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Master of Philosophy in Architecture

/ The A²-effect /
Suburban Domesticity and the in-between as Space of Activity

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This dissertation demonstrates the contemporary relevance of Brechtian critical and performative method within architectural studies. The significance of Brechtian criticality is given an extra impetus by Lieven De Cauter’s more recent theory of “capsular civilisation” and Jean Baudrillard’s concept of “Integral Reality.” Brecht’s thesis proposes that nothing is a given, definite situation, but rather that everything ranging from the human condition to social situations consist of ever-changing ensembles. This Brechtian perceptual pattern (an adaptation of his $A$-effect), suggests the spectator and user are equally capable of altering and working the areas in-between socio-politico-cultural polarities, even the interiorities and hetero-topologies of contemporary civilisation. The current study discusses some spatial dyads related to domesticity, ‘urban-suburban,’ ‘in-out,’ and ‘prototype-counterfeit,’ in relation to the more generic oppositions, ‘subject-object,’ ‘chaos-definition,’ and ‘organism-surroundings.’ The elaboration of some relational and spatial considerations of the $A$-effect in scenes of suburban domesticity attempts to foreground the in-between area as a space of activity within architectural theory and practice.
The inhabitants of a single building live a few inches from each other, they are separated by a mere partition wall, they share the same spaces repeated along each corridor, they perform the same movements at the same times, turning on a tap, flushing the water closet, switching on a light, laying the table a few dozen simultaneous existences repeated from storey to storey, from building to building, from street to street.¹

In his impressive work “Life: A User’s Manual”, George Perec developed a metaphor to describe the everyday life of several inhabitants within a Parisian block: the housing ensemble, he suggested, resembled a theatrical stage. In terms of representation, one could argue that his narrative creates an image similar to that of a doll’s house, whereby the ‘fourth wall’ is removed and the interior, and consequently domestic life, is revealed. Perec goes on to describe the users according to their living space, and it is clear that their own physical or mental characteristics are of no importance in such a description. Perec is making two statements; firstly, domestic life is similar to a theatrical performance and secondly, each inhabitant merges with their own dwelling and consequently his’ or her’ apartment becomes a means for the comprehension of each personality. The principle metaphor, the house as theatre, is wedded to his assumption that users perform “the same movements at the same times”, while sharing “the same spaces”. Thus the repetitive actions within similar shaped flats permit Perec’s narration to unfold just like a film. He asserts the significance of spatial standardization within the particular housing structure, in order to support his thesis on domestic performativity.
What Perec achieved was to equate architectural space with theatrical space, using a method that revealed the points of correspondence between theatre and the experience of domestic life. In alignment with Perec’s thesis, but from another perspective, Lynn Spigel, in her essay “From theatre to spaceship: metaphors of suburban domesticity in post-war America”, suggests that the relationship between domestic models and the standardization of suburbia have an impact on the behaviour of the inhabitants: “Most interesting for my purposes is the way these mass-produced suburbs were modelled on notions of everyday life as a form of theatre, a stage on which to play out a set of bourgeois social conventions.” According to her the seriality and homomorphy of suburban areas entails a synchronicity of domestic actions that in turn can be characterized as theatrical. The repetition of architectural forms shapes the everyday life of suburbanites in theatrical terms.

Seen from this perspective, one could start to elaborate on this interpenetration between theatrical and domestic attitudes. This particular relationship was the starting point for the current study. However, in the course of the research, I realized that the aforementioned homomorphy within domestic models was an assumption, and not to be taken for granted. Consequently, I could not accept the metaphor ‘home as theatre’ as a given. When one questions an established concept, i.e. the accuracy of specific conclusions within Perec’s or Spigel’s approach, one starts to seek a methodological pattern that can support the negation of deterministic affirmations concerning domesticity. The study of theatrical literature offers a different potential methodology. What seemed to adequately correspond to my initial need for an approach to the concept of domesticity beyond any sort of finitude was Brechtian aesthetics.

Brecht’s thesis is not only pertinent to a study seeking a non-deterministic approach, but is also relevant to another aspect of my work concerning domestic dyads, such as ‘urban-suburban’, ‘in-out’, ‘private-public’, ‘centre-periphery’, etc. These dyads, along with the need for a constant re-evaluation of any given condition, form the principle parameters for a study of domestic experience. Here, I define domestic dyads as those dyads that correspond to domesticity, not just at scale of the domestic interior but also at the larger urban scale.

At the beginning of twentieth century Brecht introduced a new form of theatrical performance under the title “Epic Theatre”, which was intended to contrast with the illusionistic, orthodox theatre of the time; he also developed a thesis for human being that asserted that man has to constantly re-produce his idea of being. In this sense nothing can be perceived as a clear-cut condition having precise limits. Brecht treated theatrical couplets, i.e. ‘actor-spectator’, ‘real-fictional’, ‘body of the actor-theatrical role’, in accordance with this proposition on being, while suggesting that the parts of any dyad could share common attributes and/ or interchange positions within the opposition.
In order to structure “Epic Theatre” Brecht activated a series of innovative techniques. One of the principle mechanisms employed by Brecht was the so-called A-effect, or Alienation-effect. Typically, a familiar theme was performed in a distorted way and thus what was for a long time perceived through particular configurations was changed in order to alienate and surprise the spectator. The ‘distance’, imposed by A-effect, between the previously-familiar event and the audience activated the spectator's intellect. The surprised spectator had to re-conceptualize the given configuration, and, in turn, this spectator had to mentally re-produce a new representation for the depicted event as well as a new role for him/herself so as to re-compose the space and the relationship with the subject of performance. Brecht’s longing for a socially concerned theatre could not ignore the agency of the audience; his eagerness to render the passive spectator of illusionistic theatre into a thinking, active participant culminated with his Epic Theatre.

The denial of the ‘home as theatre’ metaphor and the adaptation of Brechtian logics for use within architectural studies are the initial steps within this thesis that allow a discussion of how antagonisms within the domestic sphere shape and control inhabitants’ attitudes. Moreover, problematizing domestic experience in relation to the aforementioned dyads seeks to reveal the significance of in-between space. Throughout the current dissertation, I follow Brecht’s proposition for the constant re-evaluation of any previously familiar condition, and begin to understand and analyse the dyads as ever-changing ensembles. From this analysis a twofold statement arises: firstly, the parts of each dyadic opposition either interchange position or share common characteristics and secondly the ‘limit’ or gap between the two parts becomes an ‘active space’ rather than a ‘static’, ‘passive’ barrier.

Throughout chapter 1 I introduce the main theses within a Brechtian treatise and I seek to demonstrate the methodological pattern for the rest of the study. In order to reveal the pertinence of the theatrical attitude in Brechtian terms to the analysis of the domestic dyads, I juxtapose this analysis with the concept of mimetic behavior as an automatic, non-conscious act. While performing in a Brechtian, theatrical manner, one has to compare, to seek correspondences between things, to consciously recognize ones performance as theatrical and non-real. On the other hand, when one adopts a mimetic attitude one needs to convince the audience that this is a ‘real’, authentic representation. The mimetician does not develop awareness of their theatrical agency, but rather they remain rigidly stuck in their position. If one recognizes something as mimetic then the mimetic is revealed, it is deprived of its protecting mask and eventually it is undermined. The aim for this section of the thesis is to make clear the ways in which Brecht treated theatrical couplets. His propositions will consist of the main methodological tools for the elaboration of domestic antagonisms.
In chapter 2, I attempt, firstly, to demonstrate the contemporary usefulness of Brechtian thesis and, secondly, to analyse the first domestic dyad, ‘urban-suburban’. For the former, I discuss the notion of the capsular civilization as outlined by Lieven De Cauter. De Cauter suggests that the current formation of society is based on binary thinking, and that this thinking structures the built environment according to the concept of dualism. According to de Cauter, we now experience an increasingly introverted domesticity, while the surroundings become more and more chaotic; in order to confront the chaotic ‘out’, man, due to his incapacity to accept chaos as an a priori condition, creates an ‘in’ in accordance with the structure of capsules or enclaves. His work highlights not only the establishment of ‘in-out’ as a clear-cut antagonism but it also reveals the formation of a deeper rupture between the two parts. To this theorization of the contemporary built environment, I juxtapose Brecht’s thesis in order to propose an elaboration of the rigid couplet beyond these definitive affirmations. The ‘urban-suburban’ dyad serves as the first paradigm for the application of a Brechtian methodology. I focus on two periods of suburbanism: the first period refers to the initial steps towards suburbia during the first quarter of nineteenth century and the second refers to the mid-twentieth-century within the Anglo-American context. The early nineteenth-century was a period of appraisal, in which the suburban lifestyle was increasingly valued, and urban living denigrated, while the second period of suburbanism triggered criticisms of suburbia and thus became aligned to the demonization of this mode of living. The aim for this part of the thesis is to show how the ‘suburban’ within the urban-suburban antagonism changed positions, moving from a positive to a negative form of living. After examining three recent studies on suburbia denying the critical disapproval of suburban living, I seek to propose that even the ‘evil’ suburb could be potentially ‘harmless’. This section underlines the need to approach domestic-related antagonism beyond the concept of duality that presupposes the definition of any condition in a clear and final way.

Throughout chapter 3 I focus on the pair ‘in-out’, discussing Walter Benjamin’s theorization of interiority. In this part, I provide an analysis of the second dyad within dwelling while analysing Benjamin’s thesis on the experience of the metropolis. As with the ‘urban-suburban’ study, I focus on two different positions concerning one of the parts of the dyad. Particularly in this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how the ‘in’ was valued during the Art Nouveau period, but was almost abolished within Modern Movement dwellings, particularly through the application of the horizontal window and of the principle of transparency. This shift permits us to grasp the interchangeability of the two conditions, i.e. inside and outside, and even more importantly to comprehend that the limit between the two becomes an active in-between space.

The last section, chapter 4, focuses on the representation of suburbanism through the analysis of two films: “Mr.Blandings builds his dream house” (1948) and “Mon Oncle” (1958).
With this section the aim is to reveal how the pair ‘prototype-counterfeit’ functions in relation to domesticity. The first film depicts the longing for suburbia, situated in post-war America; it shows how dwellers dream of their suburban home and eventually how they manage to built it. The second shows a replica of the American model: a suburban villa on the outskirts of Paris. The analysis does not only reveal the ways in which movies represent the suburban, ‘real’ dwelling, but it also highlights the adaptation of the American typology into the Parisian periphery. I conclude by introducing the recent Baudrillardian theory of Integral Reality, which describes the current configuration of reality. His latter concept of reality asserts that what we experience today has no prototype and, in consequence, that kind of reality detached from its representation becomes integral. The aim for this part is to demonstrate how current architectural representations of domesticity have developed according to Baudrillard’s theorisation.

In order to elaborate the aforementioned concepts and to support the respective hypotheses throughout the research, I studied particular references, ranging from theatrical studies to sociology. The need to elaborate the notion ‘home as theatre’ and the generic commensurability between theatre and architecture had as a result to focus on the study of theatrical theory and on the reading of theatrical plays. Additionally, having as a target the elaboration of domestic-related dyads, I attempted to relate theatrical theory to the aforementioned elaboration. Therefore, I have chosen the Brechtian treatise as a primary source of references deriving from the theatrical field. At this point it is necessary to note that I did not consider part of the current study the notion of performativity corresponding to Antonin Artaud’s theorisations on theatre. Performativity simplifies the theatrical expression, unmasks the protagonist, and clears out the stage from the scenographic burden, whereas theatricality, related to the Brechtian dramaturgy, constructs codes and symbols, which performativity aims to deconstruct. In short through performativity the theatrical event becomes an explicit performance, whereby spectator participates without activating their intellect. Thus the focus on the notion of theatricality, through Brecht’s theorisations and plays, corresponds to the aims and concerns of the current research.

Moreover, two other primary sources were the contemporary critical philosophy elaborating the binary formation of society, as well as the theory on the agency of the subject, on the notion of subjectivity through the approach of the ‘subject-object’ dyad. In particular, for the first category, I sought to study those theorists that focus on the binary concepts shaping contemporary society and the respective cultural production. In doing so I have chosen to study and integrate within my research Baudrillard’s concept of Integral Reality and De Cauter’s theorisation of capsular civilisation. Both of them foreground the agency of dyads, as engineered
mechanisms, maintaining a certain degree of normality. The main reason for this adherence on the aforementioned concepts was my need to theorise the way in which man confronts and in turn ‘responds’ to any opposition, either material or virtual. Additionally the study and analysis of such theories reveal also the significance of adopting a Brechtian method throughout the confrontation of binary notions. The second group, corresponding to the theory of subjectivity, served as an essential ‘tool’ for the elaboration of the Brechtian treatise. Following Žižek’s theorisation on subjectivity, I focused on the shift in the theory of ontology from the subject as the thinking thing (Descartes) to the notion of subject as a ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger) and as a ‘becoming-conscious-being’ (Freud). Therefore, the Brechtian treatise, the analyses on binary thinking, and the theory on subjectivity shaped the principal literary references.

In order to approach the first half of the hypothesis ‘home as theatre’ and to structure the domestic-related dyads, ‘urban-suburban’, ‘in-out’, and ‘prototype-counterfeit’, I have chosen to study references on suburbia and interiority. For the first pair, ‘urban-suburban’, the study of sociological surveys on suburbs, as well as architectural theses on the suburban sprawl consisted of the main references. Whereas, for the notion of interiority, I analyse Walter Benjamin’s thesis on interiority and several theses of architectural theory on a particular shift: from the appraisal to the rejection of the domestic interior. Throughout the elaboration of the third dyad, ‘prototype-counterfeit’, corresponding to the representational means for domesticity, I analyse Gaston Bachelard’s theory on the “oneirically complete dwelling” for the comprehension of the dwellers’ adherence to specific models of inhabitation. Thus the three aforementioned groups of references consist of the secondary sources of literature.

Baudrillard’s concept of Integral Reality and De Cauter’s theorisation of capsular civilisation, inaugurate a discussion concerning man’s adherence to a living wedded to a constant beautification and sterilisation of space; man while adopting this particular lifestyle denies the natural disintegration of his/her body and of its surroundings. I discuss the possibility for man to radicalise this pattern of perceiving and re-producing ‘real’, by proposing the activation of A-effect technique. Both theoreticians reveal the problematic concerning the contemporary living as an impasse for man, yet both of them fail to provide a proposition in order for man to step out of this loop. Similarly to Brecht, who confronted the impasse imposed by the dyad ‘theatre-reality’ within the field of dramaturgy, I propose that the activation of man’s intellect through the re-conceptualisation of any previous-familiar condition could result in the re-appropriation of such a condition. Thus, following Brecht’s propositions, man could confront any dyadic mechanism, any configuration of the assimilated normality, and perhaps discard the respective perceptual and behavioural pattern.
NOTES


Carlson, while quoting Josette Féral, concludes that theatricality builds structures, which performance deconstructs.
Between 1938 and 1942 Bertolt Brecht wrote the parable play “The Good Person of Szechwan,” which was first performed on the 4th of February 1943 in Zurich Schauspielhaus. It is set in China, in the region of Szechwan. Three Gods arrive there, seeking the good person in a miserable town. They are introduced to a prostitute, Shen Teh, who provides them with shelter for the night. The Gods are pleased with Shen Teh’s hospitality, and pay her a substantial amount of money, which the young girl uses to buy a tobacconist’s shop. However in the course of the play she realizes that she cannot remain good while struggling to survive, so she disguises herself as her imaginary, male cousin Shui Ta. She uses the mask of the powerful and respectable male to carry out her financially immoral obligations. The cousin is accused of killing Shen Teh and a trial follows with the Gods acting as judges. The play ends with the unmasking of Shen Teh. The Gods leave Szechwan, without giving any satisfactory advice or a solution to Shen Teh’s moral dilemma:
To be good while yet surviving
Split me like lightning into two people. I
Cannot tell what occurred: goodness to others
And to myself could not both be achieved.
To serve both self and others I found too hard.¹

The play raises a number of questions: How can one act for the common well being, while satisfying ones personal ambitions for money and power? How can Shen Teh combine her longing for becoming an autonomous, economically independent young woman with her instinctive, internal impulse to provide economic help and shelter to the impoverished? This kind of problem is an integral aspect of Brechtian dramaturgy. In his analysis “The subject matter”, John Willett discusses the position of the individual within Brechtian plays: “[...] the individual himself is often a peculiar mixture of extreme good and extreme bad.” The following extract from the “St Joan of the Stockyards” explicitly demonstrates the kind of ambivalence that Brecht’s personas experience.

you have two rival spirits,
Lodged in you!
Do not try to weigh their merits,
You have got to have the two.
Stay disputed, undecided!
Stay a unit, stay divided!
Hold to the good one, hold to the obscener one!
Hold to the crude one, hold to the cleaner one!
Hold them united!²

The Brechtian characters do not settle in a single behavioural position, but they constantly move between several positions or attitudes. This constant movement and the simultaneous temporality of this behaviour are integral to the Brechtian thesis for human being. In particular, when he refers to the application of A-effect he states:

In order to unearth society’s laws of motion this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself. This also goes for those human feelings, opinions and attitudes through which at any time the form of men’s life together finds its expression.³

As long as nothing is perceived as a clear-cut condition, but rather is understood as an ever-changing ensemble, containing within a “disharmony with itself,” then any attempt to alter it is possible. This is the main thesis within Brechtian aesthetics. In what follows, I attempt to demonstrate the main features of Brecht’s treatise, and to juxtapose this with the concept of a mimetic attitude. In so doing, I analyse the mechanisms of two different behavioural and
perceptual patterns, the ‘mimetic’ and ‘theatrical.’ It is important to note that the purpose of this juxtaposition is to show how the mimetic takes place as an automatic or even instinctive response to any given stimulation, while theatrical behaviour, in the Brechtian sense, derives from the critical elaboration of what is perceived and, as a consequence, the observer responds consciously to any stimulation from the surroundings.

Moreover, the aim of this part is to explicitly demonstrate the methodology of this piece of research, which is derived from Brechtian logic. In the course of the study, it will be demonstrated how and why the Brechtian perspective, within architectural theory and practice, may serve as an adequate tool for the analysis of domestic-related dyads. This part introduces Brechtian thinking to the reader, in order to facilitate a more effective reading of the rest of the current research.
1 The mimetic attitude as a non-conscious act; the first level of representation

Plutarch refers to the mimetic behaviour of both the octopus and the chameleon. Whereas the octopus merges with its natural environment so as to deceive its predators and its prey, the chameleon adapts to its natural environment only out of fear. The octopus constantly changes its shape and its position in relation to the conditions of its surroundings, while the chameleon, with its colour-changing ability, blends with its environment and creates an effective form of camouflage. Even though neither animal impersonates another animal, they both still act mimetically towards the natural conditions. In neither case does the subject create a segregated replica of a given object, instead it attaches itself to the setting and it deceives the observer by creating a spatial continuity with its background. This description suggests that the mimetic behaviour of animals is an instinctive reaction to environmental circumstances, intended to help them to survive.
Roger Caillois contributes to this discourse on the procedure of mimicry and, in particular, he claims that mimicry is a natural and instinctive “language”, which both animals and humans use for “camouflage and protection, disguise and attraction, intimidation and control.” He takes the discussion one step further; in his essay “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” he gives examples of transformational disguises that several insects activate in order to merge with their surroundings. Caillois develops a naturalist metaphysics, by juxtaposing examples of insect mimicry with the concept of psychasthenia, in order to discuss the fields of personal identity, social relations and the understanding of the natural and built environment.

His point is to show the complexity inherent in the perception of space when the person attempts to determine the limits of itself and of its surroundings. Caillois states that man constantly forms a “dihedral of action,” an angle between the horizontal plane, formed by the ground, and the vertical plane, formed by “man himself.” Caillois creates an ‘image’ of his concept concerning the relationship between man and space: man carries this “dihedral of action,” creating a corresponding dihedral representation based on a constant, perpendicular relationship with the ground. However, in the case of schizophrenia, man rejects this perceptual and behavioural pattern, and understands his being as a unified totality with space. As Caillois notes, schizophrenics cannot formulate the “dihedral of action” with space, as they think that space is a kind of a “devouring force”: “He [a schizophrenic] feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar.” For him, the study of mimicry, through the approach of the relationship between a schizophrenic and space, elucidates the process of “depersonalisation by assimilation to space.” This process presupposes that the individual ought to have broken the distinction between their being and the surroundings, in order to assimilate with space and hence create an integrated entity.

Furthermore, it is important to note that when an act of mimicry is performed, a transformation of the subject itself necessarily takes place. Caillois’ references to the insect world elucidate the previous statement:

Everyone knows the Phyllia, or leaf insects, so similar to leaves, from which it is only a step to the perfect homomorphy represented by certain butterflies: first the Oxydia, which places itself at the end of a branch at right angles to its direction, the front wings held in such a position as to present the appearance of a terminal leaf, an appearance accentuated by a thin dark line extending crosswise over the four wings in such a way as to simulate the leaf's principal veins.

This example demonstrates a high degree of adaptation on the part of the insects towards the given environmental circumstances. Butterfly Oxydia succeed in creating an absolute homomorphy; the limits between the butterfly and its natural environment become vague, and eventually one cannot distinguish where the branch ends and where the insect is situated. The main characteristic of this merging with the surroundings is the transformation of the organism;
the insect uses its own structure to form a figure that is similar to its environment. Overall Caillois introduces these two examples, man/space entity and insects’ mimicry, in order to discuss the relationship between human being and space. More importantly he states that “the ultimate problem” within any sort of analysis is that of “distinction: distinctions between the real and the imaginary, between walking and sleeping, between ignorance and knowledge, etc.” For him, “among the distinctions, there is assuredly none more clear-cut than that between the organism and its surroundings” as the rupture between the two is more tangible than that within any other dyad. Therefore, one could accept the ‘organism-surroundings’ dyad as an a priori condition, which not only entails man’s life-long engagement with his perception of space, but also suggests that such an opposition triggers primordial and instinctive processes, such as: mimicry.

This aspect of mimetic behaviour, as a term inherent in human nature, suggests that a mimetic act is the first level of the appearance of an event or of a segregated subject. Consequently mimetic behaviour can be understood as an instinctive one, having a primitive nature. From another perspective Walter Benjamin approaches mimicry as a non-conscious attitude:

*Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities however is man’s. [...] This faculty has a history, however, in both the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic sense. [...] Children’s play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour.*

Benjamin refers to this mimetic behaviour of human beings and introduces the concept of “nonsensuous similarity,” which includes the notion of the pre-existing or ancient. Children perform a mimetic act while playing the roles of the shopkeeper or of the teacher. This reference to children’s play implies that the act of imitating, either a person, an attitude, or even the surroundings, occurs without following any written rules or instructions and, consequently, it can be suggested that it is the equivalent of a natural, non-sensuous, non-conscious enactment. For Benjamin, language, especially in its written form, is the adequate human expression of this “nonsensuous similarity.” He claims that language remains intact despite the increasing decay of the “mimetic faculty” and that it can be identified as “the highest level of mimetic behaviour and the most complete archive of nonsensuous similarity.” However, if language is still an extension of the mimetic faculty, how can we characterise the rest of human expression, production and comprehension? At the beginning of this essay Benjamin claims that modern man has to understand the duality or dilemma caused by the decline of mimetic faculty; we have either to follow that decay or to transform mimetic production and comprehension into something else. Either way, a series of questions arise from this double statement. Is there
another concept that has been established in the course of time and that has replaced mimicry? If there is such a concept, is it an evolution of mimesis or has it developed independently of any mimetic faculty?

Michael Taussig notes that Benjamin’s approach to the mimetic faculty creates a connection between the revival of mimesis and the era of modernity. Modernity offered such “cause, context, means, and needs” for the revival of the mimetic faculty to occur. The camera and film influenced one’s perception and as Susan Buck-Morss notes, these technologies provided a “new schooling for our mimetic powers.” Taussig goes on to suggest that during the period of its revival (the period of modernity), mimetic attitude occurred as a twofold system: “...a copying or imitation, and a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived.”

Integral to the materialisation of this kind of mimetic behaviour is corporeal contact between the observer and the observed, which precedes a sequence of copy-paste responses. However, Taussig continues his commentary by adding that these initially separated methods, contacting and copying, start to conflate, and thus to copy is to be in contact. The conflation connects with Benjamin’s “nonsensuous similarity” or to the “optical unconscious.” Both terms suggest that the human capacity for imitation lies in non-conscious enactment. This non-conscious enactment provides a reason for imitation to occur at the first appearance of an object or of an event. It occurs during a first, immediate, “nonsensuous” reaction towards a given representation. My aim in this section is to present the mimetic faculty as a natural, non-conscious action of human being. In this respect, I consider the mimetic attitude as the first level of appearance within a twofold system, followed by theatricality and its respective behavioural and perceptual pattern.
“Distribution of the sensible”

mimetic acts in public space

The concept of mimesis, as derived from Plato’s writings, has several interpretations, such as “imitation,” “representation,” “reproduction,” “fiction,” and “make-believe.” The classical term and its platonic essence has been the subject of both philosophical analyses, and of debates among scholars; it is a term that has served as a subject of study for various disciplines, ranging from philosophy and cultural theory to the history of theatre and sociology. There is not one exclusive definition of platonic mimesis; instead there are different attributes that contribute to our understanding of the term.

What is essential for the comprehension of platonic mimesis is the existence of the “One,” of the authentic or original model. Paul Woodruff describes platonic mimesis as a threefold concept that occurs through “impersonation,” “image-making” and “reproduction”. These terms refer to the aforementioned existence of an original model: “Plato’s argument in Republic III depends on assuming that mimesis can reproduce objectionable features of the original.”

In Book X of the Republic, Plato introduces this notion of “representation” through the well-known example of the bed. He suggests that a carpenter produces an appearance of the bed. What the carpenter really makes is “something that resembles ‘what is’ without being it.” So platonic mimesis is more than a term that describes artistic production; it is a philosophical concept with ontological connotations. This reference to the One includes the notion of authenticity. The One is unique and consequently it is the authentic appearance of itself, anything that derives from that source comprises a representation without being the One.
Plato’s interpretation of mimesis focused on the negative connotations of the term, and for him mimesis involved deception. According to Paul Woodruff, Plato identified that deception in dramatic mimesis occurred on two levels. Firstly, there is a danger that the observers of any dramatic representation may themselves become performers with the aim of deception. Secondly the audience may think that the poet (creator) has certain knowledge of the representing subject. Despite this focus on deception, there are references from Plato’s works where mimesis has a positive meaning. In *The Laws* he presented the idea of mimesis as a kind of accurate reproduction; in *Timaeus* he claimed that there is a relation between thought or speech and the divine reality of Forms; and in the *Statesman* he suggested that laws are mimemata of the truth that is known by experts.  

What is important for the purposes of this research is to comprehend that any mimetic product is identified as such through a comparison; we have to compare the representation with its authentic model and then we are able to characterise this product as mimetic. As soon as we define something as mimetic, we disclose the deception inherent in it and thus the representation is abolished. In order for the mimetic act or object to exist, the observers have not to identify it as a product of mimesis. Conversely, theatricality is the concept that produces representations that are constructed on the basis of a constant comparison, a kind of comparison that seeks similarities and analogies between the represented and the representative.  

Stavros Stavrides in his approach to theatricality juxtaposes the mimetic act to the theatrical attitude. In particular he notes that theatrical attitude is built with whatever is at hand, while overcoming obstacles that mimetic simulation cannot; the aim of the theatrical appearance is not the identification of the representative with the represented, but rather to seek how the two appearances correspond with each other. In order to establish the manner of this correspondence the observer has to compare, only then he will be able to articulate the links and relationships that unite the representation with any other possible image. In other words, in the case of the theatrical attitude the observer decodes the given information and then reforms its components in new configurations. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the mechanisms and the devices of theatricality extensively, examining the Brechtian perspective; at this point this short reference to the term is necessary for the comprehension of the mimetic product as a result of absolute identification. In short the purpose of the ‘theatrical’ attitude is not to persuade the observers that something is ‘real,’ while a mimetic product needs to convince the viewer that it is an authentic, ‘real,’ representation.  

The mimetic product aims at being an absolute, accurate double of the represented, and thus it achieves a high degree of simulation. In the following pages I analyse a spatial paradigm that I consider it to be a concrete, absolute mimetic representation engendering a respective attitude. However, prior to this analysis, I focus on Rancière’s interpretation of Plato’s polemic towards
mimesis. My aim is to reveal the spatial connotations of the mimetic act, as well as to comprehend how the products of this act comprise a first attempt to link public and private space.

Jacques Rancière’s writings contribute further to the comprehension of the Platonic polemic against mimesis. In order to establish an explicit link between “politics” and “aesthetics,” Rancière introduces the notion of the “distribution of the sensible.” This concept stands for the distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that shape the way in which some common attribute opens itself to external participation. Additionally, he examines how each individual contributes to this distribution. He suggests three modes of the distribution of the sensible: “the surface of depicted signs, the split reality of theatre, the rhythm of a dancing chorus.”

The first mode refers to either paintings or writings that activate the two-dimensional space of the page or of the canvas. The second mode signifies the movement of simulacra on the stage, while the third one stands for the real movement of bodies on the “everyday stage.” Particularly in the field of theatre, he notes that “politics” exhausts itself through the relation between the stage and the spectator. The development of this political relationship was the main parameter for the creation of “Epic Theatre” by Bertolt Brecht and of “Theatre of Cruelty” by Antonin Artaud.

The link between Rancière’s notion of “the distribution of the sensible” and Plato’s work towards mimesis is suggested by Plato’s statement that the mimetician is a double being. According to Rancière, Plato claimed that the rule for a well-organised society relies on the fact that each member occupies a single position or role. For instance, the worker is exclusively located in the work place, as there is no time for him to perform any other activity, such as the participation in public debate. Instead of following this rule, the mimetician, as another worker, creates a public stage for his products. For example, in the third book of the Republic the artisan is no longer condemned for the creation of fake images, for which he had no knowledge, but instead for leaving the private, domestic space of his work, and for occupying public space as a “deliberative citizen.” This transition from the private work place to public communal space occurs extensively in the theatrical field, where “the mimetic act of splitting in two uses the duality of the artisan” and, most importantly, it makes this duality visible. The mimetician’s enactment bridges the gap between making and seeing and thus a new relationship between the two is established.

