Reading Kenneth Frampton: A Commentary on 'Modern Architecture', 1980

by

Gevork Hartoonian
Gevork Hartoonian presents a retrospective reading of the first edition of Kenneth Frampton’s Modern Architecture: A Critical History, published in 1980. He provides novel insights into the significance of Frampton’s historiography of modern architecture and beyond. In exploring selected themes from Frampton’s ongoing criticism of contemporary architecture, this book leads us to a critical understanding of the past, the modernity of architecture’s contemporaneity. It unpacks classificatory modes governing the three-part organization of Frampton’s book, the constellation of which allowed him to hold on to an anteroom view of history amidst the flood of temporalities spanning the period 1980–2020. Contemplating Frampton’s book as an artifact stripped of temporality, this original work reads Frampton’s historiography in the intersection of selected epigraphs and three images illuminating the book’s classificatory mode. Hartoonian presents a valuable companion to Frampton’s A Critical History for readers interested in the successes and failures of contemporary architecture’s philosophical and theoretical aspirations.
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INTRODUCTION
In many works, searching from this viewpoint for this or that trace, for something that can give you information about an author, you practice an essentially biographical investigation of the author himself, you don’t analyse the meaning and significance of the work as such.—Jacques Lacan

This book is neither a biographical investigation of Kenneth Frampton, a renowned historian, architect and architecture critic, nor a study of his oeuvre in its entirety, a huge task that would take into consideration many volumes, including the five editions of his Modern Architecture: A Critical History, in addition to the numerous published books, essays and forewords that he has written for scholarly books to date. Instead, it is a modest-yet-timely project: focusing on the first edition of A Critical History (as it will be referred to throughout this volume), it is a search for clues and positions that will provide the reader with a partial view of the significance of Frampton’s historiography of modern architecture—â€œpartial†because, in this volume, each chapter of the first edition of his book has not been examined. Although particular attention has been accorded to Frampton’s work, the scope of this book is comprehensively narrow. Rather than reading the first edition of A Critical History through the lens of contemporary fashionable ideas and transient themes, the approach here is somewhat archeological: zooming into his book and simultaneously building out, an attempt has been made to historicize Frampton’s positions, with a critical eye on the contemporary state...
of architectural praxis. The following reading of Frampton also offers a "prism" for comprehending architecture in global capitalism. Critically significant to this retrospective reading of Frampton's book is the fact that in the course of its subsequent editions, the first two parts of the first edition have remained almost unchanged, and also that its content comprises the core of the Modern Architecture movement, which still influences the course of future actions. For instance, among the many themes discussed in the second part of Frampton's book, his interpretation of events from 1930 to 1945—a watershed in the developmental process of modern movement architecture—is highlighted. On the other hand, the thematic continuity and crisis of postwar architecture is demonstrated by a focus on selected themes from the other two main parts of A Critical History. This book explores the historical constellation in which Frampton held onto his anteroom view of history, even amid the flow of time and the flood of temporality. In this mediated interest in historiography, our contemporary involvement in the subject foreshadows the appeal to retrieve the historian's intentions. Following on from continued scholarly interest in teaching and writing on modern and contemporary historiographies of architecture was this author's The Mental Life of the Architectural Historian (2013), a volume that examines tropes central to the work of selected architectural historians, including Frampton. In particular is the question of how each historian approached the historicity of modern architecture. The present book is different: it neither looks exhaustively at every subject and building densely elucidated in the first edition of Frampton's book nor pursues what might be considered a textual reading of his book. The reader will note the diachronic temporalities that weave my reading of Frampton's project with the historicity of his ecrire. Obviously, "Kenneth Frampton" means many things, not only to this author but also to the many architects, critics, historians and academics who have been reading, reviewing and critiquing his work since he attained visibility in the architectural circles of London after graduating from the Architecture Association in 1956, and more so after he decided to settle in New York City and teach at Princeton University in 1972. In addition to his affiliation with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and with Martin Heidegger's writings on subjects such as "the work of art," technology and "dwelling," what is intriguing about Frampton is his analytical approach to, and criticism of, the architecture of the past and the present—an approach that, even during the high days of post-structuralism, was neither formalistic nor textual. Although exposed to the significant theoretical discourses disseminated during the late 1970s, this author's central intellectual inclination was coloured by Marxian readings and criticisms of art and architecture in general and Manfredo Tafuri's in particular. On the other hand, Frampton's take on critical theory and his engaged criticism of architects' work were appealing to an architect and educator who was a latecomer to the primal scene of the postwar crisis of architecture—America! As for the book itself, A Critical History, each chapter begins with an appropriate quotation from the text of another architect and/or thinker. This became a motivation to write an essay on "quotation" that was presented at the annual conference of the SAHANZ (2017)—a revised and extended version is compiled in
Equally important was the fact that, in the first edition of Frampton’s book, an image preceded the text of each of the three main parts. These three cover-page images are considered here as “postcards,†pregnant with clues to the problematic suggested by the title of each part, which Frampton critically unpacks in the relevant compiled chapters. Each of these postcards is also read as a visual emblem communicating between the author’s text and the reader, who would be expected to encounter the book in different geographic temporalities, especially as the book has been translated into several languages. Here, the reader is reminded of two things: first, that these postcards and the idea of starting each chapter with a quotation are considered as an attribute of artifact, an analogue to Frampton’s book; and, second, that the image preceding the introduction to the first edition of the book was removed in the second (1984) and subsequent editions. Though Frampton never stated as much, this excision was perhaps part of the “minor corrections, to enlarge the existing final chapter substantially, and add a completely new chapter at the end,†he outlines in the preface to the second edition. Toward the end of the same preface, we realize that this “new chapter†will introduce the concept of Critical Regionalism, Frampton’s major contribution to the criticism of contemporary architecture, which he revised and expanded upon on several subsequent occasions. This is one reason why the last chapter of this volume is dedicated to Critical Regionalism. And yet, the omission of the cover image from the book’s introduction says something about Frampton’s skilled sensitivity concerning the images he selected to accompany his text, a vital hallmark of his career since he took on the job of technical editor of Architectural Design (AD) in 1962, a position he held for three years. Frampton’s reserved admiration for photographic techniques is evident in most of his published manuscripts to date. This is an extremely important attitude in the context of the current commercialized nature of everyday life when the photographic reproduction of a building is often abused, its potentialities narrowed to image-making, a snapshot substitute for the experience of architecture as such. This development confirms today the distinction Walter Benjamin made between watching architecture with a pair of touristic glasses and experiencing a building in a moment of distraction. This is a critical-materialist understanding of â€œexperience,†the anthropological dimension of which Frampton shares, though in his work this is toned down by a phenomenological concern for “essences,†rather than for the Benjaminian notion of “bodily sphere†associated with the developments taking place in technique. In the same text, Benjamin wrote in parentheses that “Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through ‘historicity.’†Frampton would agree with Benjamin’s disappointment at witnessing the demise of traditional experience (past historical life) due to the distance technology inserts between the past and the present and the subject and the object. In the following chapters, the reader will also notice Marxian traces in both Heidegger and Hannah Arendt. Even though Arendt is not mentioned in the first edition of Frampton’s book, these two thinkers’ discourse problematized his affiliation with Benjamin to the point where Benjamin would remain in their shadow. Frampton’s post-1980
writings demonstrate that he did not keep Benjamin and Heidegger at an equal distance, even though, as we will see in the following chapter, a Benjaminian vision of history casts a long shadow on Frampton's historiography of modern architecture. The third significance of Frampton's book relates to the following statement extracted from the introduction to the first edition, which, interestingly enough, remains the historico-theoretical regime of A Critical History today:

