MAKING DYSTOPIA

THE STRANGE RISE AND SURVIVAL OF ARCHITECTURAL BARBARISM

JAMES STEVENS CURL

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JAMES STEVENS CURL
with a
Prolegomenon
by
Timothy Brittain-Catlin

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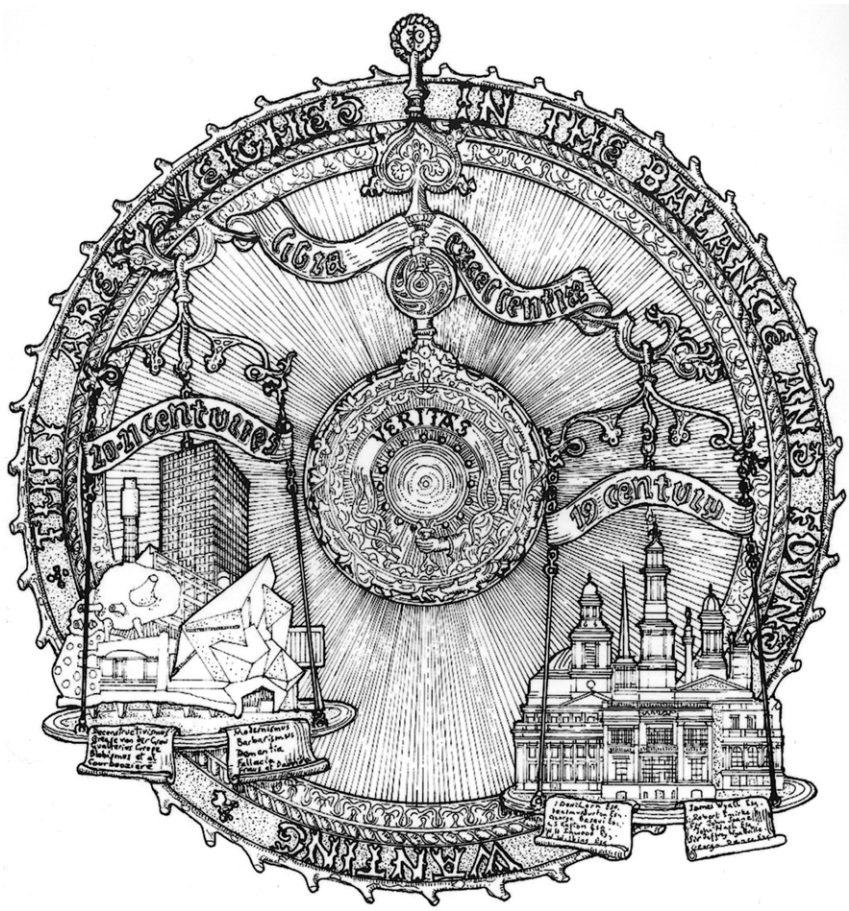
Gratia, Musa, tibi: Nam tu solacia praebes
Tu curae requies, tu medicina venis . . .
PUBLIUS OVIDIUS NASO (43 BC–*c.*AD 17): *Tristia* **iv** x 117–18



Frontispiece *They are Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting: with respectful apologies to A.W.N. Pugin*. An assortment of structures, including an International-Style tower resembling a pile of sandwiches, a tortured piece of Deconstructivism, some Blobism, *pilotis*, a sub-Corbusian block, and other familiar Modernist elements, is weighed against a selection of Classical works of architecture by John Nash, Robert Smirke, and others, and found unworthy

Contents

Prolegomenon

> It is a foolish thing to make a long prologue,
> and to be short in the story itself.
>
> Apocrypha (*Before* ad 70): ii *Maccabees* ii 32

This revealing and well-argued book is about a cultural and environmental Catastrophe, a process by which the accumulated knowledge of expertise in construction and ornament that architects used to pass on from one generation to the next in the West over many centuries was abandoned after the First World War. There had been previous periods of rise and fall in construction standards—many of the decorative applied arts in building had been forgotten in Britain before A.W.N. Pugin and the Puginites revived them in the 1840s—but this Catastrophe was something new: it was the result of a divisive and active campaign to destroy knowledge and a practice-base, perpetrated mainly by people who were not only members of peculiar cults and held extreme (and wildly swinging) political convictions, but who had, for the most part, limited design skills. Walter Gropius, it emerges from the author's researches, is unlikely to have designed singlehandedly any of the works conventionally attributed to him, and Le Corbusier appears to have been associated with Fascist sympathies, but found the collaborationist Vichy *régime* in France uncongenially liberal for his tastes.

However, it cannot be doubted, as the author acknowledges, that experimental architecture after 1918 varied tremendously in quality and content. Some of the best-known Western buildings of that period, such as the *Bauhaus* complex at Dessau (completed 1926) and the *Villa Savoie* at Poissy (1928–31), inspired many as forms of inhabited sculpture (so long as they were well maintained and the weather was good). Furthermore, there were buildings by Miës van der Rohe, as he was known in the 1920s and 1930s, that brought aesthetic gratification to some, whilst at the same time, according to Detlef Mertins's recent study,[1] were intended to represent the ideas

of the philosopher of religion, Romano Guardini, by imposing an external visual 'order' onto the various demands of what were then modern building programmes. However weird and unpleasant Le Corbusier was as a person—and he was evidently both of these—his wildly original sculptural buildings such as the pilgrimage chapel of *Notre-Dame-du-Haut*, on its isolated site at Ronchamp, near Besançon, on the edge of the Jura mountains in France (1950–5), are known to have had, and continue to have, strong effects on people, perhaps in part because of their disruptive effect on their immediate surroundings. Many who grew up in dismal architectural environments felt elevated by their first encounters with Modernist pavilions in gardens, festivals, or on the beach, which instilled a lifelong love of bright, cheery spaces.

But the Catastrophe is not that experimental architecture existed at all: it is that eventually any kind of architecture that deviated from the style of one or other of its most famous and warring protagonists was gradually dismissed by critics and by fashionable people. The results of this were extreme, and absurd, and the examples many. The 'architecture' section of the *Thirties* exhibition at the Hayward Gallery in London (1979) consisted only of a handful of freak Modernist buildings;[2] architectural historians would not be taken seriously if they deviated from a dogmatic Modernist line; young architects were for a period no longer taught the primacy of construction method and the basic organization of form; historical references in buildings were abandoned entirely, for irrelevant reasons; pseudo-scientific processes were introduced all over the place, no more useful than phrenology in its day; a kind of crude simplistic aesthetics was applied to the detailing and shape of huge buildings that demanded much more to make their bulk acceptable; ornament was jettisoned almost completely, apart from an unrelated high-art panel or a sculpture arbitrarily added here and there; and the language used to describe new buildings became declamatory, abusive, moralistic, and above all, unconnected with the experiences of most people who had to use them.

Architects are not good at describing what they are doing; they tend to cling on to what they hear, especially from their potential clients. All creative artists therefore need critics if they want to make a public case for their work, but the puritanical streak in Anglo-Saxon culture is perpetuated by the fact that, generally speaking, the eloquence of cheap literary style is taken more seriously than costly aesthetics. Thus loquacious critics from John Ruskin to Reyner Banham exerted short-term influence apparently

greater than that of the designers they championed. There was a debate some years ago about whether the then Lord Chancellor should have decorated his rooms in the Palace of Westminster with revived Pugin wallpaper at public expense: we all heard from prim commentators about the supposed disgrace of 'wasting public money', but that Pugin was one of the most creative designers Britain has ever seen, which in turn led to a flowering of design and, not least, the employment of many talented craftsmen, was something ignored. The argument often resurfaces when critics who see themselves as 'progressive' or 'left-wing' discuss the future of abandoned country houses; the impression is that they would rather see such buildings burn down than be restored or recreated for other uses, no matter how rich their history, or the fact that they often stand as the only records of the hard-worked people who invested their life-skills in designing, constructing, and decorating them. And this burning down of the house is what the Catastrophe brought about.

The Catastrophe has had a major and long-lasting impact on the way in which architecture is taught: one can still witness its terrible effects at first hand. One phenomenon that never ceases to astonish is when students, not even twenty years old, justify their design for a white-rendered block of a building with long horizontal windows as 'modern' or even 'contemporary' when in fact it would have been familiar or even old-fashioned to their great- or even great-great-grandparents. Far worse is the habit of using affected, poisonous, bullying language at public critiques of student work, which seems to have emerged from banter between tutors at the Architectural Association and, earlier, at Harvard (Marcel Breuer finally walked out on his mentor Walter Gropius after one of these).[3] There may have been occasional humour in some of these early performances, but, as the method filtered down to reach every critique in every architectural school across the Western world, their entertainment value somewhat palled. Thus it came about that, for at least a couple of decades towards the end of the twentieth century, discussion at critiques of students' work focused more on whether the young designer had fallen in line with the mesmeric appeal of their tutors' current fashionable preoccupations—political, social, or whatever they were—than on the construction, or tradition, or even simply the visual appeal of the project in hand.

It was and it remains a mystery to me how this approach—the direct, unadulterated progeny of the Catastrophe, completely unrelated to design, to material, to spirit, to anything positive at all—has a useful rôle to play in

architectural education. The world has changed a lot since then, but this particular mine of bombastic aggression has probably not yet been exhausted. A short film posted to *YouTube* in August 2008 shows one of the world's most celebrated architects humiliatingly laying into a student's work in a way that viewers have described as rude, self-righteous, and narcissistic.[4] Where did this nonsense come from?

This book offers a scholarly and passionate analysis of the whole unfortunate and destructive process, written by a distinguished architectural historian, one of the very few whose authority, accuracy, and incisiveness are beyond question in every subject he addresses.

Timothy Brittain-Catlin
Broadstairs
Kent
Summer 2017

Advance praise for Making Dystopia

'This brilliant text is a timely marvel… *Making Dystopia* is unquestionably a major contribution to the history of architecture and quite possibly the most important publication in Stevens Curl's enormously prodigious *oeuvre*.'

Frank Albo, Adjunct Professor of History, University of Winnipeg

'A milestone in architectural history… this marvellous book suggests that study of the past (denied in Modernist ideology) can liberate the present from what has been a damagingly restrictive straitjacket.'

Nikos A. Salingaros, Professor of Mathematics, University of Texas at San Antonio

'*Making Dystopia*, the most gripping and complete account of how architecture and urban planning were corrupted in the twentieth and twenty-first century leading to a catastrophic deterioration of the built environment, is a brilliant, thoroughly researched, and completely novel book… This book, surely the greatest of the many written by Professor Stevens Curl, should be read by staff and students in all schools of architecture who are still pursuing destructive, irrelevant, outdated paths, as well as by everyone concerned about the erosion of civilisation itself.'

David Watkin, Emeritus Professor of the History of Architecture, University of Cambridge

'This is a coruscating, driven, and passionately committed book which should be read by anyone who believes that a house is more than a machine for living.'

