

Architectures of Identity

English Modernism, Domesticity, and Imperial Decline

Sean David Ketteringham

The Queen's College



Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English
at the University of Oxford

Supervised by
Professor Rebecca Beasley (English Language and Literature)

Abstract

This thesis presents a cultural history of domestic space in England between 1910 and 1948. Against the backdrop of several social and economic shifts – imperial overextension, the end of the Pax Britannica with World War I, women’s suffrage, and Britain’s abandonment of the Gold Standard amid the Great Depression – it argues for a new appreciation of how domestic space became a critical forum in which the renegotiation and reformation of English national identity took place. Drawing on literary sources, economic history, architectural design, and the visual arts, the thesis thoroughly revises our historical understanding of how the impending collapse of the British imperial project inflected the cultural politics of modernism in England. By seeking out transdisciplinary blind spots in both literary and art historical studies, and uniting popular and avant-garde culture, this study provides a more nuanced account of the domestic mechanisms that enabled English national identity to wax as British imperial hegemony waned.

The first part of this thesis reassesses the relationship between the suburbia and modernist architecture, as it emerged in the years immediately before and after World War I. It recovers links between suburban domesticity and modernist artists and writers such as Frederick Etchells, Roger Fry, Wyndham Lewis, and Rebecca West. It then demonstrates the national and imperial tenor of efforts to promote both semi-detached suburban housing and modernist domesticity. From this confrontational atmosphere of avant-garde bluster, the focus shifts to how inter-war artists conceived their homes (and the artwork produced within them) according to principles of vernacular design, which were encoded with notions of nationalism and nativity. Building on existing scholarship on architecture as a discourse, as opposed to built projects, a study of the writings of J.M. Richards reveals unifying themes

amongst an array of artists including Peggy Angus, Barbara Hepworth, Winifred Nicholson, Ben Nicholson and Eric Ravilious.

The second half of this thesis uses its initial foundation in private and interior domesticities to investigate public notions of domestic belonging. With the aid of new archival sources, it looks beyond customary accounts of how modernist domesticity troubled distinctions between private and public spaces to examine how homes became a national concern, and how modern subjects attempted to feel at home in public land- or cityscapes. This is addressed by investigating expressions of homelessness and architectural language in the poetry of W.H. Auden, John Betjeman and Geoffrey Grigson, before surveying their connections with the Georgian Group and its efforts to protect eighteenth-century architecture, predominantly in London. Ultimately it will show how these literary and preservationist discourses relate to a rise in imperial nostalgia and how they influenced attempts to build modernist homes based on eighteenth-century vernaculars. The thesis will end by charting the revival of the picturesque by Christopher Hussey and in the pages of the *Architectural Review*. The picturesque became a tool with which to domesticate rural and urban space in the 1940s. Through comparison with the late work of T.S. Eliot, this section assesses the picturesque's inherently colonial and appropriative qualities, and its emblematic relationship with Englishness, to recover how strategies of aesthetic and social reform centred around domesticity attempted to prepare English culture for life after empire. On a national scale these physically and emotionally nested structures of belonging became entangled with an increasingly untenable imperial identity through the 1930s and 1940s.

Contents

List of illustrations

5

Acknowledgements

9

INTRODUCTION

England's Domestic Post-Mortem

12

CHAPTER ONE

An Immortal Cult: Suburban Modernity and the Avant-Garde

35

CHAPTER TWO

Vernacular Modernism: Englishness and the *Circle* of J.M. Richards

102

CHAPTER THREE

Imperial Pilgrimage: London, Homelessness, Georgian Preservation

161

CHAPTER FOUR

The Congruity of the Pattern: Townscape, T.S. Eliot, the Picturesque

226

CONCLUSION

Homecoming, or Apocalyptic Wallpaper

294

BIBLIOGRAPHY

312

List of Illustrations

- 1.1 Frontispiece and title page from *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue, 1912*.
 - 1.2 Prize winning 'Model Cottages', from *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue 1913*, pp. 6-7.
 - 1.3 Ray Strachey and Oliver Strachey, *Durbins*, 1916, vintage snapshot print, National Portrait Gallery, London
 - 1.4 Omega Workshops, *Post-impressionist Room*, installation at Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition, 1913. Illustrated London News Picture Library.
 - 1.5 Omega Workshops (Frederick Etchells), *Omega Rug*, 1913-14, hand knotted wool with jute or hemp warp, Chelsea College of Art, London.
 - 1.6 Unknown maker, *Kuba Fabric*, c. 1900-1949, Embroidered raffia with a tabby woven ground and stitched, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
 - 1.7 Vanessa Bell, *Frederick and Jessie Etchells Painting*, 1912, oil on wood, Tate, London.
 - 1.8 Frederick Etchells, *Progression*, 1914-15, pen and ink on paper, The Higgins Museum, Bedford.
 - 1.9 David Bomberg, *Composition (Green)*, 1914-15, gouache and varnish, Anthony D'Offay, London.
 - 1.10 Wyndham Lewis, *Design for Red Duet*, 1914-15, pencil pen and ink, water colour and gouache, private collection.
 - 1.11 Frederick Etchells, 'Introduction' in *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1927), p. xiv-xv.
 - 1.12 Le Corbusier designs for medium density suburban housing in Pessac, Bordeaux, from *Towards a New Architecture* pp. 252-253
-
- 2.1 Double page spread showing Betjeman's and Etchells's letters as Lord Ongley and Batty Langley facing Etchells design for a house at Leatherhead, *Architects Journal*, 17 August 1933, pp. 206-207
 - 2.2 Arthur Jackson, the 'front kitchen' at Banks Head, photograph print, 1936, Tate London. Winifred's dog, named Slinky, lies asleep on the rug designed by Nicholson named *Animal Squares*.
 - 2.3 Ben Nicholson (designer) and Mary Berwick (worked), *Animal Squares*, hand-hooked rag rug, c. 1925, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.
 - 2.4 Shelves at Banks Head with object belonging to Winifred Nicholson, from Winifred Nicholson, *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) p. 215.
 - 2.5 Ben Nicholson, *Numbers*, 1933, lino printed cotton, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
 - 2.6 Barbara Hepworth, *Design for Fabric*, c.1933, lino printed cotton, Kettles Yard, University of Cambridge.

- 2.7 Interior of No. 3 The Mall, Parkhill Road, 1933 (Herbert Read's study), from Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (eds.) *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, (London: Lund Humphries and Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993) p. 8.
- 2.8 Ben Nicholson (possibly worked by Joan Bravington), *Rug*, hand knotted woollen pile, c. 1933, Victoria and Albert Gallery, London
- 2.9 Ben Nicholson (worked by Joan Bravington), *Slinky*, hand knotted woollen pile, 1933, private collection, from Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton, *Artists' Textiles: Artist Designed Textiles 1940-1976* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2012) p. 29.
- 2.10 Ben Nicholson, *Counterpoint*, jacquard woven rayon and cotton, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.
- 2.11 Ben Nicholson, *Three Circles*, screen printed cotton and rayon, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.
- 2.12 Ben Nicholson, *Horizontal*, jacquard-woven cotton and rayon, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.
- 2.13 Ben Nicholson, *Still Life (1929)*, oil and pencil on canvas, 1929 reworked 1935, Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.
- 2.14 Plates of Nicholson's white reliefs in *Circle: International Surevey of Constructivist Art*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), painting plates 7-9.
- 2.15 Ben Nicholson, *1935 (Quai d'Auteuil)*, 1935, oil on carved board, The Hepworth, Wakefield.
- 2.16 Nicholson's *Quai d'Auteuil (1935)* compared with a stone carving from Tiahuanaco, Peru, from *Circle*, sculpture plates 7a and 7b.
- 2.17 Eric Ravilious, *Furlongs*, 1934, watercolour and body colour on paper, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.
- 2.18 Brackenfell, north façade, designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, 1938, RIBA photographic library (photographed in 2004)
- 2.19 Brackenfell, stairway and hall, designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, 1938, RIBA photographic library (photographed in 2004)
- 2.20 Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, Brackenfell from the south, 1938, black and white photo print, Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight photographic collection, RIBA Archives, London.
- 2.21 Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, Brackenfell from the north, 1938, pencil and ink on paper, RIBA Archives, London (RIBA126103)
- 3.1 John Constable, *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, 1832, oil on canvas, Tate, London.
- 3.2 Alexander Nasmyth, *A Prospect of London, Seen From the Earl of Cassilis's Privy Garden, with Waterloo Bridge Beyond*, 1826, oil on canvas, private collection.
- 3.3 'The Heart of the Adelphi Vanishes', *The Sphere*, June 30, 1936.

- 3.4 Dell and Wainwright, *2 Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.
 - 3.5 Ernő Goldfinger[?], *Cottages on Willow Road*, c. May 1937, black and white photo print, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.
 - 3.6 Edith Tudor Hart, *Kensal House*, London, 1937, black and white photo print, RIBA.
 - 3.7 Cut out print reproduction of George Sidney Shepherd, *View on Hampstead Heath (End of Downshire Hill)*, 1833, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.
 - 3.8 Reproduction of early nineteenth-century census data for 1 to 5 Willow Road, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.
 - 3.9a Eileen Agar, *Ernő Goldfinger at 2 Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Tate, London.
 - 3.9b Eileen Agar, *Ursula Blackwell at 2 Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Tate, London
 - 3.10 'The Story of English House Design 1830–1930', from Clough Williams-Ellis and John Summerson, *Architecture Here and Now* (T. Nelson and Sons: London, 1934).
 - 3.11 'Three Houses at Willow Road, Hampstead', from *Architectural Review*, April 1940.
 - 3.12 Ernő Goldfinger, concept drawing, c. 1938-1939, watercolour pencil and ink on paper, Ernő Goldfinger Collection, RIBA Archives, London.
 - 3.13 Cartoon of Arthur Trystan Edwards, from 'Personalia IV. Mr A. Trystan Edwards, MA, ARIBA', *Architectural Design and Construction* (September 1931), p. 469.
 - 3.14 From Arthur Trystan Edwards, 'A "Model" Town Designed for Traffic', *Town Planning Review*, 14.1 (May 1930), pp. 34–41 (p. 35).
 - 3.15 'As many as possible of the new Dwellings should be provided with Roof Gardens', from Arthur Trystan Edwards, *A Hundred New Towns for Britain. An Appeal to the Electorate* 3rd edn, (London, 1934) p. 52.
-
- 4.1 Wildwood Terrace, Hampstead. (Wikimedia Commons)
 - 4.2 John Ward, dust jacket for Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, (London: Putnam, 1927), Scotney Castle Archives.
 - 4.3 Scotney Castle from the south-east (National Trust)
 - 4.4 Isokon Company promotional brochure for St. Leonard's Hill, 1935, RIBA Archive, London.
 - 4.5 Double page spread considering the preservation of parkland by comparing high- and low-density housing on the site of Blenheim Palace from W.A. Eden, 'The English Tradition in the Countryside: III The Re-birth of the Tradition', *Architectural Review* 77 (1935), 193-202 (pp. 195-196).
 - 4.6 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Carcase of an Ox*, c. 1640-45, oil on panel, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.
 - 4.7 Gordon Cullen, 'Townscape Casebook', *Architectural Review*, 106 (1949), 363-374 (pp. 364-365)

- 4.8a View of Front Quad, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 59
- 4.8b View of the Founders' Building, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 61
- 4.8c View of Fell Tower through Tom Quad, Christ Church, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 55.
- 4.9a, b From Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- 4.10 Illustration by Kenneth Rowntree from The Editor [Hastings], 'Exterior Furnishing or sharawadgi: the art of making urban landscape', *Architectural Review* 95, (1944), p. 6.
- 4.11 Nicolas Poussin, *Summer*, 1660-1664, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.

- 5.1a, b John Piper illustration from J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: An Anatomy of Suburbia*, (London: Architectural Press, 1973), facing pp. 41, 25
- 5.2 Frederick Gibberd, Housing at the Lawn, Harlow New Town, 1951, from Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism*, (London: Architectural Press, 1966), p. 13.
- 5.3 Judith Stephen (later Henderson), Duncan Grant, and Angelica Bell, in Clive and Vanessa Bell's garden at Charleston, Sussex, c. 1923. Photograph by Vanessa Bell. Tate.
- 5.4 Hammer Prints Ltd (Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi), *Sgraffito*, c. 1955 from Jane Alison and others, *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain, 1945-1965*, (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022) p. 196.
- 5.5 Hammer Prints Ltd (Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi), *Townscape*, c. 1955 from Jane Alison and others, *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain, 1945-1965*, (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022) p. 197.
- 5.6a Eduardo Paolozzi, front cover of the *Architectural Review* 111, March 1952.
- 5.6b Jane Drew's home with curtain and upholstery fabrics by Paolozzi, from Douglas Newton, 'Printed Textiles: A Selection from the Work of the Younger English Designers', *Architectural Review*, 111 (1952), 190-195 (p. 194).
- 5.7 Gordon Cullen, dust jacket, *Townscape*, (London: Architectural Press, 1961).

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without a range of financial, intellectual, and personal support. I would like to thank the AHRC for funding my studentship, including an essential extension due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as supporting my visiting fellowship to the archives of the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas, and a curatorial placement at Flat Time House and the John Latham Foundation in summer 2021. In Oxford, various grants from the English Faculty and The Queen's College have enabled me to extend the scope and ambition of my research.

I would like to thank the many archivists who have supported my work: Lauren Alderton and Fiona Orsini at the RIBA Drawings and Archives Collection; Elizabeth Garver, Kate Hayes, Irene Lule, and Danica Obradovic at the Ransom Center; the staff of the Bodleian Libraries and Special Collections; the staff of the National Trust at Scotney Castle for facilitating my access Christopher Hussey's papers, and at 2 Willow Road for the Goldfinger family papers; and the staff at the Tate Gallery Archive.

For recommendations and resources that have enriched my work immensely, thank you to Samuel Agbamu, Mathew Aitchison, Lee Beard, Louise Campbell, Richard Cork, Jo Cottrell, Pete Collard, Evelyn Heinz, John Macarthur, Otto Saumarez Smith, Neal Shasore, and Annabel Williams. Parts of my first chapter appeared as an article in *Modernist Cultures* 17.1 (2022) and comments from the editors and anonymous reviewers advanced that work considerably. I owe a similar debt of gratitude to the audiences and convenors of the following seminars and conferences who have enabled me to present my work publicly: Modernism in the Home conference at the University of Birmingham; the British Association of Modernist Studies, New Work in Modernist Studies at the University of Liverpool; the Modern and Contemporary Research Seminar at Oxford; and the Society of Architectural

Historians of Great Britain. My special thanks must go to Marina MacKay, Michael Whitworth, and Laura Marcus who all provided open and generative critique of my work through Oxford's intermediate assessments. It saddens me that Laura will not be able to read these thanks, nor see the work she helped nurture.

My doctoral work has been a collaborative project with the National Trust at 2 Willow Road, and I am extremely grateful to their research team, particularly Claire Pascolini-Campbell, Leigh Sneade, and my supervisor at the Trust Lucy Porten whose kindness and exemplary skills as a communicator of history and heritage have motivated me. I am especially grateful to Alice Purkiss, Oliver Cox, and the wider Heritage Engagement team at Oxford who were instrumental in making this studentship happen and have provided me with the endless support, good humour, and site visits that have brought my project to completion.

I have been lucky enough to find myself amongst an outstanding group of researchers and young minds within my Faculty and College. Thank you to the undergraduate students I have taught over the past three years whose erudition and mental agility is a true tonic for complacency; to the students at Queens whose company and festive meals have brightened many a stressful term; and to my peers within the Paul Mellon Centre's Doctoral Researchers Network, particularly my co-convenor Judith Stapleton, as well as to the staff at the PMC, Nermin Abdulla, Bryony Botwright-Rance, Mark Hallett, and Rosie Ram for their assistance and encouragement. Thank you to my fellow DPhils Rachel Hindmarsh, Damian Maher, Chloe Nahum, and Ben Norbury, whose friendship and insight made the isolating experience of long-term research more manageable and joyful. I am especially grateful to Holly Bird for her inexhaustible appetite for proof-reading and her liberal offerings of love and support, and to Daniel Abdalla and Harry Daniels who have critiqued individual chapters and challenged me to think more deeply and edit more carefully.

It is difficult to articulate or overstate my gratitude to my supervisor, Rebecca Beasley. The past few years have presented exceptionally difficult working conditions, but Rebecca has been a rock to steady myself against and a model of professionalism. It has been a privilege to learn from the rigour, care, and pragmatism with which she conducts her work. I simply could not have wished for a more attentive shepherd for my research, and whatever merits this thesis exhibits are credit to her patience and intellectual vivacity. I also offer huge thanks to Alexandra Harris and Sarah Victoria Turner for surely more gentle correction and wise mentoring than I deserve during and since my first two degrees. Without them setting me on this path I could not have produced this thesis. It was written with their infectious enthusiasm and generosity in mind.

Finally, thanks to my friends Matt Brundell, Luke Conaboy, Andrew Creagh, Olivia Ditcham, Jon Ferguson and Connie Chester (*in absentia*), Holly Fletcher, Mollie Griffiths, Tom Jacques-Milner, George Jenkins, Ben Loebell, Seán Hewitt, Maddie Panto, Nico Parfitt, Lara Poynor, Ollie Walker, Cluny Wallace, Maddy Wyburd, Marcus Yeomans, and everyone at 51, who have inspired me, kept me grounded, laughed with and at me, and given me respite.

I owe my family – Laura, Owen, Dom, Becca, Sarah, and Rory – a kind of gratitude thanks cannot cover. They have all at different times tolerated my chaos, looked after me, and taught me the meaning of home independent of any academic study. My parents, Greg and Helen, are remarkable but modest people. They are my greatest teachers and they have given me the opportunities they deserve. This work is dedicated to them, with love and admiration.

Architecture has its political Use; publick Buildings being the Ornament of a Country; it establishes a Nation, draws People and Commerce; makes the People love their native Country, which Passion is the Original of all great Actions in a Common-wealth.
Sir Christopher Wren, 'Tract I', 1670s¹

all the [houses]
I have lived in sit in my ribcage
with faces like beggars
I dream my postmortem
unzip my skin and ask each [house], *what*
are you: a mother, a sculptor, a motionless meadow?
Caleb Femi, 'Yard', 2020²

Introduction

England's Domestic Post-mortem

John Braine's best-selling novel *Room at the Top*, published in 1957, is a text preoccupied with domestic belonging. Staged through five domestic locations, the narrative relates Joe Lampton's climb from his working-class origins to the monied comfort and moral bankruptcy of the middle-class. First is the semidetached suburban home of the Thompsons, where Joe lodges, 'built of an expensive-looking biscuit limestone'. Inside Joe felt like he 'was passing into a different world', where reproductions of Van Gogh, Breughel and Manet hang against 'wallpaper vertically striped in beige and silver'. The second setting, which acts as the shadow of the Thompsons' bourgeois domesticity, is the house Joe had left behind in his industrial hometown of Dufton, where 'no dreams were possible' and 'the snow seemed to turn black almost before it hit the ground'. Not a house but a pile of bricks and memory, this terraced building had been home to Joe's parents who were killed in an air raid. Joe remembers 'the blitz smell, damp plaster and bonemeal' when he revisits the site and conducts a post-mortem of his former home, remembering 'the cream valance, the red velvet curtains [...] the big photograph of myself as a child' and 'the imitation oak panelling' now lost. The third and fourth houses form a second dyad of architectural life and death. A modernist home belonging to the unhappily married George and Alice Aisgill is described as '1930 functional in white concrete with a flat roof'. As he inspects the interior and the abstract painting on the walls, Joe reflects that 'it was a strange room, very clean, very bright, in good taste, but somehow without comfort'. Next, he arrives at St Clair Park, an abandoned and derelict stately home of Georgian design with a Gothic folly, neighbouring the Aisgills' modernist villa. The grand eagle adorning the gate post, a symbol of the St Clair family, had its wings clipped by 'a drunken soldier doing a little professional practice with a Sten gun'.