"Of the courses of action which are still open to contemporary architecture—courses which in one way or another have already been entered upon—only two seem to offer the possibility of a significant outcome."

This statement discloses the dialectical coexistence of the "operative†and the critical in Frampton's historiography. What seemingly interested Frampton were the moments in the formation of modern architecture when a work either tried to exacerbate "meaning†to the point of inexpressibility or recoded the culture of building toward a poetics of placemaking. Thus, Mies van der Rohe's "ideal†of beinahe nichts (almost nothing) is tacitly introduced as a source of future action. According to Frampton, Mies’s lack of interest in engaging with the urban enclave is "patently visible and often takes the form of masonry enclosure,†without associating the implied character of architecture with any particular architect. In retrospect, the reader of Frampton's oeuvre will not fail to associate this suggested "visibility†with a specific group of modernist architects, among whom Alvar Aalto stands tall. Pursuing Adolf Loos's strategic approach to modernity, Aalto attempted to emulate the "cracks†existing between the past historical life and technologically motivated experience, aiming to create an architecture that would avoid the avant-garde's transgressive agendas. Yet, call it misreading! In the present volume, Frampton's two suggested opposing sources of future action have been read allegorically. It is hoped that the reader will extrapolate its potentialities from "Mies Contra Aalto: A Conundrum,†discussed in Chapter 6 of this book. Still, having come across Fredric Jameson’s reading of the Heideggerian rift between "world†and "earth,â€ the alleged misreading sheds critical light on Frampton's reserved position on Mies, whose work complements Aalto's while keeping the Finnish architect's "biomorphism†at arm’s length. This implied ontological separateness can be read in analogy to the "bridgeâ€ Heidegger discusses in his famous 1954 essay on "dwelling.†Reflecting on Frampton’s reading of Heidegger's essay, as suggested elsewhere, amalgamating material with technique, the Heideggerian bridge can evoke a sense of nearness by keeping the banks of the river apart. As such, dialectics structures the proposed "Mies contra Aalto†paradigm.

A fourth interest in Frampton's vision of history concerns themes that led him to choose A Critical History for the book's subtitle. These themes are differentiated from those in another prominent historian who also took a Marxian approach to architectural history, Manfredo Tafuri. While this has been extensively discussed elsewhere, the difference between the two historians can be briefly articulated thus: both remain critical of the avant-garde aspiration to reconcile formal autonomy with the prevailing zeitgeist; and each approaches architectural praxis differently. Drawing from the historicity of the nihilism of the project of Modernity, Tafuri...
€’s critical discourse remains focused on how architecture at its best anticipated an eventual failure, despite or because of its attempt at decoding the capitalist production system. Frampton, by contrast, tends to highlight the marginal victories of singular works that have been able to preserve aspects of "placemaking," as instrumental reason tightens its grip on architecture. While both historians share the idea that architecture should address a historiographical problem, Frampton's commitment to a semiautonomous architecture has uniquely positioned him to interpret the architect's continuous encounter with the contemporaneity integral to a broader crisis of architecture. Whereas Frampton plots the ongoing development of the concept of crisis throughout the short history of modernity, Tafuri traces the genealogies of the crisis back to the springboard of Western Humanism. The important dimensions of Frampton's critical regime are discussed throughout this book, particularly in Chapter 7, and in connection with the author's Critical Regionalism. Having plotted these four cardinal points, we need to remember two additional considerations: given the three postcards mentioned above, the scope of this book remains "confined" to discussing themes coterminous with the historicity implied in the division of A Critical History into three main parts, as listed in the contents of the first edition. Following Walter Benjamin's distrust of historicism, the narrative form that ends with the totalization of history in one way or another has been avoided. This is important given not only my sympathy with the German thinker's messianic Marxism12 but also the fact that Frampton's "Introduction" to A Critical History begins with a famous quotation from Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). Apropos, the present book should be considered a collage of separate plots,13 short sketches on topics relevant to Frampton's discourse on the historiography of modern architecture that have been sewn together in seven chapters with an absent central theme: to reflect and expand on the theme of the critical that peppers the first edition of A Critical History. The present book thus approximates Benjamin's concept of "constellation."14 He wrote, "It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on the past; rather, image is that wherein what has been coming together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.â€14 As such, the past/present dialectic sets the agenda for this interpretative reading of Frampton's text, which means that, although I had read A Critical History several times before, whenever teaching courses on the history of modern architecture, reading Frampton's book anew, and writing this volume, involved more than "understanding" the author's intentions. Instead, I read the first edition of Frampton’s book in the image of the constellation wherein the past, the temporality of Frampton's writing of A Critical History, and that of my writing of the following pages, could not but lead me to choose an interventionist strategy, which is evident in between the lines of my discussion of Frampton's positions on the themes elaborated in each chapter of this volume. Accordingly, this project neither attempts to "discover" what Frampton thought when he wrote A Critical History, especially during the ten long years that ended with the publication of the book's first edition, nor intends to contextualize his book historically, though "contextualization,"
remains integral to the critical rewriting of history. Moreover, the formation of Frampton's book has not been “reported†in a chronicle-like fashion, as is the case with semi-documentary work. However, this is a fashion in recent writing on past events, a follow-up to the mass media production of documentaries on diverse subjects! And yet, particles of these methodologies might have unconsciously slipped into the chapters, and the reader is sure to detect them here and there. To reiterate, A Critical History has been approached as an artifact stripped of temporality. The book's major tropes have been unlocked toward two ends: first, to elucidate how Frampton's critical presentation of the history of modern architecture, and the book's classificatory mode (periodization?), have contributed to our understanding of the contemporaneity of architecture. Second and related to the first, it concerns the particular theoretical strategy for mapping Frampton's historiography over time, from the modernism of the 1920s to the crisis of the project of Modernity (starting roughly from the mid-1930s) to the postmodern condition. The themes Frampton attended to, the formation of which has shaped his singular approach to the problems of modernism in architecture, which is integral to the historical progression in this book, have been emphasized. Frampton had the privilege of seeing the 1930s retrospectively, from the viewpoint of the Cold War era, when capitalism in America had shifted gears to not only consolidate its presence in known industries, including the building industry, but also, more importantly, and for the first time, expedite the formation of the “culture industry,†as formulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1947. While these developments' socioeconomic and cultural impacts in so-called Third-World countries have not been explored, Frampton's recently published work is proof that he sees architectural history from an Archimedean point on the fringes of the western hemisphere. Along with these developments, ample attention has also been focused to Frampton's exposure to several critical texts and concepts, including Hannah Arendt's The Human Condition (1958), Heidegger's notion of "dwelling†and Walter Benjamin’s "Philosophy of History,†mentioned earlier. The impact of these texts on Frampton’s oeuvre—the shift from his earlier reviews of buildings, which could be labeled journalistic, to his later, more distinctively critical work—is studied here. Imbued with a phenomenological reading of Marxian concepts such as labor, materiality and technology, Frampton's later work tries to move away from his earlier style of criticism, which was primarily focused on "design†and the architect's intention in handling issues internal to architectural design—even though the various dimensions of design should be the concern of every historian even today. Since the first formulation of "Critical Regionalism,†however, Frampton has consistently contributed to identifying the scope of the ongoing architectural crisis in late capitalism, while at the same time highlighting strategies of resistance intended to postpone the total takeover of architecture by the regime of technological instrumentalization. This historical phenomenon has attained global visibility through the expansive strategies of late capitalism. Not only Frampton's various reworkings of the text of "Critical Regionalism†but all the revisions of his book should be considered a strategy to resist the reduction of the project to an
object, the repetition of which undermines its capacity to face the present, the now-time. The many editions of the book do not speak to any strong desire to keep himself on the stage of contemporary architectural debates on Frampton's part. Rather, they speak to a desire to see the continuation of modernity, though with advanced awareness of its problematics, while at the same time searching for effective critical channels to postpone the moment when architecture disappears within the multitudes of effects emanating from the floating images that structure the future propagated by the global networks of capitalism. This dimension of his work places him squarely in opposition to Tafuri. Whereas Tafuri consolidated himself as a classical historian working within historical totalization, Frampton's insistence on revising and expanding the book during the past four decades demonstrates the possibility of a critical assessment of the ongoing conflict between architecture and capitalism, even as the latter's master-code constantly reimagines modernity anew. This is the negative dialectics that has unconsciously sneaked into Frampton's project, and it is a positive change.

