Le Corbusier and the Problems of Representation
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Le Corbusier and the Problems of Representation

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By reading the graphic, architectural, and photographic records of the work by Le Corbusier through a feminist lens, we can see that it is loaded with codes and systems of meaning that reflect his attitudes, and those of society, about women's place within the context of his modern architecture. By giving us a glimpse into his subconscious, these clues disturbingly confirm what has always been insinuated, that Le Corbusier objectified and had an aversion toward women. The canonization of his oeuvre has rendered this and subsequent related work problematic through its gendered associations and meanings.

The utilitarian and functionalist aspects that have traditionally set architecture apart from the fine arts have also made it difficult to engage architecture within a feminist critique. The multivalence of meanings held by an architectural object and the silence contained in its walls are precisely the elements that seem to prevent critique by comparison with what is possible with painting or sculpture. The spatial qualities of architecture also obfuscate issues related to femininity because, as we know, the self-referentiality of space negates any type of ideological transmission, including its determination as gendered. The gendering of space, as I will later show, occurs through the typological and socially constructed assignment of spaces, which are based primarily on gendered stereotypes that have dominated western thought. For these reasons, to evaluate architecture as being specifically gender-based, we must examine the architects and the types of decisions that they make, before and after the creation of architecture, that allude to a particularly gendered portrayal or positioning of women through their architecture. By employing this framework, we can begin examining the works of Le Corbusier to assess his attitudes toward women in general and within the context of his architecture. To do this, however, we must understand the "traditional" view of women within the spaces of architecture, the relationship between the architect and his objectification of women, and the placement of himself in relation to the world, specifically the one he created.[1]

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The Spaces of Femininity

Within the context of urban life in nineteenth-century France, Griselda Pollock discusses the depicted distinctions in painting of the spaces that women were allowed to occupy and those that they were forbidden. She argues that the work of Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt illustrated the spaces traditionally occupied by women as being very different from those spaces depicted exclusively by men, as exemplified in the work of Edouard Manet and other Impressionists. These female painters primarily dealt with the spaces and subjects that fell into the category of domestic social life and, as such, never exceeded the status of "mere" genre paintings.[2] The spaces occupied and represented by these women were not simply relegated to domestic interior scenes, but rather represented the positionality in discourse and social practice, ordered by sexual politics and the economy of looking and being seen, in which their femininity was manifested.[3] In the case of Cassatt and Morisot, these spaces were a direct influence of the transformation of the city into a place for consumption and specularity. Women were positioned within the realm of the private spaces that were, as Pollock suggests, "spaces of sentiment and duty from which money and power were banished . . . place[s] of constraint." Men, on the other hand, occupied the public spaces of "daily capitalist hostilities . . . freedom and irresponsibility if not immorality."[4] Male painters occupied and represented in their works places unavailable to "respectable" women, such as bars, brothels, and the backstage.

Women in the 1800s did not look, but rather were the object of the gaze of the flaneur, a man who moved throughout the city observing, but never interacting, and "consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale."[5] For women to go out into the male public realm created many difficulties. As Jules Michelet points out, these included being mistaken for a prostitute or being reduced to a mere spectacle. If a woman entered a restaurant alone, "all eyes would be constantly fixed on her, and she would overhear uncomplimentary and bold conjectures."[6] This could be seen as a consequence of a particular public arena that allowed bourgeois men to seduce or purchase working-class women. In contrast to women's firmly defined position, a man, or flaneur, was allowed to lose himself in the crowd, gaze voyeuristically, and act in complete freedom. The middle-class or respectable woman, on the other hand, was compartmentalized in the private realm within which, on their return from the exterior or public world, the men acted with constraint in accordance with their socially acceptable roles as fathers and husbands.

The division of space across gender lines had already been defined in architectural terms by Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise, *I Libri della Famiglia*,[7] in which he similarly delegates the place for women as the house and the place for men as the public world: "It would hardly win us respect if our wife busied herself among the men in the marketplace, out in the public eye. It also seems somewhat demeaning to me to re-

main shut up in the house among women when I have manly things to do among men, fellow citizens and worthy and distinguished foreigners. . . . The character of men is stronger than that of women. . . . Women, on the other hand, are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and more useful when they sit still and watch over our things."[8] In this case, as in Pollock's example, gender lines mirror economic divisions: Men tend to business because of their shrewdness, and women stay at home because of their timidity and inability to deal with financial transactions. Alberti also notes that, whereas the exterior world is the realm of labor for men, the home is their place of constraint, away from business transactions or work.

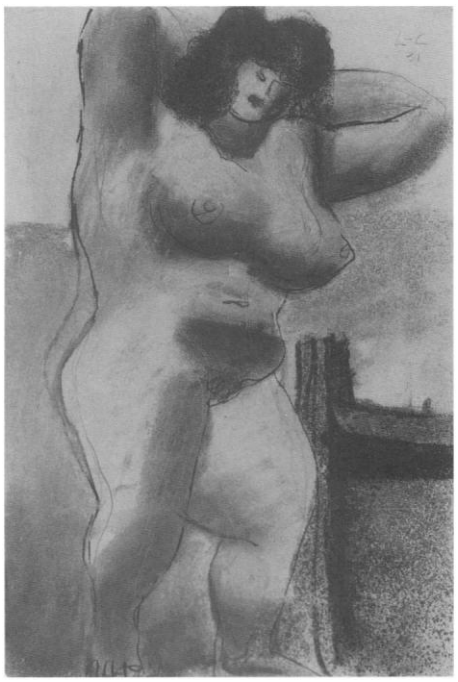
In Alberti's treatise, the female gaze or look is equated with spying and is therefore condemned. Alberti claims that a woman should be more eager to know what happens in her own house, as she should be guarding the man's possessions, rather than outside its walls, noting that a woman who spies "too much on men may be suspected of having men too much on her mind, being perhaps secretly anxious whether others are learning about her own character when she appears too interested in them."[9] In the dichotomies between the flaneur and the women in Alberti's treatise, scopophilia (pleasure in looking) can shed some light as to the problems involved in the look. For Sigmund Freud, the act of seeing objectifies the person observed by subjecting him or her to a curious and controlling gaze. This gaze, generally associated with sexual pleasure and stimulation through sight, portrays a double standard in its social context. The male flaneur is expected to use the gaze as he travels through the city. For the women in Alberti's treatise, however, looking is regarded as perverse and irreconcilable behavior for a "lady of unblemished honor."[10] The distinction of male and female scopophilia and the politics of looking creates and reinforces the spaces of femininity. A woman remains within the socially acceptable realm of the interior or in socially sanctioned environments to avoid being seen (as a prostitute) and to avoid seeing (as an act of perversion by having men too much on her mind).