Rancière claims that this procedure, namely “art as the transformation of thought into the sensory experience of the community,” was the basis of German Idealism’s aesthetic programme, as well as the basis for the thought and practice of the ‘avant-gardes’ of the 1920s. For Rancière artistic production becomes the guiding principle for a new “distribution of the
sensible,” since it unites the two opposed activities of making and seeing. A common action or concept discloses at the same time a form of visibility and the manufacturing process.

In Platonic terms, the mimetician disturbs the well-organised community, as well as the functional programme of private and public spaces. He discloses his artistic activity in a public space and thus he reveals not only the final product of his work but also the procedure of its’ making. The activity of the private space becomes visible to the public.

Rancière’s reading of Plato’s polemic towards mimesis reveals the spatial connotations of the term. In particular, the mimetic act functions as a link between public and private space. However, I feel that the mimetician structures a stage, which signifies a first attempt to relate ‘inside’ and ‘outside.’ We can claim that this attempt to perform an indoor activity in the public realm does not bridge the gap between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’; instead it enhances the concrete limits between the two areas. Again if we study the way in which the theatrical attitude compares with mimetic appearance, we will more clearly understand why the act of the mimetician does not link the private with the public space. Theatricality, according to several theoreticians and practitioners of theatre, occurs in-between the real and the fictional and functions exactly in the limit between opposed situations such as ‘in’ and ‘out.’ In this way theatricality blurs the concrete and absolute limits between things; it creates, at a spatial level, a flow between the two spaces. In contrast, the mimetic product occupies public space, preventing the interpenetration of the two spheres, but still underpins the two areas as opposing to each other.

However, it is important to understand that apart from the distinction between mimetic and theatrical attitude, there is a sub-distinction of mimetic attitude between mimicry and mimesis. The aforementioned notion of mimicry, through Caillois’ and Benjamin’s approach, corresponds with the analysis of non-conscious, instinctive actions that man and other organisms perform throughout their attempt to survive. On the other hand, mimesis refers to the conscious reproduction of a condition and to the non-conscious reaction of the viewer towards the given representation. Thus, we could argue that while mimicry corresponds to the dyad ‘organism-surroundings,’ as indicated by Caillois, the concept of mimesis introduces a third part into this opposition, the viewer. In other words, a mimetician creates a mimetic product consciously, whereas an observer of such a representation reacts unconsciously towards the given by accepting the final, mimetic product as ‘real knowledge.’ It is as if the mimetician, in the case of mimesis, shapes ‘the surroundings’ to which the spectator, as another ‘organism’ should respond to. Therefore, following the aforementioned literature, one could argue that even if mimicry and mimesis correspond to different fields of research, both concepts elaborate the distinction between man and their environment. Through the following spatial example, I will analyse in what ways man, performing a particular role, experiences the process of depersonalisation through assimilation to space.
At this point I would like to give a spatial example that enables and presupposes mimetic, straightforward, immediate human behaviour. I will focus on the tendency observed in some cities in China, to construct representations of the world’s most visited attractions in one theme park. Interestingly, in so doing, what they create is a spatial tautology: different touristic attractions within a single, larger tourist attraction. Most remarkably in one of these parks a scaled replica of Disneyland, Florida, has been constructed, and in this case the tautology is most apparent. Moreover, at these parks it is history itself that is spectacularised, but in a distorted way. For example in the park “Window of the World”, the landmarks of Oceania adjoin those of Europe, and so the visitor wanders in between Sidney Opera House and the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in a distorted geographical sequence. Or in the park “The World,” in Beijing, we can visit the island of Manhattan, where the World Trade Centre towers still adorn the landscape.

The “Window of the World” is one of these theme parks; it is located at the western part of the city of Shenzhen in southeast China. In this park one can visit the most famous world monuments within a 480,000 square meter area. Ranging from the Eiffel Tower to the Taj Mahal, and Mount Rushmore to the Sphinx of Giza, the replicas restructure the world map of touristic attractions. These reproductions are constructed at a smaller scale than the real
monuments; for example the Eiffel Tower in Paris is 324 meters tall, while in Shenzhen the counterfeit tower reaches a height of 108 meters; the replica is one third of the authentic model.

Another example of this trend is the “World Park” in Beijing. Located 17 kilometres from the city centre, it attempts to give visitors the chance to “see the world without ever leaving Beijing.” Again, in this park there are scaled reconstructions of the world’s most famous landmarks from the five continents. Chinese director, Zhang Ke Jia, in his 2004 film “The World,” presented the setting of this specific theme park through the everyday routine of some employees. In this way he develops a commentary on the rapid urbanisation of contemporary China, while criticising the communicative skills of the young protagonists.

The link between mimetic behaviour and the theme parks is suggested, primarily, by Tausig’s aforementioned notion that “to copy is to be in contact”. This notion suggests that any physical distance is abolished, and that the imitation carries with it the symbolic and spatial connotations of its prototype. But what do these two touristic attractions, the copy and its model, share? Is the experience of the tourist similar with both configurations, and, if so, in what ways? By answering these questions we can understand the procedure of imitation, and in particular we can grasp the notion of the mimetic attitude as the first level of appearance, as the first and immediate reaction towards a given object or situation. In these examples, the setting is a distorted replica, the visitor responds to this spatial representation by performing the role of the pseudo-cosmopolitan.

In order to understand how the contemporary tourist adapts himself to these multiplex and multicultural theme parks, we can imagine the visitor becoming in-one-day-cosmopolitan. These parks offer the basic touristic information for the most famous landmarks in the world. Therefore, as soon as we have visited each scaled attraction, we acquire an adequate knowledge to narrate our experience of visiting the world in one day. The fake cosmopolitan, within this odd assemblage of the monuments-replicas, represents the contemporary tendency to consume grouped cultural items in a short period of time. An obvious example of this tendency is the vast volume of published works that urge us to fulfil specific tasks before our death. Some of these works have titles such as “1001 Buildings You Must See Before You Die: The World’s Architectural Masterpieces” or “101 Sci-Fi Movies You Must See Before You Die” etc., which provide a catalogue with the must-see, must-watch, must-visit cultural products accompanied with a short review referring to each product. These parks are the spatial equivalent of these catalogue-like books. Therefore these leisure parks, including all the must-visit world monuments, provide a solution for the contemporary consumer: he becomes an in-one-day-cosmopolitan, while acquiring knowledge in the minimum of time and with limited spatial displacement.
Good day, dear visitors
Welcome aboard the elevator of our own Eiffel Tower
We hope this panoramic view will heighten your knowledge of the world.26

This is what we hear in the elevator of Beijing’s Eiffel Tower. While enjoying the panoramic view we acquire our knowledge of the world. If we understand this knowledge in light of Plato’s statement on the fallacy of the mimetic product we can claim that in the case of these theme parks the acquired knowledge is the equivalent to what Plato describes. If the Eiffel Tower is the ‘earthy’ One and authentic model, then the accurate, scaled copy of the Tower in Shenzhen or in Beijing bears all the characteristics of the mimetic product. Crucially, the double Tower needs to be convincing as an accurate representation. Even if this seems paradoxical, as we are constantly aware that Beijing’s Eiffel Tower is a copy, it offers similar experiences to the visitor and thus the copy attains the same ends as its authentic model.

In order to understand how the two touristic experiences seem to be similar, I propose examining Roland Barthes’s classic essay “The Eiffel Tower” of 1964. In his essay Barthes discusses the several connotations of this “infinite cipher”: an object that “means everything”. He notes that the tower as “a temple of science” is an empty monument; we do not visit it as a museum or as an object of art. But why do we visit the Eiffel Tower? Barthes suggests several reasons why the Tower receives twice as many visitors as the Louvre. Firstly the tower is a kind of belvedere, overlooking the city of Paris. As Barthes states, the visitor tries to recognise known sites, while his perception struggles with his knowledge of the topography of the city. Eventually he can recompose all the elements for the production in his mind of “a simulacrum of Paris.”27 In other words the visitor constructs an image, in this case the image of Paris, but what he really does is to acquire a kind of knowledge of the landscape, the history, the positions of the other landmarks in the city.

Would the visitor to Beijing’s tower elaborate the panoramic vision of the world in a similar way to the visitor of the Paris tower? We can imagine the possibility that a similar procedure could take place in the theme park “The World”. The pseudo-cosmopolitan would ascend to the top of the tower in order to enjoy the panoramic vision of ‘the world’. Afterwards, in an attempt to orient themselves, they would endeavour to recognise the exact position of the landmarks that they had just visited. Then they would be able to produce knowledge, from what they already know and what they perceive. Eventually they would recompose in their mind an image of ‘the world’, having as a background the landscape of the Chinese suburbs. Ultimately, the content of each panorama is different; the one includes the Parisian landscape, while the other is an ensemble of replicas in a false juxtaposition within the context of Beijing’s suburbs.

The second reason for visiting the Tower is that one can eat, shop, observe, dream, comprehend within the Tower; it gathers all leisure related activities. Or, as Barthes puts it:
Further, by affording its visitors a whole polyphony of pleasures, from technological wonder to haute cuisine, including the panorama, the Tower ultimately reunites with the essential function of all major sites: autarchy.\textsuperscript{28}

The visitors also adapt themselves to this sense of autarchy in the leisure theme park. The pseudo-cosmopolitans enhance their knowledge for the world, while satisfying their needs for food, shopping etc. Therefore we have two ways in which the experience of the visitor becomes similar: acquiring knowledge of the surroundings and the satisfaction of multiple needs.

At this point, it is necessary to understand why the similarity of the experiences renders the theme park into a characteristic paradigm of mimetic simulation. Rancière’s reading of Plato’s work on mimesis contributes further to this part of the research. Rancière notes that there are three major “regimes of images”: the ethical, the poetic, and the aesthetic. The ethical regime is the one that includes Plato’s thesis on art. In particular Rancière suggests that in this category “images are the object of a twofold question: the question of their origin (and consequently of their truth content) and the question of their end or purpose.”\textsuperscript{29} In this “regime” it is necessary to identify the moral impact of images on individuals and communities.

In the case of these theme parks, the representations have the same appearance as their models, as well as similar purposes. Thus according to Rancière’s interpretation of the platonic thesis on artistic reproduction, we can claim that the replicas of famous landmarks fall into the category of “true arts”, which are forms of knowledge based on the imitation of a model with specific ends. The other category of arts is formed by the “artistic simulacra that imitate simple appearances.”

Even if these ensembles are physically accessible as tactile three-dimensional representations, they simultaneously include a high degree of virtuality: distorted geographical and historical sequences, the visitor becoming pseudo-cosmopolitan, while acquiring a sort of knowledge. This is a virtuality that is partially apparent: we acknowledge the fact that all these constructions are replicas, but we do not deny either the knowledge that they provide or the experience of becoming in-one-day-cosmopolitan. Thus the potential visitor, while enjoying the panorama of the world, also demonstrates mimetic behaviour.

The mimetic simulation, as it is materialised through the re-composition of the world and through the individual’s performance as the pseudo-cosmopolitan, occurs at the first level. We can understand this statement if we imagine a visitor to the theme park wandering in between the replicas and contemplating what they observe, what knowledge they receive; in short a visitor that denies his role as pseudo-cosmopolitan, who adopts a more critical position towards the given experience, succeeds in abolishing the total representation. This kind of visitor starts to compare, and this act of comparison reveals the mimetic product as such. At this point, this
person has overcome the first level of engagement, where the mimetic, non-conscious enactment occurs. The person can no longer participate in this mimetic assimilation and, consequently, no longer enjoys all that the leisure park offers.

The antithesis of this rigid, mimetic attitude is theatricality and its respective behavioural and perceptual motif. The aforementioned visitor, who denies the virtuality of the amusement park, adopts a theatrical attitude aligned with a constant comparison of the replica and its prototype. In doing so they question the authenticity of what they have taken for granted for so long. They experience a shock-like feeling, while realising that what they have been observing becomes ineffective, becomes incapable of persuading them that it is the real thing. Thus, they are surprised as they begin to perceive the whole park as an agglomeration of replicas and not as a condition providing the ‘real’ experience. When one ceases to integrate totally with one’s surroundings, through impersonation, then one steps out of the impasse imposed by concrete imitation and consequently one ascends to the second level of engagement, that of theatricality. In what follows, I attempt to theorise this exact shift within the perception of spatial and social conditions, whereby one develops a consciousness concerning the nature of any representation: this spectator accepts the configuration as an a priori replica. The following analysis focuses on Brechtian theatricality, which, among other things, activates this shift from non-conscious integration to the conscious act of comparison.
Theatrical attitude through Brechtian aesthetics

In theatrical theory and criticism the discourse often focuses on the commensurability between the theatre and the world. The well-known phrase “all the world’s a stage” deriving from Shakespeare’s play “As You Like It”, triggers contemplations on how theatre is or how it represents reality, which have produced rich material examining theatrical, ontological, and social issues. Theatrum mundi refers to this connection; it reflects the symbiotic relationship between stage and life and it is linked to theatricality. The term was particularly popular among the theatrical practitioners and theorists during the 16th and 17th centuries; throughout this period they referred to the stage as a paradigm of human life. Academics in philosophy, theatrical studies, and art theory elaborated the idea of theatrum mundi and then attempted to respond to the aforementioned commensurability.
More interestingly playwrights and theatrical directors produced such plays and respective theatrical theory in order to elaborate the concept of theatrum mundi. According to Davis and Postlewait, Brecht, compared to his contemporaries, “went one step further” in his attempt to respond to the relationship between stage and life. As they comment:

To be politically efficacious, Brecht needed spectators to reject the commensurability of stage and world, to step out of the Möbius loop of the theatrum mundi, and use the dystopic example of the dramatised story to better their social condition.33

Brecht gives a sort of ‘solution’, an exit from this loop by developing a theatrical practice that embodied contemporary theory. The basis for his Epic Theatre was exactly this interaction between the stage and the spectator, which was intended to awaken a common concern for political matters. His aim was to create theatrical conditions that prompted the audience to become conscious of the social situation, so as to act and transform it.34 Therefore a theatrical performance, in the Brechtian sense, would be the one that employs various methods to make it explicit that it is not a representation of authentic, real life, but instead it is a performance as such. At this point it would be useful to understand the Brechtian way of thinking: by examining the reasons for his reaction to “orthodox theatre”, by revealing the structure of “Epic Theatre”, by approaching the agency of the dialectical image within brechtian logic, and by theorising the well-known “A-effect”. Through this study, one could comprehend Brechtian aesthetics and in turn consider the contemporary usefulness of Brecht to architectural thinking and practice.

Brecht was against the “orthodox theatre” as it was conceived and developed within the German and Austrian society.35 This kind of theatre forced the spectator to identify himself with the actor, and the actor with his role and eventually it rendered the spectators “into a cowed, credulous, hypnotized mass”. As John Willet states, the audience followed the plot in an uncritical state of mind; the “orthodox theatre” had an effect on the spectator’s emotions only through the reproduction of a false image of reality. The spectators did not perceive the fallacy of the image, as “they stare rather than see”.36 In his 1948 essay “A short organum for the theatre”, Brecht discusses how theatre must be formed in order to become an “apparatus of education and mass communication”, which will enable the “spectator’s intellect [to be] free and highly mobile”.37

This transition from ‘orthodox’ to Brechtian theatre demanded a radical restatement of the role of the audience; Brecht’s first step for this theatrical reformation was to establish a new relationship between spectator and stage. Walter Benjamin, in his work “Understanding Brecht” refers extensively to the Brechtian dramaturgy as it was developed in contrast to naturalistic theatre. For him the ‘orthodox’, naturalistic theatre is inherently illusionistic; its only purpose is to depict the ‘real’, while reducing its own “awareness” of being theatre. In other
words, naturalistic theatre endeavours to convince us of its reality, just like the mimetic attitude; it denies its theatrical ‘being’, through an absolute assimilation with reality. As opposed to this naturalistic, theatrical tendency Brechtian dramaturgy in its practical and theoretical application, develops a “lively and productive consciousness from the fact that it is theatre” 39. For Benjamin this kind of consciousness renders Brechtian theatre into a non-illusionistic theatre, which presents ‘real’ conditions at a distance from the spectator. In particular he notes that rather than rigidly reproducing those conditions (as the naturalistic theatre did), Brecht manages to reveal them; this revelation results in the wakening of the spectator’s intellect. Again, according to Benjamin, this wakening occurs through astonishment, which is followed by interest for what is represented on stage. The spectator’s surprise represents a key-mechanism in the whole of the Brechtian, theatrical apparatus.

Brecht employs a series of tools in order to activate the spectator, one of them being the “alienation effect” or A-effect, in its shortened form. 40 This concept signifies a representation that permits the observer to recognise the subject, but at the same time renders it unfamiliar. In other words this concept creates a ‘distance’ between the observer and the stage; the spectator needs to ‘respond’ to what is presented in order to reduce this ‘distance’. The spectator is unable to ‘respond’ if they are relaxed or absorbed by the performance, but only if they constantly use their mind in a critical sense. Brecht detected this form of representation within traditional Chinese theatre and he mentions several examples of the specific application of the A-effect. For instance, an intense movement of the hands depicts the opening of a door that does not exist physically on the set of the play; similarly, parts of the setting may be removed while others are carried in during the performance. All these gestures, which represent an act in a symbolic manner, result in the abolition of the illusionistic character embedded in the performances of ‘orthodox’ or so-called naturalistic theatre.

However, the concept of A-effect does not only materialise the abolition of illusion, it is a technique that permits a kind of detachment between spectator and the staged representation, which is followed by a necessary reorientation. A familiar subject, to the spectator, becomes peculiar within Brechtian theatrical performance. This distorted representation includes the notion of the uncanny and the unexpected, and eventually it alters the spectator’s point of observation. More importantly it expects the spectator to adapt to a role in order to understand the misshaped, previously familiar configuration. The following classic paradigm used by Brecht in his theorisation of A-effect, permits us to grasp how this ‘make-unfamiliar’ technique functions: “To see one’s mother as a man’s wife one needs an A-effect; this is provided, for instance, when one acquires a stepfather.” 41 In order to elaborate this idea we can consider the potential spectator; on seeing his mother as a man’s wife, he ought to adapt himself to the role of the ‘one-who-acquires-a-stepfather’. Consequently he alters his observational point to permit
the comprehension of the unfamiliar characterisation of his mother. Thus, this tool of A-effect creates the conditions for the immediate participation of the spectator and it introduces us to Brechtian logic, which is, among other things, a “dialectical” logic.\footnote{According to Raymond Williams, Brechtian dramatic form is inherently a dialectical one, which has its root in Marxist theory. He notes that Brecht presents men “in the process of producing themselves and their situations”, in contrast to the naturalistic dramatic form, where men discover “themselves in a given situation”.} Therefore, Brecht, while breaking the illusionistic character of theatre (inherent in the naturalistic dramaturgy) and introducing the spectator to a new theatrical experience through participation, manages to make a statement concerning man and his environment: nothing is taken for granted, but we constantly ought to re-examine and consequently re-produce in our mind the image of the human and its surroundings. Of course the A-effect, as many other Brechtian techniques (‘gestus’, time parallel actions, revealed scenery etc.), were developed simultaneously with a rich theoretical work.

Brecht’s theorisations on the reformation of theatre were materialised in his theatrical plays. Both his theory and practice come under the common title “Epic Theatre”. He announced that “Modern theatre is the Epic theatre” in his notes to Mahagonny. However he was not the only one engaging with the concept of “Epic theatre” during the 1920’s; Erwin Piscator, Alfons Paquet, and Arnolt Bronnen are examples of other playwrights that conceptualised this kind of theatre in correspondence with the “new matter-of-factness of the machine age”.\footnote{Piscator juxtaposes film projections within the actual theatrical performance, while Brecht’s tools for an Epic Theatre were the subtitles, Kurt Weill’s music, and parallel film projections. At this point, it is necessary to comprehend how the notion of the epic intervened in Brechtian logic, and what this term signifies in terms of narration.}

The term epic derives from Aristotle’s “Poetics”, where he articulates the distinction between several modes of imitation such as: Epic Poetry, Tragedy, Comedy, Dithyrambic Poetry, the Music of the Flute or the Lyre and so on.\footnote{The first two modes of imitation correspond with the epic and dramatic manner of narration respectively. Whereas the epic form of narration is not tied to time, the dramatic manner of narration follows a linear structure analogous to time and place. The dramatic form includes the Aristotelian concepts of catharsis and of self-identification (empathy), which in Brechtian logic both result in an illusionistic theatrical performance and a hypnotised audience. On the other hand the epic style, is associated with a fragmentary narration, which results in the activation of the spectator’s intellect. Brecht in his attempt to theorise epic theatre quoted the writer Döblin: “[...] with an epic work as opposed to the dramatic, one can as it were take a pair of scissors and cut it into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life.”} The latter reference enables us to visualise this kind of narration; the hypothetical spectator should ‘respond’ to the given, in this case to the scattered pieces, and
seek how each part corresponds with each other. The epic narrative style underpins each scene so as to stand for itself, while the traditional concepts of catharsis and empathy are abolished; the emancipated spectator in the becoming.47

A stage image equivalent to epic narration is given by Brecht in his essay “Theatre for Pleasure or theatre for Instruction”: “Films showed a montage of events from all over the world. Projections added statistical material. And as the ‘background’ came to the front of the stage so people’s subjected to criticism.”48 The multiplicity, inherent in the Brechtian stage image, materialised all the characteristics of the epic theatre and most importantly transmitted a sort of knowledge. He endeavoured to create the epic theatre, which was among other things instructive theatre; however his plays were not deprived of the entertaining character of theatre, since he claimed that the apparatus for amusement could incorporate instruction and learning. Or as Fredric Jameson puts it, while referring to Brecht’s dramaturgy: “The age-long dilemmas of a didactic theory of art (to teach or to please?) are thereby also overcome, [...] a didactic art may now be imagined in which learning and pleasure are no longer separate from each other.”49 In these terms, instruction and entertainment intermingle for the materialisation of the Epic theatre.

Various elements structured the Brechtian image stage, such as: films, sub-titles, lantern-slides, musicians. All these means visualise the general notion of the epic theatre and the concept of ‘Gesten’, which signifies a precise manner of acting out; ‘Gesten’ in German or ‘Gestus’ in English is equivalent to the idea of showing the process of showing. The fragmentary nature of epic style influences the method of acting, which was supposed to present the human not as “a consistent whole but as a contradictory, ever-changing character”.50 For the actor to achieve this fragmentary and multi-layered way of playing, he had to employ ‘interruptions’ and ‘jumps’ within a non-consistent time sequence. This notion of interruption is at the heart of Brechtian dramaturgy, since it destroys the illusion by creating multiples ‘gaps’ in the narration.

According to Willet, the Brechtian stage permits us to see the lights, the musicians and the actor who ‘must not just sing but show a man singing’ (Gesten). Additionally, Brecht states that the procedure of making should be visibly available and comprehensible, and this method of disclosure is applied to every level of the theatrical production, from the ‘plot’ to the stage scenery. For instance, the sub-titles described what was about to happen on stage; we already knew the story, prior to the beginning of the theatrical performance. Brecht gives another example of this form of visibility, in his essay “Stage Design for the Epic Theatre”. He proposes that: “The best thing is to show the machinery, the ropes and the flies.”51 He also adds that the materials should be treated in a similar way; the wood, plaster, and canvas should be shown as they are, with their own natural texture. Therefore, the procedure of making is revealed to the
public, through the fragmented epic style, so as to render the spectators into critically thinking individuals, who eventually will create their own theatrical configuration in the course of the play; what Brecht hoped was to activate a common concern for social issues.

Brecht constructed a theatrical apparatus by utilising the aforementioned techniques: the epic style of narration, the consequent non-linear theatrical action, the concept of ‘Gestus’, the multiplicity or complexity of the stage (referring both to the tangible, physical scenery and to the elaboration of the fragmented action), the revealed mechanisms of the scenery, the use of the A-effect, and the active audience, to invoke the spectator’s surprise and so on. He shaped an anti-illusionistic, anti-naturalistic, dialectical, and instructive theatre on the antipode of the ‘orthodox’ theatre, while attempting to confront the theatrical dyads, such as actor-spectator, real-theatrical, instruction-entertainment, through a dialectical method. This method consists of a main ‘tool’, deriving from Brechtian doctrine; this ‘tool’ is applied throughout the current study.

But, what did Brechtian dramaturgy achieve? How is it related to theatricality? How can we interpret Brecht’s work in terms of space and in particular in terms of the dominant dyads in relation to domesticity? What would be a possible application of the Brechtian methodology within a contemporary analysis of architectural space? Throughout this dissertation I attempt to respond to these questions, while applying a Brechtian-like methodology.
Brecht and the binary logic:

‘object-subject’/‘subject-object’

Through his work Brecht distributes a form of visibility: he discloses the procedure of making, and its supporting mechanisms. Brecht revealed the esoteric, functional system of each theatrical procedure; from the acting-out method to stage scenery design, his aim was to show the method of production. In this sense, he attempted, not only to abolish the naturalistic character of theatre, but most importantly to convey his Marxist-based concept for human being and its surroundings: man is an ever-changing being that must constantly re-produce and re-examine its environment. The hypothesis for this part of the research bears the main points of Brechtian dramaturgy: Brecht’s exposure of the inner theatrical apparatuses discloses a new form of visibility, which in turn shatters the dualities inherent in every aspect of human life. In particular, I will focus on the way in which this binary logic operates in the relationship, ‘subject-object’. This relationship dominates the theatrical field; within ‘orthodox’ theatre, the spectator is identified as the subject, while the actor is the object of observation. Brecht reverses the traditional reciprocity between the two couplets.

Josette Féral states that theatricality is the result of three distinct “cleavages”: ‘spectator-actor’, ‘real-fictional space’, and the ‘real body of actor-the person whom the actor incarnates’. Theatricality bridges that gap between real, everyday life and the symbolic theatrical performance. According to her writings, this bridging occurs as a result of the position of theatre in-between a real and a fictional condition; everything that a theatrical performance represents is inscribed in both conditions. For instance, the bodies and the movements of the actors are always perceived as real, physically accessible, and tactile; yet the content of their performances and the respective, depicted personality derive from the imaginary, fictional, non-real theatrical literature. It seems as if the actor on stage is trapped in a non-visible space, between a real and a non-real dimension. We could consider this ‘cleavage’ between real and fictional as a kind of dilemma; as if one demands that the actor choose between the real and non-real space. Then the actor, forced to choose but incapable of doing so (he could not deny his tangibility), refuses both options. Eventually, he creates a third alternative ‘space’, while overcoming the impasse imposed by such a dilemma. One could argue that the actor performs within an intermediary area, an in-between space, between the haptic human body and the non-tangible theatrical role.

This metaphor, cleavage as dilemma, facilitates our comprehension of the generic notion of ‘dilemma’ that exists inherently in our societies. This notion of dilemma is another version of
the binary logic that characterises several aspects of our everyday life. One can suggest that this concept of the binary may take the form of a dilemma, of a rupture between opposed situations, of a dichotomy. Lieven De Cauter states that our contemporary civilisation is formed upon the principles of transcendental capitalism, which as any other expression of capitalism, is based on a basic characteristic: its binary logic. According to De Cauter contemporary capitalism has become “meta-stable”, owing to the prevalent, concrete gaps that exist between superficially opposing situations; these gaps reinforce the widespread binary concept. In these binary inspired societies the in-between is indistinguishable, while each component within an opposing relation is fixed permanently in its position; interchangeability is not allowed. For instance, the potential alteration of the parts within the antagonisms ‘in-out’, ‘public-private’, ‘centre-periphery’, would destroy the opposition and the respective relation. If ‘in’ and ‘out’ exchange positions, a new distorted relation would emerge. The formation of the ‘out-in’ relation is the first step for the destruction of the binary pattern.

An adequate model for this kind of distorted relation is given by Brechtian dramaturgy and it corresponds with the first “cleavage” in Féral's theorisation: the spectator-actor relation. Within a Brechtian play the spectator, as if another ‘actor’, ought to participate not physically on stage, but mentally from the auditorium. What actually occurred was a kind of reverse within the ‘spectator-actor’ relation. Obviously, the interchangeability of positions is not a clear-cut process; the actor did not occupy a position in the audience, nor did the spectator on stage. Similarly, this procedure of interchangeability is a qualitative mechanism, since one cannot confirm how much of the actor-position is occupied by the spectator-position and vice versa. Yet, it is necessary to emphasize what is primarily achieved through this reversal; the aim is not to establish the accuracy of this reverse. Thus this alteration bridges the rupture between two antithetical positions and emphasizes the fact that the binary logic is diminished, if not abolished.

A relationship analogous to that of ‘spectator-actor’ would be that of the ‘subject-object’ interaction. Within the traditional, theatrical apparatus the spectator corresponds to the subject of observation, while the actor to the respective object. In the distorted, Brechtian formula subject and object blend with each other, while destroying their concrete and orthodox relation. Therefore, in the Brechtian sense, the ‘spectator-actor’ dyad does not correspond automatically to the ‘subject-object’ relation. As the two parts of the first relation interchange positions, the analogy with the parts of the former relation is not fixed. In order to comprehend fully this brechtian mechanism of interaction and to suggest its possible application within a contemporary analysis, I will give a brief overview of the extensive theory on subject’s being, on the term of subjectivity and on the subject-object interaction.
Prior to an examination of the term, it seems it would be useful to elaborate the linguistic approach to ‘subject’ and ‘object’ given by Žižek: “[...] to subject (submit) oneself and to object (protest, oppose, create an obstacle).” He adds that the subject displays itself to the object’s presence, which “disturbs the smooth running of things”\(^{34}\); the passive object thwarts the active subject. This etymological approach is reminiscent of the *cogito*, which is the active, autonomous subject. The human-centred theory of the “Cartesian subject” (the “thinking thing”) situates the subject, during a hypothetical observation, as the active member within the ‘subject-object’ relation. The widely known phrase “Cogito ergo sum” [I think therefore I am], which is attributed to the philosopher René Descartes, includes the notion of an ‘active’ subject that exists and functions independently of its surroundings. In addition this autonomous subject resides in itself, while any interaction with its environment (a potential object) is excluded from the being of the Cartesian subject. As Žižek points out, Descartes asserted the *cogito* as the departure point of philosophy; during the period of the Renaissance, man was celebrated as the absolute definition of being.\(^{56}\) Therefore the theory of *cogito* was embedded in the human-centred culture of the Renaissance, while indicating the beginning of a philosophy of the subject; in other words the foundation of the theory of ontology.