Katharine Wilson, author of *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives: Euphues in Arcadia*

List of Plates

List of Figures

Preface & Acknowledgements

Essence of the Argument; Afterword & Acknowledgements

> The preface is the most important part of the book . . .
> Even reviewers read a preface.
>
> Philip Guedalla (1889–1944): 'Conversation with a Caller'
> in *The Missing Muse: and Other Essays*
> (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1929) viii

> Should you, my LORD,[5] a wretched Picture view;
> Which some unskilful Copying-*Painter* drew,
> Without Design, Intolerably bad,
> Would you not smile, and think the Man was mad?
> Just so a tasteless Structure; where each Part
> Is void of *Order*, *Symmetry*, or *Art*:
> Alike offends, when we the Mimick Place;
> Compare with *Beauty*, *Harmony*, or *Grace*.[6]
>
> Robert Morris (1703–54): *The Art of Architecture, a Poem.*
> *In Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry* (London: R. Dodsley 1742)[7]

Essence of the Argument

This is not a history of Modernism[8] in architectural or urban design. The term presents difficulties of definition, and it is probably easier to think of it as opposed to academicism, historicism, and tradition, embracing that which is self-consciously new or fashionable, with pronounced tendencies towards abstraction. The word was used from the 1920s to suggest the new architecture from which all ornament, historical allusions, and traditional forms had been expunged: promoted by architects such as Miës van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and Walter Gropius, it had 'flat'[9] roofs, plain, smooth, white rendered walls, long horizontal strips of window, some sort of frame construction so that external and internal walls were non-structural, and often depended on factory-made components (*see* **Figures 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2**).

Indeed there would be a 'general consensus' regarding what can be 'readily identified' as Modernist buildings that began to appear shortly after the end of the 1914–18 war,[10] and that, despite denials they were in any 'style', their progeny continued to proliferate well into the 1970s. Stylistically recognizable, often with 'curtain-walled' façades (*see* **Figure 6.4**), such buildings were representative of what became known as the 'Modern Movement' in architecture, more specifically of what was termed 'The International Style',[11] so called because its protagonists insisted it must be applied globally, no matter what were local conditions of climate, skills, industrialization, traditions, culture, or much else, for that matter.

Nor is this study an attack on that Modern Movement in architecture as such. There were certain aspects of Modernism, such as the liberation of rooms from being boxes and experiments in the flowing of one internal space into another (made easier by structural innovations), that were positive, but there was a coercive, dogmatic side to it (especially in the pronouncements of Le Corbusier and his followers) that was unattractive, and that has led to a great deal of bad architecture and disruptive interference with old-established urban fabric. It questions some of the means by which the Modern Movement in architecture and town planning became not only accepted, but virtually compulsory, the only 'appropriate' way of designing buildings and urban structures, according to its devotees, after 1945.[12] It assumes in the reader a smattering of knowledge concerning the subject, otherwise the volume would have to be very much larger than it actually is.

The aims of this book are to attempt to explain, expose, and outline the complex factors[13] that have managed to create so many Dystopias in which, arguably, an 'architecture' devoid of any coherent language or meaning has been foisted on the world by cliques convinced they knew or know all the answers, yet demonstrated or demonstrate an incompetence with buildings that fail as architecture at almost every level and by almost every criterion. It became clear many years ago that all was not well, and that enormous damage had been done to cities, towns, and the countryside, and was continuing, backed by spurious arguments and questionable posturings, including the central tenet of Modernism that tradition was dead (it was Modernism which did its best to kill it, and put enormous numbers of craftsmen out of a job).

Osbert Lancaster's *Pillar to Post: English Architecture without Tears*[14] first appeared in 1938, followed in 1939 by *Homes Sweet Homes*:[15] consisting of cleverly economical drawings, each opposite a page of pithy text. These volumes describe styles with clarity and wit. Together, they comprise what is

probably the best and most succinct textbook on architecture ever published, even though the author, in the Foreword to *Pillar and Post*, entitled 'Order to View', opens with a disclaimer: the 'book is not a text-book'[16] at all. A great satirist, Lancaster knew exactly when something was both true and untrue. He used irony (something clearly beyond the comprehension of Le Corbusier and other Modernists) with devastating effect, at the same time pointing out that everything built is architecture (in contrast to the questionable and dogmatic positions adopted by Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner, John Ruskin, and others). Moreover, Lancaster demystified architecture, and, by so doing, enabled everybody uncowed by the pretensions of aggressive architectural critics to have opinions of their own about the subject. He deplored the establishment of critical 'compounds'[17] and obfuscatory 'specialist' language that excluded normal people from all debate about their surroundings in daily life. He even had the temerity, having worked for a time (from 1934) as an assistant editor at *The Architectural Review*, to refer to the outpourings of certain enthusiasts of the Modern Movement as 'that Bauhaus balls'.[18]

In 1949, Lancaster brought out *Drayneflete Revealed*,[19] in which he showed that of all ideologies which threatened British urban and rural landscapes, the most destructive was that of Corbusianity (ubiquitous worship of the Swiss-French architect, C.-É. Jeanneret-Gris, who from *c.*1920 pretentiously called himself 'Le Corbusier'), as the hearts were torn out of countless towns and cities in the dubious name of 'progress'. People were condemned to an unpleasant existence in badly designed and built high-rise blocks of flats and to rat-runs of dark, smelly, threatening underpasses, leaving what was left of the earth's ruined surface to motor traffic. *Drayneflete* chronicled the historical evolution and final wrecking of an English town from prehistoric times to its terrible demise ('The Drayneflete of Tomorrow')[20] as a Modernist Dystopia dominated by roads and tower blocks on *pilotis*, with only four old buildings ludicrously 'preserved' as 'Cultural Monuments' (one marooned on a traffic roundabout) (**Figure P.1**). The Corbusian device of *piloti* (one of several piers supporting a building above the ground), which elevated the lowest floor to first-floor level, leaving an open area below, was widely adopted, and resulted in countless unpleasant spaces.[21] Drayneflete's remaining fabric was completely obliterated to create an inhumane environment of empty, stupefying, memoryless banality, devoid of beauty or anything uplifting to the spirit: its succinctly observed fate, as recorded by Lancaster in his wonderful book, sums up what happened up to 1949 and was to happen in

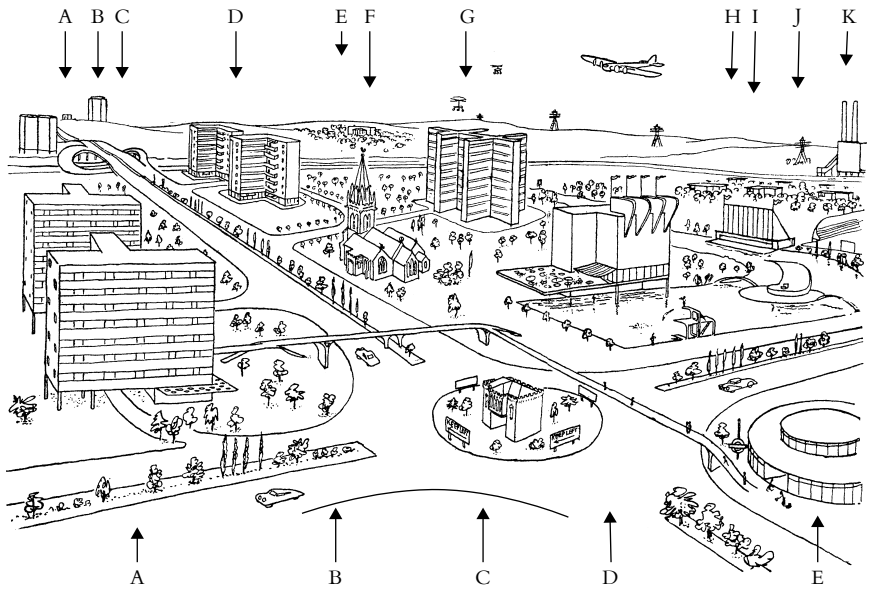


Figure Preface P.1. 'The Drayneflete of Tomorrow'. Osbert Lancaster's vision of an English Town with virtually everything of its old fabric obliterated, apart from: 'Poet's Corner'; the former stately home of the Littlehamptons, now serving as a Lunatic Asylum, set in its Park; the parish church with all traces of its burial-ground obliterated; and the gateway to the former Augustinian Priory marooned on a traffic-island. Nothing resembling a traditional street remains: Le Corbusier had decreed streets should be abolished

Key to Illustration

Top:

A: Cultural Monument scheduled under National Trust ('Poet's Corner')
B: Gasometer
C: Clover-leaf Crossing and Bridge
D: Communal Housing-Block on *pilotis*
E: Lunatic Asylum and Littlehampton Memorial Park
F: Cultural Monument scheduled under National Trust
G: Municipal Offices including Community Centre, Psychiatric Clinic, Crèche, and Helicopter Landing-Strip on the Roof
H: Housing-Estate for Higher-Income Brackets
I: Communal Sports-Centre, Yacht-Club, and Football-Ground
J: Floating Concert-Hall for Audience of 2,500 and full Symphony Orchestra
K: Power-Station

Bottom:

A: Communal Housing-Blocks on *pilotis*
B: High-Level Pedestrian Road Bridge
C: Cultural Monument scheduled under National Trust
D: People's Restaurant, Swimming-Club, Bathing-Pool, Cinema, and Amenities Centre
E: Underground Station

the next three decades, as Modernists enforced 'a monopoly of uglifiers',[22] as Sir Roger Scruton has aptly put it.

As each year passes, so-called 'iconic'[23] erections become more and more bizarre, unsettling, outrageous, incredibly expensive, and wasteful, ignoring established contexts, destroying townscapes, and cutting across old-established geometries and urban grain. If these represent a 'new paradigm', as some have claimed,[24] then an unpleasant future for a Dystopian universe is assured. This is especially true as something resembling gross irresponsibility was manifest in London,[25] where the property bubble was being inflated to obscene dimensions at the expense of social cohesion at the time this study was being written. When cities become dominated by enormously wasteful 'icons' and affordable housing lies beyond the reach of most people, the development of shanty-towns around them is more than likely.

Such models exist elsewhere in the world where Modernists were given free rein. Brasília, Federal Capital of Brasil, designed (1956–7) by the 'left-wing' Modernists Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa,[26] encapsulated many principles laid down by the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in Le Corbusier's Athens Charter:[27] these included demands for 'autonomous sectors' for four major 'functions' of cities, and thus enshrined the notion of rigid zoning in urban planning widely adopted for urban reconstruction after the 1939–45 war with disastrous results. The plans for Brasília were praised to the skies in Modernist architectural circles when they were first revealed, but the place has not worn well.[28] It is completely lacking in human scale. Dominated by the motor-car,[29] it has dated painfully, with a handful of large official 'iconic' buildings as its centre, but around it satellite- and shanty-towns in the outskirts have proliferated. Exacerbation of this trend on a global scale can only lead eventually to social disintegration and ungovernable violence.

