liberating their potentials'.[372] Again, here, we can glean an echo of the School of the Annales, for whom the 'history of mentalities' was a central concept. I say 'echo', rather than a straightforward connection, since the 'history of mentalities' is applied with a certain degree of freedom. In consonance

[370] My translation of 'Purtroppo la seduzione di trasformare un'antitesi in una spiegazione, confondendo una negazione con una determinazione positiva, ha operato su troppi storici della cultura rinascimentale'. Ibid., p. 8.
[371] Tafuri and Ingersoll, 'There is No Criticism, Only History'.
[372] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 7.

with his penchant for hybridization, Tafuri makes the 'history of mentalities' react with its 'direct rival', the history of ideas and conflicts, in the attempt to restore a conflicting dimension that he considers elsewhere lacking.

Tafuri plunges himself into the writings of Baldassare Castiglione, Lorenzo Valla, Sperone Speroni, Leon Battista Alberti amongst others, with the aim of working out how humanist culture addressed the question of language. He turns, in particular, to Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, a literary attempt to delineate the profile of the perfect nobleman, in which he identifies a double conception of beauty as both metaphysical and contingent.[373] In this work, beauty is described alternatively, and oppositely, as 'spring[ing] from God and resembl[ing] a circle',[374] and deriving from the courtier's deliberate selection and intermingling of external models. Tafuri places emphasis on this second definition, for it reveals how the choice of models was in large part assigned to individual artists on the basis of what Castiglione defines 'an instinctive judgement'.[375]

This research focus unequivocally reveals the intention of challenging the image of the Renaissance as a world of perfect correspondences and unalterable principles. However, we must be careful not to think that such a critical endeavour aspired to replace a model of orderliness with one of contingency. Tafuri's work is far more ambitious, and it seeks to understand how rules and licence were made to coexist during Renaissance period. It illustrates, for example, that all figures of speech were originally 'abusioni' [abuses] later 'accepted and established by custom', thus revealing that what Castiglione defined an 'instinctive judgement' was in actuality a peculiar form of spontaneity premised on experience.[376] In Tafuri's view, the humanist's work would display an idea of language in which the rules of

[373] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. by Thomas Hoby (London: J. M. Dent, 1994).
[374] Castiglione in Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 4.
[375] Ibid., p. 4.
[376] Ibid., p. 5.

transformation are produced by its use (hence the title 'a functionalist notion of language'), embodying – I want to add – a form of rationality *inherent* to practice.

For Marco Biraghi, the Renaissance is the site where Tafuri finds *concrete answers* to the question regarding the possibility of combining, without reconciling, practice and theory, rules and licence, totality and the fragmentary.[377] In his account, Tafuri's Renaissance emerges as the last moment in history in which the *concordia oppositorum* takes place.[378]

3. 1. 4. The Unattainability of the Past

So far we have seen that Castiglione's courtier is allowed to select and mix what he judges the best models of beauty, but we have not paid attention to what the term 'model' meant and entailed for Renaissance intellectuals. Once again, here, it is worth referring, even if briefly, to Eugenio Garin, whose observations on this theme seem to prepare the ground for Tafuri's analysis. In his *L'umanesimo italiano* and *La cultura del Rinascimento*[379] the philosopher maintains that the Renaissance discovery of the classics signals the emergence of a new historical consciousness. Artists and intellectuals began to refer back to the great examples of antiquity, with the aim of separating themselves from it.[380] This in turn leads to a refashioning of the idea of *imitatio* [imitation], which becomes an instrument for reaching a 'new originality'.[381] Tafuri appears to implicitly support this thesis, bringing to light a link between the Reinassance concepts of 'reproduction' and 'representation.' Referring to Christof Thoenes's study on Bramante, he contends that the impossibility of restoring original ideas of the past was established knowledge amongst Renaissance architects, who for this reason abandoned a *strictu sensu* 'reproduction' of old models, and opted instead

[377] Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, pp. 140-141.
[378] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 19.
[379] Eugenio Garin, *La cultura del Rinascimento* (Bari: Laterza, 1971).
[380] Garin, *L'umanesimo italiano*, p. 21.
[381] Garin, *La cultura del Rinascimento*, p. 49.

for processes of creative (and partly fictive) 'representation'.[382] To further explicate this move, Tafuri refers to the *concordia philosophorum*, a concept employed by Pico della Mirandola and Erasmus to indicate a form of truth that is knowable and transmittable only via interpretations. The implicit link between Garin's and Tafuri's argument now appears more evident: the gesture of referring back to the example of antiquity in a creative way presupposes a sense of awareness of the present as distinct yet linked to the past. The Renaissance architect's labour, such as it emerges from Tafuri's account, thus proves to be extremely close to the labour of the historian: aware of the unattainability of truth (or of the original idea), they both seek to approach it through a 'process of refraction, experiment and perpetual enquiry'.[383]

3. 1. 5. The Question of Representation

The thesis of the replacement of reproduction with representation relates to the Renaissance discovery of the perspectival representation of space. In order to convey the all-encompassing nature of this discovery, Tafuri sharply cuts across disciplinary boundaries, drawing attention to a novel that apparently has little to do with architecture proper. I say apparently, for one of the main characters of the story is Filippo Brunelleschi, but in this context he drops his guise as an architect and becomes the author of a diabolic ruse. The story tells of Brunelleschi deciding to punish intarsia craftsman Matteo Ammaniti, nicknamed Il Grasso Legnaiolo, for having missed a dinner organized by a group of Florentine artists. Brunelleschi leads the group to trick Ammaniti into believing that he had metamorphosed into another person called Matteo Mannini. The story spreads around, reaching the true Matteo Mannini, but rather than revealing the machination, Mannini tells Grasso of his own disturbing dreams where he takes on other personalities. At this point, Grasso loses any sense of distinction between fiction and reality, he fully accepts that the

[382] Christof Thoenes, 'Bramante e la bella maniera degli antichi', *Studi bramanteschi. Atti del congresso internazionale*, Roma, 1974, pp. 391-396.
[383] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 11.

transmutation has actually occurred, and decides to move to Hungary to start a new life.

The story does not end here, but it continues into a second part which makes apparent the implications of the ruse. We are told by Tafuri that Grasso returns to Florence and meets Brunelleschi, who asks him to recount the machination, pausing on every single detail. In this way, Brunelleschi seeks to persuade Grasso of his transmutation, and to apprehend the process of conscience-transformation that has occurred in his mind. He is eager to know how his trick played out, and the reasons why it succeeded. In Tafuri's view, the success of the ruse – Grasso's belief in the reality of the fiction – alludes to the distorting power that the new techniques of scientific representations exert over the perception of reality, and more broadly, it symbolizes the danger concomitant to the emergence of calculating reason in the Renaissance.

3.2. Leon Battista Alberti or 'the Weak Power of *Concinnitas*'

The choice to depict the coin that Leon Battista Alberti commissioned from Matteo de' Pasti on the cover of the Italian edition of *Interpreting the Renaissance* suggests that the humanist intellectual bears a certain significance in Tafuri's chronicle. No less relevant is the decision to use the coin to represent Alberti. This latter is in fact well known as a uniquely cryptic relic. On the front side of the coin there is a portrait of Alberti, and on the back – which appears on the book's cover – a winged eye, together with the question 'QUID TVM'. Scholars have long speculated on the exact meaning of this phrase, reaching the most diverse interpretations. Its immediate significance is known – 'quid tum' literally means 'what then' – but its wider frame of meaning remains largely obscure. What is the context of the question? To whom is it addressed? And how does it relate to the drawing?

There is something intrinsically Tafurian in the effect that Alberti's coin produces in those who view it. The anxious desire to decode the riddle, accompanied by the impossibility of seeing this desire fulfilled, resonates with what Tafuri

considers the historian's 'labour'. In the choice to place Alberti's 'emblem' on the cover, we can perhaps glimpse the attempt to share with readers the experience of the interminable search for truth. We owe to Massimo Cacciari the merit of drawing attention to the cover of Tafuri's *magnum opus,* in the speech he made at Tafuri's funeral in 1994. In his short but impassioned text titled – like the coin – 'QUID TUM', Cacciari avers that in the winged eye Tafuri saw 'the speed of [...] intuition', 'and the effort involved in remaining ever aware [...]'.[384] He further notes that the eye stares at the question at the bottom of the coin, as to suggest a link between figure and text. The 'what then' thus turns into a 'what we see then', and comes to signify the call for a perpetual verification of one's historical findings.

References to Leon Battista Alberti are abundant throughout the preface to *Interpreting the Renaissance*. Tafuri avails himself of his writings and architectural works in order to challenge various aspects of the Wittkowerian image of the Renaissance, at times turning Alberti into an anti-Wittkower. The stark opposition between Alberti's work and the study conducted by the German scholar calls to mind the first chapter of *Theories and History*, where Tafuri turns the history of architecture into a sequence of oppositions between a pair of antithetical tendencies, each epitomized by a single architect.[385] The Tafurian penchant for 'battles', underlined by his student Georges Teyssot, appears to inform his work till the very end of his intellectual career. This notwithstanding, however, as soon as we go beyond the preface and start reading the first chapter dedicated to Alberti, the Alberti-Wittkower opposition shifts to the background, leaving space for a new and less vitriolic critique. In the chapter in question, the objects of Tafuri's polemics are Georg Dehio's and William Carroll Westfall's theses as to Alberti's participation in Nicholas V's plan (1447-1455).

[384] Massimo Cacciari, 'Quid tum', *Casabella*, 619-20 (1995), 168-169 (p. 169).
[385] See the chapter 'Modern Architecture and the Eclipse of History' in Tafuri's *Theories and History*.

The opening chapter of *Interpreting the Renaissance*, '*Cive Esse Non Licere*: Nicolas V and Leon Battista Alberti', deserves close examination.[386] It is interesting to point out from the outset that both Massimo Cacciari and Eugenio Garin encouraged interest in Alberti's work.[387] The humanist therefore seems to represent the figure around which Tafuri's sources of inspiration converge, thus rendering '*Cive Esse Non Licere*' a particularly interesting entry point for assessing his historical reading of the Renaissance. The text is divided into three interlinked parts. The first focuses on the pontificate of Nicholas V and calls into question Westfall's thesis regarding Alberti's collaboration in the pope's plan; the second brings to the fore the salient traits of Alberti's thought by closely examining his writings; and the last one, finally, reinstates the thesis expounded in part one by extending it to the design of St. Peter's choir, advancing a set of broader observations concerning the relation between architecture and political power. After a section which 'deconstructs' Westfall's and Dehio's positions, there follows a moment of 'construction' in which Tafuri convincingly seeks to establish a radically different portrait of Alberti.

At the beginning of the text in question, Tafuri makes plain the reasons sustaining Westfall's argument. These include specific passages in the *De re aedificatoria* referring to proposals for a new city, and a set of unspecified affinities between Alberti and Nicholas's cultural formation. Immediately after this, Tafuri begins his 'deconstruction', making use of an extensive amount of historical proofs. Our aim here is not to closely examine all the steps of his argumentation, but to centre on a few aspects which we consider distinctive of his approach. We should start by saying that at the beginning of the chapter Tafuri diligently examines Nicholas V by placing his interventions in the broader context of fourteenth and fifteenth-century politics. Such a long initial detour might be perceived as misleading by those who expect the chapter to focus on Alberti straight away, but the more we

[386] It was first published as the introduction to Carroll William Westfall, *Invenzione della città: la strategia urbana di Nicolò V e Alberti nella Roma del '400* (Rome: La Nuova Italia, 1984).
[387] It must be underlined that Garin wrote a book on Alberti: Eugenio Garin, *Leon Battista Alberti* (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2013).

proceed onward the more we realize that a close scrutiny of the pope's role as advocated by Nicholas V is essential to evaluating Westfall's thesis as to the affinity between Alberti and Nicholas.

Tafuri refers to the emergence of statist forces during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and to the Holy See's fear of losing its temporal power, and links it to Nicholas V's urge to rethink ecclesiastical sovereignty by placing the 'spiritual arsenal of the Church at the disposal of new temporal aims'.[388] Tafuri talks of the emergence of a 'State of the Church', namely of a papal power that participated in the political system, and took control over all aspects of civil life. In this new scenario, urban politics becomes an important tool for the fortification of the ecclesiastical state at the direct disposal of the pope, as testified by Nicholas's emphasis on the grandeur of monuments and architecture, or the passing into papal hands of the *magistri*, the figures in charge of supervising building projects and maintaining the streets and public sanitation. Tafuri first outlines the principal aspects of Nicholas's papacy, and only in a second moment calls into question his collaboration with Alberti. He does so in two ways: first by revealing the insufficiency or the misinterpretation of the proofs that Westfall provides in support of the claim that Alberti designed a set of projects undertaken under the supervision of Nicholas V, and secondly, and more subtly, by bringing into view the political and intellectual distance between the two figures. In the last part of the chapter, Tafuri delineates a portrait of Alberti that appears incompatible with everything that we have just been told about Nicholas V at the beginning of the same text.

The chapter on Alberti in *Interpreting the Renaissance*, rests on an investigation into a wide array of his texts. Tafuri thinks that the answer to the question of the architect's role in the pope's plan has to be found in the ideas and the vision that seep through much of Alberti's architectural writings, as well as through his political and philosophical ones (if we admit that the three can be disentangled).

[388] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 25.

It is interesting to note that before Tafuri, Garin had similarly argued for a close comparative reading of Alberti's political and architectural texts.[389] Tafuri does acknowledge the philosopher's proposition, and seeks to push it further by constructing an essay that continuously juxtaposes quotations excerpted from almost all of Alberti's oeuvre. His aim is certainly not to present Alberti's architectural forms as a perfect embodiment of his own philosophical precepts, but rather to seek to insert architectural considerations into his wider frame of thought. This approach allows us to grasp, for example, the link existing between the Albertian notion of architecture as 'Stoic Virtue', and the idea of man spelt out in the *Theogenius*, or *Momus*'s critique of power. I want to argue that if the analysis of *De re aedificatoria* would hardly alone have sufficed to challenge the thesis as to Alberti's participation in the plan, the choice to take into account a wider selection of texts permits Tafuri to bring to light, in an almost undisputable way, a structural incompatibility between Nicholas's *modus operandi* and Alberti's theories. The comprehensiveness of Tafuri's investigation therefore proves a successful strategy for questioning Westfall's argument.

We shall consider, for example, Tafuri's analysis of the *Momus*. This latter narrates the story of a God that is expelled from heaven for having inveighed against Jupiter's plan of *renovatio mundi*. Once fallen to Earth, the God finds himself obliged to confront humans' eagerness for power, and he does so by developing a strategy of dissimulation. In Momus's attempt to defy domination, Tafuri discerns a reflection of Alberti's own hostility towards tyranny. The thesis is not new indeed, but Tafuri turns to Alberti's other works and finds further evidences of his defiance towards humans' unbounded ambition, calling into question Alberti's collaboration with the pope.

Tafuri does not mechanically transfer his interpretation of the *Momus* or of the *Theogenius* onto the *De re aedificatoria*, but re-reads the *De re aedificatoria* in the light of a set of aspects emerging in Alberti's other works. For example, the

[389] Garin more specifically refers to the *Momus* and to the *De re aedificatoria*. See Garin in Ibid., p. 44.

importance accorded to architectural measure (*misura*) is read as evidence of a model of behaviour inspired by self-control, and as such related with the critique of man's bestiality advanced in the *Theogenius*. The comprehensive reading of Alberti's work that Tafuri attempts makes apparent how the idea of architecture spelt out in *De re aedificatoria* has very little to do with the mimicry of a cosmic order, as described by Wittkower. Rather, it amounts to an arduous labouring process aimed at the domestication of man's destructive impulses'. Architectural harmony and measure, which Tafuri renames as 'good nature', are therefore visual manifestations of human self-conquest and repression.[390]

I want to dwell a bit longer on this last point, and look at the specific ways in which architecture succeeds in containing human destructive force. In this regard, it might be helpful to start by considering a citation from Alberti which Tafuri includes in his long article:

> In addition, there is one particular quality that may greatly increase the convenience and even the life of a building. Who would not claim to dwell more comfortably between walls that are ornate rather, than neglected? What other human art might sufficiently protect a building to save it form human attack? Beauty may even influence an enemy, by restraining his anger and so preventing the work from being violated. Thus I might be so bold as to state: no other means is as effective in protecting a work from damage and human injury as is dignity and grace of form.[391]

From the sentence we apprehend that the effect of containing human hubris is not just embedded in design practice, but can also emanate from completed buildings. Buildings' '"weak force" of *concinnitas*' – meaning the harmony between the parts of an edifice – opposes and palliates 'the diabolic scission to which [...] man is

[390] Ibid., p. 45.
[391] Alberti in Ibid., p. 45-46.

condemned'.[392] The use of the word 'weak' suggests, I would argue, an interpretation of Albertian organicism which is at odds with an idea of force and compactness. It can also be regarded as an implicit reference to Gianni Vattimo's and Pieraldo Rovatti's 'weak thought' [pensiero debole],[393] which Andrew Leach portrays as a source of inspiration for Tafuri's historical method.[394] 'Weak thought' was a philosophical strand emerging in Italy in the early 1980s that proposed, contra western metaphysics, a rethinking of nihilism as a possibility – sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago coined it the definition of an 'ethic of weakness'.[395] Yet the reference to Vattimo and Rovatti is tempered by the second part of the phrase, where the term *concinnitas* indicates that the force in question, in spite of its feebleness, has to work toward unity, understood here as form of harmony and beauty. In Alberti's '"weak force" of *concinnitas*' – even more than in Piranesi's disaggregated urban scenarios – Tafuri appears to glimpse the possibility of overcoming the dichotomy between fragmentation and compactness.