The house itself is ‘absolutely severe with a flat parapet line and no projections’. The fountains are choked up, the ponds are stagnant, ‘here was frozen music’ Joe recalls in reference to his art master’s favourite phrase for architectural façades; ‘it smelled dead and it wanted to die’. The well-to-do Susan Brown, whose affections Joe is pursuing, reports that her ‘great-great-great-grandpa built this’ before ‘death duties and drink’ finished off what else remained of the St Clair family line.³

The fifth and final domestic setting that structures *Room at the Top* is the flat that facilitates Joe’s clandestine sexual liaisons with Alice Aisgill. It does not fit into the pairings of bourgeois semi and bombed-out terrace, modernist villa and decaying stately home. Neither Joe nor Alice own the flat and its interior – ‘middle-class, *démodé*, vaguely theatrical’ – amplifies Joe’s sense of displacement: ‘it was a boudoir, faintly naughty, rather too feminine. I felt not quite in place there, as if I’d got into the wrong room by mistake’. At the novel’s climax, Joe feels guilt for Alice’s death in a drunken car crash having rejected her love and he descends into a drunken spiral. He brawls, has numb, mechanical sex with a stranger, and staggers around the placeless streets of Leddersford, which had ‘ceased to be a place a long time ago’, before he is picked up by friends from Warley. ‘Time for you to come home, Joe’ they tell him. He replies that ‘I have no home’.⁴

Braine’s novel may appear an unlikely starting point for this thesis. It was written too late for the arguments I will construct around English nationalism and cultural premonitions of imperial decline before 1948 and, at least superficially, it barely engages with the wholesale collapse of British imperialism after that date. However, I recount these events and locations at such length because they set out some of the key ideas which will recur in the

¹ Sir Christopher Wren, ‘Tract I’, in *Wren’s ‘Tracts’ on Architecture and Other Writings*, ed. Lydia M. Soo (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 119.

² Caleb Femi, ‘Yard’, *Poor* (London: Penguin, 2020) p. 109. Square brackets and italics in the original.

³ John Braine, *Room at the Top* (London: Arrow, 2000) pp. 10-12, 85, 91, 93, 67, 154-5.

⁴ Braine, *Room at the Top*, pp. 121, 101, 230, 234. This final line was cut from Jack Clayton’s 1959 film adaptation of the novel, produced with an Oscar-winning screenplay by Neil Paterson.

following chapters. Each of the first four locations offers Joe an inkling of domestic belonging: the comforting conformity of suburbia, the familial love of his childhood home, the cultural vitality of advanced architecture, and the ancestral heritage of an aristocratic seat. These are all prospective if wholly unviable architectures of his and his generation's identities, inherited from the first half of the twentieth century. It is only the most placeless, least possessed domestic space, the flat belonging to one of Alice's friends, where Joe forms the most emotionally rooted, and least financially motivated, relationship of the novel. By working back from the 1950s, we can reverse engineer the complex mechanics of English identity as they were developed through the preceding decades and especially through notions of home and domesticity. Braine exhumes these domestic identities from the past to inspect the present state of each one in turn with a caustic nihilism.

Clearly, here is simply architecture as setting, a necessary backdrop against which the events of a novel unfold. Yet if we look more carefully, these domestic spaces themselves form an architectonic structure through which Braine's overriding concerns regarding belonging, class, and modernity – particularised through the story of Joe Lampton – are given historicity and become socially embedded. Braine's narrative, and indeed England's post-war more broadly, relied on debates surrounding the English home which raged in the early twentieth century and touched on each of the key typologies I have just considered. This story about the broiling domesticity of class war and disaffected youth owes its popularity to the crisis of belonging that plagues its iconic protagonist. Its titular debt to domestic architecture puns on domestic space and social mobility but signals a more diffuse connection between architecture and literature which, once drawn out in concentrated form, provides a crucial and often overlooked interpretive framework for examining English national identity before the mid-century. This thesis will make a case for domestic space as one of the principal sites through which cultural history can read the permutations and stubborn endurance of national

and imperial identities in England during that period. The crisis of English culture plays across a well-established backdrop of certain features of social and economic histories which demarcate the decline of the British Empire. These include imperial overextension, the end of the Pax Britannica and World War I, increasing indigenous resistance and colonial nationalism, women's suffrage, and Britain's abandonment of the Gold Standard amid the Great Depression.⁵ In counterpoint, I argue that homes became important sites for the reinforcement and reformation of a core English national identity through contact with modernist culture while the colonial fringe – the very basis of Britishness – appeared to be dwindling. Alongside the traditional Marxist view of the home as the heart of bourgeois ideology and the reserve of nationalist and imperial delusions, I will set a conception of domesticity as the generative mechanism for necessary national imaginaries variously in the service of differing political and cultural positions. Therefore, modernist domesticity's troubled distinction between private and public spaces in the inter-war years will be a consistent theme throughout. How might homes become a public and national concern? How might one feel at home in a public land- or cityscape? On a national scale, these physically and emotionally nested structures of belonging became entangled with an increasingly untenable imperial identity. Ultimately, traditions of comfort and retreat so central to the notion of the English home of the nineteenth century were either vigorously defended or replaced with a form of homelessness we now recognise as a characteristic experience of modernity.

Cultural historical evaluations of the post-war moment described by Braine are necessarily incomplete if they fail to attend to the difficulties of establishing continuity between England's pre-war and post-war selves. It has become commonplace to describe the

⁵ Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019) ; Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London: Allen Lane, 2014); *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E. Nym Mayhall, and Philippa Levine (London: Routledge, 2000) .

years after 1945 in terms of dislocation occasioned by the effects of World War II, an epochal shift of a nuclear dawn, and a socio-aesthetic toolkit formed in response to bombsites as blank slates for reconstruction.⁶ But this progressive vision of wholesale change and multicultural exchange after empire struggles to account for the spectral endurance of conservative and apparently regressive efforts to re-establish a sense of national belonging and creative vitality. By pointing this out, I am not taking a unique approach to notions of heritage and identity. Before the millennium, Patrick Wright's *On Living in an Old Country* (1985) and Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* (1994) both made significant inroads towards an account of how the past lives through the present in forms of myth, nostalgia, economic hauntings, architectural traces, and the iconography of nationalism. They wrote in the wake of the moment when

Margaret Thatcher started to project her governmental mission not in terms of the merely political (and therefore changeable) consensus of liberal democracy but in the transcendent and eternalised measure of an imperial national identity which she alone could secure against the series of indefinite but nonetheless persistent threats which have played that conveniently demonic role in her public rhetoric.⁷

Now, a few decades later, the specific character of the 'threats', and the national identity they threaten, have shifted, but the gambit remains the same: national heritage is yoked to a political mission to conserve an aura of imperial pomp. The events of recent years, namely the Scottish independence referendum and Britain's divisive vote to leave the European Union, have opened up new and urgent ground for cultural histories of English, as opposed to British, national identity as its distance from the continent and the other nations in the United Kingdom appears ever greater. Even without taking these shifts into account, clear gaps

⁶ Jane Alison and others, *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain 1945-1965* (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022).

⁷ Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985) pp. 2-3; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: The Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994).

remain where literary and architectural histories can respond to the efflorescence of writing on nationalism over the past forty years to reconceive of how Englishness and modernism collided the first half of the twentieth century.

I turn my attention, not to the post-war period as the moment when Britain's post-imperial identity was in formation, but rather to the period between 1914 and 1948 as the long and agonised moment when Britain began to come to terms with itself without empire, and Englishness simultaneously emerged as the dominant frame of national identity. As Edward Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*, 'When you can no longer assume that Britannia will rule the waves forever, you have to reconceive reality as something that can be held together by you the artist, in history rather than in geography.'⁸ Said recognised that imperialism and nationalism were critical constituents of the reality held together by artists in the first half of the twentieth century. We must, therefore, address the processes that recognised that the Empire would wane as the founding moments of modern Englishness, encompassing both twentieth as well as twenty-first-century contexts. This was a period when avant-garde practices showed an unprecedented level of engagement with 'mass' culture, a period *before* Britain's status as a post-imperial nation was a lived reality following Indian Independence in 1947 and the end of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1948. Nonetheless, the decline and dissipation of British Imperial power and its fading position within the world-system was felt within the domestic social and cultural landscape of England.⁹ This thesis contends that the rise of modernist architecture in England through its literary articulation, in the context of a profound crisis in national identity closely related to imperial decline, set in motion patterns of thought that still dominate our contemporary

⁸ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994) p. 243.

⁹ For a closely related periodisation focused on Britain declining position within the world system, to which my own work is indebted, see Thomas S. Davis, *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) .

cultural and political positions on what Englishness is and how it is represented in the domestic and urban fabric.

British? English? The Break-Up of a Nation

Naturally, the idea of ‘English modernism’ I will go on to develop is informed by our new twenty-first-century political realities of English nationhood. It is worth briefly considering the extensive treatment Brexit has received, for instance by Michael Kenny and Ben Wellings, even while it remains beyond the scope of my historical and cultural concerns. These contributions to political science highlight the disintegration of both contemporary European and British identities. The prospect of increased integration with the EU has triggered contested ideas of popular, parliamentary, executive, and national sovereignty in Britain and animated an individuated nationalist response in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.¹⁰ Read as a broader response to globalisation with a long history through the twentieth century and indeed Britain’s colonial past, it comes as no surprise that rhetorics of national greatness and Britain’s continued role as a global power were a prominent feature of these debates. The work of this thesis is to flesh out this history of national aggrandisement and to point out how the English identity considered to be at stake since the 2016 referendum, configured as the secure domestic centre of long-armed global influence, shares much in common with the Englishness that emerged through the inter-war years in response to the dual influences of international modernism and the mounting inevitability of imperial decline. If, at times, there appears to be slippage between descriptions of British and English

¹⁰ Michael Kenny, *The Politics of English Nationhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Ben Wellings, 'Brexit, Nationalism and Disintegration in the European Union and the United Kingdom', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 29 (2021), 322-334; Ben Wellings and Michael Kenny, 'Nairn's England and the Progressive Dilemma: Reappraising Tom Nairn on English Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 25 (2019), 847-865.

identities, this is due to what Hugh Kearney and, more recently, Krishan Kumar have recognised: that English identity is itself bound up with Britishness in its colonial expansion through the British Isles and overseas.¹¹ The two are easily and often conflated when history is written from the supposed vantage point of Oxbridge, or the Home Counties, or Westminster. I aim to investigate the unravelling of Britishness that occurred when this conflation became untenable as the imperial logic of expansion and dominance collapsed and Englishness, curiously underdeveloped and reliant on cultural narratives or what I term architectures of identity, took on the burden of national identity. There was a time, as recently as the 1990s, when it was possible to maintain that ‘to some ears there may be a discordant oddity in speaking of “English nationalism” at all’, given how public debate around collective identity in England remained subsumed and veiled by cultural discourses.¹² In the three decades since Stefan Collini wrote that statement, our views on English nationalism and its capacity to circulate and gather momentum on the cultural periphery and shadowlands of online culture have certainly altered. Far fewer academics or lay observers would now find ‘discordant oddity’ in talk of English nationalism, and in sympathy with this thesis, we are now more attentive to its deep roots in twentieth century literary and visual culture.¹³

Tom Nairn’s *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neonationalism* (1977) can be credited with establishing an early, cogent account of British disintegration.¹⁴ Alongside Wright’s and Samuel’s texts, Nairn’s history of Britain’s geriatric constitutional and cultural structures has been republished by Verso in recent years, but a truly invigorating revision of

¹¹ Hugh Kearney, 'Four Nations or One?', in *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*, ed. Bernard Crick (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) pp. 1-7 ; Krishan Kumar, 'Negotiating English Identity: Englishness, Britishness and the Future of the United Kingdom', *Nations and Nationalism*, 16 (2010), 469-487. See also Krishan Kumar, 'Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?', *Theory and Society*, 39 (2010), 119-143.

¹² Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 346.

¹³ See Marta Dassù and Edoardo Campanella, *Anglo Nostalgia: The Politics of Emotion in a Fractured West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) and *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain*, ed. Stuart Ward and Astrid Rasch (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) .

¹⁴ Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2021) .

this narrative has been given by Alex Niven's *New Model Island* (2019), which moves from a British to a specifically English collapse. Niven proposes a regional break up of England and suggests a movement towards an archipelagic conception of the British Isles and their European neighbours, not as a form of continual balkanisation but as the basis for new forms of unity and solidarity. Working from a background in the modernist poetry of Ezra Pound and Basil Bunting, he productively situates his book on the borders of academic and life writing by rejecting scholarly apparatus and punctuating his reflections on contemporary England with fragments of memoir. This marginal positioning is shared by the many incisive analyses of popular culture in the recent work of Owen Hatherley and the late Mark Fisher.¹⁵ It provides a platform for Niven's claim that 'England as a historical entity that has, since the industrial revolution at the latest, crossed over completely into mythopoeia, high confusion and self-contradiction'. For Niven the 'contemporary irrelevance of England' is no bad thing. He expresses the 'great urgency now in the need to show up the hollowness of English dreaming'.¹⁶ Some may opt not to follow Niven to his more radical destination where collective English identities evaporate and are replaced by regional communities with far-reaching bonds of solidarity. However, his polemic forcefully demonstrates the historically rooted void that is English identity. Writing in 2019, Niven is responding, in part, to the political issues of a post-Brexit age diagnosed by Kenny, but he is also voicing a connection to the period in the twentieth century examined by this thesis.

In 2019 as in 1939, Britain faced the collapse of its position within the world-system with aggressive nationalism rushing into the void where English identity was assumed to have existed. Not only has English nationalism become a more pressing issue in recent years,

¹⁵ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009); Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014); Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2008); Owen Hatherley, *The Ministry of Nostalgia* (London: Verso, 2017).

¹⁶ Alex Niven, *New Model Island: How to Build a Radical Culture Beyond the Idea of England* (London: Repeater, 2019) pp. 13, 20.

so too has the nation's collective reckoning with its colonial past, particularly with how that past is monumentalised through architecture and sculpture within our towns and cities.¹⁷ This context has inevitably informed the work of this thesis which responds to the question of how imperial identities could endure so far beyond the end of empire to retain such a significant role in the formation of twenty-first-century Englishness. Stuart Ward's edited collection *British Culture and the End of Empire* (2001) and Mark Crinson's *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (2003) go some way to addressing the legacies of empire, but both take the 'end of empire' as the period after 1945 and neither place sufficient emphasis on imperialism as a constituent part of Englishness.¹⁸ Crinson's work, for instance, opts to take a global view of modern architecture's role in mediating exchange between Britain and its former colonies as the imperial project unravelled in the post-war years. More recently, Rixt Woudstra has studied colonial architecture in British Africa and the British West Indies in the 1950s – the final conflict-stricken decade of imperial rule – as it worked to contain anticolonial protest and make the case for the beneficent impact of British imperium.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Crinson's *Rebuilding Babel: Modern Architecture and Internationalism* (2017) adds much-needed detail to the familiar claim of modernist architecture as international force, answering questions of how modernism combined knowledges from around the globe to contribute to social meliorism. These are landmark studies for understanding British culture through its vestigial colonial influence, yet I confess to taking a more negative outlook in this thesis by attending instead to the capacity of modern architectures in England to turn their back on the world in an attempt to shore up a failing national identity. What these outward-looking

¹⁷ Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia: How the British Conquered Themselves* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021) .

¹⁸ *British Culture and the End of Empire*, ed. Stuart Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) ; Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2018) . See also Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) .

¹⁹ Rixt Woudstra, 'Countering Independence: Architecture, Decolonization and the Design of Stability', in *Architecture and Action*, ed. J. Meejin Yoon and Irina Chernyakova (Cambridge, MA, 2019) pp. 130-131.

histories of imperial decline leave untouched is how Englishness became entangled with an in-folded imperialism through their mutual fragility before the age of major colonial dismantling.

Architecture Buttreasing Identity

We might ask how English culture of the later twentieth century, exemplified by Braine, came to write with such passing ease about not only modernist architecture, but also middle-class suburbia and the English country house as essential constituents of national identity or collective belonging and as hollow relics of an earlier age. I will explore the journey of these ideas on their way to becoming part of the mental furniture of mid-century England after an extended phase as some of the principal fora in which national identity and the cultural implications of imperial decline were contested. I suggest that even while texts such as Braine's may contain little reference to England's evermore threadbare imperial identity, the crisis of identity they describe, a state of ontological homelessness, can be traced back to a void that was revealed to many writers and artists where English national identity ought to have existed. I will demonstrate how this collapse of identity preceded and modified more measured attempts at imperial withdrawal in the years that followed. The post-mortem of the British Empire on a domestic level quickly escalates into a post-mortem of England itself and the hollowness at the heart of its cultural construction.

Architectural discourse will play a crucial part in this discussion. Nigel Whiteley and William Whyte have involved modernist architecture, together with heritage and preservation, in the early twentieth century reconstruction of Englishness.²⁰ Whiteley writes

²⁰ Nigel Whiteley, 'Modern Architecture, Heritage and Englishness', *Architectural History*, 38 (1995), 220-237; William Whyte, 'The Englishness of English Architecture: Modernism and the Making of a National International Style, 1927-1957', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), 441-465.

specifically of the acquisition of Ernő Goldfinger's 2 Willow Road by the National Trust as a bridge between modernist and twenty-first-century attitudes of home and Englishness. My third chapter will address this issue at greater length. More extensive and more general studies inform my approach to both the methodology and the content of the following chapters. Beatriz Colomina's *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (1994) has become the touchstone for countless histories of how modernist ideas of building and living entered the popular consciousness.²¹ My attention to the role of the architectural press, namely the *Architectural Review*, in chapters two and four and my sustained attempt to understand how private domestic space became a site for the incubation, contestation, and publicization of national and imperial identity is indebted to Colomina's work. Equally, Elizabeth Darling's important intervention in *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity Before Reconstruction* (2007) articulated the ferment of inter-war architecture as the foundation that enabled modernist design to claim hegemony after World War II. In subsequent work she has set out 'to connect design directly to a particularly English set of historical circumstances.'²² Working in a parallel method, I show how these English historical conditions involved narratives of national introspection and imperial decline. In other words, architecture and domestic life mapped out England's turbulent and fruitless flight from its nineteenth-century self toward new identities fit for twentieth-century modernity.

This project was first conceived as a study of how avant-garde culture became popularised in England through its entrance onto the domestic architectural scene. As such its method is predominantly literary in its approach to architecture as a written and published discourse, as much as in its assertion of the joint importance literary and architectural sources

²¹ Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (London: MIT Press, 1996) .

