

The Decreative Impulse: The Last Page of Learning from Las Vegas

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This paper delves into the ‘decreative impulse’ briefly mentioned on the last page of *Learning from Las Vegas*, unraveling its roots within the disruption of modernism initiated by Venturi and Scott Brown and revitalizing decreation’s disruptive capacity. Tracing a chain of evidence through archives and intellectual connections, the author traces the source of the reference to Venturi, connecting his exposure to New Criticism and teachings of Jean Labatut back to Simone Weil’s theological decreation, transformed by Wallace Stevens.

Shifting from historical inquiry to theoretical projection, the author proposes Weil’s call to undo ego as a potential response to challenges to the profession posed by AI integration, climate change, and social justice. While Venturi gently pushed conventions, truly ‘Decreationist architecture’ needs more radical undoing of the profession. This is embodied in contemporary examples such as new Japanese metabolic urbanism and experimental preservation. These resonate with Weil’s concept of generative restraint.

The unexpected discovery, in a study sparked by ‘60s disruptors via a book on the Las Vegas strip, is not more neon and spectacle in the desert, but the ascetic ideas of a French mystic – underscoring the potency of interdisciplinary disruptions across criticism, design and religion. Weil’s “less” is no longer “a bore” but rather a door opening new architectural possibilities.

INTRODUCTION

Late in 2019, I set out to retrace the footsteps of the ‘radicals’ and ‘flower children’ of the 1960s and ‘70s to hear what they had to say about a possible future (our now) that might have been had they not cut their hair, took jobs, had children, got mortgages, etc.

Re-reading *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, I discovered (somehow I had missed it when I first read it in school) on the last page, page 72 of the abridged version, after the images and before the end notes, hidden behind a reference

to cliché and Warhol’s soup can, a quote from Richard Poirier on the ‘decreative impulse.’¹

Decorative impulse? (as my spell check sought to correct, as would any credible AI familiar with Venturi & Scott Brown). No, ‘deCREATIVE.’

This paper maps the quote’s journey through history, beginning with an early manuscript’s last pages, navigating through New Criticism, and unfolding during Venturi’s Princeton studies. After this historical exploration, we will delve into the ‘decreative impulse’ and its significance in Venturi and Scott Brown’s disruption of modernism. The final section revisits Weil’s original definition, minus Steven’s interpretation, asserting how ‘decreativism’ signals the essential disruption needed to refresh architectural practices and conventions.

MANUSCRIPT

Although I knew *Learning from Las Vegas* was a collaborative effort,² I was curious about the providence of the reference to Poirier. Through my research, I uncovered three clues that point to Robert Venturi as the most likely origin.

The first clue lies in the last pages of an early typewritten manuscript of Scott Brown and Venturi’s original essay, “A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas” (published in 1968, see figure 1) provided by a generous archivist at the University of Pennsylvania Stuart Weitzman School of Design Architectural Archives. Quotes from Poirier’s 1967 New Republic review of Allen Tate’s anthology on T.S. Eliot³ are carefully handwritten into the draft. Searching for handwriting samples from Venturi and Scott Brown, I found a page of notes and sketches prepared by Venturi during a Princeton class taught by Jean Labatut. (see figure 2) The script bears a striking resemblance to Venturi’s handwriting, though this is not definitive.

While speculative, this initial clue points towards Venturi as the potential origin of the Poirier reference. However, the case is far from closed. We now delve into two other chains of evidence, each holding the potential to shed new light on our inquiry. One

