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Margins and Centres
Reflections on the Topic... Critical Marginalia on Space and Design
(For the *Via 13* Editorial Collective)
Rob Shields April 1994

Statement of Topic

> The margin is a construction. Opposition, dialogue and interplay may occur between marginal and non-marginal realms. Whether perceived or actual, tangible or ephemeral, it establishes a centre, a body, or a territory - that which lies beyond its edges - the realm of a more expansive other. Consequently, it is a limit - of behaviour, of profitability, of place. The margin is of the same nature as that which is central. The margin establishes a centre. To design is to work through the margin. The definition of edges, limits and boundaries renders both physical and speculative conditions sharp and exclusive or permeable and ambiguous. We illuminate the relation of centre and margin through work in the margins - the recoding of marginalia (*Via 13* Editorial Collective).

"Centre-margin-ing"

The margin is a construction.[1]

The division of core and periphery has been central to the modernist project. Beyond design and the designing professions, the absolutist divisions of space into natural wilderness and cultured landscape, barbaric and civilized, centres and peripheries has organized a Western, and more specifically European, vision of the world as a spatial environment in which cultural, economic, and political action takes place. This paper focuses on the discourse and practice of 'centre-margin.'

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[1] This essay enters an interrogation of and dialogue with the Statement of Topic which the editors of *Via* graciously provided. The objective is to go beyond the limits of the original vision of the margin and marginalia. But at the same time, it will become clear that this is an archaeological process where in digging ourselves out from under a conventional spatialisation of centre-margin, we discover that the potential of an alternative and more radical approach was contained all along within the Statement of Topic. Quotations from the Statement appear in italics.

We may speak politely of relations, 'visions' and cosmologies but this dualistic system of spatiality split into centre and margin has also been the bread and butter of European expansionism, the rhetoric of the black slave trade, the legitimating discourse of missionary zealots and the ongoing projects of subjection and domination in the name of the Centre. To be 'on the margin' has implied exclusion from 'the centre,' and frequently a form of colonial relationship with the centre. Cultural, political and economic relations bind peripheries to centres, keep them together in a series of binary relationships, rather than allowing complete disconnection. In this way, 'margins' become signifiers of everything 'centres' deny or repress; margins as 'the Other,' become the condition of possibility of all social and cultural entities. In these 'centres,' self-centred and entrenched groups inflate their opinions to ostensively universal proportions, glossing over the differences between centre and periphery, with the help of thought constraints and banishment into exile if necessary (Bauman 1988:25-6).

Contemporary Western society has continued to discover itself, its conditions of possibility and that which has been denied in the construction of a Western cultural identity in the 'otherness' of marginal groups and places, tourist rituals of liminality, the revival of 'lost,' marginal works of art and the gentrification of run-down, marginal urban areas. Commercial films, documentary and otherwise, have probed this lure of the marginal (as in the case of British Realist cinema). 'Marginality' is a central theme in Western culture and thought. A later inflection of the margin took the form of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous 'frontier thesis' which cast the United States and inevitably expansionist. Another example is Emmanuel Wallerstein's critique of global capitalism, and its variants which describe the contemporary global social milieu in the language of core and peripheral *economies* (not societies, nor territorial nation states) such as the economic bloc of the European Union (core) and Argentina (periphery). The regularity with which these divisions repeat older forms of colonial domination is less striking the more these discourses are viewed as evolutionary forms of older spatialisations of colonial power.

'Spatialisations' - an interesting word. Moving aside the term architects are familiar with - space - allows us to begin to reconceive of space outside of the tyranny of language and the deadening effect of taken-for-granted meanings. Space is something actualized by people, created by human agency and inflected by their use, and as a systematic organization of the environment so that our world is one which is meaningful to us. Yet, this is a dynamic process, one in which organizations of space, or 'spatialisations' in turn limit peoples' actions and options. It is conflictual because the process of meaning creation is one which involves the anchoring or significance to given sites and the attempt to exclude or displace others' meanings. To maintain the centrality of a 'centre' vis-à-vis one or more marginal places requires a continual social effort to stave off alternative visions. This effort of construction, legitimation and articulation replaces heterologia with an exclusive monologia[2]. It ritually makes out of a field of points and sites an ordered table with a