It must be noted, in conclusion, that Tafuri devotes attention to Alberti's ideas of *techne* by shedding light at the different definitions the humanist provides of this concept throughout his work. It is perhaps with regard to this topic that the decision to juxtapose Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* to his other books proves particularly successful, for it allows Tafuri to situate in a broader frame the 'civilizing mission' accorded to *techne* within the architectural treatise. If in this text Alberti contends that the deployment of technique permits the architect to meet 'the temporary needs of the man' and open up 'new gateways to all the provinces of the world', in the *Theogenius* or in the *Momus* he instead lays stress on the violence connected with

[392] Ibid., p. 46.
[393] My knowledge of 'weak thought' relies on the eponymous publication Pieraldo Rovatti and Gianni Vattimo (eds.), *Pensiero debole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983).
[394] See Chapter Four in Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri. Choosing History*.
[395] I borrow this definition from Alessandro Dal Lago's contribution to *Pensiero Debole*.

this.[396] To illustrate this last point, Tafuri chooses an indirect but fascinating path which leads him, once again, to the writings of Cacciari. After calling attention to the references to Prometheus in the *Theogenius* and in the *Momus*, he reads them in the light of the interpretation that Cacciari provides of this myth in his philosophical work *Dell'inizio*.[397] Here, the Italian philosopher recalls that for Greek mythology technique was a good achieved through theft, and thus bereft of any intrinsic foundation – '*the foundation of* techne – says Tafuri by paraphrasing Cacciari – *is not in* techne *itself*'.[398] For this reason, any attempt to turn *techne* into 'an absolute', amounts to an act against the divine law. Seen from this perspective, therefore, Alberti's reference to the myth of Prometheus indexes a recognition of the 'culpability of technology'; a culpability reflected in the defensive function he assigns to architectural practice.

Tafuri concludes his enquiry by drawing attention to a passage by the Tuscan humanist Matteo Palmieri linking Alberti's name to the Nicoline "plan". Departing from it, he advances a set of broader reflections on the relationship between architects and their patrons.[399] First he observes that in the document in question the architect discourages rather than advises the work outlined by the Pope: 'All we have [from Alberti]', Tafuri says, 'is a negative intervention', not only with regard to a single project, but towards Nicholas's conception of architecture at large.[400] According to Palmieri's chronicle, Nicholas did request Alberti's counsel for the restoration of the choir of St. Peter, but this collaboration unexpectedly materialized in a set of critical comments towards the pope's views and ambitions, traceable in the *De re aedificatoria* even before Palmieri's account. When Tafuri speaks of a negative intervention, therefore, he does not mean to say that Alberti refused to enter into dialogue with papal power, but rather refers to the *specific form* that their failed

[396] Alberti quoted in Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 50.
[397] Massimo Cacciari, *Dell'Inizio* (Milan: Adelphi, 1990), p. 359.
[398] Cacciari in Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 50.
[399] Ibid., p. 53.
[400] Ibid., p. 54.

dialogue took. His assumption is that this failed dialogue entails a counter-affirmative side, and that the *De re aedificatoria* could be considered the attempt to affirm – contra the pope – a wholly new idea of architecture, implying an equally new relationship between the architect and the representatives of political power. Complying with his 'methodology', Tafuri finishes his argumentation by suggesting that in order to assess Alberti's collaboration with Nicholas V one would have to refer to 'the mental frame provided by the *Momus*'.[401] We shall recall that the book in question tells the story of Momus's expulsion from heaven for his critical opinions on the plan for *renovatio mundi* devised by Jupiter, for whom he act as an adviser. *Momus* strenuously defends his autonomy, at the cost of facing the gods' rage. Adopting 'the mental frame provided by the *Momus*', as Tafuri suggests, therefore means reading Alberti's 'negative' collaboration with Nicholas's plan as a sign of 'the affirmation of the autonomous motivations of the *ratio aedificandi*'.[402]

3.3. San Francesco della Vigna and Venice: Refusing Modernity

The writings on Renaissance Venice offer a vantage point to observe how Tafuri coalesced the 'microhistorical' method with the lesson of the School of the Annales. In this last part of the chapter, we will look closely at the outcomes of this combined approach, by considering a set of excerpts from Tafuri's last two books on the Renaissance, *Venice and the Renaissance* and *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects*; his monograph on the church of San Francesco della Vigna (*L'armonia e i conflitti*); and a little-known essay on Daniele Barbaro's 1567 commentaries on Vitruvio's *De architectura*. The Italian titles of Tafuri's books on the Renaissance – whose English translation is partial or not fully loyal to the original –, and their publication as part of Einaudi's multidisciplinary book series 'Saggi' anticipates Tafuri's attempt at dislocating architecture, troubling its status as a purely technical discipline.

[401] Ibid., p. 57.
[402] Ibid., p. 57.

3.3.1. Venice between *Inventio* and *Consuetudo*

In the last chapter of *Interpreting the Renaissance*, Tafuri surveys Venice's response to the humanist rediscovery of the *all'antica* idiom. He had already earlier examined this theme, but here his focus narrows to a selection of edifices designed by the architect Jacopo Sansovino in Venice just after his departure from Rome. His exposition of these works follows a specific order, reflecting Sansovino's gradual abandonment of his initial references to the *all'antica* idiom, and his simultaneous adaptation to local conventions. Venice is portrayed as a city reluctant to welcome the formal novelties brought by humanistic culture, of which Sansovino acted as one agent. This historical discovery is made possible by adopting a *longue durée* historical approach that privileges the long waves of history (for example, the building work realised in Venice by Sansovino across his whole career) rather then a single event, as well as by placing emphasis on the interaction between novelties and consolidated mentalities. In examining Sansovino's four buildings – one of which was never realized –, Tafuri pays particular attention to a set of documents providing some information on the context of the projects. These include, among other things, texts referring to buildings penned by Sansovino's contemporaries, correspondence between the architects and the patrons, and documents referring, more broadly, to economic, political, and religious changes affecting the city of Venice in the fifteenth century. Formal choices are constantly correlated with the interplay of the religious, political and economical forces acting upon the project with different degrees of intensity.

By adopting this combined approach, Tafuri manages to 'decrypt' the formal conformity – the *mediocritas* as he calls it – that marks fifteenth-century Venetian architecture and Sansovino's design work. The implicit question underpinning this whole section will be the following: why, in Tafuri's account, did the theoretical principles assimilated by Sansovino during his stay in Florence and Rome fail to find *full* expression in the Venetian projects? I stress the word 'full' in order to make clear that Sansovino's reaction to the Venetian conventions was not one of either total

denial or acceptance. Tafuri implicitly talks of a partial defiance of local rules, and wants to locate the formal 'adaptations, distortions, interpretations and hybrids' ensuing from it.[403] Still, why did Venice reject Sansovino's absolute novelty and oblige him to hybridize his language with local codes? The first reason Tafuri provides is predictable, and regards the competition between the cities of Rome and Venice, which triggered the latter to safeguard its artistic uniqueness. But in addition to this, Tafuri argues that the formal homogeneity of Venice was an effect of its adhesion to an ideal of equilibrium, which found materialization in its political organization:

> Venice's singularity, claims to sacrality, the idea of concord amongst the various members of the patriciate, the topos of the 'mixed state,' and the fusion of religion and civic pride all contributed to a horizon that provided a reference point for the *res aedificatoria*, leaving only minimal margins of autonomy.[404]

In support of his argument, Tafuri refers, amongst other sources, to Nicolò Zen's *Storia della guerra veneto-turca del 1537*, a text pointing to the perils threatening republican liberty, which was considered the city's primary value.[405] Tafuri excerpts a selection of passages that make apparent the author's idealization of the city's equilibrium, and he draws attention to his pronouncements regarding the public function of art and architecture. These latter reveal a certain defiance of the 'sumptuary displays' of music and architecture, as a potential menace to the 'the *virtus* and the stability of the State'.[406] Architecture is permitted only if it incarnates 'the precepts of a collective ethic', and is 'aim[ed][...] at safeguarding and transmitting communal values'.[407] A similar position can be retraced in the first resolution of the original Venetian government, prescribing respect for criteria of

[403] Ibid., p. 219.
[404] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 220.
[405] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 1.
[406] Ibid., p. 2.
[407] Ibid., p. 3.

equality among the city's buildings.[408] In light of the aforementioned documents, Tafuri rereads traits of Venice's architecture such as the ordinariness of the façade of the Palazzo Zen in the Campo dei Crosechieri or the pared-down structure of San Girolamo's Case Moro as evidence of the Venetian *prudentia* spelt out by Niccolò Zen.[409]

However, the Venetian reticence about novelty and ostentation was not without exceptions. We are told that a desire for pomp had taken root in a few aristocratic families related to Rome and the Holy See, and that these same families had turned to Sansovino, the Roman-Florentine architect *par excellence*, to design their palaces. Sansovino's 'foreign' style became a vehicle for representing social difference and the modernizing drive that a group of pro-Rome aristocrats strenuously sought to achieve.[410] Tafuri confronts us with a scenario traversed by multiple rifts: Sansovino's humanist background collides with the universe of values of the city of Venice, which is divided amongst aristocratic groups with different inclinations towards the city of Rome. As well as these two, we have to add a third split internal to these same aristocratic families, apparently eager to renovate their image. It becomes apparent that Sansovino's project for Vettor Grimani's Palace remained unrealized because the radicalism of its virtuous 'inventions' was unacceptable to an aristocratic class still vacillating between the desire for *novitas* and jealousy over its hard-earned traditions.[411]

Tafuri's portrayal of Venice centres on its distinctive relationship with its past and future. The focus is on the city's idleness towards *novitas,* but attention is also paid to the impulses to change arising and surviving in its interior. The historian is cautious in distinguishing the city's reticence about novelty from a categorical refusal to change. The new – he specifies – is rebuffed only if it claims to be

[408] Zen quoted in Tafuri in Ibid., p. 3.
[409] Respectively in Ibid., p. 3; *Interpreting Renaissance*, p. 251.
[410] Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, p. 251.
[411] Ibid., p. 224.

absolute, and refuses to come to terms with the set of unwritten rules that add up to the city's identity (or *consuetudo,* as he calls it). Renewal is possible only in the form of a progression which is also a return.[412] This specific temporality is inscribed in other artistic forms to which Tafuri also turns, confirming the interdisciplinary scope of his research. He refers, for example, to the *tricipitium*, an allegorical figure composed of three heads of men of different ages, and to Giorgione's painting *Three Philosophers*.[413] His analysis rests upon the research conducted by Erwin Panofsky, Fritz Saxl and Salvatore Settis, but attempts to define new levels of meaning by adopting a different perspective for reading the two works of art. He proposes, for example, to look at the symbol of the *tricipitium* as if it were suspended in space, and he shows how this approach brings to light aspects that two-dimensional readings could not notice:

> [...] imagined in space, a fourth element – which is the presupposition of visible ones, thought it cannot itself be represented – becomes necessary to complete the symbolic wheel of time. The *hidden element* is origin and purpose [...][414]

Similarly, in his analysis of Giorgione's painting, he suggests paying attention to the symbolic valences of the natural landscape surrounding the three males depicted. He contends that the young philosopher intent on contemplating and measuring nature has his eyes fixed on a cave, which can be taken as symbolizing the 'origin' of thought, as well as of life.

In both representations, the extremes seem to converge: in the same way as the youngest philosopher looks back at the cave-origin, the hidden face of the *tricipitium* stands between the first and the last head of the series. Borrowing the

[412] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 2.
[413] As Tafuri reminds us the emblem of the *tricipitium* had already been examined by Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl in their 'A Late-Antique Symbol in works by Holbein and Titian', *The Burlington Magazine*, 49.283 (1926), 177-181
[414] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 12.

words of Karl Kraus – an author dear to Tafuri – we could allege that 'the origin is the goal'.[415] I believe, however, that unlike what a superficial reading of both Kraus's sentence and its Tafurian variant may lead us to think, the Venetian time here described does not exactly follow a circular path. If this was the case – if Tafuri's analysis of the *tricipitium* and Giorgione's painting pointed to a plain temporal circularity – we would have serious trouble situating these writings within his corpus of work. On the other hand, if we do not accept this hypothesis, we need to explicate how the overlapping of 'origin and purpose' can in any way lead to anything other than a repetition of the same path. In other words, how can 'a progress that is also a regression' retain some degree of novelty? As a possible way of answering this question, I want to suggest considering Theodor Adorno's interpretation of Kraus's aphorism in his *Negative Dialectics*. Tafuri never refers to Adorno directly in the texts here under consideration, but a few passages that we are going to examine in a short while suggests a certain familiarity with the reading that the German philosopher provides. In referring to Adorno, our intention is not to question the originality of Tafuri's analysis, but rather, to expose the philosophical implications that lie at the bottom of his elliptical discourse on Venice's temporality.

We should start out by saying that the part in the *Negative Dialectics* where Adorno refers to Kraus's aphorism has little to do – apparently, at least – with questions of history and temporarily. It is a section belonging to the second half of the book where Adorno seeks to challenge the understanding of 'concepts' as incorruptible and self-identical (intended as 'identical to what they conceive'), as set forth by Western philosophies. By the end of his critical argumentation against the primacy of the concept and of the epistemic subject, Adorno suddenly refers to 'origin' as a category of dominion used to grant autochthones priority over

[415] For a comparison between Tafuri and Karl Kraus consider chapter 5 in Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*: 'Kraus – or better still, Kraus reread by Benjamin – is Tafuri's authentic double'. Ibid., p. 119.

migrants.[416] The juxtaposition appears to be aimed at presenting these phenomena as of two sides of one same coin. Adorno seems to be willing to say that the same cultural tradition that set natives against newcomers by mobilizing the category of 'origin' has also given rise to a philosophical tradition which grants concepts with the capability to fully capture their objects, thus degrading these latter to a second-order position. It is within this context, by the end of his vitriolic exegesis, that Adorno surprisingly recurs to Kraus' aphorism. I say 'surprisingly' since the quote seems to have very little to share with the line of argumentation of the text, but Adorno cunningly reverses the aphorism's meaning as follows:

> Karl Kraus's line 'The origin is the goal' sounds conservative, but it also expresses something that was scarcely meant when the line was uttered: namely, that the concept 'origin' ought to be stripped of its static mischief. Understood this way, the line does not mean that the goal had better make its way back to the origin, to the phantasm of 'good' nature; it means that nothing is original except the goal, that it is only from the goal that the origin will constitute itself. There is no origin save in ephemeral life.[417]

Let's now juxtapose this quotation to a couple of sentences from Tafuri's *Venice and the Renaissance*:

> The concept of *renovatio,* consequently, assumes specific characteristic in Venice: the new was called upon to develop what had been present at the moment of its genesis; there was no appeal for a return to a perfection that had been destroyed by a repeated 'fall'.[418]

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[416] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966) (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 155.
[417] Ibid., pp. 155-156.
[418] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 15.

> [...] the voice of the origin was not crystalized in a Text, did not form a binding language: in order to resonate it confronted eras, transformed itself, only resisting unfounded innovations.[419]

These three passages seem to offer a way out of the problem described above. If we reconsider Tafuri's 'renewal through return' in light of the idea of origin advanced in these excerpts, it will become apparent that the notion of time we are dealing with is not a circular one. Adorno opposes any understanding of origin as a pristine and incorruptible 'first principle', and he insists on its ephemerality. Similarly, Tafuri denies its status as a 'crystalized', 'binding' language, and instead stresses its malleability and trans-temporality. The proposal of a '"progression" that [is] also a "return"' has therefore to be understood not much as a retrieval of specific forms of the past, but as a rethinking and bettering of the precarious foundations of the city. If we now rethink Venice's reluctance to adopt the *all'antica* language, we realise that it stands less for a fear of change than for a refusal to undertake a modernization process that is only apparent, in so far as premised on the recuperation of an original and universal language that does not as such exist. Here we can glimpse a parallel with Tafuri's description of historian's work as doomed to a continuous 'refashioning' of the critical tools at his or her disposal. In Tafuri's terms, the production of knowledge and space appear to adhere to the same logic of 'doing through undoing', or founding through perennial refounding.

3.3.2. The Church of San Francesco Della Vigna

In 1983 Tafuri dedicated a whole book to the church of San Francesco della Vigna, a case study to which he would return a few years later in his work on Renaissance Venice. The book, co-authored with Antonio Foscari, was produced as part of the 'Microstorie' series, and it included a short but notable preface laying down the methodological choices that had guided his research. Here, we find references to

[419] Ibid., p. 13.

polycentric analysis, microhistory and *longue durée* with an explicit reference to Lucian Febvre, and a few passages indicating the author's intent to situate the history of the building in the wider context of the city.[420] The chapter titles reflect this specific intention, and anticipate those of Tafuri's later books on Renaissance discussed above: chapter one, for example, reads: 'Francesco Zorzi, Andrea Gritti and the church of San Francesco della Vigna (1525-33)', and chapter three: 'Jacopo Sansovino, Domenico Grimani and Andrea Gritti'. We will see who these figures are in a short while, but for the moment it suffices to underline that they belonged to completely different professional contexts: Zorzi was a Franciscan monk, Gritti a chief magistrate and Sansovino an architect. The methodological choices guiding Tafuri's and Foscari's enquiry into San Francesco della Vigna would occasion an innovative historical chronicle, challenging the reading Rudolf Wittkower provided of this same project.