The materialization of these beliefs can clearly be seen manifested in the architecture and in the positioning of women within it, particularly in its representations, shown by the work of Morisot and Cassatt. How, then, is one to read an architecture that attempted to break with past architectural traditions? Is Le Corbusier's oeuvre truly innovative in a conceptual restructuring of these traditions, or does it maintain and reproduce the ideology and patriarchal hegemony within the innovative restructuring of his buildings? As discussed earlier, to ascertain the ideological intention of the architecture it is necessary to examine the decisions made by its architects that determine these qualities. In Le Corbusier's work, this can clearly be found in his architecture and his representations of it.

Le Corbusier and the Problems in Representation

Beatriz Colomina refers to the photographs of Le Corbusier as representing a new reality about the ways in which he used them, not only to represent, but rather, as modern advertisement had done, to construct a text. For Le Corbusier, the photographs of architecture and machines that he included in many of his publications helped him assess a portrayal of his own architecture and his relation to it. The photographs that Le Corbusier used in *Vers une Architecture* and in *L'Architecture Vivante*, for example, render everyday experiences and objects accessible to the reader by presenting them not only as fragmentary but as "corresponding to the experience of culture in the society of media."[11] Under closer examination, we find that these photographs do indeed present the contemporary cultural situation; however, they also provide us with a window into his subconscious. An exploration into Le Corbusier's process of continuous editing of photographs—erasing, removing from context, reframing, choosing, composing, and constructing—reveals many indications in these images about Le Corbusier's aversion toward women.[12] What we find is that Le Corbusier follows and repeats architectural conventions or standards that attempt to control the image of women and nature through privileging the position of men/architecture over women/nature. However, at the time of representation, Le Corbusier reveals traces of himself and the role he envisioned for women as well as their position within his architectural and artistic production; in other words, the representations of architecture reveal the classical structure of patriarchal oppression working within traditional architectural representation.

There is a dichotomy inherent within the work of Le Corbusier that dialectically pairs the figurative work (drawings, photographs, sculptures, etc.) in contrast to the architectural production. This juxtaposition similarly can be read as the clash between the irrational unconscious of the former and the rational consciousness of the latter. Through this pairing, however, it is also possible to analyze the work in terms of the universalizing aspirations of a utopian modernism that placed a tremendous stress on the purity of the visual signifier. An investigation into this quality of the work by Le Corbusier elucidates what Jacqueline Rose refers to as the sexuality in the field of vi-



1. Le Corbusier, *Nude Female*, 1931. © 1995 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

sion, showing that the "image [can be held] accountable for the reproduction of norms" and that the scrutiny of the image "adds the idea of a sexuality that goes beyond the issue of content to take in the parameters of visual form (not what we see but how we see it)."[13] The figurative work provides us with the articulation of a particular language of patriarchy that is present within his representation of architecture. By studying such representation, we find, on the one hand, the reproduction of the language or ideology of patriarchy. This is achieved through a series of particularly gendered conventions that position women, both as users and creators, within the margins of artistic or architectural production. On the other hand, the photographs, through their manipulations, echo the predominant system of architectural representation.

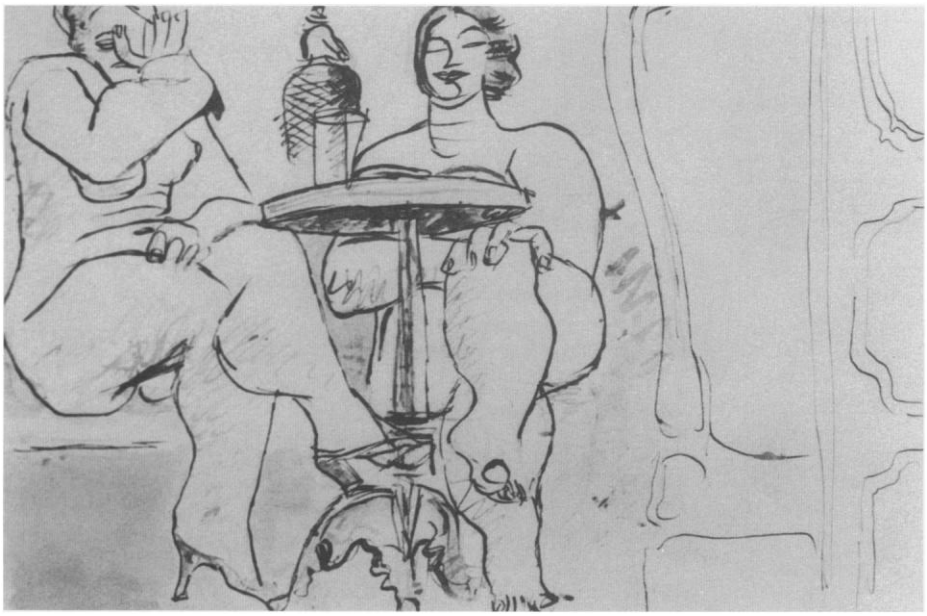
Because of the position that Le Corbusier occupied in the emerging modernist avant-garde, whose means of artistic dissemination consisted primarily of elements of the mass media, the transformation of conventions through which architecture and its images were transmitted was altered to suit the systems of mass production and mass dissemination of information. This transformation profoundly altered the course of architecture and, because of his abilities to manipulate this newly formed medium, of the reception of Le Corbusier himself. Nevertheless, the impact that this had on architecture transformed the way that we now see, learn, and create architecture—that is primarily based on images. A critical engagement with the figurative work therefore immediately begins to inform the architectural work. The semantic purity of the architectural signifier, as Le Corbusier would describe the arrangement of forms that made architecture, would inform the purist qualities of the villas as being completely self-referential. Through investigations into the irrational and subjective quality of his unconscïous artistic work, however, psychoanalytic theory can be mobilized to analyze the particular and limiting opposition between male/architect and female that the rational and objective quality of the architecture, seen to be devoid of meaning, maintains. This investigation similarly can describe the persistence of the typical female patriarchal oppression present within his architectural production.