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[2]   Monologia is Bakhtin's term for any univocal logic in which a single point of view is acceptable. Heterologia, by contrast, allows multiple points of view. An example is interpretation which admits many different narratives and explanations of the

precise centre and margins defined by their non-coincidence and isomorphy from that centre. For some places, no one meaning predominates, their spatialisation is a babble of actions, intentions and imputed meanings. For other sites, their meaning is univocal: the sacredness of Jerusalem's Wailing Wall. Yet even where the sacredness of a site is agreed upon, its significance, and its meaning in relation to other sites, may be the subject of acute discord.

I am arguing that spatialisations extend beyond given places to link them one to the other in a systematic formation of differences, inflections and oppositions. While it is systematic, it has the quality of a constellation, which is continually under construction. Spatialisations are the subjects of design, but are social in scope. While they may be the topic of an architectural project, social spatialisations exceed the realm of individual architects, specific sites and individual works.[3]

Opposition, dialogue and interplay may occur between marginal and non-marginal realms.

In approaching margins, physically and conceptually, we need to be constantly aware of the centre at our backs. We are travelling on a gameboard called a social spatialisation in which centre and margin are both inscribed. The board is a metaphor for the (shifting) formation of disparate and differentiated sites and regions. Unlike the board of a 'Monopoly' game, in social spatialisation the 'properties,' their names and values, are created by the players. By their designs, their strategies for the occupation of space.

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phenomena being interpreted. The Achilles Heel of monologia is that it must be constructed and maintained, by force if necessary. More subtle options for this nexus of power and knowledge arise with the legitimation of monologism in the eyes of potential opponents. Legitimation, with its root in the Latin *lex* or law carries the force and backing of not only power but also the consistency and truth of the social order.

[3]   The marginal places that I am concerned with are not necessarily geographical peripheries but, most importantly, they have been placed on the periphery of cultural 'regimes of space' in which places are ranked relative to each other. These spatialisations are not only mental classifications but are also performative and embodied. As a result, places are 'enacted' as places appropriate to only certain types of activity - as places for this and for that - some marginal, some central. All marginal sites carry the image and stigma, of their marginality which becomes indistinguishable from any basic empirical identity they might once have had. From this primary ranking of cultural status, they may also end up being classified in what geographers have mapped as systems of 'centres and peripheries.'

Sites are taken up in social action. They become so overcoded with meaning and with habitual routines of specific social interactions that their empirical and physical character is displaced. Social action overwrites and overrides the original *'genus loci'* of a site. The architectural and planning fetishism of *genus loci* simply locates the explanation for design decisions in 'nature' outside of the sphere of responsible human action. By distinguishing geographical peripheries from sites which are socially-constructed as marginal, I am avoiding this form of 'naturalism.'

However, like 'Monopoly,' the fate of the players rests with the qualities of the many spaces of the gameboard or spatialisation, and the ability of the players to tactically appropriate and strategically redesign the spaces as sites of cultural and political action.[4] Furthermore, the spaces must be continually repositioned vis-à-vis each other, because their political value depends on their relationship with other spaces.

How do sites become culturally marginal? The development of cultural marginality only occurs through social activity and cultural work. There is a broad literature on cultural categorisation. But there is little more than a patchwork of studies of the active formation of sites through routine, through the interaction of the bodies with each other and with the space of the site. For example, Pierre Bourdieu's work on 'habitus' aimed to identify the characteristics of each socioeconomic class position in their everyday practices and taste. Bourdieu conducted surveys of taste and ethnographic studies of behaviour to show, for example that poor academics and other 'marginal professionals' favoured marginalism in taste and a reverse snobbery in their patterns of consumption. The shortcoming of this approach is its hidden economic determinism. Bourdieu attempts to explain taste choices and repeated routines of habitual behaviour by class relations.

Michel DeCerteau's work has focused on the role of individual practices in actualizing the reified definitions of sites. Thus, a 'street' is not a street unless used for circulation in the manner that is culturally understood to be appropriate. Similarly, the wandering footsteps of a pedestrian can be studied as tracing a narrative in the urban environment which may depart significantly from the bird's-eye understanding of the planner or the macro-level focus of the architect on functions, the syntax of architectural spaces and the vocabulary of facades. However, a more social view recognizes that it is not only individuals who decide on their actions and thus determine the 'life of urban spaces.' Crowds and other forms of collective behaviour may supersede the consciously choosing individual.