The world has already experienced several manifestations of extreme anger against aspects of Western life not unconnected with architecture. The prognosis is not encouraging, as, almost daily, Modernist architects inflict damage on the already weakened fabric of cities that have been subjected to nearly a century of ideological tinkering, and even export their outlandish computer-generated Parametricist[30] fancies to places where their incongruities insult and contribute to the wrecking of what survives of indigenous cultures. Parametricism owes its origins to digital animation techniques. It implies that all elements and aspects of an architectural composition are parametrically malleable, and makes unprecedented use of computational

design tools and methods of fabrication. It has been claimed[31] as the great new 'style' (succeeding Modernism, Post-Modernism, Deconstructivism, and Minimalism). It is supposed to have superior capacities to articulate programmatic complexity, enabling architecture to translate convoluted contemporary life processes in the global Post-Fordist (meaning mass-production, presumably) network society. It is said to offer functional and formal heuristics based on a set of general abstract rules distilled from a very complex ecosystem of sustained *avant-garde* design research.[32]

In the face of such 'clarity' of expression, it is little wonder ordinary human beings hesitate to question the pretensions of the incomprehensible. Obfuscatory language is an effective camouflage for a massive programme to impose a new architectural style on a global scale. Parametricist architects and their disciples seem to be oblivious as to the impact of what they are doing or have done as they bask in the adulation of a handful of critics adept in the fancy jargon of what has become a cult.[33] The assumption by so-called 'star' architects and their acolytes that only they have the right to insist on the excellence of Modernist 'icons' must be challenged: they are wrong. Only those persons who have to live in, use, or endure the sight of what those 'stars' impose on the rest of us have the *exclusive* right to criticize, to weigh in the balance, and decide. Architecture is ubiquitous. It is not a mystery to be guarded and protected by the high-priests of obscure cults: it is everywhere, and the public should be its judges, not a small coterie promoting its own agenda.[34]

A lifetime studying architecture and looking at hundreds of villages, towns, and cities has provided the essence for what lies within this volume. The book attempts to explain how an extraordinary state of affairs occurred to channel the noble art of architecture into stony paths beset with problems over the last century or so. Much of this work, therefore, is based on personal observations made during travels looking (and drawing, because that is the most effective way of *really looking*) at buildings in their contexts in Europe and America; on careful perusals of original texts (as opposed to what commentators have written about those texts); on painfully acquired knowledge of historic fabric (and the terminology associated with it,[35] something that is clearly lacking in contemporary 'education'); and on quiet contemplation (often leading to great regret and sadness).

Several influential *dramatis personae* will appear: many of these took stances that were inconsistent, demonstrably illogical, and frequently just plain wrong. It is not just the theorists and practitioners who created difficulties

for the historian. Apologists for certain almost deified Modernists constructed mythologies and made connections with earlier architects and architecture that are simply untenable once subjected to careful analysis. They fabricated narratives that were swallowed whole by the gullible. I shall attempt, therefore, to point out some of the more glaring errors in widely accepted texts, theories, and dogmas, though space precludes an analysis of every one of them, as the 'literature' is so vast.

Reactions to certain writers, including Jane Jacobs's critique of the damage being done to American cities by Modernism,[36] were examples of the vindictiveness of believers in the cult. A title given to a review by Lewis Mumford,[37] of all people, was unquestionably sexist in tone ('Mother Jacobs' Home Remedies'[38]): this was all the more unpleasant because Mumford had once written perceptively on Utopias,[39] on the need for an indigenous American architecture as an antidote to the puritanical, fanatical, and political extremists of European Modernism,[40] and (despite helping to organize the exhibition *International Style* at the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], New York [1932]) on the dangers of that style, particularly the dogmatic theories of 'Le Corbusier'.

In the same year, however (1962), Mumford was to write an article entitled 'The Case Against Modern Architecture'[41] in which he questioned much, not least a blind belief in mechanical progress as an end in itself. Nevertheless, there was a cacophonous chorus of damnation of someone (especially a mere woman, it would seem) with the temerity to question the professionals, their entrenched beliefs, and (especially) the unholy mess they had managed to make of countless places. Oddly, Mumford's 'Case Against Modern Architecture' came out in April 1962, and his unpleasant attack on Jane Jacobs was published in December of that year: it is difficult to understand what prompted such a thoroughgoing change of mind, and even more difficult to avoid the suspicion that he may have been leant on. There were many other predictable denunciations of Jacobs by Modernists[42] who believed but could not see: enthusiasts may pursue these dreary effusions if so inclined, but an assurance that they were published will have to suffice here.

Another weapon, of course, is to damn by ignoring any criticism, which was almost the fate of David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture*,[43] published by Oxford University Press, until Denys Sutton printed an approving review in *Apollo* (which he edited 1962–86), noting the 'trouncing' meted out to the 'collectivists' who had 'had their way far too long in intellectual circles' thanks to a general and cowardly 'appeasement of the Left'.[44] Thereafter

came a flood of hostile reviews, including a specimen in the *Times Literary Supplement*[45] by one always on the lookout for a fashionable attitude, Reyner Banham, 'willing as usual to go too far'[46] with his unpleasant jibes (including one about the 'kind of vindictiveness of which only Christians seem capable',[47] which was particularly significant given the anti-historical, anti-cultural, and anti-religious nature of much in Modernism). Stephen Bayley drew on an arsenal of barbs, describing the book as an 'addled, sly, knowing, superior, rancorous, smarmy, sneering stinker':[48] and *Building Design* called it 'waspish', 'spiteful', and obsessed with 'reds under the beds'.[49] Question the priests of the cult at your peril, it would seem, but there are times in one's life when one has to put one's head above the protective screen of the crenellations.

Now one of the many reasons for such attacks were Watkin's criticisms of Nikolaus Pevsner who, by that time, had almost been beatified, if not canonized, by received opinion: Pevsner's utterances, having acquired an 'almost Mosaic authority', were eagerly embraced, became ideology, and were repeated, as his biographer, Susie Harries, observed, without any qualification the man himself might have applied to them.[50] Some commentators even referred to Pevsner's 'sacred cow-dom' that had ensured his 'highly debatable views' became 'all too acceptable to influential people'.[51] Pevsner's achievements were immense, not least as the originator of the marvellous *Buildings of England* series and their progeny, the *Buildings of Scotland*, *Wales*, and *Ireland*. He was extremely generous with information to young scholars, including myself at the start of my career, but that does not mean scholars have no right to suggest that some of his work, especially his considerable part in constructing the very questionable 'Grand Narratives' of the Modern Movement, might have been based on error. When some of those Pevsner described as 'pioneers' (of something they themselves detested) denied that they were anything of the sort, he and his followers continued to insist on the opposite view. So it might be sensible to suggest that Pevsner's categorizations were perhaps odd or even flew in the face of facts: his construct should be recognized as part of a deliberately fabricated propaganda exercise.

Arthur Korn (who had worked with Erich Mendelsohn and was a member of Berlin's *avant-garde*, including *Der Ring*) supervised one of my early research projects: a delightful and generous man, a real friend, he, like Pevsner, tended to construct a seamless history linking Modernism with millennia of historical developments, when in fact what had happened was a complete and absolute rupture. So this book will cast doubt on Korn's views too. This

does not constitute an attack, personally, on either Pevsner or Korn at all: what it does mean is that, despite holding both men in high esteem, and being grateful to both of them for many reasons, it is neither dishonourable nor 'spiteful' to suggest that they might, in some respects, have been severely and seriously mistaken, even to the extent of contributing to a great deal of damage.

When marvellous publications[52] of the past demonstrate what beautifully designed, sensitive, and carefully detailed works of real architectural quality were being created in the United Kingdom alone in the years before 1914, a sense of great loss is inevitable, and comparisons with much-lauded productions by today's architects might suggest that something like a massive cultural disruption has occurred. This ought to be cause for concern, yet seems to be merely accepted as part of a general, inevitable, resigned attitude to the incomprehensible and to current fashion. Thus this book is inevitably filled with regret, but it also contains critical examinations of what seem to be absurdities that have been supinely adopted as bases for what is happening in the world of architecture. What is needed now, perhaps more than ever before, is a surgical, thorough, methodical *exposé* of the ideologies of those responsible for an environmental and cultural disaster on a massive scale, and no punches should be pulled when compiling it.

There appears to be a yawning chasm between architectural criticism and the facts of architectural history: in a lifetime reading about architecture and looking at it, I have been amazed, time and time again, to perceive how many authors have proved they are incapable of seeing that which is in front of them, or that they wilfully distort what is visible in that about which they write.[53] Whole generations have been informed that works by distinguished Arts-and-Crafts architects were 'pioneering' designs of the Modern Movement,[54] which is simply untrue, as anyone who really looks clear-sightedly at buildings by C.R. Mackintosh, C.F.A. Voysey, and others would immediately be able to understand. It is a curious problem, but it suggests that those who uncritically accepted such assertions are unable to use their eyes, and can only believe what they are told: indeed, they are not looking at all, but are superimposing the opinions of others, overlayering what they could see with what others wish them to see. In other words, they look with their ears.

I recall reading essays by students, all of which claimed that the Glasgow School of Art contained nothing derived from period styles, something I knew was untrue. When I questioned the students it was clear they had all lifted this uncritically from Pevsner's *Pioneers*,[55] so I asked them each in turn

if they had ever seen the building, or bothered to study pictures of it. One had 'seen' the building, and a few admitted to having glanced at the photograph in Pevsner's book, but none had actually studied it and tested the evidence of what could be viewed in the image against what Pevsner had claimed for the architecture. When I showed them good, comprehensive, clear photographs of the building, picking out details, comparing them with images of *Art-Nouveau* details and canted bay-windows from English vernacular buildings, and then displayed a photograph of Lutyens's house known as *Le Bois des Moutiers*, they were profoundly shaken, but it taught them a salutary lesson: to check statements made against what could actually be seen, and not to take printed opinions by polemicists as truths without testing them. Many thanked me later for what to them at the time was a shocking revelation.

Is this the result of having a word-based culture rather than a visual one; or is it intellectual idleness or mere cowardice in being unable to see facts for what they are? Or is it, perhaps, the result of brainwashing and indoctrination? Architects, curiously more than most, seem to be afflicted with a chronic inability to see and think with clarity: even in the early nineteenth century, certain architects claimed their designs for crenellated houses had been derived from ecclesiastical architecture, yet it is obvious that was not so.[56]

The strange thing about the almost universal embrace of architectural Modernism and Corbusier-inspired town planning is that it occurred at all. This cannot be explained only in terms of a few proselytisers, pedagogues, practitioners, loaded 'histories' that were essentially polemics, well-publicized exemplars, or claims for their 'rationalism' or 'functionalism' (both of which soon turned out to be neither, but were just concerned with appearance, packaging, and the creation of images that *suggested* these). Something more was required to propel the Modern Movement into global acceptance. First of all, in the 1930s it captivated wealthy, fashionable society in the USA through the taste-formers associated with the Museum of Modern Art in New York;[57] secondly, its possibilities were quickly grasped in America by large commercial/financial concerns, such as General Motors, which lobbied both public opinion and politicians to back it;[58] thirdly, it was seen after the 1939–45 war as the antithesis of the sort of grandiose stripped Classicism that had been favoured for public, official architecture by German National Socialism and during the Cold War by the Stalinist Soviet Union, so was promoted by groups working against the Soviet Union;[59] fourthly, its association with *émigrés* from Germany (some of whom had attempted to work

for the National-Socialist *régime*, but that inconvenient fact was suppressed) gave it a kind of kudos, a tenuous connection with a righteousness that was founded on fantasy; fifthly, its dogmatic assertions, 'energised by a heady mix of economic power and quixotic idealism',[60] were not countered intellectually by the traditional architectural profession, which was increasingly sidelined as irrelevant, with '*bourgeois*' 'reactionary' values, and browbeaten into silence; and sixthly, the combination of product-marketing, the manufacture of industrialized building components and systems, and designers who abandoned everything in order to serve the machine-minimalism claimed as 'objective', 'functional', 'rational', and so on, produced environments that enriched those involved in their creation but impoverished those who had to live and work in them.

