From:

Dorothee Wagner von Hoff
Ornamenting the »Cold Roast«
The Domestic Architecture and Interior Design
of Upper-Class Boston Homes, 1760-1880

This book presents the meticulous case studies of three individual houses from different eras, which serve to depict the social, political, and cultural effects that domestic architecture and interior design had on the upper class, the city of Boston, and a national American identity. It takes the reader on a journey to 18th and 19th century Boston and provides insight into the lives of these prominent men and women as seen through the perspective of their homes. It is a novel examination of the cultural significance of domestic architecture and interior design and, because of its story-telling character and extensive attention to detail, it is fascinating for curious readers and cultural historians alike.

Dorothee Wagner von Hoff received her PhD at the University of Munich.

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Introduction

Urban studies observe various aspects of cities that all work together to individual-
ize a specific locale. One of these aspects is domestic architecture, which includes
interior design as well, and is a considerable part of urban life, even after signifi-
cant suburbanization in most American metropolises. The urban structure of a city,
the architectural design that civic and private buildings follow in a given region,
and the people that stand behind the planning, building, and habituating of the
latter require an interdisciplinary approach. Urbanism has many supporters and
critics from different analytical backgrounds, which all have varying points of
view and opinions regarding city planning, development, and life. The civic, pub-
lic, and domestic architecture within these ambiguous cities is usually historically
observed by architectural historians, who analyze their foundational and design
features. The people who are responsible for the construction and, in the case of
domestic architecture, the homeowners are a matter for social historians that look
at their lives and their work. This study intends to empirically work with and com-
bine these three aspects of architectural urbanism from the standpoint of a cultural
historian. Thereby, the focus will lay in part on the urban and spatial constitution
of the city of Boston during the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century,
in order to get an in-depth look at the neighborhood distribution of the upper class.
The real focus, however, is dedicated to the domestic architectural and interior
design of three specific upper-class homes from various points within the
timeframe of 1760 until 1880 and the people that functioned as their architects and
their owners. Although architectural texts and works were consulted and are used
as references throughout this study to apprehend the fundamental construction
attributes, the main object behind this research endeavor is to gain an understand-
ing of social, cultural, and political indices within domestic architecture. This was
constituted through the empirical observation of three case studies that cover the
architect, the architecture, and the homeowners and their respective positions in
society and the greater national influence that these aspects produced.

TOPIC, OUTLINE, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The domestic architecture and interior design of upper-class Boston homes from 1760 until 1880 includes numerous facets, which are important to observe prior to disseminating the three case studies, in order to get an accurate picture and understanding of the city and the eras that this domestic architecture came about in. In order to make a statement concerning domestic architecture, the focus was restricted to a region, one race, one class, and one gender. The regional point of interest is the city of Boston, which was an integral player in the colonies and the American nation and its development throughout the nineteenth century. Additionally, nineteenth-century Boston, "[…] maintained much of what has been called a preindustrial form – the elite continued residing in the city, commercial districts expanded slowly, and areas close to the central business district were kept free from commercial development."[1] The center of Boston, then, is the ideal setting for upper-class urban domestic architecture because it stayed in this form throughout the nineteenth and partially the twentieth century permitting the empirical research to stay within the city limits. Additionally, the civic planners and proprietors of the most important sections of Boston had a vision of "urban utopianism,"[2] in which the city was constructed according to the most satisfying extent, in this case rather subjectively for the upper class. The study restricts itself to white Bostonians, both architects and homeowners, in that both black architects and upper-class homeowners did exist, but were not significant contributors to the layout of the city nor to the defining of a social and national architecture. The upper class is the social rank that had the most wealth and the most influence on city politics, architects, and architecture and is thus seen as setting the standard in their own city, which quickly spread to other growing American cities. The subject of gender is also important in cultural histories and in this study is similar to the matter of race. Women architects were present in Boston in the nineteenth century and also women in the home became a vital part of domesticity during this time, however, they also were not able to leave an adequate imprint on national architecture. The three case studies thus encompass three upper class, white, male architects who built homes in upper-class, white, neighborhoods in Boston for three upper-class, white, male commissioners.

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1   Mona Domosh, *Invented Cities: The Creation of Landscape in Nineteenth-Century New York and Boston* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 34.

2   Síofra Pierse, "The City for Voltaire and Rousseau 1776-1778: The Imaginings of Old Age," in *Imagining the City, Volume 1: The Art of Urban Living*, ed. Christian Emden, Catherine Keen, David Midgley (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2006), 56.

The more common background that these individuals and their architecture shared discloses the introductory chapters of this research and provides a social setting for their domestic architecture. The first chapter discerns life in colonial and American households, which evolved substantially from the late eighteenth to nineteenth century and brought about changes among all classes of society. Prior to the American Revolution and the War of 1812, these households and their way of life were still dependent on European forebears and thus, these households must be comparatively included. The family, all of its members and their roles, and the rituals, manners, and traditions of early America are aspects that this chapter scrutinizes to show the everyday city life that families experienced and how their architecture was nothing more than a utilitarian tool. The second chapter takes a closer look at the city of Boston and the upper social strata, which will be discussed in terms of its domestic architecture in later chapters. In this chapter the more specific question of who the upper class were and, more specifically, who they were in Boston is addressed. The prerequisites that one needed to belong to upper-class Boston are analyzed and broken down further into their political and religious background. The neighborhoods that these individuals and their families inhabited and built for their exclusivity provides the setting and downsizes the geographical area of focus to those parts of the city that were reserved for proper Bostonians. The South End, Back Bay, and Beacon Hill were upper-class neighborhoods that underwent an evolution and development of their own and, much like some of the members of this class, were hailed once and then discarded of due to the invasion of emulation.

The common denominator affecting the architects and homeowners that were studied are given in theses introductory chapters. Chapter 3 begins the architectural study by introducing the profession of architecture and the rank of the architect within society. The professional status of an architect, and interior designers, was not always a given case in the time that provides the frame for this study. The late-eighteenth century did not professionalize architecture and although talented builders were erecting houses, they were considered nothing more than contractors and carpenters. The evolution of the vocation is discussed in order to get a feel for the importance that architecture was gaining and how its professionalization ran parallel to the refinement within American architecture. The three architects involved in the case studies are presented through their personal lives and through the development of their careers and commissions. Charles Bulfinch, Asher Benjamin, and Edward Clarke Cabot are the three architects that enjoyed an upper-class position in society and in their vocation and who were responsible for the houses that will be presented. Their achievements, and failures, distinguish them as a canon of architects within the early construc-

tion of the city of Boston and provide evidence of the vitality of both evolving upper-class domestic architecture and the proper architect as status symbols.

The professionalization of architecture leads into the fourth chapter in which the domestic architecture of Boston is the focus. The architecture that dominated the eastern seaboard was always controversial in some manner. Often times this controversy was bound to the political agenda that occupied the colonies and the nation. The ideals and values that politics hinged onto their newly acquired sovereignty had the peculiarity of not coinciding with the ideals behind upper-class domestic architecture. This was especially the case before, during, and after the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Additionally, the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 marked a cultural, as opposed to political, event in which the values behind this architecture were similarly dismantled and reevaluated. It is necessary to mention that an important political event that also falls into this time, namely the Civil War, will be omitted. The Civil War had a significant influence on domestic architecture in the southern United States, but less so in the northeastern region or Boston, for that matter. The domestic and landscape architecture of southern plantations are testaments to the controversy of slavery that came with this political event; however, Bostonian architecture was influenced more decidedly by the Centennial Exhibition in 1876, which is the reason for focusing on this historical event instead. Architectural trends in America can be categorized according to these three historical events and their influences thus become clearer. Once the general timeline of domestic architecture is established, it is possible to apply the three case studies to these changes in styles and trends and to the changes in the national political arena. The Harrison Gray Otis House marks the first time era, being built after the Revolution and during a time in which the consensus of liberty had not collectively been reached. The William Hickling Prescott House also falls into this ambivalent timeframe in American history and its construction is situated prior to the dawning of the War of 1812. Once these political upheavals had settled and the nineteenth century progressed, the Victorian era set in producing among many other unique exemplars, the Gibson House. These homes, their style of architecture, and their owners will be depicted and placed accordingly into the social, cultural, and political context that each of them influenced and were influenced by.

