

## PHILIP JOHNSON, ARCHITECTURE, AND THE REBELLION OF THE TEXT: 1930-1934

The architect Philip Johnson, intermittently famous for provocative buildings—his modernist Glass House, 1949, and the Postmodern AT&T (now Sony) Building, 1984—will be remembered less for his architecture than for his texts. He first made a reputation as co-author (with Henry Russell Hitchcock) of the 1932 book *The International Style*, which presented the European Modern Movement as a set of formal rules and documented its forms in photographs. In 1947, on the verge of a career in architectural practice, Johnson authored the first full-length monograph on Mies van der Rohe. To these seminal texts in modernism's history in America should be added a number of occasional writings and lectures on modern architecture. In addition, the exhibitions on architecture and design Johnson curated for the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), beginning with the seminal *Modern Architecture* in 1932, should also be considered texts, summarizing, or reducing, architectural experience through selected artifacts and carefully crafted timelines.

In the course of a very long career, Johnson was under almost constant fire for de-radicalizing modernism, for reducing it to yet another value-free episode in the history of style, or even of taste. The nonagenarian Johnson himself cheerfully confessed to turning the avant-garde he presented to America into “just a garde” (qtd. in Somol 43). Yet in 1931 Johnson described the spirit of his campaign for modernism as “the romantic love for youth in revolt, especially in art, universal today” (Johnson, *Writings* 45). This essay examines Johnson's writings of 1930-34 as artifacts of that “spirit.” It attempts to show how Johnson could craft an identity for himself in a catharsis of rebellion, while working simultaneously to lock radical energies of transformation, inherent in a machine-age architecture, into a static and historicist framework. While the present study does not examine Johnson's activities in architecture beyond 1934, it may suggest some reasons why Johnson's later efforts, from Miesian dogmatism to Postmodern irony, took the path they did.

Writing of another reactionary modernist, Wyndham Lewis, Frederic Jameson comments that ideology “is the subject’s attempt to map himself into a historical/narrative process that excludes him, and is non-representable and non-narrative” (12). Although we think of Johnson as a formalist, his earliest and most heartfelt work is a self-therapy based on narratives of modernity, modernity as a perpetual revolt. Some narratives were sociopolitical, some reified “the machine,” and some were art-historical. It was art history, ambiguously understood as both the history of form and the history of the artist’s place in society, which gave Johnson his strongest sense of self.

### **Art History**

Philip Johnson discovered architecture as a wordless catharsis, in 1927, in what he has always called a “religious experience” at the Parthenon. The context was his flight from texts to the body. As a Harvard undergraduate Johnson studied academic philosophy and found that his mastery of it did not impress his teachers. He also found that he could not bring order to his own mind and body, as he realized to his dismay that he was homosexual. He went to Europe to flee his Harvard self, to find himself sexually, and to seek wholeness in aesthetics. He did so, in a pattern that he would repeat, not in a situation with a private and personal meaning for himself but at an already-certified monument of art history.

Johnson then discovered a new kind of art-historical certification: Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s texts on modern architecture. These foregrounded a new equivalent to the Parthenon—J. J. P. Oud’s machine-functionalist housing architecture in the Netherlands—and demonstrated that it held the rules of a new historical style, accepting modern building technology but transcending it through art. Hitchcock led Johnson to Alfred Barr, just as Barr became founding director of the Museum of Modern Art. Barr put Johnson to work displaying pictures and producing words about this style. (Schulze 34-49) These texts had nothing to do with the modernists’ own manifestoes. They were condensations of Hitchcock’s textbook, *Modern Architecture*, and the leading German *Kunstgeschichte* narrative on modernism, G. A. Platz’s *Die Bau-*

*kunst der Neuesten Zeit*. Both argued that the connoisseur's mode of vision, finding "style" in the norms of industrialized building, could find coherence in modern culture (Riley, "Portrait of the Curator as a Young Man" 13). So Johnson fled the texts of one kind of cosmic order, philosophy, for wordless ecstasy, which had to be explained and channeled in other texts that systematized the world, the texts of art history.