²² Elizabeth Darling, 'Institutionalizing English Modernism 1924-33: From the Vers Group to Mars', *Architectural History*, 55 (2012) p. 300-1.

play in building a picture of domestic architectures of identity in England. Victoria Rosner's work, which moves between architectural plans, novels, interior design, and journalistic writing, therefore provides an important methodological precedent for this thesis.²³ However, where Rosner emphasises the private sphere that is the starting point for works such as Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, I am interested in how we can build out from that private space into a more complete understanding of the construction of public, national identities. Ashley Maher's recent work, on the other hand, has provided an essential toolkit for thinking through modern architecture's relationship with British politics between the wars, particularly the emergent welfare state and tensions between fascism and communism.²⁴ Both these texts have demonstrated how fruitful it can be to probe the links between architecture and literature.²⁵ I aim to provide a fully-fledged treatment of how discourses of domesticity might be productively situated at the intersection of private and public culture that emphasise the centrality of identity.

Going Over Old Ground

The wide-ranging, transdisciplinary approach of this thesis stands within one vein of the 'new modernist studies' as it has been described by Douglas Mao. According to Mao, modernist studies is failing 'to learn sufficiently from other fields and disciplines, let alone to metabolise their methodologies and values'. The following chapters seek to redress this issue by pairing literary and architectural figures and blurring the boundary between these designations. My protagonists include Wyndham Lewis and Frederick Etchells, Ben

²³ Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

²⁴ Ashley Maher, *Reconstructing Modernism: British Literature, Modern Architecture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

²⁵ See also, David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

Nicholson and J.M. Richards, W.H. Auden and Ernö Goldfinger, Nikolaus Pevsner and T.S. Eliot. It will be immediately apparent how canonical and overwhelmingly male this selection is, and they may appear a dubious choice for a discussion of imperialism and domesticity. However, this regrettable imbalance is itself a product of studying those who held the greatest institutional and personal authority over how Englishness mutated in the public (domestic) imagination of modernism. Nonetheless, the voices of Elizabeth Denby, Barbara Hepworth, Sadie Speight, Rebecca West, and Virginia Woolf will be shown to consistently temper the domestic paradigm and patriarchal power projected by those who managed major heritage organisations, edited the foremost publications, and assumed habit of avant-garde influence before 1948.

Still the question remains: why centre the princes of the modernist establishment when so many women and writers of colour lie disregarded? Eliot, Lewis, Nicholson, and Pevsner represent the heart of what is still today taken to constitute authentically English modernism. They exerted huge influence over cultural debates of their age, and all oversaw the subsidence of modernism from its inter-war heights into its post-war condition, with their work governing its scholarly and popular afterlives into the twenty-first century. By placing their perspectives at the heart of this thesis they come to preside not over a triumphalist project of English modernism, but rather the desperate renegotiation of English cultural identity when faced with the loss of empire. In recent years, worthy calls to decolonise school and university syllabuses have swept the anglophone world as a means of redressing and understanding the legacies of British imperialism. In addition to these efforts, this thesis maintains that major works by overinflated titans of the canon perform a similarly important role in understanding empire through due to their inordinate impact on national consciousness since the end of the Victorian era. To read against these writers so as to understand their extended influence is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss and is the kernel of the idea

expressed by C.L.R. James in *Beyond a Boundary*, when he describes Eliot as ‘of special value to me in that in him I find more often than elsewhere, and beautifully and precisely stated, things to which I am completely opposed.’²⁶ In a similar approach, Alison Light has dismissed the male inter-war travel writers discussed by Paul Fussell, who were beset with anxieties of class conflict and imperial decline, as a particularly masculine ‘hysteria of the dispossessed’.²⁷ This thesis agrees with her assessment but argues that the cultural response to a dispossession that is concerned with class and empire must also be understood through a broad spectrum of cultural activity, beyond the literary and into the visual arts, architecture and design. If in the following chapters I appear to be going over old ground, this is figuratively true of my desire to read the traces of our present-day English identity written into the literary, urban, and rural landscapes of the 1930s and 1940s. By reapproaching these familiar, even repressive, texts with an interdisciplinary methodology rooted in histories of art, architecture, and design as well as literary studies, it becomes possible to read against the formidable, entrenched authorities of modernism’s foremost mandarins and so to change ‘the interpretive and evaluative lenses through which texts are read’.²⁸

A masculine hysteria of dispossession, to which I will return in chapter three, can be read in Joe Lampton’s declaration that he has no home, and in his dislocation in the feminine boudoir of the apartment. Joe is bereft of belonging having robbed himself of his class solidarity and entered the haute bourgeoisie. Although he is far from the upper-class aesthetes and authors considered by Fussell, they share a pervasive sense of dislocation. I am not the first to suggest the hidden role of imperialism in the wider context of this disaffection and the cultural dynamics of identity and political alienation it involved. Ian Baucom has emphasised

²⁶ C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013) p. 65.

²⁷ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 7.

²⁸ Douglas Mao, 'Introduction: The New Modernist Studies', in *The New Modernist Studies*, ed. Douglas Mao (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) pp. 6, 3.

the dislocating function of empire in relation to English national identity. His work remains an essential enquiry into how ‘the struggles to define, defend, or reform Englishness have [...] been understood as struggles to control, possess, order, and dis-order the nation’s and the empire’s spaces.’ The empire, Baucom suggests,

is less a place where England exerts control than the place where England loses command of its own narrative of identity. It is the place onto which the island kingdom arrogantly displaces itself and from which a puzzled England returns as a stranger to itself.²⁹

His argument dwells on the confusion colonialism wrought on English identity, and he works between and through the fields of architectural theory, country house fetishism, sporting culture, and conventional literary readings to emphasise the spatiality or locatedness of English imperial experience. Similarly, Simon Gikandi’s work has charted how colonial experiences and subjects redefined Englishness during the colonial period, how the great wave of colonial power was reflected back on to the metropole through the literary text. But how might we build a more nuanced picture of how that refashioning of identity was brought to bear on England at the precise moment imperial decline became evident? And, to refocus Baucom’s public-minded approach, how can we account for the remarkable significance of the home within this process, both in its ability imagine private as public and in its extension beyond the feminine sphere described by Light, as a site wherein the patriarchal system of empire and nation begins to crumble?

A wealth of writing on both abstract and more concrete notions of home in the early twentieth century has emerged in recent years. Deborah Sugg Ryan and Peter Scott have both produced ground-breaking social histories of the inter-war suburban home. Where Ryan

²⁹ Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999) pp. 2-3.

offers a corrective to the absence of women's narratives in histories of domestic design, Scott demonstrates the staggering scale of suburban expansion during the inter-war years.³⁰ Yet behind these material histories billowed the vast expanse of the imaginative (re)construction of the English home. Alexandra Harris's *Romantic Moderns* remains the most wide-ranging and persuasive account of how English culture made a pilgrimage inward to the domestic landscape of home and country, and through history into the Georgian and Victorian past that could furnish the modernist present with a sense of rootedness and belonging.³¹ It is a central contention of this thesis that the process of national self-discovery described by Harris must also be articulated in terms of crisis. The urge to locate and preserve historical culture, and so direct contemporary contributions to the tradition, is inflected by an inherent instability or hollowness at the heart of what it meant to be English in the early twentieth century. As I have already explained, an essential context to that crisis is imperial decline as described by Baucom and Gikandi but also Jed Esty. Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2003) presents imperial contraction as the formative shift in the material and imaginative condition of England between wars. England's loss of its imperial carapace rendered it vulnerable and prompted what Esty describes as an anthropological turn in English modernism that ultimately anticipates the rise of the Birmingham School of cultural studies in the 1960s. Esty invites us to consider the post-war closing statements of modernism, to hears its eulogies and its hiss of dissipation, in counterpoint to its opening manifestoes, its bold clarion calls and militaristic fanfares before 1914.³² Central to his study is Raymond Williams's use of the term 'metropolitan perception' to describe the urban arena of modernism as 'beyond both city and

³⁰ Deborah Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes, 1918-39: Domestic Design and Suburban Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Peter Scott, *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) .

³¹ Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Romantic Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010) .

³² Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003) p. 1-22.

nation in their older sense' which developed out of the 'magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals and the simultaneous cosmopolitan access to a wide variety of subordinate cultures.'³³ My third chapter will extend Esty's analysis with an increased emphasis on the urban alienation that is at the core of the metropolitan perceptions of modernist writers, architects, and preservationists in the nineteenth-thirties. In tandem with *Romantic Moderns*, *A Shrinking Island*'s pervasive influence on this thesis can be read in how I define the behaviour of the architectures of identity in urban and rural space. I suggest that the search for English nationalism after empire is as reliant on a reinvigorated metropolitan perception (as the cultural construct of the city is reconstructed before and after World War II), as it is on the construction of rural space through the memory of rapid urbanisation, land enclosure, and imperial expansion stretching back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁴

In my first two chapters, I deal largely with the emergence of architectural discourses of modernity prior to their manifestation in built projects. I argue that the nationalist and imperialist inflection of modernist architecture was written into its earliest phase of development in English culture. Chapter one spans 1913 and 1927, when recognisably modernist architectural ideas began to reach large audiences and avant-garde provocation entered the public consciousness, before moving on to study attempts to make modernist design amenable to 'vernacular' constructional and decorative methods in the 1930s. The latter two chapters address an approximate decade from the late 1930s to the late 1940s when these discourses interacted with more tangible interventions within the built fabric of England's urban and rural spaces. Chapters three and four are both concerned with

³³ Raymond Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism', in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989) p. 44.

³⁴ Other relevant studies that have informed this position include David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, 2nd edn (London: Reaktion Books, 2016) and Alun Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside since 1900* (London: Routledge, 2003) .

preservation and the manner in which the ideological value of heritage commodities, exemplified by Georgian architecture and picturesque landscape, rises in proportion to their (perceived) scarcity.

Chapter one establishes the conditions of modernist domesticity's entry onto the English cultural scene. It takes a dual focus on the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and a body of modernist architectural writing centred around Le Corbusier, Frederick Etchells, Roger Fry, Rebecca West, and the vorticists. Through this uneasy partnership, I identify how popular and avant-garde conceptions of the home at the beginning of the twentieth century converged on distinctively imperialist and nationalist axes. The emergence of modernist architecture in England, which (like its continental counterparts) prioritised functional efficiency and cut ties with the ornamental bent of the nineteenth century, was unusually imbricated with the technological innovations and the historical and ideological underpinnings of suburbia. The rapidly maturing conception of the how the twentieth-century English home might look and feel was held in tension between speculative modernist designs and new suburban lifestyles as two archetypal manifestations of architectural modernity. This analysis goes beyond a recognition of modernist debts to the arts and crafts movement into an articulation of how the period witnessed so-called avant-garde iconoclasts and suburbanites jointly reinvesting in what Le Corbusier termed the 'immortal cult of the home'. The driving force behind this process is, I argue, a crisis of domestic identification and belonging rooted in the British Empire's fading stability.

Chapter two turns to several artists, architects, and writers for whom English national identity played a central role in shaping their homes and work throughout the 1920s and 1930s: Winifred Nicholson, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, Eric Ravilious and Peggy Angus. The architectural writer and editor J.M. Richards acts as conductor to this motely band of creative practitioners, a lover to Angus and friend to

the others who provided a theoretical narrative to their work through his writing on vernacular architecture. Extending the debates of the previous chapter, I follow how craft, locality, history, and natural materials are successfully assimilated into an uncompromising modernist domesticity through Richards's writing and the activities of his friends. Ultimately, his contributions to two publications, the *Architectural Review* and *Circle*, introduce the notion of architecture as a discourse experienced through print and radio rather than a physical space – a crucial consideration, I argue, for a national architectural culture where built modernist projects were scarce, especially beyond London, but new collective identities of subnational polity could be imaginatively forged through modern media. Even in the most staunchly modernist spaces, Richards's writing and Nicholson's white reliefs smuggled in history as both a comfort and anchor to contemporary domestic practice.

Chapter three continues to focus on faltering ideas of England but with a fresh emphasis on empire and the nation's urban capital in the late 1930s. It uncovers links between a preoccupation with dis-location or ontological homelessness shown through the poetry of W.H. Auden, John Betjeman, and Geoffrey Grigson and engagements with Georgian architectural heritage in the period. Anxieties of domestic collapse, rootless, incoherent communities, and national impotence that recur in the poetry I scrutinise worked to amplify the urge to protect and preserve London's remaining eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century heritage. Even before the widespread destruction of the Blitz, property developers led the city to gaze on the ruins of its monuments to a classical and imperial past – for instance the Adelphi Terrace and Waterloo Bridge. The rhetorical and institutional apparatus that confronted these changes is closely linked to the work of Etchells and Richards discussed in the first two chapters, while Betjeman's membership of the Georgian Group, founded in 1937, and Grigson's commissioning of architectural writing act as concrete links between poetic and architectural discourses. Finally, the influence of the Georgian typology

of the terrace in unbuilt projects by Ernö Goldfinger, Elizabeth Denby, and Arthur Trystan Edwards returns us to the central refrain of this study: that imperial decline led to a crisis in English national identity manifest the architecture of the home.

Chapter four tests conventional definitions of the architecture of the home still further by turning its attention to urban and rural landscape as a domestic space in which public and private investments of comfort and belonging are made. The revival of picturesque aesthetics first by Christopher Hussey and later by Nikolaus Pevsner and Hubert de Cronin Hastings in print, is my focus here. Against a backdrop of country house preservation following the National Trust Act of 1936, the appropriative and colonial function of the picturesque is associated with the *Architectural Review*'s promotion of 'Townscape', a (largely successful) attempt to establish a new hegemony in urban planning in England through the principles of eighteenth-century writers on the picturesque including Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight, and Horace Walpole. This revival of the picturesque, which seeds Pevsner's late writing in *The Englishness of English Art* (1957), is closely related to the 'Whig interpretation of English literature' described by Stefan Collini, and ties into T.S. Eliot's contemporaneous intellectual project. Through *Four Quartets* and his late critical writing, Eliot set out to reclaim the social cohesion he imagined in early seventeenth-century Anglican villages. By reaching back to an England before land enclosure and colonial expansion, Eliot's perspective shared the picturesque mechanics Pevsner and Hastings has popularised while vigorously opposing their liberalism.

Finally, I conclude by returning to the suburban scene with which I began. J.M. Richards's *The Castles on the Ground* (1946) reframes many of the debates around national and colonialism that intercede between the pre-1914 rise in suburbia and the post-1945 renegotiation of how domestic space might envision national coherence and collective belonging. Through this concluding reading, I argue that the literary and architectural

constructions of the suburban home, the modernist studio, the Georgian terrace, and stately home in its picturesque landscape, reverberate through post-war conceptions of English domesticity into the age of high-rise social housing and continued expansion of social housing provision.

Chapter One

An Immortal Cult: Suburban Modernity and the Avant-garde

The foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the People.
King George V, 1910

In the twilight of Edwardian England, George Silverton, a solicitor's clerk and resident of the suburban area of Petrick, returns from work to an unusual dinner. His wife, Evadne, eats only 'a bowl of plums, softly red, soaked with the sun, glowing like jewels' and 'a great yellow melon, its sleek sides fluted with rich growth, and a honeycomb glistening on a willow-pattern dish'. George is presented simply with 'a plate of tongue'. He fights with match and gas lamp to bring light into the dark 'little room' of the suburban dwelling in which they eat, and he remembers the room in which he first encountered his wife singing in 'the black panelled drawing-room amidst the jungle of shiny mahogany furniture'.¹ Both Evadne's food and her domestic interior emanate a racialised threat. Her fruit is simultaneously bodily and jewel-like. Suggestive of a precious material, sun-soaked and extracted from a distant land, it carries the colonial trace of Evadne's origins, yet it collides with that symbol of suburbia, the willow-pattern dish. This chinoiserie design, likely manufactured for mass markets in Britain but a reminder of colonial trade in East Asia, echoes the domestic 'jungle' of the bourgeois interior filled with dark hardwoods imported from the tropics.² Within this designed setting,

¹ Rebecca West, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 98-117 (pp. 98, 100).

² See Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), ch. 1 on the mahogany furniture in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. On colonial suburban design see Iris Moon, 'Unhomely: Redefining British Decorative Arts', *British Art Studies*, (2021), online, <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-21/imoon>. On ceramics, see John Carswell, *Blue & White:*

George's food is presented as an abject display of flesh which rehearses his sexual and verbal powerlessness – later 'he would find the words choked on his lips'.³ Held between desire and corporeal horror, this allegory of dismemberment marks an early surfacing of the base instincts and psychological breakdown that will later control George's unhomely relationship with his wife. Soon after, he is horrified to discover Evadne's plans to give a speech at a socialist meeting, and having convinced himself that she is about to elope with another man, proceeds to drown her in a nearby lake. Believing himself successful he returns home to dreary suburbia and resolves to kill himself, only to find Evadne unharmed and sleeping soundly. Even George's suicide fails as Evadne had already turned off the gas that he would have used to finally destroy them both and their home.

These events constitute the plot of Rebecca West's short story 'Indissoluble Matrimony', an ironic melodrama and satire of modern domesticity set within the interior of a typical suburban home of the 1910s and its surrounding environment. As we have just seen, several features of West's narrative draw on the nationalist and imperialist coding of early twentieth century domestic space. Given its publication in the first issue of the avant-garde journal *Blast* in 1914 (under the editorship of Wyndham Lewis), it is also a surprising example of an extended consideration of suburbia and the gendered tensions boiling under its surface within the pages of an avant-garde journal that otherwise upheld the a chauvinist abjuration of domesticity in favour of the 'heavy chaos of wharves, steep walls of factories'.⁴ 'Indissoluble Matrimony' thus acts as an ideal point of departure into the dual focus of this chapter. I will address the early avant-garde theorisations of architecture and domesticity

Chinese Porcelain around the World (London: British Museum Press, 2000) and Geoffrey A. Godden, *Oriental Export Market Porcelain and Its Influence on European Wares* (London: Granada, 1979) . On colonial hardwood furniture see Amin Jaffer, *Luxury Goods from India: The Art of the Indian Cabinet-Maker* (London: V&A Publications, 2002) and Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014) p. 122.

³ West, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', p. 99.

⁴ Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 9-43 (p. 23).

associated with Le Corbusier, Frederick Etchells, Roger Fry, and the vorticists, but I will place them in dialogue with the development of a less aesthetically radical – but no less modern – conception of home through the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and the semi-detached suburban houses, interior design, and labour-saving appliances it helped to promote. The first section of this chapter will use West's story to briefly introduce some of the key historical and ideological debates around suburbia, including the centrality of the home to public notions of national and imperial identity. The second section will move on to discuss how private suburban life was publicly presented in the Ideal Home Exhibition, exploring the 'Tudorbethan' style and the exhibition's anticipation of later modernist rhetorics of functional efficiency alongside an imperial economics of consumerist accumulation. The latter half of this chapter will investigate modernist intersections with normative or suburban domesticity, first through the Omega Workshops and eventually through Frederick Etchells's translation of Le Corbusier. I will set modernist theories of domestic architecture alongside suburbia as two competing and mutually indebted strains of architectural modernity arriving within cultural discourses of nation and empire in England. Cumulatively, the following pages will show how the emergence of architectural modernity in England, through both modernist domesticity and suburbia, responded to a crisis of English national identity stemming from increasing evidence of imperial decline.