Another feature within domestic architecture that should not be disregarded is the floor plan of the house. Domestic architecture is not only restricted to exterior elevations that display certain types of ornamentation, it also includes the interior layout of the house. These floor plans have undergone significant changes between the time of the colonies and the very late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The floor plans are important to mention in that they produced a mani-

festation of style and luxury through elevated comfort levels. These spatial arrangements initially allowed the upper class to distinguish themselves through the superficial means of size and privacy. The more rooms that one could add, and the more intimate these became, the better off the homeowners seemed to be. Floor plans then, are another symbol of status that entered the realm of representative domestic architecture. In chapter four, the development of floor plans will be discussed. The exhibition of the floor plans within the three case studies will be shown in more detail in the next chapter on interiors.

The final chapter in this study moves from the outside of the house into the interiors. Interiors were an equally important part in putting oneself and one's position in the social order on display. Analyzing the interiors will be done in a similar manner as with the domestic architecture in that the general trends and style movements will be discussed to give an overview of the attitudes reflecting on interiors during each time. The rooms that were intended for display and entertainment are given an in-depth look in order to correspond to the case studies and the confirmation of the presence of appropriate quarters. The Otis, Colburn and Prescott, and Gibson interiors were each treated individually and the emphasis was placed on different rooms. The intention of the research overall, with regard to both the domestic architecture and the interiors, is not meant to be comparative among these three case studies. Instead, both the elevations and the rooms that were empirically observed are each used to reach the collective goal of using upper-class domestic architecture as a medium to explain social, cultural, and political trends and progressions. The interiors of each of these three houses were filtered accordingly and only the rooms that confirmed the owner's upper-class membership were taken into consideration. These interior spaces will be looked at more closely in relation to their status within the house's hierarchy and in their individual characteristics, which elevate their rank and their owner's rank. Various objects embellishing the room as such, and objects put on display within the room are seen as a means to ornament the interiors. These, along with the positioning within the floor plan, will be perused to describe each interior.

The interiors thus conclude the examination of the house as a status symbol and the effects that this had on American society. The history of life in parts of Europe, the colonies, and later the United States broadly commence the investigation of this domesticated aspect of urban life. The upper class in Boston relays the general attitude regarding characteristics of this part of society in a specific urban center and the ideals that they followed. The architects, elevations, and interiors of the house are then produced to reflect the influences that they accommodate and reversely, the influences that they exert. As a result, the combi-

nation of architectural and social history is fused together and perceived from a cultural historical point of view. The novel mediums used to scrutinize this cultural perspective are the families that breathed life into these homes and cities. "On the one hand there is considerable popular interest in the intimate details of upper-class family life and social experience; on the other, scholarly interest in the upper class has almost always been posed in terms of general group characteristics, rather than a particular set of families who make it up."[3] The intention is to demonstrate that urban and national history can be reevaluated through the guiding influence of domestic architecture and that this influence can be read off a selection of standard-setting upper-class homes that depict them in their façades and interiors.

The question that underscores the intent of the research project consists of three distinct parts, which adhere to the different sections that make up the entirety of the house and the message that it gives the cultural historian. The first part of the question is concerned with the exterior of the home and its location. What did the exterior elevations of an upper-class home in Boston and the neighborhood that it was located in say about the owner's position in society? To answer this question it is important to look at the exterior and the neighborhood, as mentioned, and also the architect and his rating in the high society and their choice of employees. Secondly, what did the interior design and floor plan say about one's refinement and standing in society and what objects and embellishments were used to confirm this? In each house, the highest ranked rooms require a closer look to identify and analyze these attributes of the interiors and to complete the investigation of the house. Lastly, how were these houses influenced by social, cultural, and political actions and how did they go on to influence a political, national domestic architecture? These houses in Boston were not only exposed to the sentiment of their times, but they also relayed their contribution into the greater national landscape not only because they answered to the political cry for democracy, but also because they set the standard for emulation, spreading the politically correct and sometimes also incorrect domestic architecture of the upper class across the growing nation by inadvertently guiding the copying hands of the middle class.

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3   Betty G. Farrell, *Elite Families: Class and Power in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 3.

THEORY AND METHOD

Theory

Taking a theoretical approach to the dynamic process of domestic architecture within a broader spectrum requires tools of explanation to guide the theme of this study. Theories in the context of history allow the historian to reconstruct the meanings of the past and apply them,[4] as in this case theories were applied to the greater notion of architecture. This history of past timeframes acts, like architecture, as a social framework for each given point within this particular historical investigation. "[…Vergangenheit] ist eine soziale Konstruktion, deren Beschaffenheit sich aus den Sinnbedürfnissen und Bezugsrahmen der jeweiligen Gegenwarten her ergibt. Vergangenheit steht nicht naturwüchsig an, sie ist eine kulturelle Schöpfung."[5] In the investigation of the domestic architecture and interior design of upper-class homes in Boston, guidance and explanatory support was conducted using the ideas behind the performative turn, the spatial turn, partially the topographical turn, and the theory of cultural transmission. These provide a framework for the depiction of the influence that space and architecture inspired in eighteenth and nineteenth century Boston.

The performative turn, stemming from Theater/Drama studies, embodies the thought that culture can be seen and regarded as a performance of various sorts.[6] The type of performance that culture relays, however, varies and has been conceived differently among the writers and contributors to this cultural turn. Often times the performative was seen as being equal to the interpretive in the cultural context, in that cultures and their behavior were interpreted. Clifford Geertz proposed the thought that these manners and behaviors could be staged conceptions of culture, which on a more general level are a performance of specific values and beliefs.[7] In the 1970s, John Austin went further and expressed the act of speaking as being a part of the performance of expression, which eventually came together with concepts of theatrical studies that

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4   Chris Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: Eine Einführung in die Geschichts-theorie* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), 1-2.

5   Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2005), 48.

6   Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kultur-wissenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), 104.

7   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 106.

underscored the extent of performative actions in a normal cultural context.[8] It is this interdisciplinary definition of the performative turn that applies to the study at hand in that it provides insight into the everyday life and especially the domesticated life of the protagonists that acted out their class, regional, and personal membership within society using specific objects. "[…Durch Kapital geprägte Erfahrungen lässt sich eine] Tendenz zur Nutzung von Konsumgegenständen als Instrumente der Selbstdarstellung und des Rollenspiels ableiten."[9] This form of self-manifestation in social, cultural, and even political branches of society can be traced through Otis, Colburn, Prescott, and Gibson and the domestic architecture that they used as their main prop.

In addition to the setting and staging of the cultural performance, ceremonies and rituals become the demeanor with which these cultural actors embellish their script. According to Victor Turner, these ceremonies are the signs of action. They do not provide new insights or influences, but rather describe something, such as the rank of an individual in the social order. Ceremonial actions in the cultural context provide a backdrop, a sign or depiction of a stable action.[10] Rituals, on the other hand, alter the culture and reconstruct cultural phenomena while at the same time providing regulation.[11] They can change the constellation of the social order and its members, while at the same time establishing systematic uniformity with which this is accomplished. Thus, the groundwork of a culture is laid and progressively altered according to institutionalized norms and practices. Among these ceremonies and rituals are also the performances that develop self-representation.

A performance usually requires actors, human or inanimate, which act according to the setting that they have been placed in. The former of the two, the human actors, perform in order to further themselves and represent their place on a greater scale. These performances are then adjusted to the surroundings that they cater to, "It is worth noting here that the notion of performance implies that the self is seen as acting in response to and in accordance with the social scene

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8   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 107, 109.

9   Rolf Lindner, "Kritik der Konsumgüterwerbung: Gesellschaftliche Voraussetzungen, ökonomische Implikationen eines Kommunikationsmittels" (PhD dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 1975), 303.

10   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 112.

11   Ibid.

rather than reacting to it from a self-identical or gyroscopic position."[12] The per-performance is based on the society and the culture that one has been introduced to and grown accustomed to. These ceremonies are categorically stable in each given society, but there are also actions that change over time. "[…] Die inszenierte Ungezwungenheit des bürgerlichen Lebensstils und das Streben nach stilistischer Exklusivität ('Luxusgeschmack') erscheinen als Garanten für das größte Maß an sozialer Distinktion."[13] These factors are applicable to both hu-human protagonists as well as inanimate objects, such as houses, that evolve with their surroundings and according to the level of social distinction that is the goal. "The emphasis on spectatorship, on acts of observation and on adjusting one's behavior to the response of others, is linked to the shift from a social structure based on tight family relations and traditions to a market society based on money and exchange."[14] Both the owners and the houses presented in this study altered their behavior and their appearance, respectively, to adhere to these new values within society and to perform according to what the audience wanted to see.