This is a passive approach to history. It makes historical narrative out of a sequence, or pseudo-sequence, of monuments observed by the connoisseur. Johnson absorbed it from Hitchcock, a rigorous formalist unconcerned with the social aims or architectural theories of the modernists he treated. However, Barr, much more than Hitchcock, felt the historian or patron of art should intervene in a culture, in the name of an authentic course of history. Thus Johnson's very first campaign for the new style shows him using a more radical version of art history, as therapy and as catharsis: "In 1855 when Gustave Courbet was refused for a seventh time by the Salon, he set up his own show in a wooden shed. In 1863 Napoleon III founded the Salon des Refusés for such rebels as Manet and the Impressionists. In 1931 a Salon des Refusés is still useful" (qtd. in Riley, *International Style* 215). This was Johnson's text to the brochure of a storefront architecture show he and Barr mounted. The mostly unbuilt designs, by ex-students or imitators of Oud, Mies, and Le Corbusier, had not been included in the dominant professional event in New York architecture, the Architectural League's annual show. Johnson called his counter-show "Rejected Architects" (Schulze 72; Riley, "Portrait" 39-40).

Johnson transferred to architecture, with some mistakes, a meta-narrative Barr had used for painting. Barr schooled his followers in a central story of modern art: since 1800, unlike earlier eras, the important artist had been rejected rather than accepted by the public. "What we value most in the last hundred years," Barr stated, "was achieved in rejection and reform." It was the job of the historian of modern art to show the "rejects" had been right (Kantor 171; Barr, *Defining Modern Art* 41, 74-75). This historical model's origins in the Romantics' pathos of the misunderstood prophet/genius are not at issue here; what is crucial is what Johnson made of it. I argue that Johnson assumed for himself the role of "the rejected." Failing in the social roles

he chose at Harvard, falling into alienation and panic, Johnson could use art history to prove that outcasts would triumph.

## Battle

Johnson had another arena of battle. Barr believed that those institutions that marginalized the “refusés”—art museums, critical discourse, or “architects’ leagues”—would have to be attacked (Barr, *Defining Modern Art* 52-53). Many of Johnson’s texts before 1934 are in fact not art-historical discourse, but aggressive weapons against those already making it. Occasionally he wrote about a building, but essentially Johnson attacked texts. His targets included Sheldon Cheney, author of a popular book on modernism, whom Johnson called too indiscriminating; critics and historians who called the Art Deco skyscraper “modern;” and reviewers of his own “Rejected Architects,” who called the work shown “functionalist” instead of examples of a “style.”<sup>1</sup> Attacking a text with a countertext meant attacking decadent authority. Johnson loaded these slight but aggressive essays with the professional terminology of the architectural historian—“pier-buttressing,” “battering,” “corbel tables”—demonstrating his right to strike at the old guard in the terms of its hegemony (Johnson, *Writings* 40-41).

It is in his critique of critiques of “Rejected Architects” that Johnson writes of the “universal [...] romantic love for youth in revolt.” Johnson used the trope of a rebel generation in several shows and catalogues (Riley, “Portrait” 51-55). There are several different contexts this would have had for Johnson. One was Barr’s statement of the modern art meta-narrative as not rejection but revolution; another was Barr’s

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<sup>1</sup> The most significant of Johnson’s polemical pieces are “Modernism in Architecture,” *New Republic*, 18 March 1931; “The Architecture of the New School,” *Arts* 27 (March 1931); “The Skyscraper School of Modern Architecture,” *Arts* 27 (May 1931); “Rejected Architects,” *Creative Art* 8 (June 1931). The last three are reproduced in Johnson, *Writings*.

belief that change in art, at least modern art, was generational (Barr, *Defining Modern Art* 29). Johnson turns these into a historical narrative, one that lays out the structure and spirit of his time. This spirit is not one of “truth in revolt” or “the gifted in revolt,” but Youth, calling up vitality and impulse. The narrative of modern culture as a culture of “revolt” foregrounded unthinking impulse as a weapon. Narratives of “youth in universal revolt” led Johnson back to ecstasy, into an erotics of revolt.

It also led him close to fascist discourse. “Giovinezza”—“Youth”—was a rallying cry of Mussolini’s Black Shirts, and the trope of political violence as vital impulse was widespread in the European Right (Jameson 171-172; Wohl 72ff, 175ff). Johnson’s friend of this period, art critic Helen Appleton Read, began equating the architecture of a young postwar Germany with the energies of the Hitler movement around 1931. In one piece she wrote that the Nazis, “whose ideology has appealed so strongly to youth,” should embrace modernism, “Youth and radicalism in the arts being almost synonymous terms” (Read). Johnson would make the same equation in his 1933 essay “Architecture and the Third Reich,” and it was Read who took Johnson to his first Hitler rally (Johnson, *Writings* 54; Johnson, “Interview;” Schulze 89-90).