The book starts by describing the structure of the church prior to its renovation, and the relation it entertained with other parts of the city. After only a page, however, the text abruptly switches to the figure of Francesco Zorzi, the guardian of the monastery annexed to the church, and begins to recount his biography, leaving aside any connection with San Francesco della Vigna. We are told in passing that Zorzi would write a *memorandum* on the proportions of the new building, but priority is given to his *De Harmonia Mundi* (1525), and to the esoteric interests which inform this work.[421]

The emphasis placed on the biography of the monk only begins to make sense later on, when Tafuri and Foscari introduce the other protagonists of the story, Andrea Gritti, Domenico Grimani and Jacopo Sansovino. At this point, we come to realise that religious anxiety is the *fil rouge* tying together all the figures involved in the renovation of the church, which Tafuri and Foscari considers to be part of a broader project of religious reformation. Such an assumption in turn sustains their

[420] Tafuri, Foscari, *L'armonia e i conflitti,* p. 9.
[421] Ibid., p. 21.

choice to focus on the variations and the delays punctuating the design process. These latter are, in their reading, the visible traces of the conflict between the modernising initiative guiding the project and the forces opposed to it. The fear of religious reformation in sixteenth-century Venice materializes in a number of material impediments, amongst those, as we will see shortly, was the prohibition against utilizing the territories adjacent to the S. Francesco, enforced by philosopher Pietro Contarini.

It is in light of this intricate scenario that Tafuri and his collaborator interpret the relation between Zorzi's *memorandum* and the church, arriving at a result that radically calls into question Wittkower's reading. We shall remind that in *Architectural Principles*, San Francesco Della Vigna was the first case study cited in support of Wittkower's argument regarding the harmonic proportions of Renaissance architecture. The section dedicated to the church centres upon the text of the *memorandum* – interestingly renamed 'platonic programme' – and is aimed at proving the correspondence between its principles and the actual form of the building. A very brief introductory paragraph on Andrea Zorzi describes the *Harmonia Mundi* as an instantiation of cosmological theories, and the *memorandum* as its practical application:

> This Francesco Giorgi had made his name by a study of the problem of proportion in all its aspects. In 1525 he had published a large folio on the harmony of the universe in which Christian doctrines and Neo-Platonic thought were blended, and the old belief in the mysterious efficacy of certain numbers and ratios was given new impetus. The memorandum of the proportions of S. Francesco is a practical application of the theories of that book.[422]

[422] Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, p. 104.

A few lines before this, we are given some vague background information on the project and the genesis of *memorandum*:

> [...] the structure was begun in accordance with Jacopo Sansovino's design. But differences of opinion soon arose about the proportions of his plan, and the doge commissioned Francesco Giorgi, a Franciscan monk of the monastery attached to that church, to write a memorandum about Sansovino's model.[423]

Wittkower's reluctance to address the history of the church's renovation and its protagonists is conspicuous. We are told that Sansovino's original design was dropped due to the incompatibility between 'different opinions [...] about the proportions of his plan', but we are left to imagine what the cause of the disagreement, and the role played by Sansovino therein, might have been. Similarly, it remains unknown how the project of the memorandum differed from the one designed by the architect, and what remained of this latter in the final work. Tafuri and Foscari seek to illuminate the historical space left unexplored by Wittkower, but without aiming to produce a supplement to it. By 'filling in the gaps' left open by their German colleague, the two historians undermine the whole framework of his historical construction, ultimately causing its collapse.[424]

Tafuri and Foscari want to uncover what exactly caused a variation of the initial project by Sansovino, and what role the memorandum played in this scenario. It seems that none of the architectural drawings still remain, but representations of the church appear on two medals donated to the doge Andrea Gritti in 1534, a year before the release of the *memorandum*.[425] The medals reveal two wholly different

[423] Ibid., p. 104.
[424] Tafuri explicitly presents his thesis as opposed to Moschini's and Wittkower's argument about the 'intellectual dominance of the monk over the artist', Tafuri, Foscari, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 48.
[425] I cannot verify this information but I assume the authors would have turned to the drawings if they were available.

versions of the church, of which only one seems to correspond to the actual edifice. The historians also draw attention to the past tense of the last sentence of the *memorandum*, where the monk declares that the text is meant to inform the people of Venice that the project *is being handled* in observance of 'good reasons'.[426] Combining this with other evidence, Tafuri and Foscari come to the conclusion that Sansovino's second project predates the release of *memorandum*. Moreover, the absence of any reference to the first project in the document leads them to argue that this latter was not devised to oppose Sansovino initial design, but rather to support the second version.

We should recall a detail spelt out above in order to understand why Sansovino's project would require the endorsement of the monk. When we touched upon the modernizing import of the project for San Francesco, we specified that this prompted a set of efforts to impede it, including Contarini's blockade of the shared land neighbouring the church. Carefully looking at the plans, Tafuri and Foscari observe that the second version of the project would have not been realizable without the gaining access to the contended piece of land.[427] In light of these findings, the historians advance a new and expanded interpretation of the function of the *memorandum*:

> So here some of the hidden reasons of the 'memoriale' come to light. The array of cabbalistic, hermetic, neo-Platonic and neo-Pythagorean scholarship to which Zorzi takes recourse is functional to removing the – conceptual and material – obstacles hampering the realisation of the work designed to celebrate in concrete the *concordia urbis* and *harmonia mundi*. If we are here identifying its instrumental character, this is only *one* of its aspects; it it any

[426] My paraphrased translation of 'acciò che ognuno intenda che quel che si fa in questa chiesia si fa con bone ragioni' *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 50.
[427] Ibid., p. 56.

> case fits perfectly well into the mentality of those years, a commixture of ideal values and concrete decisions.[428]

What is to be called into question, here, is not the speculative 'substance' of the document, but the programmatic function that Wittkower had accorded to it.[429] Tafuri and Foscari refrain from looking at the relationship between text and architectural form through the lenses of analogism, and choose to situate the document within a wider set of political, religious and economic dynamics, thus managing to grasp a set of less apparent alliances between the monk and the architect. As we will see in a short while, their thesis hints at broader changes in the role of the architect during the Renaissance, a theme that Tafuri had already tackled in his seminal *Theories and History*. In more recent texts on the Renaissance, however, he would push this line of research one step further by inquiring into the substance of the transition.

As we have just seen, Tafuri's and Foscari's thesis as to the instrumentality of the *memorandum* challenges the idea of the monk's intellectual ascendancy over the architect, as implied in Wittkower's reading. But more than this, they go as far as to reverse Wittkower's implicit argument, by contending that it was Sansovino who exploited Zorzi's authority in order to get his design approved by of a city jealous to guard its traditions. Here we can see a parallel with the story of the Grasso

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[428] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'Ecco dunque alcune delle ragioni nascoste del "memoriale" vengono alla luce. Il dispiegamento di erudizione cabbalistica, ermetica, neoplatonica, neopitagorica, cui lo Zorzi fa ricorso, è funzionale alla rimozione di ostacoli – concettuali e materiali – che intralciano la realizzazione dell'opera destinata a celebrare in concreto la *concordia urbis* e l'*harmonia mundi*. E non sembri, questa, una sottovalutazione della sostanza intellettuale del "memoriale". La strumentalità che ad esso stiamo riconoscendo è solo *uno* dei suoi aspetti; e comunque rientra perfettamente nella mentalità di quegli anni tale commistione di valori ideali e istanze concrete'. Ibid, pp. 56-57.

[429] Tafuri and Foscari confidently argue that in light of their reconstruction of the complex of dynamics surrounding the project for San Francesco Della Vigna, Wittkower's and Moschini's theses lose plausibility. Ibid., p. 48

Legnaiolo, in which the description of the ruse brings to the fore the instrumentality guiding Brunelleschi's actions. For Tafuri, architects' appeal to theory is not a proof of the mythical multidisciplinarity conventionally associated with Renaissance culture, but the early sign of the emergence of a 'cunning of reason' that would come to define modern capitalism.

All this will become apparent if we follow the developments of the story of San Francesco after the release of the *memorandum*. In 1558, in the midst of the counter-reformation, Zorzi's cabbalistic influences were judged heretical, and Jacopo Sansovino was replaced by Andrea Palladio as the head of the project for renovating the church. Tafuri ascertains connections between architecture, politics and religion in the counter-reformation period by adopting two different yet complementary perspectives. Sometimes, he looks at the way political proposals are translated into urban choices, and at other times he considers how architectural texts and treatises reflect emerging systems of values.[430] In the case of the replacement of Sansovino with Palladio, for example, he draws attention to the latter's collaboration with Daniele Barbaro for the new commented edition of Vitruvio's *De architectura*. Barbaro appears as the official author of the commentaries, but Tafuri considers Palladio's decision to contribute to the book with his drawings, together with the specific techniques of representation that he employed, to be signs of the architect's adhesion to the broader aims of renovation underpinning the project.[431]

Tafuri undertakes a close scrutiny of the 1556 edition of Vitruvio's *De architectura* in the second part of *L'armonia e i conflitti*, and later on in a long essay tellingly entitled 'La norma e il programma' ['The Norm and the Program']. Both analyses place emphasis on Barbaro's worship of reason and his rebuttal of any

[430] Tafuri argues that Domenico Morosini's political proposal *De bene instituta re publica* includes precise guidelines related to the form of the city. Similarly, the plan for territorial defence described by Francesco Maria in 1532 reveals a new urban paradigm based on organic planning. Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, pp. 104 and 109 respectively.

[431] Tafuri underlines that the employment of aerial projection lends the drawings an effect of graphic 'transparency'. Tafuri, *La norma e il programma: il Vitruvio di Daniele Barbaro*, p. XV.

mystical influence, of the like that we could find in Zorzi's oeuvre.[432] A passage in *L'armonia e i conflitti* very well illuminates the difference between the idea of knowledge at stake in Barbaro's and Zorzi's respective works:

> The *Knowledge* to which Barbaro refers is not the same as Zorzi's, for it no longer seeks to get to the mysterious heart of truth by mystical and contemplative routes: rather, it serves as a regulating principle for the various activities that are called upon to fit out and rationally renovate *la res publica bene instituta*.[433]

In the wake of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, Barbaro considers geometry and mathematics the supreme principles of artistic production, which allow to reflect the harmony of the cosmos.[434] Architecture is described both as a special language that makes the divine rational order intelligible, and as the *locus* where the unity of differentiated knowledges and technical skills is ensured.[435] As such, Tafuri concludes, it is at the same time a metaphor of the perfect *polis*, and one of the primary tools that provide for its survival.

Tafuri pays particular attention to Barbaro's (and Palladio's) recasting of the category of experience. He explains that although their theory of art does hold on to this latter category, its role is considered secondary with respect to universal principles (the *principii*). The following metaphorical sentence by Barbaro might help elucidating the relationship between the two:

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[432] Tafuri refers in particular to a passage attacking the 'grottesche'. Ibid, p. XVI.
[433] David Broder's and mine translation of 'La *Sapienza* cui accenna il Barbaro non è più quella dello Zorzi, non tende più a raggiungere il misterioso cuore del vero per via mistica e contemplativa: essa funge, piuttosto, da principio regolatore delle varie attività chiamate ad attrezzare e a rinnovare razionalmente *la res publica bene instituta*'. Tafuri, Foscari, *L'armonia e i conflitti*, p. 140.
[434] Tafuri, *La norma e il programma*, p. XVIII.
[435] Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, p. 125.

> Experience is similar to the footprint, [...] [tha]t is the principle of tracking the deer, and yet it is not part of the deer.[436]

Experience figures as an essential tool for reaching art, but it does not necessarily add up to its essence, which is instead regulated by universal and abiding *principii*. We can now start to better understand why Tafuri regards the rationalizing project carried out by the likes of Barbaro and Palladio with suspicion: positing that abstract principles are distinct and prior to experience means engendering a division between the architect and the manual workers involved in the construction of a building.[437] Sansovino's and Brunelleschi's instrumentality is therefore an index of the division between intellectual and manual labour which will soon come to dominate all the spheres of production:

> [The architect] the boss, standing over and regulating all the Works, stands above he who does not rise to such a primary level, who is not exercised in so many and different works, and doctrines; he demonstrates, designs, distributes and commands; and in these tasks it becomes clear that the dignity of Architecture is its proximity to knowledge; and it lives in Heroic Virtue among all the Arts, for it alone knows its reasons.[438]

The work of the architect consists in drawing as much as in demonstrating and ruling over workers relegated to an abject function, 'who [don't] know the reasons'. The

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[436] David Broder's translation of 'L'isperienza adunque [...] è simile all'orma, che ci dimostra le Fiera perchè sì come l'orma è il principio di ritrovare il Cervo, nè però è parte del Cervo'. Tafuri, *La norma e il programma,* p. XX.
[437] Ibid., p. XIX.
[438] Mine and David Broder's translation of '[L'architetto è] capo, soprastante, et regolatore di tutti l'Artefici; come quello che non sia prima e tanto grado salito, ch'egli non s'habbia in molte, et diverse opera, et dottrine essercitato: soprastando adunque dimostra, dissegna, distribuisce, et commanda; et in questi uffici appare la diginità dell'Architettura esser alla Sapienza vicina; et come *Virtù Heroica* nel mezzo di tutte le Arti dimorare, perchè sola intende le cagioni'. Ibid., p. XVII.

distinction between design and execution arrives together with the architect's rise to a figure of management and command. But the antinomy between the rationality of the scientific plan and the irrationality of bare practice as set out by Barbaro is just as apparent. Tafuri's chronicle unveils that 'continuous and homogenous' urban development is made possible by the mitigating effect that the *proti*'s 'experience' has on the '*shock* of absolute *novitas*'.[439]

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In Renaissance Venice, Tafuri seems to be finding an answer to problems regarding contemporary cities, such as the relation between innovation and tradition. This chapter mainly takes into consideration Tafuri's Renaissance project, but it seeks to single out themes appearing therein that had also emerged in the texts considered in the previous part of the thesis, revolving around more contemporary issues. One of these is the labour of the architect and the transformation it undergoes over the course of time, concomitantly with the development of the capitalist regime of production. In the Renaissance Tafuri identifies the seeds of changes that would completely reshape the architectural profession – as we made clear in chapter one, through our reading of the essays for *Contropiano*. This chapter should be considered the fulcrum of the thesis, for it is here that Tafuri's historiographical approach is exposed through an in-depth examination of the articles or excerpts in which he sought to define the 'parameters' guiding his historical research. Attention has been paid to the multifarious theoretical influences that contributed to shaping his notion of the 'task of the historian', and to the subtle methodical variations between the texts considered. In the second part of the chapter we have metaphorically 'dissected' Tafuri's historical constructions, unveiling the type of sources on which they rested and the way they put these sources to use. This in-depth scrutiny has brought out the comprehensiveness of Tafuri's approach (i.e. in the case

[439] My translation of '[...] lo *choc* della novitas *assoluta*'. Ibid., p. XIX.

of Alberti, as we have seen, he takes into account almost the entirety of his writings), and his attention to both the historical contingencies and the ideological instances that combine in shaping architectural projects. I have also given prominence to the criticism Tafuri makes of many renowned historians' portrayal of Renaissance architecture, especially with regard to their establishment of rather ungrounded analogies between forms and philosophical theories. This has brought to light the anti-ideological aim that guides Tafuri's historical research, and in so doing it has stressed, once again, the links between his 'Renaissance project' and his earlier theoretical writings addressing the relation between architecture and ideology.

Chapter Four:

The Formative Years. Architectural Practice and Political Verification

1. The Struggle for the Rome plan

In 1978, architect Piero Sartogo curated for the Roman cultural association *Incontri d'arte* an exhibition which took as its point of departure Gian Battista Nolli's 'Nuova Pianta di Roma'. Nolli's renowned plan, commissioned by Pope Benedict XIV in 1748, was aimed at making visible the city's division into different districts. The organization of this outline into twelve distinct yet contiguous sections reflected this intent, and it also informed the shape of the exhibition's curation. Sartogo invited twelve leading international architects to participate, assigning each of them a different portion of the map, and as an exercise in counterfactual history, he asked each designer to imagine what 'their' part of the city would look like if it had not been transfigured by more than one hundred years of political inertia and land speculation. The architects had to design on paper a different historical development, departing from what Sartogo regarded as the last document of a coherent urban project.

In his *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, Tafuri refers to Sartogo's *Roma Interrotta* exhibition only in passing. His judgement is plainly a dissenting one. The show would disclose, he writes, an 'abstract "will to design"', contributing to strengthening an idealized representation of the historical city by artificially trying to reconnect with it.[440] He judges Sartogo's curatorial idea culpable of being no more than an exercise in eschewing the tangible effects of almost two centuries of negligence and corruption still haunting the present. Pushing Tafuri's criticism further, we can also say that the invitation to imagine how the city could have developed differently diverted everyone's attention from the vicissitudes that had hampered the implementation of a plan for Rome ever since the proclamation of the state of Italy. The brief cuts architects off from the city's present as well as from its near past, by prompting them to turn back to a remote age where, in Paolo Portoghesi's words, 'there (was) no lack of equilibrium to compensate, no error to

[440] My translation of 'astratto "bisogno di progettazione"'. Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana 1944-1985* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986), p. 227.

correct'.[441] Sartogo's curatorial project completely obliterated the negative aspects of the real, contemporary, city, and provided the architects with a scenario diametrically opposed to the one where Tafuri and many of his colleagues had found themselves in the second post-war era, when they came together to prevent the 'last' plan for Rome from coming to grief.