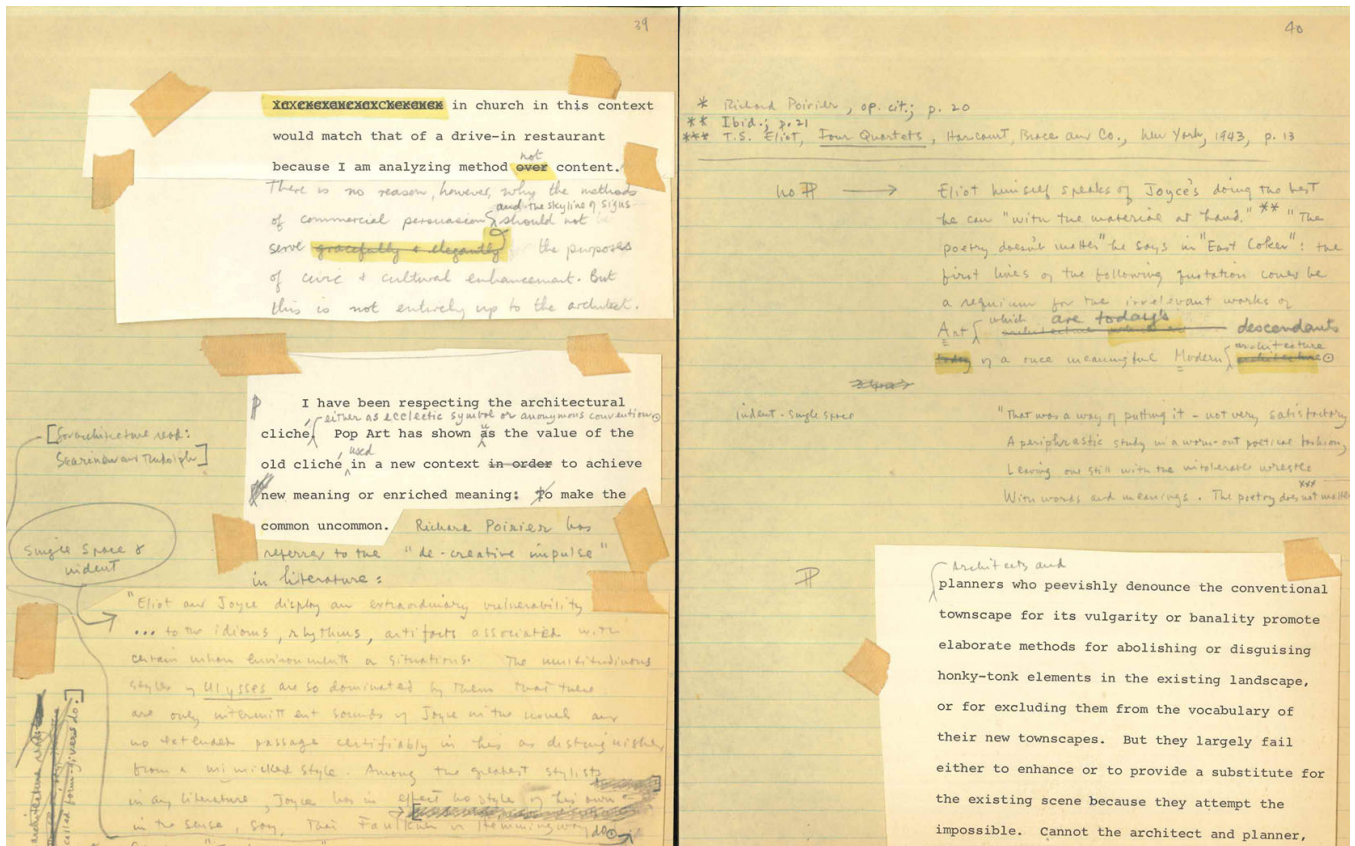


Figure 1. Last pages of an early typewritten draft of 'A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas,' with editing marks. Images courtesy The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, by the gift of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Publication rights under arrangement. (low res version, higher available)

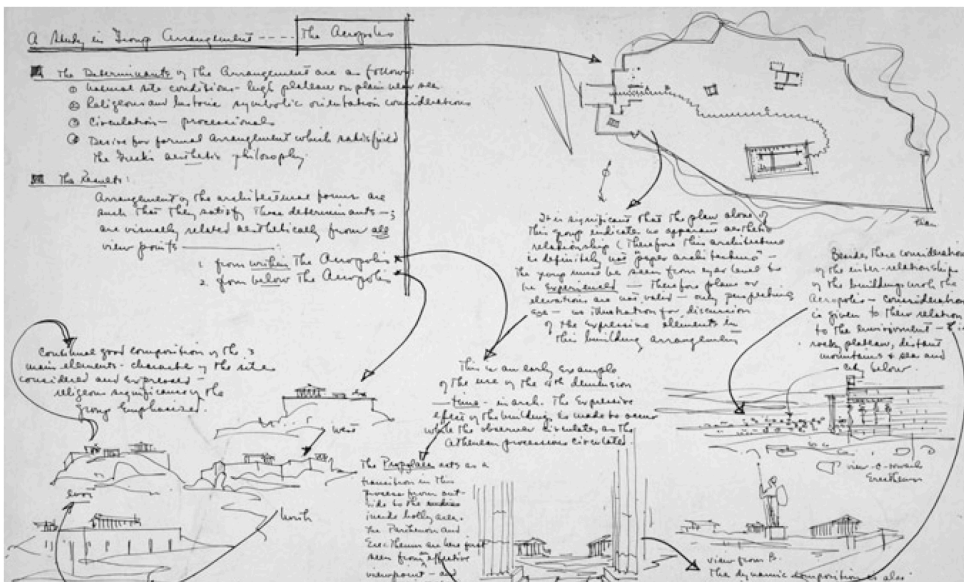


Figure 2. Study of the Acropolis for Jean Labatut's course, 1947 ca. Images courtesy The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania, by the gift of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown. Publication rights under arrangement. (low res version, higher available)

leads us to New Criticism; the other takes us back to Venturi's formative years at Princeton.

CHAIN OF EVIDENCE: NEW CRITIC HAND-ME-DOWN

...if we have this experience, we know how poets help people to live their lives.... There is, in fact, a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or, I ought to say, no doubt, from the world in which we shall come to live, since what makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it.

—Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel*⁴

The second clue is Venturi's connection to New Criticism, where the 'hand-me-down' game of decreation was played. Aron Vinegar, writing in *I am a Monument*, one of books that came out at the 50th anniversary of *Learning from Las Vegas*, notes that fifteen of the fifty endnotes in *Complexity and Contradiction* originate from influential New Critics of the 1950s.⁵ A more circumstantial piece of evidence is Venturi's personal connections – his Princeton roommate and lifelong friend, Philip J. Finkelpearl, studied English during New Criticism's heyday and later pursued an academic career in literature. Their relationship reflected a depth of intellectual engagement similar to that which will be seen later in this paper between Jacques Maritain and Jean Labatut.

This depth is evident in Finkelpearl's description of the house Venturi designed for his mother: "Sometimes the viewer needs to be as learned as a reader of *The Waste Land*, as in the project for a house that architecturally alludes to Lutyens, Vanbrugh, Holkham Hall, the Usonian house, pre-TAC Gropius, and Elizabethan manors."⁶ It's likely that Venturi's immersion in the New Critical tradition was reinforced through his connection to Finkelpearl.