However, Johnson did not become politically active at this time, but applied fascist rhetoric to art. He belonged to a Harvard circle around Barr, including Hitchcock, Lincoln Kirstein, Everett Austin, and Edward Warburg (Schulze 34-39, 58-64, 91-93). Almost all of these men, according to memoirs and recollections, felt psychically dislocated and socially marginalized. They felt that psychic dislocation could be cured through the coming fusion of art and life. Barr showed them how to do this by writing modern art’s history and explaining it to the public. Bringing radical form into mainstream consciousness, showing it was part of an ordered sequence, they would de-marginalize the Other, including themselves.<sup>2</sup> These “rejects” were marginal now, but could rest serene in their Otherness, knowing it would soon become history.

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<sup>2</sup> For further reading, see Fox Weber, and Steven Watson chapters 6 and 8. Watson emphasizes that many of these men were homosexual, a fact noted by several historians and commentators. Attempts to work out a group dynamic for this coterie along psychoanalytic, gender stud-

Almost all of these men, Johnson included, became something more than academic historians. “Empresario” is a weak word for the spirit in which they, and above all Johnson, made their fight for modernism a public fight. In Johnson’s case, this stemmed from Barr’s belief that the general public, not an avant-garde coterie, was the natural constituency for art. Yet it also meshed with the belief held by almost all fascist ideologues, that the revolutionary elites (or marginal men) who will triumphantly end history are doing it for the good of the masses. The battles of “revolutionary youth” will be rapturously watched, from below, by a mass that is itself (passively) transformed by the spectacle. The leader of the “revolt” has power and inner wholeness only to the extent that the public watches him in action. Thus the effort Johnson put into non-scholarly journalism, and the glee with which he marshalled the material of architectural history into spectacles for the public at MoMA.

But the material of rebellion was still that of the art historian, and there is the question of how modernist “style,” as a rebellion, enters the art-historical narrative. Barr could praise the Bauhaus for turning the “energies of our time [...] from a rebellious to a constructive activity.” But Barr could also point to a narrative of perpetual rebellion, urging artists in their twenties to revolt, “pictorially or verbally,” against their seniors in their fifties.<sup>3</sup> Yet again, it was the historian’s duty to work these rebellions into a seamless narrative which, seen in a textbook or a museum, would reassure and not frighten the public. Barr himself courageously refused to close off his narratives into declarations that any one “style,” however handy a tool for the historian, was mandatory or fixed (Kantor 214-218, 334-337, 352-353). Johnson, however, needed a closure in his narrative of the history of form; otherwise he had no foundation for his sense that he was fighting for a definite end. His model of closure became the over-

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ies or Queer Theory models have been tentative. Douglass Shand-Tucci suggests some paradigms, relying mostly on the example of Johnson’s friend Lincoln Kirstein (324-348), but Shand-Tucci’s study deals for the most part with earlier generations.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred H. Barr Jr., statement for *PM*, accompanying letter to Josef Albers, 7 April 1937. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Papers [2166; 340]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Barr, *Defining*, 41.

coming of an old guard—the forms of an establishment, or even the avant-garde forms of earlier movements—by “rebellious youth.”

### The Aporia of Machine Art

Problems of rebellion and resolution infect Johnson’s first sustained narrative of art history, his “Historical Note” to the catalogue of the 1932 *Modern Architecture* show, a three-page condensation of Hitchcock and Platz (Barr, *Modern Architecture* 18–20). Most of it lists the nineteenth century’s rebels against historicism. But their rebellion was flawed: “Each generation [broke] each time in a unique fashion with the current revivalism,” Johnson says. “There was no consecutive development.” Johnson found rebellion—the necessity of the MoMA meta-narrative as Johnson grasped it—but no coherence as a narrative sequence, as every art-history timeline demands. Architecture after World War I ended the making of radical architecture by “great individualists.” Instead, the new generation aimed at “the development of a conscious style.” But the style’s story is one of *separate rebel gestures in art*: Neoplasticism, Expressionism, the New Objectivity. Johnson cannot explain how any of them were turned into architecture. Instead he borrows from Hitchcock’s catalogue essay on Le Corbusier, who codified the “style” with “a new technic and a new aesthetic.” (Compare Johnson’s “Historical Note” in Barr, *Modern Architecture* 20, with Hitchcock’s, “Le Corbusier,” *ibid.* 72) Conspicuously missing is Russian Constructivism. This reveals that the real fusion of avant-garde art and avant-garde politics was anathema to Johnson. It meant Communism, which meant materialism and the masses, not art—a narrative of history and ideology Johnson abhorred.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Barr, by contrast, thought the insights of the Constructivists were particularly important (Kantor 161–188). Johnson’s lifelong aversion to and fear of the political left on elitist and aesthetic grounds are most precisely stated in the 1962 pronouncement, “commercialism and Communism are both anti-aesthetic movements that control our cultures” (Johnson, “Article for the *Kentiku*,” *Writings* 248).

