what conditions is a pragmatic solution also poetic? Frampton could have written more about such a distinction because so much is implicit in his close interpretations of built works. Nevertheless, his use of the term "tectonic expression" does imply that architectural construction has a role in the formation of culture. This is the consistent message of this book and its challenge.

— David Leatherbarrow
University of Pennsylvania

Mark Wigley
White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture
Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995, xxvi + 424 pp., 115 illus. $40.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-262-23185-9.

Recently a number of theoretically oriented scholars of modern architecture have addressed the subject of fashion. Mark Wigley's *White Walls, Designer Dresses* follows an edited collection entitled *Architecture: In Fashion* (New York, 1994) with essays by Wigley, Mary McLeod, Leila Kinney, and Erin Mackie, while *Domus, 9H, Baumeister,* and *Assemblage* have published articles exploring attitudes toward fashion among practitioners of the modern movement. One might think this a curious topic for the architectural press: designer dresses certainly seem irrelevant to the making of buildings. Yet since 1967, when Roland Barthes published *Système de la mode* (*The Fashion System,* 1983) a number of provocative studies have examined how fashion manifests larger social themes, among them Anne Hollander's *Seeing through Clothes* (New York, 1978) and Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (London, 1985). Such studies have legitimated fashion as a topic for intellectual debate.

Wigley's thesis, despite its foundation in these earlier studies, comes as a surprise. He argues that architects and polemicists of the modern movement used the notions of fashion and "whiteness" in shaping the new style, and that these two tropes allowed Modernism to come into being. Common to these pioneers was the tendency to define the new architecture through clothes, either by claiming that their architectural vocabulary was like a new outfit or, conversely, by characterizing their idiom as outside or above fashion. Whiteness symbolized both the nonfashionable and the new outfit that would clad "the modern, athletic body," so that "white walls" became the "default setting" for avant-garde architecture even where color was employed.

To advance these ideas, Wigley astutely directs our attention to fashion and color metaphors in the polemical statements of two principal groups and one supporting actor. In the first group are precursors or pioneers of the modern movement: Hermann Muthesius, Henri van de Velde, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, Walter Gropius, Adolf Loos, and Le Corbusier. Of these Loos and especially Le Corbusier are most often center stage. Wigley's second group is formed by polemicists for the new style such as Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedion. Gottfried Semper appears in the role of major supporting actor because his writings on color, clothing, and architecture in the mid-nineteenth century often influenced early twentieth-century debates.

Wigley opens his chapter on the color white with a long discussion of the Weissenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart. Before 1927, he demonstrates, avant-garde architects actively debated the proper use of color, and many of the Weissenhof's buildings were not white: Le Corbusier's were pink, brown, blue, yellow, and gray; Mart Stam's was bright blue; Bruno Taut's was such a tonal riot that it provoked Le Corbusier to remark that Taut must be color blind. Nevertheless, Wigley correctly asserts, written descriptions and cheap photographic reproductions have persuaded generations of students of modern architecture that this model development of dwellings was principally white. Thus, the Weissenhofsiedlung "facilitated the reduction of diverse tendencies and contradictions of the avant-garde into a recognizeable 'look' that turns around the white wall" (302).

To explain how the modern movement came to be associated with whiteness, Wigley teases out the many connotations white bore for polemicists of the avant-garde. Color was sexual; white intellectual. Color was feminine; white masculine. Colors changed; white seemed permanent. Ornament was frivolous and rarely all white. White focused the eye on the "true" composition of a building, its volumes, rather than keeping the eye on the surface. White seemed hygienic. For Le Corbusier, white bespoke ocean liners and therefore represented modern industrial culture; but it also connoted the vernacular dwellings he had sketched on his "voyage d'orient," and thus represented tradition.