In the year *Complexity and Contradiction* was published, Douglas Day constructed a history of New Criticism⁷. Under the influence of Joel Elias Spingarn (1875-1939) and Irving Babbitt (1865-1933), New Criticism was founded on "the necessity for a clearing-away of irrelevant, non-literary techniques, to allow a return to a proper concern for the poem as an object."⁸

Including Ezra Pound (1885-1972), T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), and I. A. Richards (1893-1979) in the founders of New Criticism, Day ultimately characterizes their approaches as "consistently inconsistent." According to Day, this inconsistency arises from the clash between classical and romantic perspectives. We will see later that this split is important as Weil is in the classical category; Wallace Stevens, the romantic.⁹ The classical viewpoint

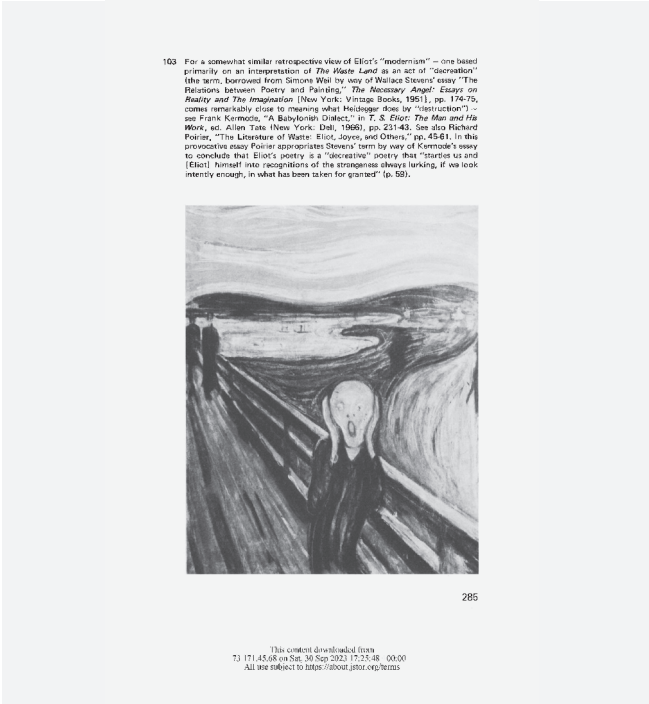


Figure 3. Footnote from William Spanos, 'Repetition in The Waste Land: A Phenomenological De-Struction.' (1979).

constrains the poet to the sensory world and emphasizes form and structure for poets and critics. In contrast, the romantic viewpoint centers on the poet's heightened sensibility, imagination, and the poem's autonomy.

In his 1979 essay "Repetition in The Waste Land: A Phenomenological De-Struction," William Spanos traces the lineage of New Criticism's assimilation of decreation from Simone Weil's *Gravity & Grace* (1947), to Wallace Steven's *The Necessary Angel* (1951), to Frank Kermodé's "A Babylonish Dialect" (1966) to Poirier.¹⁰ (see figure 3)

One of these viewpoints on decreation that stands out is Kermodé's explanation of Blackmur's definition.

But we can see that when Eliot pushed his objective correlative out into the neutral air – 'seeming a beast disgorged, unlike, / Warmed by a desperate milk' – he expected it, liberated from his own fictions, to be caught up in the fictions of others, those explanations we find for all the creations. In the world Blackmur is writing about, the elements of a true poem are *precisely such nuclei, disgorged, unlike, purged of the suffering self; they become that around which a possible new world may accrete.*

—Frank Kermodé, "A Babylonish Dialect"¹¹ (italics by author)

By capturing a sense of initiation rather than finality, Kermodé's concept of nuclei conveys a clear idea about the terrain of possibilities opened up through decreation. Kermodé further explains,

So this kind of art is a new kind of creation, harsh, medicinal, remaking reality 'in rivalry with our own wishes', denying us the consolations of predictable form but showing us the forces of our world, which we may have to control by other means... —Kermodé, "Babylonish"¹²

PRIMARY SOURCE

Simone Weil's decreation involves stripping away the human-centric perspective through intense attention, empathetic immersion, and self-limitation. Born into an affluent Jewish family in Paris, Weil's lifelong activism from a young age embodied these principles. Actions such as aligning her food intake with war prisoners' rations, joining rebels, and renouncing social status for factory work led to shifts in her politics, documented to advocate further change.

At 29, Weil likely converted to Catholicism¹³, shifting from politics to spirituality for the remaining five years of her life. In 1942, she traveled to America with her parents to escape the Nazis, leaving her writings with Gustave Thibon. After ensuring her parents' safety, Weil returned to England to work for the French Resistance, passing away in 1943 at 34, likely due to underlying health issues and self-imposed food rationing. Thibon, a lay Catholic theologian, and her parents compiled her writings into *La Pesanteur et la Grâce (Gravity and Grace)*. The posthumous publication of this work brought Weil recognition as a significant spiritual thinker of her time.¹⁴

Simone Weil's decreation is a means to return to a state preceding creation, described by Jacek P. Gutorow as a 'void of possibilities,'

Weil differentiated between destruction and decreation, the former marking a pass to nothingness (thus nihilism) and the latter revealing a void of possibilities. Decreation was a challenge and not a scene of destruction —Gutorow, "Bird's Cry"¹⁵

For Weil, humanity's existence required God's withdrawal from the world; otherwise, everything would essentially be God. Gravity represents the force pulling us away from God, the life force compelling our existence, which includes inner lives, dreams, memories, and hopes for the future. Most significantly, it includes the imagination, "which perpetually tends to stop up the cracks through which grace flows."