The narrative of rebellious “style” is interleaved with another, which undercuts it. Johnson begins by saying that there are two histories of modernism. One is the history of engineering since 1800, which cannot be discussed. It is not architecture—not art—and he drops it to chronicle the “individualists.” But it returns as “individualism” ends. In the new style, “Engineering is made the basis of design,” and the Crystal Palace of 1851, snubbed at the essay’s opening, turns out to be the secret progenitor of the new style. The style is based on the meta-narrative of modernity itself: the rise of “the machine.”

The way Johnson trapped himself between art and machine, fighting for one at the expense of the other, constantly switching their labels of “rebel” and “villain,” comes out especially clearly in his journalistic writings. Johnson states of Joseph Urban’s 1931 *moderne* building for the New School for Social Research, “[t]he central portion [with its ribbon windows] extends three feet beyond the wall supports, concealing them [...]; the space which the projection creates cannot be utilized [...]. Had the architect been guided by functional requirements and the building allowed to grow from within out, the posts would have been placed in the outer wall (Johnson, *Writings* 33). Not “functional”: not International Style. On the supposed “functionalism” of a house project by “reject” Alfred Clauss, Johnson notes: “Instead of being placed on the facade, the posts are set back within the living room, [decreasing] the interior circulation and [increasing] the cost of construction. But the non-functional cantilever does give a unified expanse of glass necessary to the design” (*Writings* 45-46). Not functional, therefore art, therefore International Style.

Johnson is cheating here, of course: the Clauss project looks like an Oud or Mies building, while Urban’s does not. But in terms of the narratives through which Johnson fought for a new order, the aporia is unavoidable. The “International Style” was a crucial step in history because it was art based (as fascist revolution would be based) on a fact of modernity: the dominance of economics and environments by industrialism. If architects did not foreground this, and the machine’s impersonality, they were not truly of modern times, and could make no claim to be an avant-garde. However, if architects made the beneficial functioning of the machine come first, rather than form, they were not artists, and thus not part of art history’s meta-narrative. Moreover, like fascism’s



elites, they were expected to transform the material of the industrial mass into an aestheticized statement of mastery over it. If they did not do so, they did not drive change in art history, and were not avant-garde.<sup>5</sup> The relentlessness with which Johnson argued for the existence of a “post-functionalist” modernism—a model pushed by Barr and Hitchcock—reveals the desperateness of the aporia. Yet Johnson’s MoMA shows highlighted work that redefined architecture and design in terms of the machine, with the machine “dictating” form.

In Johnson’s 1932 catalogue essay, the art-history narrative of the Twenties is the style’s fight against Expressionism—all art and not enough machine—and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, all machine and no art. In 1932 both are the past, dead avant-gardes, no longer options for the present. But Johnson obsessively resurrected “functionalism” to kill it again and again. He called it a “fad” among commercial American *moderne* architects like Raymond Hood: commodity masquerading as rebellion, unwittingly enacting a dead phase of the avant-garde. However, Johnson consistently praised the architecture of such anti-aesthetic European functionalists as Mart Stam, insisting that it met both formal and art-historical criteria of avant-gardism. However, he could still attack it by calling functionalist discourse “theory,” a body of ideas that interfered with the haptic experience of architecture—a strategy that was damaged by his own use of texts, especially with Hitchcock in *The International Style*, to narrow avant-garde architecture to one art-historically acceptable manifestation. Here was another aporia: theoretical texts were necessary to show why architecture, as an art, could not be limited by theoretical texts (Hitchcock and Johnson 38, 214-217). Functionalist texts hobbled the ecstasy of art—but so did Johnson’s historical narratives.