Imperial and Suburban Identities in 'Indissoluble Matrimony'

The national and imperial significance to suburban space was a major concern for many writers, aside from West, working around the turn of the century. H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1897) is perhaps the most prominent example of suburbia deployed as a parade ground for English anxieties of reverse colonisation. Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of the*

Four (1890) treads similar territory by bringing the repercussions of the so-called Indian ‘Mutiny’ of 1857 to English shores and the settled domestic lives of suburban London. West’s own debut novel, *Return of the Soldier* (1918) – a text fixated on the warped projections of sexual and political fears through domestic interiors – makes sure to include passing reference to ‘the red suburban stain which fouls the fields’ near the rural estate managed by protagonists Kitty and Jenny.⁵ Todd Kuchta has already explored how these various forms of suburban fiction by Wells and Doyle articulate anxieties about the British Empire appeared semi-detached, and in danger of coming loose.⁶ Kuchta has sought to show how literary representation in the first half of the twentieth century frequently used suburban sites to bind together anxieties of home, empire, and national identity. Over the course of this chapter and this thesis, I will show how his position presents only part of the picture. I will demonstrate the centrality of modernist theories of architecture and, in later chapters, architectural preservation and the visual arts to a renegotiation of national identity in England as a response to imperial decline. More immediately, West’s story, which does not appear to fit into the corpus of writing studied by Kuchta, provides a disruptive example of the channels of imperial anxiety through which suburbia and avant-garde modernism clashed and collaborated before the First World War.

‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ is a narrative largely dedicated to the masculine perspective. It presents Evadne as a racialised alien and an invasive presence within Petrick. The reader is informed Evadne has ‘black blood in her’ and, when George remembers courting her at her mother’s home – cheaply furnished with ‘Oriental hangings that set off the women’s alien beauty’ – orientalism constructs a continuity between interior decoration and the unknowable, diseased interior of his wife’s mind – ‘infected with her Oriental crudities’. Later, when he is

⁵ Rebecca West, *Return of the Soldier* (London: Penguin, 1998) p. 8.

⁶ Todd Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire: Suburbia and the Colonization of Britain, 1880 to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). Other authors considered by Kuchta include Joseph Conrad, Hanif Kureishi, and George Orwell.

reflecting on his wife's murder, notions of imperial control and ethnic purity become explicit: 'He had saved the earth from corruption by killing Evadne, for whom he now felt the unremorseful pity a conqueror might bestow on a devastated empire'. All the while we understand that George is far from a powerful imperial conqueror. By the end of story's action, he has come to accept his physical inferiority with a feeble echo of sexual climax: 'He sneezed exhaustingly and from his physical distress realised how absurd it was to have ever thought he had killed her. Bodies like his do not kill bodies like her.'⁷ George realises his wife's reality for the first time as his image of her as a racialised abstraction is shattered.

We might assume that Evadne is physically superior to her husband. However, West reasserts gendered and racial difference in the following passage where her narrative voice breaks away from George's viewpoint to describe Evadne's fallen, Eve-like status suggested by her name:

There entered into her the primitive woman who is the curse of all women: a creature of the most utter femaleness, useless, save for childbirth, with no strong brain to make her physical weakness a light accident, abjectly and corruptingly afraid of man. A squaw, she dared not strike her lord.⁸

Erich Hertz has argued these lines are an exposition of West's call to subjugate the body to a 'higher aesthetic ordering of life'. Trapped in a violent duet, Evadne, like George, is 'too immersed in her physical body to constitute a beautiful and aesthetically purified feminine power'.⁹ And yet, West's characterization of Evadne is contradictory and fragmentary, subjected to the dislocating effects of colonisation.¹⁰ Even though she overpowers George

⁷ West, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', pp. 101, 102, 115, 117.

⁸ West, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', p. 111.

⁹ Erich Hertz, 'The Gender of Form and British Modernism: Rebecca West's Vorticism and Blast', *Women's Studies*, 45 (2016), 356-369, (pp. 357, 365).

¹⁰ Laura A. Winkiel, *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p. 142. See also Urmila Seshagiri, *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010) pp. 88-112.

physically and intellectually, West's use of 'squaw', a slur used to describe an indigenous North American woman, establishes her as her husband's ethnic and sexual subordinate. Nonetheless, if she is weak, George is weaker. Evadne is the furious incandescent light by which the inadequacy of suburban masculinity can be observed.

In this sense, West's story helps introduce us to the nationalist and imperial valences established by architectural modernity at this historical moment. Alison Light has argued that the inter-war period, 'saw a move away from formerly heroic and officially masculine public rhetorics of national destiny [...] in "Great Britain" to an Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more private – and, in terms of pre-war standards, more "feminine"'.¹¹ Light contends that the home and garden of the inter-war years became the central focus of England's national self-conception; in the wake of universal suffrage between 1918 and 1928, the private sphere assumed new public importance as an honored national arena while remaining conservatively gendered as feminine.¹² These tropes are already evident in West's pre-war story but where Light optimistically understands the imperial coding of domestic space as a diminishing feature during the inter-war years, it is my view here (and particularly in chapter three and chapter four) that the imperial rhetoric of home only grows louder through the 'twenties and 'thirties.¹³ Scholarly emphasis usually lies on the public spectacle of England's national and imperial identity, but this thesis suggests that, as the private was made public, modern homes assumed an elevated role in bolstering imperial sentiments.¹⁴ West's story is presented here as one minor but eloquent early example of the home's transition from its triumphalist

¹¹ Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 8.

¹² For the 'domestication' of party politics after the war see Deirdre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1989) and Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000) .

¹³ See also Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire*, pp. 7-8.

¹⁴ See Iain Black, 'Imperial Visions: Rebuilding the Bank of England 1919-1939', and Deborah Sugg Ryan, 'Staging the Imperial City: the Pageant of London, 1911', in *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*, ed. Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

nineteenth-century conception as each Englishman's little dominion into its later role as a vehicle for the anxieties of a failing national and imperial power. At the turn of the century H.G. Wells claimed suburban homes satisfied an English desire for a 'private little *imperium*'.¹⁵ That notion would become increasingly untenable during the period considered by this thesis.

If Light has asked us to take the inter-war years as the period in which the patriarchal dismissal of the domestic is successfully overturned, then the roots of this process are set in the pre-war context of West's story. Here, we witness domestic modernity emerging onto the English cultural scene. Writing in *The Freewoman* in 1912, West had dismissed the prejudice of

considering domesticity tame. Nobody holds such a heresy. Domesticity is essentially dramatic, for drama is conflict, and the home compels conflict by its concentration of active personalities in a small area. The real objection to domesticity is that it is too exciting [...] People revolt against domesticity, not in boredom, but in terror and fatigue.¹⁶

Written the year before these remarks, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', on its modest scale, articulates the growing recognition at the beginning of the twentieth century that domestic space could be both a site of gendered drudgery and an important cultural arena at the crux of what West saw as the most pressing conflicts of her age. The home stages new tensions between man and woman, and between the ignoble requirements of the body and the elevated spiritual dimension of art. By acknowledging the home as a highly pressurised cultural and conflictual space, with explosive implications, West resists the masculine dismissal of

¹⁵ H. G. Wells, *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902) p. 49.

¹⁶ Rebecca West, 'Book Review of *Manalive* by G.K. Chesterton', *The Freewoman*, I (1912), 334-5 (p. 334). In the same issue, see West's question of how 'could a Feminist worship the industrial system? It makes the same demand from the woman as does the home – physical drudgery, combined with mental inertia' Rebecca West, 'Correspondence: A Reply to Mr. Hubert Wales', *The Freewoman*, I (1912) p. 331.

domesticity's relevance to public art and politics. As later chapters in this thesis will show, the gendered conflicts of West's domesticity mutate into an acute strain placed on the home as a protective vessel for patriarchal conceptions of empire in the 1920s and 1930s. By the end of this chapter, we will see how the public importance assigned to private domestic and particularly suburban space before and after the First World War through the Ideal Home Exhibition is in harmony with West's perspective. In Light's terms, 'even if a new commercial culture of "home-making" was conservative in assuming this to be a female sphere, it nevertheless put women and the home, and a whole panoply of connected issues, at the centre of national life.'¹⁷ My argument diverges from this position. Firstly, I am demonstrating that the version of home placed at the centre of England's national consciousness was not secure, coherent, or whole, but rather in a state of crisis; English homes were subject to radical revision by modernists due to the nation's unstable position on the global stage. Second, I argue that the national conservatism Light identifies provided sustenance to Britain's imperial self-image and ensured that the home became a mechanism through which the rickety structure of imperial confidence could be shored up or undermined.

We can see these tendencies emerging as West uses the setting of her narrative in the stultified suburban zone of Petrick to describe and critique a chauvinist delusion of national and imperial power. George's hubristic return to the new villas in Petrick is clothed in the pomposity and jingoism of military parade: 'like all people of weak passions and enterprise he loved to think of Napoleon' and 'he wished a military band went before him'. This bathetic triumphal procession sets up George and Evadne as opposing factions in a territorial dispute over domestic space as he at last realises masculine possession of the feminine domain. He surveys the 'stone hedge of towers of loose brick, trenches and mounds of shining clay, and the fine intentful spires of the scaffolding round the last unfinished house

¹⁷ Light, *Forever England*, p. 10.

[...] Everything was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful', before the narrative voice shifts, puncturing his mirage, to describe Petrick's 'squalid walls and squalid homes where mean men and mean women enlaced their unwholesome lives'.¹⁸ West pillories the masculine desire to colonise domestic space and in so doing contributes to an early 'revolt against, embarrassment about, and distaste for the romantic languages of national pride'.¹⁹ Ultimately, as the twentieth century matured, Kuchta suggests that

If Britain no longer feared reverse colonization by foreign forces, this was because suburbia replaced them as a more viable threat to national identity. Initially idealized as imperial pioneers, suburban males degenerate into ineffectual colonizers, threatening savages, and powerless slaves.²⁰

George Silverton can be understood as a hybrid of all three. His quixotic march home highlights the refashioning of Englishness occurring through suburban space. West's 'attempt to give Evadne a fully lived, historical location in the metropole' Laura Winkiel argues, 'imaginatively alters the geographical and racial boundaries of Englishness. West's story places imperial critique within the affective, generative centre of British nationalism, the home.'²¹ From this alteration comes instability envisioned through the semi-constructed state of the Silvertons' street where scaffolding still marks the 'jerry-built' skyline; the delusions this sight triggers in George are as incomplete or as prone to collapse as the buildings themselves.²² The street's name, 'Sumatra Crescent', also reflects the fact that much suburban construction took place at the height of empire. Kuchta comments on how new suburban roads, particularly in and around London, often took their names from colonial

¹⁸ West, 'Indissoluble Matrimony', pp. 115-16. Cf. D.H. Lawrence's later description of suburban homes as 'little red rat-traps', D. H. Lawrence, 'Then Disaster Looms Ahead: Mining-Camp Civilization', *Architectural Review* 68 (1930), 47-50 (p. 50).

¹⁹ Light, *Forever England*, p. 8.

²⁰ Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire*, p. 15.

²¹ Winkiel, *Modernism, Race, and Manifestos*, p. 141.

²² Peter Craig, 'The House That Jerry Built? Building Societies, the State and the Politics of Owner-Occupation', *Housing Studies*, 1 (1986), 87-108.

possessions, battles, and military leaders. Battersea has four street names linked to the Second Afghan War, three to the Sudan campaign, and one each to the 1857 Indian ‘Mutiny’ and the 1867 Ethiopian invasion. Norwood has six roads named for places in the West Indies.²³ Alongside whatever connotations of comfort and security this might imply, enfolding the colonial periphery into the metropole, suburbia also delivered imperial anxieties of national impotence to the very hearth of the middle- and lower-classes.

The rest of this chapter will demonstrate how major public exhibitions of domestic spaces at the Ideal Home Exhibition as well as avant-garde theories of modernist architecture share a concern for many of the issues raised in West’s story. Although it is a brief anomaly buried in the pages of *Blast*, ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ should heighten our awareness of how suburbia’s imperial and nationalist significations can be brought to bear on a modernist context. Literary critics and scholars of vorticism have long considered ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ to be a distraction or a compromise to the vorticist aesthetics supplied by Lewis and others in the two issues of *Blast*. ‘Much of the non-theoretical writing in *Blast* No. 1 had dangerously weakened the magazine’s cohesion,’ wrote Richard Cork in 1976, ‘Explosive in its emotional outpourings, her story nevertheless remained surprisingly conventional in style’.²⁴ Only recently have scholars begun to challenge such assessments.²⁵

My position attends to how the concerns of West’s suburban narrative are also the concerns of vorticism’s fascination with the built environment: physical and mental degradation, empire, and nation. Lewis’s aesthetic bombardiering shares a symbiotic relationship with the ostensibly quiet but actually fractured, neurotic, and potentially

²³ Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire*, p. 26.

²⁴ Richard Cork, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age: Origins and Development*, vol 1 (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976) p. 291.

²⁵ Laura Winkiel *Modernism, Race, and Manifestos*, pp. 138-44; Chris Mourant, ‘Rebecca West, the Forgotten Vorticist?’, *Modernist Cultures*, 14 (2019), 469-497; Hertz, ‘The Gender of Form and British Modernism’; and Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism: The Women of 1928* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

explosive lives of suburban families. Modernity is confronted through avant-garde and popular cultures' communication and mutual challenge through a nexus of imperialism and nationalism, rather than remaining exclusively enshrined in the pages of the radical journal. Before examining vorticism and its associated theories of architecture at length, it is necessary to show how architectural modernity developed in its suburban, semi-detached forms.

Marketing the National Glory

'The foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the People' is a quotation from King George V, printed on the first page of the 1912 catalogue of the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition.²⁶ It immediately establishes the domestic focus as well as the national and imperial scope of an exhibition which, from its inception in 1908, would come to have a major impact on how domesticity was reimagined and experienced in twentieth-century England. The reuse of these words, originally uttered at the Convocation of York on 8 July 1910, set out what appeared to be at stake in a presentation of domestic goods. The 'National Glory' would now be dependent on the decoration, cleanliness, and architectural quality of the home of the English everyman, and -woman. 'Home' assumes its sonorous national reverberation demarcating a collective moral and political identity, affirming the geographical borders of the metropole, while extending towards the wider empire and more distant sources of the 'National Glory'.²⁷

At its core, the annual Ideal Home Exhibition was an exposition of commercial traders specialising in domestic goods: architects, furniture designers, manufacturers of home

²⁶ *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue 1912* (London: Associated Newspapers, 1912) p. 4.

²⁷ See Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) and Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

appliances, windows, flooring, plumbing, lighting, gardening equipment, interior designers, roofing experts, even musical instrument makers and children's education specialists. Upon further investigation, however, it reveals itself to be fertile ground for a study of how middle- and lower-class domestic life England, through its turn to modernity, became a locus of debates around national identity. Considering the suburban ideal of this exhibition in relation to theories of modern architecture opens the scope of this study from elite, avant-garde diagnoses of the tenuous position of English nationalism to mainstream, popular recognition of the same issue. To read the overt imperial semaphore of suburbia against the more oblique strategies of modernist canons of literature and design reveals the mutuality of these usually siloed categories. Both are involved in the domestication of England's imperial and national identity.²⁸ This dual focus confronts a faulty assumption common to conventional histories of the period that cosmopolitan modernism attacked the vulnerable underbelly of a national culture seemingly hostile to their work, while popular culture rallied to its defence.²⁹ Through this breadth of vision we can gain a more complete understanding of popular and avant-garde culture's joint investment in the home as a cultural arena in which national anxieties of empire could be eased. The Ideal Home Exhibition has been a long-running phenomenon from 1908 until the present day, 'a national event and an imaginative space within which the contradictions of commodity society – between past and future, art and technology, familiar and exotic – have been played out.'³⁰ The exhibition was consistently attentive to popular expectations of domestic architecture and design, and according to the design historian Kjetil Fallan, these 'vast masses of modern material culture not conforming to the modernist ethos'

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) pp. 43-66.

²⁹ For instance, Robert Burden, *Travel, Modernism and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2016) and Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism, 1900-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981).

³⁰ Barry Curtis, 'Review of *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition: The Ideal Home Through the 20th Century*, by Deborah Sugg Ryan', *Journal of Design History*, 11 (1998), 266-8 (p. 266).

have been ‘excluded from our histories of design’.³¹ The following pages go one step further by pointing out how the historic exclusion of suburban domesticity from literary and design histories confounds any holistic appreciation of how English homes contributed to the renegotiation of national identity in the early twentieth century.

A handful of books published since the 1980s have shed some light on this historiographical blind spot. Ian Bentley, Ian Davis, and Paul Oliver’s *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (1981) launched an impassioned defence of the suburban home against its detractors in mainstream architecture.³² More recently, inter-war domesticity and its economic dimensions have been explored by Peter Scott in *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life Between the Wars* (2013). But above all the following pages are indebted to Deborah Sugg Ryan’s *Ideal Homes, 1918-1939: Domestic Design and Suburban Modernism* (2018). Sugg Ryan’s work redresses the lack of attention paid to gendered roles in the design, decoration, and maintenance of suburban homes and also provides a dedicated chapter on imperial nostalgia in later inter-war suburbia. However, her book leaves scope for a more far-reaching acknowledgement of the nationalistic overtones of the Ideal Home Exhibition as it pertains to imperial decline. I want to place the Ideal Home Exhibition between West’s scathing account of suburbia and later modernist theories of architecture so as to illustrate how their overlapping investment in domestic space placed the home at the centre of a crisis of Englishness in the period.³³ Indeed, it is crucial that we place studies of suburbia in closer contact with the emergent avant-garde in order to understand their hazy boundaries and shared concerns.³⁴ Sugg Ryan

³¹ Kjetil Fallan, “‘One Must Offer Something for Everyone’: Designing Crockery for Consumer Consent in 1950s Norway”, *Journal of Design History*, 22 (2009), 133-149, (p. 133).

³² See also *Little Palaces: House and Home in the Inter-War Suburbs*, 2nd edn (London: Middlesex University Press, 2003).

³³ David Gilbert and Rebecca Preston, “‘Stop Being So English’: Suburban Modernity and National Identity in the Twentieth Century”, in *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Gilbert, David Matless, and Brian Short (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) pp. 187-203.

³⁴ See Nicola Humble, *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

declares that ‘questions of nationhood, patriotism and race were important in the early twentieth century, when Britain was struggling to maintain its economic and military position in the world’, but this thread is not substantively developed in her book beyond her conclusion that imperial nostalgia in suburbia functioned as a ‘reflexive’, ‘playful’, and ‘ironic’ engagement with the past.³⁵ By burrowing into the ‘peculiarly English invented traditions’ of suburban modernity, it is my aim to demonstrate that such suburban concerns are largely those of mass culture, nationalism and the anxieties of a dying empire.³⁶

By 1912 the Ideal Home Exhibition had begun to expand and mature. Taking that year as a sample, we can see how it presented a model for the English home that acknowledged imperial extension. The central feature of that year’s exhibition was the ‘Ideal House’, a fully furnished, tile-hung, half-timbered house. This house earned its place as the show’s single focal point winning a competition organised by the *Daily Mail* in which architects were invited to enter designs according to a certain cost or set of requirements. The winner in 1912 was Reginald C. Fry and the builders were ‘Messrs. H. and G. Taylor of Parklangley, Beckenham, Kent’ (figure 1.1). Designs such as Fry’s contributed to the trend for ‘Tudoresque’ or ‘Tudorbethan’ suburban homes that would establish itself before the war and flourish after it.³⁷ By 1933, the young John Betjeman had coined the additional, affectionate term ‘Jacobethan’ in *Ghastly Good Taste*.³⁸ As its various titles suggest, this

³⁵ This argument rests on the distinction between ‘restorative’ and ‘reflexive’ nostalgia in Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) pp. 41-55.