According to Žižek this is the anthropocentric approach towards man’s being; the ‘anti-humanistic treatment’ of the subject reduces human being to another component of reality. Thus the subject is no-longer self-referential and autonomous but it becomes part of a whole. The concept of this unprivileged subject was dominant during modernity: the modern subjectivity is inherently “anti-humanist”, since it conceives human, not at the heart of all being, but in correspondence with its context.\(^{57}\) The “Modern subject”, as opposed to the “Cartesian subject”, develops a context-related consciousness of its being, meaning that the subject needs the ‘other’, perhaps an ‘object’, so as to comprehend, and in turn develop, a consciousness of its own self.

‘Cogito’ triggered the formation of several theories on the subject’s agency and on the respective subject-object relationship; these theories, in turn, contributed to the formation of the “modern subject”. Following Ricoeur’s analysis, I will juxtapose two brief references on Heidegger’s “Dasein” and on Freud’s three-fold “topography” (system) of *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Both elaborated the concept of *cogito*, as a basis for the construction of their own theorisation of Being. Heidegger introduced the well-known term “Dasein”.\(^{58}\) According to Ricoeur, Heidegger’s formation of the subject is based, primarily, on doubting the certitude on which the *cogito* is conceived. For Heidegger, we have forgotten the question of Being, and thus we have to rely solely on a model of certitude provided by the theory of cogito. What is significant is not the Being, per se, but the question of Being:
What is important in the question is that it is ruled by the questioned-by the thing about which the question is asked. [...] Thus in the position of the ego, there is both the forgottenness of the question as question but also the birth of the ego as the inquirer. 59

Thus, this ego is not situated in a specific position with a certitude of itself; it is included in the question and it goes backward and forward in the inquiry of itself “as a mode of being of a possible ego.” 60 It is as if the subject is situated in a ‘non-position’, between the inquiry of its own being and this “possible ego”; the Heideggerian subject would constantly re-establish what it is, through a process of regression. A sort of ‘definition’ of Dasein in “Being and Time” provides the key-characteristics of this un-fixed ego:

The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of Being; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about-namely Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term Dasein. 61

Therefore the subject, as Dasein, is not a segregated object, but an entity that includes the twofold being residing both in its possible mode of being and in its own inquiries of itself; the question of being is a constructive part of our possible ego. For Ricoeur, Heidegger proposed a kind of ontology as “a hermeneutics of I am” and thus focusing on the second part of Descartes' statement: I think - I am. 62 Heidegger points out that Descartes left undetermined the kind of Being that I am. So the Heideggerian “hermeneutics of I am” introduced the twofold subject of Dasein, while denying the absolute nature of cogito, by approaching the very meaning of the I am as an entity. 63

This notion of being, as an entity, is significant for the comprehension of the 'subject-object' relationship. Heidegger in his work “The Origin of The Work of Art”, sought to identify the being of the work of art, of art itself. In so doing, he contributed further to the understanding of human being. He examined the well-known example of Vincent Van Gogh’s painting “Shoes of the Peasant”, for the support of his main thesis: “the work of art reveals things in their Being”. 64 It reveals the world of the peasant. In other words, any work of art discloses a whole “world” and not just itself. The thing, in this case the artistic production, carries along information, which enables this kind of revelation. As David Farell Kerell mentions, the notion of world in Heidegger’s work is essential for the comprehension of Dasein: “There (in Being and Time) he defines world as the structural whole of significant relationships that Dasein experiences-with tools, things of nature, and other human beings- as being-in-the-world.” 65 This first encounter with Dasein revealed human being as a constantly-determined condition; the process of determination is included in the subject itself. Most importantly, we can identify the gradual
intervention of the ‘subject-object relation’ in the formation of subject’s being; the subject seeks to comprehend its being in relation to and interaction with other elements.

The contribution of psychoanalysis to the theory of subjectivity was significant, especially on how it elaborated the idea of cogito. In particular Ricoeur mentions that the Freudian elaboration of human being revealed the problems of cogito and eventually attempted to resolve them. Freud introduced a kind of “personology” constituted from a series of “roles”: the neutral-id, the personal-ego, and the superpersonal-superego. Freud imposed this threefold system upon the first “topography” of places: unconscious-conscious-preconscious. As Ricoeur comments: “[...] consciousness and the ego still figure among the places and the roles which, taken together, constitute the human subject.”

What Freudian doctrine achieved, was not the abolishment of the subject, but its displacement; Freud substituted the conscious-being (Bewusstsein) with the becoming-conscious-being (Bewusstwerden). He displaced the subject from the position of origin to the position of goal. The becoming-conscious-subject attempts to comprehend its being, while enlarging the field of consciousness and “re-appropriating some of the strength that was given to its three powerful masters”.

Aren’t the notions of “being-in-the-world” and that of “becoming-conscious-being” suggestive of a particular shift in the theory of ontology? The subject abandons the fixed, central position that it has gained through the Cartesian doctrine, and develops a consciousness of its own being in relation to its surroundings that can exist either ‘in’ (id-ego-superego) or ‘out’ (the world) of it. What both thinkers suggested, even if they come from different fields, from phenomenology and psychoanalysis, was that the human subject understands its own being through an unending procedure; it is a life-long process. This subject can never take for granted its instant comprehension of what it is. Additionally, the subject’s interaction with its environment has an ontological impact on its being. It is necessary to understand these two characteristics – the unending procedure of self-identification and the interaction of subject with its surroundings – as key points in the comprehension of what Brechtian dramaturgy achieved. This link, between the theory of the subject and Brecht’s ‘achievements’ becomes clearer when we recall Brecht’s thesis on the human subject, which was based on Marxist theory: the subject has to constantly “re-produce” its being and the situation that surrounds it. In this respect, Brecht activated the spectator, who did not discover his ‘position’, his being and, thus, his environment (as occurred during an “orthodox”, theatrical performance), but instead he constantly invents his position. To describe this sense of constant interaction between subject and object, Žižek uses the term “parallax”.

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...the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight. [...] Or—to put it in Lacanese—the subject’s gaze is always-already inscribed into the perceived object itself, in the guise of its “blind spot”, that which is “in the object more than the object itself”, the point from which the object itself returns the gaze.70

The reference to Lacan’s thesis concerning the gaze elucidates both the notion of parallax and the interaction between object and subject of observation. Žižek’s example deriving from cinema enables us to comprehend the ontological co-dependence inherent in the subject-object relation through Lacan’s hypothesis on the gaze. The example provided is the Hitchcockian image of a protagonist approaching an “uncanny” object, usually a house. In this case, according to Žižek, we confront an image that is equivalent to Lacan’s statement: “You never look at me from the place from which I see you.”71 The house-object “looks” at the protagonist-subject; yet the protagonist does not perceive the object’s gaze. Or, we can claim that the subject partially perceives that gaze: she does not consciously acknowledge the fact that the object is looking at her but she unconsciously ‘feels’ its powerful gaze when she becomes aware of the uncanniness. It seems that the correspondence between the relations subject-object and protagonist-house is not fixed; both the protagonist and the house can be the subject or the object of observation simultaneously.

The juxtaposition of the Brechtian treatment of spectator-actor dyad with theories concerning the ‘subject-object’ couplet reveal not only the commensurability between Brecht and the aforementioned theorists, but also highlights the approach of any antagonism beyond definitive affirmations, beyond a concrete, binary pattern of perception. When the subject/spectator perceives its position in relation to object/actor’s attitude, then the mechanism of ambivalence is activated.
Eventually, while keeping in mind Rancière’s notion of “the distribution of the sensible”, one can claim that Brecht materialised this sort of distribution; he disclosed the way of making. In the previous section on the mimetic attitude, the juxtaposition of Rancière’s concept attempted to reveal the way in which the mimetic production intervened within the opposition of public-private. Brechtian theatricality seems to explicitly materialise what is for Rancière the distribution of the sensible: an unambiguous disclosure of the way of making. For instance, the Brechtian, scenographic pattern, which discloses the inner structure of the scene, is akin to Rancière’s thesis: Brecht sets forth “a way of making” the scenery. Similarly, the actor has to show the way of showing and not simply impersonate the role. This kind of disclosure is at the heart of Brechtian logic. Following Rancière’s theorisation of how this disclosure blurs the limit between private and public, we could argue that Brechtian dramaturgy, certainly succeeds in creating a correspondence between the private and public condition.

In contrast to the rigid, mimetic attitude, Brechtian theatricality treats the couplets under the concept of interpenetration, while proposing a perceptual and behavioural pattern aligned with a constant ambivalence. In the following chapters I give several examples in order to demonstrate how Brechtian logic is applied throughout an architectural elaboration of domestic-related dyads.
/NOTES

1 This is a part of the monologue by Shen Teh, just after she has revealed her identity in front of the Gods/judges. She demands a solution to her problem, but the Gods seem unable to provide any advice on her ethical dilemma. Brecht, B., (1962[1938-1942]). p.105

2 Willett, J., (1959), p.85

3 Brecht, B., (1957), p.193

4 Stavrides is referring to this passage from Plutarch in order to relate man’s mimetic adaptive behaviour to the octopus’ attitude. Like the clever octopus, man learns how to act in order to merge his appearance with the social background. Stavrides, S., (2002), p.158

5 Smith, (1984), p.3

6 Caillois, R., (1935), p.30

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p.20

9 Ibid., p.17

10 Ibid.

11 Benjamin, W., p.130

12 Taussig, M., (1993), p.20


14 Taussig, M., (1993), p.21

15 From the essay Aristotle on Mimēsis by Paul Woodruff, found in the Essays on Aristotle’s Poetics edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rotry, 1992, pp.73

16 Ibid, p.77


18 Woodruff, P., (1992), p.77


21 Ibid., p.14. This distinction derives from Plato’s writings; he proposed these three manners in which artistic practices “suggest forms of community”.

22 Ibid., p.42

23 Ibid., p.44

24 In the second part of this research I analyse several of these references, ranging from Bertolt Brecht to Judith Butler and Josette Féral. In this instance I draw a conclusion that derives from the reading of this literature in respect to theatricality.

25 In the text I mention two of these theme parks, “The Window of the World” in Shenzhen and “The World Park” in Beijing. There are several other similar parks throughout China, but these two represent the most complete representations of the world, as they include monuments from the five continents. Some other examples of this trend are the series of amusement parks called “Happy Valley”; four of them are located in Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. For more information see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Amusement_parks_in_Chinan or in Davis, E., (2005), pp.819-820.

26 Jia, Z.,(2004)


28 Ibid., p.180
Sometimes scholars of theatrical theory refer to the A-effect as E-effect, which stands for estrangement-effect, or as V-effect which results from the German word ‘Verfremdung’ that means alienation. John Willet mentions that the interpretations in English or French – dépaysement, étrangement, distanciation- cannot express the German notion of ‘Verfremdung’. He adds that both the words ‘Verfremdung’ and ‘Effekt’ have a single purpose: “to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even what he has so far taken for granted.”(Willet, J., 1977, p.177)

In the following chapter (2nd) I will analyse extensively this pattern of binary logic that rules our contemporary communities. Here I use this notion as a given, general situation; the relation subject – object constitutes a kind of a sub-type of the binary.

Often academics use the term cogito, as a kind of abbreviation for “Cogito Ergo sum”. Cogito includes the notion of the Cartesian subject, of the thinking thing.

Heidegger, M., (1962) Being and Time
Ricoeur, P., (1989) pp.221, 222
Ibid., p.222
Heidegger, M., (1962), p.27
Ricoeur, P., (1989) p.219
Ibid.
Ibid., p.145
Ricoeur, P., (1989) p.236
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., p.237
70 Žižek, S., (2006), p.17
71 Žižek, S., (1992), p.126
Brechtian dramaturgy made a proposition, which was not only pertinent to theatrical practice but to the general comprehension of the human condition: man has to constantly re-conceive and re-produce their idea of being, since nothing is a given, final condition but rather everything comprises an ever-changing ensemble. In this respect Brecht's approach could be applied to several other fields, such as architecture. Nonetheless one may ask why is it necessary to transfer Brechtian methodology from theatrical to architectural theory and practice? Also, what would that transfer involve and how would it formulate thinking and criticism for architectural affairs? Lastly, why is it significant to identify the contemporary usefulness of Brechtian logic, and how is this related to the current socioeconomic condition? In the two parts of chapter two, I will respond to these questions, while demonstrating the correspondences and analogies between Brechtian logic and the architectural domain. As the architectural domain unfolds so will the reasons for the specific Brechtian ‘adaptation’ would be more apparent.
The first section of this chapter “Starting point: the dyadic mechanism and the simulation of normality”, reveals how Brechtian logic becomes pertinent to the current production of space and the generic formulation of society. This is only possible when we bear in mind the way in which Brecht treated antagonistic couplets within theatre, such as object-subject, spectator-actor, reality-fiction, and so on. He altered the traditional interaction between two parts of a dyad by proposing a sort of reversibility: actor may become spectator and, in turn, spectator may take the actor position. These alterations were not literal exchanges of positions, but they rather comprised metaphorical conditions. For instance, when Brecht was longing for the activation of the spectator’s intellect throughout a theatrical performance, he was actually urging the spectator to take one a more actor-like attitude; the fact that the spectator was adopting an active position towards any theatrical performance was opposing the age-old, stable, and passive attitude within traditional theatre. Brecht’s treatment of couplets is completely linked to his general appraisal of the human condition; it followed his denial of a deterministic and clear-cut definition of the human in general. Therefore, in Brechtian logic, spectator and actor, as cases of the human conditions, could not occupy fixed and final positions in the course of a theatrical performance, but instead they would both shuttle between different behavioural points. This proposition of a constant movement between points within a dyad seems to correspond to the contemporary notion of “capsular civilisation”. Lieven De Cauter introduced the term while highlighting that antagonistic couplets, such as ‘in-out’ or ‘centre-periphery’, underpinned the present-day culture of enclosure. The correspondence between Brechtian logic and De Cauter’s theory is based upon the hypothesis that Brecht’s proposition could respond to present-day culture, by actually proposing the abandonment of rigid binary concepts. In this section I seek to highlight how Brechtian propositions are related to the contemporary problematic.

Then, in the second section of chapter two “Suburban domesticity: the ‘good’, the ‘bad’, and the ‘in-between’”, I endeavour to show how suburbanism emerged as a wholly ‘good’ condition of living at the end of eighteenth century, while acquiring an exclusively ‘bad’ reputation in the mid-twentieth century, post-second-world-war era. This comparison enables us to grasp the notion of suburbia on the one hand as a highly contradictory condition of living, but at the same time to comprehend its transformation from the ‘good’ part to the ‘bad’ one within the dyad, ‘urban-suburban’. In this section I trace the critical literature concerning suburbia, from the bourgeois’ vision for another lifestyle beyond the urban core, to the negative appraisal of suburban life as a promoter of individualism and conformism, and eventually I introduce three recent pieces of research presenting suburbia as an actual condition of living that can also promote creative and collective initiatives. These case studies sought to depict the suburban condition not as a ‘bad’ or ‘good’ lifestyle, but rather as an in-between situation. In so doing, these scholars denied the dualism of the pair ‘good-bad’, while applying a Brechtian-like
methodology throughout their work; a constant ‘movement’ between positions derives from the Brechtian treatment of the dyadic mechanism. Nonetheless, the aim is not to neutralise suburbia or even defend it against its negative appraisal, but rather to demonstrate that alternative methods of approaching a living condition are possible. Beyond the rigid methodology of preserving a sort of a dualism, I attempt to show that architectural research could apply Brecht’s proposition of a constant shuttling between different points.
Starting point: the dyadic mechanism and the simulation of normality

In his attempt to theorise the term “capsular civilisation,” De Cauter provides an analysis of how “the idea of catastrophe” is pertinent to the contemporary “concept of progress.” Owing to over-development in various fields, to the simultaneous acceleration of technology, to the over-accumulation of information as knowledge, and to the growth of population, “the world is out of hand” and consequently “catastrophe is becoming permanent.” In other words, the excess of progress or development results in an uncontrollable situation, which in turn creates a sort of an impasse for the proposition of any viable solutions. Any attempt to solve this impasse reveals certain difficulties or creates even more long-term catastrophes. For instance when one is proposing to discontinue the production of nuclear energy, which covers a certain amount of energy needs but “entails a significant risk of catastrophe,” one encounters a series of alternative solutions that could potentially become equally catastrophic. A shift to weather-dependent energy production methods, which “can provide at most 10 to 20 per cent of our ever-rising energy consumption,” may result in a decrease in growth and eventually create a new problem: “the aforementioned synchronicity of population growth and an ageing population.” In this sense he foresees that in the near future we should develop a mechanism for “disaster management,” in order not to avoid catastrophes but instead to somehow organise them and in a way minimize their consequences.
However, as well as establishing this near-future mechanism, he refers to how politics, as well as each person individually, responds to the ‘transformation’ of progress into catastrophe, within contemporary society. He introduces the term “ostrich politics,” which operates “from the planetary level to the small-scale everyday life,” while adding that the antagonism between our moral self and our practical self dominates our daily routine. We are more and more eager to protect our natural surroundings, on a daily basis, through the participation in environmental causes, even if this participation is simply to sign a petition form or to buy organic products, but on the other hand we may acquire two cars. This trend of eliminating our guilt through environmental-friendly consumption is suggestive of our need to “repress our fear: fear of insecurity, of increasing violence, of alienation through multiculturalization.” At the same time we conceive of the catastrophic events “as occasional dysfunctions”, which in turn are easily fixable. Thus we not only ignore the significance of the catastrophes as interrelated conditions, but we also try to respond, by actually practising ‘ostrich politics’ and rely solely on ‘ethical’ consumption.

Similarly Slavoj Žižek in his 2009 essay “Architectural Parallax: Spandrels and Other Phenomena of Class Struggle” attempts to situate ‘ethical’ consumption within the general “spirit” of current capitalism. In order to communicate his concept of “cultural capitalism,” he juxtaposes the Lacanian triad, real-symbolic-imaginary, with the evolution of consumption. He argues that there is primarily the “Real” consumption of “direct utility”; we have to buy good, healthy food to satisfy our biological needs. Then there is the “Symbolic” consumption that mainly refers to our status; certain brand-products signal our status and communicate to the others what our ‘position’ is within consumerist society. The third type is “Imaginary” consumption that perhaps includes both “real” and “symbolic” consumption values, but it can also promote “a pleasurable and meaningful experience.” This consumption model refers mainly to the more recent consumerist tendency of buying products that facilitate ethical or environmental causes: the so-called fair-trade commodities that guarantee “a better deal for Third World Producers” or even organic food, which is produced without using environmentally harmful pesticides and so on. Žižek adds that this is how capitalism found a way of adjusting “the legacy of ‘68” within everyday consumption; in order to respond to the critique of alienated consumption, we applied the proposition that “only authentic experience matters” to the daily routine of consuming. He then asks why we buy organic products:

The reason is that, by way of buying them, we do not just buy and consume a product – we simultaneously do something meaningful, show our care and global awareness, participate in a large collective project...
In these terms, his theorisation of consumption agrees with De Cauter's thesis, by highlighting that the consumer feels reassured and morally confident that he has accomplished his duty to humanity and to the natural environment. Barbara Kruger paraphrases Descartes' cogito (“I think therefore I am”) as “I buy therefore I am” in her 1987 collage; today, a paraphrasing might read: “I buy, therefore I offer, therefore I am.” This reinterpretation signifies our longing to participate in a “collective project” towards a ‘better world’ and in this sense we situate ourselves on the global level through these ethical practices. What we actually achieve is to partially mask the actual condition of “progress as catastrophe,” while permitting it to still dominate any aspect of life.

Or as De Cauter's puts it: “Business as usual is not just a slogan for our politicians, but also our rule for everyday life.”8 This phrase explicitly expresses that the contemporary practice of simply covering up or refuting the problem is aimed at maintaining the condition as it is; the ‘business-as-usual’ tactic guarantees the continuation of progress, even if it is progress as catastrophe. But what is this condition that we are more and more eager to preserve?

The image of the society of the future is perhaps that of the entropic universe: islands of order and increasing complexity in an ocean of chaos. The entropic in our societies seems to be expanding; normality is increasingly maintained or simulated within islands of order. 9

De Cauter shapes an image of our future condition, which is aligned with dualistic conception, and with an antagonistic relationship between the interiority of “islands of order” and the openness of the “ocean of chaos”; the rupture within dyads becomes more rigid, it gets deeper. More importantly, the dualism is the key-mechanism in the perpetuation of normality. The problem here is that this normality is simulated. To better understand this statement, we need to follow De Cauter’s theorisation of “capsular civilisation.” What does the notion, “simulation of normality” signify? And which spatial forms could be adequate physical accomplishments of the notion? In addressing these inquiries we not only understand the assumptions of simulated normality and of capsular civilisation, but we also understand how the mechanism of dyads supports and maintains such conditions.

De Cauter calls “capsular civilisation” the civilisation that becomes self-referential, deterministic and has emerged through intensive urbanisation, the proliferation of advanced technologies, and “especially under the pressure of the dualization of our society [...] abandonment of the outside space and seclusion, often out of necessity, in protected enclaves.”10 Even if his position seems to be drawn from science-fiction, it is pertinent to contemporary physical ensembles such as gated communities, the mall, the theme park, or even the atrium that are material equivalents of his thesis. Encapsulation creates an artificial ambiance that insistently attempts to maintain a degree of normality, while promoting individualisation
and privatisation. This kind of interiority is opposed to a more and more chaotic ‘outside’ that partially supports the tendency of enclosure; an uncontrollable ‘out’ creates a greater need to control the ‘in’ features and more importantly to establish a more effective and rigid boundary between these antagonistic conditions.

An adequate spatial construction that explicitly materialises this sort of high internal artificiality in opposition to the ‘chaotic’ outside is the indoor ski slope in Dubai. An impressive construction, completed in 2005, which covers 22,500 square meters of indoor ski area, The efficient insulation system means that the “Ski Dubai” ensemble manages to maintain a temperature of -1 °C during the day and -6 °C at night, while the average temperatures of the outside range from 33 to 40 °C in the period of May-October. Even if it is a straight-forward example, meaning that it literally creates a totally opposite to the outdoor ambiance, it still demonstrates all the attributes of an enclave in De Cauter’s terminology; it is self-referential with no cultural or environmental connection to the Muslim tradition of the United Arab Emirates, it simulates mimetically the physical skiing resorts of central Europe (within “Ski Dubai” one can dine in the St. Moritz-themed cafe and experience a “real cosy mountain ski lodge”11), it certainly augments the gap between in and out, while maintaining a binary spatial couplet. In this case ‘normality’ is shaped through a construction system totally foreign to the native culture, in order not to sustain an actual condition but rather to celebrate human’s power over the natural surroundings. This stretching of the structural characteristics of the internal to the far opposite limit of the external ambiance ensues from a totally absurd base, which has converted Dubai from a classical Muslim emirate to the construction hub of star-architecture and technologically unique ensembles. “Ski Dubai” is reminiscent of the amusement parks in China: both constructions follow a similar pattern of mimetically providing services culturally and environmentally detached from the native context. Within such conditions, the occupant’s attitude needs to adjust to simply conceive the whole edifice as a given and final situation. Any attempt to question the initial decisions for constructing such complexes or even any attempt of identifying the absurdity within them may automatically shatter their esoteric, vital structure.

At this point it is necessary to provide a sort of a metaphor, in order to relate all these theorisations and their spatial equivalents to a Brechtian methodology: these promoters of dualism resemble pre-Brechtian, “orthodox” theatre. Both the “Ski Dubai”-like constructions and “orthodox theatre” sought to provide a clear-cut and absolute definition of the human being and its surroundings, while endeavouring to create and maintain a kind of ‘normality’. It is as if we have transferred rigidity from the theatrical production to the spatial one and therefore the human remains trapped within a high artificiality. What is integral to the promoters of dualism, so as to convince us that this is the only possible solution, is the lack of abstraction. For instance, “Ski Dubai” recreates the ambiance of St.Moritz ski resort through a detailed
‘copy-paste’ tactic and eventually wishes to persuade us it is the ‘real-thing’. Without any abstraction the viewer’s intellect remains passive, while accepting anything as a definite, non-changeable condition. Therefore, just as Brecht sought to respond to the rigid repetitiveness inherent in the “orthodox theatre,” here the proposition follows Brechtian guidelines by juxtaposing definitive dualism with a more flexible treatment of dyads. In what follows the suburban lifestyle serves as the model through which I demonstrate how this sort of treatment may function.
Throughout a study of suburbanism one encounters an extensive historiographic and sociological literature, which is developed, up to a point, independently of urban theory; the study of suburbanism follows the methodologies of urban analyses, yet structures its own theoretical field. Scholars and theoreticians, in history and sociology, among other things sought to enumerate aspects of suburban living, as well as to identify the criterions for a possible typology of the suburbs. For a more precise study of sububria, one has to respond to specific inquiries, to set up a kind of limitation, while selecting the context and period of reference. Is there a common pattern of suburban development globally? Could we determine the common points between different suburban developments? Are there national particularities that should be mentioned? All these questions are suggestive of a need to theorize suburbia, not as a seemingly homogeneous condition, but as a pragmatic way of living with various applications. Therefore, here the approach to suburbia is limited by the consideration of three parameters: the type of suburb, the national context, and the chronological period.
Clearly attempts at typifying suburbs wish to disclose suburban living as a diverse condition. For instance, the sociologist David Thorns in his 1972 work “Suburbia” suggests a possible, accurate methodology for determining the typology of suburbs. In particular he notes that a typology based upon one criterion is inaccurate, hence he has chosen to form a typology based upon three parameters: type of development, social class, and dominant activity. He concludes with eight types of suburbs within the British-American context at the beginning of the 1970s (see table 1). The first one “is often seen as the archetype of suburbia”\(^\text{12}\): middle-class planned residential development. He adds:

The structure of this type of suburb is the formally laid-out estate or tract suburb, with its long rows of uniformity built and identically (or nearly so) designed semi-detached and occasionally detached houses, with their neat lawns and gardens.\(^\text{13}\)

As well as the physical structure of the suburbs, a series of other aspects shaped this kind of suburb. The inhabitants of this suburb have chosen this type, in contrast to those dwelling in the working-class planned industrial developments: "in Britain, […] most working-class suburbs have been the product of local authority re-housing and overspill schemes. This means that for many of the residents the move to the suburbs was not a planned one voluntarily enter into it."\(^\text{14}\) On the contrary, the middle-class inhabitants moved to the exclusively residential suburb ‘voluntarily’, both in Britain and the United States. Nonetheless, the fact that there was not a formal authority forcing people into that kind of suburban living, does not suggest that suburbanites chose it independently of any other system. The procedure for choosing the dormitory-like suburb is linked to a complex set of reasons, which are partially connected to state provision and thus to a system urging people towards suburbia. The fact that dwellers prefer this model of living is linked to what sociologists call “the aspiration of suburbia” and, more importantly, to the growth of suburbia as a myth. The rest of the typologies are shown in table 1. In this part of the research the analysis examines the first type of suburb, which is the dominant model of suburban inhabitance and in consequence is situated at the heart of any possible theorization of suburban living.\(^\text{15}\)

Furthermore, the national context, as well as the type of suburb, specifies my reference to suburbs. For this part I focus on suburbia as it was conceived and developed within the Anglo-American context. Once again, the British or American residential suburb consists of the most “classical embodiment” of what we can call 'mass-produced suburban housing.'\(^\text{16}\) Despite this embodiment, even this transatlantic grouping of suburbs is not a homogeneous set, but rather one that includes various sub-types of the exclusively residential suburb.\(^\text{17}\)

In consideration of the third parameter, i.e. the chronological period, I have chosen to focus on two distinct suburbanization periods: the beginning of nineteenth century and the post-
Second World War era. In so doing I attempt to underline the fact that suburbia was an invention of the bourgeoisie at the end of the eighteenth- and the beginning of the nineteenth-century, while demonstrating what was the supporting domestic pattern to the bourgeois vision for a new lifestyle beyond the urban. I juxtapose this with post-war suburbanism in order to show how suburbia, from a relatively 'positive' condition of living, was rendered into an inferior one.

What I endeavour to propose in this part, as in the whole thesis, is a series of methodologies that work in-between conditions; to disclose a method that rejects absolute and deterministic definitions, but rather seeks meaning through a constant 'movement' between definitions. In these terms I use the configuration known as suburbia as a tool for the further support of my main thesis. In so doing I try to reveal, through a Brechtian perspective, that nothing is a given, fixed condition, but rather that everything, even the 'evil' suburb of the post-war period, could potentially include more than one clear-cut negative or positive definition; that things possess a multiplicity of connotations.
### Suburban Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Suburb</th>
<th>Examples of this type†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Middle-class planned residential</td>
<td>Park Forest (USA)(^{14})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Levittown (USA)(^{15})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crestwood Heights (USA)(^{16})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woodford (UK)(^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Militipas (USA)(^{18})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Working-class planned residential</td>
<td>Greenleigh (UK)(^{19})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wigston Magna (UK)(^{20})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becontree (UK)(^{21})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old Harbour (USA)(^{22})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hertfordshire commuter village (UK)(^{23})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nottinghamshire commuter village (UK)(^{24})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berkshire commuter village (UK)(^{25})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westchester &amp; Fairfield County (USA)(^{26})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Middle-class unplanned residential</td>
<td>Liverpool estate (UK)(^{27})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saltaire (UK)(^{28})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bournville (UK)(^{28})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Sunlight (UK)(^{28})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Working-class planned industrial</td>
<td>No studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Working-class unplanned residential</td>
<td>No studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Middle-class planned industrial</td>
<td>West Ham (UK)(^{29})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Middle-class unplanned industrial</td>
<td>Camberwell (UK)(^{30})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Working-class unplanned industrial</td>
<td>Paddington (UK)(^{29})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1  
[Thorns, D., (1972), p.83]
Bourgeois’ suburban visions:
the emergence of new domestic patterns

Robert Fishman in the introduction of his work “Bourgeois utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia” mentions that suburbs, as they developed in the second half of the twentieth century within an Anglophone setting, derived from the “English concept of picturesque,” which conforms with a configuration including both urban and rural elements. Moreover he adds that the American and British bourgeoisie, i.e. the elite of the middle-class during the late eighteenth century, are the protagonists in setting the basis for the more recent, postwar image of the mass-produced suburbs. Bankers and merchants “sought land not only for their commercial and industrial enterprises but also land for their dreams: their vision for the ideal middle-class dream home.” The gradual diminishment of buildable urban areas meant that the peripheral zone offered cheap land for the material accomplishment of the bourgeois utopia for a new way of living beyond the urban core.