Grace guides us back to God through the dissolution of selfhood. In this theological context, gravity symbolizes the creative act,

whereas grace embodies the process of 'decreating' ourselves. Attaining grace involves embracing 'life's wounds' and immersing fully in the world, achieved by releasing attachments to the past, future, and imaginative constructs. This journey emphasizes profound self-loss, entailing the deliberate renunciation of imagination, memory, and future plans. Decreation involves purposefully letting go of the human 'set' of the world, a concept articulated by Stevens as 'its stiff and stubborn, man-locked set.'

Day's exploration of the tension between classical and romantic approaches in New Criticism is evident in Wallace Stevens' adoption of Weil's decreation. While the classical emphasis on close reading in New Criticism aligns with Weil's call for attentiveness, Stevens significantly diverges from Weil in his romantic promotion of the poetic imagination. Weil sees imagination as separating us from God, to be renounced, while Stevens envisions poets becoming creators in God's absence.

Even as it sits in tension what happens next after decreation, Blackmur, Kermodé, Poirier, and then Venturi inherited Stevens' altered sense of decreation, with an analytic approach retaining strands of Weil's attentiveness. Numerous art and philosophy movements share affinities with Weil's decreation -- from Christian kenosis to introducing chance in art to found objects, these relinquish artistic ego. What distinguishes Weil is the extreme, actively renounced selfhood involved.

This unexpected line from New Criticism to the writings of a young, ascetic French activist-philosopher adds complexity and contradiction to our story. Weil stands in stark opposition to the architectural epicureans, Venturi and Scott Brown, who celebrated 'less is a bore.'

LEARNING FROM LABATUT

Maritain described the poetic content of art and architecture as a 'little shock' that stills the mind and clears it to receive the intuition of being: 'Poetry in this sense is clearly not the privilege of poets.' One could find poetry everywhere—in a 'paste-board model,' the 'booths of a fair,' even in sign-boards.'—Otero-Pailos, "Eucharistic"¹⁶

Another avenue of our inquiry into the origin of the quotes from Poirier—the page from Venturi's Princeton notes—leads us to Jean Labatut, his professor at Princeton. Labatut turns out to have been teaching decreation to architects under another flag. His initiation for students was through lessons in wartime camouflage, assimilating objects with their context. He then taught the students a design process: 'learn, assimilate, forget, create.'¹⁷ These four steps offer an even better step-by-step description of the process of decreating than any of the New Critics gave.

Unexpectedly, our learning from *Learning from Las Vegas* reveals an additional branch in his intellectual lineage linked to theological discourse, or what Jorge Otero-Pailos calls ‘eucharistic architecture’. This link to Catholic theological thought was through Labatut’s intellectual lifelong friendship with Jacques Maritain. As evident in the quote from Maritain above, there was a reciprocal relationship between the two of them, as he is referring to specific aspects of Labatut’s work. The inclusiveness of a world reset by a ‘little shock’ administered by art and architecture, links the writings and practices of both of them. Labatut’s portfolio of works, from the proposed roadside Catholic church to the 1939 World’s Fair fountain, brings together the practices of commercial signage, lights, music, and water to create an architecture made from a ‘void of possibilities’ gained through renouncing disciplinary conventions and strictures.

Returning to Venturi, it is evident that his intellectual lineage, shaped by the teachings of Jean Labatut, reveals another layer of the ‘decreative impulse.’ This understanding, reflected in the creative works of both Labatut and Venturi, underscores the interconnectedness of their practices in forging an architecture of possibilities.

EVOLUTIONARY VERSES REVOLUTIONARY¹⁸

Formal analysis should be comparative, linking the new forms, by comparison, to the rest of the formal tradition of architecture thereby incorporating them into the architectural discipline and helping us to understand our new experience in the light of our former training.

—Scott Brown “Learning from Pop”

This investigation has presented three pieces of evidence that, while individually insightful, collectively build a compelling argument pointing to Venturi as the likely origin of the Poirier reference. Firstly, the handwriting and notes on the manuscript appear to align consistently with Venturi’s script. Secondly, Venturi was familiar with New Criticism, as evidenced in his previous book, *Complexity and Contradiction*. The last clue lies in his formative intellectual development at Princeton under the guidance of Jean Labatut and his friendship with Finkelpearl. Upon collective evaluation, these exhibits and proofs highlight feasible explanations that could have led to the inclusion of the phrase ‘decreative impulse’ on the last of *Learning from Las Vegas*.

Unlike ‘resetting’ architecture outright, Venturi and Scott Brown’s ‘decreative impulse’ expanded the field in two phases - Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction* a ‘little bang’ renouncing modernist conventions, and their collaborative *Learning from Las Vegas* a ‘big bang’ incorporating commercial elements, launching an ever-expanding architectural universe.



Figure 4. Robert Venturi in front of a model of the iconic Vanna Venturi House in the early 60’s. Image Credit Rollin LaFrance/ VSBA

Based on the insights gleaned from this inquiry, I contend that the last page of *Learning from Las Vegas* would better have been placed at the end of *Complexity and Contradiction*. In his first book, Venturi directs his efforts toward challenging the confines of modernism. In this initial act of decreation, Venturi deliberately sought to reset modernism’s worn-out conventions and clichés, aiming to rediscover the nuanced interplay of ‘emptiness and fullness’ inherent in the history of architecture.