Architecture itself, once a respected art, was tragically corrupted by the industrialization of the human habitat, serving not society and the betterment of the human condition but the interests of enormous conglomerates and financial/commercial corporations only concerned with ever-greater profits and ever-increasing production. Many key figures of the Modern Movement and their successors today embraced a 'vehement ideological rigidity'[61] and a 'cognitive bias' similar to that occurring in other forms of fundamentalism.[62] A by-product of this is the curious blindness of architects to the many negative and unpleasant effects of their own work: such 'architectural myopia'[63] rejects the views of ordinary people, the public, who wonder why architects, and architectural students, want to create strange, unpleasant, expensive, crude structures, ill-mannered interlopers that damage the environment today. In other words, there is, and has been for some time, a 'remarkable divergence between the way architects see their work and the way non-architects do'.[64]

Some of these matters will be described below, and this book will make a plea for clear-sightedness, for a more humane and pleasant environment, and for a stop to outlandish fashions that only serve advertisers, corporate greed, and 'celebrity culture' (which has nothing in common with real culture of any value).[65] It will also regret the widespread infantilism that seems to be endemic: infantilism was already a tendency present in John Ruskin's writings in the nineteenth century, but is now so widespread it threatens everything that is actually important. When attention-spans become ever-shorter, reading a whole book is too much to expect of many undergraduates, and whole groups feel 'challenged' or 'threatened' by anything they cannot be bothered to study, it becomes clear that the infantilization of society proceeds.[66]

This is a gloomy, even frightening, prospect for the future, but there are some glimmerings of hope that real architecture might once more be revived. Apart from the School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA,[67] there are several organizations devoted to the study and practice of the art and craft of architecture, including the Traditional Architecture Group (TAG) and the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture, & Urbanism (INTBAU), both of which were founded by the English architect, Robert Adam.[68] INTBAU runs a Summer School in Sweden in which Adam and other members of ADAM Architecture (the practice established in Winchester, Hampshire, and London) participate. Adam, too, has been involved with the Council for European Urbanism, with the British Academy of Urbanism, and with the Prince of Wales's Foundation for Building Community. The MArch design-studio, Kingston University, Surrey, teaches the *application* of the Classical language of architecture to contemporary design, making explicit issues of scale, proportion, order, and relief, all neglected in much modern education. The environment and climate-change have not been ignored either.

In the USA, too, many architects have turned away from the aridities of Modernism, yet have seen their work as a branch of Modernism, freed from its stultifying stylistic shackles. R.A.M. Stern, for example, has spoken of architecture having a 'public responsibility': its future, as well as the fabric of Western civilization as a whole, depends on society's ability and willingness to seek precedents in the massive riches of its inheritance rather than ditching that great legacy. He has expressed his belief that the past can 'release us from the tyranny of the present' as well as help to create a future in which scientific and technological innovation will support the enhancement of daily life.[69] To him, architecture is a 'meditation of the present on the past' as well as a 'speculation of the present on the future': 'Modern architecture' in the 1960s was defined as 'buildings your mother and practically everyone else hated', and he had no doubt where the blame for that lay. European Modernists (and their American supporters) had 'combined to rob American architects of the courage to continue their dialogue with the past',[70] yet architecture is 'not a private meditation': it is 'a public art'.[71]

Several students, too, are beginning to show an interest in historical architecture and what it can offer for inspiration and even emulation: those brave enough are finding meaning, metaphor, and much else in works by great architects of the past, although they may have to do so in a clandestine manner, concealing the fact from their 'Modernist' tutors for whom they have

to conform to something in which they do not believe. Some of my own students, realizing the implication of those Modernists who took over the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) from the 1950s onwards in corrupting what architecture should be all about, refused to join that institution after they qualified as architects: some joined the Art Workers' Guild instead, a body that still values aspects of creative activity long ditched by the *apparatchiks* of the Modern Movement.

In January 2017 I met a young man who had spent five years studying architecture in a state of some bewilderment, not finding much intellectual stimulation in the sort of stuff to which he had been subjected by his tutors. Then, through a new tutor who knew something of architectural history and its wider culture, he discovered Hawksmoor, one of the greatest architects England had ever produced after the Middle Ages: this was a revelation, and the student began to devour every book he could find which featured the work of Hawksmoor, discovering the tensions and possibilities of the juxtaposition of masses of masonry, the drama and power of modelling, light, and dark in vigorous design, and design-triggers from Antiquity, the Renaissance, and the mediaeval period that informed an architecture of immense emotional resonance wholly absent in the flabbiness, shallowness, and superfluities of so much 'modern' architecture. The student told me that in two weeks not only had he learned more than in the previous five years when he felt architecture had no real meaning, but now he was galvanized, enthused, and belatedly discovered a whole world of amazing richness, beauty, and possibility.

In Petrarch's celebration of Scipio Africanus,[72] there is a passage relevant to this topic:

> *Poterunt discussis forte tenebris*
> *Ad purum priscumque iubar remeare nepotes*[73]
> (Then perhaps, with the darkness dispelled,
> Our descendants will be able to return to the pure radiance of the past).

Regrettably, that 'pure radiance' was noticeably absent from the Modern Movement in architecture and urban planning: Dystopias it created were not celebrated for illumination other than garish advertisements for trivialities that are not needed, and no references to the past were permitted in their urban deserts. An historical vacuum was the result of the widespread adoption of the Modern Movement. That cannot be filled with what Robert Adam has aptly described as 'glib eclecticism':[74] it requires nothing less than a rebuilding of education with a respect for the past, an immersion in history

and culture, including a religious dimension, and an end to the inglorious separation of 'academic' education from technical and craft teaching (and, indeed, the deplorable compartmentalization of the 'Humanities' and the 'Sciences'). Architecture is far too important to be entrusted to the products of talking-shops: as a public art, it matters hugely, and it cannot succeed unless it connects with the public in a positive way, conveys meanings, arouses resonances, reaches back to the past and forward to the future, and has the appearance of stability. All great architecture turns gravitational thrust to aesthetic advantage, expressed historically in the Orders and in Gothic construction, for example. Architecture only succeeds as architecture as an expression of gravitational control and stability:[75] if it fails in these respects, it induces anxiety. Coventry Patmore understood the importance of this, and had no truck with contemporary critics such as Ruskin and their shallow, fallacious arguments about ornament, morality, and an impoverished, restrictive palette of supposedly 'acceptable' styles.[76]

Deconstructivism and Parametricism, by rejecting all that went before and failing to provide clear values as replacements, can be seen as intentional aggression on human senses, abusing perceptive mechanisms in order to generate unease, dislocation, and discomfort. But that attack, that aggression, began a century ago, gaining impetus after 1945 (backed largely by American money and political clout, and catalysed by 'Grand Narrative' polemics masquerading as history):[77] it managed almost complete victory some thirty years later, yet its protagonists were blind to the ravages of what they had done.[78] Subsequent branches of Modernism have made a Dystopia even more alien and unhumane: it is time for a complete rethink.

Afterword & Acknowledgements

Any author owes much to earlier writers: the sources to which this study is indebted are many, but only those which have been major influences are given within. All my life I have read voraciously, and days without books and journals (more and more usual for most people these days) would be unbearable to me. Matter, absorbed over a lifetime from books, journals, and conversations, has imperceptibly become unconsciously part of my own intellectual make-up, and its origins have simply been forgotten with the passing of time, so publications cited represent only a fraction of what has prompted the contents of this volume. Obligations to acknowledge such

long-assimilated knowledge or opinions are the hardest to make, for that reason, because when one has come to believe they are one's own, the memories of original sources have entirely faded. The many authors of works read by me over the last seventy years or so are therefore thanked for enriching, disturbing, or irritating: whatever my reactions, they all stimulated thought, and that is what counts. The notes and bibliography acknowledge material by others used in this study, and also include works that have some indirect bearing on the subjects discussed: they could have been much more extensive, and no doubt will be criticized for not incorporating this or that volume or paper favoured by pundits. Nevertheless, in my judgement, everything included is there for a reason, not a mere whim.

Dates of individuals will not appear in the texts. A decision was made with the publishers not to include them there, because the flow can be interrupted if a page is littered with dates, so the years of birth and death (if known) are given in the *index only*: the information is there if required by the reader.

Many years of travel, study, and looking with unclouded eyes rather than ears have contributed to the making of this book. Thanks are recorded to the British Council, which arranged for two major study visits (1986–7) to the former *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (DDR), the Ministry of Culture of which facilitated delvings in numerous places, especially Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, and Dresden, thus providing a fairly comprehensive understanding of the convoluted history of Modernism, not least that connected with the *Bauhaus* and the shifting sands of politics: in my DDR journeyings, benefit was derived from the assistance of Eva Eissmann in cutting through tedious bureaucratic obstructions. Later, in a reunited Germany, Andreas Förderer arranged a memorable visit with Jan Snoek to the *Mathildenhöhe*, Darmstadt,[79] a real eye-opener; Georg Friedrich Kempter kindly discussed the Column in its various manifestations, meanings, and uses;[80] and David Lehrman generously provided information on Poznań.

Gratitude is due to several persons who helped to make this book possible: first of all, my father, the late George Stevens Curl, who refused facile arguments, insisted on testing attitudes, and had a fine eye (and well-tuned ear); secondly, the late A.H. Buck, who insisted on clarity of expression and avoidance of obfuscation; thirdly, Judith Wilson and Matthew Cotton of Oxford University Press, who saw the point, and without whose backing nothing would have been written at all. Unfortunately, Matthew Cotton fell seriously ill when the book was being written, so his duties were assumed

by Luciana O'Flaherty, assisted by Martha Cunneen: from the summer of 2017 Matthew Cotton, Martha Cunneen, Hannah Newport-Watson, and Gemma Wilkins (later Alec Swann) took over, and Paul Dines dealt with the onerous task of copy-editing, so their efforts helped to steer the work through the choppy processes leading to publication. Kim Behrens and Kate Shepherd efficiently managed publicity, Dorothy McCarthy read the proofs with me, and Auriol Griffith-Jones prepared the splendid Index with her customary expertise. Finally, my wife, Dorota Iwaniec, with rare grace and patience, put up with the inconveniences, tedium, and distractions inevitable during the book's gestation, construction, and completion: she helped in a great many ways (not least tracking down useful material) to ease it to the finish, for which she has my humble thanks.