As mentioned earlier, the text of Chapter 1 emerged from the idea of the role quotation plays in historiographies in general and in Frampton's narrative in particular. Each chapter of A Critical History begins with a carefully chosen quotation. However, the choice turns out to be particularly significant when Frampton opens his short introductory remarks with a famous quotation from Walter Benjamin's essay "Philosophy of History." In this chapter, extensive attention is given to Benjamin's "Angel of History," mapping its critical importance for Frampton's historiography of modern architecture. Chapter 2, "A Trilogy," focuses on three dates, 1939, 1967 and 1978, claiming that each of these years saw particular historical events destined to limit the scope of architecture's drive for autonomy. These dates also designate the periodization that underpins the three-part organization of Frampton's book. The three cardinal transformations that thematically structure Frampton's position on the history of modern architecture have been highlighted: these are the cultural, the technical and the territorial, which are discussed in the first three chapters of part I of A Critical History and encapsulated in part I's cover image, an interior view of Germain Soufflot, Ste-Genevieve, Paris, 1750–1939. Inspired by the cover-page image of part II of the book, a photomontage of Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio, Como, 1932–36, Chapter 3 in this volume argues for the criticality of the events of the 1930s, particularly the rise of Fascism in Europe, a pivotal moment in Frampton's retrospective account of the period spanning 1836–1967. Comprised of twenty-seven chapters, part II of A Critical History comprehensively covers Frampton's story of modern architecture. The study of the major players of this rather long period was guided by the insight that, between 1914 and 1918, Benjamin had already sensed the crisis haunting Europe. While Frampton might not share Benjamin's position that technique is more than a tool—that, rather, "it is a condition of the invention of the human itself"—he would be unlikely to disagree that the decade of the 1930s transformed the "structure of experience," which in its many manifestations, including architecture, was until then directly or indirectly influenced by the metaphysics of Humanism. No wonder then that in
Chapter 3, and throughout this volume, Frampton's obsessive focus on Hannah Arendt's call for "the space of public appearance" and the Heideggerian notion of "placemaking" is important. These two concepts have been taken up in Chapter 6 to demonstrate their centrality to Frampton's appraisals of Aalto's architecture on several occasions since the first edition of the book. What makes the uncharacteristic juxtaposition of Aalto and Mies significant is the type/tectonics manifested in these two architects' best work. Another difference relates to the geographic temporalities that each of these two architects had to work through as part of the project of Modernity. Herein lies the essentiality of regional difference—Finland for Aalto, Berlin and Chicago for Mies—even within Europe and from the bedrock of the formation and transformation of modernity. The significance of distance is discussed in Chapter 7, which primarily focuses on Frampton's Critical Regionalism. The historico-theoretical trajectory of his discourse on the "critical" since the book's first edition in 1980 is also demonstrated. Chapter 5, by contrast, presents an in-depth reading of four analytical essays on selected works of postwar British architecture that were written before Frampton's total appropriation of Arendt and Heidegger. Despite this, his later writings show the persistence of particular concerns about the culture of building that were formative for his earlier work. In this regard, the culture of building is for Frampton the site where the image of the past turns out to be the nucleus of resistance; he has launched against the colonization of architecture by commodity form. This book deliberates on matters related to the history of modern architecture and contemporary historiographies of architecture. Besides this, it stresses on the relevance of modernity and modern architecture for contemporary architectural criticism and praxis. In the present state of digital reproducibility and global capitalism, it is convincing that, at best, both architecture academics and students have lost sight of architectural history. At worst, they presumptuously proclaim the irrelevance of history for contemporary architectural praxis. Perhaps a different architecture could emerge from the prevailing depthless intertextuality, when all that is solid, including the subjectivities nurturing class conflicts, melts away! It is not the task of architecture to expedite this process in any form; it should, however, be theorized to offer a clear demonstration of ideologies of architecture across history. The following pages aim to establish Frampton's historiography and his ongoing endeavor to promote a critical understanding of the historicity of architectural crisis.