The theme of binary oppositions between the high and the Low, Centre and Margin are characteristic of the cultures of European civilisation. These oppositions are never entirely separable, because each term is always only defined in terms of its opposite. In a process of categorisation through binary oppositions 'The human body, psychic forms, geographical space and the social formation are all constructed within interrelating and dependent hierarchies [which are] ...a fundamental basis to mechanisms of ordering and sense-making in European cultures' (Stallybrass and White 1986:2-3). Within this division, further

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[4]   Michel DeCerteau usefully distinguishes between the strategic control of spaces and their tactical occupation. 'Strategies' characterize the actions of those who have the power to define the actions appropriate to sites and to hold constant their significance (for example a 'Town Square' or 'Parliamentary Precinct'). By contrast, 'tactics' are punctual, short term appropriations of sites which redefine their significance or re-actualize old meanings to redefine the sites momentarily (from a 'Parliamentary Precinct' which may symbolize the stability of government and the status quo of the state, to a site of a momentary popular carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984) in which archaic memories of the unity of the people and the precedence of popular tradition displace the official order of the State). See DeCerteau 1984)

differences and discriminations are inscribed.

> *Whether perceived or actual, tangible or ephemeral,*
> *it [the margin] establishes a centre, a body, or a territory.*
> *Consequently, it is a limit - of behaviour, of profitability, of place.*

The social definition of marginal places and spaces is intimately linked with the categorisation of objects, practices, ideas and modes of social interaction as belonging to the 'Low culture,' the culture of marginal places and spaces, the culture of the marginalised. In his book on *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) has demonstrated this simultaneous definition of the Low-Other and the categorisation of the Marginal as being at the 'edge of civilisation.' For example, the Euro-chauvinistic myths of the Middle East constructed by Europeans bolster their own cultural status and legitimated European imperial ambitions.

The politics of this process of symbolic exclusion depends on a strategy of what Said has called 'positional superiority,' one which puts the High or the Central in a whole series of possible relationships with the Low or Marginal without ever losing the upper hand. This allows a series of ambivalent representations of, and relationships to the Low or Marginal. Stallybrass and White conclude that 'Repugnance and fascination are the twin poles of the process in which a political imperative to reject and eliminate the debasing 'Low' conflicts powerfully and unpredictably with a desire for the Other....' (1986:4-5).

The 'Top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'Bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other...but also that the top includes that low symbolically, as a primary eroticised constituent of its own fantasy life.... It is for this reason that what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central (like long hair in the 1960s). The Low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organisation and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture (1985:5).

The social 'Other' of the marginal and of the low is despised and reviled in the official discourse of dominant culture and central power while at the same time being constitutive of the imaginary and emotional repertoires of that dominant culture. The relation of centre and margin lies at the heart of the identity. But, even if this binary separation is clearly visible analytically, the construction of marginality, the classification of the Low, and the exclusion of the Other are not final points of achieved stasis. Marginality has its own states, a history of transformations between being a pure margin, a near-sacred liminal zone of Otherness, and a carnivalesque leisure spaces of ritual inversion of the dominant, authorised cultures.

The Tyranny of the Centre

On the gameboard of social spatialisation, margin and centre are inextricably linked:

> *The margin is of the same nature as that which is central.*

The marginality of margins is defined only by their lack of centrality. Centre and margin are a dualism. By definition, the centre is defined by the margin and vice versa. One organizing thesis of this issue is thus that,

The margin establishes a centre.

Long before the individual architect comes onto the scene of design, this definition is preset in the spatial discourse of centres and margins. But beyond the conceptual aspect of dualistic representations of the margin and centre, it is important to note that these correspond to both a spatial practice and to a spatial imaginary which frames understandings of problems and limits ahead of time the sort of design options which will be considered as solutions to a design problem. So we are dealing with more than fantasies about the marginal. Spatialisation is lived and practised. It is inscribed onto bodies and those bodies must struggle to change and free themselves of its categorical oppositions - centre/margin, natural/civilized, near/far, spaces of production/consumption, sites of work/pleasure. Designers, like the ethnographers of old, travel - even their theories travel - out to the margin and back in again to the centre.