The irony, Wigley maintains, is that the white on buildings such as Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye at Poissy was nothing more than veneer—a "designer dress." Through such linguistic analogies and through analyses of polemical texts, Wigley patches together his argument that fashion, along with whiteness, was the repressed originator in the conceptualization of modernity. Loos's writings on fashion are well known, but Wigley also calls forth the writings of Walter Gropius: "Modern man, who no longer dresses in historical garmets but wears modern clothes, also needs a modern home appropriate to him and his time, equipped with all the modern devices of daily use" (1926; 102–103). Le Corbusier, in the first volume of the *Oeuvre complète,* declared himself "against the *frivolités* of passing fashion" (38). Of course, Loos, Gropius, and Le Corbusier paid much attention to their own clothes, while Henri van de Velde and some of the Viennese Secessionists designed women's apparel to complement their interiors.

Wigley contends that the persistence of fashion metaphors in the discourse of early Modernism indicates that modernity could only be defined in this manner. For example, architects such as Gropius or Le Corbusier often wrote that architecture should take its form from an unblinking assessment of programmatic functions. Yet, in reading their manifestoes, "All we learn is that function is what fashion is not" (83). In all, Wigley contends that "Modern architecture did not simply become fashionable. Rather it was, from the very beginning, organized by the operations of fashion that underpinned its very attacks on fashion" (180).

To explain the significance of fashion for these architects, Wigley again points to oppositions that defined their terms. Architecture should be timeless; fashion meant changeability. Architecture should be determined by its bones, its structure; fashions clothed surfaces. Architecture should be strong, masculine; fashion was frivolous,

feminine. The paradox, Wigley continues, is that Modernist architects, in aiming to create what Giedion had declared "a new tradition," were in essence creating a new fashion. The new style would inevitably be absorbed into what Theodor Adorno called "the culture industry" (to which Wigley alludes with his persistent but unexplained use of the phrase "the fashion industry"), and the sociocritical tool of early Modernernist architecture would eventually be coopted and rendered a tool of capitalist expression.

Wigley also suggests that architects who defined the new style in opposition to fashion were equating modernity with masculinity. He cites Adolf Loos's attack on the Wiener Werkstätte's "feministic eclectic rubbish arts and crafts" (76), and cites a newspaper article in which Loos thundered: "To bring us first-rate work no architects are needed, no arts and crafts students and no painting, embroidering, potting, precious-material-wasting daughters of senior civil servants or other *Fräulein*, who regard handicraft as something whereby one may earn pin-money or while away one's spare time until one can walk up the aisle" (77). To Loos, "first-rate work" was strong, silent, restrained; in other words, it was male.

As Wigley unfolds his ideas, the theoretical apparatus undergirding his argument becomes apparent. In exploring the relation of fashion to architecture, he can apply insights in Derridean philosophy and feminist theory to a study of the modern movement. Such an enterprise allows him to efface the differences between Modernist and Postmodern architecture by portraying the modern movement as defined by an interest in surface, ornament, and fashion, epithets that are usually reserved to characterize Postmodernism.

Wigley wrote his first book on Jacques Derrida's reliance on architectural modes of thought in *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), and the methodology of this French poststructuralist philosopher has profoundly influenced *White Walls, Designer Dresses.* Like Derrida, Wigley constructs arguments mainly through *explication de texte.* Derrida's central insight and the foundation of the analytic technique he invented, deconstruction, is that no argument can be logically constructed without setting itself against another concept, term, or idea. The excluded concept, often never discussed, actually allows the argument to come into being. "To 'deconstruct' philosophy," Derrida once explained, "is to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts . . . to determine, from a certain external perspective that it cannot name or describe, what this history may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as history through this representation in which it has a stake" (*Positions,* 1972; [Chicago, 1981].) Wigley's thesis, that the early Modernist style is a "designer dress," is precisely the kind of argument Derrida describes: Wigley purports to have "determined" that fashion, ornament, and surface were what the avant-garde "concealed or excluded" in defining itself as rational, permanent, purist, and founded in technological advance. He claims his book examines "what is hidden only because it is so close to our eyes" (xv).