Notes
1. The final draft of this manuscript was prepared by mid-2020; thus, the fifth edition of Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History (September 2020), and K. C. Britton and R. McCarter, Modern Architecture and the LifeWord (January 2021) were not consulted.
2. Jacques Lacan explaining his methodology, quoted in Fredric Jameson, Allegory and Ideology (London: Verso, 2019), 97. For Lacan, the problem was the articulation of "desire."
4. Another curiosity is the photo of Alberto Santori's project for Notre-Dame du Phare (1931), used for the book's...
are like robbers lying in ambush on the highway to attack the passerby with weapons drawn and rob him of his conviction.—Walter Benjamin

Kenneth Frampton is one of the few historians who has used an epigraph at the start of each chapter of his/her work, in his case the famous volume Modern Architecture: A Critical History, first published in 1980. Throughout the book, each epigraph either sets the basic theoretical tone of the chapter or plots the premise of Frampton's take on a subject, which is further elaborated on in other relevant chapters.

Following Walter Benjamin, we could say that Frampton's appropriation of quotation intends to rob from the traditions of the historiography of modern architecture: an interventionist strategy and one in lieu of dismantling a linear vision of time central to the preceding historiographies of modern architecture. If we do not reduce historiography to the factual presentation of data, dates and building types, then historiography proper involves a philosophy of history by which the historian maps a constellation of architects' work abreast of available textual interpretations, critical or otherwise. This definition of "historiography†was not popular a century ago, and the absence of such a perspective along various discursive formations necessitated the emergence of different approaches to the formation of modern architecture during the 1960s. Frampton's book, among a few others, is a case in point: it was written with an eye on the suggested theoretical vacuity. However, it would be premature at this point to reflect on the word "critical,†which has particular sociopolitical connotations for most of what Frampton has written to date, not to mention its implications for the history of modern architecture discussed throughout A Critical History. Considering the epigraph Frampton chose for the introductory chapter, it is appropriate to recall Benjamin's dream project: to write a book compiled from quotations! A brief discussion of a few writings that also influenced Frampton's positions on architectural history and criticism will shed light on his appropriation of the discursive differences between Benjamin and Martin Heidegger, especially the issue of technology. In reflecting on the work of these figures, this book hopes to provide the reader with a retrospective view of Frampton's book, casting light on his short introductory text to the first edition of the book.

To quote an author in confirmation or refutation of an argument is one thing, to write a book of quotations quite another. Whatever Benjamin's intention, a book peppered with quotations page after page would elucidate two theoretical strategies that he pursued in his philosophical reflection on history, montage and constellation. Montage is a conceptual and technical device to make a thing (text) out of various fragments, a technique exemplified by both carpentry, one of the oldest crafts, and cinematography, the most modern technical artwork. Constellation, by contrast, connotes "a group of stars forming a recognizable pattern [totality] that is traditionally named after its apparent form or identified with a mythological figure.â  

The implications of this definition of "constellation†for the historiography of architecture, in general, and for Frampton's take on the subject, in particular, will be discussed in this book. There are two interrelated types of violence that are involved in using a quotation: the first concerns the extraction of a sentence or two from its original context, while the second involves the insertion of a quotation into the text of an author. Whereas the first case is justified based on
the content of a text—the direct or indirect need to confirm an argument with the help of another author's words—the second is considered part of a writer's judicious right to violate his/her own text using another author's statement(s), as long as it is properly referenced in footnotes or in the bibliography. In both cases, however, “the authority invoked by quotation is founded precisely on the destruction of the authority sealed by the history of culture.4 Thus, provisionally we should say that the totality a narrative evokes is nothing but fabrication, a montage of statements and quotations that, similar to a constellation, tries to disclose a myth (ideology)—perhaps a historical fact, if not a lucid historical observation, or a detailed representation of events, as is the case with the nineteenth-century novel. These preliminary remarks are important not only in reference to Frampton's use of quotation at the beginning of each chapter of his book but more so in consideration to the image accompanying the book's “Introduction,” the text of which is introduced by Benjamin's statement borrowed from Theses on the Philosophy of History, discussed below. This cover-page image (Figure 1.1), though removed in subsequent editions of the book, is remarkable. It depicts the demolition of C. N. Ledoux's Barrieres de l' Etoile, engraved by Henry Duff Linton in 1860. Allegorically, it represents the singularity of modernity as the messenger of “ideological and political changes,” compared with previous periods of Western civilization. Both here and in the remaining caption of the frontispiece, Frampton tries to encapsulate modernity as a destructive, but at the same time inevitable, historical force, the wind of which, as we will see shortly, propels Benjamin's Angel of History forward. Figure 1.1 Demolition of C. N. Ledoux's Barrieres de l' Etoile, engraved by Henry Duff Linton in 1860. Image courtesy of Chronicle/Alamy Stock Photo. In Linton's engraving, the two buildings standing unharmed say something about the two sides of the coin of what we might consider the humanistic impetus of the Enlightenment: that “ideas created buildings and ideas destroyed them.” In the same engraving, one of the buildings that stands tall is The Arc de Triomphe, conceived by Chalgrin in 1811 and completed in 1836. By contrast, at the forefront of the engraving we see workmen demolishing the Barriere, an emblem of the Ancient Regime that was “stormed and damaged during the Revolution as symbol of oppression,” Frampton added to the caption printed at the foot of the frontispiece. The engraving's compositional message is convincing: the Arc de Triomphe is positioned away from the picture plane occupied by the workmen and closer to the spectator than the Barriere. As such, the composition, particularly the proximity of the Arc de Triomphe to the spectator, confirms Frampton's emphasis on “ideas” as a transformative force throughout modernity, itself loaded with utopic visions (constructive or destructive) that were most often expected to take place sometime in the future. In a nutshell, the image reiterates the temporal and ideological dimensions of the famous French literary debate between the ancients and the moderns, the modus operandi of the project of Modernity even after it was usurped by capitalism ca. late 1930s. Baron George Haussmann, the ideologue behind the genesis of this engraving, is discussed in the next chapter. What should be noted in passing is the importance of Walter
Benjamin's philosophy of history, which also covers Haussmann's surgical operation,5 mapping the ideological regime of the territorial and technological transformations unfolding throughout modernization, as hinted in Frampton's caption, mentioned above, and discussed convincingly in chapter 2 of A Critical History. In what follows, Frampton's short introduction to A Critical History in the purview of Benjamin's concept of history, a lengthy quotation which provides a window into the mental life of the historian, is analyzed. Thereafter, Benjamin's notion of the constellation as it concerns the two realms of the cultural and technical transformations that structure Frampton's historiography of modern architecture is discussed.