Among many others who helped in different ways were Frank Albo, whose infectious enthusiasm and encouragement spurred me to proceed with what turned out to be a huge task; Maureen Alden, who, with great generosity of spirit, made helpful suggestions for improvements to the text, and heroically corrected several clangers; the late Stephen Dykes Bower, who provided insights into the repugnant tactics of Modernist bullies; Timothy Brittain-Catlin, who courageously allowed quotations from his publications, shared some thoughts with me, and very kindly wrote the *Prolegomenon*; Madeleine Compagnon of the Monacelli Press, who organized permission to quote from the work of R.A.M. Stern; Carol Conlin, Gregory Dunstan, and their colleagues in Armagh Public Library for their unfailing kindness and courtesy; Inge Drew, who corrected my clumsy translations from her native language; Lucas Elkin, formerly of the University of Cambridge Library, who managed to dig out some obscure stuff with great speed, humour, and efficiency; Susan Halpert, Reference Librarian, Houghton Library, Harvard University, for invaluable help with some unpleasant correspondence connected with Mendelsohn and Gropius; Clare Hastings, for permission to use an illustration by Osbert Lancaster; Simon Jenkins, who permitted the use of material from his perceptive writings; Ian Johnson, whose friendship and backing always raised morale; the late Arthur Korn, whose support greatly helped a young man, and with whom lively arguments sparked the heretical thought that Korn's 'leftist-Modernist' orthodoxy might be mistaken; the late Arthur Ling, whose trenchant views expressed in kindly and timely terms stimulated early musings on matters mentioned in this book; Nicholas Llewellyn, with help regarding reproduction of a drawing by Osbert Lancaster; Lutz Luithlen,

who made useful comments; Scott McMaster, who came to the rescue when IT mysteries or infections had to be unravelled or cured; Malcolm Millais, who supplied some interesting technical material based on his original studies of the *Unité d'Habitation* at Marseilles; Ulrike Möhlenbeck, *Leiterin des Historischen Archivs*, *Akademie der Künste*, Berlin, who helped with material relating to what was the Prussian Academy of Arts; Tanya O'Sullivan, who assisted with bibliographical matters and illustrations; the writings of the late Coventry Patmore,[81] which revealed many basic architectural truths that have been forgotten, especially in the Deconstructivist and Parametricist miasmas; the late Nikolaus Pevsner, who generously provided leads concerning several Victorian architects, especially Henry Roberts; the late Georges-Henri Pingusson, who shared insights concerning the 1930s and after; Tanja Poppelreuter, who kindly sent the author her perceptive paper on Miës van der Rohe's concept of the 'dweller', 1926–30; the staff of the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, who managed to get material through inter-library loans with amazing speed and absence of tedious bureaucracy; Nikos Salingaros, who sent some very useful material and was kindness itself in his copious generosity with criticisms, ideas, references, and suggestions; Nina Schönig and Erika Babatz of the *Bauhaus-Archiv/Museum für Gestaltung*, Berlin; Megan Schwenke, Senior Archivist/Records Manager, Harvard Art Museums, for help with documents; the late Albert Speer, who suggested looking at the works of certain architects active in the 1930s; the late Gavin Stamp, for liberally sharing information and warm friendship over many years, and who provided encouragement for the project; Anthony Symondson, SJ, for discussing the works of Comper and Dykes Bower with me over a long and agreeable luncheon at his Club; Peter Walker, for exploring with me useful ideas concerning the way forward for architectural education; David Watkin, for invaluable support; Nigel Wilkins, Archive Services Officers, Historic England, for help with illustrations; and Nicola Willmot-Noller for her insights, taste, expertise, and speed in assisting with the design of the wrapper. I am also extremely grateful to Geoff Brandwood, Lawrence Matheson, the late Gavin Stamp, and Mark Watson for their great kindness in supplying images (some taken especially for this book, at extremely short notice) to replace those of Historic England's photographs which had become financially out of reach; Jason Canham, Simon Edwards, Tricia Lawton, Richard Reed, and Cathy Wilson of the RIBA Library and Information Centre, London, for assistance in checking journal references (and their patience in so doing); Hal and Gill Wilson, who enthusiastically endorsed the project,

read the first drafts, offered constructive criticism, and encouraged me to get on with the work, despite exhaustion and self-doubt; Katharine Wilson, for allotting a considerable amount of time to propose perspicacious and extremely helpful tweaks of the text; Vicky Wilson, Assistant Curator, RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, London; and, last, but not least, Susan Wilson, who loyally, in friendship, in 2013 argued (mindful of the problems inherent in what is a convoluted subject) that I should propose the topic to Oxford University Press (with which publisher we had worked for several years to produce our *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* [2015 & 2016]), as she recognized I had long been deeply concerned about the future of architecture and urban design, and needed to get many of my thoughts and views on the matter coherently down on paper and out of my system, especially in relation to reversing the general attitude in architectural circles that was anti-history. Learning from historical precedents has always been the means to successful development across the arts until that was not only discouraged but actively forbidden by doctrinaire Modernist theorists and teachers.

As well as those mentioned above, other friends and colleagues, far too many to be individually named, made invaluable contributions; their assistance, unstintingly given, is herewith recorded with warm appreciation.

James Stevens Curl
Berlin, Broadfans, Cambridge,
Chicago, Darmstadt, Dublin,
Glasgow, Holywood, London,
New York, Oxford, Paris, Rutland,
Weimar, Winchester, and Wrocław
1970–2017

I

Origins of a Catastrophe

Introduction: A Few Definitions; The Modern Movement; A Strange Aberration; Pugin, the Ruskin Problem, Perils of Uncritical Acceptance, & Some Perceptive Critics; Hermann Muthesius; Harry Kessler, van de Velde, & Weimar; The Deutscher Werkbund; *The* Werkbund *Exhibition, Cologne, 1914; Epilogue*

> *An der heutigen, mit verkrüppeltem Kunstorgan behafteten Gesellschaft ist vielleicht nichts bezeichnender, als die vollkommene Unfähigkeit, irgend ein Verhältnis zur Architektur zu gewinnen. Malerei und Bildhauerei interessieren ja wenigstens durch die Anekdote, die Architektur bleibt aber ganz unverständlich* (Nothing is more characteristic of modern society's atrophied appreciation of the arts than its complete inability to form any kind of relationship with architecture. Painting and sculpture may appeal through their anecdotal content, but architecture remains completely unintelligible).
>
> Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927): *Das Englische Haus: Entwicklung, Bedingungen Anlage, Aufbau, Einrichtung und Innenraum* **i** (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth 1908–11) 7

> *Modernismus* is an hysterical state, the climax of a succession of false starts. It began on the Continent before the War.[1] In France and Germany, the break-up of tradition and the loss of all standards in the Arts went very much further and at the same time there was a rapid advance in applied science resulting in a tendency to mechanize everything. Modernists translated the Arts into terms of mechanical science yet they should have concentrated on finding the right balance between the two. However, with the 'recklessness of ignorance' they threw everything overboard . . .
>
> Sir Reginald Theodore Blomfield (1856–1942): *Modernismus* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd 1934) 171

Introduction: A Few Definitions

It is best, at the beginning, to clarify a few terms used in this book. A place, state, or condition, ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions has been described as *Utopia* (from the Greek *οὐ* [= not] + *τόπος*

[= a place]), once imagined by Thomas More as an island that enjoyed a perfect social, legal, and political system,[2] though some have interpreted his work as a satire on Tudor government. More, or his friend, Peter (Pieter) Giles (Gilles *or* Gillis), of Antwerp, printer, Humanist, and city official, used the word *Eutopia* (from the Greek εὖ [= good or well] and τόπος [= a place]) to signify a region of ideal happiness or good order: in other words, a positive Utopia.

Of course there were earlier versions of ideal societies, including *The Republic* of Plato. The concept of a city suggests a reality which is both ideal and empirical. Throughout history the city has been the centre of civilization, set apart from the barbarous, hostile countryside, and the Ideal City may be viewed in terms of *Revelation*[3] as the City of God, a regular, symmetrical creation that may have its roots in the human subconscious. The symbolic aspects of designs for ideal cities cannot be overstressed, and emphasize the desire for wholeness, completeness, and unity expressed in the shapes and plans. Such plans have affinities with the designs for labyrinths, such as that in the centre of Chartres Cathedral, France, representing a journey, a ritual pilgrimage, an allegory of life's journey, with its trials, tribulations, and false turnings, yet a goal at the very centre (**Figures 1.1*a* & *b***).[4]

The notion of the Ideal City influenced many designs for geometrical symmetrical plans for settlements during the Renaissance period: all of these

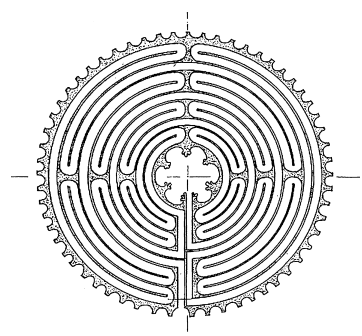


Figure 1.1*a*. Labyrinth of inlays of blue and white stones in the centre of the nave of Chartres cathedral, measuring some 13 metres (43 feet) in diameter. The way to the central point (called the *Paradise* or *Jerusalem*) was 230 metres (775 feet) long, representing a journey, a ritual pilgrimage, progress through life itself, with all its false turnings

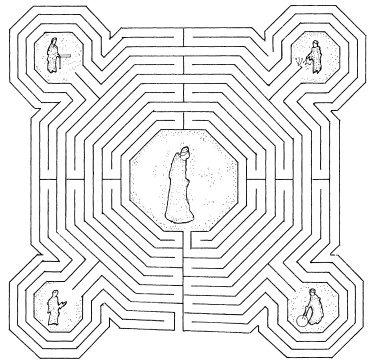


Figure 1.1*b*. Labyrinth formerly in Rheims cathedral, from a sixteenth-century representation (it was destroyed in the eighteenth century). Four master-masons were shown with compasses, square, etc., and the archbishop was depicted in the centre

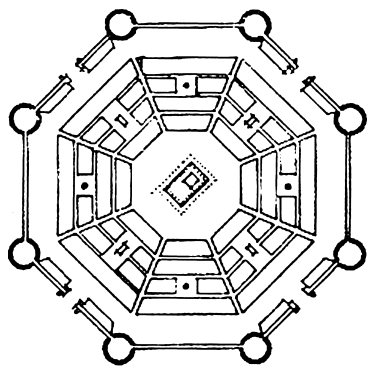


Figure 1.2. Ideal-City plan created during the Renaissance based on ideas in Vitruvius

were variants on patterns established during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus by Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio) (**Figure 1.2**), who, in turn, may have derived his typology from more ancient sources, now lost. Renaissance architects of the *città ideale* froze elements into formal patterns on which Man imposed his ideals and heroic dimensions (**Figure 1.3**),[5] often with a central structure (e.g. a fortified building or a church) as an expression of the social order. Such perfect geometrical plans also symbolized the yearning for Utopia, the perfect State, and even the City of God, the *New Jerusalem*, and include works by Antonio di Pietro Averlino (known as *Il Filarete* [from the Greek φιλάρετος = lover of excellence]) (**Figure 1.4*a***),

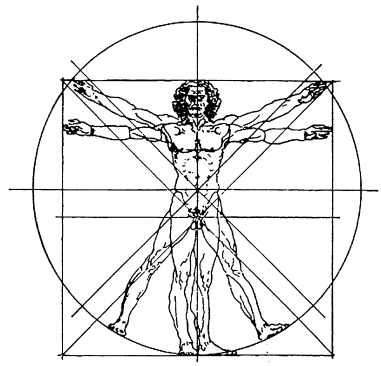


Figure 1.3. Vitruvian Man imposing his own dimensions upon the elemental forms (the square and the circle) of the Ideal City