The performative turn is speculatively applied to the three case studies of the owners and homes that represent the domestic architecture of the upper class in Boston. It can only be speculated what ceremonies and rituals the owners and families of the homes produced in order to confirm their social rank, because the primary sources are too vague to provide grounded evidence thereof. All of the families were of high rank in Bostonian society, a fact that is conspicuous in both the primary and secondary literature that exists. However, the actions that brought them there and kept them in this position are not alluded to with enough vigor. Therefore, the performance of these proper Bostonian families can only speculatively be reconstructed. The homes, on the other hand, provide a performance of style and refinement. This performance pertains to the domestic architecture in general and the succession of each of the studied homes, as opposed to each house separately. Domestic architecture performed in a costume that reflected the surroundings that society at each given time required and styles

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12   Ulfried Reichardt, "Interior and Exterior Spaces: Versions of the Self in the American Novel around 1900," in *Space in America: Theory History Culture*, ed. Klaus Benesch and Kerstin Schmidt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 348. More specifically, Reichardt refers to the novel *The House of Mirth* by Edith Wharton in his discussion on interior and exterior spaces.

13   Klaus Kraemer, *Der Markt der Gesellschaft: Zu einer soziologischen Theorie der Marktvergesellschaftung* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 300.

14   Reichardt, "Interior and Exterior Spaces," in Benesch and Schmidt, 348.

that catered to both the inhabitants and the spectators. Another set of performances that took place simultaneously to this was the role of the consuming emulators. According to Walter Grasskamp, these middle class consumers can be considered modern-day sinners, who used and took advantage of objects in order to reach a higher goal.[15] On the contrary, the collectors, or rather the upper class, work with these objects, cultivate them, and use them without destroying their meaning and worth.[16] This presentation of both domestic architecture and interior design and the imitation thereof is a ritual of Bostonian society that evolved partially dependent and partially independent from its builders and promoters, creating a heroic elitist backdrop that defined various levels of a new national culture.

The space in which this enactment took place is undeniably important to the result. The surroundings that constitute this given arena, in a geographical, cultural, social, and political sense, define the boundaries of influence of culture that are obeyed and trespassed. "Sie können sich nur in der Wirklichkeitsform ausdrücken, gehorchen der Befehlsform, gehen in ihrer Verwendung auf, ohne sich auf das Gestern beziehen zu können, und bestimmen mehr oder weniger ihre Umwelt im Raum, ohne deren zeitliche Tiefe ausfüllen zu können."[17] The restricted space of Boston is the immediate environ in which influences on the domestic architecture of each given time era distinguish the performance and the culture regionally and geographically. However, the cultural, social, and political emphasis on the colonies and later the nation reach beyond these natural boundaries of Boston and influenced other spaces of architecture and design. Ceremonies and Rituals were transcribed through the process of cultural transmission into other cultures that defined the greater American space that was slowly developing.

The spatial turn is a postmodern discourse that is a social construction and encompasses cultural and implied categorizations of the concept of space, as well as the spatial concept of space.[18] Space is the focus in this discourse and brings with it numerous facets that need to be included in a theoretical analysis:

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15   Walter Grasskamp, *Konsumglück: Die Ware Erlösung* (München: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2000), 38.

16   Grasskamp, *Konsumglück*, 19, 38.

17   Jean Baudrillard, *Das System der Dinge: Über unser Verhältnis zu den alltäglichen Gegenständen*, trans. Joseph Garzuly (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus Verlag, 1991), 98.

18   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 284-285.

Raum meint soziale Produktion von Raum als einem vielschichtigen und oft wi-
dersprüchlichen gesellschaftlichen Prozess, eine spezifische Verortung kultureller Prak-
tiken, eine Dynamik sozialer Beziehungen, die auf die Veränderbarkeit von Raum
hindeuten […die] Gestaltbarkeit des Raums [wird] durch Kapital, Arbeit, ökonomische
Restrukturierung sowie durch soziale Beziehungen und Konflikte bestärkt.[19]

The construction of space from a geographical, architectural, and social point of
view is the emphasis that is placed on this study and the influence that it
received and had from politics, culture, and society.

   There are two names that are closely linked and vital to the concept of the
spatial turn: Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja. Henri Lefebvre was responsible
for including the social factor within space and the role that it played within
societies and social relationships.[20] He proposes that social space is a social
product.[21] Spatial distribution is connected to the evolution of societies and the
manner in which they are constructed. The city of Boston and its upper-class
neighborhoods are distributed according to this principle in that the social
relationships of fellow upper-class men and the natural, political, and economic
environment played an important part in the creation and sustainability of
neighborhoods that underscored certain social relationships. In the 1960s
Lefebvre proposed that, "Die Stadt wird als *Projektion der Gesellschaft auf das
Terrain* definiert [emphasis in original]."[22] In effect, the city is a cultural
construction of space that abides to the vision and rules that a society has set
itself. The projection of social relationships on the spatial constitution of an
urban center is defined by class hierarchies that bring about conflict and
cohesion, resulting in the distribution of space. "'Die räumliche Struktur ist
deshalb nicht nur die Arena, in der Klassenkonflikte sich austragen, sondern
ebenso der Bereich, in dem – und teilweise durch den – Klassenverhältnisse

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19   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 289.

20   Ibid., 291.

21   Jörg Döring, "Spatial Turn," in *Raum: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Stephan
     Günzel (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2010), 91.

22   Kurt Meyer, *Von der Stadt zur Urbanen Gesellschaft: Jacob Burckhardt und Henri
     Lefebvre* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 271.

konstituiert werden.'"[23] Lefebvre proposes three different spaces that can be conceptualized in a cultural context: the mental space, the physical space, and the social space.[24] However, the mental and physical spaces tend to coincide in that the mentally established social space is directly related to the physical constitution of individual space but has to be appreciated in its entirety. "Daher könnte man, wie Max Weber festellt, 'mit etwas zu starker Vereinfachung sagen: 'Klassen' gliedern sich nach den Beziehungen zur Produktion und zum Erwerb der Güter, 'Stände' nach den Prinzipien Ihres Güterkonsums, in Gestalt spezifischer Arten von 'Lebensführung''."[25] Imitating a specific physical space does not constitute it as being the appropriate social space; it has to follow the ascribed rules of functionality. This study concentrates on the physical space, in the sense of the city of Boston, the domestic architecture of the case studies, and their interior spaces, as well as the social space, in the sense of the influence and symbolic production of status that evolved out of these physical structures.

Edward Soja went on to write about the understanding of what space is, a subject that is still controversial in the discourse of space in general, and promoted the expansion of the spatial turn. He defines two aspects of the spatial turn, which should be given more attention in cultural and social studies. In general, he criticizes that space has not received enough attention and that it has been treated rather passively, whereas history and time have always been conceived as being active.[26] The first aspect that he speaks of is "spatial capital," which refers to the advantages that arise from the density and connectivity of urban centers. The second aspect is "spatial justice," which exclaims that hierarchies are easily established in these same urban centers and that oppositions form as a result.[27] Spatial justice could refer to the emulation that

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23 Derek Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 120, quoted in Edward Soja, "Verräumlichungen: Marxistische Geographie und kritische Gesellschaftstheorie," in *Raumproduktionen: Beiträge der Radical Geography, Eine Zwischenbilanz*, ed. Bernd Belina, Boris Michel (Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2007), 92.

24 Meyer, *Von der Stadt zur Urbanen Gesellschaft*, 313.

25 Max Weber, op. cit., T. II: 688, quoted in Pierre Bourdieu, *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, trans. Wolf H. Fietkau (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 60.

26 Döring, "Spatial Turn," in Günzel, 91.

27 Edward Soja, "Vom 'Zeitgeist' zum 'Raumgeist'. New Twists on the *Spatial Turn*," in *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, ed. Jörg Döring (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 241-242.

resulted through the middle class and their strive to be upper class. Through the strategic formation of neighborhoods, architectural styles, and interior trends, the upper class set itself apart and created an urban hierarchy. As a result, gentrifica-gentrification occurred in direct opposition or perhaps even in coherence with these hierarchies and spatial justification was attempted.

On the smaller scale of the house, the distribution of space and rooms had the intention of separating and connecting areas, which adhered to the same social affiliation guidelines that ruled society. The spatial turn applies to the following study in a twofold manner: on the one hand, space is seen metaphorically, "[…] als gesellschaftlicher Produktionsprozess der Wahrnehmung, Nutzung und Aneignung […]",[28] on the other hand, space is considered for what it is, a func-functional, utilitarian concept of a given area. "Auch hier gilt Raum nicht als Behälter, ebenso wenig als wahrnehmungsprägende Bewusstseinskategorie, sondern als 'Produkt sozialen und politischen Handelns' mit seinen materiellen Entsprechungen in Architektur, Bauwesen, usw."[29] The homes under scrutiny are both metaphorical and structural entities. They create a specific space in the greater context of an urban center, giving it a hierarchy and a systematic organization of class and an identity that is local and national. "Quite literally, space or, more accurately, its 'warring' ideological appropriations formed the arena where America's search for identity (national, political, cultural) has been staged."[30] Within domestic architectural structures, a hierarchy of space also exists and an individualized, domesticated as well as a national identity are produced.