IIThe quotation Frampton included in the introductory text of A Critical History is a well-known passage from Walter Benjamin's "Thesis on the Philosophy of History†(1940),6 which is frequently discussed and widely quoted. Numbered IX, the passage starts with a poem written by Gerhard Scholem, a close friend and confidante of Benjamin.7 Scholem's poem, called "Gruss vom Angelus,†was written in reference to a 1920 Paul Klee painting, Angelus Novus, a print of which Benjamin had purchased in 1921. Both the painting and Benjamin's interpretation of it have become allegorical for Left-oriented scholars, and thus the main points of his take on the painting are worth summarizing here. Essential to an understanding of the quoted passage is the physiognomy of the angel, which is depicted against a storm "blowing from paradise," as Benjamin reminds us. The force of the storm propels the angel forward, and yet in a gesture of resistance, the angel's head is turned back, with mouth open and wings widespread. What makes this image associable with history is the figure of the angel even though we do not know why the angel's mouth is left open, for example. It might be that the angel is screaming in reaction to "the catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet," as Benjamin wrote. It might be that the angel's mouth is open in analogical reference to the shock effect of the storm of progress depicted in Edvard Munch's The Scream, first painted in 1893. In Munch's painting, the central figure is painted in a ghostly form, with mouth hanging open in anguish at the stakes involved in reconciling "the individual with the metropolis," according to Manfredo Tafuri, another historian sympathetic to Benjamin's philosophy of history.8 Whereas Tafuri's interest is channeled toward the historical avant-garde's responses to the schism capitalism introduced into the traditional fabric of cities, Frampton instead seeks the architectonic responses that avoid internalizing technological nihilism into the work, as has been the case with most avant-gardes. Still, while Tafuri closely investigates the work of the avant-garde to sharpen his own criticism of architecture in modernity, Frampton sees "salvation" in the work of architects who would sidestep the modernist reduction of architecture to the exigencies of technology, the driving engine of capitalism as we know it. Thus, Frampton's notion of resistance attains both conceptual and pragmatic complexity, not only because a more sophisticated capitalism has prevailed since the Second World War but also because of his own juggling of the most relevant critical discourses focused on architecture, particularly those formulated by Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger outlined below. Head turned back, the...
forward-moving figure of the Angel of History can be considered a proper analogue for the ontological posture of the historian. So too can the angel's desire "to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed," an impossible task since the storm has already lifted the angel off the ground, "propelling him into the future to which his back is turned." Benjamin ends the passage with a reminder that "this storm is what we call progress." Thus, eyes turned to the past, armed with the will (desire?) to reconstruct the past out of memory and factual and textual evidence, Benjamin outlines the task of the historian as such. Central to this task is the messianic dimension of Benjamin's project, which, interestingly enough, has the least passion for utopic visions. Its main commitment, rather, is to rescuing the progressive aspects of the past that are essential for the formation of an image of the bygone totality that progress has smashed to pieces. For those who have followed Frampton's oeuvre closely, the above reading of the Angelus Novus should convincingly justify his appropriation of a long quotation from Benjamin in support of his historiography of modern architecture and the criticism he has launched against the mainstream architecture produced during the second half of the century. Read in conjunction with other passages, Benjamin's text discloses both a vision and a strategy for historiography that, in addition to defying the linear vision of history, also plots a discourse of temporality that is not homogeneous. He rather highlights the anachronism involved in most cultural production activities and puts forward a concept of time, now-time (Jetztzeit), that is pregnant with the revolutionary ethos of the past that is most often suppressed by the victor's vision of history. Since the publication of Benjamin's text, historians sympathetic to Marxism and scholars affiliated with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Frampton included) have appropriated Benjamin's vision of history.9 Frampton writes, "My affinity for the critical theory of the Frankfurt School has no doubt coloured my view of the whole period and made me acutely aware of the dark side of the Enlightenment which, in the name of an unreasonable reason, has brought man to a situation where he begins to be as alienated from his own production as from the natural world."10 Having established this, Frampton quickly reminds us that, in spite of the fact that he has been influenced by a Marxian understanding of history, his book does not follow "any established methods of Marxist†analysis."11 In addition to Benjamin's text, which supports the general outline of his book, Frampton also uses quotations from other prominent architects, writers and thinkers in the remaining chapters. He writes, "I have endeavoured to use these 'voicesâ€™ to illustrate the way in which modern architecture has evolved as a continuous cultural effort and to demonstrate how certain issues might lose their relevance at one moment in history only to return at a later date with increased vigour."11 The statement echoes a general Marxian understanding of modernity articulated by Harry Harootunian, among others. Harootunian writes, "All production immediately falls into ruin, thereafter to be set in stone without revealing what it had once signified, since the inscriptions are illegible or written in the dead language."12 He concludes that "beneath the historical present, however, lie the spectres, the phantoms, waiting to reappear and upset it."12 Nothing short of this statement confirms
the devastation caused by the wind of progress, which paradoxically secures the return of certain aspects of the past in the form of either kitsch, which works against the transmissibility of tradition in now-time\textsuperscript{13}, or fragments of a bygone project to be enlivened once more when the time is ripe. This much is also evident in Fredric Jameson's observation that, as an external factor, history cut short the ideology of modernism developed in Russia and Germany in the 1920s\textsuperscript{14}, an unfolding that nurtured the theoretical seeds of what we might call the state of unequal development of modernism. These observations solidify both Jürgen Habermas' theorization of modernity as an incomplete project\textsuperscript{15} and Jameson's particular theorization of postmodernism\textsuperscript{16}. Having established these Marxian dialectics between past and present, it is not far-fetched to claim that, against postmodern abuses of the past, Frampton turns his attention to the culture of building pregnant with the dialectics of inspiration and resistance accumulated throughout the history of various geographies. In a nutshell, this is a strategy of resistance against the drive for formal autonomy and other ideological manifestations of architecture's drift into the production and consumption systems engineered by postwar capitalism, the theoretical gist of which would culminate in Frampton's formulation of critical regionalism, discussed in Chapter 7 of this volume. Having mapped these observations, interpretative methods and influences, it can be posited that central to Frampton's historiography are dichotomies such as tradition and innovation, métier and technology and also site and materiality. Frampton reads these dichotomies through Benjamin's discussion of the loss of aura and Heidegger's Building, Dwelling, Thinking (1954). Six years before the publication of his book (1980), Frampton wrote an editorial in Oppositions plotting the implications of Heidegger's essay for the state of an architecture thwarted by postmodernist simulation of historical forms.\textsuperscript{17} Starting with the differences between architecture and building, and the effectiveness of generating a built environment that society is receptive to, Frampton's short editorial presented a criticism of late liberal capitalism and the postmodernist exaltation of the mainstream commercialization of the urban fabric under the spell of "illusory vernacular," and the dissemination of abstraction as part of the enforcement of commodity form in everyday life and in architecture. Frampton visits these developments and their consequential tendency to overstate the importance of space at the expense of the dialectics of production and place. His convictions regarding the state of architecture and the city under the auspices of late capitalism, and the architects and theoreticians who embraced the postmodern condition with least reservation, were enough for him to curtail his collaboration with the editorial group of Oppositions, although he himself was one of the three founding editors at the time of the publication of his editorial text on Heidegger in Oppositions 4 (October 1974).\textsuperscript{18} One of the implications of the aforementioned editorial relates to the critical implications of Frampton's juxtaposition of quotations from Walter Benjamin and Heidegger for the opening and closing chapters of his book, an issue which will be taken up on another occasion in this volume. What should be mentioned here is that his appropriation of Benjamin and Heidegger hinges on a third figure, Hannah Arendt, and her famous manuscript, The Human Condition (1958), which has...
influenced Frampton’s oeuvre more than any other contemporary thinker today. As early as
1969, and in a collection of essays that today can be considered an opening into the state of
uncertainties permeating postmodernism in architecture, Frampton made a case for the stakes
involved in Arendt’s differentiation between labor, work and action.19 His didactic text
expands the etymological dimensions of Arendt’s triad, relating each to architecture and to
his own discussion of the city and how the classical and holistic meaningfulness of what Arendt
coined “the space of human appearance†has not been attainable since the advent of
industrialization, to the point where the railway station would be taken for the res publica in T ony
Garnier’s Cité Industrielle of 1904. At these two levels of consideration, Frampton’s
text seems written in anticipation of the three first chapters of “part I,†where he maps the
historico-theoretical premises of A Critical History under the rubric of cultural, territorial and
technological transformations, respectively. Following Arendt’s association of labor with the
biological and ephemeral attributes of the individual (domestic cell), and work with the world of
lasting things distinct from nature, the reader will not dismiss the permanence of dwelling in the
form of edifice, an idea essential for the meaningfulness of what Frampton considers the â€œcultural context.†Be that as it may, Frampton traces the loss of a constructive dialectic
between the domestic cell and the city in projects that most often are overshadowed by the
emergence of a contemporary Megalopolis, where various infrastructural elements substitute for
the role edifice used to play in the built environment. The following dire conclusions speak for
themselves: that “an arbitrary individual vocabulary wilfully used is relatively in-effective,â€20 and that things do not last long enough to be part of humanity’s needs for permanence
and stability. It can be speculated that Frampton’s formulation of “critical regionalismâ€ and
“Megaform†was in response to the ongoing crisis of architecture, and the expectation
that the cultural could charge “meaning to architecture,†to recall the central theme of the
book edited by Charles Jencks and George Baird (1971), which was titled accordingly.
Furthermore, as we will see shortly, their book announces a new turn in architecture, with most
chapters, including Frampton’s, trying to rethink postwar architecture based on the direct or
indirect conviction that the core principles of modernism are not sustainable in the built
environment and that architecture should be retooled using theories such as semiotics (Jencks),
humanism (R. Wittkower, 1949), phenomenology (N. Schultz, 1962) and a nostalgic view of
vernacular (B. Rudofsky, 1964).The two main tropes Frampton draws from the discourses of
Benjamin and Heidegger are technique and place, one born out of the spine of modernization
and the other rooted in ancient times and congenial to most existential aspects of the lifeworld.
He pursues the impact of these two themes’ uneven rapport with architecture in the light of
the ever-acceleration of temporality experienced in modern times. Frampton discusses the
concept of place-making in reference to Heidegger’s and Benjamin’s proto-
anthropological understanding of history. Disregarding their philosophical differences, what
makes the juxtaposition of these two figures plausible is their critical reflection on technology
and time. Both Heidegger and Benjamin “opposed the progressive view of history which
regarded the present as the untroubled heir of the past. † Peter Osborne continues that, for both these thinkers, “the act of ‘handing over’ destroys the object it surrenders,† and “tradition is not only that which is handed over within a given time, but also the giving of that time itself in the distinction of past and present.â€²