To design is to work through the margin....
We illuminate the centre through work in the margins

In such formulations it is the centre which is privileged. It is the place 'where it's at.' While the margin may delimit the centre, it is always the centre which represents that still point around which the margins are organized. Discursively, we 'know' the margin, construct their truth through operations grounded on the privileging of a single analytical vantage point from which truth and falsity are distinguished out of competing claims of knowledge and manoeuvres of power/knowledge (Foucault 1980).

> 'The margins can easily recomfort the centre in goodwill and liberalism.'
> They are 'our fighting grounds' as well as 'their site for pilgrimage...while we
> claim them as our exclusive territory, they happily approve, for the divisions
> between margins and centre should be preserved and as clearly demarcated
> as possible, if the two positions are to remain intact in their power relations.'
> (Minh-ha 1991:96)

Usually the margin is only approached through the portal of the 'non-centre.' The rhetoric of the modernist discourse of centre-margin turns on the idea that the margin is unexpectedly found to be central. Modernity includes both the ordering dualism of centre-margin and its momentary transgression. Baudelaire hints at this:

> ...for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the
> heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of
> the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself
> everywhere at home; to see the world, *to be at the centre of the world, and*

yet to remain hidden from the world... (1964:9)

This is also the essence of design under modernity: the legitimating retrieval of new forms and solutions through a transgression of conventions. The insight or new alternative is brought from the margin of illegitimate practices and codes into the centre of culturally legitimated practice. What is not tolerated is the erasure of the centre-margin division.

To design is to work through the margin.
The definition of edges, limits and boundaries renders physical and speculative conditions
sharp and exclusive, or permeable and ambiguous.

The reverse alternative is to privilege the margin for its power to redefine the centre. bell hooks has noted this power of margins:

> It was this marginality that I was naming as a central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives....
> Understanding marginality as a position and place or resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people. (hooks 1990:149-150)

Both of these approaches fetishise the socially-created spatialisation of centre-margin as absolute and pre-given. Centres become features of a naturalized landscape and margins are also reified as alternative-frontiers around centres. To romanticize the margin as a side of radicality 'gives us away, for in order to realize the outside we must already be, to some degree, comfortably on the inside. We really only have the leisure to idealize the subversive potential of the power of the marginal when our place of enunciation is quite central' (Fuss 1991:5). Margins become sites of pilgrimage, where identity can be transformed, but marginal sites and spaces remain unaltered.

We illuminate the centre through work in the margins - the recording of marginalia.

Of crucial interest to me is not the usefulness of margins in the inspiration of design, but rather to find a design practice that questions the political role of centre-margin spatialisations and transforms the spatial relationships of the sites and identity bound within.

Modernist identity politics smuggles in a form of spatial structuralism by which identity depends on a positionality in given spaces and sites which themselves are presented as beyond human modification.

> The body becomes the virtual text of [a kind of social version of] particle physics. Spread out over a topographic field, the imploded self is energized creating the movement over a power grid where all ontologies are merely the sites of local 'catastrophes.' Neither self nor other but, rather, a quasi object/subject picks up cultural characteristics as it shuttles from node to node. Following the French

theorist Michel Serres, each movement across the power field tattoos the body until it represents a cartography of the field itself (Kroker 1988:26; see Serres 1982).

Identities depend on territorial location, rather than being understood as flexible and momentary 'identifications' on the way to the next creatively formed subjectivity (Maffesoli 1981). In effect, in this form of modernism, the potential for any deeply meaningful design enterprise is aborted and withheld a priori. I endorse Neil Smith and Cindi Katz criticism that,

> The notion of margins and borderlands is more interesting, especially with the implication of a permanent location at the edge, but, of course, it leaves a core identity [a centre] intact, a forceful locus of power uninterpolated (1993:78).