The spatial turn is a theoretical tool, which guided the discussion and research of the domestic architecture in Boston. However, the ambiguity of the spatial turn and the construction and application of the aspect of space in cultural historical pieces of writing must be clarified. The problematic of the spatial turn is that it is never quite clear whether a physical rendition of space, such as a house or interior rooms and spaces, are applicable as concepts of space. Sociologists criticize the use of physical space as an aspect of analyzing social

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28 Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 292.

29 Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, *Das Meer als kulterelle Kontaktzone: Räume, Reisende, Repräsentationen* (Konstanz: UVK Verlag, 2003), 9, quoted in Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), 307.

30 Klaus Benesch, "Concepts of Space in American Culture: An Introduction," in *Space in America: Theory History Culture*, ed. Klaus Benesch and Kerstin Schmidt (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 19.

relationships, because it distracts from the political and social realm of descrip-description. Even scholars jump back and forth between perceiving physical space as a part of the spatial turn, like "[…] Pierre Bourdieus anfänglicher Unterscheidung und dann doch wieder Verschmelzung von physischem und sozialem Raum demonstrieren."[31] In the following chapters, it becomes clear that physical space is a cultural concept; in fact, it is a cultural text that establishes the social, cultural, and political definitions of a broader space and even in a national context. According to Bourdieu,

Folgt man diesen Prämissen, wird die gesellschaftliche Welt vornehmlich als symbolische Welt wahrgenommen, in der um die Verfügung über symbolische Macht gekämpft wird. Dabei ist vor allem die Fähigkeit zur Grenzziehung, zur Unterscheidung, zur Klassifizierung und Differenzierung von Bedeutung.[32]

Social, cultural, and political actions are materialistically reflected in domestic architecture and, thus, reversely these concepts and ideas can be transcribed to historians that observe these structures at a later point in time. "Architecture may be an effort to arrest time by wresting and shaping a livable place from space, yet its specific design is always shaped by particular cultural values and social norms."[33] These values and social norms, to be found in a physical form of space, do possess a historical stronghold that personalizes and politicizes culture. Furthermore, these physical and social or rather cultural spaces, when combined with modern concepts of historical thought, create an understanding of contemporary taste, "So ergänzt die ganze Vergangenheit, als eine Sammlung von Gebrauchsformen, die Kollektion der modernen Verbrauchsgegenstände, um zusammen die transzendente Sphäre des Zeitgeschmacks, der Mode, zu bilden."[34]

A variation of this spatial conception that is partially applicable to the study is the topographical turn. It applies through one part of its theory in which it sees architecture as acting in two distinct ways in cultural history. Primarily, as supported by Maurice Halbwachs and Jan Assmann, it is seen as the foundation of a collective memory:

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31   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 315.

32   Achim Landwehr, *Geschichte des Sagbaren: Einführung in die historische Diskursanalyse* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 2001), 94.

33   Benesch, "Concepts of Space in American Culture," in Benesch and Schmidt, 17.

34   Baudrillard, *Das System der Dinge*, 109.

Assmann's concept, on the other hand, looks at the medial conditions and social structures of organization which groups and societies use to connect themselves to an objectified supply of cultural representations, available in diverse forms (for example, in writing, image, architecture, liturgy), in order to construct patterns for self-interpretation legiti-legitimized by the past.[35]

Thus, it often occurs that the group that is responsible for this form of self-interpretation does not act in a particularly egalitarian or open manner, instead cultural memory, in most cases, is strongly tied to an elitist concept.[36] The architecture of the upper class provides not only a collective memory for those among its ranks, but through the emulation of middle-class households and the consequential spreading of *their* style – the American landscape was influenced by their developing memory. Secondly, according to Susanne K. Langer, architecture is a symbol for specific social groups.[37] "Bei der Erinnerungskultur dagegen handelt es sich um die Einhaltung einer sozialen Verpflichtung. Sie ist auf die Gruppe bezogen."[38] Maurice Halbwachs has a slightly altered conception of memory and its construction. He considers individual and collective memory to be socially and spatially conceivable, "[…] the social group comes into being through stable spatial images representing it […]. It is the spatial images which produce collectively constituted psychological states, and especially the collective representations connected with memories and stored in the collective memory."[39] On a grander scale, these spatial conceptions are the instruments of creating identity within a regional space and perhaps even extending to a national identity. "In urban society, the spatial fragmentation causes fragmentation of social life. But movements among people are faster paced, and

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35 Dietrich Harth, "The Invention of Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 91.

36 Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 116.

37 Kirsten Wagner, "Topographical Turn," in *Raum: Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, ed. Stephan Günzel (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2010), 100.

38 Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 30.

39 Jean-Christophe Marcel and Laurent Mucchielli, "Maurice Halbwachs's *mémoire collective*," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 145.

a greater diversity of situations is concentrated in a given time frame."[40] In addi-
addition, it is clear that the architecture presented here deemed as a symbol for
this group of elites and exalted a message to other groups that determined their
position in society:

Auch diese Dingwelt – Geräte, Möbel, Räume, ihre spezifische Anordnung, […] – ist
sozial geprägt: ihr Wert, ihr Preis, ihre status-symbolische Bedeutung sind soziale Fakten.
Diese Tendenz zur Lokalisierung gilt für jegliche Art von Gemeinschaften. Jede Gruppe,
die sich als solche konsolidieren will, ist bestrebt, sich Orte zu schaffen und zu sichern,
die nicht nur Schauplätze ihre Interaktionsformen abgeben, sondern Symbole ihrer
Identität und Anhaltspunkte Ihrer Erinnerung. Das Gedächtnis braucht Orte, tendiert zur
Verräumlichung.[41]

This memory and symbolism not only influenced the middle class, but also other
cultures and, notably, was influenced by other cultures to begin with.

The personalization of culture evolves through the influence of other cul-
tures, which is a result of the transmission and transfer of culture. This theory of
cultural transmission provides that a society be shaped into one by various
influences and by agents of experience and transcription. "A culture lives
according to the ways it is reproduced and transferred, just as it is modified by
the operational aspects of the transmission itself."[42] According to Bonnemaison,
culture is first inherited and then reinvented according to the culture that is
already present, the way it was transferred, and the way in which it is received.[43]
This process of cultural transmission influences those people that are responsible
for the construction and those who are responsible for the commissioning of
structures of domestic architecture, not to mention their own individual pre-
existing cultural attributes which come into the mix, as well. Domestic
architecture and interior design, then, is the transferal of one's own culture and
the influences from outside sources.

This process of civilization was recognized by Norbert Elias, who describes
individuals as having gone through several practices of transferal and thus,
becoming who they are:

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40   Marcel and Mucchielli, "Maurice Halbwachs's *mémoire collective*," 147.

41   Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 39.

42   Joël Bonnemaison, *Culture and Space: Conceiving a New Cultural Geography*
     (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 69.

43   Bonnemaison, *Culture and Space*, 69.

Rather than attributing all this to the rise of capitalism or liberal constitutional democracy, he argued that contemporary modes and standards of behaviour are a result of long-term processes which gradually form the individual into a particular *kind* of person, one who as a result of numerous civilizing processes adopts a particular mode of existence: a *modus operandi* which fundamentally defines the person's relation to the world.[44]

Their mode of existence also influences their manner of living and their places of habitation. Elias supports the idea that civilization, coming from French and English linguistics, is a developmental process, whereas culture, rather a German term, is a product that humans have made.[45] This German word *Kultur* describes an elite, highly positioned identity that describes a nation and its ideals. The English term *civilization*, however, describes so much more than actual culturally significant characteristics, it is all-encompassing and thus becomes excessively collective and almost superficial.[46] This fabricated commodity, then, experienced a high rate of transmission in the eighteenth and still in the nineteenth century in America, which was mainly due to the influx of immigration from various countries, all with different cultures and different architectures. The process of civilization, in this case, is applicable to the Bostonians of varying origins, as a well as to their architecture, which went through a process of architecturalization, and in the case of the upper class, a process of continuous refinement. "Die legitimen Inhaber der *Symbolischen Macht* definieren Bourdieu zufolge allgemeinverbindlich die 'Wahrheit der sozialen Welt', der sich subalterne Gruppen schließlich selbstgenügsam und selbst-beschränkend anzupassen und unterzuordnen haben."[47] The middle class, thus, had to undergo a further step of cultural transmission in order to attain subdued refinement.