³⁶ Deborah Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes, 1918-39: Domestic Design and Suburban Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018) p. 19. On ‘suburban modernity’, see Michael John Law, *The Experience of Suburban Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Mica Nava, ‘Modernity Tamed? Women Shoppers and the Rationalisation of Consumption in the Inter-War Period’, in *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, ed. Maggie Andrews and Mary M. Talbot (London: Cassell, 2000) pp. 46-64; Gilbert and Preston, ‘“Stop Being So English”’; David Gilbert, ‘The Edwardian Olympics: Suburban Modernity and the White City Games’, in *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910*, ed. Morna O’Neill and Michael Hatt (London: Yale Center for British Art and Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010) pp. 73-97.

³⁷ R.H. Best records that in term of urban acreage the rate of suburban growth between 1900 and 1920 was 10%, from 2.0 to 2.2 million acres, while between 1920 and 1939 it had accelerated to 50%, from 2.2 to 3.2 million acres. R.H. Best, ‘The Future Urban Acreage’, *Town and Country Planning*, 32 (1964), 352.

³⁸ John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste, or a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1933) pp. 53-56.

A large black rectangular area covering the top half of the page, indicating that the image content has been redacted for copyright reasons.

Image redacted due to copyright

1.1 Frontispiece and title page from *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue, 1912*, showing that year's prizewinning house, designed by Reginald C. Fry.

architectural style disregarded precise periodisation, and frivolously conflated historic architecture from across the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. So-called ‘cottage homes’ were modelled on the notion of a small country house associated with a rural, manorial and Protestant ‘Merrie England’, and at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1910 an entire Tudor village was one of the main attractions.³⁹ Reflecting on this material, Sugg Ryan has invoked Raphael Samuel’s suggestion that the eighteenth century ‘elevated the stately home to a pinnacle of romantic esteem while at the same time making the Elizabethan the morning star of the indigenous’.⁴⁰ Sugg Ryan proceeds to the reasonable conclusion that, as Britain faced social unrest, economic instability, and imperial decline, the ‘mock Tudor or Tudorbethan was thought of as inherently imperial, symbolising England’s glorious Tudor and Elizabeth pasts as a world power.’⁴¹

This emphasis on the supposed indigeneity of the Tudorbethan style, and its association with an era of early imperial expansion, cannot obscure the equal and connected role of Georgian classicism within popular responses to Britain’s ailing global influence in the twentieth century. The revival of classical Greek and Roman architecture in the eighteenth century – as Britain’s modern empire began to taste global power – and the rise of the neo-Georgian or so-called ‘Wrenaissance’ in the twentieth century – as that same empire began to wane – may have an even more straightforward claim to be called ‘inherently imperial’. Even stable suburbia felt the return to order after 1918. Indeed, scholars of urban history have shown that the suburb was itself born from an eighteen-century colonial context. White European settlers built on the peripheries of occupied cities, which offered separation

³⁹ Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, p. 140. See also Andrew Ballantyne and Andrew Law, *Tudoresque: In Pursuit of the Ideal Home* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

⁴⁰ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: The Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994) p. 22.

⁴¹ Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes*, pp. 140-41.

from areas of official business and predominantly non-white populations in the centre.⁴²

Susan Neild remarks that, in Madras and Calcutta, suburban living had become the rule for the mercantile and official elite as indigenous farmland was transformed in residential zones for colonial administrators of the East India Company.⁴³ Back in England, the expansion on London's fringes was guided by colonial precedent, as Mark Girouard has shown. Between 1793 and 1809, initial plans for the pristine villas near Regents Park submitted by the surveyor for the Duke of Portland, John White, were 'suggestive of the great houses round the Esplanade in Calcutta' and went on to influence on suburban areas in England popular with East India Company officials.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, with its playful, desirable pastiche of earlier historic architecture (whether from 1510 or 1610) here can be little doubt that the Tudorbethan style was a critical part of how the Ideal Home Exhibition marketed the 'National Glory'. Being forced to conceive of itself without empire with the greatest urgency in over three hundred years, England was beginning to feel the pang of a compromised identity. If the nation could no longer consider itself an unsullied home and wellspring of power, could solace be provided through modern representations of early modern domestic space, with physical and emotional comfort coupled together? Reginald Fry's prizewinning model home in 1912 featured a '6-foot Jacobean sideboard, solid and correct' and 'Jacobean oak chairs with cane seats and armchairs to match':

The air of cosiness is imparted by the warm coloured carpet and the carefully blended colours of the curtains and cushions. Much depends on the choice of fabrics used, and

⁴² John Archer, 'Colonial Suburbs in South Asia, 1700–1850, and the Spaces of Modernity', in *Visions of Suburbia*, ed. Roger Silverstone (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 26-54 .

⁴³ Susan M. Neild, 'Colonial Urbanism: The Development of Madras City in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13 (1979), 217-246, (p. 224).

⁴⁴ Mark Girouard, *Cities and People: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 1985) pp. 278-80; see also Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire*, pp. 16-19.

charming Oriental prints and needle work, to be used as curtains, table covers, chair backs and cushion covers, are quite inexpensive for the purpose.⁴⁵

Cosiness and imperial reassurance go hand in hand with the Jacobethan style. This interior may bear little resemblance to an historically accurate Jacobean room, but its furniture and the house as a whole voiced the vain and sinister hope that England could still strike out to new lands and that the nation's people could be enriched with the vitality of their pioneering ancestors. The stylisation of the text – its tone of effortless style and persuasive emphasis on affordability – reminds us that what the exhibition presented as a normative ideal was, more accurately, a curated demand. The exhibition mandated how its lower- and middle-class audience should understand the relationship between their private domestic lives and a public duty of national aggrandisement.

The political goal of Britain's continued global strength was therefore clothed in the spectacle of a trade fair. The putatively 'care-free and purse-proud' taste for the Tudoresque was promoted through the careful marketing strategy developed by the exhibition organisers. The commercial motivations of those organisers ensured the exhibition's roots were firmly set in the same history of consumerism and mass readerships as the newspaper that conceived it: the *Daily Mail*. Famously, the *Daily Mail* was established in 1896 to capitalise on the increasing literacy rate in Britain due to improving educational standards. Cheaper and more efficient printing methods also allowed its founders, the Harmsworth brothers (later the Lords Northcliffe and Rothermere), to target an audience of unprecedented magnitude. This prompted a change in both journalistic tone and material form: the writing of the *Daily Mail* would be designed as a hybrid of tabloid and conventional broadsheet prose; its features and advertising were selected with housewives, working, and middle classes in mind; its reduced page size was designed to appeal to commuters from the suburban peripheries from Glasgow

⁴⁵ *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue 1912*, p. 11.

to London. Its aim, in short, was to maximize its readership, profits, and influence over public discourse in Britain.⁴⁶

The idea for the Ideal Home Exhibition was born from the *Daily Mail*'s Special Publicity Department, formed by the head of advertising for Associated Newspapers Ltd., Wareham Smith. Acting as the director of the exhibition, Smith worked in partnership with the lively creative force Frederick Moir Bussy, the organising secretary, described by Smith as a 'genius' in need of 'keeping down to earth'. There was no other major newspaper in the country with a comparable department nor was such an emphasis usually placed on advertising revenue. Smith describes how his team prepared pages of advertising related to highly specific news events before they happened (a Royal baby or a shipping disaster, for instance) and targeted overlooked demographics in order to draw in advertisers usually averse to buying space in the pages of a paper like the *Daily Mail*. He termed this technique 'working ahead of history', and it was frequently targeted at women and the new suburban masses. It was the pursuit of such untapped opportunities that led Bussy, on Smith's instructions, to discover that almost the entirety of the interior decoration and building industries were hidden from the mass market. Architects or builders would usually be charged with recommending how to appoint a new home with all its necessary fittings, decoration, and hardware such as plumbing. Companies would, therefore, exclusively advertise in industry-specific publications, rather than in newspapers, and would pay architects a fifteen percent commission. Reflecting on this situation in his autobiography, Smith wrote that the architect's

hold was so complete in fact, that the home builder was left with no say whatever in the construction of his house, choice of fitting and decoration [...] Our task was clear. It was

⁴⁶ Adrian Addison, *Mail Men: The Story of the Daily Mail, The Paper that Divided and Conquered Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2017). For the *Daily Mail*'s relationship with modernist literature see Matthew Kibble, "'The Betrayers of Language': Modernism and the Daily Mail", *Literature and History*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2002, pp. 62–80.

important to undermine the influence of the architect without delay, remove his stranglehold from the whole industry – ‘clean up the racket’, as my American friends would say. I was determined that the public should know the various and multitudinous things in existence which could make a house a home.⁴⁷

The architect, in Smith’s characterisation, restricts the market and limits the freedom of consumers. His reference to his ‘American friends’ hints at the economic background and consumerist trajectory behind his activities with the *Daily Mail*. Suburban domesticity would be his weapon in a movement against protectionist trade and toward free market economics then gaining influence across the Atlantic.⁴⁸

The professed intentions of the exhibition were to ‘entertain’ and ‘educate’, but we might infer from Smith’s autobiography that his motivation for showing the British public ‘multitudinous things’ was for his own financial benefit, and that of his employers.⁴⁹ This hunt for capital also accords with the pursuit of power and the political prerogatives of the *Daily Mail* and its owners. The true intentions of Lord Northcliffe and the team behind launching the exhibition were to raise publicity and advertising revenue. When they launched the Daily Mail Exhibition of British and Irish Lace in March 1908, articles in the newspaper suggested that the exhibition was intended to counter the threat of French imports to the British and Irish lace industries.⁵⁰ A more accurate characterisation of the impetus behind the exhibition would be as a calculated attempt by the *Daily Mail* to capture the large female audience in the newly affluent lower- and middle-classes. Looking beyond Britain, Michael Leaf describes how suburban growth and consumption can ‘be seen in the context of a world

⁴⁷ Wareham Smith, *Spilt Ink* (London: Ernest Benn, 1932) pp. 62, 64, 67.

⁴⁸ Smith’s contacts in the U.S., including Herbert S. Houston and organizer of the International Chamber of Commerce, *Spilt Ink*, pp. 165-8.

⁴⁹ ‘To display in a manner and on a scale that has never been attempted before – all that will conduce to the comfort, convenience, entertainment, health and well-being of home life will be the purpose of this Exhibition. It will diffuse a knowledge of the most improved implements and contrivance of inventive science and all else that will tend to the enrichment and easing of life, or the beauty and charm of home.’ See ‘Advertisement for the First Ideal Home Exhibition’, *Daily Mail*, (26 March 1908), p. 1; Deborah Sugg Ryan, *The Ideal Home through the 20th Century* (London: Hazar, 1997) p. 12.

⁵⁰ Sugg Ryan, *The Ideal Home through the 20th Century*, p. 10.

economic system which facilitated the expansion of export markets for manufactured goods on the one hand and the extraction of resources from peripheral to core societies on the other'.⁵¹ Revealing the untapped commercial potential of suburbia could also stimulate the economy of the British empire and maintain its global power.

It is hardly surprising to find 'Oriental prints' (though of doubtful authenticity) and a wide range of goods likely from imperial sources, or those which use the raw materials of empire, in the lists of exhibitors at the Ideal Home Exhibitions. Perhaps we can imagine the non-fictional counterparts of George and Evadne Silverton visiting the Ideal Home Exhibition to purchase their willow pattern dish and (mock-) mahogany furniture. Writing on America in the 1950s, David Harvey has shown how whole industries – in addition to trade in primary resources such as oil, rubber, timber, and metals – were accelerated by the suburban boom in the US. As ownership of a car or certain domestic appliances shifted from a luxury to a common necessity, the neo-colonial extraction of their requisite resources abroad was expanded.⁵² Suburbia in Britain, and the role of the Ideal Home Exhibition within it, can be understood as having a similar function. Swelling sales of consumer goods marketed under the tagline of 'British is best' ensured that 'British manufacturers enjoyed a near-monopoly of the home-market, and in some spheres, world supremacy.'⁵³ After 1926, as Felicity Barnes has shown, the Empire Marketing Board fostered tariff-free trade within the empire with through marketing campaigns that constructed newly linked identities for settler-dominions and native consumers alike, for the economic benefit of Britain.⁵⁴ Suburban modernity could provide a crutch not only on the level of representation, as the Tudorbethan style sustained an

⁵¹ Michael Leaf, 'The Suburbanisation of Jakarta: A Concurrence of Economics and Ideology', *Third World Planning Review*, 16 (1994), 341-356, (p. 342).

⁵² David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) p. 207. For a general summary of this suburban economy in its literary contexts, see Kuchta, *Semi-Detached Empire*, p. 20.

⁵³ Raphael Samuel, 'Introduction: Exciting to Be English', in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Volume I, History and Politics*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989) p. xxii.

⁵⁴ Felicity Barnes, 'Bringing Another Empire Alive? The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926-33', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42 (2014), 61-85.

imperial identity, but also in material terms as suburban commercialism provided economic stimulus through an expanded market for consumer goods. While it is unlikely that the King could have understood the material validity of his declaration in 1910, the ‘National Glory’ would indeed be founded, in a direct economic sense, on the ‘homes of the People’.

Smith realised that he would be taking lucrative opportunities out of the hands of domestic architects and, in order to guarantee the profession’s involvement in his enterprise, he established the *Daily Mail* Competition for Ideal Homes. Like the design by Reginald Fry in 1912, each year a winner would receive a cash reward and their design would be built and displayed at that year’s exhibition. Affordability was a consideration from the outset. The inaugural prize in 1908, judged by Edwin Lutyens, defined three cost levels: £500, £750, and £1000.⁵⁵ Although naturally varying in size, the designs of 1908 are all but uniform in their architectural conservatism; typically featuring steeply pitched roofs, small windows, and period detailing. Revival styles of Georgian symmetry, arts and crafts ‘Country Cottage’, and the nostalgic mock Tudor are common. In 1913, the still more thrifty display of a pair of £175 ‘workmen’s cottages’ and a £200 cottage constituted the winning selection constructed at the centre of the Olympia Hall (figure 1.2). This £200 cottage, designed by Mr. Ralph Knott, is described as the ‘minimum possible for the working man and his family’.⁵⁶ These details convey a sincere attempt to stimulate architectural practices to service the needs and interests of an undefined everyman figure, and they were met with approval in a review from *The British Architect* which remarked

the ideality of the small, cheap cottage is one so bound up with its initial cheapness that if it is economically sound in its scheme and artistic in general effect we are hardly left free to complain that it is too early English, or too Dutch, or too French, or too Russian. Mr. Ralph

⁵⁵ Lutyens was then still known primarily as a designer of country houses and was only beginning to receive the critical praise that established his stature and popularity between the wars in, for instance, Lawrence Weaver, *Houses and Gardens by E.L. Lutyens* (London: Country Life, 1925).

⁵⁶ *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue, 1913*, p. 9.



Image redacted due to copyright

1.2 Prize winning ‘Model Cottages’, from *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogue 1913*, pp. 6-7.

Knott's modest little cottage then, with its good form and picturesque black gable counts for much in this exhibition.⁵⁷

As with the winning design in 1912, the house's conformity to national 'styles' is under the microscope. Even though its priority is to be economical, and so criticism based on its divergence from certain archetypes is considered less relevant, the reviewer returns with comfort to the cottage's mock Tudor gabbling. Through such commentary we can see the centrality of national and imperial identity to the domestic ideal presented at the exhibition. Even as principles of economy and efficiency are introduced – an implicit challenge to the bourgeois preference for abundance and accumulation central to suburban economic power – national characteristics and English superiority are upheld as a constant. Such rational home planning with convenience and health in mind was a dramatic step beyond the Victorian home or cramped terrace in which many visitors would have been raised.⁵⁸ In one extreme example, one reviewer in 1913 noted the futuristic advancement in domestic labour and reported on a house managed entirely by automated electric appliances. Machines would serve dinner and drinks and clean up afterwards; all heating was electric with 'no fireplaces, no dustpans, brooms, coal cellars, or dirt'; the 'whole house is an electric dream, or nightmare [...] sufficiently tidy and inhuman to figure in one of Mr. Wells's novels of the future'.⁵⁹ Futurist zeal, the review observed, could easily spill over into a vision of dystopic modernity.

Within these spaces innovative gas cookers barged their way onto traditional cottage floor plans, modern windows poked through black timber gables, new-fangled vacuum cleaners prowled cottage carpets, electric fires slotted under faux seventeenth-century

⁵⁷ 'The Ideal Home Again' *British Architect*, (10 October 1913), p. 255.

⁵⁸ See Gill Speight, 'Who bought the interwar semi? The socio-economic characteristics of new-house buyers in the 1930s', *University of Oxford Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, 38 (December 2001), pp. 1–35; and Mark Swenarton and Sandra Taylor, 'The Scale and Nature of the Growth of Owner-Occupation in Britain between the Wars', *Economic History Review*, 38 (1985), 373–392.

⁵⁹ 'Ideal Homes', *Manchester Guardian* (9 October 1913), p. 7.

mantels. The isolation of a distinctly English domestic modernity was pursued as a marketable commodity. The issue at stake here is that the technological advances of suburbia, presented and promoted by the Ideal Home Exhibition, participated in the modernisation not only of English homes, but also of the notions of national and imperial belonging those homes harboured. These material and ideological shifts occurred on a vast scale designed to embrace mass audiences and popular taste as suburban consumerism came to represent a parallel modernity to modernist architectural theory, to which I will now turn. Both contributed to a reckoning with Britain's changing position in the world system and the crisis of identity that ensued. While this may involve the steadfast celebration of England's glorious past as a world power, as identified by Sugg Ryan, the 1910s and 1920s also introduced fresh contingency and doubt at the centre of this system of domestic identification as the empire waned and modern conveniences, like modern aesthetics, made homes life less familiar.

Modern Identities: Roger Fry and Frederick Etchells

Until the 1980s, the value of suburbia and its 'pluralist aesthetic' had been overlooked in histories of modern British culture.⁶⁰ The work of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, particularly their highly influential *Learning from Las Vegas* (1974), and its transatlantic extension into a British context by texts such as *Dunroamin* by Bentley, Davis, and Oliver (1981), addressed this issue.⁶¹ Despite the wealth of subsequent scholarship on the topic during the intervening decades, it remains isolated from conventional definitions of avant-garde modernist design, and questions of how, if at all, these two seemingly antagonistic

⁶⁰ Paul Oliver, Ian Davis, and Ian Bentley, *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1981) p. 196. For an example of attacks against the 'ugliness' of suburbia see Arthur M. Edwards, *The Design of Suburbia: A Critical Study in Environmental History* (London: Pেমbridge, 1981).