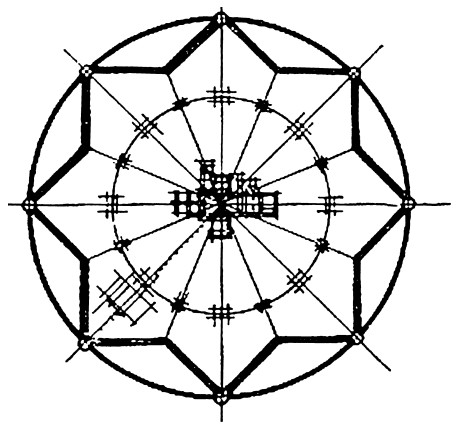
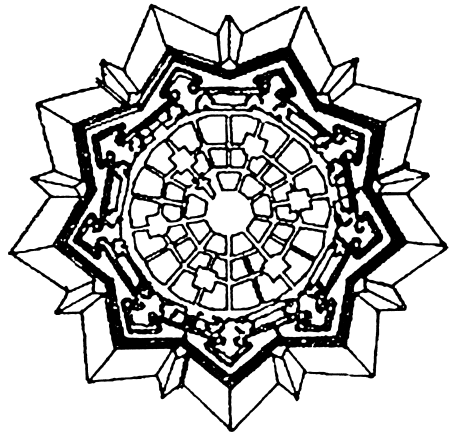
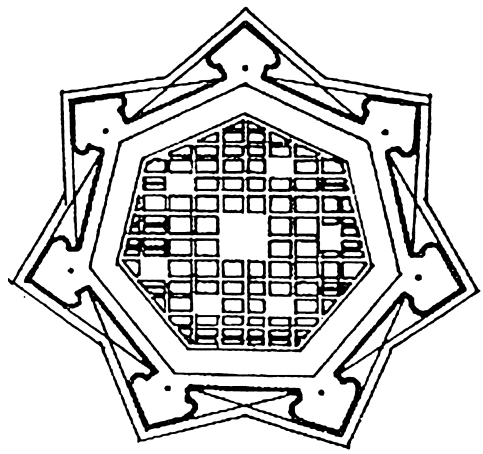


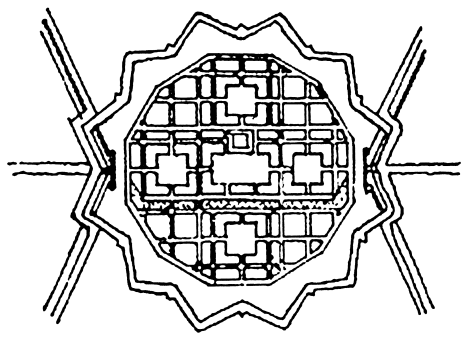
Figure 1.4*a*. Sforzinda, by Filarete (*c.*1457–64)

Pietro Cataneo, Albrecht Dürer, Bonaiuto Lorini, Francesco (Maurizio) di Giorgio Martini, Jacques Perret, Giulio Savorgnano, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Heinrich Schickhardt, and others (**Figures 1.4*b–c***).[6]

Figure 1.4*b* (*facing page*). Renaissance Ideal-City plans with massive fortifications: (*top*) proposal by Bonaiuto Lorini (*c.*1590s) showing a central octagonal space with radiating streets and six squares in the centres of densely packed urban fabric; (*centre*) design by Pietro Cataneo (published 1554) for a heptagonal arrangement of fortifications within which is a grid pattern of streets and blocks, a large central square, and other squares disposed within the grid; and (*bottom*) Vincenzo Scamozzi's version (published 1615) of a grid with one central rectangular space, four squares, and a grid pattern set within a dodecagon held within a geometrically arranged set of bastions







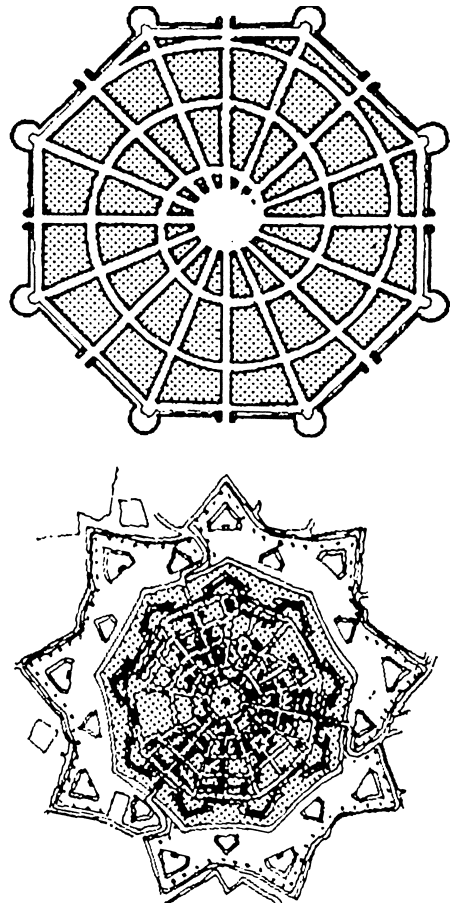


Figure 1.4*c*. (*top*) Ideal-City plan by Giorgio Martini with spiral street-pattern leading to central circular open space; (*bottom*) plan of the unfinished town of Palmanova, the fortress-town of Venice (1593–8), designed by Giulio Savorgnano, Lorini, and Scamozzi

It follows that *Dystopia* (the opposite of *Utopia*) is a place or condition in which everything is as bad as possible. Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*[7] and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*[8] are about *Dystopias*. 'They describe not a world we should like to live in, but one we must be sure to avoid':[9] however, as the quality of the environment, notably in terms of architecture, infrastructure, and urban devastation, deteriorates, to a very great extent because of matters discussed in this book, 'our real future is more likely to be dystopian',[10] a grim prospect indeed.[11]

And what do we mean by 'Modern Architecture', 'Modernism', 'Modernist', the 'Modern Movement'? 'Modern' has meant whatever one might want it to mean.[12] If we look at such sumptuous volumes as the Dutch *Moderne Architectuur* (1927)[13] most of the exemplars therein would hardly be described as 'modern' today. Otto Wagner's *Moderne Architektur*[14] is *fin-de-siècle* Austro-Hungary steeped in Baroque, Neo-Classicism, *Jugendstil*, and it contains nothing of what might be perceived as 'modern' now (even though Wagner [who conveniently died in 1918, a few months before the collapse of the Empire he had served so well] was reinvented by the compilers of the hitherto widely accepted Modernist cult-narrative as a proto-Modernist). Werner Hegemann's *Façades of Buildings* (1929) illustrates over 500 buildings, only a fraction of which could be regarded as 'modern', and demonstrates a refreshingly undogmatic stylistic approach to early twentieth-century architecture.[15] In 1922, Hegemann had collaborated with Elbert Peets on *The American Vitruvius*, one of the finest twentieth-century publications dealing with urban design and architecture, and although skyscrapers and a good medley of modern buildings are included, their selection is eclectic, giving a full flavour of the vast range of stylistic choice available in the 1920s before the authoritarian zealots of International Modernism dictated their architectural agenda.[16]

Confusingly, the word *Moderne* refers also to the Art-Deco style. *Modernismo* is Spanish *Art Nouveau*, also called *Estilo Modernista*, and mostly associated with Catalonia, where it was called *Modernisme*, connected with an assertion of regional (even nationalistic) identity: yet its architectural expression lay in the incorporation of eclectic elements derived from historic styles (notably Moorish and Gothic), in the exploitation of materials (especially brick and tile) to express structure as well as to embellish every visible part of the fabric, and exuberant use of enrichment, applied or integral to the structure. Its most celebrated protagonists were Domènech i Montaner, Gaudí i Cornet, and Puig i Cadafalch, none of whom, by any torturing of facts, could ever be regarded as a Modernist, 'pioneer' or otherwise.[17] The '*Modern Style*' was a term also applied to *Art Nouveau*, called *Nieuwe Kunst* in The Netherlands, *Jugendstil* (Youth Style) in German-speaking countries (though in parts of German-speaking Europe, notably Austria-Hungary, it was identified as *Sezessionstil* because it was associated with those artists who seceded from traditional, conservative academies to show their works), and *Stile Liberty* or *Stile Floreale* in Italy.

The style conveniently labelled *Art Nouveau* was abhorred by converts to the Modern Movement, who clung to deliberately unnatural abstractions.

It had its roots in the late Gothic Revival: the flowing forms that were such a feature of the style were also found in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Auricular and Rococo ornament.[18] Viollet-le-Duc's *Entretiens* (1858–72) disseminated images of free-flowing curved forms throughout Europe and America, and there are many instances in the Gothic Revival where *Art-Nouveau* motifs[19] occur much earlier than suggested by many commentators. The Gothic Revival, however, was the main source for *Art Nouveau*, albeit with much attenuated emphasis.

None of this could ever be regarded as having any connection with the so-called 'Modern Movement', nor did those who promoted that 'Modern Movement' approve of *Art Nouveau*. Even Hermann Muthesius, in *Das englische Haus*, made overt his antipathy to what some have described as a '*movement, not a style*',[20] despite the fact that there was a time when '*Modern Style*' referred specifically to *Art Nouveau*.

The Modern Movement

A short explanation of the essence of Modernism in architecture was included in the Preface. The term 'Modern Architecture' may refer to all buildings of the modern period, but more often it signals a narrow stylistic/ideological approach, usually associated with International Modernism and with a handful of architects and their disciples approved of by its theorists, apologists, and protagonists.[21]

'Modernist' can also suggest an architectural style (1920s/30s) incorporating decorative devices that owed not a little to Art-Deco, Aztec, and Ancient-Egyptian styles, prompted by the discovery (1922) of the tomb of King Tutankhamun and by the Paris *Exposition Internationale des Arts-Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* (1924–5). Among commoner motifs were chevrons, canted and corbelled pseudo-arches, medallions, wave-scrolls, flutings, mouldings stepped over surfaces, and strong geometrical patterns. Colours were vivid, influenced by Ancient-Egyptian artefacts such as those associated with Tutankhamun, so blacks, vermilions, greens, yellows, blues, and lots of gilt and chrome were *de rigueur*, often in enamels and even glazed openings.[22] 'Modernistic' buildings (as they are often called) also incorporated streamlining and curved walls: a good example of Modernistic architecture (**Plate 1.1**) is the former Hoover Building, Western Avenue, London (1931–8), by Wallis, Gilbert, & Partners (Nikolaus Pevsner hated it, primly

Plate 1.1. Egyptianizing, Art-Deco, Modernistic former Hoover factory, Western Avenue, London (1931–8), by Wallis, Gilbert, & Partners: the long front, with battered sides, is a version of an Egyptian temple-front, whilst *loculi*-like openings are recalled in the windows of the towers (which also sport tall windows with heads composed of the chamfered or canted pseudo-arch)

dubbing it 'offensive' and a 'modernistic atrocity' because it did not fit neatly into his *Bauhaus*-slanted, Gropius-worshipping narrative).[23] 'Modernist' also can mean a person subscribing to the doctrines and principles of the 'Modern Movement'.[24]

The term 'Modern Movement' is used to encompass disparate twentieth-century architectural tendencies (also called 'Modernism')[25] that sought to sunder all stylistic/historic links with the past, despising context, and demanding replacement of existing buildings so that there could be no comparisons between the new and the old. There was much debate in the nineteenth century about how a *style* suitable for the times could be found. Attempts to achieve this involved eclecticism and mingling to produce so-called 'free' or 'mixed' styles, the optimistic idea being that something fresh might emerge from the well-spiced *mélange*: others claimed that 'function', 'honest' expression of structure and materials, and a 'rational' approach to design problems based on first principles freed from constraints of style were sufficient to point the way forward to a 'New Architecture'.[26]

Early twentieth-century movements associated with totalitarianism (such as Futurism and Constructivism) sought answers in machinery, technology, and the expression of industrialized power, while the search for a 'machine aesthetic' became at times an end in itself.[27] To some (notably Le Corbusier), grain-silos, ocean-going liners of the *Titanic* vintage, motor-cars, and aeroplanes were paradigms of a desirable new aesthetic (***see*** **Figures 5.3, 6.1–2**),[28] but others held that all art, all aesthetics, and all refinement were *bourgeois* affectations and therefore should be avoided. Aims of Modernism were radical, concerned with the suppression of all ornament and historical allusions, counterbalanced by the search for so-called *Sachlichkeit* (variously translated as functionalism, impartiality, objectivity, pertinence, practicality, realism, reality, relevance) and the wholesale adoption of industrialized methods of construction.