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44 John Mandalios, "Civilization Complexes and Processes: Elias, Nelson and Eisenstadt," in *Handbook of Historical Sociology*, ed. Gerard Delanty, Engin F. Isin (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 66.

45 Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und Psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (Basel: Verlag Haus zum Falken, 1939), 3.

46 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 4-5.

47 Bourdieu, Pierre, "Sozialer Raum und 'Klassen'. Leçon sur la leçon. Zwei Vorlesungen (Frankfurt a.M., 1985):25, quoted in Klaus Kraemer, *Der Markt der Gesellschaft: Zu einer soziologischen Theorie der Marktvergesselschaftung* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 299.

The transferal of culture did not always have to stem from abroad, but could also come from within and instead breach the boundaries of class, as opposed to geographical borders. The middle class attempted to emulate the culture of the upper class and transfer it onto themselves. Their main method of instrumentalization was consumption and the marketplace evolved according to evolving social standards:

Die Soziologie führt hier auch nicht recht weiter, weil sie die demonstrative Aspekte des Konsumgüterverbrauchs bevorzugt, die sich nicht auf die stofflichen Eigenschaften der Gegenstände, sondern auf ihre symbolische Handhabung im Sinne des Prestigeerwerbs beziehen. Bei dieser angesehenen Form des Fetischismus, der Zurschaustellung von Reichtum im 'demonstrativen Konsum' (Thorstein Veblen), macht der erkennbar hohe Tauschwert einen beträchtlichen Teil des Gebrauchwertes der Güter aus.[48]

Emulation by the middle class thus became a demonstrative display of status through the exhibition of certain objects and their applicable worth. "Der Konsum dient folglich als Mittel zum Zweck: als Mittel zur Demonstration eines Lebensstils, der sich von der Lebensweise des Proletariats prinzipiell abhebt."[49] This can be deemed a process of cultural change, which is linked to a new performance and improvisation of a ritual that is not one's own. "Ver-änderungsmomente ergeben sich bereits aus den Spielräumen der rituellen Praxis selbst, wie sie durch eine analytische Zergliederung des Rituals in seine spezifische Verlaufsform sichtbar werden."[50] The process of change and civilization can be observed in the manner in which it changes. The rituals may be the same, but the processes are different. The transmission of culture can thus be disseminated in order to understand the origin of influences and the evolution of societies. This cultural progression can be traced through the attempt at the development of a national architecture in a nation that is characterized by an abundance of cultural transmissions.

The performative turn, the spatial turn, the topographical turn, and cultural transmission are theoretical approaches that underscore the cultural significance of upper-class domestic architecture. The performative turn can only be applied from a distant perspective in that the empirical evidence of these performances of social mobility is rather limited. The spatial turn provides an insight into the categorization of spaces and the various forms that culminate in this research,

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48 Grasskamp, *Konsumglück*, 37.

49 Lindner, "Kritik der Konsumgüterwerbung," 300-301.

50 Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 110.

including the socially revealing form of physical spaces. Part of the topograph-topographical turn applies the importance of architecture in societal understanding. Cultural transmission gives a background look at the possible magnitude of the influences that shaped Boston, its neighborhoods, its architecture, and its people and how these processes are infinite. Yet, these approaches should not consummate the interpretation of domestic architecture fully,

Wenn Du ein architektonisches Projekt im Kopf hast, die verschiedenen Gegebenheiten des Raumes, der Geschichte, der Umgebung, die Elemente des Projektes, die Ziele, die Finalität, dann wird Dir das vielleicht alles an einem bestimmten Moment erlauben, Dich zu einem verwirrenden Objekt gelangen zu lassen, das wirklich etwas anderes ware als das ursprüngliche Objekt. Aber wenn Du zuviel planst, wenn die Konzeptualisierung zu dicht ist, verkümmert die Ader, und ich glaube, daß das auch für den Bereich der theoretischen Forschung zutrifft, diejenigen, die alles anhäufen worauf man sich beziehen kann, die Daten multiplizieren, eine Bahn bis ins unendliche darlegen, erschöpfen sich, bevor sie etwas gesagt haben[...].[51]

These theories, which guide the research and hinge on past and contemporary approaches, but are not intended to steer the interpretation entirely, were complemented by the methodology of the investigation of these metaphorical and physical spaces.

Method

Methodically two perspectives had to be considered. On the one hand, this is a cultural historical study requiring methods that are used by historians from different branches of cultural disciplines. On the other hand, there is an artistic aspect, more specifically that of the decorative art of architecture, which follows methods used in art history. These methods are rather similar, yet they need to be explained individually in order to gain an understanding of the overall spectrum of the research methodology that was used to contemplate eighteenth and nineteenth century Bostonian upper-class domestic architecture.

The cultural historical method used to structure the following research was a hermeneutic appraisal of the texts and objects that construe the focus. Hermeneutics is usually understood as, "the art of understanding particularly the

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51 Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *Einzigartige Objekte: Architektur und Philosophie*, trans. Eva Werth (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 2004), 113-114.

written discourse of another person correctly."[52] Interestingly, Friedrich Schlei-Schleiermacher refers to hermeneutics as being an art of understanding texts, but it can also be an art of understanding art. The latter postulation is rather the one that art historians would refer to, however, some art, such as homes and interiors, can be read as a text and thus, the hermeneutical method of research is similar in its construction and utility. The former discourse of reading and interpreting a text has developed in the cultural and philosophical historical disciplines, as a reference to understanding the past. Hermeneutics has a large connection to language and is thus often seen as being a method for textual sources. "First and most famously developed by Wilhelm Dithey (1833-1911) and Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), this was a reading strategy that emphasized the scholar's empathy with a text, an understanding of the meanings constructed by the text's language."[53] The language and the message of written sources were interpreted and read not only according to contemporary sentiment concerning the upper class, Boston, and domestic architecture and interiors, but also the way that these texts had an impact and an influence on the time of relevance. The primary documents of the architects and the owners of the homes give insight into the life that they lived and strove for, and lay the foundation for their social positioning and the architecture that resulted from this.

Hermeneutics is a broad method of research that in itself requires further classification and understanding. Although the text is the center of the hermeneutic method, the meanings that a text conveys and the influences that this may have had are all aspects that hermeneutics must consider and investigate. According to Johann Gustav Droysen, there are four phases of the interpretation of texts that historians must relate to in order to produce an accurate representation of past events. These four phases consist of a pragmatic interpretation, an interpretation of the circumstances, a psychological interpretation, and an interpretation of ideas. The pragmatic asks what happened. In the following study the diction is more specifically, what was built and why? The interpretation of the circumstances extends to the reasoning and influence that these conditions had on the topic of discussion. The historical events in Boston, the development of the city, the establishment of the upper class and its

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52   Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism And Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

53   Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, "The Source: The Basis of Our Knowledge About the Past," in *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, ed. Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 102.

morals and values, the professionalization of architecture, and the progress that each homeowner in question underwent are all results of specific circumstances that influenced the domestic architecture that they chose to erect. In the psychological interpretation, it is the historian's task to place themselves in the shoes of those that are being analyzed. In slight coherence with the performative turn, the protagonists of this study, the architects and the homeowners, are reanimated and their lives recreated to the best of the ability using the primary sources that were available. The interpretation of ideas is the reasoning that lies behind the actions being described and constitutes the integrity of the house as it was and as it is.[54] The greater purpose behind the use of multifaceted hermeneutic interpretation is to steer away from a purely analytical observation of the text or objects that one is working with.[55] The theme here, therefore, is not to examine the minute architectural characteristics of each house, but instead to investigate and interpret the symbolic aspects of the outside and inside and to link these to the architects and owners on the immediate scale, and to the upper class in Boston, as well as nationally, on the greater scale.

To return to Edward Soja, he was responsible for composing a specialized type of hermeneutics that should also be attributed to this study. The concept of "spatial hermeneutics" refers to an open conception of space, which allows the historian to interpret all aspects of space in correspondence with one another.[56] In this sense, it is not only the domestic architecture and interiors of the upper class that present the statements that these objects exclaim, but also the emulation of the middle class provides the additional interrogation of what general refinement was. Being able to look at other classes and architectures in relation to one another aids the interpretation of the obvious supremacy of one over the other. It also permits the problematic of spatial distribution and spatial hierarchies to become recognizable. Although this study is not meant as an analogy of social hierarchies and their varying domestic architecture, occasional comparisons of spatial features underscore the importance, authority, and permanence of an upper-class architecture in Boston and also what this meant in the national realm. These literal and geographical research methods are used to place the objects of interpretation accordingly within society and also to inspect and read their protagonists.