Johnson was on the firmest ground when he allowed his mentors to set the terms for him. In *The International Style*, whose text is mostly Hitchcock’s, what mattered was

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<sup>5</sup> For Barr and Hitchcock on the problem of the machine for modern art and culture, see Kantor 146-148, 255-259, 307. Johnson’s confusions on “functionalism” stemmed in large part from Barr’s difficulties evaluating the aesthetic and the functional components of architecture; see Kantor 250-253, 445 n. 132. See also Riley, “Portrait of the Curator” 65.

not the machine, but the “style,” both expressive of and compatible with modernity’s machine processes, which formalist art-history methods located in the practice of representative artists (architects). In the 1934 MoMA show *Machine Art*, Johnson was steadied by Barr’s conviction—derived from Clive Bell’s *Art* (1913)—that pure form without narrative content (“significant form”) drove great art, and that therefore machinery, without representational purpose, could be the purest art. The notion of a state of pure aesthetic ecstasy, removed from the contingencies of the world, was deeply sympathetic to Johnson. Yet even here Johnson could not resist turning his historical narratives into “revolts”—against the individualism of Wright and the anti-aesthetics of functionalism in *The International Style*, and against the handicraft ethos of William Morris in the catalogue to *Machine Art* (Riley, *The International style* 55; Riley “Portrait” 55-61; Kantor 33, 307-309).

What mattered more to Johnson, the serenity of form or the ecstasy of textual battle? Or was it the security of art-historical narrative versus the thrill of radical form? For while crafting these texts, Johnson was increasingly preoccupied by the idea of becoming an architect, or at least acting as a patron of architecture. This fatally destabilized the routine of “revolt” he had mastered in his texts.

### **Architecture and the Texts of the Body**

Failing in college as a thinker and a sexually “normal” man, Johnson abandoned the mind for the ecstatic body in space. However, the body in architectural space, in the spaces of Johnson’s own time, had to be approached through an impersonal, limited, order-enforcing architecture. This had to be readable as a text of history, since mastering such texts of order was his escape from Otherness to triumph. Oud’s work met Johnson’s needs at first. It was machine-like, Platonically pure and Dorically austere, like the Parthenon, and Hitchcock called it the key to the narratives of modern form. But we see Johnson thrilling to examples from art history that had qualities he bracketed out of modern production. He admired the theatrical, the expressive, and the physical in the Zwinger in Dresden. He feared it in works of the present, like Urban’s New School, or Le Corbusier’s Pavillon Suisse (Schulze 56, Kirstein 136)

Mies van der Rohe's work, which Johnson first saw at the Tugendhat House in the present Czech Republic, drove Johnson to ecstasy and delivered him order. Mies's work was Platonic and machined. It had Classical simplicity and purity of proportion. His buildings and interiors used rich, luxurious materials, like marble, rare woods, and silks. Their somatic richness and echoes of Classical grandeur called up Johnson's quest for bodily pleasures. Mies's breakdown of traditional walls and enclosures called up new freedoms of the body. Also, unlike Corbusier and Gropius, Mies claimed to hate words and theories, especially social and functionalist ones. He was an avant-gardist of silence and pure form, of unhobbled ecstasy (Schulze 69; Johnson "Interview").<sup>6</sup>

Johnson tried to absorb Mies to himself through words, by becoming his monographer, in the 1932 show catalogue. As an art historian should, Johnson "explained" Mies by identifying the "influences" on him, tracing Mies's aesthetic back to the great Prussian architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Johnson decided that his own corner of the art-historical enterprise would be the German Neoclassical tradition, from Schinkel to Mies, and in 1932 he began preparing a scholarly monograph on Schinkel's pupil Ludwig Persius (Barr, *Defining Modern Art* 112-113; Schulze 188). Mies the violator of history and of Classical scale, the creator of the Glass Skyscrapers of 1921-22, received no attention from Johnson at all.