Some Modernist groups (e.g., those associated with the Dutch *De Stijl*) advocated abstractions and purity of expression, and there were various different emphases within what was never a unified movement; but virtually all were agreed on the need for 'rational' responses to contemporary requirements using modern materials, mass-produced building components, and experimental, industrial methods of building (which brought in their wake many problems, including spectacular *functional* failures). While idealistic iconoclasm, allied with 'leftist' political attitudes, was endemic, the more extreme protagonists advocated violence: slogan-making and rabid polemics all too often suppressed all pretensions to 'rational' argument. 'Functionalism'[29] was supposed to be common ground, but even that term was subjected to objections in the search for an architecture freed from tiresome constraints, not only from the past and aesthetics, but from use as well. Some advocated that the purest architecture was that which remained on paper, or, even better, in the mind, uncorrupted by any processes involving getting it down in drawn form or being built, let alone used by imperfect, untidy human beings.

The so-called 'pioneer'[30] phase of the Modern Movement has been deliberately (but arguably erroneously [see Chapter II, *passim*]) identified with the British Arts-and-Crafts Movement, with *Art Nouveau*, and with other themes, personalities (notably C.F.A. Voysey and C.R. Mackintosh, neither of whom, despite the efforts of various writers, can be regarded by the clear-sighted as 'pioneer' Modernists), and supposed precedents. The Movement itself seems to have originated around the time of the 1914–18 war, and especially in the aftermath of that catastrophe. Its protagonists

shared a concern of many nineteenth-century architects in that they sought an 'appropriate' contemporary mode of design. But what made it different from earlier stylistic movements was its absolutist nature not unconnected with 'left-wing' political stances. There had been tyrannical attitudes to Taste in English Palladianism, and the dogmatic 'moral' imperatives in the writings of A.W.N. Pugin and John Ruskin associated with religion certainly had unpleasant undercurrents. But the violently expressed coercion, aggression, and intolerance that permeated Modernist sloganizing were more than sinister, and were something new.

Secondly, Modernism's apologists created a 'Grand Narrative' which attempted to connect the extraordinarily fecund artistic movements and creative personalities (dubbed 'pioneers' by those apologists) of *c.* 1880–1914 with what happened after 1918, but close and clear-sighted examination of that narrative exposes its obvious weaknesses. Through exhibitions, manifestos, publications, and exemplars, Modernist proselytizing succeeded in establishing Modern Movement roots in most Western countries, with the major aim, assumed to be a political necessity, of destroying the boundaries between aesthetics, technologies, and society. Architecture became a means by which, allegedly, social aims (*or* engineering) could be achieved.[31] Supposedly influenced by the writings of Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, William Morris, and John Ruskin, among others, many accepted that the proletariat had been brutalized by mechanization and division of labour, leading to psychological impoverishment: so the alienated masses were seen as the victims of capitalism, and, ultimately, as machine-gun and high-explosives fodder for the slaughterhouse of 1914–18. Theorists noted further that since design was an essential element in the production of commodities, and therefore with wealth-creation, it was capable of changing the conditions of the proletariat, and so, the argument went, alienation could be reversed.[32]

Malign seeds of 'moral' confusion in architecture may be detected in Pugin's urgings[33] about architectural design. Ruskin, too, followed with dogmatic assertions regarding acceptable styles and 'morality', and these curious arguments formed the kernel of beliefs among Modern-Movement architects, although in that kernel there were no longer any religious or historical connotations. Faith in the possibilities of modes of building, freed from human imperfections, that grew logically as a result of some irrefutable, inevitable process, evolved into a quasi-religious belief in 'functionalism' and 'truth' in respect of materials. Yet what resulted was all about appearance and image and nothing about 'truth' at all. 'Truth', a *moral* value, became a supposed

aesthetic value, not least to protagonists of the Modern Movement. The search for 'truth' went even further, rejecting decoration: and that meant discarding mouldings as well, even though those could help a building to weather naturally and with grace by throwing water off plain vertical walls below.

But we must now return to the origins of all this in the years before the 1914–18 war.

A Strange Aberration

If one looks at old photographs of streets in the British Isles taken just before the catastrophe of 1914, it is apparent that the architecture of the buildings lining those streets consists of series of predominantly *vertical* elements (**Plate 1.2*a***). Pictures of the same streets (if those streets have survived) taken from the 1950s onwards show alien intruders with aggressive *horizontal* bands of windows, ground-floor insertions utterly unrelated in any way to what happens above, failure to respond to roof-pitches, and a lamentable demonstration of what can be described as not only architectural

Plate 1.2*a*. High Street, Belfast, *c.* 1910 (the tramways were electrified in 1905), looking towards the Clock-Tower (1865–9) commemorating Albert, Prince Consort, designed by W.J. Barre. The third building from the left topped by urns (1888–9) is No. 16, called Washington House, probably designed by W.J. Gilliland. Each element in the street is characterized by a series of vertical elements

bad manners, but as an assault on the essence of architectural aesthetics (**Plate 1.2*b***). The deliberate disruption of established geometries was a direct result of the Modern Movement, and especially derives from designs by Maria Ludwig Michael Miës van der Rohe, Erich Mendelsohn, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (*known as* 'Le Corbusier' from the early 1920s), and their legions of imitators. Yet this is not a contrast of aesthetics, but a fundamental clash with physiology: human beings evolved to accommodate forms responding to gravity, not to predominantly horizontal ones.[34] Gravitation and its counteraction[35] once informed all legitimate structural design to create an imagery of perceptible stability, 'the secret of beauty in architecture',[36] and Coventry Patmore, drawing on Kugler,[37] grasped both the essence of the *aesthetic development* of the principles of trabeation

Plate 1.2*b*. High Street, Belfast, 2016. Washington House is on the left, minus its urns and with its ground floor wrecked. Beyond it is a work of 1957–9 in the Festival-of-Britain manner, by Young & Mackenzie, then an uninspired block in the Neo-Georgian style (1955) by the same architects; but the aggressive *horizontals* of River House (Nos. 48–60) demonstrate the damage the Modern Movement could do to grain and character, typical of the way in which established geometries were destroyed by Modernist interventions that paid no heed whatsoever to context. In 2017–18 River House was re-clad, eliminating the horizontals, but nothing could be done about its bulk

(essentially, beams supported on columns or piers) in ancient Greek architecture and that of what the Germans call *emporstreben* (rise *or* tower *or* soar up) in Gothic architecture, with the 'transcendent symbolic potential' of the pointed arch.[38] Patmore also pointed out that architectural ornament, as in Gothic, was not *decorative*, but *expressive of structure*, a response to the laws of gravity, and therefore of physics, a view contrary to that of Ruskin, and completely incomprehensible to devotees of the Modern Movement.

It seems that, despite expensive so-called 'architectural education'[39] spanning several years of 'study', many, perhaps most, architects no longer understand the street (because they were told to ignore it in the writings of 'Le Corbusier', and obediently did so).[40] It would appear that conventionally trained Modernist architects are no longer capable of designing an aesthetically agreeable street, let alone intervene without making matters worse. The pleasures of walking down an old-established street are becoming rare, as Alain de Botton has noted: it is impossible to create pleasant, ordinary, humane streets or places when every architect is straining to be 'original', which really means cribbing exemplars of the latest fad, be it Deconstructivism, Parametricism, or whatever, an activity that can hardly be described as 'original'.[41] There was another factor that put paid to the street: in the 1930s a campaign in the USA to promote motor-cars as essential accessories proposed driving highways into towns and cities, destroying traditional streets, discouraging pedestrians, and making cars penetrate every part of the urban fabric.[42]

Throughout the ages, humankind has embellished its creations with ornament. If one considers exemplars of the architecture of ancient Mesopotamia, of ancient Egypt, of China, of Japan, of India, of Hellenic and Hellenistic culture, of the Roman Empire, of Islam, of Carolingian and Romanesque Europe, of the Middle Ages, of the Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-Classical periods, of nineteenth-century Historicism, of the Arts-and-Crafts Movement, and indeed of any period in human history, ornament has played no small part in them all.

The exception has been the 'International Style'[43] that emerged from the 1920s, lauded as 'patently in accordance with the new social and industrial situation of architecture'.[44] With 'its refusal to accept craftsmanship and whims of design'[45] it was 'eminently suitable for a large anonymous clientele'.[46] Its 'sheer surfaces and minimum of mouldings for the industrial production of parts'[47] received the *imprimatur* of Nikolaus Pevsner and others.

The problems with the 'refusal to accept craftsmanship' and 'sheer surfaces and minimum of mouldings' were that buildings did not age gracefully, and indeed failed spectacularly, but succeeded as uncouth interlopers in established streets, towns, and cities. As Osbert Lancaster put it, the

> voice of the new Puritans, nourished in the doctrines of Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mumford, first attained an authoritative ring in the late 'twenties, but even in the succeeding ten years, while it was listened to with ever-increasing respect, the number of persons who felt compelled to act upon such advice as it so generously gave remained disappointingly small.[48]

That voice, however, was hearkened to among 'progressive' persons, with startling results, but the chief catalysts were those intimately connected with commerce, finance, and politics.

It became apparent that something very strange had occurred: an aberration, something alien to the history of humanity, something destructive aesthetically and spiritually, something ugly and unpleasant, something that was inhumane and abnormal, yet something that was almost universally accepted in architectural circles, like some fundamentalist quasi-religious cult that demanded total allegiance, obedience, and subservience. What is more, the Modern Movement claimed to abolish 'style' by preventing any choice in the matter through the imposition of one single style (which it was at pains to claim was not a 'style' at all: one of the apostles of Modernism, Walter Gropius, for example, insisted, not entirely ingenuously, that the object of his creation, the *Bauhaus*, 'was not to propagate any "style", system, or dogma, but simply to exert a revitalising influence on design').[49]

Yet if disciples of the apostles and evangelists of Modernism had acquainted themselves with the huge stylistic choices available to architects of the latter part of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, when the Picturesque was the subject of much consideration,[50] they might have understood that eclecticism represents freedom of thought and is a hallmark of sophisticated societies antipathetic to slavish adherence to imposed dogma. Regrettably, however, blinded by myopia, deafened by slogans shouted at *fortissimo* volume (notably by Le Corbusier), and cowed into submission for fear of being cast into critical outer darkness, they obeyed the *Diktat*, hearkened to the herd instinct, and adopted stylistic conformity.[51] Modernists did not actually want choice at all: their agenda were to *impose* that stylistic dictatorship by any means possible.