Interestingly enough, time and technology, the engines of the so-to-speak progressive view of the Enlightenment, constituted the two major vectors of the historiographies of modernism written by Reyner Banham and Sigfried Giedion. Unlike these two historians, Frampton neither bets on technological determinism (Banham) nor presumes the totalized experience of time and space exemplified in modernist abstract painting, the architectonic implications of which are paramount in many historiographies of early modern architecture, and Giedion’s in particular. And yet, what differentiates both Banham and Frampton from Giedion relates to the strategy of periodization and a complex approach to technology. While acknowledging Giedion’s contribution, Frampton tries to put behind him the zeal for capturing and projecting a coherent concept of the Zeitgeist of modernism exemplified in the Swiss historian’s pathbreaking book Building in France, Building in Iron, Building in Ferro-concrete (1928), which, interestingly enough, was also noted by Walter Benjamin.²² Frampton instead recognizes Banham’s persistent sympathy with the main ethos of modern architecture, disregarding Banham’s inclination toward high-tech architecture and his tendency “to structure his arguments around persistent antinomies—tradition versus technology, aesthetics versus ethics, style versus performance—that he saw as key features of modern architecture and central to his discussion of High T ech.”²³ These dichotomies have been important for Frampton as he takes note of Banham’s strategy of breaking down modern movement architecture into various thematic segments, each championed in the work of one or two architects. Frampton seems also sympathetic to Banham’s later writings, which, according to T odd Gannon, “assumed a staunchly critical stance to postmodern architecture and laboured to make a case for the continued validity of modern architecture.â€²⁴ Mention should also be made of Frampton’s attempt to recode the aforementioned dichotomies without giving lip service to the aesthetic of high-tech and its implications for the postwar consumer culture. In retrospect, Frampton’s discourse on tectonics²⁵ was a response to the dichotomy between the engineer and the bricoleur implied in Banham’s criticism of Charles Jencks’s turn to the communication theories of the 1960s and the subsequent theorizations of the architecture of postmodernism.²⁶ For Jencks, the debate between the master and his pupil was the tip of the iceberg of crisis, a crisis he plotted at the two levels of “revolution and change† and “architecture and meaning.â€²⁷ By contrast, in Studies in T ectonic Culture Frampton underlines the significance of “public architecture,† in place of Banham’s proposition for the responsiveness of architecture to the individual. Their differences attained a new visibility in Frampton’s A Critical History: while radicalizing Banham’s strategy of periodization, Frampton subdivides his own book into three main parts, each a constellation wherein every chapter covers the work of a particular architect, to the point where each chapter can be read independently of what has gone before
and what follows after. The first two major parts of Frampton's book explore dichotomies that were essential to the schism between the cultural and the technical as architecture entered (1750–1939) and exited (1925–78) the vicissitudes of the project of Modernity, respectively. The taxonomy Frampton follows in the middle section of the book works like a historical construct in its own right (1836–1967). For one, he rips objects out of their context and places them in reference to an architect's interpretation of the suggested dichotomies. The anachronism informing the dates of the two major parts of the constellation defies historicism: it departs from the vision of history that would try to establish totalities based on one or two major principles, that is, the organic (Bruno Zevi), or space and time (Giedion), let alone the totality constructed in analogy to a Marxian interpretation of capitalism (Manfredo Tafuri). Frampton's periodization of modern architecture instead conjugates the dynamics of time and technology with the geopolitics of placemaking as architecture puts behind itself the historicity of modernism. This strategy of periodization is implied in the work of many theorists, including Habermas, a thinker Frampton has been sympathetic toward. It also draws from ontologies inherent in Heidegger's critique of technology. What makes Frampton's take on periodization interesting is the concept of placemaking, which meets technology halfway. This much is clear from the last chapter of the first edition of Frampton's book, titled "Place, Production and Architecture: Towards a Critical Theory of Building," where he discusses postwar architecture in the light of technological optimization, on the one hand, and the urge to recognize the existential demands of dwelling, on the other. Starting with a quotation from Heidegger, Frampton departs from Benjamin to follow Heidegger's distinction between space and placemaking. It rather allows for "crossing-over […] between the categories of Marxist materialist explanation and those of Heideggerian ontology, which ascribes the age of modernity to the unfurling of the essence of technology." This understanding of technology turns out to be central to Frampton's theorization of a semiautonomous architecture, the thematic of which, paradoxically, is defined and redefined by the unpredictable path capitalism travels to smooth its internal contradictions. Even though the outdated distinction between "the base" and the "superstructure" is itself a by-product of capitalism, in its evolutionary process the system has shaped and reshaped itself to the point where culture has become a production system in its own right. This development has led historians and critics to rethink the production of subjectivity anew and beyond the mechanics of the base and superstructure paradigm. However, as far as Frampton's project is concerned, we ought to ask: what is involved in discussing architecture in relation to the human condition, especially the idea of placemaking, at a time when capitalism has taken over the project of Modernity? In Chapter 7 of this volume, Frampton's critical regionalism is discussed in depth. For now, suffice to say that Frampton was aware of the total disintegration of the craft-based tradition of architecture, the loss of aura as the art of building encountered the instrumental logic of technology and the impossibility of sustaining the old homologies between
the body, language and landscape. If the implied homology fits with our understanding of vernacular, Frampton is pretty consistent in underscoring the uniqueness of critical regionalism compared to the vernacular. Gone also is what Arendt termed the excess of labor, when the latter was not yet fully absorbed into the production and consumption cycles of capitalism.31

