

1 An Alternative Abstract

It has often been recorded- humanity must always move forward- to be human means forward momentum- the tradition of progress is found in most founding English scholars- in this view the present must validate the future- it stems from Hegel, Bacon, Locke, Voltaire and their ilk- looking backwards we are told to celebrate the past in present to facilitate the future- and that is the story that architectural historicism expresses- it is synchronised with the anthropological notion of the primitive - historicism via the anti-primitive - it is like Fabians (1983) idea of the denial of the coeval presence of the past as primitive (Bennett, 2004- Quoting Fabian (1983))- the traditional primitive is negative while modernity is positive- the primitive is the negative presence of the past in the present- it is the product of an invented idea of the primitive identity based on objectified western ideology - historic science - it is a constructed absolute idea of the other portrayed as an objective truth that dismisses recognition that science contains ideology - as Peter Kulchyski writes, "the term 'totalization' can be used to characterize colonial power... with any process that 'totalizes'(1995, p405)- the idea of the primitive is a denial of the coevalness of their spirit, their identity is defined as being the past- this denial is abstract, not concrete, even if it always claims to be absolute, it is not- for example in old science the primitive is a bad human body, a degenerated form, not present in the present even when we see it presenting itself or exhibited (Malik, 1996)- it is seen as a missing link to the primate world from which humans evolved- this evolutionary dialogue was made up for the purposes of power it says we must think objectively to analyse truth and use the rules of science- it claims this method is fair, is objective- it says only the objective is true- science is truth, is fact, is control and control is good, isn't it?- in the English canon the primitive counterpoint is necessary to the construction of a contemporary civic identity because without the negative past there is no future- In Weber's *The City* (1921/ 1951) the urban environment was conceived as the ideal type of environment for Anglo Saxons, and an expression of their race genius- without civics there is no civilization- in Lokko's (2000, p42) *White Paper Black Marks*, the city became an icon of the degradation of civilisation as the city turned black- as the city came to be associated with radicalised groups it transformed from a traditional utopia to contemporary dystopia- today the idea of a progressive civic spirit continues to justify the existence of the metropole and its international economy- despite its supposed decay- without new buildings and new technology and new infrastructure, the old celebration would be over- what would the politician talk about if not for the new objective achievement?- without the primitive comparison our civic population would not believe we are still making progress- without the Canadian heritage index, without the old there would be no visual comparison between the present and the past- in this process we are required to 'modernise' the built icons of the past- the ideological past is derived from the counterpoint of an ideological future- it is a tune our planners play in harmony- "do you think things are getting better every day?" (The Mekons, 1995- voice of Vito Acconci) are you positive-ist-ic? do you believe the story of the former harmonises with the prior? Must the act of remembering the past be a celebration of the present? Does it reassure us of our superiority over it?- or do you embrace the new sentiment, that we need to just get over it, forget it, move on- ahistoricism (and modernism) is a popular tune these days, I do not deny it- the voice of modernism, thrives on the absence of those tougher criticisms put forward by Clement Greenburg- the new way of thinking about progress requires a civic spirit that celebrates and will not denigrate the nation. Yet the old idea of the past

is no longer so worthy of that celebration, so we look outwards to ignore the way the primitive was presented as degradation and devolution, but continue to paint scientific evolution as the future. The new tune implicitly and often silently argues that the past is undesirable, the future is inevitable - it argues the primitive must migrate into the present society and economy or be subsumed and doomed- they are offered a new form of assimilation and genocide- or as Ann Laura Stoler (2006) writes, the term imperial or empire does not always fit because its actors often refused those terms when practicing its practices (p10)- the white man's primitive remains a dying and disappearing phantom disappearing in the shadow of a west that continues to imagine itself growing (Berkhofer, 1978)- but are we (the west) growing or dying?- the world around us is dying, our traditions are also dying- and as Muschamp (1974/ 2004) says, the Western tradition of architecture is already completely dead and both Adorno and Baudelaire write in context of the traditional western mindset; modernity itself is death (Paz, 1991)- their version of modernity requires we step outside the western establishment and see our society in a state of death- it is a negative poetics- it proposes an embrace of a negative view of our own culture- and this view inspires me- the objective and clinical society, the world of the here now is already in ruin- the positive and victorious dialogue might in fact be a state of death- yet commodious positivism reigns supreme within the status quo- it claims normality is human and we are destined to humanize the world- standardization- it proclaims we are all human, but some humans are good and some humans are bad humans degraded humans- bad humans are supposedly underdeveloped- technological humanity is human achievement is good humanity- new engineering feats, new buildings, new technology, new materials, new shapes and aesthetics are good human achievements- future humanity is new humanity- good clean math and geometry and new human achievements are contextualised by an the increase our measure of control and sanity- the world made visible and knowable is goodness is health- scientific control of the environment- the dream of utopia versus the dream of dystopia- the dream binary being the primitive as chaos, as violence, as superstition, as broken, as ill, as other- the contemporary is healthy, is wealthy, is happy, is superior, is proven true- I proclaim that the future entails looking backwards.