Art historians whose focus lies on architecture also use methods that are very similar to those used by cultural historians and reiterate the use of text semiotics

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54 Lorenz, *Konstruktion der Vergangenheit*, 92-93.

55 Ibid., 95.

56 Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 303.

and hermeneutics with regard to structural objects. The method of semiotics in architectural history introduces the idea that architecture is a language, which speaks to the owner of a house and the onlooker. "Die Anwendung der Semiotik innerhalb der Architekturinterpretation setzt stillschweigend voraus, daß die jeweilige Architektur nicht nur funktioniert, sondern kommuniziert und somit neben dem Benutzer vorrangig auch den Betrachter anspricht."[57] It is precisely this point of view that expresses the manner in which the houses under observation were perceived. The importance lay in reading their façades and their interiors like a historical document, which expressed and made a statement concerning the owner and which was directed at the onlooker, in this case referring to society as a whole.

The use of hermeneutics in the field of the decorative arts is widespread and architectural historians often make use of it. It is with this method that the actual reading and interpretation of a given structure takes place and it requires the following of a new set of rules:

Im Medium der Architektur wird der Raum als Gestalter zum Gestaltenden und somit zu einem die Erfahrung übersteigendem. Es ist die Möglichkeit eröffnet, den Raum nicht nur als Struktur- oder Formelement und in seinem zweckbestimmten Sinn zu interpretieren, sonder darüber hinaus als ein eigenständiges Sinnstiftendes wie Sinnganzes[...]. Der Raum gelangt zur Eigenqualität, zur ästhetischen Wirklichkeit, von der Objekts- zur Subjektsqualität vor aller Anbindung an Funktion, Inhalt oder Stil.[58]

Both the architecture and the space or rather interior space have to be seen through their expressive purpose as opposed to their superficial function. Architectural hermeneutics consists of the interpretation of a façade and interiors according to their semiotics, or rather what they are trying to say. The messages that can be deciphered from their walls give the historian information on the various aspects of these domestic spaces. In this study, this application of hermeneutics provided the method with which to read the façades and interiors of the Otis, Colburn/Prescott, and Gibson houses and constitutes the central effort of the architectural interpretation presented.

The interpretation of written documentation is thus secondary. The focus of this study is the domestic architecture of upper-class Boston and is exemplified

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57 Ralf-Peter Seippel, *Architektur und Interpretation: Methoden und Ansätze der Kunstgeschichte in ihrer Bedeutung für die Architekturinterpretation* (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1989), 68.

58 Seippel, *Architektur und Interpretation*, 116.

through three case studies. These three homes are not literal texts, but they are historic texts in that they can be read and scrutinized in order to attain a historical perspective of this regional class hierarchy using their home dwellings. The use of objects is more closely related to iconography and iconographic studies thereof. Disseminating the text of a visual object requires, much like that of language, a look beyond the surface and an interpretation of what is stated between the lines, or rather between the mortars.[59] The architectural hermeneutic of the Otis, Colburn/Prescott, and Gibson houses require an iconographic reading in that they say more than they appear to. The interpretation of their foundation, elevations, and interiors provides the icon that they mean to represent on behalf of their architects and their owners. This method of research is applied not only to the (very well-maintained) remnants of the houses, but also pictures of them from different time periods, how they may have adjusted to contemporary surroundings, and how they were evaluated in certain records and statistics. The interpretation of the source of the house as a whole requires different points of view from which to examine the entirety of its structure and purpose.

The hermeneutics of cultural and art history provide the empirical research guidelines for investigating domestic architecture in the context of upper-class Boston. The hermeneutics of text analysis provides the method of interpreting the primary sources that pertain to the architects and the homeowners and their abodes. Spatial hermeneutics lets a comparative analysis enter the scene, where it is necessary, to confirm the social renderings of upper-class cohesion and the threat that was present from below. The architectural methodology allows a more in-depth and disciplined investigation of the objects and their structural personas while adjusting the historical context to the decorative arts. This allows the iconography of certain objects to be further examined using both cultural and historical guidelines that were established using hermeneutics and architectural accuracy to underscore the influences and, thus, the equivalent meanings of houses and interiors and their respective ornamentations. It is the combination of these different interdisciplinary methods that are obligatory prerequisites for the proper interrogation of the artifacts within a cultural historical interpretation of domestic architecture.

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59   Howell and Prevenier, "The Source: The Basis of Our Knowledge About the Past," in Howell and Prevenier, 104.

TERMINOLOGY

A cultural historical study of the upper class in Boston and their domestic architecture and interiors introduces interdisciplinary terminology that needs to be explained for the purpose of clarification. The social aspect of class in general and in Boston, which possesses its own elitist terms, will be discussed with regard to their locales, politics, and religion in the second chapter; however, their specific definitions need to be put into context. In addition, the meaning behind the architect and the interior designer, which cannot be used loosely throughout the entire timeframe, will be given a general meaning that explains its continuous use throughout the following chapters. Finally, writing as a cultural historian, it was necessary to study the terminology frequented by architectural historians and to use these terms for the descriptive passages concerning the case study homes. In order for the reader to be able to follow along and picture the house and its details, these terms will be given an overview and listed in an appendix as a reference aid while perusing the architectural details of the houses.[60]

Upper-class membership can be subdivided into various categories, which have different words to adorn them and that can mean different things. Primarily, the general term *upper class* is used throughout this study and signifies the top rank of individuals within the general social order, regardless of whether they are a part of this class because of their ancestry or their wealth. An additional term that is used to express the same general idea is the word *elite*. There are two further terms that may seem ambiguous and whose meaning in this particular work should be paid some attention. The word *aristocracy* can mean upper class but, on the American scene, it brings with it a somewhat derogatory connotation in that it is often associated with royal ancestry. Many authors writing about American history often use the term in coherence with an upper class that had high-ranking ancestry and their diction was not altered. The use of the word in the general context of the American upper class, however, will only be used in circumstances where it seems necessary in that a name-based accession is the underlying requisite of class membership. Aristocracy is a term that is somewhat controversial in the top ranks of American society, whereas the word *gentry* can mean various things regarding the lower portion of the upper class. Similar to the term aristocracy, different authors use this word in differing ways. Often times gentry is equal to upper class, whereas other times the gentry refers rather to the upper-middle or middle class. In this study, it will be used universally to

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60   A Glossary of architectural terms is in Appendix I.

describe the more wide-ranging upper ranks of society, which include the upper class and the upper-middle class. Notably, the term *gentrification* is only appli-applicable to the upper-middle and middle class in that it signifies a communal rise, or rather an exchange, within the social hierarchy, which the upper class is incapable of achieving in that they are already at the top. "Mit dem aus dem Englischen entlehnten Begriff *gentrification* ist ein sozialer Umstruktur-ierungsprozess gemeint, der sich in viele Städten beobachten last: eine statusniedrige Bevölkerung wird durch eine statushöhere Bevölkerung ausgetauscht."[61] These words provide an overview of mainstream terms for the upper regions of society and the use of each in the chapters that are to follow.

Whilst referring to these families their origin and their influence are sometimes referred to as being from the mother country, which, unless otherwise specified, refers to England. In the metropolis of Boston, new terms became a part of the local idiom that described the upper class and, consequently, the individuals of each respective case study. The most widespread nickname was that of the "Boston Brahmins," a term that was given the socially exclusive members of Boston proper by Oliver Wendell Holmes.[62] In essence, the term refers to the Brahmins of the ancient Hindus, which were the leaders of their caste and society. Holmes applied the term to the elite Bostonians who also became the guiding dynamic behind their modern society.[63] The term will be used on occasion to describe this exclusive tract within society and it should be noted that it was a term that the Brahmins would gladly have associated themselves with. Another nickname that the majority of upper-class Bostonians perhaps did not fancy as much was that of belonging to, "a city of blue-nosed provincials – 'cold roast Boston,' as T.G. Appleton once described his birthplace […]. Its citizens were fierce sectionalists and often suffered from acute over-refinement, what [Henry] James usually meant by the word 'genteel'."[64] The slight ridicule behind this endearing term of an untouched, frigid meat dish is strategically placed in the title of this work because it provides a metaphorical link to their domestic architecture. Ornamenting the 'cold roast' describes the circumstances of domestic architecture and interior designs attempts at embellishing a conservative, uncooked part of society. As Theroux calls it, their

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61 Meyer, *Von der Stadt zur Urbanen Gesellschaft*, 275.

62 Farrell, *Elite Families*, 1-2.

63 Stephen Birmingham, *America's Secret Aristocracy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 137.

64 Alexander Theroux, "Henry James's Boston," *The Iowa Review* 20, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1990): 160.