Even though the consequences of these so-to-speak "negatives†for the art and architecture of early modernism were reapproached by both revolutionary and conservative politics,32 Frampton has not yet given up the angel's mission of rescuing those aspects of the culture of building, type/tectonic in particular,33 that could resist the current flood of commodification.IV

How then do the symptomatic readings charted so far structure Frampton’s introductory text? Similar to the Angel of History, Frampton's attention is focused on the past, especially the culture of building, without dismissing the natural flow of progress that has been at work since the Enlightenment, and this in conjunction with an experience of temporality that is measured not in terms of nature but history. Frampton reminds his reader of the fact that construction of the lifeworld demands both formal and spatial solutions, which are essential for architecture's rapport with the city and urban design as history moves from the pre- to the post-Enlightenment appropriation of reason. This historical trajectory, which Frampton sees as the dark side of the Enlightenment, is enforced by a production system that differs from the pre-mechanical process of reproducibility when most construction materials were extracted from nature and skills and techniques of surface embellishment were rooted in the traditions of handcrafts. Even though architectural production and reproduction have always used construction methods internal to the building's historical development, this limitation, if you wish, did not stop the art of building from sharing motifs developed in other areas of cultural production. The vicissitudes of this Semperian position (Stoffwechsel) were drastically transformed as architecture entered into the production and consumption cycles of capitalism, wherein industrial technology overdetermined the natural transmission of those aspects of the culture of building that were not profitable in terms of the de- and reskilling of labor. One consequence of this was the urge to use industrial materials and techniques. The implications of this process of reskilling for the work of art and architecture, as discussed in Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction†(1934), is another topic informing Frampton's introductory text. In the tradition of critical theory, Frampton suggests that, in addition to performing its purpose, technique sets up a particular movement and rhythm, the temporality of which, interestingly enough, coordinates the body's action and its relation to place. Recalling Heidegger, Frampton's criticism seems to be focused on architecture's one-dimensional appropriation of technique, and this in spite of Benjamin's belief that the exhibition value of the artwork, itself one of the consequences of the infusion of the aesthetic of commodity fetishism into the cultural realm, will one day be integrated into the general ways in which architecture is appropriated and apprehended. No wonder then that the first edition of Frampton's historiography does not fully cover the aesthetic and formal consequences of what he would later frame as the "product-form.â€³4