Venturi’s architectural decreationism, exemplified by works like the Vanna Venturi House (1962-1964) and the Guild House (1965), aligns with Simone Weil’s exploration of decreation’s creative ‘void’ as opposed to the destructive ‘nothingness’ of modernism. The background in Venturi’s photograph (see figure 5 above) is a poignant record—a selfie captured against the backdrop of architecture’s ‘void of possibilities.’

In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi and co-authors formally reinterpret mass culture facets for architectural assimilation. They continue the trajectory set by Le Corbusier in *Towards a New Architecture*, as writing about ducks and decorated sheds is not that far removed from Corbusier’s airplanes and grain silos. The generation of literary and cultural critics that followed New Criticism, figures like Poirier and McLuhan, were part of a similar expansion of the canon of literature to include all textual elements. However, by the time Venturi was writing *Complexity and Contradiction*, about a decade after he graduated from Princeton, literary critics had declared New Criticism ‘a bore’ and criticized it for its formalism separating art from biography, politics, i.e., the context of its production. As Vinegar relates, in connecting historical, cultural, and philosophical analysis, Poirier’s contemporaries also connect ‘mediated urban life’s’ multisensory qualities. Scrutinizing graphics, light, and ordinary buildings, Scott Brown and Venturi’s evolutionarily integrate, rather than revolutionarily erase, diverse influences into architecture’s ever-growing universe. If *Complexity and Contradiction*, written by Venturi while he was in Rome, was a Roman act of

assimilation; *Learning from Las Vegas* is like the Romans of the 24th Century, the Borg. ‘An Italy of the mind’ combined with Little Ceasar’s Pizza.

Rather than eradicating, reputing, or erasing, Scott Brown and Venturi used the genetic codes of architecture to assimilate more material into the ingredients of architecture, resulting in an expansion of the universe, a big bang.

Unlike the ensuing New Historicism in literature, Venturi and Scott Brown retain quality judgments, upholding the utility of formal analysis. As Bernard Tschumi critiqued in his exhibit walk through Sylvia Lavin’s “Architecture Itself and Other Postmodernist Myths” at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, at this time architecture lagged, still assimilating mass culture

as literary scholarship progressed into Deconstruction and contextual rejection of aesthetic hierarchies. While open to society, Venturi and Scott Brown’s pulsating decreation never wholly yielded disciplinary foundations. Expanding through pop culture connections, their evolutionary spirit preserved architecture’s perpetual regeneration.

The disruptive pulses of decreation in Venturi and Scott Brown’s work, against modernism and for ‘architecture,’ were never larger than the “cracks that grace trickles in” that Weil wrote about and were quickly filled by historicists, postmodernists, and the prevailing ‘gravity’ of the architectural discipline.

With Tschumi’s *Park de la Villette* project, architecture as a discipline tacked to follow the subsequent movement in literature