Roma Interrotta thus entailed a further omission that regarded Tafuri directly. Bracketing the sequence of urban planning failures that had followed one after another since the mid-nineteenth century, the exhibition covered up the battles of the architects on the Left. These latter created professional organizations, denounced these events in journals and national newspapers, as well as setting forward alternative ideas and proposals for the city. The exhibition conveyed the impression that nothing had been done to counter the hegemony of large landowners and complicit politicians. Tafuri may well have found the historical amnesia implicit in this project disturbing, for his early writings, like those of many of his classmates and later colleagues, were highly committed to this cause.

In the following pages I will look at this selection of Tafuri's texts. I will do so by situating them in the wider debate over the master plan for Rome and the proposal for a 'new urban dimension'. The choice to place Tafuri's texts side by side with those of other architects and intellectuals, is justified by the high degree of sharing and collaboration that marked cultural production in post-war Italy. In particular, most of the writings that we will take into account were part of broader discussions hosted by magazines involving different representatives of the cultural and intellectual life of the time. By skimming through the journals published in the 1950s-60s in Italy, we can sense a visual, structural and thematic coherence that is relatable to a common political horizon. Such a scenario makes it difficult to attribute single authorship to a number of theses, and compels us to consider the different

[441] Paolo Portoghesi quoted in Maarten Delbeke, 'Roma Interrotta: The Urbs that is not a Capital', *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani*, 26. 2 (2011), 37-49 (p. 39).

voices contributing to the post-war architectural debate as having been connected and complementary.

We shall consider, for example, issues 27 and 28 of *Urbanistica*, a journal published by the national institute for urban planning and directed at the time by Giovanni Astengo. Both issues chart Rome's urban history following a chronological approach. The first one covers a period ranging from the city's foundation till 1873, while the second takes its cue from the 1880 master plan and finishes with a scrutiny of the proposal devised by the Special Office for the New Master Plan [Ufficio Speciale per il Nuovo Piano Regolatore] in 1959.[442] In issue 27, Tafuri's teacher Ludovico Quaroni goes back to the origins of Rome and points to a set of legal and political factors that would have significant effects on the city's subsequent development. He recounts, for example, that during the Roman Empire public lands (*publicum*) could be sold to private owners without any restrictions, but could not be expropriated for the sake of public utility. The concept of public law adopted was, from the very beginning, defective, and inevitably doomed to empower wealthy land owners.[443] Quaroni also lays stress on the instrumental purpose that the edification of grandiose monuments and palaces had for the Roman emperors, and much later for Mussolini or popes like Sixtus V. The strategy of stupefaction, encapsulated in the well-known expression *Panem et Circenses*, was meant to cover up the inconsistency of the city's administration, of which urban matters were an important part. This effect was also engendered, moreover, by the value of eternity attached to buildings, and soon extended to the whole of Rome, turning it into 'the eternal city'. Citizens' attention was, in this way, shifted into a different temporal plane, far away from the present political terrain.

[442] Paolo Rossi de Paoli, 'Due Fascicoli monografici dedicati ai problemi urbanistici di Roma', *Urbanistica*, 27 (1959), 3 (p. 3).
[443] Ludovico Quaroni, 'Una città eterna, quattro lezioni da 27 secoli', *Urbanistica*, 27 (1959), 5-73 (pp. 17-18).

In the same issue, a young Manfredo Tafuri examines the vicissitudes surrounding the construction of what was supposed to be the first street of modern Rome, immediately after the proclamation of the state of Italy.[444] Tafuri provides an accurate account of all the litigations which followed from the Rome municipal authorities' approval of the project in 1865, revealing a structural weakness of the state vis-à-vis private interests. By then, the state may have acquired the right to expropriate privately owned territories to devote them to civil use, but its negotiating power was still too weak to grant a fair gain to both sides. Tafuri's chronicle points to a disjuncture between the text of the law and its application in the Italian context, and does so – perhaps not unintentionally – by focussing on the abortive first public infrastructure project in the capital of the newly born state. It is as if he wanted to uncover an 'original failure' in the history of planning in modern Italy, and evoke the country's troubled relationship with modernity more broadly.

In the second issue dedicated to more contemporary matters, architect Luigi Piccinato gives an outline of the events that predated and engendered the abrogation of the 1954 master plan. Piccinato recounts the story from an insider's perspective, since he was one of the members of the commission – the CET – in charge of implementing the guidelines defined by political representatives.[445] Piccinato's intervention is important because it describes, in detail, the proposal for the master plan of Rome endorsed by the community of architects on the Left. One of its main points was the creation of a south-western urban development axis that would have put an end to a centripetal city-model. In describing the idea of the new axis, Piccinato repeatedly refers to concepts of openness, continuous development and

[444] Manfredo Tafuri, 'La prima strada di Roma moderna. Via Nazionale', *Urbanistica,* 27 (1959), 95-109.

[445] The CET commission was composed by representatives of the Association of engineers (Enrico Leni e Roberto Marino), the Association of Architects (Luigi Piccinato e Vincenzo Monaco), the National Institute of Urban Planning (Ludovico Quaroni, Saverio Muratori), the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (Giuseppe Nicolosi, Enrico Del Debbio). See Italo Insolera, *Roma Moderna. Un secolo di storia urbanistica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), p. 228.

organicity, as opposed to the closeness and mono-centrism of the proposals advanced by a previous generation of architects before the war. Not only was the plan, then, the object of a political struggle;[446] its specific form also embodied the yearning for an artistic renewal, for a break with a previous generation of 'academics' reticent towards international influences that may have altered established codes.[447]

Before returning to Tafuri, it is worth shedding further light on the multiple meanings attached to term 'plan' by pondering over the article concluding the second issue of *Urbanistica*. The text in question, penned by architect Michele Valori, contains almost no references to the technical features of the master plan for Rome, and nor do we find information on the specific episodes that caused its cancellation. What is emphasised, rather, is an idea of the plan as a bearer of values of justice and democracy:

> […] the conflict that unfolded over the Rome [plan] was the fruit of concrete technical demands, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the expression of a desire for justice; a positive albeit still weak symptom of a collective search for truth; the manifestation of an effort directed at clarifying political relations that were still obscured by burdensome inherited customs.

And again:

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[446] For an unrivalled reconstruction of the vicissitudes surrounding the concoction and implementation of the master plan for Rome in the post-war period see Italo Insolera, *Roma Moderna. Un secolo di storia urbanistica*, for a broader historical account of the urban history of Rome consider instead Alberto Caracciolo, *Roma capitale. Dal Risorgimento alla crisi dello stato liberale* (Rome: Edizioni Rinascita, 1956).

[447] In his book on Ludovico Quaroni, Tafuri narrates that academic Gustavo Giovannoni removed international journals from the library of the Faculty of Architecture of Rome after realising that students were drawing inspiration from international examples. Manfredo Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni e lo sviluppo dell'architettura moderna in Italia* (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1964), p. 27.

> What is a plan if not the manifestation of the conscious love for the present human reality; of the disinterested, fervid search for an imagined future that we want to be made real, both for others and ourselves?[448]

Valori turns the plan into a semi-autonomous object epitomising a collective longing for ethics and justice. Elsewhere in the text, he distinguishes between good and bad plans, and he specifies that while formally speaking the two may resemble one another, a good plan conveys a specific idea of the city and of the life therein, which the bad one wholly lacks. This difference occasions a significant paradox, for if a plan is a drawing that contains a proposal for achieving an objective, then the bad plan cannot exist. This latter would amount to a denial of the very idea of the plan, or, as Valori asserts, to a 'nothingness'.[449] A nothingness, indeed, that evokes the situation of legal vacuum and disarray into which Rome had been precipitated after the failure of the 1959 plan.

Valori does not spare his colleagues from criticism, considering them guilty of having deemed failure inevitable.[450] If politicians had hypocritically appealed to realism in order to mask their indifference, architects and engineers had, in his view, opted for staying with them in order 'to save what could be saved'.[451] The problem,

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[448] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'il conflitto sviluppatosi intorno a [l piano di] Roma, mentre è frutto di concrete esigenze tecniche, è pure, forse soprattutto, espressione di un desiderio di giustizia; sintomo buono anche se ancora debole, di una ricerca collettiva della verità; manifestazione di uno sforzo diretto al chiarimento di rapporti politici, ancora oscurati da pesanti eredità di costume [...] Cos'è un piano se non la manifestazione del consapevole amore per la realtà umana presente, della ricerca disinteressata e fervida di un futuro immaginato che si vuole avverato per noi stessi e per gli altri?'. Michele Valori, 'Fare del proprio peggio', *Urbanistica*, 28 (1959), 185-188 (pp. 185-186).

[449] My translation of 'l'altro [il piano cattivo] non è nulla'. Valori, 'Fare del proprio peggio', p. 185. The expression would appear contradictory if translated literally, but in Italian it is common to say 'non è niente' [it isn't nothing] to mean ' è niente' [it's nothing].

[450] Ibid., pp. 186-187.

[451] My translation of 'salvare il salvabile'. Ibid., p. 186.

for Valori, lies with a lack of political ambition on the part of the 'technicians' – a theme that would recur later on in Tafuri.[452]

What is noteworthy in the two issues of the journal is not so much their thematic consistency, but the contributors' engagement with the theme addressed; their shared indignation and preoccupation with the future of the city, and with their profession as a whole. The debate held in *Urbanistica* would leave a trace on Tafuri.[453] In his early articles on post-war architecture, a number of aspects resonated with the texts penned by his colleagues a few years previously. In a similar fashion to Valori, for example, he considered the failure of the plan to have exposed the inadequacy of the political strategy that architects had adopted.[454] Tafuri seems to build on Valori's criticism of the CET, and to extend it to other organizations like the National Urbanism Institute [INU; Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica], and the Association for Organic Architecture [APAO; Associazione per l'Architettura Organica] founded by Bruno Zevi. In his view, the problem mainly regarded the relationships these associations had established with political and economical powers. The INU, for example – he explains – had undertaken a bridging function between the politicians and the other technical figures involved in drafting the plan,

[452] Day makes a similar point: 'But we should be clear here: Tafuri's argument is not an "anti-modernist" dismissal of, or "moral judgement" on, such projects, but a critical exploration of the disjunction between their aims and achievements, between the hopes set forth and the resulting realities; he was interested in why they did not succeed, in order to set out more propitious ways forward. Tafuri himself, we should recall, is repeatedly critical of moralising approaches (and an important aspect of his approach is to chart modernity's turn to a constitutive amorality). If one really wants to make an argument for a Tafurian sense of fateful "inevitability" it is this: the predictability of capital's success when the opposition restricts its aim to delivering reforms or to ameliorating capital's effects, or when these come to substitute for the goal of social transformation. The point he was making was not the inevitability of appropriation, but the problems that resulted from half-applied strategies, the limitations on social goals'. Day, 'Manfredo Tafuri, Fredric Jameson and the Contestations of Political Memory', p. 61.

[453] In his 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961' Tafuri refers to Valori's article. Manfredo Tafuri, 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961', *Superfici*, 4 (1962), 20-42 (p. 21).

[454] Ibid., p. 31.

increasingly losing disciplinary autonomy,[455] while the APAO, for its part, was not able to devise means adequate to its goals. Zevi envisioned a scenario in which architects could guide the construction industry and tie their design work to political and civic goals, but he thought this could be achieved by including architects within state organizations, without paying enough attention to the effective power they held.[456]

Tafuri's criticism ought not be read as a sign of disenchantment, however. The possibility of a politically engaged architecture remained a central concern in his work within this phase. In 'Teoria e critica nella cultura urbanistica italiana del dopoguerra' [Theory and Critique in the Urban Planning Culture of Post-War Italy], for example, he takes a stand against the famous argument advanced by Engels in *The Housing Question*, according to which the solution of housing problems entirely depends on the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. Siding with Gramsci's criticism of economism, and simultaneously rebuffing visionary theories of architecture's ability to overthrow the political-economic system on its own, Tafuri concedes that sectorial struggles can elicit a break, and perform an anticipatory function.[457] Elsewhere he reiterates this point by questioning the idea of the party as the primary locus of political activity, and calling for political action in one's own professional sector.[458] Tafuri's objective was not the creation of organizations like Zevi's APAO, but predating his more explicitly 'workerist phase', he hoped for an alliance between architects (and architectural organization more broadly) and trade unions.[459]

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[455] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Teoria e critica nella cultura urbanistica italiana del dopoguerra 1945-1961', in *La città territorio, un esperimento didattico sul centro direzionale di CentoCelle in Roma* (Bari: Leonardo Da Vinci Editore, 1964), pp. 30-45 (p. 41).
[456] Tafuri, 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961', p. 22.
[457] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Teoria e critica nella cultura urbanistica italiana del dopoguerra', pp. 40-41.
[458] Tafuri, 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961', pp. 40-41.
[459] Ibid., p. 41.

2. The City-Territory

The efforts made by the architectural community to denounce the political class's inertia with regard to pressing urban questions predated, and partly overlapped with, the elaboration of new planning proposals that sought to respond to the dramatic changes brought about by economic development. During the years of Italy's economic miracle (ca. 1957–1963), flows of workers moved from rural areas to the cities, causing massive housing developments and putting pressure on infrastructure networks.[460] This rapidly changing scenario forced architects to rethink the relationships between historical centres and newly built areas, as well as between cities and regions. The numerous conferences and meetings held in the early 60s[461] tackling this theme, and the editorial line of *Casabella continuità* – one of the main architectural journals in Italy – attest to the importance of the 'new urban scale' within the architectural debate of the time.[462] Formulas like 'city-region', 'city-

[460] See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943–1988* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

[461] The main ones being: the seventh national meeting of the Italian institute of urban planning 'Il volto della città' held in Bari in 1959 and its proceedings published in *Urbanistica*, 32 (1960), Giuseppe Samonà, 'La nuova dimensione della città', in *Urbanistica Conversazioni*, ed. by D. Andriello (Naples: Università di Napoli, Istituto di tecnica urbanistica, 1959), the ILSES conference 'La nuova dimensione della città – La città regione' held in Stresa in 1962 and its proceedings published by ILSES, the publication that resulted from the experimental design studio held at the University of Rome titled *La città territorio. Problemi della nuova dimensione. Un esperimento didattico sul centro direzionale di Centocelle in Roma* (Bari: Leonardo da Vinci Editrice, 1964), Emilio Mattioni, Gian Ugo Polasello, Aldo Rossi, and Luciano Semerani, 'Città e territorio negli aspetti funzionali e figurativi della pianificazione continua', in *Atti del X convegno dell'Istituto nazionale di urbanistica, vol. 1* (Trieste: Istituto nazionale di urbanistica, October 14–16, 1965).

[462] As Chiara Baglione argues, 'But questions regarding the city represent the hard core of what we could call the Rogersian phase of *Casabella*. From 1960, in fact, debates on problems of architectonic language gradually gave way to themes concerning urbanism, which became predominant the following year, above all with reference to the extra-urban scale, a new metropolitan and territorial dimension, and reflections on the "city-territory" and "city-region"'. Mine and David Border's translation of 'Ma il nucleo tematico forte di quella che si può definire a stagione della "Casabella" rogersiana è rappresentato dalle questioni inerenti alla città. Dal 1960, infatti, i dibattiti sui problemi di linguaggio architettonico lasciano il posto via

territory' or 'new dimension' were coined to indicate a new urban unit which exceeded the perimeter of the traditional city, and turned into an infrastructure network connecting residential agglomerations with centres for services and business called 'directional centres' (centri direzionali). These proposals were partly inspired by the Garden City theory, and by British and American planners advocating regional government and forms of decentralization in state-centred administration.[463]

In the early 1960s, a young Manfredo Tafuri, at the time a member of the Architetti Urbanisti Associati studio (AUA) with Giorgio Piccinato and Vieri Quilici, co-authored a number of articles endorsing the new urban dimension.[464] As we will see in more detail later, the enthusiasm for 'mega-urbanism' was in part a response to the rhetoric of the 'quartiere' (Italian for 'district') in post-war neorealist architecture. Tafuri and his colleagues felt the urge to call into question what they perceived as an attitude prioritizing the individual over society as a whole, and to restore an idea of spatial totality predicated upon the merging of architecture and urban planning. A thorough analysis of Tafuri's and his colleagues' position, however, cannot leave out the debate on literature and industry that took place in the journal *Il Menabò* at that time. As I mentioned in the introduction, the debate marked an important moment in the country's cultural history, and though its focus was limited to literature, its effects reverberated across different disciplines, including architecture. One of the main

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via a temi urbanistici, che diventano predominanti a partire dall'anno seguente, soprattutto in riferimento alla scala extraurbana, a una nuova dimensione metropolitana e territoriale, alle riflessioni sulla "città-territorio" e sulla "città-regione"'. Chiara Baglione, *Casabella 1928-2008* (Milan: Mondadori-Electa, 2008), p. 221.

[463] Mary Louise Lobsinger, 'The New Urban Scale in Italy. On Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città*', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 59. 3 (2006), 28-38 (p. 31).

[464] Giorgio Piccinato, Vieri Quilici and Manfredo Tafuri, 'La città territorio. Verso una nuova dimensione', *Casabella continuità*, 270 (1962), 16-25. Tafuri wrote two other articles on this theme which focus on specific case studies (Rome, Turin, Tel-Aviv): Enrico Fattinnanzi and Manfredo Tafuri, 'Un'ipotesi per la città-territorio di Roma. Strutture produttive e direzionali nel comprensorio pontino', *Casabella continuità*, 274 (1963), 26-37; Manfredo Tafuri, 'Razionalismo critico e nuovo utopismo', *Casabella continuità*, 293 (1964), 20-25.

problems tackled in the issue, we have seen, was Italian intellectuals' inability to find new 'forms' to portray the country's unprecedented modernization. Tafuri and his colleagues refer to Vittorini's article, focussing on his critique of the use of a pre-industrial language, and of tendency to turn industry into a new nature. In their interpretation, Vittorini's contribution was important because it encouraged writers to acknowledge not just the 'thing-industry', but the effects that this latter had brought to human cognitive abilities more broadly.