A more radical approach would avoid the tendency to fall in line with the preset definitions of the discourse of centre-margin. A more adventurous approach creatively redesigns the centre-margin spatialisation to rediscover 'the margin' as 'spatial potential' and human opportunity at many and all points. Most people are in some way, both 'insiders and outsiders' both in the centre and out in the margins at the same time. But it is important not to allow the spatial metaphors of centre-margin to organize our thinking and practice, without questioning the purposes such dualisms serve.

Taking the Centre out of the Margin.

At most, conventional visions of the margin hint at an undefined 'beyond':

> *That which lies beyond its edges - the realm of a more expansive **other**.*

This 'other' is a double margin, a reflection of the margin which goes beyond the limits of the margin conceived of as a frontier to a defined centre. It takes a doubling of the margin, what Nietzsche called an overcoming or *uberwinden* to begin to step outside of the dualistic couplets of centre-margin, that spatialisation dominated by the tyranny of the centre. To 'overcome' the margin is necessarily also to overcome or overstep the privilege of the centre. Such a step throws one into a situation of radical bricolage where no central organizing point is uncritically accorded primacy. However, this requires constant attention in order not to degenerate into a formless relativism.

bell hooks, cited above, actually goes on to say that the margin needs to become more than an anti-centre. Margins need to become spaces for alternative reorganizations which doe not reproduce the spatial centre-margin dualisms which so often are mapped on to social dualisms of dominating-dominated, colonizer-colonized. Margins are both sites of repression and sites of resistance and therefore she concludes:

> This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover

ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. (hooks 1990:152)

This margin is conceived of as an open space which escapes from its orbit around a centre. This margin is no longer a margin in the sense that we have been using the word, but it retains the specificity of the margin. Nor is it a frontier, or a borderzone. If any natural and spatial metaphor fits, it is a *desert*. A place bereft of a pre-given centring point of orientation. Although hostile to civilization, in this space, one must struggle to orient oneself not only so as to adapt to the environment but also to get along with 'others' who inhabit the same nomadic space, and reinvent the spatial 'tactics of the habitat' (Foucault 1980:149)[5]. These are basic activities of both architectural design and of culture.[6]

Erasing the Centre

'Marginality,' in the words of George Yúdice (1989:214), is a concept that straddles modernity and postmodernity. It is a central topos in both the modern pluralist utopias and postmodern, radical heterotopias, following a logic of exclusionary incorporation in the former and a tactics of singularity in the latter. Modern liberal pluralism has called for the incorporation of the 'marginal' into a depoliticizing framework that co-opts it. Pluralism is

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[5]   Ed Soja and Barbara Hooper's excellent article on 'The Spaces That Difference Makes' (1993) has reminded me of Foucault's contention that 'A whole history remains to be written of *spaces*' (Foucault 1980:149). Soja and Hooper survey the importance given to margins by cultural theorists.

[6]   I refer here to the old definition of 'culture', which comes by way of agrarian roots, which link this term to husbandry and to the cultivation of land as well as self and social organization in a manner distinct from the civil and urban qualities of 'civilization'. Extensively discussed in 'Culture Spoken Here' (Shields 1993).

The 'desert' is theoretically hostile to civilization because it is a zone where there is no founding point, no *gnomon* or *axis mundi* around which the world may be conceived and mapped as a cosmology or other form of meaning-laden spatialisation. Such a 'point' or place would oppose the extension of the 'desert' in every direction as a homogeneous space (*extensio*), it would be the first negation of the pure space of this 'desert.' According to Hegel, the negation of space (pure homogeneous extension) is time (the point, moment, *punctum*). For Ernesto Laclau (1990:68), without time, there is no change: the 'desert' is static and rebuffs human creativity, making design, change, or politics impossible. Politics is ruled out, especially modernist politics defined in a historical manner as a 'future-oriented project' driven by master narratives of utopia. However, it is possible to argue that although there is no future-oriented politics of this grand kind, forms of accommodation, tactical interventions (see note above), ethical forms of 'getting along' and a present-oriented aesthetics of cooperation and the 'beautiful life' predominate. This latter vision is of a postmodernist politics of the present which may avoid the tyrannies committed in the name of the noble visions of future-oriented politics (see Shields 1991a; Maffesoli 1991).