Le Corbusier and Women

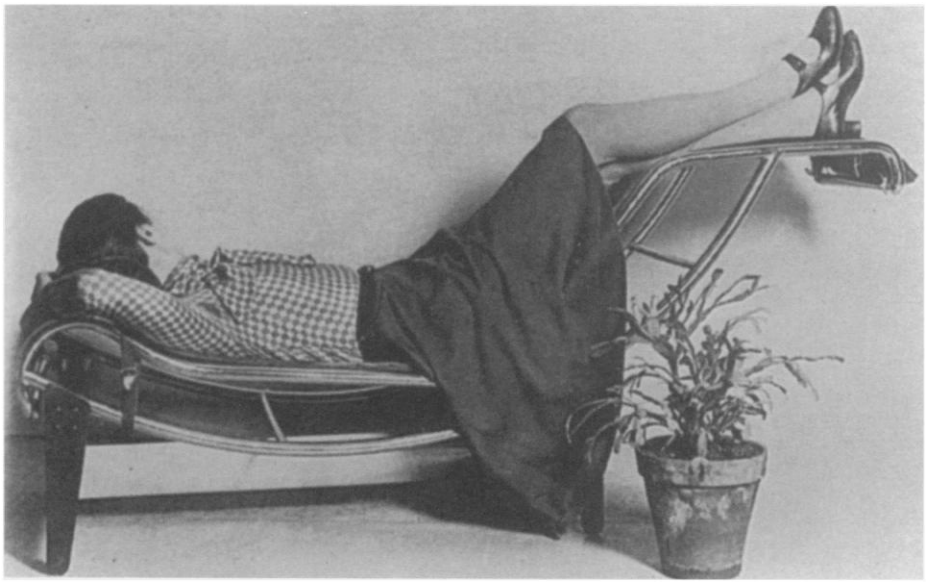
Le Corbusier saw women as inferior and disregarded them in his architectural production. For example, when Charlotte Perriand approached Le Corbusier about joining his team as a furniture designer, he immediately replied, "We don't embroider cushions in my studio."[14] This and similar prejudices can be seen as influencing the work that he produced. In Le Corbusier's drawings, paintings, and sculpture, we can see three things that are of interest regarding his portrayal of his relationship to women. The first is his inability or lack of desire to portray women, indicating his opposition toward the feminine. In much of his work, we can find a masculinization of women (as in *Nude Female*, 1931 [drawing 65 from *Le Corbusier Secret* (LCS)]).[15] These women are portrayed as large and muscular, and their stereotypical long hair hides what appear to be male faces. The fact that they are women is revealed by the titles of the pieces and by the exaggerated breasts. We also find, in his earlier work, a lack of portrayal of the otherness, women's genitals, which becomes problematic by presenting us with an unconscious fear of what is not there and, ultimately, what that absence represents. In this early work, until about, 1940, the positioning of women in the pictures prevents Le Corbusier from having to deal with woman's "lack" of a phallus (as in *Two Women*, 1932 [plate 17 from *A Marriage of Contours* (AMC)][16] and *Two Nude Women*, 1928 [drawing 15 from LCS]). In his later work, we find not only that he portrays this "lack," but that he portrays it in a very graphic manner—illustrating the vulva and its void (as in *Woman with Candle and Two Figures*, 1946 [plate 30 from AMC]). The earlier work perhaps is introduced by a fear of the feminine otherness and thus a fear of castration, and in the later work, the otherness is fetishized to remove this fear and show it as an anatomical occurrence.[17] These images reveal two things. First, these portrayals and their disruption of traditional modes of representation point to a possible relationship between the author's sexuality, or his imaginary conception of it, and its representation in the field of vision. This inability to repre-

sent can be equated to Freud's analysis of Leonardo da Vinci, who was unable to represent the sexual act, and can lead to the conclusion that Le Corbusier's drawings allow us to "deduce the repression of libido—a repression that [can throw] the great artist and investigator into something approaching confusion."[18] The second thing that these images reveal is what Laura Mulvey described as the artistic fetishization of the female body. Le Corbusier, like the artist Allen Jones, whom Mulvey discusses, does not actually show the female genitals; they are "always concealed, disguised, or supplemented in ways which alter the significance of female sexuality."[19] In the images mentioned above, the candle continually oscillates between the genital itself and its phallic distraction. The flame of the candle becomes, in place of the phallus, a representation of the scar, violence, and fear of castration; yet, it serves to displace this fear, as "traditional" fetishistic objects do, through the overvaluation of a mediating substitute.[20]

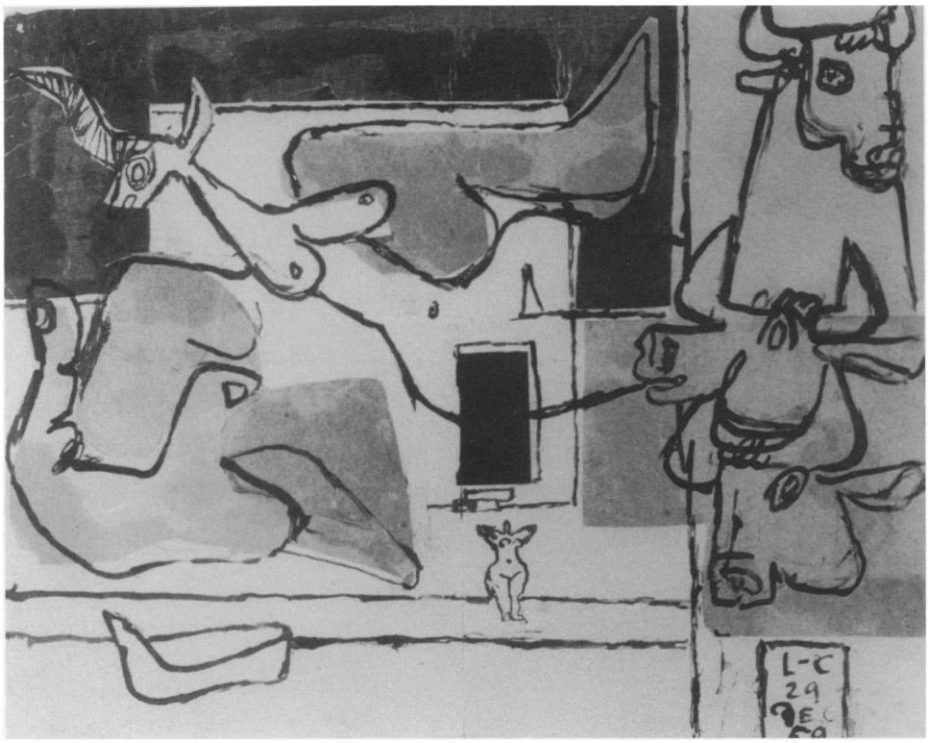
Through their placement in his work, Le Corbusier visually objectifies women by submitting them to (unreturnable) voyeuristic gazes, making them into objects of male desire. In many cases, the drawings suggest a voyeuristic view of women in which the point of vision suggested by the drawings implies an abnormal positioning of the artist—in many cases as if he were hidden (as in *Two Nude Women at the Table*, n.d. [drawing 54 from LCS], or *Two Women*, n.d. [drawing 47 from LCS]). In other cases, he portrays the women caught "in the act" by his voyeuristic activities (as in *Woman and Leaf*, 1946 [plate 14 from AMC]). The gaze of Le Corbusier, in these, dominates these women by finding them in the act of doing something "perverse" and by the position that he occupies in order to be the subject of the gaze. This objectification of