The importance of gender in Wigley's rereading of these polemics further explains his interest in examining the linkage of fashion and architecture. Other writers, most notably Mary McLeod, have developed the feminist themes that Wigley explores. In her "Undressing Architecture: Fashion, Gender and Modernity" in *Architecture: In Fashion,* McLeod unveils the sexism intrinsic to the early avant-garde's construction of Modernism as a style transcending the vagaries of fashion. Discussions of gender in previous literature on modern architecture have focused principally on peripheral topics such as the interior domestic environment and women's unequal access to the profession. Wigley and McLeod, rereading polemics by masters of the modern movement through the lens of fashion, have forged an opportunity to touch upon problems of gender and architecture while exploring not the marginalized but the central.

With all these interesting insights and possibilities one wishes that *White Walls, Designer Dresses* were better than it is. At times Wigley appears unwilling to pull disparate insights into a coherent whole, and his text eschews normal discursive methods of argumentation. Moreover he is given to straw men and overstatement in constructing his argument, weakening the genuine merit of his claims. He is to be applauded for pointing out the frequency of fashion metaphors in discussions of the new style. But does that really mean that the modern movement is defined by an obsession with surface, ornament, and style to the exclusion of interests in structure and technology, functional planning and spatial dynamism?

The real problem with *White Walls, Designer Dresses* is its monocular historical vision. When Wigley uses the word "Modernism" he refers to a highly selective cast of characters, those architects or critics who wrote about fashion or whiteness. By nearly anyone's standards, however, Josef Hoffmann, Henri van de Velde, and Hermann Muthesius did not design in the canonical modern style that is the subject of Wigley's argument. Furthermore, on those architects who failed to mention clothes but were central to the modern movement's definition of itself, Wigley is silent. Where is Mies van der Rohe? Or Johannes Duiker, or Mart Stam, or Gerrit Rietveld? Wigley can hardly discuss everyone, but his book claims that "white walls" and "designer dresses" underlay "the fashioning of modern architecture." In fact, Wigley's text most consistently refers to Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion, two figures who constructed a very unbalanced, if influential, view of the modern movment, as Giorgio Ciucci demonstrated in "The Invention of the Modern Movement" (*Oppositions,* 1981).

Indeed, if one extracts Wigley's main thesis from the hyper-jargoned language in which it is couched, one discovers a core that reads approximately as follows: Le Corbusier and Sigfried Giedion conceptualized the new architecture against fashion, but created a new fashion. They demanded that the new architecture be white, ignoring the use of color by most Modernist architects, including Le Corbusier himself. In short, Wigley points out contradictions inherent in Giedion's and Le Corbusier's vision of the new architecture. In doing so he is essentially following the trail blazed thirty years ago by second-generation critics and historians such as Reyner Banham, William Jordy, Alan Colquhoun, and Colin Rowe, all of whom highlighted inconsistencies and complexities in various visions of Modernism, especially that of Le Corbusier. Wigley has found an unexpected set of contradictions, to be sure, but the

overarching point of his argument is not new.

Wigley has successfully revealed how architects like Le Corbusier used "the operations of fashion" in defining the new style, but he does not consider why the Swiss architect began to pay heed to fashion in the first place. Fashion, if nothing else, marks social status. Perhaps Le Corbusier and other architects who opposed fashion were trying to erase the class distinctions that fashion typically secures. This would be consistent with the traditional (though challenged) characterization of the modern movement as left-wing in ideological orientation. On the other hand, the fashion industry expanded dramatically between 1880 and 1930, and stylish outfits previously accessible only to the rich were marketed to an expanding bourgeois class. In opposing building fashions, Le Corbusier and Loos at least may have been groping to preserve the social distinctions that mass production techniques served to disintegrate. If so, these architects bore intentions more conservative than revolutionary, an implication of Wigley's thesis that is provocative, yet unexplored.

Behind the presence of fashion in the discourse of the modern movement lies the working out of a class ideology, which Wigley fails to articulate. To do so, he would have had to investigate outside the frame of the texts he consults. He would have had to research into the cultural history of the moment, and go beyond readily available published statements by his cast of characters. Wigley's method of textual analysis has produced a promising beginning. But to examine what these statements on fashion and architecture reveal about the culture of the modern movement, deconstructing polemics is not enough.