The bourgeois pioneers introduced the model for suburbanization, while opening up a whole new field for economic investments. So, apart from re-shaping a collective dream for the ideal residence, the elite added an “economic motive” to this procedure of suburbanization: “The suburban idea raised the possibility that land far beyond the previous range of metropolitan expansion could be transformed immediately from relatively cheap agricultural land to highly profitable building plots.” In this sense, the periphery offered financial opportunities for a new kind of living to emerge. What is of importance in Fishman’s thesis is his proposition that suburbanization was not a smooth evolution of the pre-modern city, but rather an immediate ‘imposition’ of a new kind of living beyond the urban core. It was a cultural creation and “not the automatic fate of the middle class in the mature industrial city.” Fishman approaches suburbanization as an invention of the elite in which the contribution of architects and urban planners was remarkably limited. For the materialization of their vision, merchants and bankers had to promote the value of living outside of the urban range. The transition from the centre to the periphery was only possible through a transformation of urban values.

Therefore this new concept of the ideal model of inhabitation was suggestive of a particular shift within the whole perception of urbanity, a turn that resulted in the negation of the urban. Their aim was to reduce the value of the urban to that of rural living. As David Thorns points out, the age-old opposition between the rural and the urban was substituted for the suburban-urban, while rendering suburbia as a hybrid condition in-between urban and rural.
The fashion of suburban country living with one-family dwelling was set in both the United States and Britain by the wealthy and was adopted by the rising middle class in the nineteenth century. This adoption was facilitated and made respectable by the Romantics who flourished on both sides of the Atlantic, extolling the virtues of rural life.23

Thorns’ proposition agrees with Fishman’s thesis in highlighting the key-role that the middle-class elite had in the process of suburbanization. Additionally he argues that another group, the Romantic Intellectuals, supported the move to the periphery by highlighting the virtues of countryside living. According to Thorns the Romantic Suburbs of the mid-nineteenth century were the first middle to upper class suburbs, in which both the romantics and the elite found their ideal model of living. In these terms the tendency to dwell beyond the urban centre, resulted from both elite’s vision for another lifestyle and romantics’ encouragement for a rural lifestyle. What both groups managed to do was to introduce the elite middle-class to a threefold system concerning inhabitation: domesticity, privacy, and the nuclear family.

According to Chris Couch, Lila Leontidou, and Gerhard Petschel-Held what the elite also invented was supportive of the new lifestyle model of family. This sort of family is the so-called nuclear family, which along with the notions of privacy and domesticity structured mid-19th century suburbia. Urban living was corruptive for the nuclear family; only suburban life could protect the inner structure of such a family. In their work “Urban sprawl in Europe: landscapes, land-use change and policy” they sought to elucidate the origins of suburbia in the United States and Britain. Their theorisation agrees with both Fishman’s and Thorns’ proposition on the key-role of the bourgeoisie in the process of early suburbanisation. Additionally they cite John Ruskin’s thesis, which explicitly defines what the home should not include, in order to be a home.

This is the true nature of home-it is the abode of peace; the protection not only against damage but also against terror, doubt and division. If it does not work that way it is not a home. When the anxiety of the outer world penetrates into it, when an incoherent, uncharitable and hostile world is allowed to cross the threshold by a husband or a wife, it ceases to be a home. It becomes just a part of the outer world, with a roof over it and a fireplace.24

Domesticity to support the nuclear family is thus wedded to a notion of absolute and rigid privacy, which in turn excludes any ‘evil’ element, i.e. any urban, ‘outer’ condition that could potentially harm inner, domestic life. Ruskin’s proposition is somehow totalitarian; it presupposes that the true nature of home as a clear-cut condition should promote peace, certitude and homogeneity, while protecting the family from “terror, doubt and division.” In Ruskin’s terms home should be an integral unit, while blocking the penetration of all the urban elements. When the home does not conform to his logic of interiority, it becomes “just a part of the outer world.” This kind of theorisation sets forth not only what home should exclude, but
also sets up a boundary between the highly introverted dwelling and the corrupting, external, urban surroundings. In this respect home as a family’s only shelter is conceived through division and exclusion.

Additionally the separation of work and family life is another aspect of the bourgeois vision for suburban living. Couch, Leontidou, and Petschel-Held claimed that the home used to facilitate three distinct activities: working, living, and exchanging one’s production. In the nineteenth-century suburb, the home was confined to promoting just the function of living. Therefore, apart from the rupture between outer urban and inner homely, suburbanisation is associated with another separation, that of functions. Suburbs are dependent on the urban core, since the city provides work to the suburbanites, as well as services and commerce. Thus the home-owners – mainly the males—are forced to travel to the city in order to work, but at the same time obliged to discard their urban experience as soon as they cross the threshold, for no urban element could penetrate the home’s privacy.

What we confront throughout the study of suburbia, either in the early steps of suburbanisation or in the more recent mid-twentieth-century suburb, is a structure that emerges through the fusion of urban and rural, but at the same time participates in the opposition ‘urban-suburban.’ The suburban emerged from both the negation of urban values and the engagement with a more rustic tradition within the countryside. Nevertheless, suburbia is not wholly rural or exclusively urban, “it is rather defined by what the city and the country are not.” So even if suburban values, in the Romantics’ or in Ruskin’s terms, opposed urban ones, they still inherently include a notion of urbanity. From that point one could begin to theorise suburbia as a highly contradictory invention. As Roger Silverstone puts it, while quoting Robert Fishman:

Running through many of the critical discussions of the character of suburbia and suburban culture is a strong sense of the paradoxes and contradictions that define it. Suburbia is, quite rightly, seen as both an essential product of urban expansion and at the same time as escape from, and a protest against it (Fishman, 1987: 206).

In this respect any attempt at providing deterministic and inflexible definitions of suburbia would seem inaccurate. Furthermore, an absolute critique that seeks to define suburbia as an inferior, non-productive place seems to be built upon an insecure base, since it accepts a clear-cut, stereotypical representation. The antithetical nature of suburbia demands a treatment that could highlight certain aspects, while leaving some elements fluid or undetermined. This exact contradictory notion of suburbia renders it as an in-between condition, which becomes even more explicit when one focus on the critical discourse that treated suburban life as an inferior lifestyle. In contradiction to the stereotypical negative appraisal of suburbia, recent research has
sought to reveal suburban life as a place of production, instead of a mere place of consumption and passivity. In what follows I introduce a brief introduction to post-war suburbanisation, while referring to the extensive literature that approached suburbia as having a negative impact on whole community living conditions.
Post-war-mass-produced suburbs
and the demonization of suburbia

The values indicated by the bourgeois for a new way of living were also internal aspects of the more recent post-war suburbanisation. Fishman mentions that the main difference between nineteenth-century and twentieth-century suburbia is the fact that the recent suburbanisation was an attempt to provide suburban lifestyle to the majority of the middle-class and even to the working-class, while “the classic nineteenth-century suburb has been restricted to the bourgeois elite alone.” The common points between the two periods of suburbanisation are strongly embedded to the bourgeois’ vision for a new lifestyle, of which aspects are included in the notion of the suburban aspiration within the more recent sociological studies.

The mass-produced, post-war suburb resulted from a complex set of economical factors, while the aspiration to suburbia gave further support to its expansion. Therefore, similarly to the nineteenth-century suburb, two main axes shaped post-war suburbanisation: an economical system and the myth or aspiration to suburbia. One could argue that the first axis refers to the actual causes of suburbanisation, while the second is somehow the social background that supports sprawl. This is a similar condition to the nineteenth-century case, where the bourgeoisie introduced a whole new field for economic exploitation, which in turn was
supported by the Romantic Movement highlighting the virtues of suburbia. In the following brief reference to the financial causes of suburban, post-war sprawl, I refer mainly to the American case. This is owing to the fact that twentieth-century suburban growth was adopted on a larger scale in the United States than in Britain.29

In America the reasons for the so-called “housing boom” are strongly aligned to the exploitation of seemingly cheap land, which appeared as the “alternative to the rising costs and diminishing space in urban areas.”30 According to Thorns there was a significant increase in newly built houses in the suburbs compared to the urban centres in the period after 1945. This shift resulted from both the failure of the city to expand its administrative limits and “economically viable” land ownership. The ‘alternative’ of cheap, peripheral land provided a solid financial basis for the construction of the mass-produced suburbs, while a range of other reasons gave further support to the large-scale expansion of suburbia. Scott Donaldson attempts to enumerate the factors underpinning post-war suburban sprawl: “The expanding highway system, the car ownership, the baby boom of the forties, and most important of all, the availability of cheap land, cheap homes, and cheap financing.”31 The final factor refers to the low-rate loans that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) issued to new homebuyers and to the mortgages provided by the Veterans’ Association to ex-servicemen with “low rates of interest and long repayment periods.”32 For Thorns post-war suburbanization would not be possible without these state-provision measures. The rest of the factors are somehow supportive mechanisms for the further expansion of suburbia and in this sense they are not causal features of large-scale suburbanization. As well as the pragmatic conditions shaping suburbia, the notion of the suburban myth or of suburban aspiration was associated with the physical suburbanization.

In other words the suburban myth was supportive of suburban sprawl apparatus. As Thorns claims, the suburban myth was developed simultaneously with the physical growth of suburbia during the 1950s and 1960s.33 In this way Thorns notes that the suburban way of life is an assemblage of actual conditions and of fantasy. His aim was to identify the imaginary elements that intervene in the definition of suburban life and in turn remove them, in order for a more pragmatic approach of suburbia to be made possible. His sociological study of actual suburban conditions revealed a gap between the popular, stereotypical beliefs and the realistic behaviour of suburbanites. He provides a list of the mythical elements of British and American middle-class suburbs, while attempting to prove that some of these elements do not correspond with actual suburban attitudes and conditions. But, prior to the analysis of Thorn’s assumption of the gap between myth and pragmatic conditions, it is necessary to understand, on the one hand, the features of the suburban aspiration and, on the other, the negative appraisal of the suburban lifestyle.
Marc Clapson, in his attempt to define suburban aspiration, argues that it is actually a threefold system. Its first characteristic is the notion of “anti-urbanism,” which is described as a reaction to the overcrowded and unhealthy city. This sort of reaction results in the negation of urban living, while directing people to engage with the values of countryside living. The second parameter defining suburban aspiration is the desire for a detached or a semi-detached home with a garden: “[...] the image and appeal of the ‘traditional’ home, bedecked with at least a few ‘fake rustic’ motifs, became culturally pervasive in both England and the United States.”34 The last part is the suburb itself, as the most close-to-nature type of living. This kind of theorisation of the suburban ‘ambition’ links the post-war suburban expansion to its antecedent prototype, the nineteenth century model. However despite the superficial resemblance between the values of the two periods of suburbanisation, one still ought not to accept that the bourgeoisie concept was applied unchanged in the realisation of mid-twentieth-century suburbia. For instance, Clapson highlights that post-war suburbanites did not desire to leave the urban centre so much as to become homeowners. Their longing for a home and the accompanying garden seemed to be the major factor for the move to the periphery.35 Suburbanites did not deny urban values, as Ruskin would have urged them to, but rather they envisaged a suburban house of their own; the specific domestic type was at the heart of the tendency to inhabit the periphery during the post-war period.

The proliferation of similar, standardised, domestic units shaped the configuration of the mass-produced suburbs. The units were situated in similar distances from each other and from the street, while forming symmetrical or geometrical patterns; in grids, in single rows, or even in wedges suburban residences occupied large, peripheral areas. This physical homogeneity was at the heart of any criticism of the passive, non-productive character of suburban life. Additionally the fact that, initially, only middle-class white families inhabited the suburbs gave further reason for theoreticians to attack suburbia. Consequently, critics focused on the inferior nature of suburbia, as a result of physical and behavioural homogeneity. But was that attack accurate? Could it be possible that this notion of homogeneity derives from a superficial study of what pragmatic, suburban life is? Prior to any attempt of answer these questions, I introduce a brief analysis of the main points of such a criticism; the work of sociologists, historians as well as Dan Graham’s artistic commentary may highlight this approach.

The following passage is taken from Lewis Mumford’s 1961 work “The City in History” and summarises how the post-war suburban lifestyle was conceived within the mainstream, negative critique.

In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same age group,
witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mould, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible.36

For Mumford the notion of homogeneity characterises several features of suburban life. The architectural similarity is just one part of a generic, homogeneous pattern of living. In this criticism, suburbia was confined to representing an inferior, non-productive condition, which rendered its inhabitants into passive consumers. He describes suburban life as a kind of internment, “from which escape is impossible.” It is as if suburbanites were forced to experience almost identical lifestyles. Similar positions are found in the works of urban historians like Kenneth T. Jackson, William H. Whyte, and John Palen37, of feminists like Betty Friedan, who condemned suburbs for promoting, among other things, the “low-brow new media like television” and encouraging “the boredom of the over-educated housewife.” 38 Also novelists like John Keats, Vance Packard, and John Cheever contributed to this discourse. Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, while quoting Keats’ novel “Crack in the Picture Window,” claim that he equates suburbia to George Orwell’s “1984,” while for him suburban life was promoting sexism and anticommunism.

Marc Clapson attempted to enumerate the defects of suburbia deriving from that critical literature, while claiming that this critique was focusing mainly on the post-war rise of suburbia. Thus, another negative appraisal has been the dependency of suburbanisation on the automobile, which resulted in an environmentally unsustainable model of living. Subsequently, the suburban home was criticised for encouraging “an atomised nation”: “[The suburbanites] appeared to live lives dominated by commuting patterns, by status competition, and by corporate and conservative values.”39 Furthermore, he adds that suburban life was also criticised for racial and ethnic exclusiveness; in particular North American suburbs have been characterised as “wholly white.” 40 Furthermore, the following examples contribute to the negative appraisal of suburbia from an artistic perspective.

Two works by Dan Graham set forth some of the negative aspects of suburban living. The first one is a series of photographs called “Homes for America,” published in the journal Arts Magazine on December 1966- January 1967. It was an attempt to represent American, mass suburbanization as a highly automatic, industrial procedure, while comparing the suburban, domestic unit to a serial product. In so doing, Graham endeavoured to develop a commentary on the standardized design of the suburban dwelling and the respective homogeneous lifestyle.

The photographs and the text are separate parts of a two-dimensional, schematic grid perspective system. The photographs correlate to the lists and columns of serial documentation and both ‘represent’ the serial logic of the housing developments which the article is about.41
The photographic series accompanied by a textual commentary constructs a two-dimensional grid, which reflects the actual, physical arrangement of the suburbs. He also underpins the use of the long perspective in suburban design representation to highlight the notion of serial production.

The second example is the “Alteration to a suburban house” of 1968. In order to dismantle the structure of the suburban house, Graham has primarily accepted that such a type of inhabitation is ascribed upon a system of dyads: ‘in-out’, ‘public-private’, and ‘centre-periphery’. More importantly his perspective is engaging with the popular beliefs that conceive suburbia as a highly introverted, self-referential, and culturally non-productive place. In this sense the suburban home as an introverted space, sets a concrete limit between inside and outside. He decides to remove the front façade and replace it with a glass surface, while positioning a mirror inside the house in parallel to the front façade:

As the mirror faces the glass façade and the street, it reflects not only the house’s interior but also the street and the environment outside the house. The reflected images of the facades of the two houses opposite the cut-away ‘fill-in’ the missing façade.42

Beatriz Colomina in her essay “Double Exposure: Alterations to a Suburban House” claims that “the passer-by is really exposed in the suburbs, subjected to all the hidden eyes behind every window.”43 In the case of Graham’s model, the dweller is still observing the pedestrian, while becoming an object of observation himself. Additionally, because of the mirror surface the dweller becomes an object of his own surveillance. In these terms he manages to reverse the established relation between the object and subject of observation; the dwellers lose their superior, observational position. Graham’s treatment of suburban domesticity not only destroys the integral, domestic configuration, but also more importantly proposes a technique for
'shaping' the area in-between inside and outside. By substituting the picture window with the glass surface, he unifies optically two distinct parts of the couplet in-out. But is his proposition a commentary on what the suburban house is lacking or on what the suburban house already facilitates, i.e. the blurring of a concrete limit? In the last part of this section I seek to identify those aspects that being already visible, situate suburbia and the suburban house as potential tools for similar blurring methods.

Overall the main body of critical literature on suburbia constructed an opposition to the bourgeois’ vision of a healthy countryside living configuration. More importantly the criticism resulted in the demonization of suburbia. Following the mainstream critique and popular beliefs, suburbia was transformed from the totally ‘good’, from the romantic or bourgeois perspective, into exclusively ‘evil.’ This transformation is suggestive of a particular shift: from the negation of urban values to the disapproval of suburbia. So, it is as if the suburban substituted with the urban within a general critique of human living. As Donaldson puts it in his 1969 work “The suburban Myth”:

Intellectuals turned upon the suburbs, where once they had attacked the city for robbing America of its agrarian dream, now they zeroed in on the suburbs, which had betrayed their fondest hopes for a 20th century restoration of the Jeffersonian ideal.44

In these terms the failures of suburbia to promote a new culture through the adoption of rural values, provoked an extensive attack. In the dyad ‘suburban-urban’, the urban used to stand for the negative, the evil value in mid-nineteenth-century literature. Whereas, after almost a century the urban re-gained a positive position for human social values, the suburban was now the ‘evil’ part of the dyad. If we bear in mind Thorns’ assumption of the gap between the myth of suburbia and its pragmatic experience, we could comprehend that the critique was based upon a constant treatment of suburban life as a seemingly repetitive, homogeneous pattern without variations. For Thorns when the critics underpin suburbia as this inferior condition, they simultaneously omit to consider “the actual facts and conditions of urban living, preferring to rely on the more impressionistic and unreliable accounts like Keats’s book than on a careful investigation of the suburb itself.”45 For instance, when he enumerates the several features of the suburban myth, he focuses on number four of his list: “4. Great importance was attached to the possession of status symbols.”46 According to his survey findings, he argues that suburbanites desire to improve their home primarily because they longed to add variety in their surroundings and not because they exclusively attempt to “keep up with the Joneses.”47 Adversely to the popular, common beliefs, Thorns attempts to dismantle the myth of suburbia, not through an absolute beautification of the suburban condition, but rather by opposing an alternative to the finitude of criticism thesis, while examining suburbia as a vivid, pragmatic,
non-passive condition. In what follows I approach three recent researches, which attempt to re-conceive suburbia beyond the mainstream critique. The aim then is not to merely reduce the negative appraisal of suburbia, or to even neutralize the suburban myth, but rather to reveal three methods of working in an area in-between superficially opposing conditions; suburbia is just a field for activating such ‘in-between’ methods.
Three methods for the activation of
A-effect technique

In the introduction to her book “Welcome to the dream house: popular media and post-war suburbs”, Lynn Spigel discusses two different critical positions towards the reciprocal relation of the private space of the home and the public field of media. One set of critics suggest that the privatisation of leisure, in the form of television, internet, computer-games and the like, results in rendering active citizens into “passive consumers.” Whereas other critics decry all sorts of media that penetrate into the private space of home, as, for them, these media corrupt family values. Interestingly Spigel mentions that whether they are concerned with the impact of media-home relation to public life or to the family values, they both perceive home and the “outside world” as “antithetical spheres of action.” She then adds that this separation of spheres is a historical phenomenon as well as “a socially and politically motivated way of organising social space, rather than a response to universal human needs.”

Her study focuses in various leisure-related activities that ‘penetrate’ the private sphere of the suburban home. Eventually her aim is to disassemble the distinction between the public and private sphere. In particular she argues that during the post-war formation of suburbia there was a growing interest in home crafts: filmmaking, painting, electronics etc. This do-it-yourself tendency was suggestive of a production within home and it was highly supported by the
products of media, such as television shows or even the Barbie doll. In this respect these activities enabled the homeowner to become an active citizen instead of a “passive consumer,” while transforming the corrupting media into a positive influence for the family life. Furthermore, she points out that media, especially television, and the mass-produced suburb in the post-war America reinforced one another.

Television and suburbs are both engineered spaces, designed and planned by people who are engaged in giving material reality to wider cultural belief systems. [...] they are spaces (whether material or electronic) in which people make sense of their social relationships to each other, their communities, their nation, and the world at large.50

Therefore physical and virtual space structured a common image of what suburban life is and of what suburban life stands for. In this sense the public and private sphere cooperate for a common configuration of suburbia, which further supports Spigel’s attempt at breaking the rupture between home and media. In short, Spigel accepts as a historical phenomenon the binary logic that shaped post-war, suburban life and society in general. Nonetheless she endeavours to convey the paradoxical nature of such a phenomenon: public and private spheres are co-dependent. This co-dependency entails that the ideology of dyads (such as ‘in-out,’ ‘public-private,’ ‘centre-periphery’) is not inherently a part of our societies, but rather an engineered system that attempts to ‘explain’ in a deterministic way any ensemble, either material or virtual. In this respect the mainstream criticism supported by various sociologists, historians, novelists, or even artists, accepts this age-old engineered mechanism of dyads, since they have simply conceived suburbia as a part of an oppositional dyad: urban-suburban.

Another work by sociologists Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, “Picture windows: how the suburbs happened,” endeavoured to separate suburbia from its inferior connotations. As they mention: “Suburbia phobia remains an intellectual cliché, the mantra of the urban refugee against the commercial culture of H.L.Mecken’s ‘booboisie’. In the mass exodus of 1940s and 1950s this theme gathered steam, even though the class composition of those moving changed.”51 What they attempted was not exactly a blurring of the limit between urban and suburban, as Spigel did, but they proposed another method for breaking a dyad, by questioning the definition of one part of a couplet. To this end they conducted surveys in specific American suburbs, in order to reveal a more pragmatic suburban attitude in contrast to its popular, negative connotations. Initially they decided to reject “the antisuburban snobbery” and in so doing they questioned suburban behaviour as ‘evil’ per se in the ‘urban-suburban’ couplet. To question this criticism is to formulate a major thesis: to re-conceive suburbia and in consequence challenge the basis of the respective, engineered opposition. But again the aim is not to announce an absolute ‘truth’, or even to attempt to shape a realistic configuration of what suburbia really is. Their aim was to highlight the points of a suburban historiography beyond the
stereotypical positions of critical literature. They focused on the myth asserting suburbia as a politically conservative area:

We uncovered signposts dim to us: community activism and political battles in Levittown, women changing their lives due to the liberation movement, struggles over integration in schools and housing, and even suburban race riots.52

These “dim signposts” are perhaps not a generalised practice within suburban life, but they are suggestive of political diversity. These sociological findings are opposed to the mainstream thesis, which considers suburbanites as exclusively right-wing conservatives.53 This kind of suggestion, similar to David Thorns’ position, objected to the criticism that has flattened the particularities of suburban behaviour into one deterministic group based on an abstracted version of the several variations of suburbia. So Baxandall and Ewen, while dismantling the clear-cut definition of suburbia, simultaneously contribute to the formulation of another methodology for breaking the dyadic mechanism, that is, to break the clear-cut, deterministic definition of one part. In this way, what ensues from the questioning and re-definition of one part of the dyad, is the respective re-conception of the dyad itself or even the total rejection of the oppositional couplet. When some of suburbanites’ political positions are pertinent to some of the urbanites’ engagements, then how can one set up a dividing line between the two groups? With commonalities between the opposing parts of the dyad, such as the political orientation, the dyadic mechanism becomes weaker.

From another perspective, Beatriz Colomina assembled the work of a group of doctoral candidates in the School of Architecture at Princeton University, between the years 2000, 2002 under the title: “Cold war hothouses: inventing postwar culture, from cockpit to playboy.” Colomina and the young scholars managed to ‘interpret’ suburbia through a methodology based on gathering suburban fragments. It was a sort of archaeological survey that was eager to reveal not simply the architectural, domestic practices of the Cold War era, but also to assert that this era “was a hothouse, breeding new species of space, a new organisational matrix.”54 What they attempted to communicate was the concept that the Cold War certainly had an effect on domesticity, and that a new kind of domesticity emerged. Nonetheless, for them, the emerging domesticity and the general transformations of space were not simply products of architectural innovations, but instead resulted from the intervention of a new series of objects and gadgets within everyday life: TV sets, toys, appliances, plastics, fast food, picture windows, bomb shelters etc. They then transferred their study from the small domestic scale to the larger urban scale: drive-in theatres, shopping malls, the national park system and so on. Describing this transition of the research from private to public space, Colomina adds: “Soon we realised that scales had become conflated, that everything in the postwar age was domestic.”55
The outcome of their research ("scales had become conflated") offers a third methodological pattern based upon the idea of working in-between conditions: to reverse the positions of each part within a dyad. Even if it seems that this third pattern includes some of the features of the other two types, i.e. blurring the limit and re-defining one part, it still suggests something else, the reciprocal transfer of points and characteristics from one part to the other. Therefore the main tool of this methodological type is not simply to seek correspondences and commonalities between the two parts, but rather to explicitly re-constitute each part as a condition that inherently embodies aspects of the other part. However, this treatment of the dyadic mechanism is not what the researchers were aiming to achieve; the interchangeability of scales, the concepts of "privatisation of public" and of "publicization of private" represent the main outcomes rather than the methodological guidelines of the research. Even so, this assemblage of academic papers contributes further to my attempt to formulate a kind of typology of methodologies working in-between conditions within suburban theory.

For instance, the seminar paper “Playroom” by David Snyder seeks to demonstrate how “the drive-in cinema turned out to be as domestic a space as the suburban home.” As he argues, suburbanites in the confines of the automobile, acted in the public space of the drive-in cinema as if they were within the private space of their home; housewives snapping peas, babies sleeping, the family eating dinner, while watching the movie. The performance of private acts in public view is suggestive of what Colomina called “the privatisation of public.” In this sense the transfer of domestic activities into the public space of the drive-in alters the relationship private-public, by introducing aspects of one part into the other. A similar condition of interchangeability is found in the national park system and the vast space of the highway. The Beat generation established the highway system as a “small domestic world,” while the national park system offered domestic-like experience of the natural world. In both spatial ensembles suburbanites experienced the outdoors within the automobile, while transferring inner, domestic comfort into their surroundings. In this sense Colomina argues that the main transformation throughout the Cold War era, at the public level, was the introduction of domestic patterns and features into the natural or artificial surroundings.

Similarly, the private, domestic interior had undergone alterations, which resulted in the publicization of private. In particular new technologies, such as plastic utensils, the extensive applications of aluminium, electric appliances etc., inaugurate the formation of new patterns of domesticity. The housewife became a sort of a commander, in the military sense, controlling everything efficiently from the cockpit-like kitchen. The suburban house was a symbol of American freedom, whereas the housewife became the defender of the nation: “Suburban house, equipped with every imaginable appliance, projected the image of the Good Life, of the lifestyle of prosperity and excess that was the main weapon on the Cold War.” Therefore the
Publicization of the private is achieved through the transfer of suburban domesticity into the field of political debates, and thus the home is conceived as an example of the move from internal to public affairs.

Colomina and the group of doctoral candidates attempted to confront post-war suburbia through a constant questioning of the dyads, such as ‘public-private’ or ‘in-out’, and in turn they argued that what Cold War culture promoted was the blurring of the distinction between “work and play, business and entertainment, appliances and toy, buildings and dollhouses.”

In short, the first study by Spigel, in order to elaborate the ‘media-suburbia’ opposition, introduces the concept of equating the two parts of the particular dyad, by suggesting that both fields have similar ends towards domesticity. Baxandall and Ewen, throughout their study of the ‘urban-suburban’ dyad, question one part of the opposition; consequently they propose the re-definition of the one part and the following re-conception of the second part within any dyad. The third example elaborating the ‘public-private’ dyad, by Colomina and the doctoral candidates, introduces the idea of reversing the positions of the parts within an opposition.

Perhaps what we are more and more eager to support and, in turn, proliferate is binary concepts aimed at maintaining a degree of normality; the simulation of normality, in De Cauter’s terms. Suburbia serves as a model for another way of thinking, which promotes the treatment of any condition beyond the rigid terms and mechanisms of dyads. Even if that seems to be a naïve or utopian proposition, owing to the fact that we cannot sometimes escape the binary and antithetic mentality, the three case studies show that non-binary thinking could be possible.
// NOTES

1 De Cauter, L., (2004), p.100
2 Ibid, p.104
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., p.105
6 Zizek, S., (2009)
7 Kruger, B., (1999), p. 135
8 De Cauter, L., (2004), p.105
9 Ibid., p. 110
10 Ibid.
12 Thorns, D., (1972), p.82
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., p.85
15 Ibid.
17 For instance Mark Clapson in his book “Suburban century” provides an extensive comparative analysis between suburbanisation in the United States and England. This research is suggestive of the fact that American and, in this case, English suburban sprawl do not form a homogeneous group, but rather they comprise distinct conditions. However for the purposes of this research, it was not necessary to refer to these particularities in detail. Rather, I follow the notion of the Anglo-American suburb, which is pertinent to the post-war, mass-produced suburb
18 Fishman, R., (1987), p.15
19 Ibid, p.9
20 Ibid., p.7
21 Ibid., p.6
22 Thorns, D., (1972), p. 22
23 Thorns, D., (1972), p.65
25 Ibid., p.8
28 Fishman, R., (1987), p. 10
29 Thorns, D., (1972), p.62
32 Thorns, D., (1972), p.67
33 Thorns, D., (1972), p.147
34 Clapson, M., (2003), p.52
35 Ibid., p.63
37 Clapson, M., (2003), p.6
39 Clapson, M., (2003), p.6
In Thorns’ list of the aspects shaping the suburban myth, number seven highlights the estimated political orientation of suburbanites: “7. Suburbs were politically conservative.” (Thorns, 1972:150). Moreover, Marc Clapson argues that a one-dimensional perspective towards suburban politics characterised debates among sociologists and commentators throughout the 1950s and 1980s. While quoting Stuart Blumin, he adds: “[...] it is often seen that the 1980s resemble the 1950s in their political conservatism and that the suburbs were the major terrain of this conservative mentality.” (Clapson, 2003: 169)
A Benjaminian thesis
on interiority and performativity
within the in-between space

Integral to this part of the study is the formulation of a brief outline of the alterations that the ‘in-out’ dyad has undergone, focusing on the transitional period from the end of the nineteenth century towards the beginning of the twentieth century. Just like the dyad ‘urban-suburban’, the ‘in-out’ antagonism serves as another example for the examination of domestic oppositions. The main aim for this section is to reveal the correspondence between the ‘in-out’ and the ‘chaos-definition’ dyads, while invoking the role of the individual facing the multiplicity of modernity. This individual’s responses to the stimulations embedded in processes of high mechanisation and standardisation is at the heart of any study focusing on modernity and more specifically on the examination of domestic architecture of the respective period. So, man’s perception of the metropolis shapes proportionally the degree of acceptance or rejection of interiority.
In terms of literary references, I follow Walter Benjamin’s approach to the domestic interior as well as his position on the modern experience of urban living. Benjamin manages to explicitly demonstrate the correspondence between the two, that is to say that he provides several paradigms whereby man’s perception of specific cityscapes shapes the respective formation of domesticity, either internally or externally. Consequently, his long-term engagement with cityscape analysis could not be excluded from a study of how ‘in’ and ‘out’ interchange positions, or how they interpenetrate within the respective dyad. Moreover, Benjamin’s theoretical relation to Brecht’s position is another reason for the juxtaposition of his treatise within this research.