2. Le Corbusier, *Two Nude Women at the Table*, n.d. © 1995 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.



3. Le Corbusier's chaise longue (with Charlotte Perriand). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.



4. Le Corbusier, *Composition*, 1959. © 1995 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

women by the male gaze is clearly evident in the photograph of Charlotte Perriand on the Le Corbusier and Perriand chaise longue, where she is made into an accessory of the furniture. By allowing the skirt to flow downward, her legs are revealed and thus fetishized and shown as objects of desire. However, most important, Perriand never acknowledges the viewer.[21] Unlike Manet's *Olympia*, the photograph does not depict an opposing gaze confronting the photographer, but rather shows a voyeuristic scene: the unknowing woman and the photographer, and audience, that looks at her. If we compare both, we see in *Olympia* a recalcitrance about the traditional representation of a woman who not only confronts and resists our gaze, but one who "turns, inevitably, on the signs of sexual identity. . . . [For] sexual identity was precisely what *Olympia* did not possess. She failed to occupy a place in the discourse on woman [of the nineteenth century]."[22] Although Perriand is arranged with the correct amount of distance and height (not as close or as high in relation to the viewer as *Olympia*), she appears to reveal herself to the viewer in an unknowing way by the natural falling of the skirt. In contrast, *Olympia* appears to object to her viewing and hides herself from us while, at the same time, she dares us and confronts our look. The photograph of Perriand offers us, as in the traditional nude paintings, an "infinite territory on which spectators are free to impose their imaginary definitions."[23]

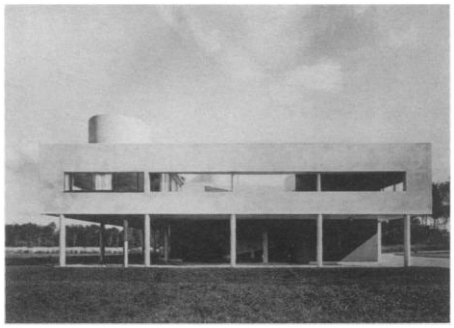
Finally, we can see that Le Corbusier's portrayal of men reinforces stereotypes and attitudes about male virility and female subjection. The sculpture *Le Petit Homme* (1944) portrays a small man whose penis wraps around him; the title, "the little man," is a French vernacular expression for the penis. This sculpture, as a libidinal subconscious representation, give us a glimpse of Le Corbusier's image of himself.[24] Similarly, many of his drawings and paintings portray the men as dominating women. Zeynep Çelik, for example, argues that Le Corbusier's depiction of Algiers in the cover sketch for *Poésie sur Alger* as a goat-headed well-endowed woman caressed by a hand, perhaps that of the architect, shows the mastery over the feminized body of the colonialized territory—the prostitute and the conquered.[25] In *Composition*, 1959 (drawing 170 from LCS), containing a similar motif, we find a naked woman with the backdrop of the city, seen depicted from a boat, as would have been the case with Algiers, awaiting the arrival of the colonizer. The colonizers are portrayed as bulls, a traditional metaphor for masculinity and virility, and the open door behind the woman signifies her as welcoming their arrival. Another set of paintings and sketches portrays women in relationship to traditional fetish objects—in one case, ropes (as in *Two Bathers and Dog*, ca. 1931 [plate 13 from AMC]). This depiction portrays a need to be able to control women, on one hand, and emphasizes, on the other hand, the role of the fetishistic object, which serves subconsciously as a sadistic punishment for the lack of the phallus.[26]

Le Corbusier: Photographs of a Male Architecture

Issues similar to the ones previously mentioned in relation to the paintings and drawings can be found in many of the photographs attributed to or composed by Le Corbusier. By presenting a single view-

point, the camera or photograph implies a constructed look that can be related to scopophilic drives as well as to the desires of the subconscious. We find that Le Corbusier's photographs show the importance of men and the masculine in architecture through the positioning of women within their socially constructed "rightful place" in the house, showing the (male) gaze as one of the driving forces that control his architecture.[27]

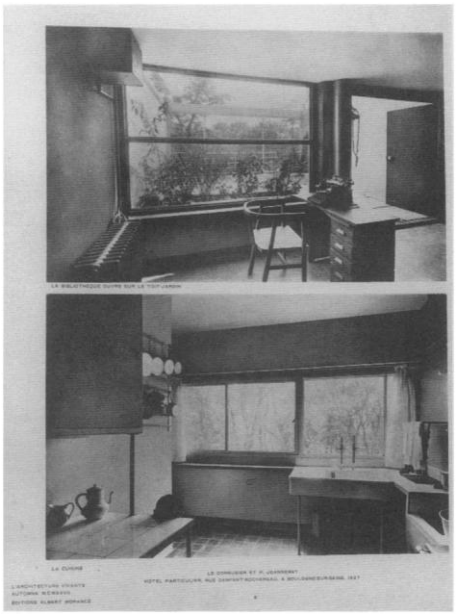
Le Corbusier constantly asserted that the house was a machine for living. The reference of the machine was used not only for the house, but also for painting and life itself. His own carefully constructed image, for example, was that of a "machine" or a mass-produced human being: He always wore a black suit, white shirt, and "owl" glasses. There is no doubt that the machine also became the generating element in Le Corbusier's architecture. The curvilinear shape on the ground level of the Villa Savoye, for example, was obtained as a result of the maximum turning radius of a car. This insistence on the machine can be equated with the phallus and masculinity. The machine, in Freudian terms, represents all that is male: activity and power. By claiming that his houses were machines, Le Corbusier, therefore, assigned to them a gendered distinction as male, because a "regular" house would be passive by nature and therefore female.[28] In some of the photographs, man is specifically translated by Le Corbusier as a machine. The small modeling figurine that inhabits the Maison Cook, for example, is the machine that inhabits these spaces and the one that also points or focuses our gaze to the windows, corresponding to, according to Colomina, the mechanical eye of the film camera.[29] Another photograph shows one of the Villa Savoye's side facades, labeled as the main facade, deviating from traditional architectural representations of the front facade, usually the one with the main entrance to the building, as the main facade. This picture, obviously one of importance in *L'Architecture Vivante* because of its size and prominence in the book, focuses specifically on the side that houses the cars. In this case, Le Corbusier has gone against traditional representation and portrayed the most important aspect of the villa: the machines. The priority for Le Corbusier is to show where the machines will be located, and by doing so, he disregards the living occupants of the house. Similarly, the picture that "synthesizes" his architecture, the first plate in *L'Architecture Vivante*, is of an airplane; the caption claims that architecture—and, by implication, the machine—is not simply a language of forms, but rather is something that must stand in harmony between nature and human creation. In this case, the machine dominates nature, however. The airplane, according to Freud, represents the male organ, not only by its shape, but also by the means that "enable it to rise in defiance of the laws of gravity."[30] This domination of nature is also depicted by Le Corbusier through the siting of the buildings themselves as removed from nature—as phallic fetishized objects in the landscape—yet the relationship that they have with nature is one of visual control. This is most evident in the Villa Savoye, where the windows frame the landscape and allow man, in a mechanical or photographic way, to analyze and therefore control it visually. Even objects that are clearly contextualized—for example, the photograph of the Villa Shwob in *L'Espirit Nouveau* or the photograph of New York in the "Architecture or Revolution" chapter of *Vers une Architecture*—are decontextualized to show the machine's importance over nature and to reinforce the fact that man (phallus) is superior to and dominates woman (nature).