"over-refinement," the domestic architecture and interior design, were the gar-garnish that the upper class used in order to set themselves apart from the rest. The Boston Associates and sometimes also the Mount Vernon Proprietors are also names granted Boston's upper class in general, but they refer more specifically to certain groups of individuals that were a part of upper-class business ventures. These groups and their names will not be used generally, but rather contextually with regard to their business partners or endeavors.

Among the protagonists in this study are the architects and interior designers, as they are known today. Neither of these terms existed in the United States until well into the nineteenth century, and in the case of interior designers not until the very late-nineteenth, early-twentieth century. The development of the trade will be discussed in further detail in chapter three, including the evolution of the appropriate terminology and its connotations. Seeing as this study is written in the twenty-first century, in which the term architect and interior designer have been well established over time and there is hardly room for discrepancy, both terms will be used to describe the builder and planner of a house and the decorator of the inside of the house, respectively. As a result, even in coherence with structures that were built in the eighteenth century and prior to the implementation of both terms, the words architect and interior designer will be used to describe the carpenters, builders, and decorators, as they may have been more commonly known back then.

Coming from a cultural perspective, architecture and its implications remain to be the focus. The descriptions of the houses do require some insight into architectural terminology, however, and these terms must be properly defined. Domestic architecture is the overall term for privately owned homes that can differ greatly in their size, style, and build. This includes the exterior façade and the floor plan of the space within these elevations. It requires to be treated separately from civic and public architecture in that its scale and use are of a completely dissimilar magnitude. The same holds true for domestic interiors, which refers to the decoration and placement of objects in specific rooms or spaces that make up the house. The detailed definitions of aspects that define domestic architecture and interiors, and which are used in the study of the houses can be referenced in Appendix I. Domestic architecture also includes another aspect that has been omitted from analysis due to its different characteristics. Landscape architecture is a part of most domestic architecture, less so in urban centers, however. The homes that are to be analyzed in this study have small tracts of natural land in front of their doors, but in all three case studies, these are restricted to a small piece of lawn, which can hardly qualify as landscape architecture. Exterior elevations and interiors can be scrutinized more readily

because of their spatial connectivity and because they incorporate the same as-aspects of design. Landscapes can be considered status symbols, as well, due to the fact that being able to sacrifice a piece of one's property for nothing more than a piece of grass in a dense urban center signaled the immensity of space that one obviously still had available while retaining the proper comfort level. Their embellishment, at least in consideration of the three case studies, is kept rather minimal and thus a certain degree of uniformity is attached to this aspect of private homes. The focus, therefore, remains with the strict structural elements of the house from the outside as well as the inside.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Contemporary Research

Each individual section has some sort of contemporary research that can be attributed to it. This pertains to the discourse concerning Boston, the upper class, domestic architecture, interior design, and to a lesser degree also the houses that were studied. Yet, the combination and analysis of all of these elements put together and in relation to each other fails to exist. More specifically, a concise perception of these three homes and the statements that they made about their owners, about architecture in the United States, and about Boston has not been presented from a cultural point of view in which the political agenda that discerned the colonies and the development of an independent nation is put into the context. The intention in the following chapters is thus to establish a backdrop for the urban upper class in Boston and then to analyze their domestic architecture and interiors while contemplating the social, cultural, and political consequences that these have.

In correspondence to the general outline, the contemporary discourse concerning each part of the study will be investigated. The regional focus on Boston is the starting point of concentration in this analysis of private homes. The discourse on urban centers has long been established and it is common to concentrate on cities and their various characteristics. "Urbanism is the study of cities – their inner structures and environments as well as developments and processes within. It is also the practice of planning, arranging, designing, and

creating human communities."[65] These aspects of urbanism also establish part of the argument presented here. The inner structures and environments of a specific class, or rather human community, are followed in their planning and designing stages and then investigated from an internal point of view. The city is perceived not only through its structures, but also through the individuals that design and those that inhabit them. The concept of New Urbanism, which came into being after the Second World War, integrates this human factor and uses it as the medium with which to plan and evaluate cities.[66] The study does not concentrate on urbanism with regard to Boston, as such, but instead uses the urban plan that Boston embodies to reconfirm the upper-class stronghold over neighborhoods and city planning in general. Urbanism is a widespread discourse in cultural history, yet it is only an introductory part of the study of domestic architecture and interiors, which is placed in the urban setting of Boston.

The second aspect of the study is that of class, in this case the upper class, which has also been paid attention to in past and present discourses. The topic of class has been analyzed from the standpoint of the upper, middle, and lower class placing each in a social context that varies from region to region. The more specific subject matter of the upper class has been given the backseat in scholarly research after the Second World War. Instead, the New Histories were introduced, which decided to put the focus on the marginalized groups in society, which included the less fortunate and poorer classes of American society.[67] Also, a New Cultural History was developed, which presupposes that the majority of past cultural studies were directed towards the upper class. "What is even more important here is that historians have learned to take culture more seriously, not just the culture or cultural products of the elite – that historians have always done – but culture as the system of meaning through which people experience the world."[68] The upper class, whether through the willful act of exclusion or as a measure of standard, has been treated differently in past and contemporary research. This study treats the upper class as the focal

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65   Tigran Haas, "New Urbanism & Beyond," in *New Urbanism and Beyond: Designing Cities for the Future*, ed. Tigran Haas (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 11.

66   Haas, "New Urbanism & Beyond," in Haas, 9.

67   Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, "New Interpretive Approaches," in *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, ed. Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 112-113.

68   Howell and Prevenier, "New Interpretive Approaches," in Howell and Prevenier, 117.

point because it demonstrates the only possible perspective of the original strive towards extravagance and of a decisive threat of emulation from lower ranks.

Domestic architecture has been a part of both architectural research as well as cultural historical research. This is not restricted to a purely structural and technical perspective, but also views the house as a symbol and a tool in under-understanding history. "By common understanding, Americans have embraced the house as the most appropriate metaphor for their political and social states."[69] It is not new, then, to use domestic architecture as means in investigating the people, lives, and events of things past. "As buildings are candid statements they have a moral superiority as records over many of those made by historians, and subsequently revered and treasured by other historians."[70] Relying on these arti-artifacts that have been preserved over time, in most cases, is a common method in analyzing a nation's history. The discourse of using architecture as a historical text has been introduced and used, but is not very widespread.

Looking at both the outside and inside of a house is important in capturing a nation's historical development in that it brings historians directly to the people that lived and created it and permits them to enter their most personal and intimate of spaces. "In the absence of ancient customs or structures, the foundational unit of community construction, the house, became the means by which the nation conceptualized its own history."[71] Breaching the boundaries of a community by observing people's living situations is a manner of recon-structing history that other historians have used. The interiors also count for something in this process in that, "[…] the filling in of interior space is an exercise in self-representation."[72] If interiors and exteriors served a representative purpose then these rare glimpses at early American life and values must be exploited. Using the three case studies in Boston is a means of ex-emplifying this exact process and methodically using the metaphor as the medium of investigation.

The arrangement of these different and similar discourses provides the foundation for examining the Otis, Colburn/Prescott, and Gibson houses. The brief inspection of the urbanism of the city of Boston and the symbolic use of domestic architecture and interiors are implemented into the three case studies

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69   Duncan Faherty, *Remodeling the Nation: The Architecture of American Identity, 1776-1858* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007), 2.

70   John Gloag, *The Architectural Interpretation of History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 1.

71   Faherty, *Remodeling the Nation*, 6.

72   Ibid., 34.

and correspond to the general social, cultural, and political climate that was pre-present at each respective time in the United States. The houses provide the evi-evidence of these interactions and permit the events of each of their times and the positions of their owners in society to be read off of their walls. Looking at Boston through the streets that are lined with elite private homes is a new manner of conceptualizing the city and its influence on American architecture and national politics. Boston is ideal for this purpose in that it not only provides the tumultuous political backdrop for the creation of the new nation in the late-eighteenth century, but also "This sureness of purpose, this desire to create a model city, lay at the very heart of Boston's identity as a community."[73]

The houses that were investigated bring with them an idealness that also helped constitute the proper confirmation of these statements and meanings. Although each one has been researched independently, they have not been put together in one study that covers the major architectural instances and symbolisms of the nineteenth century. The Otis house magnifies the architecture of Revolutionary times and aids in bringing to light the conception of Boston, the professionalization of architecture, and the political voice of Federalism. The Colburn/Prescott house symbolizes merchant wealth and ranking and spatial exclusivity prior to the War of 1812. The Gibson house exhibits cluttered refinement that accentuated the Victorian era and brought about an architectural revolution in the years to come, especially after the Centennial Exposition of 1876. These houses followed the urban sprawl of Boston and the alterations within domestic architecture that were based on national mechanisms of change. There are few other houses that exemplify this chronology so clearly and it is the compilation of these three that underscore the theme of ornamenting the "cold roast" throughout the first century of American nationhood.