In the second section of this part of the thesis, I examine the dyad through the reversal of its constituent parts. Meaning that I focus on the ‘in-out’ and then on the ‘out-in’. This is possible, as what I propose is the alteration of the observational point: the researcher as a dweller perceiving the ‘out’ from inside and then the researcher as the passer-by observing the ‘in’ from the outside. This method enables us to comprehend how the ‘in-between’ limit functions as a space of action. This ‘space of action’ will become more apparent as the analysis unfolds.

Overall, this part aims at providing an insight into the formation of the specific dyad and to propose a method for the examination of the oppositions following Colomina’s method of interchangeable parts within a dyad (see chapter 2, section 4, “Three methods for the activation of A-effect technique”). Additionally, it is a small-scale study, in contrast with the previous chapter where I sought to demonstrate the larger-scale dyad of ‘urban-suburban’.
During the first half of the nineteenth century there was a certain shift in portrait painting: painters situated the models “inside a room in the midst of a family scene”, instead of placing them in front of a picturesque outdoor setting. This change of the painting background followed a generic tendency of that time to ‘abandon’ public space as potentially corrupting for family values. This ‘turning within’ inaugurates the emergence of interiority, as one part of the opposition ‘in-out’. As Richard Sennett points out, in his analysis “The modern fear of exposure,” the generation of 1840 withdrew from city living in order to engage in a more introverted lifestyle. Within the confines of the domestic interior, aristocrats safeguarded their families from the chaotic and corrupting urban conditions. Sennett explicitly connects the emergence of interiority to the age-old controversial dyad ‘chaos-definition’. In particular he notes: “The antagonism felt in the first modern age of industry between the collage of the street and the serial unfolding of the interior reverberates with an ancient opposition between chaos and definition.” According to Sennett the new domestic model was a kind of railroad-apartment: rooms in a line, the access to the rooms provided by a corridor, each room corresponding to a specific activity. This linear design was not only a new spatial domestic pattern, wedded to the division of function, but also, and more importantly, it was a configuration opposed to the fragmented urban landscape. Here, it is necessary to note that despite the common characteristic of fragmentation pertinent to both domestic and urban configurations, the difference between them is relevant to the way in which we perceive each configuration. Within the home one experiences distinct scenes, whereas the cityscape offers simultaneous scenes in a specific period of time.
Therefore the opposition ‘chaos-definition’ corresponds spatially to urban segregation and domestic sequential order respectively; that is to say that the home as “an interior order of unfolding distinct scenes” is opposed to the chaotic urban condition of synchronous stimulations. Integral to his theorisation is this notion of fragmented urban surroundings, which entails a synchronicity of events. Conversely, the home provided separate room-scenes that permitted a clear-cut perception of each room and its particular function. Henceforth, for Sennett, the simultaneous focal points within the city equate the urban to the chaotic. Such conditions of multiplicity inaugurated a particular process of evaluation; one had to assess the stimulus and in turn decide on what one should focus. In these terms, man in the first period of modernity had to ‘respond’ to a series of events or spaces unfolding throughout the cityscape.

Hilde Heynen reveals a similar pattern in reactions towards ‘chaotic’ urbanity in Hermann Bahr’s short essay “The Modern” of 1890, and Georg Simmel’s 1903 essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life”. Both Bahr and Simmel attempted to formulate a thesis regarding the metropolitan condition and the ways in which each individual adapts to the culture of the new urban era. Bahr states that while the world outside has changed and continues to change, man has not yet followed. His proposition, intended to allow man to reconcile with his surroundings and step out of this impasse, is to discard old techniques and beliefs. For him, one’s inward spirit ought to be in harmony with one’s outward conditions and this is only possible by flattening the old limit between in and out, while art, science and religion should formulate a unity. As Heynen comments, Bahr initiated the concept of a new culture wedded to beauty, harmony, and truth, while erasing “the difference between outward appearance and inner spirit.”

Simmel attempted to respond to this problem from another perspective, situating man and metropolitan condition at the two ends of an oppositional dyad. As with Sennett’s thesis, Simmel stressed that the emerging urbanity of his era was a condition proliferating “constantly changing stimuli with which every individual is bombarded.” Even if Simmel refers to a later period than that discussed by Sennett, the two describe in similar terms the antagonism between modern man and the urban condition. In contrast to Bahr’s rhetoric, Simmel denies the unification of art, science and religion within a whole, while arguing that the establishment of that “synthetic ideal” is in stark contrast with the social reality. For him the rational relations within the metropolis resembled “the money economy logic,” where “objects derive their value not from their inherent quality, but from their quantitative market value.” This reduction of the qualitative in favour of the quantitative characteristics also applies to the human condition, so long as individuals are replaced by numbers. Another aspect of his thesis is the increasing cleavage between objective and subjective spirit. In particular he estimates that the individual cannot absorb or perceive the objective culture developed in “institutional buildings and educational organisations, in infrastructures and administrative bodies,” and consequently the
rupture between “objective and subjective spirit” will still dominate everyday life within the metropolis.

Heynen explicitly underscores the significance of Simmel’s position regarding the difficulties inherent in metropolitan life, while connecting the individual to the external world throughout the era of modernity. She wishes to demonstrate in this part of her study “Architecture and Modernity” how critical literature appraised modernity as an experience of rupture. For her, Bahr’s rhetoric is similar to theses supported by the modern movement, while Simmel sought to demonstrate that this concept of rupture was a sort of impasse for modern man. The longing for a unification of either man with his surroundings or of inside with outside, was an integral aspect of the avant-garde doctrine of modernity. The discourse focusing on this concept of connecting the ‘in’ to the ‘out’ condition was embedded in the nineteenth-century practice of actually appraising interiority and individuality. Seen from this perspective, the modern concept of unification developed on the antipode of the romantic configuration of the secure, domestic interior. Nonetheless, what both concepts had in common was their eagerness to suggest a way for man to adjust to the new urban era of industrialisation.

Similarly to the ‘urban-suburban’ dyad, the ‘in-out’ couplet has undergone certain alterations. During the transitional period of the first era of mechanisation in particular, the methodological motives for shaping the particular dyad, under the doctrine of modernity aimed at appraising transparency, unification, purity, authenticity, resulted in actually breaking its esoteric mechanism. Therefore, a certain shift occurred within the oppositional dyad ‘in-out’; as the modern movement reduced the significance of interiority, the ‘inside’ lost its favourable position. The modern movement equated the two parts of the couplet, while reacting to this dominant clear-cut distinction. In order for an individual to reconcile themselves with the new order of things, they had to promote this sort of flattening of the barrier between in and out.
Benjamin’s treatment of the ‘in-out’ dyad

An insight into the pre-modernist as well as to modernist domesticity is given by Walter Benjamin’s commentary on dwelling. Benjamin’s critique of the nineteenth-century romantic interior serves as another attempt to demonstrate his position towards the modern, domestic interior. What is essential throughout the study of Benjamin’s thesis on domesticity is a constant ambivalence dominating his thoughts. As Heynen mentions:

It is unquestionably the case that Benjamin hoped for a revolutionary “reversal” (Umschlag) that would transform the life of the individual and of the collective by achieving a public openness, transparency, and permeability as conditions of everyday life. At the same time, however, as an individual subject he still clung to numerous memories of another sort of dwelling in another sort of time, the dwelling that made security and nurture possible in rooms that wrap round the individual like a shell.

According to her, Benjamin did not oppose the singularity of dwelling to the modern domesticity of “public openness, transparency, and permeability,” but rather he suggested that the house could be at the same time a mechanism for “leaving traces behind” and a living condition as “a revolutionary duty par excellence.” Therefore, inherent to his analysis is the non-definitive character of his assumptions; the house could provide the secure atmosphere of a bourgeois interior, while materialising the living conditions outlined by the modern movement. In other words, Benjamin did not establish a singular position towards the domestic interior or even the modern metropolis: “He [Benjamin] both loved and loathed the city. It is this paradox, this unresolved tension, that lies at the heart of Benjamin’s fascination with the modern metropolis.”

Bearing in mind this constant ambivalence, one can argue that the Benjaminian approach to domesticity could be an indicator of the function of the ‘in-out’ dyad throughout the era of modernity. His writings illustrate the particular shift that occurred and, in a way, his work mirrored the synchronous experience of that shift. Furthermore, the exposure of Benjamin’s shuttling between positions highlights a direct link between Benjamin’s writings and Brecht’s approach to theatre and to being; both endeavoured to treat and analyse the intermediary areas in-between opposing positions. However, for Benjamin ambivalence is not simply a methodological tool within his analysis, but it is also significant and constructive to the comprehension of the built environment.

Graeme Gilloch’s reading of Benjamin’s analysis of the city of Naples in particular demonstrates Benjamin’s longing to highlight the fluidity embedded in the Neapolitan experience of everyday life through a methodology based on the observation of how in and out
interchange positions. Through the example of Naples Benjamin introduces the term *porosity*, which signifies the lack of boundaries between spaces and thus the lack of ruptures and divisions: “[Naples] is an unplanned, chaotic entity which constitutes what one might describe as an organic totality.” Moreover, what characterises Naples is the non-definitive character of each space, which is expressed through the inhabitation of public instead of the private, internal space. This lack of clear-cut limitations between the inside and the outside, and between private and public space, makes possible the reversal of the two parts within the ‘in-out’ dyad. For instance, while observing the everyday life of Neapolitans, Benjamin writes the following passage regarding the inhabitation of external spaces:

How could anyone sleep in such rooms? To be sure there are beds, as many as the room will hold. But even if there are six or seven, there are often twice as many occupants. For this reason one sees children late at night –at twelve, even at two—still in the streets. At midday they then lie sleeping behind a shop counter or on a stairway. This sleep, which both men and women also snatch in shady corners, is not the protected Northern sleep. Here, too, there is the interpenetration of day and night, noise and peace, outer light and inner darkness, street and home.12

In opposition to the Northern pattern of inhabitation within the secured “gloomy box” still conforming to the public-private distinction, in Naples the motif of inhabitation is shaped according to this notion of “interpenetration”. As Gilloch notes, the domestic interior in Berlin or Paris resembles “the site of private fantasy”13, whereas the Neapolitan dwelling is “far less the refuge into which people retreat than the inexhaustible reservoir from which they flood out.”14 This intermingling of spaces, functions, and activities is what shapes the pre-urban landscape of Naples. It is this image that Benjamin offers, while inaugurating the concept of porosity throughout the essay. According to Gilloch, Benjamin managed to align porosity with three other themes significant to his long-term engagement with cityscape analysis: the metropolis as ruin, as labyrinth, and as theatre. These concepts are pertinent to the Neapolitan urban condition; it is a remnant of the old, traditional lifestyle, it disorients the passer-by – a map is of no use within its chaotic structure — and it offers a public stage for the externalisation of private acts. The three notions (ruin, labyrinth, and theatre) and the prevailing conditions of porosity/interpenetration shape an image that is the antithesis of the capitalist, modern metropolis of the North.15

Another study by Benjamin further elucidates his constant endeavour to theorise spatial relations and consequent everyday experience indicated by the prevalence of oppositional dyads. Throughout his essay on the city of Moscow, we encounter a series of commentaries contemplating the spatial transformations of the in-out and public-private dyads.16 Benjamin stayed in the Soviet capital from December 1926 until February 1927, and while initially he had decided to travel to Moscow to visit Asja Lacis, various other reasons triggered his need to
travel there: his belief that Moscow “obliges everyone to choose his stand-point”17, his commission to write three articles about Moscow and the Soviet Union for the journal Die Kreatur, and perhaps most importantly his need to examine and “experience directly the great Communist experiment.”18 Gilloch argues that both his relation to Lacis and his ambivalence towards Soviet society influenced his work on the Muscovite metropolis.

In terms of his observation of spatial and functional couples, what derives from the study of his writings, and certainly from Gilloch’s reading of this particular essay, is that in Moscow the opposite terms do not intermingle as in the case of Neapolitan society, but rather they ‘coexist’, sustaining the dichotomies. For instance, Benjamin underpins the rural character of Moscow, explicitly stating that a “peasant population” inhabits the village-like city. Or as Gilloch puts it: “Lacking a concentrated, visibly distinguishable urban centre, Moscow instead consists of a vast, amorphous sprawl of low-rise structures.”19 To this image of the city Benjamin adds the assumption that Moscow is also “the theatre of the new;” a stage where the scientific experiment of a new societal structure is played out. The ‘new’ and the ‘old’, coexist within the same structure: “wooden staircases give the back of the houses, which look like city buildings from the front, the appearance of Russian farmhouses.”20 The half-concealed coexistence of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ features is different to the porosity of the Neapolitan condition. In Moscow ‘old’ and ‘new’ do not shape an integrated ensemble through interpenetration; instead their juxtaposition further highlights the rupture within the couplet.

Benjamin treated interior, domestic arrangements that had undergone alterations according to the principles of Soviet society in a similar way. Within the Soviet doctrine collectivism replaced the notions of individuality and privacy. The rule, as noted by Benjamin, was that each person was “entitled by law to thirteen square meters of space”. This regulation, which was intended to abolish bourgeois interiority and, in turn, to enforce an ‘equal’ distribution of domestic space, resulted in shaping sterile and austere dwellings. The Soviet houses were overcrowded, while the homely ambience was reduced. As Gilloch comments: “Living space is accordingly strictly rationed. [...] Space does not merge and interpenetrate as in Naples, but is rigidly delineated and allocated.” Given this rigid definition of domesticity, Muscovites are obliged to perceive interior space as another spatial model promoting the concepts of the collective, the mass, the public. Nonetheless, the imposition of this pattern of inhabitation did not totally abolish the notion of privacy, but rather it activated the reversal of the terms within the dyads ‘in-out’ and ‘public-private’. As Benjamin mentions, Muscovites transformed external spaces, spaces beyond the domestic interior, such as offices, clubs, and streets, into the main sites where private activities were enacted. Therefore, the teleological character of such spatial configurations, along with the mandatory deterioration of individuality, maintained the distinction ‘in-out’ in similar terms to the coexistence of ‘old’ and ‘new’.
Benjamin’s thesis

on history and the experience of urban life

Prior to a discussion of the shift from the approval to the rejection of interiority, I will focus on Benjamin’s attitude towards history in general and his theorisation of the experience of the modern metropolis in particular. These attitudes include two significant points for the study of interiority focusing on the shift from bourgeois to modernist modes of inhabitation. This reciprocity, between the specificity of the interior and Benjamin’s belief in “demythologizing the critical theory of society”\textsuperscript{21} in part reveals his consequent perceptual motif. Benjamin’s examination of urban assemblages is akin to his endeavour to reveal the hidden, the ephemeral, and the marginal elements that shape the cityscape. A constant focus on the fringe of any condition entails the development of a respective observational pattern beyond definitive affirmations (relevant to Benjamin’s ambivalence as mentioned earlier), while adhering to the concept of the dialectical image.

Gilloch provides the term “counter-history”, while supporting the hypothesis that Benjamin’s engagement with “alternative historical practices” sought primarily to approach the modern city as the principal area of bourgeois dominance and secondly to “empower the marginal and the oppressed.”\textsuperscript{22} For a better understanding of the link between Benjamin’s position on history and the concepts of the fragment, the marginal, the ruin, and the hidden, I follow Gilloch’s method of distinguishing three principles embedded in Benjamin’s denial of ‘orthodox’ historiography: the \textit{archaeological}, referring to his longing to preserve what modernity sought to destroy, the \textit{memorial}, concerning the need to oppose critical thinking to the “modern propensity for amnesia,” and the \textit{dialectical}, indicating the notion of the dialectical image as a “mutual recognition and illumination of past and present.”\textsuperscript{23} This threefold approach reveals the reasons for Benjamin’s reluctance to compose a historiography concentrating on the most apparent, straightforward events and, secondly, it not only elucidates his position on modernity,\textsuperscript{24} but it also explains his method of observation and in turn composition. A tangible example of this sort of attitude towards history is Benjamin’s work “The Arcades Project.”

In his essay “Dialectics at a Standstill,” Rolf Tiedemann, editor of the German edition of “The Arcades Project,” compares the fragments of the \textit{Passagen-Werk} to the materials used in the building of a house, while attempting to underline the significance of the blending of the quotations and Benjamin’s own writings. As Tiedemann states, Benjamin sought to compose a body of work in alignment with contemporary methods of representation, namely film, photography, and montage. As a consequence the parallel study of “theory and material” within
each “Convolute” would aid the reader in understanding how each fragment, either quotation or Benjamin’s theory, ‘participates’ in the total project. Tiedemann, quoting Benjamin, aims to clarify further his assumption that the separation of Benjamin’s own work from the interfering material would have rendered any attempt to grasp Benjamin’s theorisation impossible.

In what way is it possible to conjoin a heightened graphicness to the realisation of the Marxist method? The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event.25

As Tiedemann notes, Benjamin initiated this approach to the problem of historical materialism, introducing the montage as a “heightened graphicness” to support any “Marxist method”. The process of formulating “The Arcades Project” through fragmentation and discontinuity ‘forces’ the reader to perceive “the architecture of the whole” in order to study each passage and, more importantly, it directs the reader “to specify which function an excerpt would have served in the global construction”.26 The reader of Passagen-Werk follows a pattern of study similar to the process of architectural design, where one has to shuttle between the larger, urban scale and the smaller, interior scale of the project at hand. Benjamin’s reader, just like an architect, experiences this shuttling while composing a structure either material or virtual. Additionally, such a reader acts in a way similar to Brecht’s spectator, who constantly searches for the links throughout an Epic theatrical performance.

Crucially the purpose is not to reduce discontinuity, since that would undermine Benjamin’s initial goal. As Anthony Auerbach notes in his 2007 essay “Imagine no Metaphors: the Dialectical Image of Walter Benjamin,” what some scholars and academics of Benjamin’s literature attempted to undertake was nothing more than “to repair the discontinuity Benjamin believed was essential to the historical material and his own literary technique.”27 They abolished the fragmentary element by either “stretching the concepts” or “by attempting to reconcile the contradictions.”28 Auerbach clearly states that such a flattening of Benjamin’s initial structure results in the neutralisation of Benjamin’s work rather than elucidating his position towards dialectics. Therefore, bearing in mind Auerbach’s statement, throughout the study of “The Arcades Project” or of the Benjamin’s literature in general the reader has somehow to conform to Benjamin’s own methodology of a constant ambivalence towards (or oscillation between) either concepts or scales. This technique not only entails the eradication of definitive characteristics within the assumptions made by the reader/spectator but it also presupposes the constant re-examination of each hypothesis and, consequently it could be characterised as a lifelong, unending process. This notion of a perpetual ambivalence does not simply prove Benjamin’s adherence to particular techniques of observation and of composition, but
Additionally it connects the actual material of his theoretical critique to the period of modernity in which he was working. In a way, Benjaminian dialectics correspond to the multiplicity embedded in daily life within the modern metropolis. This reciprocity between Benjamin’s theorisation of the experience of urban living and his own modes of articulating such an experience constitutes the framework for the current analysis; I could not ignore such commensurability throughout my attempts to approach Benjamin’s position on domesticity.

What is crucial during a study of Benjamin’s thesis on the experience of modern living within the metropolis is the distinction between the different words for ‘experience’ in German, Erlebnis and Erfahrung. According to Hilde Heynen, Erlebnis refers to a set of “disconnected moments [...] that are not integrated in life experience,” whereas Erfahrung corresponds to the assimilation of events, moments, and sensations into a “stock of experience.” Additionally, Erfahrung stands for a coherent experience, which is common among individuals and in this sense it is linked to the notion of the collective and of tradition. Conversely, Erlebnis is more connected with the inner life of the individual, as “it leaves no trace to the (unconscious) remembrance” and in turn does not participate in the formulation of a collective, unconscious life experience. As Gilloch mentions, quoting Benjamin, Erlebnis is the transformation of Erfahrung in the course of one’s life within the metropolis.

The greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it is so, the less do these impressions enter experience [Erfahrung], tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour of one’s life [Erlebnis].

The multiplicity of the urban landscape activated a mechanism within each individual in order for him or her to ‘react’ to the abundance of stimuli through the automatic negation of such stimuli as a collective experience. In so doing, modern man adapted to the new age through denial, while developing a form of defensive behaviour aimed at composing this “screen against stimuli.” Also the condition of shock is significant for the transformation of experience, from Erfahrung to Erlebnis. From this point on, if one does not wish to experience shocking events, which entail a certain danger, one ought to express an indifference towards what is happening. The behavioural pattern of the modern man is similar to what Georg Simmel called the “blasé attitude”: “The essence of the blasé attitude is indifference toward the distinctions between things. Not in the sense that they are not perceived [...], but rather that the meaning and value of the distinctions between things themselves are experienced as meaningless.” Consequently, as Gilloch comments, what is experienced by modern man is not inscribed securely in the memory, since the conscious act of “forgetfulness” does not permit the formulation of a collective unconscious. Or, as Colomina puts it, quoting Eduardo Cadava, modern experience leaves behind “no trace of itself: ...an experience whereby what is experienced is not experienced.”
The annihilation of *Erfahrung* and in turn the emergence of *Erlebnis* had a clear-cut impact on attitudes towards domesticity, in terms of interiority and privacy. In respect to this transformation of experience and to Benjaminian dialectic techniques affecting both the content and the methodology of his writings, in what follows I attempt to outline Benjamin’s position on pre-modern dwelling as well as on the mode of habitation proposed by the modern movement.
The rise and fall of the integrated ‘in-out’ couplet

In ‘Convoluted S’ of The Arcades Project, “Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty,” Benjamin juxtaposes citations from several writers, from surrealists Salvador Dalí and André Breton to essayists such as Marcel Proust and Roger Caillois, with his own writings. In so doing he offers a critique of art nouveau architecture and its respective domestic patterns, while relating the emergence of such forms to bourgeois culture and to “man’s passion for self-knowledge.” In one of these quotations, Dolf Sternberger links the immovability of furniture within Art Nouveau dwelling to the increasing importance of private property:

Increasingly, furniture is becoming untransportable, immovable; it clings to walls and corners, sticks fast to floors, and as it were, takes root [...] In that way, all permanent contents of the home are absorbed in exchange, while the occupant himself loses the power of moving about freely and becomes attached to ground and property.34

For Sternberger, this tendency to create an integrated whole through the joining of furniture and dwelling also resulted in the attachment of man to the notion of property and privacy. In addition, this excerpt seems to highlight a prevailing characteristic of this mode of living, this notion of stability clearly opposes interior ambiance to the chaotic exterior condition. The stable domestic environment is opposed to the multiplicity of synchronous stimuli within the metropolis. The immovable nature of this interior entails not only the definitive character of such assemblages, that is to say that the interior space is designed and furnished as an everlasting entity, but it also renders dwelling as a shelter protecting modern man not only from natural disasters but from the urban-as-dangerous. Furthermore, this model of domesticity as an integrated and absolute entity, contrasting with the fragmented, urban surroundings, materialises man’s longing for individuality. The dweller, abandoning the fragmentation and temporality of city living, values the interiority of the absolute, domestic assemblage. The following passage is taken from “Reflections,” cited by Hilde Heynen in her endeavour to demonstrate Benjamin’s thesis on art nouveau domesticity:

About the turn of the century, the interior is shaken by art nouveau. Admittedly the latter, through its ideology, seems to bring with it the consummation of the interior – the transfiguration of the solitary soul appears its goal. Individualism is its theory.35

Heynen’s position on the Art Nouveau underlines the relation between the individual and their home as the hallmark of late nineteenth-century culture, while explicitly stating that Art
Nouveau practices equate the notion of inhabitation to that of individuality through the absolute identification between the dweller and their dwelling. In her view, the automatic correspondence between inhabitant and home was “the last attempt of European culture to mobilize the inner world of the individual personality to avert the threat of technology.” Seen from this perspective one can argue that this model of habitation was the peak of introverted domesticity promoting the virtues of private life. Therefore, Art Nouveau dwelling, as an extreme materialisation of interiority, situates itself as the antithesis of the domestic model proposed by the modern movement.

In Convolute L, “Dream House, Museum, Spa,” Benjamin advocates the concept that the house loses its mythological connotations throughout Le Corbusier’s work, quoting Sigfried Giedion:

Why should the house be made as light and airy as possible? Because only in that way can a fatal and hereditary monumentality be brought to an end. As long as the play of burden and support, whether actually or symbolically exaggerated (Baroque), got its meaning from the supporting walls, heaviness was justified. But today—with the unburdened exterior wall—the ornamentally accentuated counterpoint of pillar and load is a painful farce.

In Giedion’s estimation “the airy house” brings to an end the monumentality that has long dominated the nineteenth-century domestic configuration. Comparing this configuration with Benjamin’s assumption that Le Corbusier disconnected ‘house’ from ‘myth’, one can argue that the modern movement’s proposal for domesticity sought to unburden dwelling of its previous bourgeois conception as an introverted, rooted assemblage. The new concept of dwelling is “the one that is no longer founded in security and seclusion, but in openness and transparency.”

This concept of transparency ‘moulds’ the limit between ‘in’ and ‘out’ in particular, by flattening the barrier between them through the utilisation of large glass surfaces and, eventually, the formulation of the “unburdened exterior wall.” The utilisation of glass, and certainly of concrete, rendered possible the unification of inner space and outer surroundings. Heynen’s analysis of Benjamin’s attitude to glass architecture reveals his assumption that glass becomes “the enemy par excellence of secrecy” and “of property,” since it offers a view into one’s interior space. In this sense he argued that glass symbolises “the transparency of the new society that would be founded on revolutionary lines.” It is in that context that Benjamin situated modernist dwelling, whereby while the house had a revolutionary duty to flatten the distinctions between ‘in’ and ‘out’, it could also eliminate class differentiations if a classless society was a concern. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind the Benjaminian ambivalence: Benjamin did not engage fully with the concept of modernistic habitation, as he often expressed nostalgia for the nineteenth-century dwelling, frequently making a retrospective appeal “towards the original paradisiacal dwelling, the mother’s womb.”
Even so, what is necessary for the purposes of my study is to underscore the following: even if the modern movement attempted to reconcile the outer world with inner life through unity, it still proposed a definitive model of inhabitation enacted through a universal methodology. Additionally, modernism aimed at solving modern man’s difficulty to follow the rhythms of new technologies or to respond to the stimulations of over-crowded metropolitan centres by actually promoting the annihilation of contradictions, either spatial or social. In respect to Sennett’s alignment of ‘in-out’ with ‘chaos-definition’, I would suggest that what the modern movement aimed at was the total abolition of such a dominant opposition through the agency of domestic architecture. By surpassing or concealing the opposition ‘chaos-definition’, one conforms to the assumption that architecture can control any characteristic throughout the production of any project and, consequently, it can define space by arguing ‘that chaos is defeated’.

Sennett’s critique of transparency as it was deployed throughout modernism, further clarifies my hypothesis. In particular he states that what modern architects, namely Walter Gropius, Mies Van der Rohe, and Marcel Breuer, achieved was to “satisfy an Enlightenment craving: to live in a physical unifiable world.”41 Moreover he adds that there was a significant relationship between modern physics and architectural thinking and practice:

**Space in modern physics is conceived of as relative to a moving point of reference, not as the static entity of the Baroque system of Newton. [...] a new conception of time leads to a self-conscious enlargement of our ways of perceiving space.**42

The transition of the new conception of space into the field of architecture resulted, for Sennett, in the production of coherent architectural entities. The extent of coherence or continuity was the outcome of “the sequence of movement.” When a spatial configuration permits perpetual movement, where no doors or other physical barriers interrupt this movement, then we perceive this space as unified “the moment our bodies begin to move.”43 Additionally, the modernist structures, in particular skyscrapers, utilising glass technology permitted the thermal isolation of the interior, as windows that do not open were replaced by air-conditioning mechanisms which control the internal temperature. Therefore instead of unifying, transparency furthers the oppositions by shaping a spatial condition where sight does not correspond to sound or touch. In this sense, “seeing what you cannot hear, touch or feel increases the sense that what is inside is inaccessible.”44 The main point of his line of thought is, perhaps, that the rigid determination of space as unified resulted in augmenting the gap between antithetical conditions, instead of eliminating distinctions.

Overall, what I am trying to communicate is the concept that through the absolute imposition of a model aimed at establishing an opposition to the current state of things, there is always the potential that one will end up with what one initially attempted to discard. When one
fails to consider opposition as an inherent compositional feature of the project at hand, either theoretical or practical, then one enters into a loop and eventually is forced to confront an epistemological impasse. Modernity did not accept the agency of the ‘chaos-definition’ couplet, while attempting to reduce the chaotic and increase the defined. The outcome of such an architectural approach was to create even more distinctions, particularly, between ‘in’ and ‘out’.

Benjamin’s concept of porosity/interpenetration as it was derived through the examination of the Neapolitan cityscape is not pertinent to modernistic domesticity. In Naples the contradictions were clearly visible, whereas the wish to unify space throughout modernity flattened these contradictions. Following Sennett’s thesis on transparency, what modernity achieved through the materialisation of unity was the creation of even more contradictions.