Within a 1962 article for *Casabella continuità*, in the subsection tellingly titled 'awareness of a "new" expressive need', Tafuri and the AUA members contend that Vittorini's theses were almost wholly transferable to the realm of architecture. After alluding to the writer's admonition concerning the emergence of a new naturalism, they describe contemporary architects' attitude to the arising industrial reality as 'descriptive' and 'distracted'. They then go on to invoke the urgent need to engage in a thorough refashioning of the tools at designers' disposal in facing the transformations that contemporary cities were undergoing. For Tafuri and his colleagues, the time had come to replace 'models' with flexible 'configurations' that could better adapt to unpredicted urban developments. The proposal for a new city-territory seemed to head in this direction, for it allowed an overcoming of the rationalist tendency to reduce complex systems to discrete parts, by attending to the contradictory nature of urban reality as a whole. In a similar fashion to Vittorini, the AUA architects demanded that a language be forged that could register the mutations of the objects they sought to reproduce, also in relation to the subject committed to reproducing it (or producing it, in the case of architecture). It must be noted, however, that the writers taking part in the debate on *Il Menabò* had a much higher critical attitude toward capitalist development than the AUA members, who seemed to nurture a certain optimism about the effects of the economic boom on the contemporary city.

Our analysis of Tafuri's, Piccinato's and Quilici's articles requires a further effort of contextualization. We will now take into account the journal in which these latter appeared, *Casabella continuità,* at the time directed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers, a Milanese architect and member of the BPBR studio.[465] Rogers was important for Tafuri in his formative years. In an interview with historian Luisa Passerini, Tafuri refers to Rogers and his university teacher Ludovico Quaroni as his points of reference within the Italian architectural scene.[466] The publication of the articles on the city-territory in *Casabella continuità* was, therefore, no accident, but denoted the authors' proximity with the editorial line of the journal, and with the director's view of architecture.

Up to this point we have described the proposal for the city-territory as a response to the country's unprecedented development.[467] Now, we would like to leave economic and urban questions aside, and read the same proposal in light of the theoretical frame of *Casabella continuità*. In our brief description of the journal we neglected to mention that Ernesto Nathan Rogers nurtured a particular interest in phenomenology. This does not come as a surprise: phenomenology was at the height of its popularity in Italy, especially among art and architectural theorists, who saw in it an antidote to idealist tradition. But Rogers' penchant for phenomenology is also ascribable to his friendship with Enzo Paci, one of the most important exponents of existentialist philosophy in Italy, as well as a contributor to *Casabella continuità*.[468]

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[465] BPBR is the acronym of Banfi, Peressutti, Belgiojoso and Rogers, the surnames of the founding members of the studio. BPBR played a significant role in the development of Rationalism in Italy, both through their architectural practice and their writings for the journals *Quadrante, Domus* and *Casabella continuità*, which Rogers directed from 1953 to 1964.

[466] Tafuri admits Rogers' influence in his 'History as a Project', p. 29.

[467] When I talk of the city-territory I am only referring to the formulation of Tafuri, Vieri, Quilici and Fattinanzi.

[468] The philosophical magazine *aut aut*, founded by Paci in 1951, has dedicated a monographic issue to his writings on architecture in 2007. This latter includes many of the articles written by the philosopher for *Casabella continuità* under the direction of his friend Rogers. See 'Enzo Paci. Architettura e filosofia', *aut aut*, 333 (2007). The publication does not include a crucial article by Paci written in 1959 for the

Other scholars had considered the influence of phenomenology and existentialist philosophes upon Tafuri's theories of architecture, but how these philosophical currents impacted upon his early architectural proposals remains unexamined.[469]

Our investigation of Paci's work will take its cue from his articles for *Casabella continuità*, and then proceed by looking into his 1957 book *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo* [*From Existentialism to Relationism*], which contains the philosophical premises sustaining his reading of architecture.[470] In his *Casabella continuità* articles, Paci examines a variety of topics and architectural works without attempting to establish a philosophical theory of, or for, architecture. The prompt to looking into this discipline is the belief that questions pertaining to housing and urban space are of primary concern for philosophy, insofar as they are directly related to the experience of living.[471] This can be traced back to his existentialist education, though we should also be mindful that this latter was for him just the springboard for developing a philosophical project which incorporated other sets of influences (the title of his book *From Existentialism to Relationism* is telling in this regard). Paci strove to dissociate Existentialism from its nihilist tendency by reappraising an idea of human activity that is inclined to rationality and organicity. More so, he denied the substantiality of being by equating it to an event, entirely subjected to spatio-temporal variables and always in relation to other events. Such 'relationism' or 'relational existentialism', as it is otherwise called, is, in Paci's own words, 'a philosophy of time and of the relation that does not separate temporal situations from the conditioning relations that constitute this process or close it with an abstract determinism, but opens it up to new relations'.[472]

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magazine *La casa*: 'La crisi della cultura e la fenomenologia dell'architettura contemporanea', *La casa*, 6 (1959).

[469] I refer in particular to Giorgio Ciucci, 'The formative years', *Casabella*, 619-20 (1995), 12-27 and Andrew Leach, *Manfredo Tafuri: Choosing history*.

[470] Enzo Paci, *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo* (Messina-Firenze: D'Anna, 1957).

[471] I owe this observation to Pier Aldo Rovatti. Pier Aldo Rovatti, 'L'uso dell parole. Enzo Paci. Architettura e filosofia', *aut aut*, 333 (2007), 3-6.

[472] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'Il relazionismo e una filosofia del tempo e della relazione che non separa il processo delle situazioni temporali dalle relazioni

In his 'Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea', Paci seconds José Ferrater Mora's argument about the anti-substantialist and relational nature of both contemporary philosophy and architecture. [473] Paci refers to CIAM's acknowledgement of the inextricability of architecture and urban planning,[474] and to the efforts made by contemporary designers to develop a new organic idea of architecture. Drawing from these debates and practices, he then proposes a definition of the city as 'a knot of relations',[475] in which architecture appears as both a materialisation of a set of predefined functions and the expression of new forms and possible relations. 'Every construction – he wrote – is at once, response and proposal, real actualization and project.'[476]

We can now begin to glimpse a link between Paci's theories and AUA architects' analysis of the city territory. The link we are trying to establish, however, is circular rather than direct. The changes regarding the relation between city and countryside, architecture and urban planning discussed at international CIAM meetings in the 1920s were the source of inspiration of Paci's writings on architecture, which, in turn, became a reference for Italian designers such as Rogers or Tafuri.

Equipped with some basic knowledge of Paci's relationism, we can now explore Tafuri's, Piccinato's and Vieri's scheme more closely. We should start by looking at the passage from the *Casabella continuità* article where the city-territory is defined in opposition to total urban planning, as a process premised upon 'the

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condizionanti che lo costituiscono e non lo chiude in un astratto determinismo ma lo apre a nuove relazioni'. Paci, *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo*, p. 11.

[473] Enzo Paci, 'Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea (1956)', *aut aut*, 333 (2007), 16-33 (p. 19).

[474] He refers, in particular, to the 1929, the 1931 and 1933 congresses held in Frankfurt, Brussels, and Athens, respectively.

[475] My translation of 'nodo di rapporti'. Enzo Paci, 'Il cuore della città (1954)', *aut aut*, 333 (2007), 7-14 (p. 8).

[476] My translation of 'ogni costruzione è insieme risposta e proposta, attuazione reale e progetto per l'avvenire'. Paci, 'Problematica dell'architettura contemporanea', p. 32.

identification of a series of points to be levered'.[477] Such a definition is significant to our analysis, for it suggests an altogether different relation between the architect and the space of the city. While 'total planning' amounts to the division of the land into areas associated with specific uses (zoning), and entails an idea of space as abstract and 'inert', the act of 'levering' alludes to a combined action of the architect and the city. Architects are supposed to act upon points in space to do something, turning top-down planning into an interactive process resulting from the action of the architect and the reaction of the city. This definition brings to mind Paci's postulate as to the 'ontological difference between the intention that drives the project and the temporality that receives it', underpinning his thesis of architecture as a combination of both the 'proposal' and the 'response' mentioned beforehand.[478] A further correlation between the AUA and Paci lies in their rethinking of the 'model'. Tafuri and his colleagues suggested replacing models with plastic configurations, and described the city-territory scheme as a form that 'concretizes in a variation of its own limitations'.[479] In a similar fashion, the first principle of *relazionismo* argues for a new relation between models and 'being', where the former is in the service of the latter.

In spite of their numerous similarities, Paci's theories and the work of the AUA architects present a few notable differences that would serve to justify Tafuri's subsequent theoretical moves. Earlier, when we expanded on the reference to Vittorini within Tafuri's and his colleagues' article, we mentioned these latters' trust in the progressive effects of capitalist development. A trust, I could now argue, that has something in common with Paci's theory of organicism. This notwithstanding, it is important to consider the conjunctural nature of the AUA architects' judgement.

[477] My translation of 'punti sui quali far leva'. Piccinato, Quilici and Tafuri, 'La città territorio', p. 24.
[478] Massimo Canzian in Francesco Rispoli, 'La ragione di Ulisse. Il colloquio tra Paci e Rogers', *aut aut*, 333 (2007), 57-81 (p. 75).
[479] My translation of 'si concretizza addirittura in una variabilità dei suoi stessi limiti'. Tafuri, Piccinato, Quilici, 'La città territorio', p. 25.

Whereas their praise for capitalist development implicitly refers to the changes occurring in Italy in the early 1960s, Paci's thesis, on the contrary, bears a universalizing significance: 'every process, or every experience', he says, 'have a *meaning*, and they tend [...] towards a more "positive" form'.[480] What ties Paci's philosophy to the AUA studio's work is the will to challenge two different, though not fully unrelated, schools of thought still dominant in their respective disciplines in Italy: idealism and the Modern Movement. Yet, while Paci would not drop idealism completely, Tafuri's work will become increasingly influenced by Marxism in the following years. These early articles addressing the question of the new urban scale are however important, because they contain, *in nuce*, a number of points which would evolve into the critical study of the insularity of public housing projects hosted by the journal *Contropiano* in the late 1960s.

Before passing to the next section of the chapter, I want to explore a further theme around which Tafuri's, Paci's and Rogers's works appear to converge. It is a broad topic, an in-depth exploration of which is beyond the aim of this chapter, but I nonetheless consider it important to touch on, even if briefly, for it helps shed some light upon Tafuri's understanding of history. To start with, we should recall that the beginning of Rogers' directorship was marked by the magazine's title changing from *Casabella* to *Casabella continuità,* the Italian for 'continuity'. Rogers' choice was intended to call attention to one of the core aspects of his editorial project: the rethinking of the relation between contemporary architecture and the Modern Movement. Rogers meant the word 'continuity' quite literally as a synonym of coherence and connection, but the way in which this latter had to be pursued was far less easy to grasp: 'continuity' – the first editorial argues – 'means a historical consciousness [...] [,] a dynamic continuation and not a passive copying exercise: not a mannerism or dogma but a free, unprejudiced research, with a constancy of

[480] My translation of 'ogni processo, o ogni esperienza, hanno un *senso* e tendono, fin che possono e come possono, as una forma "più positiva"'. Paci, *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo*, p. 35.

method'.[481] We need to pause on this sentence and juxtapose it to other excerpts from Rogers' other articles if we want to understand its full meaning. In 1960, in a text for the journal *La Casa*, Rogers wrote:

> [...] The modern is that which, negating the fossilization of the ancient, and thus its death, brings the rebirth of the ancient in new forms.[482]

A year later in *Casabella continuità*:

> Studying the Modern Movement without prejudice, one must recognise that it has made irreversible conquests. That notwithstanding, certain of its theoretical weaknesses must be analysed […]. The true consciousness of the Modern Movement is its continual self-transcendence: in its ever-renewed conquest of itself, moving beyond any conquered form. This is a fact of fundamental importance; it is from here that we can and must proceed, and therefore when I speak of continuity, I am speaking of a dynamic continuity, that is, of the progressive direction of tradition, beyond its second-rate, nominalistic meaning.[483]

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[481] My translation of 'Continuità significa coscienza storica: cioè la vera essenza della tradizione nella precisa accettazione d'una tendenza che, per Pagano e per Persico, come per noi, è nell'eterna varietà dello spirito, avversa ad ogni formalismo passato o presente. Dinamico proseguimento e non passiva ricopiatura: non maniera; non dogma, ma libera ricerca spregiudicata con costanza di metodo'. Rogers in Baglione, *Casabella 1928-2008*, p. 214.

[482] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'Il moderno è ciò che, negando la fossilizzazione dell'antico, e quindi la sua morte, fa rinascere l'antico in nuove forme'. Rogers quoted in Rispoli, 'La ragione di Ulisse', p. 76.

[483] David Broder's translation of 'Studiando il Movimento Moderno spregiudicatamente, si deve riconoscere che esso ha operato delle conquiste irreversibili. Ciò nondimeno si debbono analizzare certe carenze teoriche [...]. La vera coscienza del Movimento Moderno è nel suo continuo trascendersi: nella conquista sempre rinnovata di sè oltre ogni forma conquistata. Questo è un dato fondamentale; da qui si può e si deve procedere, perciò quando parlo di continuità, parlo di continuità dinamica, cioè del senso progressivo della tradizione, di là dalla

Establishing a continuity with the Modern Movement did not just mean adopting a critical, active, relation to its heritage, but also required the effort to keep alive its capacity to set itself in crisis. In other words, it was the inner dynamic of the Modern Movement, beside its outcomes, which had to be appropriated by posterity. Rogers' relation to modernity was not easily understood. For Reyner Banham, for example, Rogers and his colleagues' mid-1960s revivalism and Neo-liberty was a sign of 'infantile regression' that risked imperilling the conquests of the twentieth century.[484] Rogers, in response, accused Banham of technological progressivism, and reinstated his idea of historical 'advancement' as a continuous rethinking of past styles, including the ones antecedent to the modernist break. He also stressed the importance of dealing with pre-existing conditions of the environment, whether natural or constructed.[485]

A close reading of Paci's relationism reveals an understanding of the relation between present and past that bears more than some resemblance with Rogers' theory of pre-existing environmental conditions. Earlier we defined relationism as a philosophy of time and relations that replaces the idea of being as substance with one of being as an event. To this we should add a qualification: every event, in the sequence leading to ever-organic configurations, is unique and irreversible. A quotation from Paci's 1951 text 'Fondamenti di una sintesi filosofica (continuazione)' takes us to the very core of the matter:

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sua deteriore accezione nominalistica'. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, *Editoriali di architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), pp. 121-2.

[484] Reyner Banham, 'Neoliberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture', *Architectural Review*, 77 (1959), 231-235.

[485] For which he coined the definition 'preesistenze ambientali' ['pre-existing environmental conditions']. Ernesto Nathan Rogers, 'Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei (1954)', in *Esperienza dell'architettura* (Turin: Einaudi, 1958).

> The assertion of the present as something totally extraneous to the past coincides with considering the past to be a nothing, and thus setting the present at the beginning of history, as the creator of the form. But the irreversible is not an absolute beginning, but rather the metamorphosis-form, that is, the emergence of the form as a renewal. […] The permanence of the form is the actualisation of the past as the present. […] In the present, the conservation of the past is not a return to back then, but the only possibility of a future; and reverence toward the past is the condition of truth for the present.[486]

The excerpt makes apparent that Paci's idea of irreversibility does not imply a complete break with the past. Irreversibility is regarded as a necessary condition for the continuous metamorphosis of being, and therefore of being as such, for this latter, in Paci's philosophy, is inextricable from time and coincides with its own ceaseless transformations and relations. For Paci, form *is* a continuous process of metamorphosis in which the present realizes the past, and the future in turn realizes the present. This presupposes, to conclude, an idea of origin coinciding with the transcendence by the future, and of transcendence as possible rather than ontological.[487]

At the same time as Paci and Rogers were grappling with questions pertaining to the relation between past and present, the problem of preserving Italian cities' historic centres in the face of rampant urban development was acquiring increasing

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[486] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'L'affermazione del presente come totalmente estraneo al passato coincide col considerare il passato un nulla e quindi col porsi come l'inizio nella storia, il creatore della forma. Ma l'irreversibile non è un inizio assoluto, bensì la forma-metamorfosi e cioè l'emergenza come rinnovamento della forma. [...] Il permanere della forma è l'attuarsi del passato come presente. [...] La conservazione del passato non è nel presente un ritorno ma l'unica possibilità di un futuro e la pietà verso il passato è la condizione di verità del presente'. Paci in Rispoli, 'La ragione di Ulisse', p. 64.