5. Side elevation of the Villa Savoye, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1931). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

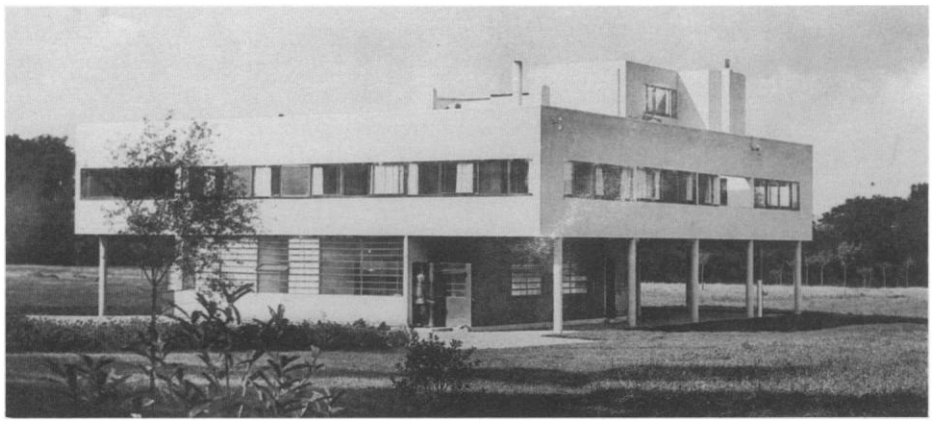
In many of the photographs, Le Corbusier places women in their socially created space. In one of the interior photographs of the Maison Cook, the woman is placed in the kitchen by virtue of her hat being left there. Similarly, the male, or public, spaces in the Villa Savoye are described and inhabited by the fragments that are left behind by the men in the photographs—be it a hat and coat or a hat and cigarettes or even a machine. We never see a purse or a lipstick left as a forgotten object in the "public" spaces. In another photograph of the Villa Savoye, a woman is shown entering the house from the back, or servants' entrance.[31] The woman is thus relegated to the role of servant, yet Le Corbusier assigns to the male the primary entrance by the fact that he has left his possessions on the table right next to it. The photographs of these buildings suggest a temporality of the man as he traverses the spaces of the houses, but the viewer is not allowed a glimpse of him, only the remainders and hints that the viewer has just missed him, as the open door in the kitchen of the Villa Savoye shows.[32]

The photographs of the kitchens in the Villa Savoye and the Villa at Garches are two of the most enigmatic photographs that contain the fragments of the user. Their careful setup and the deliberate



6. Page from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1927), depicting the juxtaposition of the library and the kitchen of the Maison Cook. © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

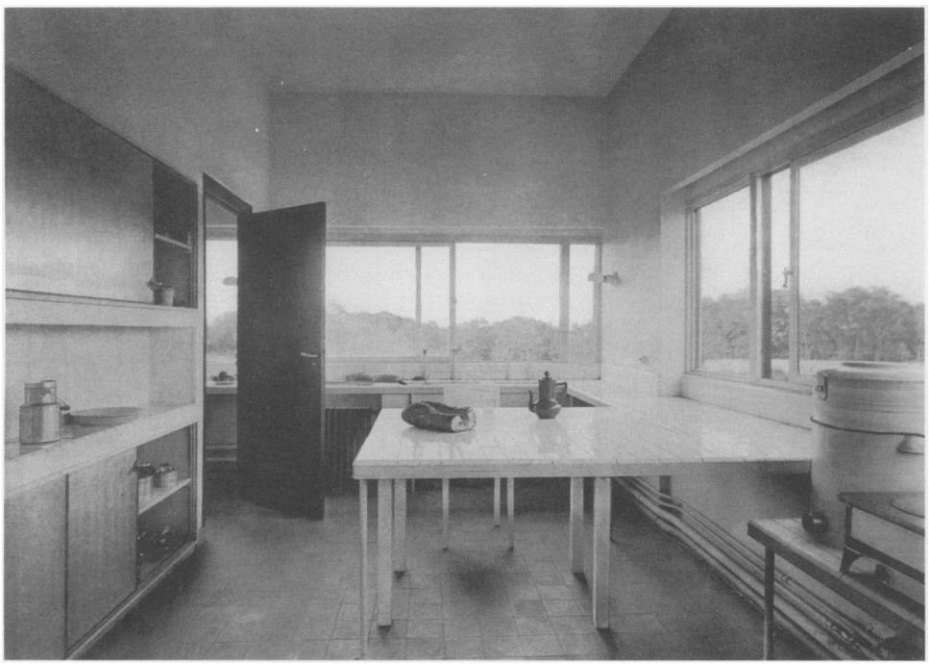
7. Entry hall of the Villa Savoye, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1931). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.