Frampton's introductory text also
touches on the daunting issue of the date and period when the modern movement in architecture began. He sees the diffusion of industrialization and prefabrication into the production process of architecture as the agent not only of the transformation of the culture of building but also of the dissolution, slowly but surely, of the Humanist precept of unity between architecture and the city. Frampton correctly argues that, with the proliferation of positivistic and technocratic approaches to planning and built-environment, the split between "architecture and urban development has led to the situation in which the possibility of the former contributing to the latter and vice versa, over a long period of time, has become extremely limited.†No wonder then that the two opening chapters of the book are dedicated to the theme of territorial and technological transformations, which, interestingly enough, happens to be the core subject of his critical interpretation of modernism in architecture at least until the arrival of the postmodern moment. This interpretative regime not only structures the entirety of the first edition of the book but also opens a particular vista into what was and was not included in the second part, a major section of the book. However, the introduction fails to provide detailed criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of architects explored in the second and main part of the book.35 It is left to the reader to speculate on how the work of the discussed architects relates to the specificity of the "subject under consideration†in each chapter of the book; how a particular design is "inflected by the given socio-economic or ideological circumstances;â€ and/or in what conditions the author has restricted his analysis to formal issues. What we do know is that these exclusions concern projects that were motivated, in the first place, by the architect's subjectivity—expressionism as one example among other omitted themesâ€”instead of disclosing the ways external factors (the dichotomies mentioned earlier) influence design and its execution. Similar to Benjamin's characterization of "expressionismâ€ and the Neue Sachlichkeit architecture of the 1920s as a "delusional belief in the efficacy of intellectuals and of moral appeals for progressive causes,â€36 the exclusions noticed by T afuri and others disclose another side of Frampton's critical discourse, wherein the individual quest for freedom (liberalism?) is seen as inadequate to stand against the totality enforced by capitalism. The implied "collective†is a major clue to the labyrinth of Frampton's Marxian approach to the historiography of modern architecture.VAt this point it is important to reflect on the differences between Heidegger's and Benjamin's take on technology one more time. As mentioned earlier, in Benjamin's account, the angel's physiognomy is positioned between the two moments of the past and the present. The temporal passage between the now-time and the past is inflected by Benjamin's take on the historical loss of the aura. However, he does not specify the timing of this historical unfolding; instead, he associates its occurrence with techniques internal to the age of mechanical reproducibility. This entails a concept of periodization that separates the Classical age from the Modern, the two major and long-lasting periods of Western humanity that were still in progress during Benjamin’s lifetime (1892–1940). The posture of the Angel of History also suggests that the now-time stands for modernity, a longue durée event driven by the repressed dynamics of the past,
and a perception of temporality that is in tune with technological innovations. Unlike Heidegger, Benjamin does not lament the loss of the classical comradeship between the body, place and the act of making, a constellation shaken by the rise of the instrumental appropriation of science and technology, another theme dear to Frampton's critical discourse. Unlike the concept of the body foregrounded in phenomenology, the "anthropological materialism" attributed to Benjamin draws its conclusions, first, from the conviction that "the idealist tradition of humanism, and the classical ideal of humanity itself, were thoroughly compromised. Not the preservation of these traditions but only a purifying liquidation could hope to save what had once animated them." Second, Benjamin's position benefits from an experience of "bodily collectivity" that is traceable in the realm of images, on the one hand, and in the bodily self-consciousness that is touched by technological development, on the other. These brief reflections on the body, place and making are important because, among other things, technique also sets a particular movement and rhythm, the temporality of which coordinates the body's action and its relation to place. According to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, who is occasionally referenced in Frampton's lectures, Pre-industrial traffic is mimetic of natural phenomena […] Only during a transitional period did the travellers who transferred from the stagecoach to the railway carriage experience a sense of loss due to the mechanization of travel: it did not take long for the industrialization of the means of transport to alter the consciousness of the passengers: they developed a new set of perceptions. In reading Heidegger through the pen of Arendt, Frampton foregrounds an understanding of the culture of building that is not yet reduced to its "lowest common denominator, in order to make production cheaper and to optimize use." He goes further, suggesting that "in its well-intended but sometimes misguided concern to assimilate the technical and processal realities of the 20th century, architecture has adopted a language in which expression resides almost entirely in processal, secondary components" of buildings. The aforementioned two poles of periodization, the Classical and the Modern, underpin Frampton's A Critical History and disclose the paradox of his historiography. This means that in order to exert its disciplinary autonomy, architecture in modernity has to stand against its context—that is, against the hegemonic aspects of the functionalist reduction of all expressive dimensions to the exigencies of instrumental reason, and against the simulacra of the postmodern historicism of the 1970s. It seems that, at the time of the publication of the first edition of A Critical History, and in reference to Frampton's later publications, Alvar Aalto was the architect whose work came closest to Frampton's hope of reconciling the Miesian "obsession" with technology and the notion of "almost nothing" with the traditions of the culture of building. Such a work, according to Frampton, is "patently 'visible' and often takes the form of a masonry enclosure that establishes within its limited 'monastic' domain a reasonably open but nonetheless concrete set of relationships linking man to man and man to nature." Here, Frampton tries to unpack the paradox permeating Benjamin's and Heidegger's positions on technology, which, interestingly enough, demonstrates the subject's
importance for historiography of modern architecture. Benjamin's tacit acceptance of technology as the force propelling the Angel of History forward does not overshadow the critical task of the angel in saving the radical potentialities of the past. It was clear for Benjamin that technology had already tossed the earthly bound culture into the orbit of relentless technological innovations and into the mutation of a landscape that is charged with the desire for nothing less than mere consumption. This suggested negativity is balanced dialectically in Benjamin's formulation of the “loss of aura,” meaning, among other things, the impossibility of critical praxis without technological progression as it has taken place. Heidegger's project, by contrast, was centered on the recollection of work that might turn his hypothetical spectator’s attention from the bridge (a technological spectacle) to the apartness of the two banks of the river.42 It is the distinction between Benjamin's and Heidegger's interpretations of the loss of aura, on the one hand, and Frampton's empathy with Heidegger’s notion of Raum and the loss of “nearness,” on the other, that led Frampton to compile his book as a constellation of various architects' responses to the nihilism of technology, and the way each had tried to recode the culture of building, major aspects of which are particles of premodern times in the first place. Setting aside philosophical differences, what made Frampton sympathetic to Heidegger, as discussed in Chapter 7, was the historicity of the 1960s, when a different understanding of the nation-state prevailed in countries then viewed as “underdeveloping,” whereas Benjamin's overarching position on modernity and modernization remained focused on Western geographies. In Heidegger's notion of placemaking Frampton saw the seeds of a resistance that might be workable in the context of developing nations (peripheries), turning it to strategic criticism of architecture produced in Western centers. What we can expect from the concept of “resistance” is a general stance with no strategic future goal.43