[487] Paci, *Dall'esistenzialismo al relazionismo*, p. 309.

importance. The country's urge for modernization through planning coincided with, and perhaps prompted a rethinking of both the function of historical heritage and ideas of preservation. Tafuri also tackled questions related to historical heritage in the early 1960s, and collaborated with the journal of *Italia Nostra*, a campaigning organization dedicated to the protection and promotion of the country's historical, artistic and environmental patrimony. In the texts for *Italia Nostra*, Tafuri emphasized the importance of the problem of historical heritage for post-war Italian architectural culture, and advanced a proposal within the framework of the city-territory scheme. He contended that within a new type of city, the historic center was destined to lose any privilege over recent developments, and thus to become one among many points. Tafuri foresaw an urban system where the new and the old could coexist on the same plane, and in which the historic value of the monumental city would be preserved by virtue of its integration and accessibility. Such a position was reflected in his endorsement of the abolition of the distinction between conservation and planning, contained in the proposal for a new urban law devised by the Istituto nazionale di urbanistica in 1961. Tafuri defended the proposal for a 'Pianificazione conservativa' [conservative planning], an apparently antinomical definition entailing a shift from an idea of conservation as passive preservation to another, more active one, related to the exigencies and the changes of the contemporary city as a whole.[488] He laid stress on the inevitable operation of re-signification in light of contemporary values and conditions which inheres to any work of conservation, troubling in this way the apparent antinomy between conservation and planning.

3. In Search for the Real

In the mid-1960s, the debate over the new-dimension scheme began to lose momentum, and Tafuri for his part, also feared that the city-territory could soon

[488] Manfredo Tafuri,'Il Codice dell'Urbanistica ed i Piani di Risanamento Conservativo', *Italia Nostra V,* 21 (1961), 13-17 (p.15); Tafuri, 'Il problema dei centri storici all'interno della nuova dimensione cittadina', p. 29.

become a slogan stripped of any 'operative consistency'.[489] Concomitant to the abandonment of the urban design schemes was a fading away of the interventionist tone that had marked Tafuri's early writings. In 1965, Rogers left the directorship of *Casabella continuità,* and Tafuri stopped contributing to the journal that had for a decade been one of the most important platforms for committed architectural discussion.

In the same year as his participation in Rogers' project came to an end, Tafuri published his first book, a monograph on the work of his teacher Ludovico Quaroni. These two moments signal, I contend, a shift from a phase of engagement in the present, to another, more retrospective moment dedicated to reviewing his formative years.[490] In the introduction to the book Tafuri rebuffs any hagiographic approach, and contends that the work of Quaroni should be conceived as a prism through which to examine and assess post-war Italian architectural culture in its entirety.[491]

In his 1962 article for the journal *Superfici,* Tafuri observes that the attempt to provide the city of Rome with a plan was paralleled by the effort to devise a methodology for contemporary architecture that would be valid on the national scale. One of the main proofs of this endeavour was the National Research Council's publication of the Manuale dell'Architetto [Architect's Manual] in 1946, a set of design guidelines that were later incorporated into Italy's government-subsidized housing. The first goal, we know, was soon doomed to fail, but not dissimilar from Tafuri's perspective was the destiny of the search for a method. This notwithstanding, Tafuri does not renounce to praise individuals' efforts to rethink the methodological underpinnings of the discipline, as we will see upon a closer reading of his book on Ludovico Quaroni.

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[489] Tafuri, 'Razionalismo critico e nuovo utopismo', p. 20.
[490] Tafuri explicitly refers to the need to historicize post-war architecture in order to learn from the past. See Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni*, p. 11.
[491] Ibid., p. 11.

The argument about the concomitant struggle for plan and method, leaning towards the latter, finds an interesting precedent in Giulio Carlo Argan's 1951 book on Walter Gropius, to which Tafuri refers in multiple places.[492] In the book in question, Argan champions Gropius' understanding of rationality as a method, and sets it in opposition to the notion of rationality as a system instead embodied by Le Corbusier's work. In Argan's description, the Gropiusian method extends beyond architecture and permeates the entire life, to the point of becoming a disposition inherent to every single human act.[493] Gropius is important for Argan, for he represents an alternative to the a-priori schemes and formulas of Modernism, without dispensing with rationality altogether. In his article for *Superfici*, Tafuri underlines that the publication of the book coincided with the emergence of the 'neorealist tendency', that as we will see in a short while, will develop in an almost oppositional way to the Modernist poetics. In his view, Argan's book was therefore an attempt to establish a critical continuity with modernist heritage, one which would have allowed the maintenance of methodological rigor, while accepting the new instances of the rising Italian society.[494]

In Tafuri's monograph on Quaroni, the antinomy between system and method takes the form of an opposition between the ideological stasis of the Modernist Movement and the flexibility of the Quaronian modus operandi. Quaroni emerges as the proponent of an architecture capable of constantly renovating its methods and tools, with the aim of better adhering to different moments and contexts. Tafuri describes Quaroni's approach to architecture in appreciative terms, but he remains ever-vigilant of the pitfalls it may engender. He is well aware that its limitless adaptability to particular situations, while on the one hand permitting a better adherence to reality, is, on the other hand, at odds with the aim of universality implicit in every method:

[492] Giulio Carlo Argan, *Walter Gropius e la Bauhaus* (Turin: Einaudi, 1951).
[493] Ibid., p. 13.
[494] Tafuri, 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961', p. 30.

> [...] whoever does not start from a revealed truth or a truth that he assumes for comfort's sake, who instead assumes a 'horizon of truth' at the foundation of his action, which does not in itself guarantee any particular action, is naturally brought gradually to create himself a personal moral, limited because it cannot be extended to everyone; because it is valid only for he who experiences it.[495]

Abdicating the pretence of universality and its ideological implications can lead to the opposite, yet equally dangerous, situation dominated by 'personal ethic';[496] but the value of Quaroni's work, Tafuri insists, lies precisely in its attempt to overcome such a polarity and find a space in between individual principles and 'authentic methodology'.[497] At this point, however, Tafuri is forced to take a step back, and attenuate his initial positions. The only condition for Quaroni's 'morality in action' having a political impact, he maintains, is to contain an '*ideological margin*, a theoretical nucleus, even if one in constant evolution'.[498] The neat polarity between the stasis of ideology and the flexibility of the method posited at the beginning of the paragraph no longer seems to hold. Quaroni's architecture cannot do without an ideological content, such as we had been led to think; it is just that the ideology operating through his work is not crystallized in any immediately identifiable form. Such an 'instability' is fraught with risks, of which Tafuri seems to be very aware, but

[495] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'chi non parte da una verità rivelata o da una verità che egli assuma di comodo, chi assume, anzi, a fondamento del suo agire un "orizzonte di verità" che non garantisce, di per sé, nessuna azione particolare, è naturalmente portato a crearsi via via una morale personale, limitata perchè non estensibile a tutti; perchè, appunto valida solo per chi la sperimenta'. Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni*, p. 15.
[496] Ibid., p. 15.
[497] Ibid., p. 15.
[498] Mine and David Broder's translation of '*un margine ideologico*, un nucleo teorico, anche se in continua elaborazione'. Ibid., p. 17.

concomitantly it allows for a constant overcoming, albeit a largely unconscious one, of the work's ideological content.[499]

4. Realism and the Question of Method

The question of how to consider the singularity of each design project without fully doing away with 'objective' methods will return in Tafuri's analysis of Quaroni's design of the Tiburtino and La Martella districts. Both projects were realized in the early 1950s, and are regarded amongst the most representative examples of Italian post-war realist architecture. Before we go on to delve into Tafuri's criticism of these projects, however, I want to shed some light on the debate over realism that emerged in Italy after the end of World War II. We shall recall that the turn to realism was an attempt to reconnect with the 'uncontaminated' values of pre-fascist times, but it was also motivated by the interests of intellectuals on the left and by the Communist Party, at the time under the leadership of Palmiro Togliatti.[500] Realism was called on to support the political belief in the urgent need to rebuild democratic culture on the basis of the real material conditions and needs of Italian society.[501] This attempt was reflected in the proliferation of a number of literary, artistic, and filmic works labelled 'Neorealist', that shared a documentary attention to the everyday and to

[499] Tafuri does not come to the same conclusion, however. He ends the text by pointing to the implicit ideological content of Quaroni's work but he does not admit that this implicitness may open up a space for criticism.

[500] See Giorgio Luti, *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana del novecento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997), p. 547.

[501] On artistic realism in the post-war period, consider E. Braun (ed.), *Italian Art in the 20th century: Painting and sculpture 1900-1988* (Munich: Prestel, 1989). On the cultural politics of Italian Communist Party in the post-war period see Nicoletta Misler, *La via italiana al realismo. La politica artistica del P.C.I dal 1944 al 1956* (Milan: Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1973). The theoretical premises of the PCI's cultural politics lie in the work of Antonio Gramsci. Of particular relevance are the texts collected in Antonio Gramsci, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1950).

ordinary people.[502] Simultaneously, literary critics and philosophers debated theories of realism, principally drawing on the work of Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács.

Between 1954 and 1956, partly thanks to the climate of the 'thaw', Georg Lukács's influence among Italian cultural critics grew considerably.[503] The philosopher was mainly known for his theory of realism as elaborated in his books *Essays on Realism* and *Marxism and Literary Criticism*, but by 1957 critics could also access to the important collection of philosophical essays *Contributi alla storia dell'estetica* [*Contributions to the History of Aesthetics*].[504] In the above-mentioned texts Lukács advanced a theory of realism in stark opposition to naturalism, arguing that the reflection of reality corresponded to a portrayal of its 'essential connections, contexts and manifestations'.[505] These latter ought not be confused with some inner, truthful essence lying behind a deceptive surface, but they corresponded to a set of determinants resulting from a dialectical exchange between historical and political factors and individual traits. The site of realism, within Lukács's theory, is what he calls the 'particular', a never fixed category produced by a continuous oscillation

[502] For a definition and periodization of neorealism, I rely on Romano Luperini 1997 anthology of Italian Literature and Enrico Chidetti's and Giorgio Luti's dictionary. According to Luperini, Neorealism originated from 1930s Italian 'New Realism', but it presents a stronger political commitment. He furthermore distinguishes between an initial, 'spontaneous' Neorealism (1943-1948), and a subsequent, more coherent phase that will continue through the 1950s. See Romano Luperini, Pietro Cataldi, *La scrittura e l'intepretazione, storia della letteratura italiana nel quadro della civiltà e della letteratura dell'occidente Vol. 3* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1997), p. 910. A number of literarily critics have refrained from associating neorealism with a movement, and have underlined its lack of a coherent programme or manifesto. See *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana del novecento* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1997).

[503] See Franco Fortini, 'Lukács in Italia 1959', in *Verifica dei poteri, scritti di critica e istituzioni letterarie* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1965).

[504] I am relying here on Fortini's historical reconstruction of the translations of Lukács's work into Italian. It is important to stress that his *History and Class Consciousness* only appeared in 1967. Georg Lukács, *Contributi alla storia dell'estetica* (1954) (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967).

[505] Georg Lukács, 'Scientific Particularity as the Central Category of Aesthetics (1956)', trans. by Nicholas Walker, in *The Continental Aesthetic Reader*, ed. by Clive Cazeaux (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 220-233 (p. 231).

between universality and the individual. When applied to literature, the particular takes the form of the type or typical character, which Lukács defines as follows:

> [...] the *typical* is not to be confused with the *average* (though there are cases where this holds true), nor with the *eccentric* (though the typical does as a rule go beyond the normal). A character is typical, in this technical sense, when his innermost being is determined by objective forces at work in society [...] [when] the determining factors of a particular historical phase are found in them in concentrated form. Yet, though typical, they are never crudely 'illustrative'.[506]

Equipped with this knowledge, we can look more closely at the reception of Lukács's work in Italy. We will focus on the proceedings of the conference 'Problemi del realismo in Italia' ['Problems of Realism in Italy'] held at the Gramsci Institute in 1959. The event took place when the popularity of neorealism was already on the wane, and as the title suggests, it was aimed at assessing the success and failures of the movement across various disciplines. In the list of invited speakers, which included some amongst the most prominent figures on the Left, we also find two architects: Carlo Aymonino and Carlo Melograni.

The event began with an intervention by literary critic Carlo Salinari centring on Lukács's and Galvano Della Volpe's contributions to Marxist theories of realism. The text attested to the theoretical relevance of Lukács in Italian contemporary debates, but it simultaneously advanced a number of significant criticisms, amongst which we find the distinction between realism as a method and realism as a tendency that would flare up in some of the subsequent interventions. Lukács was accused of privileging an idea of realism understood as a totalizing method that overlooked the concreteness of particular realist manifestations, while a conception of realism as a

[506] Georg Lukács, 'Critical Realism and Socialist Realism', in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: The Merlin Press, 1969), 93-135 (p. 122).

tendency, on the contrary, would have made it possible to grasp the essential aspects of reality at a given historical moment. Such an interpretation bore the stamp of the historicist approach still dominant in the Italian context, and failed to do justice, I would argue, to the complexity of Lukács's thought.

Architect Carlo Melograni also championed Salinari's thesis. In his short intervention he challenged the neorealist use of elements belonging to a folkloristic tradition, for they no longer represented the real material conditions of the people. Alluding to the introductory intervention, he then contended that realism had to 'refuse all kinds of programmatic expression'.[507] Carlo Aymonino took an almost opposite stance, one that predated Tafuri's judgement on the Tiburtino and La Martella projects. In discussing the Italian architects' analysis of realism, however, we need to keep in mind that their understanding of the term largely relies upon the way realism had been interpreted in architectural practice in post-war Italy. Before we go on to examine how Aymonimo and Tafuri positioned themselves in regard to the debate over realism, it is, therefore, useful to dwell on the two amongst the main neorealist projects, the Tiburtino and the La Martella village.

The construction of the Tiburtino district in Rome (1950-1954) took place within the framework of the INA-Casa, a nationwide program of housing promoted by the government after World War II. The project was directed by Ludovico Quaroni and Mario Ridolfi, and included both Melograni and Aymonimo as members of the team responsible. The designers responded, in part, to INA-casa's request to meet inhabitants' psychological needs, through a number of formal devices such as the adaptation of buildings to the site's geo-morphological features and the privileging of typological variation.[508] Pushing the INA-casa guidelines further, the team led by Quaroni and Ridolfi decided to entrust the design of each block to a

[507] My translation of 'rifiuta ogni modo di espressione programmatica'. *Il contemporaneo*, 1 (1959), p. 31.
[508] From the 'volumetto della gestione INA casa', in Carlo Aymonino, 'Storia e cronaca del quartiere Tiburtino', *Casabella continuità*, 215 (1957), 19-22 (p. 20).

different member, so as to reach the highest typological variety. Asked to write about the project seven years after its completion, Aymonino revealed that the idea shared by all members of the group was 'to move beyond a rationalist type of composition, dictated by uniform orientations, constant distances, and the repetition of a few building types [...] in order to obtain a unity by means of the overlapping of ever-different perspectives'.[509] This formal heterogeneity was achieved through the employment of a number of expedients such as the differentiation of façades, the use of a range of traditional materials and the construction of underpasses and overpasses fragmenting the artificial compactness of the building complex. Also noteworthy was the inclusion of apparently unplanned elements like external staircases starting from the third floor of the buildings to reach a single apartment. The only unifying elements of the project, as admitted by one of the architects involved, were the materials used for the roof and the frames in pinewood with Roman-type shutters.[510]

Tafuri wrote about the Tiburtino for the first time in his article for *Superfici*, as part of a section on the neorealist experience, and he would return to it a few years later in his monograph on Ludovico Quaroni. To some extent, his critique reiterated many of the issues raised by other designers, including the ones in charge of the project. Less than a decade after the completion of the Tiburtino, Quaroni did not spare himself self-criticism, acknowledging that the project was grounded on a shared 'emotional state' instead of a solid notion of realism. The architects' prime, though undeclared, intention – Quaroni continued – was that of leaving behind a rationalist architectural heritage that was considered sterile and inhuman, but this came at the expense of an accurate analysis of the 'real' needs of the future inhabitants of the estate. In a similar fashion, Carlo Melograni highlighted how the urge to break from preceding architectural experiences had been replaced by an

[509] Ibid., p. 20. The excerpt has been translated into English by Antony Shugaar and Branden W. Joseph. It can be found in Bruno Reichlin, 'Figures of Neorealism in Italian Architecture (Part 1)', *Grey Room*, 5 (2001), 78-101 (p. 85).
[510] Carlo Chiarini, 'Aspetti urbanistici del quartiere Tiburtino', *Casabella continuità*, 215 (1957), 28 (p. 28).

excessive empiricism and emphasis on individual cases.[511] Paolo Portoghesi, for his part, observed that the deployment of folkloristic elements could be perceived as denigratory, for it anchored the residents to an image of cultural subalternity. Tafuri widely drew from all these criticisms, we have said, but still succeeded in developing further a few issues that his colleagues had left unexplored.

Amongst the aspects that distinguish Tafuri's review of Tiburtino, we can certainly count his emphasis on the district's insularity. This latter was, in part, an effect of INA-casa's requirements, but it simultaneously indexed the architects' inability to envision the pitfalls embedded in the proposed model, and to respond by advancing an alternative configuration. 'The district seems to accept such limitations' – Tafuri writes – 'and seems to do so precisely through its substantial seclusion from the city; a seclusion defined by its very form, which excludes any effective relation of continuity with the pattern of the city'.[512] Tafuri saw in the district's seclusion the will to impose the ethical superiority of a popular, ancestral, culture over a metropolitan space dominated by capitalism. He considered such an attempt particularly naive in a period marked by booming industry and the emergence of a new working-class subjectivity connected to the factory and the city. And if the geographical isolation of the neighbourhood misrepresented the 'real position' of the working class in society, its limited extent could be read as a sign of the rescaling of the political ambitions of the Left. Tafuri did not fail to draw attention to the coincidence between the construction of the Tiburtino and the latest abrogation of the urban plan for Rome, suggesting that the focus on smaller-scale housing complexes served to divert attention from the failure of a grander project.