'accretive' and tolerant, 'allowing' other voices into the mainstream. While pluralism proclaims a controlled polyvocality which is harmonious, this must be extended to the dissonant, conflictual heteroglossia in which each voice can be heard with its full force and no position can remain outside of the exchange of voices, no interlocutor remains unchanged (Stamm 1988:131). The postmodern tactician often uses the 'marginal' to make a case for his or her own subversive potential, following Karl Mannheim's notion of the intellectual who is a perpetual wanderer and universal stranger, a perpetual exile who proclaims universal foundations against local values and 'regimes of truth.'

The erasure of the division between centre and margin is one of the transformations which form part of a grassroots experience of a 'postmodern condition.' Postmodern thinkers, labelling this experience, have transformed the certainty with which the Centre can be taken as a privileged, Archimedean pivot from which to define margins. Michel DeCerteau commented:

> Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the nonproducers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable, and unsymbolized, remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has become the silent majority (De Certeau 1984:xvii).

The margin is relational.

Viewing sites or social groups as margins which are relational means that they are generally characterized by their relation and definition in terms of a centre. The erasure of the centre-margin division involves an intervention which recodes the margin as not relational but central. The margin is a place in its own right. It is not just a foil for a centre. It is in this sense, that bell hooks argued that we must choose the margin and abandon our faith in a universalistic centre which serves to unite all people. Instead, by choosing the margin, we recognize the legitimacy of different points of view and of different practices - of space, of design, of culture. All of these centres are part of a polynucleated margin: a margin of many centres. For me, erasing the difference between centre and margin collapses 'centre-margin' into a strange new term of '*centmarges*' denoting these many marginal-centres or, in another language, a 'hundred margins,' and heard as a pun (sounding like *sans marges*) it becomes an injunction: 'without margins.' They are all the same. Homi Bhabha, speaking of the case of colonized Algerians analyzed by Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), argues that we need to translate this into a tactic of simultaneously occupying both the centre and the margin. In so doing, the prerequisites of the generalized strategy of divide, classify and conquer which is expressed in the spatialisation of centre-margin begin to unravel. For Bhabha,

> In occupying two places at once...the depersonalized, dislocated colonial subject can become an incalculable object, quite literally, difficult to place. The demand of authority cannot unify its message nor simply identify its

subjects...the strategy of colonial desire is to stage the drama of identity at the point at which the black mask 'slips' to reveal the white skin...there is a tension of meaning and being...demand and desire (1989:144-5).

Centmarges: Living the marginality of sites.

What is the impact on our social spatialisation and on conceptions of design when the centre-margin division is eliminated? This is not only a discursive change, a tinkering with representations of space. The erasure of the division between centre and margin implies changes in our everyday spatial practices, as much as in the practice of design. Let us begin by drawing three historical models of this collapse of differences from philosophers.

Hegel discusses the dialectical relationship of master and slave in similar terms to our portrait of the relationship between centre and margin. 'Master' and 'slave' are metaphors in a model of oppressive domination of one party or group by another. Although one dominates the other, both can only define themselves as the negation of the other (they are both blinded to any other model of relationship), with the 'slave' thirsting for the position of 'master.' Once in the position of the 'master' this dialectic of domination and oppression is in turn perpetuated. The dependency of the position of the 'master' on the 'slave' is reproduced and the process continues. Hegel sought a model of sublimation, or *aufhebung* of this vicious dialectic by transcending the dialectic with a synthetic moment in which the opposed positions of 'master' and 'slave' are brought together. One model of process of design would characterize it in the same manner, this is as an *aufhebung* or sublimation of contradictions.

Nietzsche[7] argued that this model contained an impossible illusion. Namely, that such bitterly opposed positions could be completely synthesized. While the opposition and contradictions might be overcome, which Nietzsche called *uberwinden*, there would always remain an 'unsynthesized' excess. One aspect of the theorization of 'eternal return' is thus that the oppositional dynamics would recur and must be continually dealt with. Unlike Hegel's vision, the resolution of contradictions is characterized not by an abstract historical process or teleological movement of spirit (*Geist*) towards a utopian moment. For Nietzsche, the process of *uberwinden* is characterized first and foremost by human agency; that is, by (conscious) will and (unconscious) desire. The much misunderstood concept of the 'overman' (*ubermensch*) is that human agent.

