

Modalities of poetic syntax in the work of Hejduk

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Abstract

In symbolic systems, meaning arises as patterns of relationships and elements mutually engage and define themselves. As Hillier and Hanson (1984) have pointed out, in some symbolic systems, such as built space, relational properties are far more important to the construction of meaning than any provisionally crystallised elements. Therein lies an important distinction between built space, as a morphic language, from language proper. The theory of space syntax has shown how generic social and cultural functions do indeed arise from the relational properties of built space. This does not preclude the possibility that the emergence of provisionally crystallised formal elements may have a role in the constitution, reproduction and activation of syntactic patterns, or that architectural meaning does depend upon the presence of crystallised elements. The relationship between elements and relationships is open to further exploration.

Through a limited analysis of some works by John Hejduk, we explore the way in which the mutual definition and interplay of elements and relationships is associated with a deeper interplay between syntactic and semantic structures, not only presupposed but also emergent through design transformations.

Keywords

Elements, relationships, mutual definition, semantic charge, frames of reference, poetic syntax

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