**Beauty today can have no other measure except the depth to which a work resolves contradictions. A work must cut through the contradictions and overcome them, not by covering them, but by pursuing them.**

According to Heynen, Adorno’s thesis on dealing with contradictions is relevant to the current production of space. She claims that what an architectural proposition ought to elaborate is the treatment of contradictions, not “by simply neglecting or softening the tensions that exist between them,” but by extending the antithetical qualities of the project at hand. However, she fails to support her view with tangible examples or even with a theoretical argument. In what follows, I attempt to provide a connection between the theorisation of the ‘in-between’ condition and architectural analysis. In so doing, I would like to propose a way of dealing with the binary conception of space and to support the idea that a kind of ambivalence, in accordance with a Brechtian or a Benjaminian treatise, is the key-mechanism for the treatment of antithetical conditions.
6 A study of the ‘in-between’: domestic performativity at the limit of privacy

Slavoj Žižek begins his essay “Architectural Parallax” by introducing an image of his dream house: “[...] my dream of a house composed only of secondary spaces and places of passage – stairs, corridors, toilets, store-rooms, kitchen – with no living room or bedroom.” Žižek excludes from his dream house the spaces of ‘passivity’, including only “the places of passage,” those places where one is active and in motion. This unrealistic, imaginary depiction accords with his assumption that “in and out do not cover the whole space”, found in the same essay. This hypothesis is suggestive of his unwillingness to conform to definitive affirmations of domesticity and inhabitation. In so doing, he proposes a domestic model that can be characterised as the extreme application of ambivalence, whereby the dweller is forced to constantly ‘move’. It is fruitless to discuss how impractical, irrational, or odd this house would be, however such a configuration may inaugurate a discourse on the ‘in-between’ conditions within domestic space, rather than serving as the programme for a realistic construction. Furthermore, this example introduces another kind of ‘in-between’ condition, which depends on the function of each space.
In order to propose a categorisation of the spatial ‘oppositions’ that characterise dwelling I have chosen to make some initial distinctions (see table 2). There is a primary ‘in-out’ couplet that underlines the significance of the exterior wall as an intermediary condition, and then there are the oppositional dyads within the house. This set of dyads consists of two sub-categories: the ‘activity-passivity’ couplet indicating the opposition between principal and secondary spaces, and the ‘apparent-hidden’ dyad corresponding respectively to the visible components of the house, such as furniture, ornaments, etc. and the esoteric mechanisms within the walls, the floors and the ceilings, such as electric wires, water pipes, insulation and so on. Thus, one group refers to the relation of the house with the ‘other’, i.e. the outside, and the second is a self-referential set of couplets embedded in the relationship of the house with its structural components.

My study mainly addresses the ‘in-out’ couplet and the aim is to highlight the exterior wall as an in-between area, which can be characterised as ‘the ambivalent wall’. There are several reasons for analysing the ‘in-out’ condition instead of studying the second category of couplets. Primarily, the first set of dyads facilitates a shift in the point of observation. In so doing, he or she enacts a sort of shuttling between different behavioural points, while examining and experiencing the same condition from different spatial positions. Therefore, the study of ‘in-out’ permits the development of a perceptual and compositional pattern concerning domesticity in terms of Benjaminian or Brechtian ambivalence.
(a) *in-out*: highlighting the exterior wall as an in-between condition

- study in the suburbs of Edinburgh
- dweller's performativity
- exterior wall as a communication apparatus

(b1) *principle-secondary*

- contradiction between spaces of activity and spaces of passivity
- bedroom, living-room against hallway, bathroom, kitchen etc.

(b2) *hidden-apparent*

- tales and myths (Edgar Allan Poe)
- phenomenological analyses of domestic areas, where "terrible creatures dwell" (Bachelard),
- studies of the "architectural uncanny" (Vidler),
- subjectified house (sci-fi movies)

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<th>dyads elaborating the 'in-out'</th>
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<td>dyads within the domestic model</td>
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Table 2
At this point it is necessary to note that the second group of couplets may serve as the framework for a future study. For instance, one may approach the antithetical conditions of ‘hidden’ and ‘apparent’ through the concept of the uncanny within domestic space. Edgar Alan Poe’s “Tales,” and in particular “The Black Cat,” serves as an adequate example in order to support this assumption; the cat inhabited the interior of the wall in the basement of a house. This contradiction between what is visible and what remains hidden formed the basis of a series of tales and myths, of phenomenological analyses of domestic areas, of where “terrible creatures dwell” (Bachelard), and for studies of the “architectural uncanny” (Vidler). Furthermore, houses in science-fiction movies are often subjectified and the source of their power over man is derived from within the walls. For example, the futuristic house in Luc Besson’s “Fifth Element” organises the daily life of the protagonist by forcing him to wake up, to smoke less cigarettes and so on; all the commands come from the interior of the walls, while the source of the sound remains hidden. But, again, in order to theorise such commensurability between the domestic couplet and the particular literature demands another kind of methodology, as the absence of any intermediary spaces between the ‘hidden’ and the ‘apparent’ means that the application of existing methodologies would be fruitless. Additionally, the first dyad of the second category (secondary-principle (b1)), is a tautological couplet: while seen in terms of this opposition, the auxiliary rooms simultaneously consist of the intermediary areas in-between the principle rooms of passivity. Therefore, as with (b2), (b1) is excluded from this study. Nonetheless, I would suggest that an approach to domesticity based on the detection of spatial antagonisms requires a constant re-examination and re-evaluation of the findings and, in this way, it could be a lifelong engagement. Additionally, the need for a consistent re-evaluation underlines that my categorisation is not an exhaustive model but rather a starting point demanding further elaboration in relation to the context and to the chronological period of the project at hand.
A “bitter debate” developed between Le Corbusier and his mentor Auguste Perret, regarding the shape of the window within domestic space. Perret supported the usage of the vertical window, while Le Corbusier favoured the horizontal openings. Perret suggested that the vertical window could provide a complete view of the landscape including the ground and the sky. Conversely, he claimed, the horizontal window used in le Corbusier’s designs offered just a strip of what was occurring outside of the home. Consequently the fenêtre en longueur did not provide the complete view, but instead a fragmentary, incomplete framing of ‘reality’. What is interesting in Perret’s polemic against the horizontal window, is how his thesis corresponds to “the traditional notion of representation [...] defined as the subjective reproduction of an objective reality.”

Therefore for Perret, the horizontal window was not ineffective in terms of functionality (to provide ventilation and lighting), but because it could not include in its “subjective” frame all the levels of the external “objective reality.” Interestingly, this opposition can underpin an approach to studying the notion of domesticity through the relationship between in and out. In particular, the frame of the window shapes lived experience, not in aesthetic or functional terms but in terms of perceiving, and in turn reproducing, the ‘real’. That is to say that the window frame is not assessed as a means for providing a pictorial view or even as a functionally effective construction, but it is evaluated as a medium that can most effectively reproduce ‘reality’. In this sense, the window and the respective ‘depiction of reality’ activate not only a discussion regarding the dweller and his perception of an exterior condition, but also challenge the architectural expression of the limit between in and out, or private and public.

Nonetheless, we should bear in mind that each type of opening corresponds to a different model of dwelling. A vertical window within Le Corbusier’s dwellings would not frame ‘reality’ in Perret’s terms, including the foreground and the sky as a typical Corbusian house, such as Villa Savoye, is situated on pilotis and hence the ground is excluded from the window frame. Therefore, the “airy” domestic arrangements had a structure that enabled a new reproduction of external space, meaning that not only the shape and position of the horizontal sliding window, but also a set of other spatial conditions (namely the pilotis, the open-plan, the free facade, and the roof garden*) combined to render the domestic experience and the respective re-conception of external space. When Perret advocated the vertical opening, he had in mind a house rooted in the ground.

Colomina’s reading of that polemic reveals another perspective on the relation of the dweller with the outside, a relationship that depends on the type and arrangement of the
Sketches depicting the polemic between Le Corbusier and Auguste Perret concerning the horizontal window.
openings within a dwelling. She states that the horizontal window within Le Corbusier’s designs corresponds to the movie camera. As with this mechanism that has no single point of perspective, the strip-window offers a panoramic or peripheral depiction of the landscape. As a result of the open plan design the dweller can move freely and consequently he can reproduce, just like a movie camera, the exterior space in its totality. One could argue that this architectural practice of creating multiple foci while discarding the traditional perceptual pattern of one point perspective links the inhabitation of the interior to the experience of urbanity. When what one observes from within the house becomes structurally similar to what one observes within the urban context, then modernity, expressed through le Corbusier’s propositions, succeeded in uniting in and out as conditions providing similar experiences. Therefore, aside from the effect of transparency, the horizontal sliding window served as another mechanism for the unification of the inner self with external space. The construction of similar observational ‘frames’ equates the ‘in’ to the ‘out’ experience. In and out are connected, not only because of large transparent openings but also due to the construction of such observational frames. The identification of domesticity with urbanity through the application of the horizontal window was another ‘device’ employed by the modern movement to respond to the aforementioned difficulty faced by individuals when reconciling themselves with city living.

Moreover, Colomina points out that the horizontal window as described in Le Corbusier’s writings corresponds to a new conception of human being beyond the anthropocentric doctrine. The human body loses its principal position and in turn occupies a space within the domestic totality. In contrast, Perret’s description of the relationship between the shape of the opening and the human body reveals how the vertical window is constructed in analogy to man’s physiology: “[...] a window is man himself... the porte-fenêtre provides man with a frame, it accords with its outlines... The vertical is the line of the upright human being, it is the line of life itself.” In this sense, the porte-fenêtre consists of a structure developed in alignment with the human scale and, in this sense, it conforms to a human-centred domesticity valuing individuality and interiority. Man can control the vertical opening (see figure 7, sketch 6), whereas the arrangement of the horizontal opening situates the human body analogous to the era of standardisation and in this sense man becomes another component of a larger ensemble.

“This standardization had considerable repercussions upon furniture as a result of the establishment of a module, that of the commercial format. . . . An international convention was established [for paper sheets, magazines, books, newspapers, canvases, photographic prints].” Le Corbusier understands the window in the same terms. Rather than framing the body, it is the body's mechanical substitute.
This theorisation provides the reasons for Le Corbusier’s engagement with the strip-window, as well as revealing another way of confronting the period of modernity. What Le Corbusier materialises is the adjustment of domesticity and the respective inhabitation to suit his contemporaneous era, where man comprehends his being in accordance with his context. Le Corbusier, while advocating the horizontal window, underlines the shift from interiority and high individuality to the conditions of openness and transparency. Thus, the spatial arrangement of horizontal openings removes man from the centre of the frame – in figure 7 the sketches 6 and 7 demonstrate this exact shift, whereby man from the centre of the vertical window takes a place at the side of the horizontal opening—and moreover it engenders a discourse concerning the treatment of the area in-between inside and outside.

However, one ought to approach the in-out dyad from the viewpoint of the outsider as well, meaning that throughout the study of the in-between limit one can elaborate that limit by actually reversing the dyad from in-out to out-in, while standing in the position of the visitor or of the passer-by. Through this shift of the observational point, I would like to practice, and consequently theorise, a form of ambivalence in accordance with the Brechtian and the Benjaminian thesis. The study of the intermediary area solely from the viewpoint of the dweller would cancel out my attempt to relate domesticity to such a technique of ambivalence.

*Out-in*

On the southern part of the demilitarised area between North and South Korea, one can visit a peculiar touristic attraction: “a theatre building with a large screen-like window in front, opening onto the North.” What the spectator observes is not just the landscape of the void area in-between North and South, but also a performance organised by the North Koreans, a staging of everyday life. Or as Žižek puts it, this window offers a view onto:

> [...] the barren demilitarized zone with its walls and so forth, and beyond, a glimpse of North Korea. As if to comply with the fiction, North Korea then built a fake model village with beautiful houses in full view of the window; in the evening, the lights in all the houses are turned on at the same time, and their inhabitants are supplied with good clothes and obliged to take a stroll every evening – a barren zone is thus given a fantasmatic status, elevated into a spectacle, solely by being enframed.

This example addresses the issue of the theatricalisation of domestic activities, of social life in general, as well as highlighting the significance of the frame throughout a performance or a representation. As Žižek states, there is the outside and the “inside-outside” corresponding to the outside as we perceive it from the inside, usually through a frame; what we observe from the inside is circumscribed by the frame. Interestingly Žižek’s concept of “inside-outside” conforms
to Perret’s assumption that the window frame has a significant role in shaping the outside ‘real’. In spite of this agreement, they have differing views on the nature of the outside as a subjective, real depiction; both simply underscore the agency of the frame. Moreover, Žižek refers to the \textit{incommensurability} between inside and outside space, while suggesting that it “is a transcendental a priori” condition.\textsuperscript{54} He extends this assumption by arguing that the outside we see through a window is never as real as the inside we inhabit. In this sense, for Žižek the modernist attempt to reconcile in to out is meaningless, so long as such an attempt negates the transcendental antagonism between ‘in’ and ‘out’. As with Sennett’s concept of ‘chaos-definition’ shaping any spatial opposition, the sublime nature of the \textit{incommensurability} of the ‘in-out’ suggests firstly that one cannot ignore this opposition throughout a study of the ‘in-out’ dyad, and secondly that the methodological pattern for this study should not attempt to resolve the tension but rather endeavour to foreground the operation of the in-between space. Therefore, the act of studying the areas in-between antagonisms consciously accepts the opposition as an a priori condition, while proposing a possible methodological and perceptual pattern.

Žižek’s example provokes the reversal of the couplet from ‘in-out’ to ‘out-in’. This twist is the outcome of the following metaphor: the visitors of the unique theatre correspond to the outsider, to the passer-by, whereas the North Korean village accords with the inner life seen through the screen-like window. Conversely, to the North Korean villagers South Korea is the ‘out’ while North Korea comprises the ‘in’ condition within the couplet. Through this shift the researcher of the dyad takes on the role of the passer-by rather than observing from the inside, the ‘outsider’ examines the inside from the outside. As Žižek would have put it, the passer-by perceives the \textit{outside-inside}, an inside shaped by the outside and the window frame.

Throughout my attempt to examine the ‘out-in’ dyad I focused on the observation mainly of interior domestic space as it is enacted within the in-between area of the exterior wall. The fragmented character is not only an endeavour to include the Benjaminian observational pattern in my study, but rather it is suggestive of the nature of such a voyeuristic examination. The role that I performed is relevant to what is actually occurring at the limit of privacy. Throughout the process I felt almost like a voyeur, who attempts to document in a hurry the appropriation of that limit by the dweller. In order to support the commensurability between my performance and dweller’s performativity, I would like to introduce two examples deriving from cinema: Alfred Hitchcock’s “Rear Window” and Brian De Palma’s film “Body Double.” James Stewart’s role as a photographer in Alfred Hitchcock’s “Rear Window” is an example of the first type of voyeur. As a result of his broken leg, Jeff is forced to stay indoors. He begins to observe his neighbours’ everyday life through the rear window of his apartment, which provides a view onto the backyard of a housing block. Throughout the film Hitchcock frames daily, domestic scenes and explicitly links domesticity to theatricality; the inhabitants resemble theatrical actors within a
dumb play. Through this daily observation Jeff learns the everyday routine of his neighbours, so when one of them stops acting as usual, Jeff begins to suspect him of murder. What is of importance is the fact that Jeff spies on his neighbours without their knowledge; they are not aware of Jeff's habit and consequently they are not consciously performing. Similarly, the murderer acts without closing the curtains, enabling Jeff to become the only witness of his crime. As soon as the murderer realises that the photographer is watching him, Jeff is in danger; the performer develops a consciousness of his own role as a performer as a result of the exposure of the spectator's position. The murderer-performer has to break his interrelation with the spectator, he has to destroy the evidence of his crime and he can only achieve that by killing Jeff. The spectator as witness of any domestic scene becomes potentially dangerous for the future well being of the dweller and, in a way such an outsider corrupts the continuity of the domestic performance. Jeff, as any other voyeur, activates the dweller's awareness of being a performer.

The second type of voyeur corresponds to the protagonist of Brian De Palma’s film “Body Double.” A young actor, Jake Scully played by Craig Wasson, spends a few days in his friend's modernist villa. During that time he constantly watches his female neighbour, who every evening at the same time enacts a dance-like performance. He becomes obsessed with her. One evening while watching her, Jake witnesses her murder by an unknown man. What Jake does not know is that he was meant to witness the crime. The performer's awareness of being watched destroys the clear-cut positions that spectator and performer respectively occupy. One could support the hypothesis that this kind of consciousness is similar to Brecht's concept of *gestus* that characterised the acting technique within a Brechtian play: the actor ought not to identify themselves with the role, but rather they had to show the process of acting out and in a way develop an awareness of their theatrical position. Therefore, these two distinct models of observation are shaped by the degree of the performer's awareness of actually being watched. Certainly this sort of awareness formulates accordingly the spectator's performance. For instance, Jake was seduced by the appearance of his neighbour and in this sense the domestic scene tempted him to succumb to this kind of watching. Whereas Jeff engaged in a sort of observation that underlines the reciprocity between domestic life and theatricality, even if the ‘protagonists’ within the domestic setting remain unaware of their performance. In this sense inhabitation is inherently theatrical.
domestic ‘theatrical’ stage at the windowsill
At this point, I would argue that my behavioural position as a voyeur was in the middle of the two aforementioned types. While keeping in mind that domesticity is connected to theatricality, I was lured into this constant observation of domestic facades by the inhabitant’s staging. In other words, the dweller that constructs a stage-like assembly on the windowsill is aware of his performance and in this sense this dweller invites the outsider/spectator to look and observe the setting.

Furthermore, this kind of appropriation of the in-between space (see fig. 9) is suggestive of another mechanism; the dweller responds to the external configuration. The inhabitant attempts to provide a glimpse of the inside, while forcing the passer-by to perceive the inside as the outside-inside. Thus, the outsider conceptualises the inside similarly to the inhabitant’s comprehension of the outside as an inside-outside. Additionally, the spectator’s understanding of the inside is based upon a segment of the domestic interior offered by the dweller; the dweller controls the limits of the passer-by’s ‘interaction’ just like a theatrical director or a stage designer. My role throughout the study and the respective documentation was that of the spectator, as I was formulating an idea of each domestic interior through the framed assembly situated at the windowsill. In so doing they conceal their private, interior life, while offering a spectacle-like entity for the spectator/passer-by to enjoy. Therefore, they consciously recognise their attitude as a theatrical one, since they control the degree of visual penetration, while performing a role similar to the woman in “Body Double.” When the inhabitant controls the spectator’s gaze, then they simultaneously admit their awareness of being watched.

Overall, what mainly derives from the theorisation of the findings is that the dwellers’ appropriation of the in-between area provides a sort of solution for the elaboration of oppositional dyads. These assemblages at the limit of ‘in-out’ underlined the agency of architecture as a communicative apparatus, beyond its aesthetic or functional operation. In these terms, following Žižek’s theorisation, both the statement that “in and out do not cover the whole space” and the assumption that in and out compose an a priori condition, are embedded in these domestic practices: the dwellers actually identify the opposition as a pre-established system, while using the ambivalent wall in theatrical terms or more specifically in Brechtian terms. As with the dweller who formulates a configuration of the external condition through the window frame, the passer-by acquires knowledge in the form of a photographic representation of the domestic interior. Thus, when the performer and the spectator adopt a common perceptual pattern a Brechtian ambivalence is activated. Additionally, the dweller attempts to blur the limit between private and public space by offering a fragment of the private interior. But again this blurring is suggestive of an ambivalent procedure, which does not abolish the distinction, as the modern movement attempted to materialise, but rather it foregrounds this distinction as an actual space of activity.
NOTES

1 Sennett, R., (1990), p.22
2 This study consists of a section in the first part of his 1990 book “The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities”.
3 Ibid., p. 31
4 Heynen, H., (1999), p.73
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p.74
7 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p.25
12 Benjamin, W., (1985), p.175
13 Gilloch, G., (1996), p.27
15 Here Gilloch mentions that Neapolitans did not consciously reject the Northern model of the metropolis; the disorder and chaos of Naples is “the result [...] of economic underdevelopment, poverty, overcrowding and squalor”, throughout Mussolini’s regime. [Gilloch, G., (1996), p.35]
16 In particular while referring to the common points between the ‘Naples’ and ‘Moscow’ essays, Gilloch mentions that ‘Moscow’ was an essay formally, methodologically and thematically linked to the ‘Naples’ passage, mainly owing to Benjamin’s preoccupation with opposite conditions: “Benjamin’s concern with the relationship between (and juxtaposition of) the new and the old, the archaic and the modern, is developed and given particular emphasis in his writings on the Soviet city.” [Gilloch, G., (1996), p.39]
17 Benjamin, W., (1985), p.177
19 Ibid., p.43
20 Benjamin, W., (1985), p.203
22 Ibid., 15
23 Ibid., p.13
24 Ibid., p.13
25 Here Gilloch notes that Benjamin understood modernity not as “the end-point in a continuous, linear, developmental process or even as “the height of civilisation”, but rather as sort of “refinement or fine tuning of barbarism.”
27 Auerbach, A., (2007)
28 Ibid.
31 Colomina, B., (1996), p. 72
33 Colomina, B., (1996), p. 72
These five elements, open-plan, the pilotis, the free facade, the strip window, and the roof garden are also known as the five axioms within Le Corbusier’s theorisation for the ‘new architecture’, which he formulated in 1926.
IV

prototype-counterfeit
the representation of the suburban house
and the surplus of reality

From Connecticut to Paris

In this chapter the analysis focuses on two different representations of the suburban house: the post-war, American house and the Parisian, detached villa. The first example is a proto-suburban residence on the outskirts of New York, as it is shown in the 1948 film “Mr.Blandings builds his dream house.” Ten years later in 1958, a French film, “Mon Oncle,” presents the Parisian replica of the American prototype. The former structures the stereotype of suburbia, while the latter dismantles it. The aim for this part of the research is primarily to understand the representation of early suburban life and, in particular, the ‘building’ of such a life. I then focus on the French interpretation of suburbia, which is not a representation of a process but a depiction of a stable life in the suburbs. The second example accepts suburbia as an established system of living and in this sense the critique becomes an integral part of the discussion. In contrast the first example is a representation of the initial steps towards suburbia, and in this case suburban life retains the characteristics of ideal and dreamy living.
The Parisian villa as the continental application of the American prototype is suggestive of a more generic trend, namely the cultural ‘invasion’ of American products in Europe after World War Two. Interestingly Joan Ockman suggests that “Americanisation was the price paid for liberation” and the commodities imported to Europe from the United States were not just Coca-Cola, televisions, and refrigerators but also “corporate architecture and Hollywood film.”

Parts of the American dream were replicated throughout Europe and, in the Parisian case, Americanisation structured “neobourgeois space” and the associated acts of everyday life. In this sense, as well as destroying the powerful, American prototype, the second example reveals the procedure of absolute imitation that characterised the Parisian periphery.

The films are not just a means of analysing the detached, suburban dwelling as such, they also provide an insight into the home-media relationship. Lynn Spigel revealed the nature of this binary logic, which was mainly an engineered condition and not an inherent system within the media-home relation (see chapter 2 section 2). Following her attempt at destroying the concrete limits between opposing spheres, I will endeavour to reveal the characteristics of the prototype and those of its counterfeit caricature, in order to suggest a mechanism for disassembling the image-myth of suburbia. What seems to support this attempt is Brechtian logic. The replicated, Parisian image has a lot in common with a Brechtian theatrical scene; it is an image that distracts the spectator through surprise. While the first film could have been representative of “orthodox” theatre – identification with the characters, an absolute imitation of reality, an attempt to absorb the spectator – Tati’s representation of the Parisian dwelling functions as a response to the American, realistic depiction. In this sense it endeavours to communicate a problematic issue inherent in mass-produced housing and not to simply reproduce an image. In this sense, the second section of this part of the thesis will show that Tati provides all the necessary tools for the destruction of the suburban representation.

In the final section of this chapter I introduce Baudrillard’s more recent theory on “Integral Reality,” while attempting to link my own analysis on domestic representation with the more generic field of image theory. In so doing I seek to reveal once more the significance of introducing the Brechtian perspective into a discussion of current architectural representational methods and, perhaps more importantly, to invoke the contemporary utility of the Brechtian treatise through Baudrillard’s theorisation of the post 2001 relationship between the real and its replica.
7 The proto-suburban house. *Mr. Blandings builds his dream house*

The Blandings live in a four-room, one-bathroom, Manhattan flat. Jim Blandings is an executive advertiser, while Muriel Blandings takes care of their household. Their daughters, Betsy and Joan, are attending a private, primary school and they frequently enjoy commenting on their father’s attitude and lifestyle. The New York family tries to adjust to their seemingly inconvenient flat; the lack of closets and the fact that they have to share one bathroom renders the Blandings as frustrated dwellers. So, we can note that the first set/image consists of the flat and the metropolis. Another image on the back page of a magazine of a detached house within the rural landscape of Connecticut introduces Mr. Blandings to a different type of inhabitation. The desire for suburban life is triggered by this idyllic image. The next step or the next image is the realised dream house. This suggests that there are three stages/images towards the acquisition of the ideal home: the impractical city flat (for the Blandings at least), the idyllic, non-real cottage, and the real construction of the house. During the film Bill Coles, who is Jim’s friend and the family lawyer, attempts to discourage Blandings’ desire for a detached home; he impersonates the anti-dweller, denying both family values and the respective dwelling.
The movie follows a two-fold structure; the pair ‘centre-periphery’ controls the plot. The clear-cut distinction between the metropolis and the suburb is at the heart of the narrative, while the transition from one place to the other accentuates the opposition between the two spheres. There are no transitional, intermediary spaces (as in the case of the second example, the film by Tati) and this lack of an in-between area is suggestive of the dilemma that the Blandings ought to address. Live in the metropolis or in the suburbs? The family has to choose between the two options, as there is no other alternative. This concept of separation shapes the particular image of dwelling. Despite its humorous ambiance, the film depicts a socially significant trend that characterised the post-war American lifestyle, namely the pressure to choose a suburban lifestyle. The Blandings family chose to inhabit the suburbs and the film sets out the procedure for acquiring and eventually building their dream house using a realistic cinematic methodology.
The Dream House

set 1: the impractical flat

and the multiplicity of the dream-house image

What triggers the Blandings’ desire for the detached house in the rural area of Connecticut is the problems of living in Manhattan. In other words the inconvenient flat is the departure point for a series of imaginary depictions of what the Blandings’ dream house could look like.

The image that Mr Blandings needs to replace with “Peaceful Connecticut” is the total city-flat condition. Therefore, it is both the impractical flat and the New York lifestyle that compose the first set/image towards the acquisition of the Connecticut dwelling. From the first scene the director H.C.Potter explicitly represents the impractical inhabitation of such a dwelling: while searching for his socks in the closet, several boxes and baskets fall onto Jim Blandings. Furthermore Gary Grant’s impersonation of Mr Blandings renders the depiction of inconvenient living within this residence even more obvious for the spectator. The first fifteen minutes of the film are dedicated to the representation of this impracticality and the resultant image is that of a dwelling that does not function in terms of the Blandings’ needs.

An estate agents’ picture depicting a cottage development on the outskirts of New York in Connecticut will provide the solution to this problematical city living: “Come to Peaceful
Connecticut: Trade City Soot for Sylvan Charm.” The caption is even more powerful than the picture itself, and the drawing of the cottage would be unable to convey the same message on its own. This kind of image is what Roland Barthes would have used to explain his notion of “anchorage,” which refers to the use of the linguistic message within an iconic message. For Barthes the linguistic message is the technique for controlling viewer’s perception rather than guiding his gaze. He points out that the text elucidates the very significance of the iconic message, while directing the reader to accept particular “signs” and reject others. More importantly Barthes states that there is an ideological aspect to the notion of anchorage:

The text is indeed the creator's (and hence society's) right of inspection over the image; anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility - in the face of the projective power of pictures - for the use of the message. With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text has thus a repressive value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are above all invested.²

This passage is from Barthes’ work “Image, Music, Text” written in 1977. Almost thirty years separate Barthes' theory of anchorage from the specific, fictitious advertisement image, yet one cannot ignore the correspondence between the two. In this context of control and repression, the text-image configuration introduces Mr Blandings to a new type inhabitation. This type of inhabitation, which I will call ‘proto-suburban,’ is defined by the form of the suburban house, which has some of the qualities of the well-known detached dwelling but that is not part of the mass-produced suburbs and thus retains its singularity. Even if this commercial image is suggestive of a generic trend —Barthes assumption that the text-image advertisement shapes a kind of socially significant morality and ideology — it simultaneously guarantees the uniqueness of the commodity.

What does the image communicate independently of the linguistic message? Does this sort of isolated housing construction conjure images of a more romantic approach towards dwelling? The antithesis of ‘unhealthy’ city living is this picturesque image, which could have been a subject of analysis within Gaston Bachelard’s “The Poetics of Space”. Even if Bachelard’s ‘images’ derived from poetic descriptions and were not actual pictures, this one could have been an illustration in support of his thesis. Bachelard sought to determine the phenomenological aspect of images, while describing the procedure of poetic reverie as it was embedded in “the simple images of the felicitous space.”³ This notion of space entails the existence of “topophilic” images, which find their most adequate representation in these house images. In the section “The house: from cellar to garret, the significance of the hut”, Bachelard lists the several conditions that control our reverie towards the felicitous house image: the refuge from physical catastrophes, primordial space or the ‘house-where-we-were-born’, the verticality enacted through an attic-cellar polarity, the notion of centrality through concentrated solitude, and the
simplicity of the layout. He proposes a sort of a methodology for a constant daydreaming of the ideal abode and its inhabitation. Therefore the image proposed by Bachelard could have been a house in the provinces with a cellar and an attic, where one could be isolated, within a natural landscape. The antithesis of this “oneirically complete” dwelling would be the city flat, which is the depiction of a partially horizontal house. For Bachelard the city flat has lost its vertical polarity, as it has no attic or cellar. In addition the flat is deprived of natural surroundings and in this sense this kind of inhabitation has lost its connection to the universe: “Moreover our houses are no longer aware of the storms of the outside universe.” Consequently, the horizontal home cannot provide a refuge from natural disasters, as “it does not tremble when thunder rolls.” What Bachelard achieves is the absolute reduction of urban inhabitation; for him the ideal dwelling relies on the remoteness and loneliness that only a non-urban home can offer. This unwavering opposition and the simultaneous denial of urban living are pertinent to the Blandings’ case; the commercial image represents the felicitous image of inhabitation that Blandings will use to replace their “horizontal home.”