The second major problem that Tafuri associated with the Tiburtino followed on from Quaroni's and Melograni's comments. For him, too, the urgency to escape

[511] Carlo Melograni, 'Dal Neoliberty al Neopiacentismo', *Il contemporaneo*, 13 (1959), 30-35 (p. 234).

[512] My translation of 'il quartiere sembra accettare tali limiti, sembra in definitiva farli propri nella sua sostanziale chiusura alla città, chiusura definita dalla sua stessa forma che esclude ogni rapporto effettivo di continuità col tessuto cittadino'. Tafuri, 'La vicenda architettonica romana 1945-1961', p. 27.

the anonymity of the modern movement through the abolition of typologies and the privileging of craft had resulted in the loss of any sense of overall coherence. The 'exaltation of the single perspective view, the single angle, the single decorative particularity', had turned the Tiburtino into an *unicum*, and prevented the development of a 'realist' methodology that could be applicable elsewhere.[513] Tafuri's criticism appears at odds with the historicist reading of Lukács discussed above, and it implicitly restored the importance of a universal ambition of realism. In a similar fashion, Carlo Aymonino had imputed the failure of Italian Neorealism to its lack of general aspects, in his opinion necessary for turning a set of disparate 'chronicles' into coherent 'stories'. The proximity between Lukács, Tafuri and Aymonino is further strengthened by a terminological overlapping. We know that the term 'type', which Lukács employs to mean the coalescence of universal and individual determinants, indicates a structure serving as a model for subsequent architectural works. In the context of the discussion on the Tiburtino, Tafuri and Aymonino furthermore endow the term with a meaning that goes beyond architectural expertise, implicitly echoing Lukács's thesis. Their analysis seems to suggest that placing emphasis on the specific features of a building site and allowing for unrestrained formal variation prevents the coming-together of a 'realist' language able to encompass the exigencies of an epoch. The Tiburtino – concluded Tafuri wrote – makes the dialect its own language.

A few years later after the termination of the Tiburtino, Quaroni and his colleagues will seek to overcome the shortcomings of early neorealist architecture in the project for the village La Martella, next to town of Matera. The project, commissioned by a program funded by the United States (the UNRRA Casas), together with the National Institute for Urban Planning (INU), demanded the building of more than 200 units for the populace displaced from the caves. For Tafuri

[513] Mine and David Broder's translation of 'dell'esaltazione del singolo scorcio prospettico, della singola angolazione, del singolo particolare decorativo'. Ibid., p. 27.

the design presented a compact, enclosed configuration reminiscent of the Tiburtino, but its specific location endowed it with a different meaning. The opposition between the compact estate and the deserted southern countryside epitomised, in his view, the attempt to challenge the sparse residential conurbations characteristic of traditional agricultural communities, and in so doing reversed the populist aesthetics associated with council housing estates.[514] The same objective was pursued through the limitation of spontaneous architectural forms and the employment of building typologies. Tafuri praised these efforts highly, but he ultimately found himself forced to admit their inadequacy vis-à-vis his idea of realistic architecture. The attempts to attenuate the formal chaos of the Tiburtino had prompted the architects to give precedence to the composition of its architectural aspects over its semantic value, giving rise to a new empty formalism.[515]

5. From Neorealism to Realism

According to Linda Nochlin, Realism as a historical movement in the figurative arts and literature appeared in its most coherent formulation in France in the nineteenth century, with echoes in Britain and America. The broadening of a new notion of history and temporality as well as the emergence of democratic ideas stirred interest for ordinariness and the contemporary. As an effect of this, common people and scenes from daily life, until then excluded from the space of representation, became the privileged subject of a style-free pictorial art.[516] In his 1861 realist manifesto, artist Gustave Courbet equated realist painting with a concrete language incompatible with all that was 'abstract', or simply not immediately visible to the eye.[517]

[514] Tafuri, *Ludovico Quaroni*, p. 110.
[515] Ibid., p. 112.
[516] Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 13.
[517] Gustave Courbet quoted in Ibid., p. 23.

If we turn to the history of architecture, however, we find it hard to identify a realist movement whose coherence and strength could equal that which left its mark on art and literature in the nineteenth century. Once again, Linda Nochlin is an important point of reference for understanding this difference, being one of the few art historians to include architecture and decorative arts in her study of realism. Nochlin exposes the difficulties that arise from any attempt at extending the 'parameters' of artistic and literary realism to architecture, and opts to examine this discipline in terms of one specific dimension of realism: the demand for contemporaneity. The methodological shift that she proposes does not, however, bring a satisfactory outcome, for we soon understand that the demand for modernity did not find a coherent expression across the architectural practitioners and theoreticians of the time. While architect César Daly, for example, offered an interpretation of contemporaneity based on rational planning, new building types and an emphasis on projects of a social and public nature, for Payne Knight a modern style had to be obtained by mixing existing ones.[518] The sole tenable parallel with art that Nochlin's study offers regards a number of nineteenth-century American and English designers concerned with questions of 'truth' and 'sincerity.' Asserting their identification with realist painters' transparent style, architects and theorists like Augustus Pugin, John Robinson and John Ruskin rebuffed any attempt to conceal and embellish edifices, instead championing an idea of architectural form capable of immediately displaying its purpose.[519] But even this last, and more convincing, case of architectural realism rested on only a few examples, failing to amount to a coherent realist movement in any way analogous to the literary and painterly ones.

Philosophical theories of mimesis are not of great help either in shedding light on the question of architectural realism. Plato and Aristotle limited their analysis to literature, theatre and paintings.[520] And even when the question of realism

[518] Ibid., pp. 209-222.
[519] Ibid., pp. 222 -224.
[520] See Book X in Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee, (London: Penguin, 2003) and Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996).

became prominent in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries, the majority of its theorists largely neglected to probe the difficulties arising when we leave representational arts aside. According to Bertolt Brecht, Lukács's notion of realism was reductive because it derived its parameters from analysis of the bourgeois novel alone, while understanding the 'realism' of a work of art required setting the depiction of life against life itself.[521] Brecht's attempt at breaking through Lukács's apparent rigidity was significant, but it did not lead to a broader interrogation of the relation between realism and the arts.[522] Unexpectedly, it was instead Lukács who in his monumental *Aesthetics* examined music, architecture and applied arts with a close attention to the question of mimesis.[523] Even if Brecht's criticism of Lukács's excessive focus on the novel does remain valid – as further proved by the inclusion of architecture under the heading 'marginal issues of aesthetic mimesis' in the *Aesthetics* – his attempt to extend his research to non-representational arts must be acknowledged. In the last part of the chapter, we will take stock of Lukács's theory of architectural realism, employing this theory in order to reconsider and unpack Tafuri's analysis of La Martella and the Tiburtino.

Between 1976 and 1977, two important European architectural magazines, the Swiss *Archithese* and the French *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, dedicated monographic issues to the question of realism, in which they sought to chart the history of architectural realism in the twentieth century and to address the relation between architecture and reality more thoroughly.[524] This effort coincided with the coming to the fore of *La Tendenza* [The Trend], a movement that affirmed

[521] Bertolt Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukàcs', in Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. by Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1980), p. 85.
[522] Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukàcs', p. 70; p. 76.
[523] Georg Lukàcs, *Estetica* (1963) (Turin: Einaudi, 1970).
[524] *Archithese*, 19 (1976), *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 190 (1977). The contributors of the *Archithese* special issue are Bruno Reichlin, Martin Steinmann, Alan Colquhoun, Giorgio Grassi, Aldo Rossi, Denise Scott Brown, Hans Heinz Holz, Otakar Marcel, Karel Teige. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* reprinted a few interventions appearing in *Archithese* the year before.

architecture's autonomy, partly in response to the dispersal of the discipline's authority into other fields of expertise. The assertion of architecture's autonomy inevitably modified the notion of realism, which came to be associated with a process of immanent verification accomplished through the re-examination of architecture's own history.[525]

In the 1977 issue of *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* Bernard Huet, echoing Linda Nochlin's thesis, points to the exclusion of architecture from nineteenth-century debates over realism.[526] In his view, only in the following century, with the announcement of Socialist Realism in Russia (1934), and the emergence of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New Objectivity] in 1950s Germany, the question of realism acquires historical importance for architecture. The contributors to the journal did not spare these two movements of criticism, pointing to their inability to keep faith to their realist premises. Huet, for example, though remaining a defendant of the Socialist Realist experience, held that the Leninist theory of 'reflection' was applied too mechanically, with the effect of reducing history to alternating periods of progress and decline. Reichlin and Steinmann, for their part, blamed New Objectivity for identifying realism with functionalism, overlooking the dialectical relationship between content and form.[527] None of the contributors devoted particular attention to the most recent Italian experience. It was in *La Tendenza*'s self-reflexive attitude that the architects involved found a momentary response to the vexed question of realism.

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[525] For the origin of *La tendenza* see Massimo Scolari, 'Avanguardia e nuova architettura', in *Architettura razionale: XV Triennale di Milano, sezione Internazionale di architettura,* ed. by Ezio Bonfanti et al. (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1973), pp. 153-187. The Swiss strand of the 'movement' *La tendenza* is examined by Martin Steinmann in the introduction to the 1975 exhibition catalogue *Tendenzen. Neuere Architektur im Tessin*, subsequently republished as 'Reality as History: Notes for a Discussion of Realism in Architecture', in *Architectural Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), pp. 248-253.

[526] Bernard Huet, 'Formalisme-réalisme', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 190 (1977), 35-36. Now included in *Architectural Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), pp. 256-260.

[527] Bruno Reichlin and Martin Steinmann,'A propos de la réalité immanente', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 190 (1977), 72-73 (p. 72).

The theoretical proposals and discussions here described in simplified form serve the purpose of setting the parameters within which Tafuri explored the concept of realism in the 1980s. His occasion for returning to this topic was provided by *L'avventura delle idee nell'architettura*, an exhibition querying the relation between architecture and a selection of artistic and literary movements in the period ranging from 1750 to the present.[528] Alongside some of the most prominent contemporary architects, Tafuri was invited to take part in writing the catalogue, to which he contributed with a text on architecture and realism. If the article in question recalled the main lines of the debate that we have just recapitulated, it also advanced some innovative arguments shedding light on the limits of his colleagues' previous analysis.

Before even asking what the parameters of realist architecture might be, or pondering over a set of case studies, Tafuri suggested reconsidering the idea of realism as a movement predating and opposed to the twentieth-century avant-gardes. This statement laid the basis for an examination of a selection of projects by Soviet architect Andrei Belogrud and Konstantin Melnikov, in whom traditional elements derived from peasant culture were subjected to the techniques of distortion and infraction. In Melnikov's crematorium for the masses, for example, a futuristic tower stems from a set of volumes treated in an ostensibly naïf fashion, and in his 1919 single-family dwellings, archaic elements collided with the diagonal layout of the internal walls and the chimney.[529] In Tafuri's view, the presence of elements belonging to the realist tradition does amount to a residue of a prior epoch, but it evidences a covert link between realism and the avant-garde. He then proceeds to elucidate this link by means of a chiasmic structure: the nostalgia for the origins of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian culture contained an eschatological

[528] *L'avventura delle idee nell'architettura 1750-1980* was held at the Milan Triennale in 1985 and curated by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani.

[529] Manfredo Tafuri, 'Architettura e realismo' in *L'avventura delle idee nell'architettura 1750*-1980, ed. by Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (Milan: Electa, 1985), pp. 123-145 (p. 126).

element, insofar as the avant-gardes' aspiration to a heavenly future alluded to an idea of primeval purity. In the historiographical account suggested by Tafuri, realism and avant-garde did not stand in opposition as Lukács had contended, nor did they come one after the other in the grand narrative of artistic development.[530] Rather, they could re-emerge long after the official exhaustion of realist movements, and cohabit works of art and architecture deemed to be avant-gardist.

In the article in question, Tafuri repeatedly casts doubt upon the coherence of both modernism and realism as monolithic categories. Beside the mingling of realist and avant-gardist features, Tafuri refers, implicitly alluding to Brecht, to the plurality of realist experiences. Bertolt Brecht had in fact called attention to the instability of the object of realist art, and on the effect this latter bore on the quality of representation: 'new problems appear and demand new methods' – he wrote – 'reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change'.[531] As if validating Brecht's argument, Tafuri retraces twentieth-century history by pausing on different instantiations of realist architecture, and in the case of the Viennese Karl Marx-Hof he even goes as far as to identify different types of realism within the same estate. He underlines that in the project in question, edifices replete with '*volkish*' elements sit next to monolithic towers joined by a continuous and solid wall, which he interprets as an epitome of a realist epic. Interestingly, he also contends that the perimeter wall here serves an offensive rather than a protective function as in the Tiburtino. Here Tafuri mobilises Lukács's categories to read the project, coming to present the opposition between the Karl Marx-Hof's wall and the city as analogous to the conflict between subject and society that the Hungarian philosopher identifies with the great bourgeois novel.[532]

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[530] Georg Lukács,'The Ideology of Modernism (1957)', in *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (London: The Merlin Press, 1969), pp. 17-46.
[531] Brecht, 'Against Georg Lukács', p. 82.
[532] See Lukács, 'The Ideology of Modernism'.

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In this last part of the thesis, as in chapter one, I offered a contextual reading of Tafuri's work, stressing the way in which the debate over realism and Paci's existentialist philosophy impacted upon his reading of architecture. The writings belonging to the early phase of Tafuri's intellectual career present, as I have tried to expound, numerous similarities to his contemporaries' texts. For this reason any analysis that takes these writings as its subject matter cannot do without enquiring into their broader context. Once again, in the articles examined, I draw attention to Tafuri's position regarding the political role of architects in society. I show how his analysis here is more focused on the Italian post-war context and on the role that sectorial organizations could play with regard to planning policies at both the local and national level.

A further aim of the chapter was to bring to light Tafuri's contribution to the debate over the legacy of modernism. His proposal for the city territory, the book on Ludovico Quaroni and his interventions on neo-realist architecture all reveal a tension between the need to overcome the modernist ideology and that of maintaining methodological rigor. In his view, the projects for the Tiburtino and La Martella failed because they could not combine these two instances, giving rise either to an excess of typological variations, or to buildings that embodied pure functionalism. Through the exploration of his readings of the two housing districts, as well as well as through an understanding of realism and the avant-garde as intertwined rather than opposite phenomena, the chapter thus once more brings to the fore Tafuri's adoption of a dialectical scheme that does not champion one pole at the expense of the other, and eschews any effort at dialectical sublation supposedly consuming both perspectives.

Conclusion

I frankly don't see the importance of pushing theory into practice; instead, to me, it is the conflict of things that is important, that is productive.
Manfredo Tafuri, 'There is No Criticism, Only History'[533]

[...] It is just because one has faith in the positiveness and possibility of revolutions, that one can and must prepare a solid platform for those who intend to oppose the stability of values.
Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History*[534]

In 1977, the journal *Casabella* hosted a debate on architectural education, involving the participation of the most prominent architectural theorists of time including Manfredo Tafuri. In his contribution, a short but dense piece entitled 'L'unità della storia' ['The Unity of History'], Tafuri sought to challenge the use of object-centred architectural histories.[535] The antidote to this insular approach, he argued, was the establishment of a unified department of history, in which various disciplines could 'confront amongst themselves in a tightened critical and self-critical process'.[536] On first encounter, this proposal bears a striking resemblance to the multidisciplinary approach to education which emerged a few years later, prompting the creation of courses across different university departments. Yet, by the end of the text, it had become clear that Tafuri's goal was significantly more radical, and it had to be viewed as part of a broader project: to change the role of the architect within society and the organisation of public institutions devoted to the management of artistic and architectural matters. Interestingly, Tafuri did not privilege one

[533] Tafuri, 'There is No Criticism, Only History', p. 99.
[534] Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 234.
[535] Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'unità della storia', *Casabella*, 423 (1977), 34-35.
[536] My translation of 'si confrontino fra loro in un serrato processo critico e autocritico'. Ibid., p. 35.

institution over another – universities over planning bodies, for example – but rather envisaged the implementation of similar interventions within different spheres simultaneously.

More specifically, he argued that the 'unification of histories' within universities would ultimately result in a 'socialization of the work of the historian',[537] and he imagined that this could become a 'model' through which to reorganize labour in public and public-private institutions. Needless to say, 'Tafuri's model' was not based upon peaceful collaboration between professionals. Continuing the narrative form of his historical studies, in which different 'threads' repeatedly collide, he imagined a 'socialized institution' premised on an oppositional relation between its component parts. Tafuri presented his *historical method as a framework* through which to rethink the organization of intellectual labour within universities and various state-controlled artistic, architectural and planning institutions. This proposal can be best grasped in a 1991 interview concerning the administration of architectural conservation:

> When restoration becomes indispensable, I think it should be done *conflictually*. Parties whose interests at that point diverge completely need to meet face-to-face, with the public agency, it seems to me, to act as moderator. [...] Around that table will sit the historian, the analysts, the technicians [...], the structural engineer, the architect. [...] Around that table no-one's logic will coincide with that of another.[538]

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[537] My translation of 'l'unità della storia e la crisi della sua parcellizzazione ha come sbocco una socializzazione dal lavoro dello storico'. Ibid., p. 35.