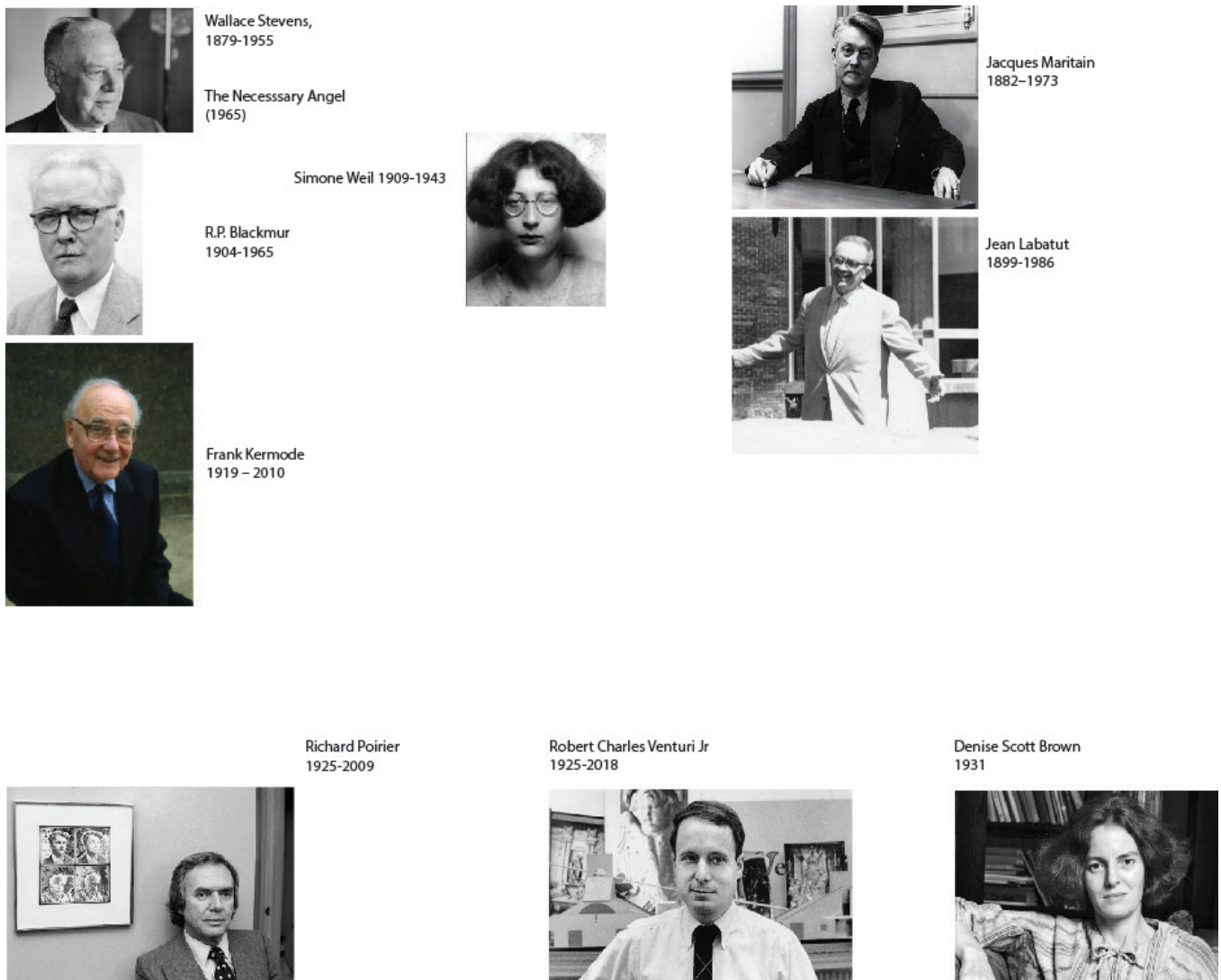


Figure 5. *Intellectual Family Tree*. Table by author.

and philosophy—Post-structuralism. In architecture, ‘deconstruction’ operated on the rules of the discipline, with the avant guard resetting architecture close to ‘the void of possibilities’ and a constellation of architect-oracles—aka, the starchitects—authoring ‘supreme fictions’

TERRAIN VAGUE

Turning the last page in *Learning from Las Vegas*, let us now follow the clue tendered by Venturi and Scott Brown in their closing argument and engage in a theoretical speculation ourselves: what if ‘Decreationism’ emerged as the next prominent ‘ism’ in architecture? Weil’s, not Stevens’ version. Weil’s concept of decreation involves the deliberate process of releasing predefined structures that impose limitations on potential. According to Weil, the subsequent creative act consciously refrains from imposing one’s will, enabling the formation of the ‘yet-as-unformed.’ For Stevens, decreation allows for limitless creative acts.

In this context, Decreationism challenges the intrinsic ‘design impulse’ shaping an architect’s vision. By undoing the productive drive, it has the capacity to generate ‘revelatory creative acts’ that are liberated from exploitative methods and environmental consequences. This departure from conventional norms holds considerable implications for addressing the profound transformations our profession faces, including advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and the escalating impacts of climate change.

Decreationist architecture applies to both practice and its outcomes, stripping away conventions and embracing intentional restraint. This generative abstinence nicely captures the paradoxical creative potential in acts of intentional restraint or abstinence from the act of ‘designing.’

To further our speculation, let us briefly examine examples of contemporary practice that could be instances of Decreationism. First, we will focus on site, where the term ‘*terrain vague*’ aptly describes a problematic ‘void of possibilities’ that transitional urban landscapes pose to traditional architectural methods. Subsequently, we will look at three examples that showcase alternative forms of practice, shedding light on the outcomes and implications of embracing decreationist principles in architectural endeavors.

The concept of *terrain vague* describes urban spaces where human activity intersects with nature, often marked by destruction, abandonment, or uncertainty of use. These residual spaces linger in limbo, defying easy classification. In the 1990s, Spanish architect Ignasi de Solà-Morales borrowed this term from Victor Hugo, delving into the role of architects and their inclination to impose meaning on these ambiguous urban areas. Solà-Morales proposes a “contradictory complicity” as an alternative to

conventional architecture, which typically imposes boundaries and functions to address indistinct landscapes. Instead of imposing new structures, he advocates for architects to assume a subtler role, collaborating with these spaces. This collaboration enables the emergence of alternative rhythms and flows, unveiling emergent identities through lived inhabitation.

In the more recent work *Tokyo Metabolizing*, Kitayama, Tsukamoto, and Nishizawa document how Japanese architects approach equating architecture with nature rather than imposing upon it. This transformative perspective blurs the boundary between nature and humanity, turning it into a ‘void of possibilities.’ The ‘new Metabolism’ also positions architecture as a collaborative endeavor rather than a combative one, emphasizing harmony and coexistence with the natural environment.

Both Solà-Morales’ *terrain vague* and the new Metabolists of *Tokyo Metabolizing* share a common thread of redefining the relationship between architecture and its surroundings through complicity, promoting a mutualistic architectural paradigm over a parasitic one. In the face of unprecedented challenges, the concept of *terrain vagues*—spaces characterized as unstructured or uncreated—is a metaphorical landscape for the generative potential of Decreationism.

Transitioning to the outcomes of practice, a notable point of departure emerged at the turn of the century with the launch of AMO in 1999 by Rem Koolhaas. AMO’s practice model marked a pivotal shift to non-building projects within the architectural realm. Parallel to this, a burgeoning community of ‘do-nothing’ practitioners has surfaced, a concept extensively explored by Aaron Betsky in his *Architect* blog and forthcoming book, *Imaginary Reuse*.