Sources

The sources that were available on these topics of focus varied and had to be individually gathered, as well. Literature concerning the upper class and Boston proper were among the most numerous sources available. Many authors have given a general account of the upper class in America and have postulated theories concerning their behavior. Literature on Boston considered the urbanism approach and brought geographical, historical, cultural, and political themes to the forefront. Furthermore, attention was paid to the planning and development

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73 Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14.

of the city as an early American center of ideas and influences and some of these sources included the theme of domestic architecture in this process. The second-secondary sources concerning domestic architecture and interior design often had a referential tone to them and usually offered descriptive nuances, but barely touched upon the interpretation of these, which was left open to the observer. Overall, the secondary literature was extensive enough to gain an adequate overview of information concerning each aspect of the cultural analysis.

One difficulty in using secondary sources that pertained to upper-class domestic architecture and interiors was the rapid turnover from Europe to the upper class and the upper to middle class. Defining whether a style can be attributed to American influences at a given time or was still copied from European building is rather ambiguous. "Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, America's elite had copied the homes, furnishings, clothing, and manners of the European aristocracy."[74] An emphasis that should be placed on the domestic architecture and interiors that are portrayed here is that they all were copies of European trends, but added an American touch that made them unique. It is not possible to term any of these an American architectural style, but it also not an exact replica of European houses. The same holds true with regard to middle-class imitations, some of the objects and aspects that distinguished a home as being upper class, and which were advertised as such in the literature, may already have been considered middle class because of the immense rate of emulation and because it was slightly altered. The research done on the houses had to confirm that they were truly upper class in order to accurately attribute the influences to this social stratum. The secondary sources often times do not provide an accurate background on the family and thus, ensuring that they are truly upper class occasionally had to be reduced to mere speculation.

Contemporary sources and research on these different topics does exist, yet the vaguer the topic is the simpler it is to find accurate, modern sources. The secondary sources that pertain more specifically to the topic at hand were increasingly older. The literature that was consulted was also used and recommended by the curators and archivists in Boston and sometimes reach quite far back. The literature regarding Boston's domestic architecture, and more specifically Boston's upper-class domestic architecture, is limited and provides only a general overview. The three houses and the primary sources that they still hold provide the most reliable look at specific examples of this type of

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74   Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, 32.

architecture and deliver the detail to the argument that remains vague in the sec-secondary sources.

The primary sources that were consulted in Boston can be categorized by those concerning the architect, those concerning the house, and those concerning the family. The sources that dealt with the architects Charles Bulfinch, Asher Benjamin, and Edward Clarke Cabot were sometimes manifold and sometimes rather scarce. Bulfinch and Benjamin were among the most well-known architects in Boston and in the United States and their personal and business papers are well maintained. Benjamin and his architectural expertise are especially accessible in that he was an architectural author whose books were widespread and popular. They also went through numerous editions and have therefore persevered to this day. Cabot was the only one of the three that posed some problems even though he was responsible for at least one major monument: the Boston Athenaeum. One of the only manners in which his talent can be interpreted is through his watercolor paintings and the few personal notes that exist regarding his work on the Boston Athenaeum and his architectural partnerships.

Each of the three houses that were under scrutiny is a historical home, meaning that it has been preserved in some way or another. In most cases, these homes were bought by an organization that ensures that its upkeep is continuously maintained. "Das performative Vermögen der Sprache ist es, das Räume herstellt, die mehr sind als bloße Verhaltensumwelten."[75] The houses were used as texts of cultural interpretation that performed and described their own and their surrounding's history. Each home has an archive, which possesses the primary material that has been left from the original owners and sometimes even the architects. Some of these archives are very extensive in their material and have collected these over many years. The Otis house has its library and archives in the basement of the house and these include papers by Harrison Gray Otis and also other architectural material on the house and other historic homes that belong to *Historic New England*, the proprietor of the first Otis house. Additionally, other scholars have done research on the Otis home and a structure report exists, which goes through the entire house and minutely reveals which parts of the house are still in their original state. The Colburn/Prescott house possesses reports compiled by an anonymous author, who was assumed to have been a member of the current owners, *The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, and who prepared these notes after the purchase of the house. Additionally, the Colburn/Prescott

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75   Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns*, 310.

house was built as a twin house and the twin portion remains less altered than the one that is open to visitors. This twin house is privately owned, yet an archi-architectural historian was allowed to look at the home a few years ago in order for the *Dames* to reconstruct what the inside of the Colburn/Prescott house may have originally looked like. These notes were consulted and perused in order to imagine the manner in which the house was spatially arranged.

The Gibson house also has an archive, which is situated on the fourth floor of the house in the Back Bay. The last owner, Charles Hammond Gibson, Jr., envisioned the house to be a Victorian house museum that grants visitors an authentic look at nineteenth-century domestic life in Boston. The interiors and exteriors are thus preserved, for the most part, in the way that they were over one hundred years ago. Gibson also made it a point to document the design and trends within the house by writing inventories of the rooms. Unfortunately, he only got around to finishing two of them, the library and the music room, but these are first hand primary sources of the actual decoration of this house. Additional pieces of information are pictures that survive of #2 Park Street, where Rosamond Warren Gibson lived prior to moving to the Back Bay. These pictures contain some of the objects that Rosamond brought with her to the new house and show the importance of some objects over others in that they were passed down to future generations. These sources were a vital part of acknowledging the worth of the presence of things and styles that managed to ornament two upper-class homes in nineteenth-century Boston.

The archives within the homes also contained information and documentation concerning the owners and families that lived there. *Historic New England* possesses transcripts of Harrison Gray's letters to his wife, Sally Foster Otis, (the original letters are owned by the *Massachusetts Historical Society*) and various business papers of his. In some of the letters that Harrison Gray wrote to his wife, he mentions aspects of the house and things that may have needed repairing. Yet, that is the extent of the architectural and domestic references that he makes, in general, the letters are very intimate personal correspondences between him and his spouse. The unfortunate circumstance of the age of these letters is that the ones that Sally wrote have all apparently been lost over time. Seeing as Harrison Gray was often away on business and it was normal for the woman to be in charge of most domestic affairs, it is not possible to get a glimpse of the on goings at the Otis house. Perhaps Sally's letters contained narratives of days in the life of the Otis house to keep her husband up to date, but these stories will never be recountable. Although the sources that are available allow researchers to reconstitute the house and its interiors, it is only possible to speculate on the life that went on within its walls.

The commissioner and owner of the Colburn house, James Smith Colburn, also did not leave much behind that could be used to get a better picture of his life and times in the house. He did, however, write a memoir, which has a brief descriptive section that alludes to the house at #55 Beacon Street. This source was also useful in that it provided a reminiscence of his work as a merchant and his personal relations, placing him within a specific part of society from the onset. This is the only piece of personal evidence left concerning Colburn, his life, and his home. The later owner, William Hickling Prescott, was more prominent in that he was a well-known historian. The information that remains on him can be found in the anonymous papers written by a member of the *Dames*, his own historical works, and the literature that has been compiled on him. In these, it is stated that he often invited guests and that these were usually prominent members of society, making it possible to place him properly in the upper echelons of Boston's elite.

The Gibson house had the advantage of having an archive that the last owner had already planned. The sources that dealt with the house were written by his hand and are seen as utterly reliable accounts. As for the life of the family that lived here, a written recollection by Rosamond Warren Gibson (Charles Hammond Gibson, Jr.'s mother) alludes to the life that went on at the Park Street and Beacon Street houses. She concentrates more so on the Park Street home and it comes across as though she preferred this house to the dark Victorian row house in the Back Bay, but she does occasionally talk about events that took place at #137 Beacon Street. An interview from the year 1988 describes the later life within the Gibson house, which already trespasses into the twentieth century, but brings to the page some oral memories that Charles, Jr. seemed to have expressed while talking about the way things used to be at the house during his youth in the nineteenth century. *The Gibson Society* also put together a Study Report, which looks into the house and the family in order to organize the museum accordingly and to recount the life that went on there. This report investigates the architecture, interiors, and family across the generations and is an integral part of analyzing and understanding the house in its entirety. These powerful insights give the house and the rooms meaning in that they show the way the family lived and behaved in their new upper-class community. The primary sources, both in their plentitude and scarcity, were useful tools in bringing the three houses to life.