Even if the commercial image here depicts three different structures (see figure 11), we can suppose that the one on the left resembles the main domestic unit, while the other two may serve as the secondary, auxiliary spaces. Clearly this is an isolated place, where the housing development built as close-to-nature as possible, could provide all of Bachelard’s demands for an “oneirically complete” residence. However, Bachelard discouraged the realistic reproduction of our imaginary image-house. For him we should “keep a few dreams of a house that we shall live later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it.” The image of the future dream house is “lighter” than that of our past houses. The realised dream house is not a part of his study and thus his thesis on the ideal, domestic house refers to the pre-construction stage of the dream house. In the film there are several scenes that refer to this procedure of imagining the ideal house.
Come to Peaceful CONNECTICUT

TRADE CITY SOOT FOR SYLVAN CHARM
The Blandings, with their real-estate agent Mr Smith, travel to Connecticut in order to visit a cottage that is for sale. This particularly old construction lies within a property of 50 acres. Mr Smith lists the several advantages of the site, like the cold, mountain water, or the hay barn, highlighting that they will not just acquire 50 acres of land, they will buy "a piece of American history".

MR. SMITH: The first year she was built, General Gates stopped right here to water his horses. But, I'm not trying to sell you anything, understand. All I'm saying is that one day someone with a little imagination is gonna come along and steal this place. [...] I don't have to tell you Mrs. Blandings what a woman's touch could do to a place like this. Yes, Sir. you've certainly got to visualise. Couple coats of paint, a little pointing up here and there.

Mr. Smith is not only trying to sell, he is actually trying to mislead them, by concealing particular disadvantages with the property. What we learn from the next scene, where Bill Coles explains that the agent, Mr Smith, and the owner, Mr Hackett the fact that the property is approximately 35 acres and not 50, is that this certainly is "a steal". Bill mentions that in this part of Connecticut an acre costs a hundred dollars and not two hundred, which is the price that the Blandings offered to pay. All this should normally discourage the Blandings from purchasing the particular property, but Mr. Blandings’ response to his friend and advisor reveals quite the opposite:

JIM BLANDINGS: For fifteen years I've been cooped up in a four-room cracker box. Just getting shaved in the morning entitles a man to the Purple Heart. [...] Bill. Muriel and I have found what I'm not ashamed to call our dream house. It's like a fine painting. You buy it with your heart, not your head. You don't ask “How much was the paint? How much was the
canvas?" [...] When I sign on Saturday, I can look the world and say “It's mine. My house. My home. My 35 acres.”

As a result of his longing for a more spacious and comfortable home, Jim ignores the disadvantages of such an imbalanced, financial exchange. Moreover Mr Smith, as well as misleading the Blandings and hiding the weaknesses of the property, has triggered another procedure similar to Bachelard’s methodology of a “reverie for the felicitous home-image”. Mr Smith was successful in selling this ‘windfall’ property simply because he urged the Blandings to imagine how they could alter Hackett’s house. As soon as both Jim and Muriel visualised the alterations to the specific construction, the image of their future dream house was fixed steadily in their memory.

In this sense Jim admitted that what they found was not a financial opportunity but rather a dream home with certain intangible qualities. These intangible qualities refer mainly to the antique value of the house. Jean Baudrillard points out that “the antique object reorganises the world in a dispersive fashion which is quite antithetical to the extensive nature of functional organisation”\(^8\), while discussing the restoration procedure as “a neo-cultural syndrome.” In this case the antique object is the house, which is historically significant and thus bears a kind of a mythological value. For Baudrillard this “fetishized” object corresponds to another era and as a consequence it carries human beings to their childhood or even to “a pre-birth reality.” Therefore the antique quality of this house transcends its functionality and eventually situates the dweller within a general historical context. More importantly Baudrillard’s assumption corresponds to Bachelard’s theorisation of reverie, as Bachelard referred to the primordial nature of the felicitous image. Even if Bachelard was not referring to the intervention of historically important objects but to the sentimentally significant object in the reverie, the sublime character of the antique object is similar to the nature of the object with sentimental value. In this sense the antique value not only compensates for the impracticality of the old house, but also participates in the whole process of structuring the ideal, domestic image. The Blandings are buying that “piece of American history,” while reconnecting “themselves to the microcosmic yet essential state of prenatal life”\(^9\) that gives further meaning to their reverie.

Furthermore, the Blandings succeeded in appropriating the old house by constructing a different domestic image, based on Hackett’s property. Therefore the intimacy developed – between them and the place — renders Bill’s advice useless, while legitimising Blandings’ decision. This kind of appropriation through the imaginary is more effective than the logical arguments of the lawyer. When Mr Smith asked them to visualise the restoration of the old house they did not simply reproduce the image of this house with a “couple coats of paint” or “a little pointing up here and there.” They adjust their age-old mental representation of the ideal home to the particular site; the non-realistic image of a Bachelardian reverie takes shape and,
more importantly, it is surrounded by the specific rural landscape of Connecticut. From here on the image that they create is based on the actual domestic construction, and it is more or less a fictitious configuration with little relevance to the physical landscape or to the old house. Furthermore what is of interest is how Muriel and Jim’s images differ.

Muriel’s dream house image (see figure 14) is a sort of a stereotypically feminine image: white fence, a well-kept garden, and the picturesque country home. All seem to be tidy, clean, and secure; the ambiance is rather romantic. This kind of image could have been an illustration in a romantic novel or even in a fairy-tale. What makes the image even more un-realistic is the background arrangement of the sky with the natural landscape; trees and clouds are depicted as if they were a part of a fine painting. Even if we cannot discern her figure clearly within the picture we can argue that she adjusts rather smoothly; she has almost disappeared and that is suggestive of a perfect merging with her surroundings. Eventually what she imagines is the experience of living ‘happily-ever-after’ and not just a picturesque domestic representation.

In contrast Jim’s imagination offers an altogether more masculine version of the ideal home-image: the house resembles an English country-cottage within an immaculate landscape, surrounded by a brick wall (see figure 15). This is a minimalist image with fewer decorative details than Muriel’s. It depicts not only Jim’s longing for a functional house, but also his inner desire to acquire a home that can provide a kind of power. This ‘sturdy’ image renders Jim as a sovereign of the area; he becomes confident and decisive. Therefore, for Jim the dream house image is not only a configuration of the form of the house but a proposition for another lifestyle: for becoming someone else.

Both images, even if they present two different architectural domestic types, are constructed upon the same ideal of suggesting a lifestyle. Thus, the image of the dream house is built upon specific elements that have been analysed extensively by Bachelard. Jim and Muriel’s images are the outcome of a lifetime’s development. Mr Smith provided the background image for such a depiction. The next set of images reveals the significance of the semi-real character of the means of architectural representation and the significance of the realistic image of the final construction of the Blandings’ dream house.
10
Muriel’s dream house image

15
Jim’s dream house image
set 2: architectural representation
and the final image

“Tear it down!” suggested all of the engineers that investigated the structural stability of Hackett’s house. The old construction was not habitable and more importantly it was not structurally secure. This is when the architect Mr Simms “comes along”. The Blandings decide to build their home from scratch, in the same position and at approximately the same size as Hackett’s old house. Mr Simms begins to design the Blandings’ residence, but Simms’ propositions seem too conventional to the Blandings, who begin altering the initial layout by expanding rooms and by adding new facilities: a playroom in the basement, a flower sink next to the kitchen, more closets and more bathrooms.

What is of interest in the procedure of altering the initial plan is that both Muriel and Jim accompany their suggestions with a kind of a supporting image. For instance Muriel proposes the construction of a sewing room: “A little utility room upstairs where I could be alone and sew or sulk on a rainy afternoon.” This is an image that sets out not only the demand for an extra room, but also the desire for a particular domestic experience. Muriel within the sewing room could experience two of the ‘elements’ of a “felicitous image”: the centrality of solitude and the home as shelter or protection from physical disasters. Here we detect a realistic adaptation of that topophilic image in direct opposition to Bachelard’s theorisation, which was against the physical application of the dream house image.

The architectural drawings are semi-realistic representations, which partially permit the dwellers’ to adjust their established images of ideal inhabitation. Even if Simms’ plans aim to correspond with the Blandings’ desires, they cannot satisfy their greed for a more spacious, more comfortable, more impressive home. This procedure, i.e. the application of the concept of the dream house onto the space of the architectural drawing at a specific scale, is similar to the shift of an architect’s work from paper to practice. The transition from designing the program and the form of any architectural project to its actual materialisation involves a gap. This gap refers to the architect’s capacity to control the final, physical outcome of the design. But is this transition inherently reductive towards the initial concept? One can argue that there is always a reduction, that from the conceptual drawing to its application some elements are always discarded or lost. What the Blandings’ suggestions reveal is the paradox of architectural planning; architects endeavour to control the programme but the final construction may not convey their initial propositions. In this sense, the physical application of Muriel’s image of the sewing ‘room-image’ would be an abstract imitation of her initial visualisation.
Simms's design

Blandings' alterations
The hybrid architectural representation has an effect on both Jim and Muriel, who seem not to accept its finitude. Their chaotic drawing seems to be more flexible than Simms’ final plans.

All these expansions and alterations result in raising the total cost of the construction and, consequently, the Blandings decide to interrupt the project and return to their city flat. However while announcing the decision to Mr Simms a realistic, three dimensional painting of their residence prompts a reconsideration of the extra cost.

Again a ‘topophilic’ image (figure 18) was the triggering influence that prompts the Blandings to surpass any functional, or in this case financial, obstacle. So the construction resumes and the family will shortly be moving to its newly built ‘dream house.’ Even if the final image of the residence represents a reduction of their initial fantasies for their own house, they compromised and accepted it; this materialisation and its locality covers some of the demands that originated from their previous urban living space. The temporality of this compromise leaves open the possibility of renegotiating, at some point in the future, the conditions of their dwelling.
Eventually “The residence of Mr. And Mrs. James Blandings” was built. The final representation of the proto-suburban home and all of the intermediary images convey the desire for the acquisition of a detached dwelling within a non-urban environment. More importantly the film seeks to persuade the spectator that the dreamy, suburban home can become a real, tangible one. In this way the Blandings’ dream house could be anyone’s dream house, and finally it could be a collective dream, a common response to the dilemma of ‘city or suburb’. During the film there are two scenes that highlight the significance of the dream house image, these are when Bill Coles is trying to persuade them not to purchase the property and when the cost of the construction is raised and in turn forces them to withdraw their offer. Following Bachelard’s codification for the topophilic representation, such an image served as the remedy to the practical or financial defects.

Furthermore the cinematic methodology was based upon a realistic narrative; this dream house image could be anyone’s fantasy. This level of plausibility renders the particular representation of the proto-suburban house as similar to the pre-Brechtian theatrical image-scene, where everything would be depicted as real. “Orthodox theatre” endeavoured to absorb the spectator through an absolute identification with the protagonist. In this sense the movie absorbs the spectator, forcing them into an empathetic identification with the Blandings. This metaphor (the proto-suburban representation as a pre-Brechtian image-scene) will become clearer as the analysis of the second example unfolds. The juxtaposition of the two images will reveal how Brechtian logic intervenes in my approach.
Jacques Tati created a series of films, which depicted modern everyday life as it was conceived and criticised by the eccentric and romantic Monsieur Hulot: *Les Vacances de M. Hulot* (1953), *Mon Oncle* (1958), *Playtime* (1967), and *Trafic* (1971). Through these films, he managed to communicate a specific problem of the ‘modern’ living of the 1950s and ‘60s; he developed a critique of the ‘modern’ house, the ‘modern’ automobile, the ‘modern’ housewife, the ‘modern’ workplace, the ‘modern’ metropolis and so on. He often employed unique performative tools and techniques in order to represent an idea or an object: the mime-like acting; unnatural, sudden, or awkward gestures; uncanny sound effects; clear-cut, minimalistic architecture etc.

Architecture is a formative element of Tati’s work. The built environment is not only the background of his films but an integral part of his narratives. Tati’s architecture does not only support the plot, but it is the plot as such. For instance, at the beginning of the film *Playtime* we are watching Hulot trying to find Monsieur Giffard within a glass office building. The particular
building is part of a larger ensemble of similar constructions, known as *Tativille*. Sometimes the glass surfaces function as mirrors for their neighbouring counterfeits, and these mirrors confuse and deceive Hulot, who has no experience of the ‘hi-tech’ metropolis.\(^\text{10}\) So he follows Giffard’s reflection instead of Giffard himself. The building-object performs a role; the deceptive edifice is subjectified, and it guides Hulot to the wrong destination. Iain Borden notes that particularly in *Playtime* “transparency is not about seeing everything but seeing something under particular conditions.”\(^\text{11}\) He adds that in this respect Tati’s architecture functions as a frame, by permitting or limiting what we can observe. So Tati’s architecture is not a passive background, but an energetic ‘actor’ of the film. Or in Tati’s words:

> [...] in the first half of *Playtime*, I direct the people to follow the architect's guidelines. [...] Modern architecture would like typists to sit straight, would like everyone to take themselves very seriously.\(^\text{12}\)

It is as if Tati treated the set as another actor, by anthropomorphising architecture. In a 1966 interview he admitted: “[...] above all the star is the set.”\(^\text{13}\) In *Playtime* in particular, the production budget was blown to accommodate the complex construction of the set. When he was asked why he constructed such an elaborate set of the studio-city “[...] Tati replied that the costs were comparable to what other filmmakers would have spent to hire movie stars;” architecture was the *vedette*.\(^\text{14}\) In this sense, Tati’s commentary on modern architecture is not a superficial discussion that arises from the story being told; rather his critique of architecture creates the rules for the plot to begin unfolding. What made architecture so significant for Tati’s work was the fact that he and the artist Jacques Lagrange were responsible for the design and the general architectural composition of the set.\(^\text{15}\) Tati’s involvement in the procedures of designing the set permitted him to convey a more comprehensive commentary on the modern architecture of his time.

The architectural settings of two of the Hulot movies have been extensively analysed: *Mon Oncle* (1958) and *Playtime* (1967). Here I focus on *Mon Oncle* as it is a film about the ideal, contemporary domestic space. More importantly *Mon Oncle* is a sort of a parody for the ideal, machine-like house. Yet a brief reference to *Playtime* is necessary, since it is conceptually and aesthetically connected to *Mon Oncle*. There is a general theme that connects these two films, which refers to Hulot’s capacity or incapacity to adapt to the modernist way of life. We observe Hulot during *Mon Oncle* going back and forth between his neighbourhood of Saint-Maur and the contemporary suburb in which his sister’s family lives, in which time he traverses empty fields and construction sites (an intermediary space, an almost empty zone).
Conversely, in *Playtime* Hulot compromised, and eventually accepted - on his terms - the ‘modern’ way of life and everything else associated with it. In *Playtime* we watch Hulot walking, trying to communicate within the modern metropolis; he is steadily performing within the metropolis *Tativille*. His presence in *Playtime* does not influence the plot of the movie as much as it does in *Mon Oncle* or in *Les Vacances*; Hulot in *Playtime* is just another person in the crowd. In the film there are several other characters that create gags and misunderstandings and consequently Hulot’s participation is reduced.

As Joan Ockman notes in her essay “Architecture in a mode of distraction: eight takes on Jacques Tati’s *Playtime*,” Hulot, if compared to Chaplin’s Tramp, represents a “passive, deferential, absentminded” character, whereas the Chaplin persona retains his “individuality” and constantly shows his rebellious character. What Hulot usually attempts to do is nothing more than “simply get from place to place.” In contrast to Chaplin, Keaton, and Langdon, Hulot does not try to get the girl or gain money, but he simply endeavours “to get by, to be treated as just another person.” Ockman compares their physical appearance and reveals their differences: Hulot is tall, sulky, in short pants, while the Chaplin Tramp is short, moves in “small, upright jerks” and wears over-sized pants. A quarter of a century separates Chaplin’s Tramp from Tati’s Hulot, and yet these two figures, physically and mentally, are almost completely opposed to one another. In the conclusion of her brief comparison Ockman suggests that while the Tramp’s body reacted to mechanisation by imitating the fragmentation and disjunction of modern life, Hulot materialized its “long-term psychic consequences”. In
this respect we observe Hulot in *Playtime* losing his singularity; he merges with the crowd through assimilation.

From the first Hulot film - *Les Vacances* - to the last – *Trafic* - we observe a gradual merging of Hulot with his surroundings. Even though Hulot never expressed his individuality as Chaplin’s Tramp did, he was still the protagonist in *Mon Oncle*, a position that he could not maintain almost ten years later in *Playtime*. So is *Playtime’s* Hulot a character that has learned how to adapt to the modernist metropolis? Or did he ‘transform’ this metropolis to suit his own rules of living? The answer lies between those positions. One can suggest that the final scene in *Playtime* presents the metropolis from Hulot’s perspective: a circus-like atmosphere, the cars creating a merry-go-around, carnival decorations on the glass buildings and so on. This scene, along with the previous chaotic scene at the restaurant, demonstrates a romantic, loose kind of metropolis. Perhaps Tati sought to represent a more ‘optimistic’ attitude towards life in the metropolis by creating this in-between image: in the background of the image we observe the rigid, glass architecture, while in the foreground a fiesta of people and cars is taking place. In this way, two incompatible situations compose the grand finale in Hulot’s terms. With *Playtime* Tati succeeding in breaking down the distinction between these opposing situations and eventually to propose a new image of ‘modern’ living, the mixture of a traditional, chaotic atmosphere and of an austere, well-organised city.

Thus, Hulot in Tativille revealed his capacity to adapt himself, in a way, to the contemporary way of life of the big city. On the other hand Hulot in *Mon Oncle* constantly shuttles between the traditional and the contemporary. This Hulot manifested his inability to adapt to the modernist house and consequently to the modernist way of life. Hulot’s inability to adapt is another reason for choosing to analyse *Mon Oncle*. The image that Tati creates in *Mon Oncle* consists of contradictions and opposing situations. In that way *Mon Oncle* can express his inability, or his unwillingness to engage with his sister’s lifestyle. For the purposes of this research it is necessary to understand the three distinct images: the contemporary suburb, the intermediary space of empty fields, and the traditional neighbourhood. Apart from a critique of the ideal house, Tati managed to create an ‘image’ following the principles of binary logic (‘in-out’, ‘centre-periphery’, ‘public-private’). So both the object of criticism – the house – and the methodology of such a critique – to present specific areas as opposed to each other – make *Mon Oncle* a useful example for the analysis of the representation of domestic space.
The alteration of the suburban image

The value of the French detached house was an issue of interest to Henri Lefebvre, who discussed the “microcosm of the French villa” as an interesting example in the act of tracing the signified and the signifier within domestic space. Furthermore, the French, and in particular the Parisian, detached suburban house was a key-term in the study of the post-war, rapid urbanisation of Paris between 1954 and 1974. He highlights that the values of the French suburban house become ideals for that type of habitation and for its associated lifestyle, through a practice embedded in the field of the “imaginary and to the signs”. In other words the French suburban house shaped the personal dream house, which gradually became the collective dream-house.

The villa habitat has proliferated in the suburban communes around Paris, by extending the built environment in a disorderly fashion. This urban, and at the same time non-urban growth has only one law: speculation on plots and property.19

A new type of habitat characterised the Parisian periphery, one which is certainly reminiscent of the suburban American residence. However for Lefebvre this kind of urban expansion is at the same time non-urban. In particular he notes that if someone thinks of urban order as a relation between centre and periphery then the suburbs are de-urbanised. Lefebvre notes that both the suburbs shaped by the segregated villas and those formed by ensembles of housing blocks have been structured upon “the reduction of ‘to inhabit’ to habitat.”20 For him what characterises the new urban ensembles are discontinuity and separation; certainly this separation is also apparent between the dwellers of the housing blocks and those of the detached residences. This exact difference – between villa-dweller and housing block-dweller – is, for Lefebvre, supportive of the suburban disorder mechanism. Or to put it in his words: “Suburban disorder harbours an order: a glaring opposition of individually owner-occupied detached houses and housing estates.”21 More interestingly he supports the idea that each dweller defines themselves in relation to the opposing dweller. This is in line with Lefebvre’s general attitude that states that we represent ourselves to ourselves by what we are lacking or by what we believe we are lacking. Apparently “the imaginary and the signs” intervene in this attempt to represent ourselves.

Is this a distortion of the very meaning of inhabiting? Is ‘to inhabit’ referring to private property in the form of a villa? Apparently that was the meaning of ‘inhabiting’ for eighty per cent of Parisians according to sociological surveys quoted by Lefebvre.22 According to Joan Ockman between 1954 and 1974 twenty four per cent of the buildable surface of Paris “was subjected to demolition [...] in the name of urban renewal.” She notes that this transformation of the city “into neobourgeois space entailed a whole new geography of inside and outside, city and
suburb, social modernization and ethnic segregation.”

Therefore, the post-war urbanisation of Paris highlighted the value of the detached villa, which became the definition of habitat, and at the same time shaped this new topography, based on the notion of binary logic, i.e. the creation of oppositions. All these spatial transformations and their respective ‘sign systems’ are found within Tati’s Mon Oncle; Tati depicted his contemporaries, their ideals, the new sub-urban order, the old centre and so on. More interestingly, Tati’s Mon Oncle functioned as a kind of link between the centre and the periphery. Throughout the film Hulot moves back and forth between the old neighbourhood and the contemporary suburb. In this respect the aim for this part of the research is as follows: to consider M. Hulot as the person who materialised an ‘in-between method’ according to the Brechtian thesis. Tati managed to highlight the absurdity of the suburban lifestyle and more importantly he succeeded in acting in-between oppositional couplets. In what follows I attempt to demonstrate this connection between Brecht and Tati.

Monsieur Hulot in Mon Oncle (My Uncle), is Gerard’s uncle. The story briefly depicts the routine of a boy’s family (the Arpel family) living on the outskirts of Paris within a ‘modern’, ‘clever’, detached residence: the villa Arpel. Monsieur Hulot is Gerard’s mother’s brother who lives in the old, traditional neighbourhood of Saint-Maur. Gerard (the boy) enjoys the company of his uncle and they often spend time together, usually roaming the areas in-between the new and the old. Therefore, the narrative is based on a three-fold structure, which aligns with the three different settings: the old, the empty-of-age, and the new. The analysis here will follow a similar approach, namely to examine the characteristics of each area-image.
The new: villa Arpel

Monsieur Arpel leaves home by car every morning to the factory where he supervises the production of plastic tubing, while Madame Arpel stays at home performing all the housekeeping-related activities. She is a stereotypical housewife, obsessed with order and cleanliness; the clever house offers all the practical support for her to achieve a hospital-like, sterile atmosphere and military order. The Arpels have developed a ritualistic routine, which is as accurate as a choreographed sequence; their movements are precise and mechanical, as if they spend a specified amount of energy on each move. Their acting, which is similar to that of a mime and the simultaneous lack of any verbal communication, accentuates this robotic attitude. Gerard participates, unwillingly, in this ritualistic performance and he is rather indifferent towards the technological qualities of his home and he constantly seeks ways to escape into the empty fields with his uncle. His mother, when she is not occupied with the housekeeping, shows off her stylish home. Again, when a visitor comes to the Arpels’ villa a sort of ritual is performed: Madame Arpel activates a water fountain shaped like a fish, welcomes the visitor, and then acts just like a tour guide explaining to them and, proudly, showing them each room, the furniture and all of the housekeeping gadgets.

Even if this house seems to be extremely practical it is partially dysfunctional. For instance, they have to rearrange the furniture for dinnertime and then readjust other pieces of furniture for the parents to watch their favourite television show on the terrace. Paradoxically they do not use the dining-space or the kitchen as eating areas. They prefer to use the garden furniture and a ridiculously small and impractical table for dinner. All these peculiar arrangements suggest what the Arpels’ will do to actually avoid using the house. In this sense they protect the interior from decline; an untouched dining table could last longer without any sign of decay. While the Arpels celebrate their immaculate home, they simultaneously deny the usefulness of the domestic spaces and eventually they embody Lefebvre’s statement: the reduction of ‘to inhabit’ to habitat. Even if Lefebvre used this statement for the description of the rapid urbanisation of the Parisian periphery, we can see that a similar ‘reduction,’ at a smaller scale, occurs within the Arpels’ residence. Therefore this non-using attitude entails a dysfunctional non-inhabitation, which is only apparent to Monsieur Hulot. During several scenes in the villa, Hulot express his frustration towards the inconvenient pieces of furniture or the absurd design of the garden tiles that forced him to make small steps instead of his usual stride. Both Hulot’s physical (a tall and graceless figure) and mental (romantic, naïve) characteristics make him the perfect anti-dweller of that particular residence. Thus, Tati uses Hulot as a tool for criticising the austere space of the modernist, suburban home and its paradoxical impracticality. Here it is necessary to note that this residence is not dysfunctional per se, it is rather its dwellers’ will to avoid using the house that turns villa Arpel into an incomprehensible and hostile environment in Hulot’s terms.
Hulot’s neighbourhood is an old, traditional, Parisian quartier. The old Paris, which was absent from Playtime, is shown at its most hyperbolic in Mon Oncle. In Playtime ‘old Paris’ had only a few representatives, such as the old lady selling flowers in the street and reflections on the glass buildings of famous landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe. In Mon Oncle the depiction of the Parisian neighbourhood is one of the three main areas/images of the setting and it is shown as an integrated ensemble. Tati introduces the spectator into Hulot’s everyday routine. In so doing he suggests a loose, highly interactive and communicative attitude enacted by all of the residents of the quartier.

We are watching Hulot as a member of a community and not as a unique individual in his segregated house (as in the Arpels’ case). The buildings are situated around a flea market that provides all essential goods, but more importantly is the daily meeting point for the residents of Saint-Maur. We are introduced to the main characters of the neighbourhood, while trying to track down Hulot’s figure within this chaotic scene. The final image of the quartier, and the resultant impact on the viewer, is similar to what a Brechtian theatrical scene-image would have achieved: a multiplicity of events, the simultaneous absence of a focal-point, the viewer’s inability to identify him/herself with the eccentric characters, etc. This chaotic image stands in opposition to the clear-cut suburban image. Even so, there is a commonality between the two images, and particularly between the two domestic representations; both the Arpels’ villa and Hulot’s garret are highly dysfunctional. Hulot’s flat is located on the top of a peculiar building, which is actually an assemblage of incompatible constructions linked by an impractical system of stairs; in order to access his flat Hulot is required to go up and down the stairs, instead of just ascending them. Furthermore, what we can assume from a particular scene, where Hulot encounters a woman in her bath towel, is that the bathroom and toilet facilities are communal and obviously are situated outside of the flats.

These arrangements are in stark contrast to the accepted norms, yet Hulot and his neighbours conveniently co-inhabit this peculiar edifice. In this case, the domestic space is inherently impractical in terms of architectural design, whereas the Arpels’ villa is not impractical on its own, but becomes totally dysfunctional because of Arpels’ attitude of non-use. Therefore, one can assume that Tati’s attitude towards domestic architecture reveals a kind of deadlock; neither the contemporary, suburban villa nor the traditional habitat can materialise the ideal living or the perfect experience of inhabitation. It is as if Tati does not reduce one type of habitat to the other; both types receive the same critique. Thus his comment concerning the home is not just about the architecture but also about the procedure of inhabiting, of how dwellers decide to use or not to use their home.
The term *empty-of-age* refers to the intermediary zone between the old quartier of Saint-Maur and the ‘modern’ suburb where the Arpels dwell. This zone consists of empty fields or semi-empty fields and the remnants of recently demolished buildings. At that moment there is no formal function attributed to these areas; one can suppose that these intermediary areas ‘are waiting’ to become construction sites. However, children appropriate the area and transform it into a kind of a playground. This belt of no-man’s-land is Gerard’s favourite place, where he can meet other kids, can organise pranks and play without having to follow his mother’s rules. Hulot usually accompanies his nephew during his roaming in these areas.

The absence of architecture is the main characteristic of the image of this area; or to be more precise architecture is present as ruins and remnants of previous constructions. Tati’s depiction of this zone highlights the transition from the tradition of building with rocks to the contemporary applications of concrete. *Mon Oncle* is, in general, a movie about the transition from one era to another, from rock to concrete and glass, from the city centre to the suburbs, from public to private space. In particular, Hulot endeavours to comprehend and adjust to the new topography, which he does not achieve until *Playtime*. The transitional character of the area and the absence of architecture releases this zone from the formality of any function: kids are ‘free’ to exploit the land. In this case architecture is no longer the star; a role that it still plays in the suburb or in the *quartier* image. Here, kids experience empty space, while appropriating the natural relief of the area and any scattered remnant of building in their games.

Thus, what occurs in this part of the set/image is the absolute ‘inhabitation’ of the place without any sign of impracticality. The impact of the built environment in the form of a material ruin provides a multi-functional character to the area. In this sense, this zone can’t be dysfunctional as it facilitates any preference. Even if Hulot shows his inability to adapt to the new urban-era in this film, there is a scene here that is similar to the final scene of *Playtime*. Tati dismantles the image of the detached house by transferring elements from the other two images: the Brechtian multiplicity from the ‘old’ image and ‘inhabitation’ from the ‘empty’ image.
After playing in the fields Gerard returns home, dirty and untidy, accompanied by his uncle. Monsieur Arpel condemns Hulot for Gerard’s appearance. Throughout the movie Monsieur Arpel expresses his disapproval for the relationship of his son with Hulot, and in an attempt to soothe his frustration, Madame Arpel has a proposition for altering his brother’s lifestyle:

**MADAME ARPEL** (to her husband): Listen, what my brother needs is a ... an objective ... a home... all this... Listen it’s our neighbour, come and see. She’s single, an exceptional housekeeper, I’ve studied her, she’s tidy, methodical and charming too. And so I thought, for my brother... Am I not right? You understand...

This is her initial idea of how to transform her brother into a ‘responsible individual’, what he needs is “an objective...a home...all this”. She suggests organising a garden party in their home to help her plan to be accomplished.

She throws the party, while trying to introduce her single girlfriend to her brother Hulot. The guests are gathering around a garden table and everything seems to be in order, until Monsieur Hulot unwittingly and unconsciously destroys a pipe supplying water to the fish-fountain. This triggers a chain of events resulting in a new image of the Arpels’ villa: guests are moving around the garden, Monsieur Arpel and his colleague are trying to fix the water pipe, Madame Arpel endeavours to re-organise the whole setting and so on (see fig. 23). The guests and more importantly the family experience a new type of inhabitation.