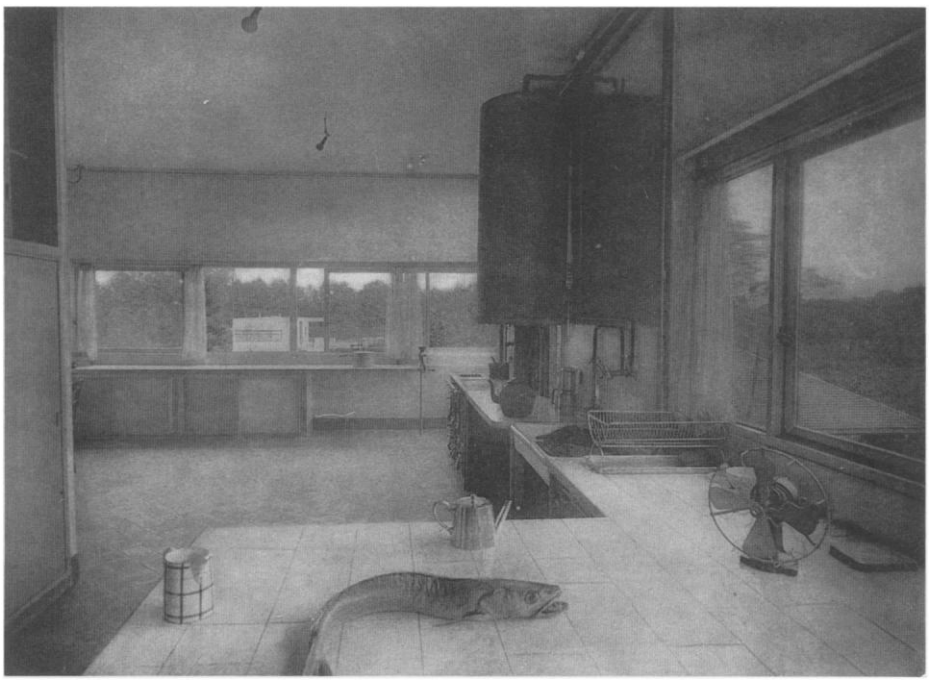
8. Rear elevation of the Villa Savoye, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1931). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

placement of the objects, the loaf of bread, and the fish, are obvious signs that they were carefully placed and not necessarily scenes from everyday life. The kitchens are completely devoid of any life with the exception of these objects. These photographs, as within pornographic depiction, use fetish objects that allow the viewer to enter safely into the feminine space, architectural or visual, by disavowing the threat or the memory of castration. In both photographs, the main elements—the bread, the fish, the creamer, the teapots—serve a fetishistic function by their shape and their character. The teapot, for example, can be said to represent the phallus through the shape and placement of the nozzle. The fish is a standard metaphor, according to Freud, for the male organ. The fan, as a machine, contains the element of activity and control over nature, and therefore represents man. The open door in the background, which to Colomina signifies the passage of the man through the space, symbolizes the female genital orifice, which can only be opened by the male key.[33] In Le Corbusier's eyes, modern architecture or his own architecture, is the realm of men.

Throughout many of the photographs, the male gaze, used to position and control women, can be seen as the creative force behind the architecture. One of the more problematic photographs is of the Immeuble Clarté. In it, we see a woman in the interior of the house looking at what



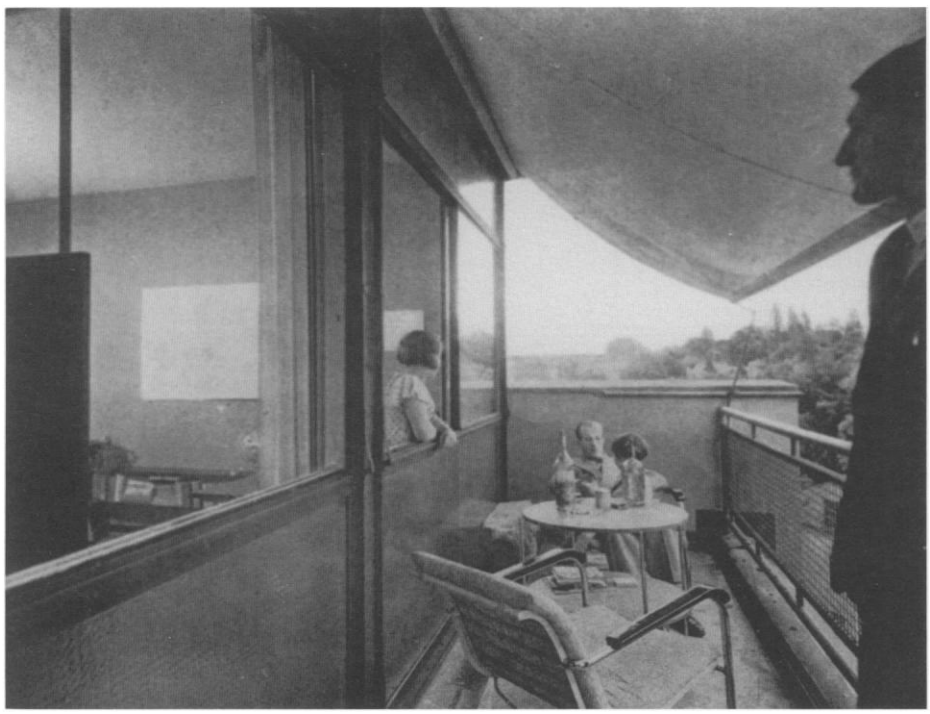
9. Kitchen of the Villa Savoye, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1931). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.



10. Kitchen of the Villa at Garches, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1929). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

appears to be her husband on the exterior, denoting the spaces of femininity and masculinity as discussed by Pollock. However, there is a third figure: a voyeur, hidden in the shadows and intently looking at the woman. He objectifies her, and she does not return his gaze. The third figure creates a voyeuristic space that resembles Robert Doisneau's *Un Regard Oblique* (1943); the woman becomes the object of the "joke" played by the photographer, the voyeur, and her husband.[34] As in Doisneau's photograph, Le Corbusier's photograph places the real scopophilic power in the margins. The woman, whose look is concealed from the viewer, becomes the object of the voyeur's vision. The male gaze, as in *Un Regard Oblique*, is the centered focus of the photograph, regardless that it comes from the margins. Mary Ann Doane, who elaborates on Doisneau's photograph, argues that by negating and framing the woman's gaze, the spectator's pleasure is created. The woman becomes the butt of a "dirty joke." In both photographs, according to Freud's standards, the joke is played by the fact that "the object of desire—the woman—must be absent and a third person (another man) must be present to witness the joke . . . the person to whom the smut is addressed."[35] For the joke to work, the third spectator alluded to is the viewer of the photograph and this person must be male. The joke in both photographs operates "as the structural exclusion of woman."[36] This power of the privileged male viewer over the woman reinforces what was found in Le Corbusier's drawings and paintings.