Clément Vautel denounced[52] such tendencies as *snobisme* based on the anxiety of the dim not to be left behind or out of the gloomy procession of obedience:[53] the Modernist asserts 'all authority and precedent should be abandoned'.[54] As Sir Reginald Blomfield observed, 'the "New Architecture" was a conscious and deliberate change in the whole orientation of architecture . . . dashing off to an extreme of crude and unabashed brutality, and total disregard of the amenities of town and country'.[55] The most curious aspect of all this is that the ideologies of European Modernism of the 1920s (with all the *lacunae* in their claims) were so widely accepted, apparently uncritically too (apart from a few brave souls who spoke out against them, to their own detriment): their ferocity, their evangelical sloganizing, and their intolerance seem to have provided illusions of probity[56] attractive to confused minds and puritanical dispositions. 'Traditionalists', Blomfield firmly declared, should 'refuse to be bullied by clamour and violent assertion',[57] but such aggressively declaimed posturings were universally accepted after 1945 for a strange *mélange* of reasons that coalesced in the aftermath of war.

Human beings are affected by their everyday surroundings: ugly, threatening, cacophonous, visually chaotic environments do not soothe the battered spirit. The harmonious, the unassuming, the ordinary, can contribute to an environment in which it is possible to live without anxiety, stress, or affronts to the sensibilities. *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*,[58] edited by Alexander Koch, was an important monthly publication that promoted modern design, and therefore the artists who created it: as an influence on design, and especially on architecture, it was highly significant in Germanophone countries from 1897 until the end of the Weimar Republic in 1933. Adolf Loos, hailed by commentators as a 'pioneer' of Modernism, stated that the

> best form is always readily at hand and nobody should be afraid to use it, even though it may come almost entirely from someone else. Enough of 'geniuses' and their originality! Let us repeat ourselves again and again! Let one building be similar to another! For doing that we will not be published in *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, and we will not be appointed professors of applied Art, but we will have served our times, ourselves, our nation, and humanity to the best of our ability.[59]

Genius, indeed, 'is as rare among architects as among the rest of us'.[60] This was also realized during the Georgian period (1714–1830), so pattern-books were made available, enabling those without genius to design and erect buildings which did not offend or jar, fitted into contexts, and were at ease with themselves and with humanity.[61]

Pugin, the Ruskin Problem, Perils of Uncritical Acceptance, & Some Perceptive Critics

Long before Loos expressed those views, A.W.N. Pugin wrote of the 'Babel of confusion' where private judgement ran 'riot' and every architect had 'a theory of his own, a beau ideal' he had 'himself created; a disguise with which to invest the building' he erected…'Styles' were '*adopted* instead of *generated*, and ornament and design *adapted to*, instead of *originated by*, the edifices themselves', all of which could only lead to a veritable '*carnival* of architecture'.[62]

Pugin, a recent convert to Roman Catholicism, used the 'moral' argument to promote his vision of Gothic, and fourteenth-century Gothic at that, as well as his concept of the 'True Picturesque' by which three-dimensional forms grew naturally and unforced from plans.[63] Pugin's claims for what was 'true' or 'false', morally depraved or uplifting, and 'honest' or 'dishonest' included statements that 'there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety';[64] that 'all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building';[65] that 'the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose';[66] that 'the construction itself should vary with the material employed';[67] that designs 'should be adapted to the material in which they are executed';[68] and that it was in 'pointed architecture [i.e. Gothic] alone that these great principles' could be demonstrated. Pugin's 'convenience', 'construction', and 'propriety' obviously owe debts to the paraphrases 'commodity', 'firmness', and 'delight' of Sir Henry Wotton,[69] 'durability [soundness or strength], convenience [utility], and beauty [attractiveness]'[70] (*firmitas, utilitas, venustas*) of Vitruvius,[71] and 'beauty', 'firmness', and 'convenience' of Sir Christopher Wren.[72]

It is significant that Pugin replaced 'delight' and 'beauty' with 'propriety', thus moving from a world of Picturesque sensation to a new (and dangerous) realm of moral judgement whereby the 'propriety' of the architecture depends upon whether or not it is 'proper' or appropriate for the use to which a building is put. Pugin's message was loud and clear: Classical architecture was no better than primitive Stonehenge in its columnar-and-trabeated structure, and was 'Pagan'[73] anyway, whereas 'pointed' architecture was not a style, but a principle, a moral crusade, and the only mode of building for a 'Christian' (by which he meant Roman Catholic) nation (which is what he earnestly hoped England would become).[74]

Interestingly, he did not think much of Greek temples, because when the Greeks started building with stone, 'the properties of this material did not suggest to them some different and improved mode of construction': they set up stone columns as they

> had set up trunks of wood; they laid stone lintels as they had laid wood ones, *flat across*; they even made the construction appear still more similar to wood, by carving triglyphs, which are merely a representation of the beam ends. The finest temple of the Greeks is constructed on the *same principle* as a large wooden cabin . . . but as for [it] being held up as the standard of architectural excellence, . . . it is a monstrous absurdity.[75]

All of which is somewhat different from the inaccuracies[76] later spouted by Le Corbusier (e.g. on the *guttae* below the frieze of the Athenian Parthenon: 'this plastic machinery is realized in marble with the rigour that we have learned to apply in the machine. The impression is of naked polished steel',[77] which, to anyone who has studied the Greek Doric entablature,[78] is a strangely perverse interpretation).

There can be no doubting the enormous influence Pugin had, for better or for worse, but one of the downsides was that he suggested to later generations that there might be a possibility of building something that was not marked by human imperfections, and which represented some sort of 'inescapable reality'.[79] Pugin stated that 'the severity of Christian architecture is opposed to all deception. We should never make a building erected to God appear better than it really is by artificial means',[80] but what he failed to note is that *all* buildings, without exception, *are* artificial. *The Architectural Review*, taking its cue from Pevsner and others, promoted Pugin as a founding-father of the Modern Movement; but Pugin, the Romantic, the champion of craftsmanship, the Gothic revivalist, the deeply religious Roman Catholic, the hardworking, scholarly designer steeped in history, and the enemy of falsehoods, simply cannot have been a founder or 'pioneer' of twentieth-century materialistic Modernism, with its insistence on the *tabula rasa*, its contempt for the *genius loci*, and its indifference to religion.

When one considers what Pugin actually wrote,[81] it is wholly impossible to see him as a prophet of 'High-Tech', Modernism, or Functionalism. With only slight modifications, his words could easily be applied to the situation today: 'The moderns . . . are constantly producing the greatest anomalies; and we are called upon to admire their thrice-cooked hashes . . . as fine national monuments of the present age.'[82] And he went on about the 'junta' who had

'disfigured the face of the country' (he was referring to those architects who had dominated the profession in the last two decades of the eighteenth and the first three of the nineteenth century):[83]

> Their works will hardly be endured for the time they have to run, and the remembrance of them will be the laughing-stock of posterity; and when the ancient glories of our native land are restored, and this generation of pretenders have passed away, men will be amazed that a period could have existed when they were permitted to disfigure and destroy, unchecked and unreproved.[84]

Pugin's prophecy led to a lack of appreciation of the works of numerous architects of whom he disapproved, and who worked with the Classical style, but were not averse to other styles as well: Nash's legacy, especially, suffered greatly, but the eclectic works of the 'junta' were later seen in more favourable lights. However, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, an obsession with expensive 'iconic' structures, conceived as though there were no context into which they were set, was very much apparent, so the second Puginian quotation could equally well apply to the contemporary situation. The desire to be 'original' has destroyed uniformity, yet uniformity is what makes many historical streets and towns agreeable.[85] The Georgian pattern-book had its uses, because it provided the alphabets, grammar, and vocabulary which enabled harmonious architecture to be created, even by modest talents.[86]

Variety, on the other hand, became *de rigueur*, with individuality, the fantastical, and even the whimsical jockeying for positions in what had been serenely understated street-frontages: and very often the people or groups who paid for the buildings went further, demanding vulgarity, individuality, and 'originality'. The assumption persists that a new architecture had to be invented from scratch every time a new school or other building-type was required. It is not possible to create decent, civilized environments when every Tom, Dick, or Harry of an architect is trying to be 'original' and create an 'icon'. Ordinary places are important, but courteous ordinariness is not what most modern architects seek to achieve in their works.

Pugin was not responsible for this state of affairs, though his name has been recruited to the cause of Modernism, notably in schools of architecture, where he might be mentioned to justify every kind of horror. Yet in the experience of the present writer, few students will turn out to have read him, but only to have heard what others have written or said about him, especially in relation to 'morality', 'honesty', and designing from the inside

out. It is a sad state of affairs, but it is certainly arguable that Pugin's fanaticism and the power of his rhetoric in relation to architectural concerns have sometimes had less than beneficial effects.[87]

John Ruskin, too, observed that a 'day never passes without our hearing our English architects called upon to be original, and to invent a new style . . . We want no new style of architecture . . . But we want *some* style'.[88] However, when the stylistic exemplars he arbitrarily judged worthy of emulation were Pisan Romanesque, early Gothic of Western Italy, Venetian Gothic, and English Second Pointed (*aka* Decorated) of the fourteenth century, his readers might be permitted a twitch of the eyebrow. Ruskin found certain styles (e.g. Baroque) unacceptable, not only because of their associations with Roman Catholicism, but because they exploited illusion, and therefore could not be considered 'truthful'. The interchangeability of truth and beauty[89] seems to have originated with Keats, but Ruskin, though he went on at length about such matters 'in a score of thick volumes',[90] failed to give precise reasons or provide reasoned arguments as to why any one style of building should be more 'true' than any other. Indeed his texts remain, as Osbert Lancaster observed, with truth, 'impenetrably obscure'.[91]

This moral disapprobation to justify an aesthetic stance has been a dangerous weapon in the hands of International Modernists: the claim of Walter Gropius, for example, to have been influenced by Ruskin's writings,[92] would have surprised, even shocked, the Englishman himself. One might be excused for questioning Gropius's supposed admiration for someone who pulled four mediaeval styles out of his critical hat as models to be followed in the middle of the nineteenth century, for Gropius's works show no traces of any of them.

It is highly doubtful, however, if the 'style' that was universally adopted in the twentieth century would have met with Ruskin's approval anyway, and it certainly would have horrified Pugin. Yet Pugin, by linking beauty,[93] function, morality, propriety, and utility, and claiming that any *building that is treated naturally, without disguise or concealment, cannot fail to look well*,[94] sowed pernicious seeds, not least by substituting ethical/religious/moral notions for the earlier visual and associationist values by which a building was perceived as pleasant because it looked stable and suitable for what it was supposed to do.[95]

Sir Reginald Blomfield set out the problem with clarity. He pointed out that 'literature and the written word established a disastrous domination in arts not their own, and all sorts of strange ideals were introduced and pursued with an enthusiasm which constantly missed the mark, because most