The spectator is activated by this Brechtian image; the chaotic image awakens the viewer from the passivity created by the previous clear-cut suburban image. What Hulot primarily achieves is the breaking of the Arpels’ order of things. This ‘gesture’ has an immediate effect on the encounter with his sister’s neighbour, which was the main reason for throwing this party. Furthermore, Hulot’s damage alters the way in which the Arpels use their home; the Arpels do not use their home. They have a sort of vanity towards their residence and in this sense their home becomes useless, and Hulot’s actions foreground this lack of usefulness several times in the film. For instance, when he has to spend the night at the Arpels he sleeps on the bean-shaped couch, which perhaps has never been used as seating. In order to sleep there he turnovers it and uses the front side of the couch (see fig.22).

The uselessness of this house is the main characteristic revealed by Hulot. Tati dismantles this perfect, non-habitable image by introducing Hulot’s paradoxical ‘practicality’. Hulot’s clumsiness balances the setting of the Arpels’ dwelling and eventually creates an image that retains the architectural elements but at the same time rejects its harmonious, sterile
composition. In her analysis of *Playtime* Jane Ockman refers to Tati’s capacity to create an image-scene that does not absorb the spectator. In particular she notes:

Tati foils our conventional notion of time much as he decentres our sense of space, elastically compressing and extending it, breaking up narrative continuity by creating simultaneous foci, as in a three-ring circus.  

In this sense of an image of “multiple foci” Hulot releases the spectator from the absolute identification with the protagonists:

Ultimately, his awkward gestures and foolish reactions release us from our empathetic identification with him. [...] We laugh, and with laughter our bodies are explosively liberated from the optical tyranny of the movie screen.

Therefore, the alteration of the suburban house by Hulot is based upon the notion of theatricality: an image-scene that includes antithetic elements (a rigid space and the loose attitude of the guests), an image-scene that projects the procedure of inhabiting and eventually an image-scene that activates the spectator through surprise. Still this kind of image does not endure; the Arpels’ cannot accept Hulot’s alterations. Thus Hulot’s in-between image is ephemeral, yet effective in activating the spectator’s intellect. Hulot is forced to leave Paris and work at a department of the plastics factory in the province. Is this his ‘punishment’ for not adapting to the new urban-era, for not becoming “methodical”, for not acquiring “a home...all this...”? Perhaps the new urban-order and its supportive dyads – ‘public-private’, ‘in-out’, and ‘centre-periphery’— temporarily thwart Hulot’s image.
Arpels’ order

Hulot’s Alterations #1

Arpels’ order

Hulot’s alterations #2
The surplus of reality: discarding ‘evil’, sterilising the space

The ‘Baudrillardian’ notion of Integral Reality

The determinism inherent in the villa Arpel is suggestive of a particular design process: modernist architecture aimed at providing the absolute functional, domestic program and the respective spatial form. The Arpels not only celebrate their untouched living space but they also express a certainty and confidence in a systematic lifestyle. In so doing they deny the potential for a human mistake, in Hulot’s terms, or of encountering any kind of misfortunes, like those that Blandings had to overcome. It is as if the Arpels live in an architect’s plan; their precise movements follow an architect’s will, without altering the clean representation. Consequently this well-fixed image is based upon an architectural finitude, which ignores the living experience as a necessary parameter within the design process. Nevertheless, Hulot managed to alter, even if only temporarily, their programmed lifestyle by introducing ‘elements’ from the other two spheres: the chaotic attitude of the quartier image and the attitude towards ‘appropriation’ from the empty-of-age image.
What Hulot enacted was not only the breaking of a clear-cut image and of its paradoxical impracticality, but also the exposure of a ‘surplus of architecture’. If we perceive Villa Arpel as the visualisation and cinematic materialisation of the utopian, modernist domestic model, then a ‘Hulotian’ intervention highlights the excess of design as a non-functional condition for inhabitation. But how does that kind of surplus ‘function’ within architectural representation and in general within any representation? Is there a connection between the determinism of design and the notion of architectural finality within the more generic field of image theory and the theorisation of the virtual? What prompts these questions is the need to situate architectural representation within a more general context of current visual theory. Of course the intention of this juxtaposition is not to reduce the architectural element, but rather to seek how architecture as image corresponds with the general theorisation of virtuality. The previous analysis of suburban, domestic representation is the departure point for this kind of juxtaposition.

The notion of the *surplus* is essential for to the comprehension of Jean Baudrillard’s notion of *Integral Reality*. In his work the “Intelligence of evil or the lucidity pact”, written in 2004 in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001, Baudrillard focuses on a system of reality that reacts to its own perfection: “the globe’s own ‘negative reaction’ to ‘globalisation’.” He outlines this notion of ‘Integral Reality’ as a kind of ultra-reality that establishes an end to both reality and illusion. This concept of reality is not opposed to the Baudrillardian notion of hypbereality, but rather it is as if *Integral Reality* is the adequate term for the beginning of the 21st century. More than twenty years separate the *precession of simulacra* from the *intelligence of evil*, yet the theorisation and comprehension of the latter demands the study of the former. Baudrillard introduces this notion of reality, which emerges through excess and perfection, and at the same time antagonises the “Dual Form.” This form “denies any final reconciliation any definitive accomplishment,” while *Integral Reality* refers to “a movement towards the totalization of the world.” Man’s position within this ultra-reality consists of an adequate paradigm for the further comprehension of Baudrillard’s theorisation. *Integral man* is part of this Reality: “Integral Man, reworked by genetics with an eye to perfection. With every accidental feature excised, all physiological or emotional pathology removed.” This kind of man is presented in the 1997 science-fiction film *Gattaca*: everything, ranging from an embryo’s mental and physical characteristics to one’s professional qualifications, is controlled by genetics. For instance, there is a scene where a couple visits the genetic expert for the determination of its unborn child’s hair and skin colour. The expert offers more: he can eliminate all the ‘evil’ genes predisposing of diseases and of “prejudicial conditions” such as alcoholism, obesity and so on. The impending parents react to that genetic ‘totalization’; they prefer to leave something to chance. The doctor’s response is negative, in particular he states: “I want to give your child the best possible start. Believe me. We have enough imperfection building already. You could conceive naturally a
thousand times and never get such a result.” So as soon as something is recognised as ‘evil’, it can be immediately discarded. In this sense ‘evil’ is defined in a precise manner. Baudrillard revealed, through the notion of that corrected human being, that evil becomes an objective reality and therefore “objectively eliminable.” For him, the ‘evil’ of our times is no longer a metaphysical or a moral condition, but rather it is considered to be a material one and in this sense we can identify it and in turn destroy it accurately.

This treatment of harmful conditions presupposes a technological and scientific accuracy, which renders the human being into this Integral Man. More importantly this degree of accuracy leaves nothing to chance and in consequence the whole of reality becomes a perfect, constructed condition with no reference, “no longer any mirror or negative.”³⁰ What Baudrillard endeavours to communicate is the disappearance of the principle of reality and respectively the loss of any imagination of the real. For him the over-exposure of things, as a result of everything becoming visible, transparent, “liberated,” and automatically produced, causes 21st century reality to become Integral Reality.

There was a reality principle. Then the principle disappeared and reality, freed from its principle, continues to run on out of sheer inertia. [...] it becomes Integral Reality, which no longer has either principle or end, but is content merely to realise all possibilities integrally. It has devoured its own utopia. It operates beyond its own end.³¹

For him the artificiality inherent in our current reality, results from the absence of an opposition to that reality: a mirror, a negative, or an ideal alternative. In this sense the duality of real-imaginary, i.e. the interaction between reality and its representation, has been gradually reduced to the point where it has totally vanished. What this connotes is a lack of any kind of falseness within the perfected Integral Reality, which eventually becomes a total truth on its own; it is a rigid, absolute ‘good’ that has lost any of its negative elements. Therefore, the ‘presence’ of such a Reality has no source or origin; it is depicted not as a representation of something else but it appears just as a self-referential condition. A potential study of this reality would be fruitless, as the only outcome would be that reality on its own; it draws back to itself, while annihilating any symbolic connotations or interpretations. In this sense everything is visibly available as it is, a “world-as-it-is”, which accepts nothing but itself.

Baudrillard points out that Integral Reality is built upon the over-exposure of things, upon the hyperbolic appearance of itself. This procedure aims at the prevention of any negative event; a non-event, which aims at the non-occurrence of ‘evil’. As with the integral being, which is a non-being denying its inherent defects, the event becomes a non-event through a similar procedure of ‘beautification’. For instance the Iraq War is the perfect example for clarifying the non-event. Baudrillard argues that this war occurred as “a systematic de-programming” of any possible
terror-related event, which could potentially shatter “the policed order of the planet.” Thus ‘staged warfare’ eliminates the possibility that a criminal event could ever take place, while materialising Baudrillard’s notion of the non-event. This is not the first time that Baudrillard references a war to facilitate the theorisation of a non-event. In his work “The Gulf War did not take place,” he refers to the Gulf War as a non-war. The mass-media depiction transformed the war into a non-event: “The horror of war is consumed as though it were a horror movie, and the news flash from the front lines competes against serialized soap operas for prime time audience ratings.” Thus, in this case the real is virtualised through the proliferation of an image throughout the media, up to the point where the real corresponds in a rigid, absolute way with the virtual. Within Integral Reality, events and human beings are deprived of their negativity, through the over-exposure of things: “There is too much everywhere, and the system cracks up from excess.”

In other words, the surplus of reality intervenes in everyday life and what eventually occurs is a saturation of artificial life, and the materialisation of all needs and desires. In this context Baudrillard highlights that “there is no way for the dream to be an expression of desire since its virtual accomplishment is already present.” Therefore, technological and scientific accuracy guarantees the elimination of ‘evil’, while materialising all of our dreams through a repetitive pattern of beautification. Thus, digital technologies can offer an absolute solution for the realization of our desires to such an extent that we no longer have any more needs to satisfy or any other dreams to actualise. For Baudrillard the highest level of reality, intelligence, happiness, and freedom, in the form of Integral reality, proposes the best solutions in respect to “the ideal normalization” and beautification of existence. Furthermore the final image of such a reality would not accept any alteration of its inherent characteristics and more importantly it would deny any spontaneous additions. This denial suggests a sort of finality, of a certainty inherent in the final image; in this sense this kind of image leaves nothing to evolve or alter.

The theory of ‘Integral Reality’ introduces the idea of the saturation of real. This is not in opposition to Baudrillard’s classic concept of the saturation of image, derived from his work “Simulacra and Simulation.” What he proposes in his later work is the shift from the image to the real. This turn is apparently a result of the smooth integration of the image into reality, up to the point where over-exposure of the real blurs the age-old rupture between reality and its representation.
The architectural image: from the diagram to the ready-made

How does this theorisation of reality explain or help to decipher the architectural image? Is the architectural representation aligned with Baudrillard’s notion of Integral Reality? In what follows I attempt to understand architectural representation in relation to these questions. I seek to identify the ways in which an excess of the real takes shape within architectural practice during the pre-realisation stage, i.e. prior to the material accomplishment of the work. The aim is mainly to question the over-determination of the image, through the over-exposure of realistic elements within the architectural design process. This will make it clearer that a sort of a gap exists inherently in architectural production, a kind of a rupture between the representation and its material application. More importantly we could situate the architectural image within a more general, theoretical context.

The evolution of digital technology gave birth not only to the fruition of parametric and organic architectural forms through algorithmic programming, but also to a sort of architectural image that is increasingly eager to be ‘real’. These images of a project that has yet to be constructed precede their materialisation by providing a totally realistic image of the final work.
For instance figure 24 is a digital assemblage of the actual natural landscape of a Greek island and the three dimensional, realistic representation of a domestic complex. Such an image attempts to persuade us that it is an already realised project. Interestingly we could argue that through this longing for plausibility the image becomes a final, deterministic picture, just like an actual building. Therefore the finitude integrated within the collage transforms this kind of architectural representation into a possible representative of Baudrillard’s *Integral Reality*. The hypothesis for this part of the research is as follows: the current architectural image participates in the ‘liberation’ of the real, as an antecedent, while discarding any architectural abstraction or codification.
In his essay “Diagrams of Diagrams: Architectural Abstraction and Modern Representation” written in 2000, Anthony Vidler points to the revival of the diagram as an architectural tool of representation and communication within computer-aided design. In so doing, he highlights the significance of diagrammatic drawing during Modernism, which in turn originated from the drawings produced throughout the first era of architecture’s mechanisation at the end of 18th century. However he notes that the current (2000) diagrammatic turn in architecture is based upon “the aesthetics of digitalization” and in this sense it is less concerned with the depiction of a new ‘abstract world’ (the modernist utopia, the absence of style, abstraction in both the representation and the realisation of a work). In other words, what Vidler attempts to convey is that the contemporary use of the diagram breaks the correspondence between the abstract representation and its respective abstract construction. Therefore the diagram is just a means for organising data (flows of traffic, climate changes, demographic trends etc.) and creating a topographic plan with no actual physical reference. This ‘map’ will not be constructed; it serves only as an analytical device. In this respect he adds that: “Modernism in these terms has shifted from a diagram that is rendered as an abstraction of an abstraction to one that is diagram of a diagram.”

As well as the specific, contemporary application of the diagram, Vidler analyses the effect of geometrical diagrams for the comprehension of architecture as a “marginal case.” Architecture makes no reference to an already constructed object and as a consequence it is not valued as art per se as a result of the distance between the composer (i.e. architect) and the final
accomplishment of his composition. Furthermore, while preceding its accomplishment such an architectural image “has never conformed to traditional formulations of imitation.”

Benjamin’s thesis on architectural representation highlights its non-imitative nature; drawings do not reproduce architecture, rather they produce it. In this sense architectural drawing is wedded to this non-imitative procedure, while demanding a sort of expertise of the viewer. As Vidler points out: “The architect works in code, code that is readily understood by others in the trade, but is as potentially hermetic to the outsider as a musical score or a mathematical formula.” For the amateur a plan or a section may appear as an incomprehensible, abstract drawing representing nothing more than an assemblage of shapes and lines. Perhaps for the “outsider” the architectural plan or the contemporary diagram is an ambiguous drawing, but for the architect it is integral to his work. Diagrammatical representations in particular serve as an initial ‘basis’ for the program and the form, permitting the respective project to develop. Apart from being an analytical tool for actual conditions within the context of a project, the diagram is also a means of program synthesis. In an interview with both Rem Koolhaas and Bernard Tschumi about the role of program in their respective practices, there is the following question highlighting the significance of the diagram in the shaping of program: “How does the above drawing (see figure 24) represent program? Is this a diagrammatic device, an operative tool, a formal construct, a descriptive idea, or a combination of these or none of these?” For Tschumi this diagrammatic drawing entails all of the above and at the same time is “the quickest way [...] to conceptualise what you want to do with the program.” Whereas Koolhaas responds that the particular drawing-diagram is just “an illustration to enable others to understand our process, [...] a retroactive illustration of what, in a more private sense, is a way of thinking.” The diagram, whether it is a device for data analysis or an abstract representation of the program, conveys information integral to any architectural project. More importantly the diagram is the equivalent of what we can call ‘an architectural language’. In this sense the significance of the diagram, as a codified image, reveals the architect’s interpretation of any present or future conditions. James Corner points out that in the procedure of making a map, which is similar to that of setting-up a diagram, the cartographer has to disclose and then to stage the actual conditions within the surface of the map. In so doing he chooses what to present and what not to show, while revealing “new realities”. In particular he notes:

As a creative practice, mapping precipitates its most productive effects through a finding that is also a founding; its agency lies in neither reproduction nor imposition but rather in uncovering realities previously unseen or unimagined, even across seemingly exhausted grounds.

In these terms diagrammatic representation is embedded in a process of codification of the actual field conditions; it is not a mere reproduction of these conditions, but rather a creative
practice of re-constituting them. Consequently the diagram demands that the viewer decipher the particular encodings in order to ‘read’ the ‘map’ and comprehend the emerging “realities.” This brief reference to diagrammatic representation reveals the symbolic nature of this type of image; it is not symbolic in terms of semiotic analysis, but rather it bears a sort of symbolism resulting from the application of codified, technical language. One has to identify the code and in turn comprehend the general structure of the map.

In contrast to the diagram and its operation, the photorealistic architectural image is more or less a simplified version of any architectural project. It is confined to present the future construction ‘literally’, while denying any abstraction or codification. The architectural image in the form of a photorealistic assemblage loses its flexibility, becomes highly deterministic and is deprived of any sort of ‘symbolism’; it becomes ready-made for the viewer to ‘consume’ immediately. It is as if the image is shaped according to the norms of Integral Reality longing, more than ever, to simulate as accurately as possible its future, physical accomplishment. The computer generated photomontage is based upon the aesthetics of the finished project, while rejecting the ‘evil’ of any potential misinterpretation inherent in the diagrammatic image.

Consequently the viewer of such a depiction remains passive; this image is a given absorbing the ‘spectator’ through an empathetic identification. From the Brechtian perspective, we could argue that this image is similar to the “orthodox theatre” stage-image. The realistic photomontage leaves nothing hidden. Therefore, apart from the correspondence with the pre-Brechtian stage-image, the photorealistic image entails an over-exposure of the ‘real’ in the sense of Baudrillard’s concept for contemporary Integral Reality. His theorisation of reality reveals the characteristics of an order aimed at the elimination of any negative element, and simultaneously suggests the emergence of a system that not only blurs the age-old limits between real and representation, but also denies its own natural disintegration.
NOTES

4 Ibid., p.26
5 Ibid. p.27
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p.61
8 Baudrillard, J., (1968), p. 84
9 Ibid.
10 The fact that Hulot has no experience of the modern metropolis is a hypothesis. In *Playtime* we are never shown Hulot's residence. Nevertheless we can suppose that his home is the same as in the 1958 film *Mon Oncle*: a peculiar, dysfunctional house within a traditional, picturesque neighbourhood.
13 Ibid.
14 Lamster, M., (2000), p.181 Joan Ockman describes the construction of Tativille, for which Tati collaborated with the architect and set designer Eugène Roman. The studio-city covered fifteen thousand square meters in area.
15 Architecture and film
16 Maddock, B., (1977) p.45
17 Ibid., p.177
18 Lieven De Cauter states that our contemporary civilisation is formed upon the principles of transcendental capitalism, which, as with any other expression of capitalism, is based on a simple characteristic: its binary logic.
19 Lefebvre, H.(1996), p.79
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p.80
22 Ibid.
24 Ibid., p.186
25 Ibid. p.185
27 Ibid, p.21
28 Ibid, p.20
29 Ibid., p.28
30 Ibid., p.34
31 Ibid, p.126
32 Ibid, p.118
33 Leach, N., (1999), p.23
34 Ibid, p.191
35 Ibid, p.19
37 Walter Benjamin used the term to describe his assumption that architecture is a “marginal case” in respect to the fine arts. The architect does not have the same contact with the final realisation of his work, as the painter or the sculptor. Ibid., p.6
38 Ibid., p.7
39 Ibid.
40 Praxis-8, p.14
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Corner, J., (1999), p.213
In the final sub-section of chapter 2, “Three propositions,” I analysed three studies exploring the elaboration of suburbanism beyond the mainstream critique, which tends to approach suburbia as the ‘evil’ part within the ‘urban-suburban’ opposition. In order for the three groups of researchers to introduce their concepts on suburbia they had to develop a methodology regarding the treatment of the aforementioned dyad. Thus, they managed to challenge generally held assumptions about the non-productive, inferior character of suburban: by equating the two parts of the dyad, by revealing commonalities between the two points, and by reversing the positions within the opposition. One could argue that their attempts to re-conceive suburban living and to question the established theorisations are similar to an application of the A-effect technique: a familiar subject becoming uncanny, demanding that the perceiver re-conceptualise the given. More importantly, the researchers, in a manner similar to Brecht, activated the A-effect while attempting to confront an opposition.
Bearing in mind both the theorisation of A-effect and its application within suburban theory, I will endeavour to show in what ways I have applied this particular technique, as well as to demonstrate the main outcomes that such an application entails. It is important to note that the need to establish a methodological pattern able to elaborate a dyadic mechanism without solving the tension between the parts of a dyad dominated any aspect of my research. In other words, the central dynamic of the thesis is as follows: the two parts of an opposition do exist as separate entities but one could radicalise the area in-between the parts if the objective of the research is the analysis of distinctions. This modification conforms to the methods, based on a constant ambivalence that both Brecht and Benjamin employed. Therefore, while the parts of an opposition remain stable in their positions, the ‘space’ in-between becomes the area whereby the analysis ‘takes place’; this kind of analysis underpins the intermediate space as a space of activity.

The similarities between the three methods for elaborating the oppositions and my own method are found in the different stages of the current study. The first type, the equation of the two parts as having similar ends as suggested by Lynn Spigel, is pertinent to the way in which I have structured chapter two and three. My reading and the consequent re-composition of the respective literature sought to highlight the parts of the two dyads, ‘urban-suburban’ and ‘in-out’, as equally ‘responsible’ for the formation of a common ideal for domesticity. For instance, the bourgeoisie rejected the ‘urban’ during the first era of suburbanisation in order for the ‘suburban’ to emerge, whereas mid twentieth-century theoreticians in sociology and urban studies re-evaluate the ‘urban’ while condemning the ‘suburban’ as an inferior, passive, and unproductive lifestyle. Similarly, throughout chapter three I endeavoured to communicate the several ways in which ‘in’ and ‘out’ interchange positions within the respective dyadic opposition: the Art Nouveau movement approved of interiority and privacy, while the Modern Movement sought to replace these values with ideas of openness, transparency, and publicity. This interchangeability is also reminiscent of the third method (the reversal of the positions), whereby ‘public’ and ‘private’ interchange positions. Therefore, this pattern not only corresponds to Spigel and Colomina’s methods, but also facilitates the application of a methodology similar to the A-effect technique (as suggested by the interchangeability within the ‘actor-spectator’ dyad).

The second method, introduced by sociologists Elisabeth Ewen and Rosalyn Baxandall, suggested the re-definition of one part through the re-conception of the other. In these terms one could argue that the suggestion that the opposing conditions are interdependent is an obvious statement. However, one needs to examine its accuracy prior to any definitive affirmations. One could argue that even the aforementioned method includes this notion of interdependency, since the ‘approval’ of one of the parts entails the ‘rejection’ of the other. Throughout my study, the part that seems to correspond most closely to the second type is the
analysis of Slavoj Žižek’s thesis on interiority: an ‘outsider’ perceives a domestic interior as an ‘outside-inside’ and a dweller conceptualises exterior space as an ‘inside-outside’. This particular analysis underpins the agency of the frame in the perception and re-compositions of the ‘real’. Similarly, the opposition between Le Corbusier and Auguste Perret over the shape of the window frame highlighted this exact concept through a discussion of how the formation of the interior shapes the dweller’s perception of the ‘outside reality’.

The last method, as suggested by Beatriz Colomina and the group of young scholars, inaugurates the concept of reversing the positions of the two parts within an opposition. I have organised the second section of chapter 3, “A study of the ‘in-between’: domestic performativity at the limit of privacy,” in accordance with this proposition. In particular, I applied this method by adopting two different ‘roles’, the dweller and the outsider, and thus reversing the point of view or perspective of a given subject. In so doing, I endeavoured to practice an ‘ambivalent’ method similar to Benjamin’s approach to metropolitan life; the reversal of one’s perspective towards a given through the adoption of opposing positions is similar to a constant ‘movement’ or to a kind of oscillation between these positions. However, it is important to note that throughout my research there are parts that correspond to all three propositions. The brief commentary on the correspondence with the particular sections of the study sought to reveal in detail the links between these methods, Brecht’s theory, and my study. Brecht’s theorisation served as a starting point for the development of a methodological apparatus for confronting dyadic concepts, whereas the three groups of researchers provided practical and theoretical guidelines for the actual application of such a method. Overall, in terms of methodology, the current study introduced the interpenetration of techniques usually employed by theatrical practitioners into the field of architectural theory on domesticity.

The particular methodology has, obviously, a significant impact on the main outcomes of the thesis; a rigid elaboration of the dyads, or the denial of the agency of the ‘in-between area’, would have provided different conclusions, which I could not foresee at that point. Nevertheless, I could admit that any rigid method may have resulted in similarly ‘inflexible’ outcomes, which would not offer a potential starting point for any future study. This is to suggest, that the definitive character of conclusions suggests the impossibility to alter or enhance the findings.

Additionally the commensurability between the theatrical field and architectural studies, as indicated at the beginning of the current research, is given an extra impetus not only through the interpenetration of techniques. The references to leisure related complexes revealed a spatial relation between theatrical and architectural production. The theme parks in China or the “Ski Dubai” ensemble in Dubai resemble a theatrical stage similar to the pre-Brechtnian stage-image, where the visitor, absorbed by the architectural ‘event’, performs a role in order to adjust(see
Moreover, the analysis of fictional domestic models, such as the Villa Arpels, revealed that the statement ‘home as theatre’ may correspond to the way in which we experience domesticity (see chapter 4, section 8). Arpels’ behaviour underpinned the role of the dweller as a theatrical performer, reminiscent of Perec’s propositions, the role of the architect as a director of dwellers’ actions, and the fact that domestic space was becoming a theatrical one. Therefore the interpenetration between theatrical and domestic space was not a given for this study but a parameter shaping both the method of analysis and the outcomes of the research.

Thus, in respect to my position on methodology, I could argue that the main outcome resulting from the application of Brechtian techniques is that I have elaborated the literature concerning dyads without accepting, in advance, stereotypical positions, such as the ‘inferior character of suburbia’ or ‘the deception inherent in any mimetic product’. Therefore, during the study of the references and the consequent elaboration of the information, I have tried to point out how each part of a dyad moved from the positive condition towards the negative, and vice versa in different periods. In so doing, I realised that I was denying a procedure similar to what Baudrillard called “Integral Reality.” Baudrillard’s recent theory of the current production of the ‘real’ is aligned with a constant beautification and sterilisation of any aspect of contemporary living, and thus this procedure defines ‘real’ in both aesthetic and functional terms. The main tool for the structure of that ‘real’ is the technology that detects ‘evil,’ or, to put it more accurately, potentially ‘evil’ conditions, and in turn discards them accordingly. In accordance with this theorisation Lieven De Cauter introduced the notion of assimilated normality which proliferates ‘positive’ spatial structures for human beings; the adherence to such constructions proves to be irrational as, for De Cauter, this activates a series of catastrophic events. Both authors managed to underline that absolute and deterministic gestures towards the destruction of ‘evil’, either in spatial or mental configurations, are a potentially harmful approach for man and its surroundings. These two references not only reveal the starting point of the current thesis, but also the significance of adapting a flexible method of analysis and narration. For instance, one could have engaged the mainstream critique, developed in the 1960’s, rejecting suburbia (as an ‘evil’ condition) and then ended up with a study approving the urban lifestyle as the only proposition for ideal inhabitation. In the course of time the result would be the re-activation of a system that would aim at the de-evaluation of the ‘urban’ and the re-evaluation of the ‘suburban’. This kind of loop within urban criticism is, perhaps, what we have experienced since the mid-1980s, when the New Urbanism movement started to promote small-scale, suburban living within picturesque neighbourhoods. Therefore, in stark contrast to the ‘rejection of suburbia,’ a new pattern of inhabitation emerged, enhancing the concept of neighbourhood and of the respective private and public arrangements.
Furthermore, the current study discussed some spatial dyads related to domesticity, ‘urban-suburban’, ‘in-out’, and ‘prototype-counterfeit’, in relation to the more generic antagonisms, ‘mimetic-theatrical’, ‘chaos-definition’, and ‘organism-surroundings’. The first pairs, ‘urban-suburban’ and ‘in-out’, are linked to the experience and architectural elaboration of domesticity, whereas the third, ‘prototype-counterfeit’ corresponds to the representational means of dwelling. This correspondence situated the domestic oppositions in the more general field of ‘distinctions’, and provided a link to theoretical fields beyond architectural criticism. In this sense, this thesis aimed at proposing a pattern for the interpenetration of architectural and theatrical studies and hence highlights the significance of an interdisciplinary methodology.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp represented man’s attempt to adapt to the new era of standardisation and mechanisation, whereas Jacques Tati developed his own persona, Monsieur Hulot, to correspond to the period of mid-twentieth century (see chapter 4, section 8). For a contemporary representative of the current condition representing man’s reaction/response to their surroundings, Woody Allen’s impersonation would be an effective persona: an indecisive, unstable, obsessive, and nervous character. These characteristics reveal the confusion associated with contemporary living, and perhaps more importantly they suggest man’s oscillation in-between conditions in their attempt to confront dilemmas and distinctions. The dyad ‘organism-surroundings’ (chapter 1, section 1), which I consider to be similar to the ‘subjective-objective’ opposition (chapter 3, section 5), is the principal antagonism, which creates a system of sub-types that are either directly or indirectly linked to it. Therefore, an individual developing a perceptual and behavioural pattern similar to Woody Allen’s character would experience a lifestyle based on a constant ambivalence, and, consequently, that neurotic person would have overcome the impasse imposed by the current state of Integral Reality and the catastrophic consequences of assimilated normality. That person acknowledges the difficulty inherent in everyday life, whereby one has to ‘shuttle’ between the roles of the ‘practical’ person, whose concern is the satisfaction of personal dreams and ambitions, and the ‘ethical’ person, who aims at the well-being of others. In this sense, the dilemma ‘myself-the other’ still dominates any aspect of life (see chapter 2, section 3) and that problematic seems to initiate a life-long procedure. The neurotic person is not an individual who provides a final solution to the confrontation of dilemmas, but they anthropomorphise what I have attempted to communicate in terms of the elaboration of a dyadic mechanism throughout this study.

In these terms, the neurotic person practices an A-effect technique rejecting the impasse imposed by either Integral Reality or capsular civilisation. Both Baudrillard and De Cauter failed to include within their theorisation a practical or theoretical proposition in order for contemporary man to step out from the aforementioned loop. When one activates his/her intellect, similarly to
Brecht’s spectator, then this person is capable to radicalise the space in-between the parts of any dyad. A previous-familiar configuration becomes uncanny and the ‘spectator’ is forced to re-appropriate the given and thus alter it partially.
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**Filmography**


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