The *architectural promenade* in the Villa Savoye can similarly be read as an element that serves to objectify woman as she traverses space. In the movie *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, directed by Pierre Chenal in collaboration with Le Corbusier, we see a woman walking through the Villa Savoye. Colomina describes the sequence:



11. Exterior balcony of the Immeuble Clarté, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1930). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

12. Still from *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 1929, directed by Pierre Chenal (with Le Corbusier). © 1995 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

> . . . And it is there [the inside of the house], halfway through the interior, that the woman appears in the screen. She is already inside, already contained by the house, bounded. She opens the door that leads to the terrace and goes up the ramp towards the roof garden, her back to the camera. . . . Her body is fragmented, framed not only by the camera but by the house itself, behind bars. . . . The woman continues walking along the wall, as if protected by it, as the wall makes a curve to form the solarium, the woman turns too, picks up a chair, and sits down. . . . But for the camera, which now shows us a general view of the terrace, she has disappeared behind the plants. That is, just at the moment when she has turned and could face the camera (there is nowhere else to go), she vanishes.[37]

As we have seen previously, the camera acts as a voyeur, following a woman whose gaze never confronts us and who therefore never acknowledges the viewer. She is objectified by the camera. The architectural promenade, as described by this film, becomes something like a fashion ramp on which the woman is to be seen "parading her goods"—her body as an object of desire—as she travels through the spaces of the house. Every level of the house is allowed a view of the ramp. The woman, Colomina claims, is framed by both the camera and the house, in particular, the mullions of the windows. The fragmentation of the female body in the film—in section by the floor slabs of the house and in elevation by the window mullions—shows a sadistic objectification of the woman. In both cases, the image and fragmentation created by the house display and make into a "punishing" fetish the mutilated female body. This is not only a fragmenting and

13. Study at the Maison Church, from *L'Architecture Vivante* (Editions Albert Morance, 1930). © 1994 Artists Rights Society (ARS), N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.

punishing dislocation, but also one that can be seen as an objectivizing one. By placing the woman behind a grid of measurement of the house and mullions (as Albrecht Dürer had done in his 1525 woodcut of an artist drawing a reclining model), Le Corbusier has placed the woman in a visually controlled position. The *fenêtre en longueur* similarly becomes the controlling device of nature by suggesting that the image the viewer sees is framed by a rhythmic grid, which Colomina has interpreted as "the architectural correlative of the space of the movie camera."[38] By the same token, however, the *fenêtre en longueur* can be read into, from the outside in, as in the photograph of the Immeuble Clarté, where it serves to frame for analysis the inhabitant of the house who, in this case, is a woman. In contrast to this, the section of the film on the Villa at Garches shows the architect himself walking through the house. We see him drive up to the house, walk through its spaces, and ignore the daily occurrences of it. As soon as we see Le Corbusier's face in this segment, we see him as a film character playing his part, which, according to the system of visual relations, posits the impossibility of our voyeurism.[39] In this case, we see Le Corbusier playing the traditional role, within the economy of filmmaking, as the mover of the narrative whereas the woman in the Villa Savoye can be seen as constituting a resistance to narrativization. Teresa de Lauretis writes that: the description of plot construction is established "on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix, and matter."[40] The woman becomes the spectacle that guides us through the house, whereas the man creates and moves the narrative. We see the importance that he has through his arrogance and the way that he majestically traverses the spaces of the house. Le Corbusier becomes the hero of the narrative; he is the one who has given life, through his genius, to an idea that has become the architecture we now admire.

The manifestation of these ideas—of man as machine, man as voyeur or privileged viewer, and Le Corbusier's own association with both—can clearly be seen in a photograph of the Villa Church. In it, we find the standard remains that denote the male qualities of the architecture: the hat and the open books (perhaps referring to men as knowledgeable or academic).[41] The picture, however, reveals the traces of the architect himself as the one who frames the image and through whose eyes we see the room. This is the camera that we see reflected in the mirror next to the picture window. The camera unaided, and therefore the architect as camera and machine for seeing, has provided this image. Le Corbusier has looked at himself in the Lacanian mirror and the Other that he has found is what he desires to be: a machine. This is no ordinary machine, however; it is a machine for seeing. A machine that controls through its gaze by paralyzing time. Le Corbusier reinforces his role as the privileged viewer by becoming the embodiment of seeing. As Christian Metz points out, he does not identify with the image itself because the primary identification has already taken place in his childhood, but rather he identifies with the process itself: the *all-perceiving* subject.[42] According to Jacqueline Rose, this identification begins the construction of the imaginary ego:

> [Placing at the point of identification in the mirror, which sets up the ego as an imaginary instance,] a specific

Urbild or construct, therefore, which from then on functions as the instance of the Imaginary, commanding both the illusionary nature of the relationship between the subject and the real world, and the relationship between the subject and the identifications which form it as "I." The confusion at the basis of an "ego-psychology" would be to emphasize the relationship of the ego to the perception-consciousness system over and against its role as fabricator and fabrication, designed to preserve the subject's precarious pleasure from impossible and non-compliant real.[43]

The mirror into which we see provides Le Corbusier with a coherent image for self-identification. This view of his imaginary identification with an object for seeing and its machine qualities again points to their importance in his work.

In conclusion, the work of Le Corbusier reveals, through the drawings, paintings, photographs, and built work the problems that he encounters in the representation of the feminine, his aversion toward it, and the "fear" that it represents to him. Having its basis on a patriarchal system, the work reinforces the standards and rules set up by that system about the place and behavior of and toward women in society. Through an analysis of the decisions Le Corbusier has made about the depiction of his architecture, we can see not only that it is specifically gender-based, but also that it maintains the traditional modes of patriarchal oppression through the representation of woman as spectacle, through the stereotypical gendered divisions of space as male or female, and through the continuation of utopian ideals about the role of the architect and architecture. By using these photographs as precedents for contemporary works, nevertheless, these issues continue operating within the architectural system. The danger of this, of course, lies in the reproduction of the stereotypes and ideologies created through a patriarchal system. This becomes especially problematic when women themselves continue these modes of self-identification and representation, remaining within the established codes and canons of architectural representation, without giving a second thought to their origins and their implications.

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Notes

1. I refer here to male architects as the "traditional" gender for the profession.

2. Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 56.

3. Ibid., p. 66.

4. Ibid., pp. 68–69. For Pollock, the paintings by Cassatt and Morisot show, in many instances, a clear distinction between the spaces of masculinity and femininity through the use of boundary demarcation devices that separate the interior space, or feminine realm, from the exterior space, or masculine realm.