⁶¹ For a survey of the scholarship on England's inter-war suburbs until the millennium, see Mark Swenarton, 'Tudor Walters and Tudorbethan: Reassessing Britain's Inter-War Suburbs', *Planning Perspectives*, 17 (2002), 267-286.

discourses of popular and elite culture might interact through domestic space. The oil and water of giddy suburban plurality and austere modernist singularity remain resolutely separate; debates around the modern home, whether modernist or suburban, continue to be polarised. This section will explore how, as semi-detached middle-class domesticity consolidated its hold on the national imagination, avant-garde architectural ideas also began to court popular tastes and to raise themselves to the level of a national concern. I suggest that only through an understanding of avant-garde and popular discourse according to their points of contact and sympathy can we accurately gauge the ways in which the modern home in England took up its privileged place within national-imperial anxieties. I will begin by looking at Roger Fry's writing on architecture and design in the 1910s and 1920s, before turning to his venture with the Omega Workshops – an interior design and furnishing company founded with Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant as co-directors – and their display at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913. Fry's writing and practical work on his own home, Durbins in Surrey, and at the Omega, demonstrates an often-overlooked desire to grapple with popular suburban design on its own terms in order to improve it, rather than establishing a hostile counter-paradigm. Next, I will highlight Frederick Etchells as a connective figure between Fry's earlier writing and the architectural theory of Wyndham Lewis, and between the Omega and Le Corbusier, whose *Vers une architecture* Etchells translated in 1927.⁶² He is a missing node in a network of ideas that helps to build a more complete picture of how, from its pre-history within the arts and crafts movement and the writing of W.R. Lethaby, modernist architecture awoke into self-recognition in the early twentieth century, and more specifically, how this involved recourse to narratives of nationalism and imperialism. The disruptive effects of Etchells's translation and its role in encouraging modernist architecture

⁶² For a brief account of Fry's influence on Etchells and the significance of 'The Architectural Heresies of a Painter' to discussions of functionalism, see Malcolm Dickson, 'Etchells (1886-1973)', (Architectural Association, 2005), pp. 27-30.

in England will illustrate how modernists and suburbanites shared an investment in the Englishness of their homes, even while the new architecture appeared to emphasise deracination. As this section progresses, the focus on suburbia will recede as we gain clarity on issues of national and imperial identities, which are the unifying theme of this thesis. Suburbia will, however, recur in the context of neo-Georgian housing in chapter three and the urban sprawl of the late 1930s in chapter four.

In 'Art and Socialism', published in 1912, Roger Fry launched his project of improving the standard of the applied arts. His choice of case study is telling: the interstitial semi-home of suburbia – a railway station waiting room. Such spaces were a crucial valve in circulatory systems of commuter-ville, with their urge toward comfort and familiarity and their attempt to please the many-faced everyman on his journey into the city.⁶³ Fry vehemently attacked the 'eczematous eruption of pattern' found in the mass manufactured decoration of the room. Already this shows a prescient glimmer of the formalist emphasis on purity as a treatment to a medical condition, be it a systemic cancer or a minor inflammation. His essay insisted that 'the artistic idea must undergo a process of disinfection.' A purgative is necessary, he claims, to relieve the pressure commercialism exerts upon creative activity. Capitalist consumption is a contagion quickly passed from aesthetic producers to consumers, resulting in 'a populace whose emotional life has been drugged by the sugared poison of pseudo-art'.⁶⁴ This discourse of health became an endemic feature of later architectural writing between the wars, including by Le Corbusier, and would evolve beyond Fry's definition. Yet at this moment, Fry understood art and design as offering only a quack

⁶³ Fiona Fisher, 'Inside London's Railway Termini, C.1870-1939', *London Journal*, 45 (2020), pp. 211-239; Matthew Beaumont and Michael J. Freeman, *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007); Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶⁴ Roger Fry, 'Art and Socialism', in *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920) pp. 49, 46. First published as 'The Artist in the Great State', in *Socialism and the Great State*, ed. H.G. Wells (London: Harper, 1912).

remedy to the economic disease of capitalism rather than a cure. In apparent opposition to the Ideal Home Exhibition, 'Art and Socialism' proposes that domestic design can revivify the artist and the entire domestic, social, and economic system within which the artist operates.

This attitude of social decay and creative resurgence, which originates in the writing of Augustus Pugin and was further popularised through that of John Ruskin and William Morris, is marked by national specificity.⁶⁵ For instance, compare Fry with Pugin writing in 1841:

England is rapidly losing its venerable garb; all places are becoming alike; every good old gabled inn is turned into an ugly hotel with a stuccoed portico, and a vulgar coffee-room lined in staring paper, with imitation scagliola columns, composition glass frames, an obsequious cheat of a waiter and twenty percent added to the bill on the score of the modern and elegant arrangements.

Like Fry's critique of pattern, Pugin targets the 'staring paper' and superficial stucco of vulgar semi-domestic space: the hotel and coffee room. These materials fail to venerate the notion of England that Pugin holds dear. From his celebrated text *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, these words are preceded by a statement that would become a central, though uncredited, tenet of twentieth-century modernism:

The two great rules for design are these: first, that there should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety; second, that all ornament should consist of enrichment of the essential construction of the building. The neglect of these two rules is the cause of all the bad architecture of the present time.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ See Clive Wainwright, 'The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century', in *Modernism in Design*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (London: Reaktion, 1990) pp. 26-39 (pp. 28-29).

⁶⁶ Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St. Marie's, Oscott* (London John Weale, 1841) pp. 56, 1. Cf. 'Structure conditions ornament, not ornament structure', Edith Wharton, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), in *Edith Wharton: The Dover Reader*, ed. Jim Miller (Mineola, New York: Dover, 2015) p. 15.

Already, here, we can infer that efficient and functional architecture could become the appropriate ‘garb’ of national veneration. Pugin’s ideas were popularised by Ruskin and reached C.R. Ashbee, the designer and founder of The Guild and School of Handicraft, who Fry befriended while studying at Cambridge. These ideas would have been fundamental to the teaching Etchells received in arts and crafts principles at the Royal College of Art between 1908 and 1911, and in 1913, Etchells would have encountered them re-formed at the Omega. ‘In designing furniture’, Fry wrote in the Omega’s catalogue, ‘we have considered comfort and practical needs first, and have tried to embody these in design of extreme simplicity and architectural fitness.’⁶⁷ Here are Pugin’s principles rearticulated by Fry, repackaged for modern audiences. With a greater insistence upon stripped-back, functional design freed from fussy patterns, this would have appeared an attractive new prospect to remodel modern life and suburban space to a generation of young modernists.⁶⁸

Fry’s argument extended from interiors to their architectural envelope. When imagining how domestic space might be improved, ‘rational’, ‘purposeful’, and ‘utilitarian’ are key words in his lexicon. He argues that increasingly mechanical building methods ‘if confined to purely structural elements, are capable of beauty of a special kind, since they can express the ordered ideas of proportion, balance, and interval as conceived by the creative mind of the architect.’⁶⁹ By articulating the basic tenets of structural rationalism as it was developed and popularised across Europe during the inter-war period, Fry marks himself out as one of the most sensitive and forward-thinking contributors to architectural discourse in England. Order, purity, proportion, the beauty of unornamented utility: these were previously

⁶⁷ Omega Workshops Ltd., *Descriptive Illustrated Catalogue*, p. 7, quoted in Judith Collins, *The Omega Workshops*, p. 59.

⁶⁸ On Fry’s debts to the Scottish art and crafts designers A.H. Mackmurdo and Charles Rennie Mackintosh see Christopher Reed, *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture) pp. 38-41.

⁶⁹ Fry, ‘Art and Socialism’, pp. 52-3.

acceptable pillars of the arts and crafts movement, yet they became severe and troubling concepts to popular taste once Fry dislocated them from their stolid and conventionalised stylistic trappings. The Omega's products were designed according to this outlook, raising art and crafts ideas to the level of self-conscious modernity. It was amidst such rational and functional design that Etchells gained experience of domestic design.

Fry's architectural ideas were put into practice when building Durbins, a house for himself and his family near Guildford, Surrey (figure 1.3). In an account of its design, published in *Vogue* in 1918, Fry took aim at suburban taste of Tudorbethan and gothic houses found near the site of his new home, suggesting that stylistic revivalism was a fashionable manifestation of cultural snobbery: 'as it requires too much imagination to find romance in the present, one looks for it in the past'. His family's house would instead be built 'without the use of any style' as 'the direct outcome of their actual needs, and of their actual way of life'.⁷⁰ It featured a studio Fry could use for painting and a large living-hall or 'house place', with high column windows, suggesting the influence of recent arts and crafts writing on the rural home as much as traditional Italian domestic designs.⁷¹ The stylistic evasions displayed at Durbins seem to place the house at odds with the Tudorbethan trendsetting of the Ideal Home Exhibition, and its echoes of empire. Within the landscape, Durbins manages to be unapologetically boxy and largely symmetrical without suggesting Georgian precedents. His rejection of the rambling, uneconomic footprint of neo-Gothic arts and crafts norms meant the main façade would have been rendered blockish by the condensed plan if it were not lightened by pilasters. Confirming its modernist credentials, Alan Powers has compared Fry's home to Le Corbusier's first houses, and Nikolaus Pevsner has drawn parallels between Durbins and the domestic buildings of the modern Austrian architect, Adolf Loos. Pevsner

⁷⁰ Fry, 'A Possible Domestic Architecture' in *Vision and Design*, p. 191.

⁷¹ M.H. Baillie Scott, 'A Country Cottage', *The Studio* (1902), p. 86; see Louise Campbell, *Studio Lives: Architect, Art and Artist in 20th-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries) p. 62.



Image redacted due to copyright

1.3 Ray Strachey and Oliver Strachey, *Durbins*, 1916, vintage snapshot print, National Portrait Gallery, London

goes as far as placing Fry's home as 'one of the landmarks in the evolution of an independent contemporary style in English architecture.'⁷²

Yet affinities between Fry's house and the Ideal Home Exhibition do exist. Fry recounts how he consulted 'a friend who has experimented building cheap cottages on his estate' in order to guide his economical design of Durbins.⁷³ This unnamed figure was probably J. St Loe Strachey, a neighbour who had promoted the Cheap Cottages Exhibition at Letchworth in 1905 and recommended the cost-effective mansard roof Fry eventually adopted.⁷⁴ Like the prizewinning 'minimum' requirement workmen's cottages he would see displayed at Olympia in 1913, Fry's pursuit of an efficient, economical design led him away from style towards self-conscious modernity.⁷⁵ Both he and the Ideal Home Exhibition made the assertion that efficient modern methods ought to entail ambitious aspirations of social change. Instead of being seduced by the antagonistic dichotomy between avant-garde and popular culture, we can see how the organisers of the Ideal Home Exhibition, like Fry, aspired to a new English identity as modern, domestic reformists, albeit using technologies of labour-saving, domestic efficiency rather than Fry's aesthetics. A final affinity between the two is raised through Fry's comment that 'I wanted a town house and a small garden in the country.'⁷⁶ Like the suburban homeowner, Fry wanted the pleasures of the country with the convenience of a town house.⁷⁷ Although Fry was a dedicated Francophile, this tint of suburbia ought to figure in our understanding of his architectural design and its ramifications for the development of modernist domestic architecture in England. This link is half-

⁷² Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Surrey* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962) p. 289.

⁷³ Fry, 'A Possible Domestic Architecture', pp. 190-4.

⁷⁴ Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 59. John St Loe Strachey (1860–1927) was cousin to Lytton Strachey and father to Amabel Williams-Ellis, the editor and writer, who married the architect Clough Williams-Ellis in 1915.

⁷⁵ Cf. 'Only when economy has banished the architect do we see masonry of any merit', Clive Bell, *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914) p. 221.

⁷⁶ Fry, 'A Possible Domestic Architecture', p. 192. Louise Campbell reads this as riposte to William Morris's advice to 'build country fashion in the country if possible', see Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 58.

⁷⁷ After the war, with his children grown up, the inconvenience of this semi-urban existence eventually led Fry to abandon Durbins as the need for a full-time home in central London asserted itself. See Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 67

acknowledged by Louise Campbell's recent claim that 'Durbins served as pivot between a home-centred Edwardian culture and a more modern future', but it is my contention that rather than a pivot – an either-or turn from one state to another – Durbins helps enfold Edwardian conceptions of home into the fast-arriving modern future.⁷⁸

Bearing in mind how Fry denounced popular taste for revival style and the lowbrow snobbery of suburbia, his assent to exhibit the furnishings of the Omega Workshops at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1913 is a curious landmark of pre-war English cultural history. Fry had founded the Omega following the controversial success of his two post-impressionist exhibitions in 1910 and 1912. His intention was to provide work for his struggling coterie of avant-garde painters, but also to ensure the suffusion of post-impressionist aesthetics into the warp and weft of everyday life. It was to be a practical display of how some of the most innovative and unsettling principles of modern art belonged not on canvas-clad gallery walls, but built into the home, covering chairs, curtains, embodied in ceramics, lampshades and sundry domestic objects.⁷⁹ Yet it was also, Fry claimed, a 'definitively English tradition'.⁸⁰ The endeavour was to be deeply collaborative with similarities to the arts and crafts guilds such as the one founded by Fry's old friend from Cambridge, C. R. Ashbee. Members included Frederick and his sister Jessie Etchells, Henri Doucet, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Winifred Gill, Cuthbert Hamilton, Nina Hamnett, Wyndham Lewis, Christine and her brother Paul Nash, and Edward Wadsworth. These diverse talents, with a conspicuous lack of trained craftspeople, independently or collaboratively created decorative designs for fabrics, clothing, painted furniture, or folding screens before submitting them to a central portfolio from which selections could be drawn when a pattern or motif was needed for a particular object. A precursor to this collective approach had occurred in 1911 when Fry had worked with

⁷⁸ Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 56.

⁷⁹ Roger Fry, 'The Artist as Decorator', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 207-11.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Frances Spalding, *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (London: Granada, 1980) p. 176.

Bernard Adeney, Etchells, Macdonald Gill, Grant, and William Rutherston on the Borough Polytechnic's dining room murals. There 'they all worked together, taking their ideas from one another, developing them along their own lines, and feeling so thoroughly all the time that the work was a common effort that they refused to sign the pictures, saying, "No, these we did together..."'.⁸¹ This elision of the authorial mark or signature pre-empted the Omega where finished works were signed with the Greek letter Ω.

In hindsight it was unlikely such an array of artistic temperaments could have remained cohesive for very long. When Wyndham Lewis discovered that the Omega had been invited to exhibit at the Ideal Home Exhibition, but that Fry had failed to communicate the commission to his fellow artists, he staged a walk-out with as many sympathetic allies as he could muster, and circulated a letter to the press attempting to discredit Fry. Lewis's secessionist group formed the short-lived rival to the Omega, the Rebel Art Centre, and many of them were associated with *Blast*'s first issue the following year. These events, which are fraught with controversy and have been written of extensively elsewhere, are now known as the 'Ideal Home Rumpus'.⁸²

Without needing to extensively recount these details, it is worth noting that Fry's invitation to join the exhibition arose in July 1913, shortly after the Omega had opened. A *Daily Mail* agent (probably from Bussy's organising team if not Bussy himself) approached Spencer Gore to ask for 'a room at the Ideal home exhibition [sic] in the advanced style'.⁸³ It demonstrates that Bussy may have been interested in representing a young generation of experimental painters and designers at his event, but he was more likely to have been enticed

⁸¹ Interview in *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 1913. Duncan Grant Scrapbook, Tate Archive TGA 7743.

⁸² Quentin Bell and Stephen Chaplin, 'The Ideal Home Rumpus', *Apollo*, 80 (1964), 288-94; Judith Collins, *The Omega Workshops*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984) pp. 54-62; Spalding, *Roger Fry*, pp. 185-88; Paul Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art 2000) pp. 95-99; Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1940) pp. 191-94.

⁸³ Letter from Gore to Fry, October 7th 1913, reprinted in Bell and Chaplin, 'The Ideal Home Rumpus' p. 289.

by the explosion of publicity given to Fry's recent exhibitions as well as Lewis and Gore's murals at The Cave of the Golden Calf, a cabaret club near Regent Street. Fundamentally, the Omega had been invited to suggest what might constitute an avant-garde vision of 'ideal' domesticity. Consequently post-impressionist interiors were inducted into a world of commercial viability to sit cheek by jowl with established and conservative elements in domestic English culture. The popular legacy of this shift is evidenced in Nikolaus Pevsner's analysis of the Omega where he notes how the pervasive adoption of Cubist-derived fabric designs in the inter-war years, and Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant's work with ceramic designers like Clarice Cliff in the 1930s, indicates the popular acceptance of the Omega's ideas initiated at Olympia in 1913.⁸⁴ Although it would have seemed an absurd suggestion at the time, the 'weirdly post-impressionist' designs, as a reviewer for the *Observer* described them, were, in actuality, proposing a new orthodoxy for English interiors.⁸⁵ Over time, the ceramics decorated with designs by Bloomsbury artists would join the willow pattern dish as a near-ubiquitous symbol of middle-class domesticity.

Following Lewis's rebellion, the Omega directors – Fry, Grant, and Bell – were suddenly short of staff and completed most of the exhibition display themselves, as well as selecting works already completed by the outgoing rebels. They chose to present a sitting room decorated on the theme of dance (figure 1.4).⁸⁶ Three large painted panels featuring leaping and twisting figures covered the back wall. Mirrors and swathes of Omega fabric covered either end of the stand. A desk, soft armchair, dining chairs and a table constitute the furniture displayed, and the scheme was completed by lamp shades and candlesticks, with painted boxes and a plant pot on the central table. Three rugs were included in the

⁸⁴ Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Omega', *Architectural Review*, 90 (July 1941), p. 45; Isabelle Anscombe, *Omega and After: Bloomsbury and the decorative arts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

⁸⁵ 'Ideal Home Exhibition', *The Observer*, 12 October 1913, p. 18.

⁸⁶ Judith Collins suggests this scheme was inspired by Diaghilev's productions of the Ballets Russes in London between 1911 and 1913, but it also has an uncomfortable similarity to Lewis's mural scheme for the Cabaret Theatre Club, The Cave of the Golden Calf (1912), see *The Omega Workshops*, pp. 57-8.

furnishings. Of the two that can be identified, one is attributed to Etchells. The other is a larger piece by Grant covering the central area of the stand.⁸⁷

Etchells's rug is the most substantial testament to his time at the Omega (figure 1.5), and it can be seen as the beginning of a thread which weaves together the nascent vorticist movement and Le Corbusier's arrival within English architectural discourse. As Judith Collins has noted, Fry chose the rug as the illustration for the carpet section of the *Omega Workshops Descriptive Catalogue*, implying his confidence in it as a successful design which satisfied his ambitions for the business.⁸⁸ The upper portion of the design involves an irregular grid of yellow bars containing two layers of first white then navy blue boxes.⁸⁹ This somewhat rickety frame fixes an abstract arrangement of trapezoids that tower precariously atop one another in the centre of the design. For Collins, this 'almost unbalanced central mass' establishes the geometric nature of Etchells's design, connecting it to his earlier paintings, including *The Fair* at the Borough Polytechnic (1911) and *Woman at a Mirror* (1913).⁹⁰ Meanwhile the design's vertical logic – more apt for a wall-hanging than a rug – offers a sense of mass, foundation, and structure to the abstraction. Together, these features make the architectonic quality of Etchells's abstraction discernible, even at this early stage. His rug design courts the bourgeois, suburban interior while physically interweaving patterns that prefigure his later vorticist contributions to *Blast* where his use of frames and interest in construction becomes overt.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Collins, *The Omega Workshops*, pp. 57-8.

⁸⁸ Collins, *The Omega Workshops*, p. 58.

⁸⁹ The irregularity of Omega products was highly prized by Fry who suggested it displayed the individual sensibility of the artist and their unabashed pleasure in the creative process – a move against the highly regulated finish of modern industrial products. This argument is made with specific reference to textiles from the Congo. See 'Preface to the Omega Workshops Catalog', in Roger Fry, *A Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) p. 201.

⁹⁰ Collins, *The Omega Workshops*, p. 58.

⁹¹ Gerstein also notes that multiple versions in differing size were made by the Royal Wilton Carpet Factory, with a larger rug, completed to the same Etchells design, extant in a private collection, Alexandra Gerstein, *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913-19* (London: Cortauld Gallery in association with Fontanka, 2009) p. 102.