If design is characterized as *uberwinden* contradictions continually reappear and can never be assimilated into a final scheme which resolves all possibilities. In terms of margins and centres, Nietzsche's insight reasserts the importance of the margin and well as the impossibility of the 'centre' which for him is an imagined cultural construction, something

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7   Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) can be viewed as fundamentally a critic of Hegel, working in the context of the late nineteenth century German revival of Hegelianism. Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), Marxist philosopher, 'father of the dialectic' and theorist of space at first bitterly critiqued, but later praised Nietzsche for expanding the limits of dialectical theory (Lefebvre 1938; Lefebvre 1976).

continually falling apart under the weight of its own marginality.

Bakhtin, reading both Hegel and Nietzsche, proposes a dialogical model which places all points in a relationship of 'dialogue.' All sites, all texts and all designs refer to others in an ineradicable to-and-fro of intertextual references.[8] All acts of communication are inherently 'other-directed.' They are formulations and reformulations of pre-existing codes and symbolic systems learned by individual agents for the purpose of dialogue and relating to other people. Communciation acts - including designs and built structures - are, like marginalia, contextually other-directed as commentaries, reflections and recodings of received rules, codes and game plans. 'Centres' are thus inherently directed outwards to margins. But rather than privileging the authoritative, official view of the world mapped in terms of centres and margins Bakhtin's work showed the power of people to reverse the 'official order' of centre and margin, high and low through humour, and parody. In carnivalesque acts - which can be both extraordinary and everyday - the relationship of 'high and low' and 'centre and margin' are inverted (Shields 1991b).

Architects are both explorers of new possibilities - and hence travellers in the margins and frontiers of unreified potential - and agents of the 'official order.' Architecture bolsters codes of good taste. Legitimate regimes of power/knowledge struggle constantly on the borderline between reasserting univocal, centralized and officialized interpretations of design, of sites and of specific buildings and carnivalizing official meanings in the name of the life-giving forces of the multiple voices and visions of those conventionally marginalized. Bakhtin's vision of multiple social and spatial margins which can never be entirely overcome through official attempts to centralize power/knowledge and to anchor a socio-spatial map on the discursive stability of central sites and institutions is the foundation for bell hooks call to 'choose the margin.'

Bakhtin reworks Nietzsche's critique of Hegel's dialectic by reasserting the permanence of dialogical opposition. Monological syntheses attempt to eliminate the possibility further interpretation, design, and action. True change occurs when the spatialisation of centre-margin breaks downs into a more equitable field of heterodox margins. One centre and several margins becomes multiple margins - *centmarges*. If we do indeed 'choose the margin' then change becomes more rapid, unrestricted by the stabilizing drag of a central point of orientation. A margin becomes a temporary point of orientation, a waypoint for the travelling designer who in this sense becomes one of Mannheim's intellectuals. In place of being centre-oriented, all margins may become more 'other-directed' relating to other sites rather than to a single, primary point. Furthermore, a hypothesis can be ventured: when the centre asserts its own marginality, then this restructuring of the configuration of centre-margins is occurring.

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[8]   'Intertextuality' is a well known concept of the 'cross-references' between texts in any given genre. Thus buildings might 'quote' a building or typical form used Le Corbusier or an advertisement might reproduce or parody a scene from the film 'Casablanca'. In all cases, these are references and 'inside jokes' for the knowledgeable insider. it is less well known that intertextuality was coined by Kristeva in her French translation of Bakhtin's work.

When we 'choose the margin' as a design act, then design overcomes the perpetual closure of Hegel's vicious dialectic which is repeated in the spatialisation of centre-margin. There, one can only '*illuminate the centre.'* But a design practice which embodies '*work in the margins*' must be more than the '*recording of marginalia*' it must also address the meta-issue of a 'recoding of margins' by intervening at the level of the spatialization of centre-margin.

To design is to work **in** *the margin.   The definition of*
edges, limits and boundaries renders **both centres**
and entire spatialisations *permeable and ambiguous.*
We illuminate the **relation of centre and margin** *through work in the margins*
- the **recoding of margins**

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