[538] Mine and Matthew Hyland's translation of 'Quando il restauro diventa indispensabile, penso debba essere compiuto in modo *conflittuale*. Bisogna mettere intorno ad un tavolo persone che sul momento abbiano interessi totalmente diversi, con un regista, che credo debba essere l'operatore pubblico. Le sopraintendenze andrebbero trasformate, per quanto possibile, nel luogo di scelta, dopo che il conflitto è stato scatenato. Siederanno intorno al tavolo lo storico, gli analisti, i tecnici [...] lo strutturista, l'architetto. [...] Intorno a quel tavolo la logica dell'uno non

In many respects, this statement stands in stark contrast to the Anglo-American view of Tafuri's work, epitomised by the analysis of Fredric Jameson and David Cunningham, which seeks to emphasise its 'uncompromising intransigence'.[539] In defence of these writers, it could be argued that their analysis stems from Tafuri's earlier writings, such as *Architecture and Utopia*, in which he holds a much more resolute position. A close reading of the latter, however, reveals a continuous trajectory between the texts for *Contropiano*, that formed the basis of *Architecture and Utopia*, and the series of interviews that I cited above. Indeed, what disappears from sight is the 'socialist horizon'; the belief that a radical overthrowing of society was, if not necessarily imminent – by the end of '60s, the workerist momentum had faded away – still 'possible' in a not too distant future. In the *Contropiano* articles, Tafuri openly discusses the possibility of a 'general attack to the Plan of capital' or an 'overthrowing of the cost of capitalist restructuring on capital itself'.[540] But the path which would led to this denouement, as he himself argued, would have required the 'utmost integration' of architects into the Plan of capital and its structures, rather than the adoption of a strategy of refusal. Architects – and intellectuals more broadly – had to accept the degradation of their role within the neo-capitalist division of labour, before politicizing this condition: 'only *within* the objective role imposed by the

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è quella dell'altro'. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Storia, conservazione, restauro', interview with Chiara Baglioni and Bruno Pedretti, *Casabella*, 520 (1991), 23-26 (p. 25).

[539] Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 55. Following the work of Gail Day, Cunningham opposes to Jameson's view of Tafuri's political pessimism by highlighting his desire for total political transformation. Neither account, however, considers how Tafuri attempts to give form to his political ideas. David Cunningham, 'Architecture in the Age of Global Modernity: Tafuri, Jameson and Enclave Theory', in *As Radical as Reality Itself: Essays on Marxism and Art for the 21st Century*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont, Andrew Hemingway, Esther Leslie and John Roberts (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 283-315.

[540] My translation of 'utilizzare la lotta dei ceti intellettuali assorbiti direttamente nella produzione, in un attacco complessivo al piano del capitale [...] L'obiettivo intermedio, il rovesciamento di tutto il costo della ristrutturazione capitalista sul capitale stesso'. Tafuri, 'Lavoro intellettuale e sviluppo capitalistico', p. 281.

dominium of capital can intellectuals find the "conditions" for struggle'.[541] Tafuri hoped that the debasement which intellectuals have undergone would prompt them join 'workers' in a general struggle for salary, whose final aim was not simply the bettering of working conditions, but the seizing of power. Distinct from productivism, artists' labour, in his view, was not simply the blueprint for a new type of labour that would define a liberated society, but a form of exploitation that had to be embraced, hated, and ultimately refused in order to produce a new society.

From the late 1970s onwards this revolutionary line of argument played a significantly less visible role within Tafuri's work. Yet, despite this shift in emphasis, his writing retained the belief that the only way for the architect to 'act politically' was by sacrificing their privileged position and exerting their negativity *within* governmental planning committees, cultural institutions and universities. In short, Tafuri adopted a significantly more focused approach to defining the sites in which architects should intervene. In a 1976 interview for *Casabella*, for example, he highlighted a series of public and private institutions, including the ENI (an Italian multinational oil and gas company) and the IRI (the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction), that had begun to tackle territorial issues, thus reinforcing the need to move beyond a strictly architectural context:

> Having shown the poverty of Architecture with capital A, the next thing is to discover those instruments which, on the contrary, are capable of positively activating the new dimension of building, or planning, or programming, or whatever it might be without capitals, which is what really interests us: the transformation of concrete work into abstract work [...]. Public institutions are generally much feared by architects as a threat to their free activity as

[541] My translation of 'solo all'*interno* del ruolo oggettivo imposto dal dominio dello sviluppo è la condizione per utilizzare la lotta dei ceti intellettuali assorbiti direttamente nella produzione, in un attacco complessivo al piano del capitale'. Ibid., p. 281.

'professionals', as holding out the prospect of bureaucratic decision-making and planning structures. It's no use fearing the inevitable, especially since such large structures are already being created in capitalist society. In Italy there is mixed capital, private capital, state capital, IRI ENI, etc. These are beginning to tackle territorial problem in an advisory capacity, and sometime even submit projects for implementation. Operations like the car park beneath the carousel at the Villa Borghese have been carried out by large-scale companies of this type. Motorways, traffic interchanges and spaghetti junctions such as of those southern cities like Naples are planned and executed from start to finish by these companies. As final touch, they even boast big names in architecture. Projects on this scale are nothing more than decoration of the countryside [...]. The key thing would be to start reorganizing these public structures, whether national, regional, provincial or municipal...and to provide them with staffs of analysts, stock-takers and designers.[542]

Tafuri describes a scenario in which a double 'negative' force is in operation. Whereas one side ensues from the degradation of architects into mere workers and thus takes the form of a struggle over working conditions, the other stems from the architect's position within a series of contexts in which they are forced to confront different economic, political and theoretical interests.

In addition to transferring research methods onto the political terrain, I want to argue that Tafuri's second proposition also echoes Cacciari's technicist turn, as described by Matteo Mandarini in an article addressing the philosopher's intellectual-political trajectory. In the article in question, Mandarini examines the political outcomes of 'negative thought', and shows how in response to the dialectic's inability to retain the negative – a problem, as we have seen, epitomised by capitalism's

[542] Manfredo Tafuri, 'The Culture Markets (1976)', *Casabella*, 619-620 (1995), 37-45 (p. 45)

unwavering ability to refunctionalize the working class –, Cacciari raises the possibility of becoming one with the system, collapsing autonomy 'into organisation and organisation into effective management'.[543] In Mandarini's account, from the 1970s onwards, Cacciari's notion of 'negative thought' takes the form of a collision between autonomous languages and techniques in the sphere of institutional politics. This bears more than some resemblance to the proposal by Tafuri discussed just above, where the class of architects is called to express its antagonism from within the system. However, unlike Cacciari, Tafuri seems to retain some belief in the irreducibility of the political subject *vis-à-vis* the capitalist regime. As we have already argued, the integration of the figure of the architect into public and private institutions devoted to planning was at the same time a pretext to call into question disciplinary boundaries, and to team up with other workers for a struggle over working conditions.

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While in the Anglophone world, partly due to Jameson's interpretation, Tafuri has been associated with an idea of political closure,[544] his name today continues to inspire researches addressing the conditions of architectural labour and the relation between history/theory and practice.[545] In the recently published book *Can*

[543] Mandarini, 'Beyond Nihilism: Notes Towards a Critique of Left-Heideggerianism', p. 48.

[544] In the recently published *Can Architecture be an Emancipatory Project? Dialogues on the Left*, Libero Andreotti asks whether 'a certain fatalistic Tafurianism [did] encourage the rise of a politically aloof architectural *realpolitik*'. See *Can Architecture be an Emancipatory Project? Dialogues on the Left*, ed. by Nadir Z. Lahiji (London: Zero Books, 2016), p. X.

[545] This claim stands in opposition to Andrew Leach's suggestion that 'Tafuri's theorization and criticism of contemporary architecture [...] no longer seems as transcendent of the circumstances of its production as it might have done 20 years ago'. Andrew Leach, 'Imitating Critique, or the Problematic Legacy of the Venice School', in *The Missed Encounter of Radical Philosophy and Architecture*, ed. by Nadir Z. Lahiji (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 95-112 (p. 102). It must also be

Architecture Be an Emancipatory Project? edited by Nadir Z. Lahiji, for example, Tafuri's name is a near-compulsory point of reference. Here, David Cunningham recalls Tafuri's appeal to identify the historical 'tasks which capitalist development has taken away from architecture' and questions whether this is still a necessary precondition for anyone that seeks 'to articulate [a] conception of architecture *qua* architecture as "an emancipatory project"'.[546] Joan Ockman, invited to write a conclusion to the book, admits instead that 'much of the critique first made by Tafuri close to half a century ago continues to stick in our respective craws'.[547]

Indeed, contemporary studies and practices which make use of Tafuri's lesson do not fully espouse his methodology or positions, and at times do not even make explicit reference to his work. They consider some of the problems Tafuri raised as a point of departure from which to develop new lines of enquiry, and they share with him a materialistic approach to the study of architecture. It is also important to recall that following the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent introduction of economic austerity across Europe, there has been a renewed interest in Marxian and Marxist theory across the arts. In the architectural realm a new sensitivity has emerged regarding the effects that the diffusion of parametric design and the processes of financialization have had on the reorganization of labour within the design and building professions, and the specter of Tafuri has reappeared, alongside Marx.[548]

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specified that the reappraisal of Tafuri's oeuvre is a phenomenon prevalently circumscribed to the Anglophone world. In Italy, for example, with the exception of Marco Biraghi's *Project of Crisis*, very few scholars have addressed his work within the past decade, and the current generation of architectural students appear to possess a superficial knowledge of it. This judgement is based upon a conversation with Marco de Michelis at the 'Design and Creativity' symposium held at Leeds Beckett University in January 2015, and a series of informal exchanges I had with students at Milan Polytechnic and the IUAV over the last couple of years.

[546] Libero Andreotti, 'Introduction' in *Can Architecture be an Emancipatory Project? Dialogues on the Left*, ed. by Nadir Z. Lahiji (London: Zero Books, 2016), pp. X-XIV (p. XV).

[547] Joan Ockman, 'Afterword', in *Can Architecture be an Emancipatory Project? Dialogues on the Left*, ed. by Nadir Z. Lahiji (London: Zero Books, 2016), p.158.

[548] See, for example, Mathew Aitchison (ed.), *The Architecture of Industry: Changing Paradigms in Industrial Building and Planning* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014);

Aspects of Tafuri's work have inspired not only studies in architectural theory, but also contemporary analyses of the architectural industry. In this respect, it is worth mentioning Architecture Lobby, a group based in the United States which in the last few years has been monitoring the working conditions of designers, with the aim of restructuring the profession from within. In many ways recalling Tafuri's 1960s workerist position, Architecture Lobby encouraged architects to get rid of the golden patina attached their professional figure, and consider themselves as mere workers: 'architectural employers and employees alike' – they state in a interview – 'have bought into the myth of the *artist* working outside of the labor discourse. You almost never hear the terms "labor" and "architecture" together'.[549] On the homepage of their website we find a list of guidelines that should regulate the architect's profession, ranging from the enforcement of laws to prohibit unpaid internships, and the replacement of fees based on percentage of construction or hourly fees with ones calculated on the money saved or gained from clients. In one of their seminal events, a conference titled 'Who Builds Your Architecture', they extended their analysis to the construction industry more broadly, illuminating the lack of power that architects have over the drawing up labour contracts. The group has also initiated a survey to chart the labour of architectural historians/theorists and its relation with other dimensions of architectural practice. The answers to the survey, collected in a publication that can be downloaded from their website, constitute an important source for understanding processes such as the underpayment and precarization of intellectual labour related to architecture (teaching, curating, writing), and the way in

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Peggy Deamer (ed.), *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labour, the Creative Class and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Peggy Deamer and Philip G. Bernstein (eds.), *Building (in) the Future. Recasting Labor in Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010).

[549] Medina, Samuel, 'Meet the Architecture Lobby', <http://www.metropolismag.com/Point-of-View/December-2013/Meet-The-Architecture-Lobby/index.php?cparticle=1&siarticle=0#artanc> [accessed 11 September 2016]

which the labour of theorists inflects, and it is inflected by, the economy of architecture.[550] Similarly to Tafuri, Architecture Lobby looks at the impact of capitalist development on the labour of the architect, but it adopts a sociological approach which allows for a more in-depth understanding of the exploitative mechanisms at work. Moreover, while Tafuri's militancy remained mainly confined to the theoretical sphere, taking the form either of a denunciation of the proletarianization of designers, or of proposals which were too far-fatched to see the light of day, Architecture Lobby has been actively trying to convince architects to team up against violations in the construction industry.

Amongst the most recent publications centring around labour which explicitly take Tafuri's work as a reference, *Industries of Architecture*, a volume that emerged from the eponymous conference held at the University of Newcastle in November 2014, stands out for its breadth of subject matter and the precision of the questions which it raises.[551] Edited by Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech, the book comprises a series of papers delivered by conference participants, as well as a section entitled 'Contemporary Questions' which includes a report from a building site visit that occurred during the conference. In their introductory remarks, Lloyd Thomas, Amhoff and Beech note that architecture requires a 'more nuanced account of its relationship *with* industry rather than a refusal or resistance to engage with its operations'.[552] They take their lead from the Tafurian view of 'the proletarianization of the architect, and his [or her] insertion [...] within the planning of programs of production',[553] but they seek to extend their analysis of labour conditions to all the other figures involved in the construction industry. The Tafurian argument just

[550] The Aaron Cayer, Peggy Deamer, Sben Korsh, Eric Peterson, and Manuel Shvartzberg (eds.), *Asymmetric Labors: The Economy of Architecture in Theory and Practice* (The Architecture Lobby: New York, 2016), p. 9.
[551] Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff, Nick Beech (eds.), *Industries of Architecture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).
[552] Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech, 'Industries of Architecture', in *Industries of Architecture*, ed. by Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 8.
[553] Manfredo Tafuri as quoted in Ibid., p. 6.

serves as a point of departure to develop aspects that are left partly unexplored in his work. As we have seen, his study on the Renaissance includes references to the growing division between the (manual) labour of the builders and that of the architect, but the topic is not examined in depth, and nor do we elsewhere find detailed analysis of how this division evolved over time. Lloyd Thomas, Amhoff and Beech instead set themselves the aim of understanding 'the position and relation of the profession of the architect to other elements in the division of labour',[554] and the impact of technical and technological revolution on the design and building industry – another topic to which Tafuri pays very little attention.

As we mentioned before, their research also involved a visit to a building site, together with various different professional figures involved in the project.[555] The trip's findings were revelatory as they called into question a series of assumptions about the impact that new digital technologies including building information modelling (BIM) had on the development of buildings. BIM is a software used for drawing, scheduling and logistical analysis that can be used simultaneously by each of the parties involved the project, and it has become a standard tool within the profession. According to its advocates, BIM allows for direct interaction between professions, thereby 'shifting the focus from individual processes to project workflows and seamless interactions'.[556] In so doing, it seeks to minimize time and maximize profits.

Beech, Clarke and Wall however adopt a more critical position, stemming from a body of evidence gathered during the visit. They argue, for example, that the presence of multilingual 'handwriting across walls, floors, and formwork' suggests that 'contemporary advances in information technology and the new structures of

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[554] Ibid., p. 8.

[555] The visit was organized by Nick Beech, together with Linda Clarke and Christine Wall.

[556] Howard A. Ashcraft, 'Furthering Collaboration', in *Building (in) the Future: Recasting Labor in Architecture*, ed. by Phillip G. Bernstein and Peggy Dreamer (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), pp. 145-158 (p. 147). It should be noted, however, that Ashcraft's analysis of BIM is not uncritical.

prefabrication and site contracting relied upon – and in crisis situations depended – the traditional skills and communication of the building operatives'.[557] This leads them to doubt about the possibility of a direct relationship between digital design and building activity in the immediate future. In their view, the utopian 'image of a large team of discrete professionals [...] wearing Google glasses and working [...] on the virtual model', must be altered to reflect 'what BIMing actually allows the designer to do, know or even perceive'.[558] Their choice to base their study on direct observation allows Beech, Clarke and Wall to question the revolution envisaged by BIM's proponents, and to provide a more realistic account of the limits of technology and of the impact it bears on labour.

In the field of architectural history, implicit echoes of Tafuri's work, can be found in the studies of his former student Pier Vittorio Aureli, and those of his PhD students who took part in the research group 'The city as a Project', established by Aureli himself at the Berlage Institute in 2009. Consistent with Tafuri's lesson, their research places emphasis on the political vision embedded in architectural and urban forms, and on the ideological role performed by the architect over the centuries. Their historical enquiries draw inspiration from the 1960s workerist texts discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, in relation to Tafuri's own work. Departing from Mario Tronti's thesis of the priority of class contestation in the transformation in capitalism, Aureli and some of his students show how techniques and architectural forms have also arisen in response to specific conflicts within labour conditions.[559]

As our enquiry sought to expose, a new and talented generation of researchers and practitioners cognizant of Tafuri's studies is now addressing areas that remain partly unexplored in his work. Interestingly, however, the emergence of these studies and practices, realizes one of the cornerstones of Tafuri's method: his Freudian-

[557] Nick Beech, Linda Clarke, Christine Wall, 'On Site' in *Industries of Architecture*, ed. by Katie Lloyd Thomas, Tilo Amhoff and Nick Beech (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 307.

[559] Consider in particular *The City as a Project*, ed. by Pier Vittorio Aureli (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2013).

inflected notion of historical research as an interminable process. Tafuri repeatedly re-asserts the provisional and unfinished state of his research, but it is only through the work of a subsequent generation of researchers and practitioners that such incompleteness is made apparent. By expanding on aspects than remain unresolved or marginally investigated in Tafuri's research, the above-mentioned studies implicitly validate a constitutive aspect of his historical method.

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