5. Ibid., p. 67.

6. Jules Michelet, *La Femme*, quoted in Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," p. 69.

7. This division was stated earlier in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, in which he describes that the god had "directly prepared the woman's nature for indoor works and indoor concerns" (VII, line 22). Later, the role given to women by the god is to guard things brought into the house (VII, line 25).

8. Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, Renée Neu Watkins (Colombia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), p. 207.

9. Ibid., p. 210.

10. Ibid.

11. Beatriz Colomina, "Le Corbusier and Photography," *Assemblage* 4 (1987): 18.

12. In this case, for example, I concentrated on Le Corbusier's *L'Architecture Vivante* (Le Corbusier and P. Jeanneret, Editions Albert Morancé), in particular the early photographs from 1927–1931, four to eight years after *Vers une Architecture*.

13. Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 231.

14. Mary McLeod, "Furniture and Femininity," *Architectural Review* (Jan. 1987): 43.

Nevertheless, Le Curbusier did hire Perriand after seeing her work at the Salon d' Automne of 1927.

15. *Le Corbusier Secret* (Berne: Mussee cantonal de Beaux-Arts, 1987).

16. Richard Ingersoll, *Le Corbusier: A Marriage of Contours* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1990).

17. It is interesting to note that *Woman*, ca. 1940 (plate 20 from AMC), shows a violent red mark over the woman's genitals. This mark can be read as the violent and sadistic feature of castration that Le Corbusier places on her. This drawing, in my opinion, marks the change in Le Corbusier's drawings from an aversion to women's genitals to an overfetishization of them. It is also interesting to note that in Le Corbusier's life, 1940 marks the professional separation between Le Corbusier and his cousin, Pierre Jeanneret. According to Perriand, the two complemented each other perfectly; Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, she concluded in an interview, "should not be separated." It should also be noted that 1940 also marks the outbreak of the war and Le Corbusier's move from Paris.

18. Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood (1910)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Vol. II, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 72 (footnote). For more on this, see Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, pp. 225–233. Something similar to Leonardo's inability to portray the sexual act can also be seen in Le Corbusier's drawing of *Group Sex,* 1934 (drawing 94 from LCS). In this case, as with Leonardo, the depiction of the sexual act is inaccurate. The protagonists are portrayed as uncomfortable and undesired/undesirable. Looking toward the viewer with anger, the man penetrating the woman does so through what would appear to be the anus. In both cases, this

failure can be seen as the failure to represent sexuality in the field of vision by two people who would have been extremely gifted and qualified to do so.

19. Laura Mulvey, "Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious or 'You Don't Know What Is Happening Do You Mr. Jones?'," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 7.

20. The candle can also serve as an abject symbol to Le Corbusier of women's genitals. In *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 169, Julia Kristeva describes through the literature of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, the horror and abjection by Céline of what she terms a decayed and derisive femininity in the image of a candle: "Women, you know, they wane by candle-light, they spoil, melt, twist, and ooze!" . . . The End of tapers is a horrible sight, the end of ladies, too."

21. By this photograph, Le Corbusier clearly shows that the woman is in no way his artistic counterpart, even though she may have been the force behind his furniture designs. She is relegated the role of *woman* in the traditional sense of the word by Le Corbusier—the object of the male gaze and his superiority over her. In this photograph, she abandons her position as furniture designer to become the object of male desire.

22. Timothy J. Clark, "Preliminaries to a Possible Treatment of *Olympia* in 1865," *Screen* 21/1 (1980): 32.

23. Ibid., p. 36.

24. Ingersoll, *Le Corbusier,* p. 13.

25. Zeynep, Çelik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," Assemblage 17 (1992): 71–74.

26. Mulvey, in relationship to Allen Jones, claims that there are three aspects of fetishistic images: first, the woman with phallic substitute ("traditional," fetish image); second, woman minus phallus, punished and humiliated (sadistic fetishism, still containing some elements with phallic significance); and last, woman as phallus (with elements that transform her into the phallic image). Mulvey, "Fears, Fantasies and the Male Unconscious," pp. 7–10. Le Corbusier's images clearly fall into Mulvey's second category.

27. In this paper, I concentrate on the early work of the *grands travaux* of the twenties and the early thirties because I feel that the early representations of his work are the most "free flowing," unconventional, "pure," and "uncontaminated" by experience.

28. According to Freud in his essay "Femininity," when the girl discovers the anatomical distinction between the sexes, she looses the enjoyment of her phallic sexuality and therefore rejects her masturbatory satisfaction. With this renunciation, a certain amount of activity is also abandoned, which, according to Freud, leads the girl into passivity. To Le Corbusier, the machine is clearly the territory of the male and a representation of masculine virility by its inherent qualities of power and activity.

29. Colomina, "Le Corbusier and Photography," pp. 18–21.

30. Sigmund Freud, "Symbolism in Dreams," in *Standard Edition,* Vol. 5, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 155. See also *Standard Edition,* Vol. 5, p. 357.

31. This almost inconspicuous detail, barely visible, appears to be a mistake or an impromptu occurrence in the photograph. But knowing Le Corbusier's experience with cropping, decontextualization, and so on and his involvement in the setup of the photographs, this hardly seems accidental. Given the fact that there are at least two photographs of the same view, probably taken on the same shoot, and that both depict the same scene (a woman, different in each case, entering through the back door) signals that this was obviously set up, planned, and definitely not accidental.

32. Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 98–100.

33. Freud, "Symbolism in Dreams," p. 158.

34. It seems interesting to me that Colomina completely disregards this portion of the photograph in her article in *Sexuality and Space*, even though the photograph appears with the "voyeur" in *L'Architecture Vivante* and in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* Dec. 1933, volume 4. The cropped photo that Colomina used appeared later in the first version of the Le Corbusier *Oeuvre Complete de 1929–1934* (Zurich: Editions H. Girsberger, 1935).

35. Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade," in *Femmes Fatales* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 30.

36. Mary Ann Doane, "Masquerade Reconsidered," in *Femmes Fatales,* p. 40.

37. Colomina, "The Split Wall," pp. 103–104.

38. Colomina, "Le Corbusier and Photography," p. 21.

39. It is interesting that one review of the film in 1931 sees the reinforcement of the film as denoting Le Corbusier's theories or goals that the house is a machine for living as an airplane would be a machine for flying. See *Pierre Chenal: Souvenirs du Cineaste* (Paris: Editions Dujarric, 1984), pp. 32–33.

40. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, and Cinema,* quoted in Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 6.

41. Whereas, in a different reading of the kitchen, the elements in it show the domesticity of women.

42. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema,* trans. Celia Britton, et al. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1975–82), pp. 45–52.

43. Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, p. 171.