A compositional interest in stability and collapse embedded within Etchells's rug is matched by cultural references that reflect Britain's imperial position and competing European claims on African territories. It featured a hatched border inspired by African textiles, particularly Kuba fabrics from the Belgian Congo – a trace of the 'primitivistic' energy sought through the heavy-limbed figures dancing across the display's back wall (figure 1.6).⁹² Colonial logics of racial distinction had played a central role in Fry's new formalist aesthetic, and in this regard Etchells's rug is representative of much of the Omega's production. Through two essays, 'Art of the Bushmen' (1910) and 'Negro Sculpture' (1920) – later published in *Vision and Design* – Fry established the extraordinary ability of 'nameless savages' to 'create expressive plastic form'.⁹³ The Western artist, by contrast, was stymied by their 'habit of thinking of things in terms of concepts which deprived him for ages of the power to see what they looked like.' His argument was that Western art lacked the vivacity and expressive power of the 'Bushman's' drawing and the 'Negro sculptor's' relief. Nonetheless, where Western vitality was left wanting, any 'sensual defects were more than compensated for by increased intellectual power.'⁹⁴ Urmila Seshagiri's discussion of the Omega Workshops in the context of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* has identified this as a colonialist distinction between the mind and body, and where both African and Western art are lacking, modernism intercedes to extract the benefits of both.⁹⁵

This perception of Western creative weakness and of fresh stores of creative vitality held in colonial territories, might be productively situated in the body of scholarship that recognises links between modernist culture and the decline of empire. Homi Bhabha, Elleke Boehmer, and Edward Said have collectively established the development of modernist

⁹² Gerstein, *Beyond Bloomsbury*, p. 93.

⁹³ Fry, 'Negro sculpture', in *Vision and Design*, p. 70.

⁹⁴ Fry, 'Art of the Bushmen' in *Vision and Design*, p. 67.

⁹⁵ This point is delivered in the context of a discussion of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Seshagiri, *Race and the Modernist Imagination*, pp. 155-163.

A large rectangular area that has been completely redacted, appearing as a solid black field. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

1.4 Omega Workshops, *Post-impressionist Room*, installation at Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition, 1913. Illustrated London New Picture Library.

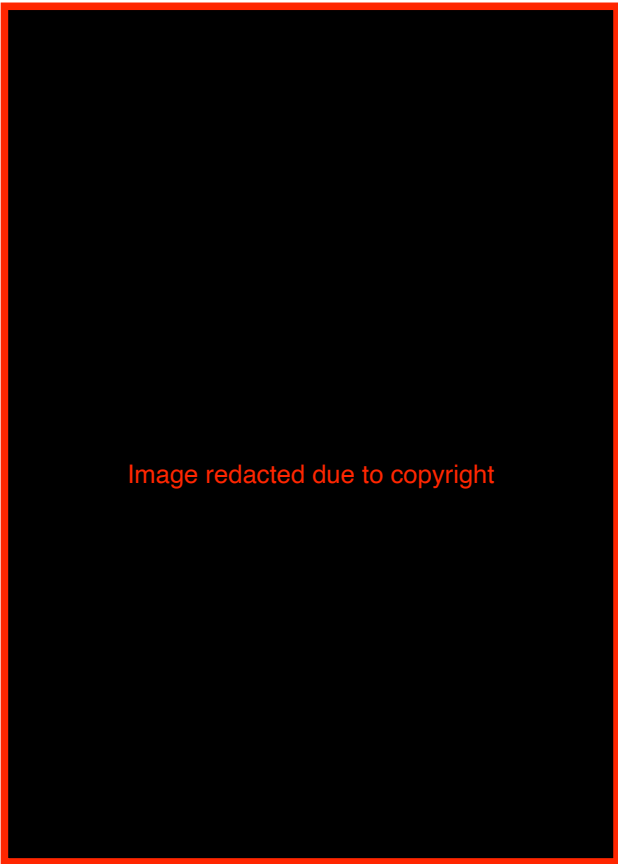
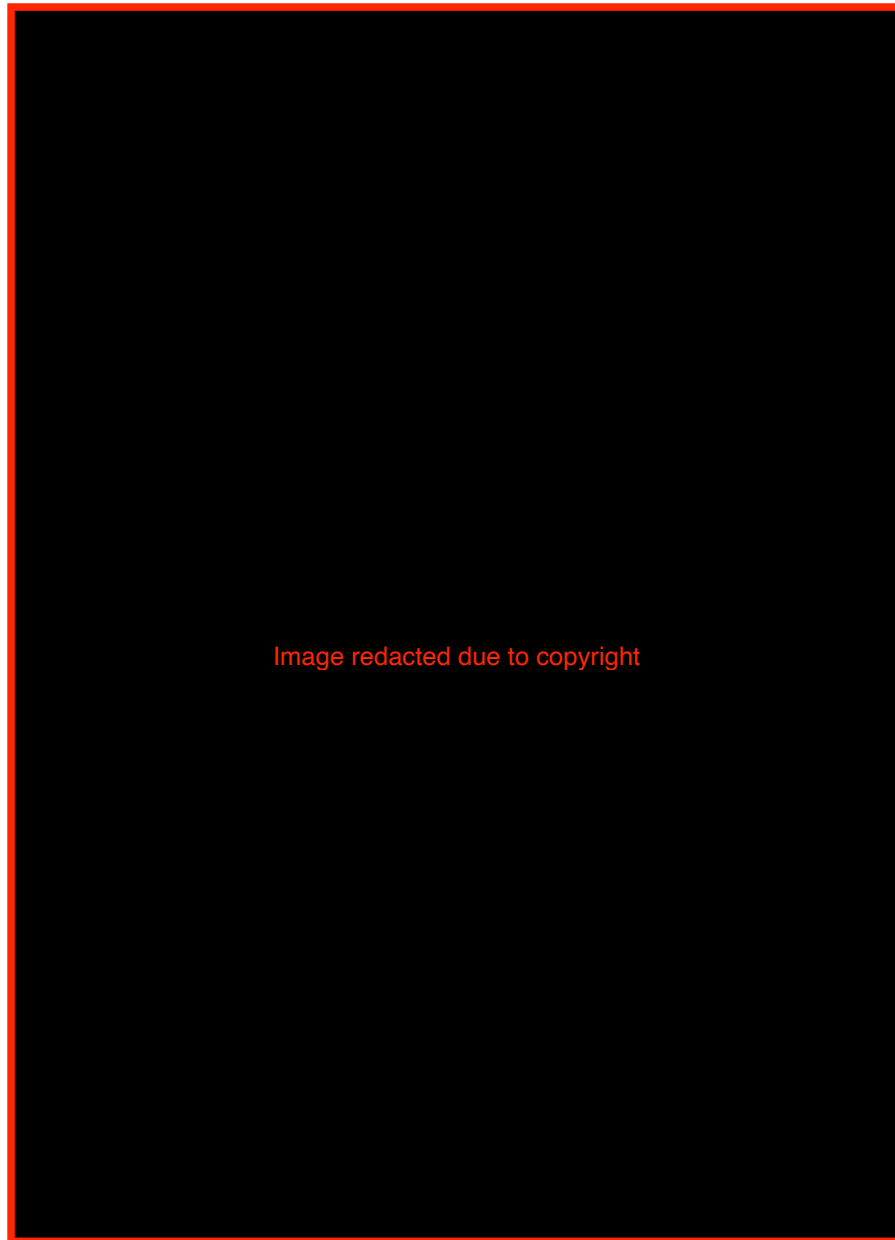
A rectangular area that has been completely redacted, appearing as a solid black field. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

1.5 Omega Workshops (Frederick Etchells), *Omega Rug*, 1913-14, hand knotted wool with jute or hemp warp, Chelsea College of Art, London.



1.6 Unknown maker, *Kuba Fabric*, c. 1900-1949, Embroidered raffia with a tabby woven ground and stitched, Victoria and Albert Museum, London

primitivism as a symptom of Britain's withering confidence in its cultural supremacy, and its mining of its colonies for sources of creative rejuvenation.⁹⁶ Seen in this context, Etchells's rug and the work of the Omega more broadly answer the same anxiety of imperial decline that encouraged suburban homes at the Ideal Home Exhibition to adopt the Tudorbethan style. The avant-garde set out to learn the expressive power of those who Fry had called 'nameless savages', while the suburban semis rapidly spreading over England's landscape signalled a return to reassuring myths of the national past. Both positioned the home as a bastion of English identity at the beginning of the twentieth century, whether through creative vitality or traditionalism.

Vorticist Architecture

With the imperial and national valences of the Ideal Home Exhibition established, from both a popular and avant-garde standpoint, the following section will take a closer look at Frederick Etchells as he is an under-appreciated figure who played an important role in the emergence of architectural modernity in England. His meandering path from being an intimate member of Fry's circle to becoming the translator of Le Corbusier is resistant to a straightforward placement within existing histories of modernism in Britain (figure 1.7). At the Ideal Home Exhibition, he forms part of a collision between post-impressionist and primitivist interior design and the aesthetically conservative but technologically advanced tastes of suburbia. Yet he had joined Lewis's desertion of the Omega on the eve of the show and later contributed to *Blast*, although he refused to sign Lewis's manifestos. His friend later

⁹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994); Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). See also John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Paul Stasi, *Modernism, Imperialism, and the Historical Sense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

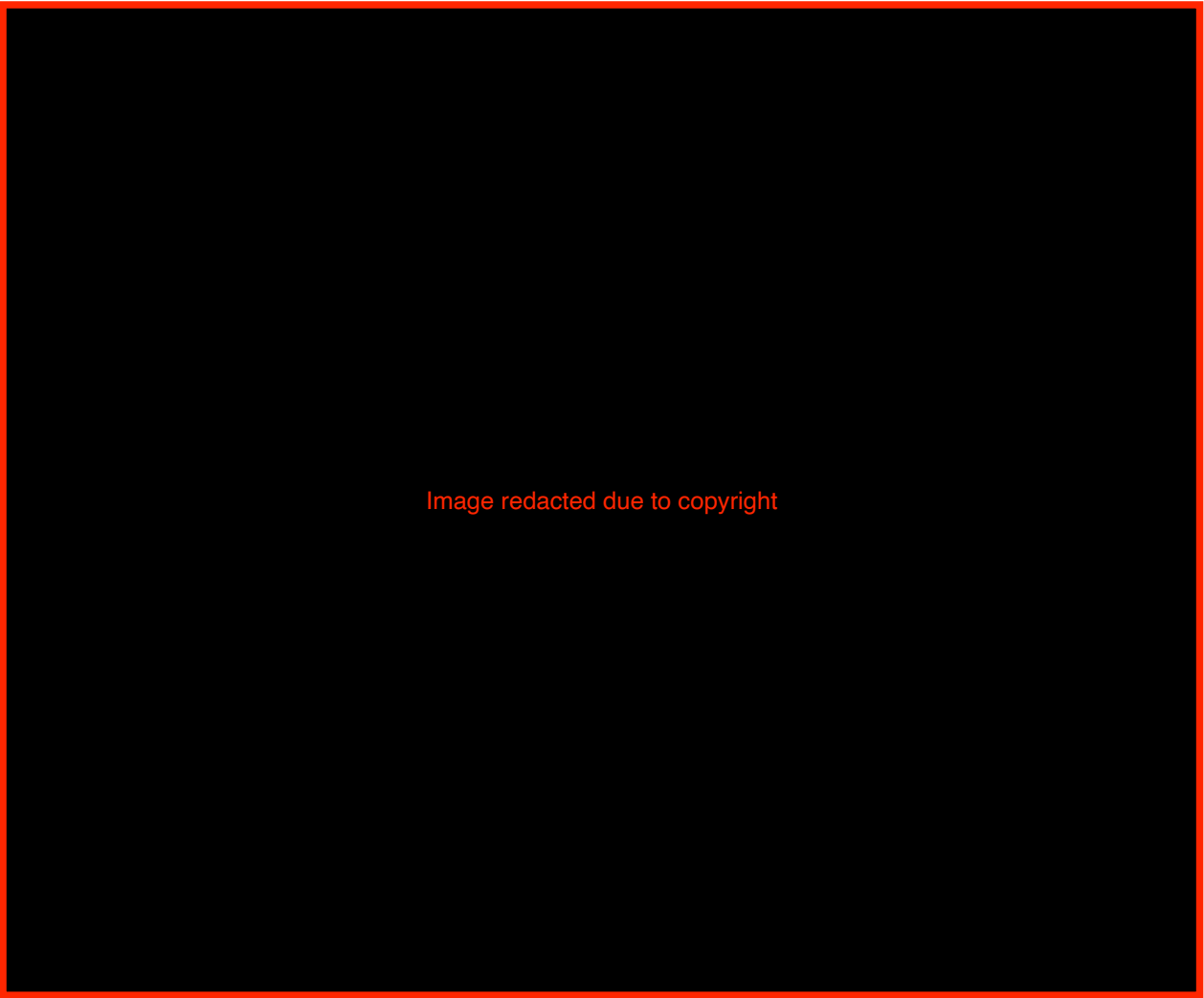


Image redacted due to copyright

1.7 Vanessa Bell, *Frederick and Jessie Etchells Painting*, 1912, oil on wood, Tate, London.

in life, John Betjeman, described him as a man who despised ‘pompous professionalism’ and was uneasy with collective affiliation.⁹⁷ Between 1913 and 1927 his work draws together an assortment of individuals including Fry and W.R. Lethaby as well as Wyndham Lewis and ultimately John Rodker, with the latter commissioning Etchells to translate Le Corbusier’s *Vers une architecture* in 1927. Nicholas Bullock claims that the commission was communicated in Paris, where Etchells spent extended periods of time, and Elizabeth Darling describes Etchells as a peculiar choice for the commission, interpreting his architectural training and work in a neo-Georgian style after the war as a ‘realignment’ which displayed a lack of commitment to the modernist cause.⁹⁸ Except for the accounts provided in these limited critical approaches, the circumstances that led to Rodker commissioning Etchells for both *Vers une architecture* and *Urbanisme* (1925, translated as *The City of Tomorrow* in 1929) remain uncertain as, sadly, much of Etchells’s personal archive has been lost.⁹⁹ Like Walter Benjamin’s historical metaphor of a ‘spade probing the dark loam’, excavating Etchells’s history in the absence of his archive appears a conjectural and fumbling project, with the pursuit of information on him tending towards diversion to other, better-known contemporaries with whom he collaborated, worked under, or shared inspiration.¹⁰⁰ But therein lies his utility to cultural historians. As we will see, adopting Etchells as the flexible spine of the remainder of this chapter helps generate a new, heterodox approach that

⁹⁷ John Betjeman, 'Obituary: Frederick Etchells', *Architectural Review*, 154 (1973), 271.

⁹⁸ Nicholas Bullock, 'Etchells, Frederick [pseud. Batty Langley] (1886–1973), architect and writer' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Darling, 'Institutionalizing English Modernism 1924-33: From the Vers Group to Mars', *Architectural History*, 55 (2012), 299-320.

⁹⁹ A limited quantity of material on Etchells is held at the RIBA archives and Tate, mainly relating either to his time amongst the writers and artists of Bloomsbury from 1911 to 1913, or to his work on church restoration during and after the Second World War. Responding to a request for archival material by the Royal Institute for British Architects in 1966, Etchells reported 'extensive casualties to Drawings and Documents. What few were recovered were stored in a cellar and this involved further losses at a later date', Etchells to Mrs. M. Richardson, 14 May 1966, RIBA Archive.

¹⁰⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings: 1927-1934* (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 576.

demonstrates how English national identity was written into modernist architectural discourse from the moment of its initial popularisation in England.

After Etchells had broken ties with Fry in 1913 and joined Lewis's band of vorticists, discreet architectural characteristics in works such as his *Omega Rug* suddenly became dominant. Paul Edwards writes that in 'inventing Vorticism, Lewis discovered a style that would do justice to his "Futurist" experience of living in the modern city'.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile Richard Cork claims that certain drawings by Lewis evoke 'the surging forms of twentieth-century urban civilization'.¹⁰² Indeed, urban experience and the domestic interior have received sustained attention in scholarship on vorticism, but this has left architecture itself and vorticism's contribution to the emergence of architectural modernity conspicuously unexamined. Pressing issues of modern architectural design are a central feature not only of *Blast* and Lewis's art, but also of his later pamphlet *The Caliph's Design* (1919). When Lewis strikes the pose of a colonial planner in *The Caliph's Design*, and writes of the dislocation and disidentification of modern subjects in domestic space, he is working in dialogue with Etchells's visions of architectural revolution. By understanding the links between their work, we can reveal how the rebels of vorticism were in fact locked into a hostile but indebted relationship with the social and architectural paradigm they saw represented by suburbia and the Ideal Home Exhibition.

In the second and final issue of *Blast*, Etchells contributed a composition titled *Progression* (figure 1.8). The work exists in two formats: a monochrome print as it appears in *Blast* and a fully developed ink drawing. The monochrome emphasises *Progression's* abstract arrangement comprehensively removed from representational reference, but when read from left to right the viewer witnesses the emergence of an architectural landscape. The

¹⁰¹ Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 136.

¹⁰² Cork, *Vorticism*, 1, p. 341.

architectural character of *Progression* is made still more evident in the full-colour drawing where the central band of geometric forms is bordered by an area of earthy brown in the lower left and a clear sky-like space of untouched paper above. Neatly organized boxes are interspersed with soaring towers that pierce the sky while sitting heavily, well-founded, on the ground below. Showing these crystalline shards as if cast down from on high by an omnipotent architect, Etchells illustrates a progression from darkness to light and from urban disorder to the clear rational construction of a new architecture.

Etchells was not the only artist associated with vorticism involved in architectural drawing. David Bomberg was keenly interested in the work of the architect Robert van't Hoff, a later member of the Dutch De Stijl movement alongside Piet Mondrian, J.J.P. Oud, and Gerrit Reitveld. Between 1912 and 1914 van't Hoff was commissioned to complete a house and studio for the artist Augustus John.¹⁰³ His architectural style was already austere, and John praised the finished, strictly symmetrical building as possessed of 'a solidity and tautness unmatched in London – a little stronghold.'¹⁰⁴ Bomberg produced a series of drawings based on a cross-section of the building. The internal structure is revealed and in one sketch the functions of the different rooms are labelled. The preparatory works culminated in a larger gouache painting: *Composition (Green)* (1914-15), a grid of lime green, teal, and sand-coloured blocks (figure 1.9). As Richard Cork has recognised, this work forms a visual pendant to T.E. Hulme's declaration that the modern artist 'passively admires' the 'superb steel structures which form the skeletons of modern buildings, and whose gradual envelopment in a parasitic covering of stone is one of the daily tragedies to be witnessed in London'.¹⁰⁵ The extent to which vorticist activity was shot through with an architectural

¹⁰³ For a more detailed discussion van t'Hoff's building see Campbell, *Studio Lives*, pp. 72-80.

¹⁰⁴ Augustus John to John Hope-Johnstone, quoted by Michael Holroyd, *Augustus John: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976) p. 513.