Yet Mies was still a kind of avant-garde artist. Johnson describes him as "an artist of the plan, a decorator in the best sense, a creator of space." He says that the slow, complex penetration of the body, moving through Mies's facadeless walls into the free spaces of his interiors, spurns the claustrophobic boxes of past architecture. Yet Johnson reduces this to an artistry of the plan—the flat diagram, admired as an abstract image,

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<sup>6</sup> Johnson relays his reservations about Gropius and the "sociologists" of the Bauhaus in a letter to Alfred Barr, n.d. (October 1929), Mies van der Rohe Archive, Museum of Modern Art, Museum Correspondence, folder 2. A 1931 Johnson essay on Clauss and Daub states of Le Corbusier, "He has written many books in propagandist vein [...] but these doctrinal writings have alienated many people" ("Two Houses in the International Style" 307-308). When this sentence was brought to Johnson's attention in 1984, he laughed and said, "I meant me" (Johnson, "Interview").

not experienced in space. Johnson also explained Mies's stylistic signature as "design in planes." That is, rich materials are reduced to two-dimensional surfaces, *signifiers* of the physical instead of *vehicles* of it. Mies's spatial radicalism is turned into something for the connoisseur to look at from a distance: a text that proclaims the importance of the physical, without genuinely acting on it (qtd. in Barr, *Defining Modern Art* 114, 117).<sup>7</sup>

By 1934 Johnson was himself attempting to create such forms, designing apartments for friends that imitated Mies's interiors, using "planes" of floor-to ceiling silk curtains over wall-to-wall windows; he took, illegally given his lack of training or registration, to calling himself an architect in print (Schulze 105-106). But the dilemma was whether the architectural body or the art-historical text, the awakening of the senses or their sublimation in narratives, would be more gratifying. He was told that he could master neither. The leading Schinkel scholar in Germany blasted the Persius project, saying Johnson was undertrained to write texts. Mies himself damned Johnson for dealing in "fashion," not "building," oblivious to the deeper revolutions of modernism (Schulze 89; Pommer 144-145). From either side, those for whom he revolted told him he could not lead them.

So in 1934 Johnson took the action latent in his ideology of youth. The narratives of machine architecture made way for the meta-narrative behind them, the politico-economic structure of modernity—as shown in the texts of Werner Sombart, which Johnson translated, and American fascist Lawrence Dennis, whom Johnson befriended. In December 1934 Johnson left MoMA to found an American fascist movement he called "Youth and the Nation." It took him six years to find that he could not master fascism's texts and that he could not resist architecture. In 1940 he began architectural training, turning Johnson "the historian" into Johnson "the architect."

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<sup>7</sup> That Johnson interpreted Mies's work in terms of his own self-therapeutics does not necessarily make his comments incorrect. Recent scholarship, making next to no use of Johnson's writings, foregrounds the effect in Mies's 1920s work of "appearance" over bodily reality (see Mertins 132-133). Johnson's difficulties, in his 1947 Mies monograph, in reconciling his interpretation with Mies's post-emigration obsession with the "factuality" of the steel I-beam are beyond the scope of the present essay.

While Johnson's later career is not at issue here, it should be mentioned that his mastery of texts continued to bring him power that his designs alone could not always accrue to him. His scholarly study of Mies legitimized not only the subject's work but Johnson's own, as he began work on his Miesian Glass House. The spoken text largely replaced the written one as a means of attack and a source of power; in lectures, in front of patrons, and in media interviews, Johnson the rebel and historical expert "shocked, charmed, amused and amazed" colleagues and clients at the highest ranks of architecture culture (Blake 9). Johnson's power in the profession increased as he lost every revolutionary conviction except one: his devotion to architecture as not a tool or a text but a monument, an authoritative and ecstasy-inducing work of art.

As a "revolutionary," an avant-gardist, the young Johnson is a kind of text himself, or at least a textbook case. He seems to live out O. K. Werckmeister's comments on the fundamental elitism of the avant-garde paradigm, its origins in intellectuals' and artists' self-vision as a new ruling class. He exemplifies avant-garde style as therapeutic counterattack, "a substitute self," "compensatory therapy for the self defeated by society" (Werckmeister 857, Kuspit 18-19). The fact that Johnson's therapy, his rebellion, and his pretensions of mastery came out through texts on architecture made him the right man at a crucial time. He appeared when American architecture culture had lost its main narrative thread, Beaux-Arts Classicism. In the absence of American buildings in radical European modes, texts and pictures offered virtually the only entry point into the new architecture. Johnson operated as a framer of narratives about it, but he brought to these narratives the erotic energy of his own therapeutics. In the years after World War II, even as his "rebellion" collapsed of its own contradictions, Johnson's paradigms of youthful adventure and historical authority brought both excitement and reassurance to the business of putting modernism into mainstream practice. The therapeutics of his first campaign of rebellion failed Johnson himself, but by the time that happened, his narratives of form and history had been implanted in American architecture culture.

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