— Sarah Williams Ksiazek
Harvard University

Ulrich Conrads, Magdalena Droste, Winfried Nerdinger, and Hilde Strohl, editors

DIE BAUHAUS-DEBATTE 1953: DOKUMENTE EINER VERD KONTROVERSE

Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1994, 264 pp., 2 illus. 48 DM (paper). ISBN 3-528-06100-6.

Éva Forgács

THE BAUHAUS IDEA AND BAUHAUS POLITICS

Trans. John Batki; Budapest: Central European Press, 1995, ix + 237 pp., 10 illus. $49.00 (cloth). ISBN 1-85866-013-0. $19.95 (paper). ISBN 1-85866-012-2

For evidence that the Bauhaus was the most important twentieth-century experiment in art and architectural education, one might consider not only the impact of its teachers and students upon succeeding generations, but also the extent to which the school serves as a template for our conception of intellectual communities and the controversies that so often divide them. Neither Éva Forgács nor the editors of *Die Bauhaus-Debatte* are much interested in education or design at the Bauhaus. Instead they focus on the academic politics surrounding the school and its reputation. Forgács takes as her subject the Bauhaus itself; *Die Bauhaus-Debatte* recapitulates arguments that erupted in West German architectural circles two decades after the school's closure.

Very different motivations shape these two books. Writing in Hungary in the spring of 1989, Forgács sought "an object lesson in the various forms of behavior that characterize a community setting out with democratic intentions and struggling with the techniques of organizing itself, while constantly having to defend its openness and independence" (3). In the essay which opens *Die Bauhaus-Debatte*, Winfried Nerdinger expresses the same demythologizing approach to the Bauhaus that characterized his sour appraisal in *Walter Gropius* (Berlin, 1985). At the same time, however, this volume, the one-hundredth in the important Bauwelt Fundamente series, demonstrates the school's continued importance as a lightning rod in discussions of the direction of German postwar architecture.

Forgács's goals are more ambitious and more difficult to fulfill than those of the editors of *Die Bauhaus-Debatte*. The publication of the Hungarian edition of *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics* in 1991 was recognized in that country as an important step in the creation of a post-Communist scholarship. At a time when the possibility of entirely objective scholarship seems remote to American academics, Forgács, who frequently quotes primary sources, creates a narrative whose ideology must be refreshingly unobtrusive for a central European audience. Her contribution to the extensive English and German literature on the Bauhaus is limited, however, by her reliance on published rather than archival sources. In fact, she appears to have read few of the contemporary attacks on the Bauhaus to which she frequently refers.

For this reader, Forgács gets off to a shaky start. She is apparently unaware of the contributions of Stanford Anderson, Reyner Banham, Tilmann Buddensieg, and Joan Campbell to the prehistory of the Bauhaus. As a result, she has difficulty in reconstructing convincingly the environment in which Gropius became fascinated with the intersection of modern industry and design. I think she also undervalues the importance of both the school Henry van de Velde had previously founded in Weimar and Gropius's flirtation with Expressionism.

The real strength of *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics* lies in Forgács's analysis of Gropius's leadership of the Bauhaus and of the personality and administrative conflicts that complicated his job. At her best, Forgács elucidates the competing agendas within the fledgling institution and its relationship to various audiences. "From the first moment the Bauhaus was forced into an ever exacerbating schizophrenia," she explains, "while Gropius was actually thinking of 'mass-produced building' and high technology, in public he had to speak about crafts; when he committed himself to the ideals of craftsmanship, he found himself opposed by the conservative painters of the academy, and when he wanted to realize his modern design ideas by smuggling them into the crafts programme, the watchful eyes of the Thuringian parliament demanded to see evidence of his loyalty, and only after the exhibition of objects designed to please the tastes of Weimar would it promise the continued