Firms like Belgium’s Architecten Jan de Vylder inge Vinck (JDVIV) are praised by Betsky for their great restraint. “I told my people, ‘Just follow the instructions on the website,’” Jan de Vylder is quoted explaining the design of the escalator in the refurbishment of the expo center in Charleroi, Belgium. “Don’t invent anything.” JDVIV’s restrained actions, characterized by minimal doing and material use, are dedicated to serving users and ensuring site responsiveness. The architects deliberately leave space for users, nature, and the accumulated echoes of previous users to play a pivotal role in completing the work.

Also extending the discourse on reuse, activists are challenging the limits of preservation efforts through ‘Experimental Preservation’, redefining political power with the goal of enriching the cultural heritage archive for future generations. Although their emphasis often revolves around the political dimensions of conservation decisions, the shift in preservation conventions suggests a potential consideration of other in situ values, such

as embodied carbon and labor. By expanding the scope of what is deemed culturally valuable, experimental preservation aims to open up the existing structures and constraints of preservation. Taken to its extreme, this approach envisions everything already built becoming part of the vast realm of possibilities.

Per the practices above, a fundamental shift in mindset is required for architects seeking to embrace Decreationism in their practice. Guiding principles such as generative abstinence, empathetic immersion, and contradictory complicity become essential tools for navigating the challenges to the profession posed by AI integration, climate change, and social justice.

CONCLUSION

Weil's concept of decreation finds resonance with experimental 'do less' creative approaches. This shift represents a profound re-attunement to the real world, offering a holistic approach of care, response, integration, and abstention during a time of radical resets.

Venturi's famous statement, "less is a bore," takes on a revolutionary dimension through Weil's perspective. Her "less is more" ethic of undoing radicalizes Venturi's 'gentle' disruption of modernism, opening the door to new architectural possibilities.

POSTSCRIPT

This story includes two young women, both born to Jewish parents, both in their mid-thirties as protagonists, yet their ideas have been sidelined due to appropriation and systemic sexism. Learning from Las Vegas has come to be a monument to the gender bias many female architects face, thanks in part to the Pritzker committee's decision to award Robert Venturi solo recognition in 1991. Denise Scott Brown was 35 when she convinced Venturi to embark on a pivotal trip to Las Vegas in 1966, leaving an indelible mark on their architectural ideology. That same year, Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* was published, setting the stage for an uneven relationship between them as he gained fame or among modernists, infamy. The trail leading to how the concept of decreation ended up on the final page of *Learning from Las Vegas* points to Venturi and ultimately back to Wallace Stevens, the literary critic, and poet who first borrowed the term from Weil, secularizing it and altering an essential aspect of Weil's original conception. Although this inquiry into the 'decreative impulse' doesn't implicate Scott Brown, it does return the source to Weil and present her original concept as a disruptive approach that offers potential for how architecture can address the profound challenges of today.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas*. (MIT Press, 1972), 72.
2. See postscript.
3. Richard Poirier, Review of T.S. Eliot and the Literature of Waste, *The New Republic*, May 20, 1967: 19-24.
4. Wallace Stevens, *The Necessary Angel: Essays on reality and the Imagination*. (Vintage, 2011).
5. Aron Vinegar, *I Am a Monument: On Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 16.
6. Finkelpearl's portrayal of his friend's work reveals the depth of their mutual relationship. "Sometimes the viewer needs to be as learned as a reader of *The Waste Land*, as in the project for a house (described in the first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas*) that architecturally alludes to Lutyens, Vanbrugh, Holkham Hall, the Usonian house, pre-TAC Gropius, and Elizabethan manors." "Philip J. Finkelpearl," *Wellesley Magazine*, Spring 2015, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://magazine.wellesley.edu/spring-2015/philip-j-finkelpearl>. 5.
- 7.
8. Douglas Day, "The Background of the New Criticism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 24, no. 3 (1966): 429-40.
9. Day, *New Criticism*, 431.
10. Below is the section from Wallace in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting" where he writes about Weil's decreation, which he only did once: "...prodigious search of appearance, as if to find a way of saying and of establishing that all things, whether below or above appearance, are one and that it is only through reality, in which they are reflected or, it may be, joined together, that we can reach them. Under such stress, reality changes from substance to subtlety, a subtlety which it was natural for Cezanne to say. "I see planes bestriding each other and sometimes straight lines seem to me to fall" or "Planes in color. . . . The colored area where shimmer the souls of the planes, in the blaze of the kindled prism, the meeting of planes in the sunlight." The conversion of our Lumpenwelt went far beyond this. It was from the point of view of another subtlety that Klee could write: "But he is one chosen that today comes near to the secret places where original law fosters all evolution. And what artist would not establish himself there where the organic center of all movement in time and space—which he calls the mind or heart of creation—determines every function." Conceding that this sounds a bit like sacerdotal jargon, that is not too much to allow to those that have helped to create a new reality, a modern reality, since what has been created is nothing less. This reality is, also, the momentous world of poetry. Its instantaneities are the familiar intelligence of poets, although it has been the intelligence of another ambiance. Simone Weil in *La Pesanteur et La Grace* has a chapter on what she calls decreation. She says that decreation is making pass from the created to the uncreated, but that destruction is making pass from the created to nothingness. Modern reality is a reality of decreation, in which are revelations are not the revelations of belief, but the precious portents of our own powers. The greatest truth we could hope to discover, in whatever field we discovered it, is that man's truth is the final resolution of everything. Poets and painters alike today make that assumption and this is what gives them the validity and serious dignity that become them as among those that seek wisdom, seek understanding." Wallace, *Necessary Angel*, 175.
11. Spanos, William V. "Repetition in *The Waste Land*: A Phenomenological Deconstruction." *Boundary 2* (1979): 225-285.
12. Frank Kermode, "A Babylonish Dialect," *The Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1 (1966), 235.
13. Kermode, "Babylonish" 234.
14. Her conversion is disputed, especially by her niece Sylvie Weil, who emphasizes Simone's Jewish heritage. Sylvie Weil, *At Home with Andr and Simone Weil* (Northwestern University Press, 2020).
15. "We must simply expose ourselves to the personality of a woman of genius, or a kind of genius akin to that of the saints" T.S. Eliot preface to Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* in 1952 quoted in Eric O. Springsted, "The Religious Basis of Culture: T. S. Eliot and Simone Weil," *Religious Studies* 25, no. 1 (1989): 105-116.
16. Jacek P. Gutorow, "The Moment of a Bird's Cry: A Note on Wallace Stevens and Simone Weil," *The Wallace Stevens Journal* 32, no. 2 (2008), 117.
17. Gutorow, "Bird's Cry," 177. Gutorow points out one of the attractions Stevens had to Weil was the 'consistently inconsistency' of her aphoristic style of writing, one that Venturi might too have been attracted to. Later in his career Stevens became critical of the role of imagination in interfering with reality. In "the Plain Sense of Things," Stevens writes: 'The absence of the imagination had/ itself to be imagined.'
18. Jorge Otero-Pailos, "Eucharistic Architecture: Jean Labatut and the Search for Pure Sensation," in *Architecture's Historical Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), footnote 55, p. 62. Quoting Jacques Maritain, *Art and Poetry*, trans E.D.F Matthews (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), 11.

