

the result of conflicts . . . between those with different degrees of power. . . . As the balance of power changes and ideologies rise and fall, so the built environment is affected (1975, 151).

One specific example of architecture as *zeitgeist* which has been explored in the recent literature is the expression of the 'metropolitan spirit' of the interwar period in the architecture of Otto Wagner, Daniel Burnham, the Deutscher Werkbund and Antonio Sant'Elia (Larsson, 1984). Another is the expression of America's changing political mood through the medium of federal architecture – from Jeffersonian classicism, through Beaux Arts grandeur to contemporary Modernism (Craig, 1978). In terms of the emerging *zeitgeist* of the post-Modern era, a good example is provided by the 'signature' structures and decor of chains of fast food restaurants in the United States (Langdon, 1985). The bold, modernistic forms and brash interiors characteristic of America's first restaurant chains, Langdon observes, did not sit well with the environmentalism and increased consumer sophistication of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Consequently, the big chains began to embark on major refits, with new buildings, surrounded by landscaped lawns and shrubbery, featuring wood, brick, earth-tone carpeting, and up-market artwork with local themes, all capped by a mansard roof (in natural-looking tiles) to hide the heating, ventilating and air-conditioning equipment while providing 'human scale'. McDonald's, who pioneered the mansard roof format for fast food restaurants, have sought to exploit the post-Modern taste for neovernacular styles by developing a range of 16 stock facade alternatives – from Country French to Village Depot – that can be applied to the exterior of its standard building configurations.

It takes only a short step from this kind of view of architecture as *zeitgeist* to deploy a crude form of Marxist theory in which the built environment is seen as part of the superstructure that is produced by – and that helps to sustain – the dominant relations of production. The history of architecture can thus be linked to a critical history of urban-industrial society, revealing a dialectic of intellectual and artistic responses to the *zeitgeist* of successive moments of capitalist development. Thus, for example, the Art Nouveau and Jugendstil architecture of the late nineteenth century can be seen as the architectural expression of the romantic reaction to what Mumford (1961, 470) called the 'palaeotechnic' era of the Industrial Revolution; a reaction which was

first expressed in the Arts and Crafts movement. By 1900, the Art Nouveau style was firmly established as the snobbish style, consciously elitist, for all 'high' architecture. The Modern movement can be interpreted as a dialectic response to this elitism (Bloch, 1977), with post-Modernism being the latest, incipient dialectical response to the transformation of Modernism into the glib Esperanto of the International style (Frampton, 1980; Tafuri, 1980).

Despite the appealing symmetry of such interpretations, it must be recognized that, in detail, shifts in architectural styles do not always fit a neat chain of cause and effect (Banham, 1975). The spatial and temporal fluidity of the social meaning of built form, combined with the idiosyncracies and impulses of architects, their clients, and the users of the built environment, means that the production of the built environment inevitably enjoys a degree of relative autonomy from the dominant social order (Dickens, 1980). In short, architecture, like other components of the social superstructure, is contingent rather than determined: a product of complex interactions between structure and human agency (Gottdiener, 1985). Whitehand's work (1983; 1984) on the architecture of commercial redevelopment in postwar Britain illustrates this contingent quality very well. Comparing two provincial centres – Northampton and Watford – Whitehand found that, whereas Modern styles rapidly supplanted neo-Georgian and Art Deco styles in Northampton after the second world war, neo-Georgian styles continued to dominate in Watford until the property boom of the 1960s, when styles in both cities became predominantly Modern. More recently, post-Modern styles have been featured in Northampton, whereas redevelopment in Watford has continued to use Modern styles. Whitehand traces these differences to variations between the two cities in the involvement of local versus non-local finance, in the activity of national speculative property development companies, in the involvement of owner-occupiers versus property speculators, in the proportion of office as opposed to chain store redevelopment, and in the use of local rather than outside architectural firms. This contingent nature of architecture means of course that it cannot be assumed to be straightforwardly functional for capitalism at any given moment of development. Nevertheless, the idea that architecture, as part of the social superstructure, serves, at least in general terms, to sustain, legitimize and reproduce the relations of production seems to offer several themes relevant to the analysis of urban geography.