19. Otero-Pailos, "Eucharistic," footnote 104, p. 92. Quoting Jean Labatut, "History of Architectural Education through People," *JAE: Journal of Architectural Education* 33, no2 (November 1979), 23.
20. "we were revolutionary in being evolutionary," Denise Scott Brown, "Interview: Robert Venturi & Denise Scott Brown," *ArchDaily*, April 25, 2011, <https://www.archdaily.com/130389/interview-robert-venturi-denise-scott-brown>.
21. Scott Brown continues, "By suggesting that form should be analyzed I do not imply that function (the program), technologies or forces (urban social processes or land economics) are not vital to architecture, nor, indeed, that they too can't serve as sources of artistic inspiration to the architect. All are necessary and they work in combination. The others are merely not the subject of this particular enquiry." Denise Scott Brown, "'Il 'Pop' Insegna' = Learning from Pop," *Casabella*, no. 359-360 (1971): 14-23
22. "self-sufficient, ahistorical, atemporal," Peter Quartermain, "Reading the Difficult by Peter Quartermain," *Poetry Foundation*, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/70059/reading-the-difficult>. And R. V. Young, "The Old New Criticism and Its Critics," *First Things*, August 1, 1993, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1993/08/the-old-new-criticism-and-its-critics>.
23. Vinegar, *Monument*, 16.
24. "an Italy of the mind" is borrowed from Patricia Merivale, "Wallace Stevens' 'Jar': The Absurd Detritus of Romantic Myth," *College English* 26, no. 7 (1965): 527-32. She used it to describe the worn-out conventions Wallace Stevens was trying to overturn, but the use here alludes to Freud's Rome, "Now let us make the fantastic supposition that Rome was not a human dwelling-place, but a mental entity with just as long and varied a past history: that is, in which nothing once constructed had perished, and all the earlier stages of development had survived alongside the latest. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars were still standing on the Palatine and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus was still towering to its old height; that the beautiful statues were still standing in the colonnade of the Castle of St. Angelo, as they were up to its siege by the Goths, and so on. But more still: where the Palazzo Caffarelli stands there would also be, without this being removed, the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, not merely in its latest form, moreover, as the Romans of the Caesars saw it, but also in its earliest shape, when it still wore an Etruscan design and was adorned with terra-cotta antifixae. Where the Coliseum stands now, we could at the same time admire Nero's Golden House; on the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find out only the Pantheon of today as bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but on the same site also Agrippa's original edifice; indeed, the same ground would support the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the old temple over which it was built. And the observer would need merely to shift the focus of his eyes, perhaps, or change his position, in order to call up a view of either the one or the other."
25. Bernard Tschumi, "The Sublime and the Farce," exhibit talk, 2018, Canadian Centre for Architecture, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/articles/73417/the-sublime-and-the-farce>.
26. Ignasi De Sola Morales, "Terrain vague." In *Terrain Vague* (Routledge, 2013) 24-30.
27. Koh Kitayama, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, and Ryue Nishizawa. *Tokyo Metabolizing* (Tokyo: Toto, 2010).
28. "The manufacturers know how to make it work with the least expenditure of time and materials," Vylder adds, "but some of our team kept trying to make it more complicated or, to them, more elegant. I think we should do only the minimal thing." Quoted in Aaron Betsky, "Miesian ghosting: Jan de Vylder and Inge Vinck Practice a Radical Form of Reuse" *architect magazine*, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/miesian-ghosting-jan-de-vylder-and-inge-vinck-practice-a-radical-form-of-reuse>.
29. Jorge Otero-Pailos, Erik Fenstad Langdalen, and Thordis Arrhenius, eds., *Experimental Preservation* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2016).