¹⁰⁵ T.E. Hulme, 'Modern Art and its Philosophy', delivered as a lecture to the Quest Society on 22 January 1914, published in T. E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London:

discourse attuned to the principles of later modern design has barely been recognised, and as such Bomberg's activity and Hulme's comments provide vital context to Etchells's intellectual development.¹⁰⁶

Etchells's *Progression* similarly accords with Hulme's statement by imagining and pre-empting an architecture which was designed to display what Fry labelled the 'structural needs' of a building, and Lewis's work joined him in this endeavour. Grid-like buildings proliferate in his art, from his well-known canvas *The Crowd* (1914-15, Tate) to the cover of *Blast*'s second issue. Several of Lewis's drawings made directly before his enlistment and departure to fight in France – *Composition III* and *V*, and *New York* (1914-15) – display his interest in architectural form and skyscrapers as they appeared in the photography of Alvin Langdon Coburn.¹⁰⁷ These drawings acknowledge with regret that while London was expanding ever-outward in an encrustation of semi-detachment, New York was heroically surging upward.

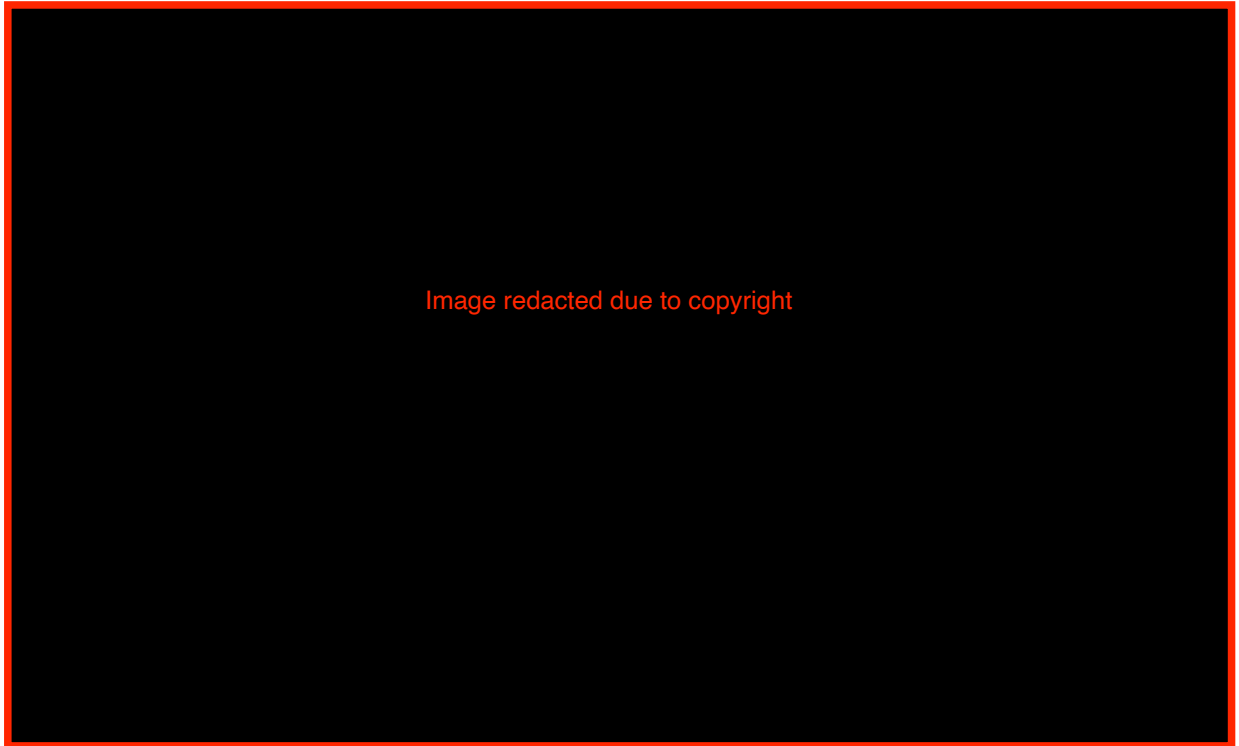
Even so, Lewis's praise of modernity was checked by his consciousness of how its conditions might adversely affect humanity. This is particularly in evidence in *Design for Red Duet* (1915) in the second issue of *Blast* (figure 1.10). Like *Progression*, Lewis's drawing exists as both a monochrome print in the journal and as a fully developed drawing with blue and yellow highlights in watercolour and gouache.¹⁰⁸ The composition includes a cellular

Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1924) p. 105. For Cork's account of Bomberg and van't Hoff, Richard Cork, *David Bomberg* (London: Yale University Press, 1987) pp. 58-62.

¹⁰⁶ Notable exceptions include, Owen Hatherley, 'Casting Spells: The Vortex and the Absence of a British Avant-Garde', *Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, 1 (2010), 1-18; Philip Head, 'Vorticism and Architecture', *Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, 2 (2011), 45-67.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis would have seen works such as *House of a Thousand Windows, New York* (1912) at Coburn's exhibition *Camera Pictures* at the Goupil Gallery in 1913. Lewis's drawings from 1914-15 are also close to Antonio Sant'Elia's Futurist architectural designs of the same period. See Cork, *Vorticism*, pp. 338, 495-6; and Jane Farrington, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Lund Humphries in association with the City of Manchester Art Galleries, 1980) pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁸ *Design for Red Duet* is signed and dated by Lewis as 1915, later than the large oil *Red Duet* of the preceding year. This suggests that once the initial drawing had been used as conceptual study for the more abstract work, Lewis returned to the drawing during preparations for its publication in *Blast*, adding colour and detail. See Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, pp. 171-73.



1.8 Frederick Etchells, *Progression*, 1914–15, pen and ink on paper, The Higgins Museum, Bedford.



Image redacted due to copyright

1.9 David Bomberg, *Composition (Green)*, 1914-15, gouache and varnish, Anthony D'Offay, London.



Image redacted due to copyright

1.10 Wyndham Lewis, *Design for Red Duet*, 1914-15, pencil pen and ink, water colour and gouache, private collection.

form in the top right corner, similar to those that appear in Etchells's works, with recessional square spaces suggesting domestic habitation – a structure strikingly similar to modernist slab blocks that would emerge in the following decades. The main portion of the drawing is, however, given over to two figures facing away from each other and built up from scrambled parallel or perpendicular lines. Their disorder contrasts with the strict grid of the adjacent building. Lewis's essay 'The New Egos' helps to illuminate the uncomfortable, unhomely relationship between architecture and the bodies presented by his drawing:

We all, to-day, (possibly with a coldness reminiscent of the insect-world) are in each other's vitals – overlap, intersect, and are Siamese to any extent. Promiscuity is normal; such separate things as love, hatred, friendship are superseded by realistic and more logical passion [...] Dehumanisation is the chief diagnostic of the modern world.¹⁰⁹

As Paul Edwards has noted, by correlating the image with these words, *Design for Red Duet* becomes 'a visual encapsulation of this mechanical disruption of the human personality consequent on the development of technology, urban structures and infra-structures.'¹¹⁰ I would like to extend this point by suggesting certain vorticist works by Lewis and Etchells are not only diagnostic of problems which arise from urban alienation but are imaginative and speculative, searching for solutions to the kind of lifestyle experienced elsewhere in the pages of *Blast* by George and Evadne Silverton. Lewis conjectures that whatever comfy defences suburban couples might mount against modernity, they too will suffer the alienation of a mechanistic modern world. Working against suburbia, his and Etchells's architectural drawings declared that revolutionary architectural spaces and abstract art had a role in

¹⁰⁹ Wyndham Lewis, 'The New Egos', *Blast*, 1 (1914), p. 141.

¹¹⁰ Paul Edwards, 'What Were Red Duet?', *Wyndham Lewis Annual*, (1994), pp. 37-8; see also Edwards, *Wyndham Lewis*, p. 173.

organising and controlling rapidly expanding (sub)urban areas in order to ameliorate the suffering and ‘dehumanisation’ of massed individuals. Yet if architecture could resolve the most abject conditions of modernity, it could also exacerbate them. Lewis’s *Design for Red Duet* is as much a warning against the fractured selves created by the new spatiality of modernism as it is an endorsement of modern art to provide a solution. As Richard Humphreys points out, when placed in the context of Lewis’s vorticist drama *The Enemy of the Stars*, *Design for Red Duet* is a restaging of an internal conflict or duel between ‘authentic and inauthentic selves, condemned to a deadly, ambiguously sexual dance around one another’. Lewis’s figure of the artist is trapped between the afflicted self and its other: he defends ‘the artist’s elite role as “sacred prostitute”, contaminated by the world but in a deadly combat with it.’¹¹¹

The issue at stake behind Lewis and Etchells’s speculative visualisations of modern architecture, like West’s ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’, is the establishment of a sense of belonging associated with domestic comfort on grounds that did not curb the creative or spiritual freedom of the individual.¹¹² This sense of belonging naturally had a bearing on the interior life of the home. In an essay for the *Architectural Review* published in 1934, Lewis denounced the path modernist design had taken with its ‘severe’ interiors and tubular steel furniture, ‘ultra-puritan in conception’. That same essay claimed vorticism had been ‘in a sense, *a substitute of architecture for painting*’, a project of ‘pictorial architectonics [...] aimed essentially at an *architectural* reform.’¹¹³ These declarations not only signalled the centrality of architecture to vorticist art, but they also suggest Lewis’s ambition to affect a

¹¹¹ Richard Humphreys, *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Tate, 2004) p. 32.

¹¹² Cf. Max Stirner’s conclusion that ‘the forming of family ties e.g., binds a man’ through social constructions of ‘belonging’, Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918) p. 119. Stirner’s philosophy was a prominent influence of the pre-war English avant-garde through Dora Marsden’s editorship of the *Egoist*.

¹¹³ Wyndham Lewis, Walter Michel, and C. J. Fox, ‘Plain Home-BUILDER: Where Is Your Vorticist?’, in *Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings, 1913-1956*, ed. Walter Michel and C. J. Fox (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969) p. 278. First published Wyndham Lewis, ‘Plain Home-BUILDER: Where Is Your Vorticist?’, *Architectural Review*, 76 (1934), 155-158. Italicized in original text.

thoroughgoing shift in England's relationship with its built environment on a more holistic level beyond the home. This line of thinking had grown through his diagnosis of alienation in *Design for Red Duet* and *Enemy of the Stars*, but it culminates in *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where is your vortex?*, which was published by Dora Marsden's Egoist Press in the autumn of 1919.

The Caliph's Design places architecture at the nexus of the relationship between artist and society, forming Lewis's most extensive statement on architecture and its social impact – a dimension of vorticism that had remained largely untheorised until its publication. Several scholars have assessed the pamphlet's international valences, but there is a scarcity of writing around its influence closer to home, in an English context.¹¹⁴ Through his text, Lewis stages a troubled and architecturally mediated relationship between the elite, tyrannical figure of the artist and the world beyond their window which confounds rather than enriches creativity. This fraught dynamic between the self and other voices Lewis's anxieties about creative vitality, which, like Fry's writing on non-Western art, maps onto a broader crisis of national and imperial identity.

The text begins with a parable of the titular Caliph in Baghdad. Dissatisfied with the design of his city, the Caliph rises from bed to complete some sketches before calling for his foremost architect and engineer, named Hassan and Mahmud respectively. They are instructed to carry out the idea depicted in the Caliph's 'little vorticist effort' or else face execution. Thanks to their 'brilliant faculties', within a month, the 'most beautiful plans that had yet been made in Baghdad' were prepared and 'a strange street transfigured the heart of

¹¹⁴ Scott W. Klein, 'Modernist Babylons: Utopian Aesthetics and Urban Spectacle in D. W. Griffith and Wyndham Lewis', *Modernist Cultures*, 5 (2010), 9-29; Kate Armond, 'Wyndham Lewis and the Parables of Expressionist Architecture', *Modernist Cultures*, 9 (2014), 282-303; and Andrzej Gasiorek, 'Architecture or Revolution? Le Corbusier and Wyndham Lewis', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005) pp. 136-45.

that cultivated city'.¹¹⁵ The Caliph represents Lewis's vision of the artist-designer who provides the aesthetic stimulus for the world around him, achieving a more beautiful environment for himself and his public subjects. Crucially, the Caliph, like the class of artists Lewis had in mind, is not immune from the unsatisfactory state of urban design and everyday life. This is a major shift, as Andrzej Gasiorek notes, because 'Lewis recognizes that the plastic arts are limited in what they can achieve culturally if the social habitus in which they exist remains unaltered'.¹¹⁶ To achieve an altered society, Lewis's Caliph articulates his desire for the artist-engineer to bulldoze entire cities and rebuild them according to a 'conscious pattern'. If this appears autocratic, it is rooted in a nurturing approach to humanity, realised through a purgative logic: Lewis proposed a holistic reformation of the built environment for the sake of enriching human life; to defend against debasement in 'animality or mechanism', order, design, and beauty, he affirmed, must be dominant.

Lewis chooses to set this parable in a newly colonised territory. Previously part of the Ottoman Empire, Baghdad and southern Iraq had been captured by the British in 1917, and they would become a formalised part of the British Empire under the Mandate of Mesopotamia through the League of Nations in 1920. Although the title and characterisation of the Caliph marks him as an 'Oriental despot', to borrow Laura Winkiel's phrase, he proceeds with the ruthlessness and disregard of a colonial power, acting as a puppet of the author's white gaze.¹¹⁷ Here, Lewis argues that vorticist insight, as an instrument of 'civilization' exercised through colonial violence, should provide escape or transcendence from debasing conditions, and would in turn foster individual subjectivity and the autonomous realisation of new social values. Yet colonial Iraq is merely a practice ground for Lewis's primary concern in the pamphlet; his main targets were London and England. As

¹¹⁵ Wyndham Lewis, *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where Is Your Vortex?* (London: Egoist Press, 1919) p.11. In later versions Lewis changed this to 'a little vorticist bagatelle', see *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, p. 133.

¹¹⁶ Gasiorek, 'Le Corbusier and Wyndham Lewis', p. 138.

¹¹⁷ Winkiel, *Modernism, Race, and Manifestos*, p. 137.

Ezra Pound recognised, Lewis was involved in ‘the struggle of driving the shaft of intelligence into the dull mass of mankind.’¹¹⁸ By 1919, vorticism’s revolutionary ambitions, so evident in *Blast*, were now fixed to the question of how the avant-garde could attain their desired level of cultural influence if they could not affect changes to the way people lived. Not content to sustain an avant-garde for its own sake, Lewis attempted to overhaul the general aesthetic life and social ills of his nation, troublingly, as the figure of the Caliph suggests, through totalitarian means. To realise this reform of what he described as ‘our common life’, what else but architecture could be the required *métier*?

When attempting to gauge the Anglocentrism of architectural reform suggested by *The Caliph’s Design*, Etchells proves to be a vital link. He qualified as an architect after the publication of Lewis’s text in 1919, which may suggest he was motivated by the new centrality of architecture in Lewis’s work. However, Etchells’s initial architectural training preceded the First World War and there is evidence it was he who influenced Lewis’s composition of the *The Caliph’s Design*. In a key section his text, Lewis quotes extensively from W.R. Lethaby’s *Architecture: An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building*, published in 1912. As a prolific designer of furniture, stained glass, as well as several distinctive buildings, Lethaby counted William Morris, Walter Crane, Edward Burne-Jones, and Philip Webb amongst his close circle. In the words of Godfrey Rubens, Lethaby’s biographer, although ‘his ideas and proposals for reform were neither so eloquently nor so trenchantly expressed as those of William Morris, they were sincere nevertheless and sprang from the same moral and social critique’.¹¹⁹ Lethaby, then, carries the torch for Morrisian utopianism and thereby influences Lewis in his understanding of how the artist might benefit society. The passages that meet with his approval are taken from the closing chapter in which

¹¹⁸ Ezra Pound, ‘Wyndham Lewis’, *Egoist* 13 (1914), pp. 233-34.

¹¹⁹ Godfrey Rubens, *William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work, 1857-1931* (London: Architectural Press, 1986) p. 12.

Lethaby considers contemporary architecture and its future. The commonalities between Lewis's quotations from this chapter and later architectural theory produced by both Fry and Le Corbusier are significant: Lethaby observes the merits of 'modern armoured concrete', his term for reinforced concrete; he encourages the pursuit of 'perfect structural efficiency'; he states the need for architects to be trained as engineers; and above all, Lethaby demands that the 'modern way of building must be flexible and vigorous, even smart and hard'.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, Lethaby's prescription that 'except for a hundred or two of buildings, London needs to be rebuilt from end to end' is echoed in Lewis's proclamation that 'practically any house, railing, monument, thoroughfare in this city should be instantly pulled down', and both resound in Etchells's introductory remarks to his translation of *Urbanisme*: 'for the most part the existing structures are unworthy. The whole urban scene is one of wasted opportunities and inefficiency.'¹²¹ One legacy of this rhetoric was that, by 1930, modernist discourse would be so emboldened that D. H. Lawrence launched the following entreaty, which could have been addressed directly to Lewis's Caliph:

Pull down my native village to the last brick. Plan a nucleus. Fix a focus. Make a handsome gesture of radiation from the focus. And then put up big buildings, handsome, that sweep to a civic centre. And furnish them with beauty. And make an absolute clean start. Do it place by place. Make a new England. Away with little homes!¹²²

Lawrence's stream of imperatives communicates the appetite for wholesale architectural change Lewis and Lethaby had promoted. He describes a classical urban plan even for his

¹²⁰ What is now known as reinforced concrete was variously described as 'armoured concrete' and ferro-concrete before and between the wars. W.R. Lethaby, *Architecture: An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912), quoted in Lewis, *The Caliph's Design*, pp. 23-4.

¹²¹ Lewis, *The Caliph's Design*, p. 15; Lethaby, *Architecture: An Introduction*, p. 245; Etchells, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning* (1929. New York: Dover 1987) p. viii.

¹²² Lawrence, 'Then Disaster Looms Ahead: Mining-Camp Civilization', p. 50.

‘native village’ and so indicates the extent to which the domestic architectural face of England would be reformed.

But why did Lewis pick out Lethaby when his more famous or equally vehement arts and crafts contemporaries were deemed unsuitable? Although Lethaby was well-known, Lewis evidently uncomfortable when reaching back to before the war, to a figure who bases a modern architectural theory on traditional design. Lewis notes that ‘this voice for the right and active vision comes from the unlikeliest quarter’.¹²³ No other architects are mentioned, and indeed it would take until his article in the *Architectural Review* in 1934 for Lewis to acknowledge the most significant practitioners of modern architecture in Britain.¹²⁴ Etchells, however, would have been acutely aware of Lethaby’s significance. In 1901, Lethaby had been appointed the first Professor of Ornament and Design at the Royal College of Art in South Kensington, and had taught Etchells there during his studies from 1908 to 1911, the period in which Lethaby composed the passages quoted by Lewis.¹²⁵ His handwritten draft of a syllabus from the period survives to give an impression of what might have shaped Etchells’s aspirations in this crucial time studying under the arts and crafts master. The innovative classes Lethaby conceived were both practical and studio-based, but more importantly, particular emphasis is placed on advanced students ‘coming into touch with special forms of industry’. This ‘special knowledge’, Lethaby stresses, is fundamental to the student’s development and enriches the school as a whole, a model adopted by the Deutsche Werkbund and ultimately the Bauhaus.¹²⁶ Ever the reformer, Lethaby had founded the Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1896 and his approach to both institutions was based on

¹²³ Lewis, *The Caliph’s Design*, p. 23.

¹²⁴ ‘Etchells, [Charles] Holden, [Amyas] Connell and [Basil] Ward, Tecton, [Joseph] Emberton, [Thomas S.] Tait, Wells Coates, [Serge] Chermayeff, [Raymond] McGrath, [Maxwell] Fry’ are all listed, see Lewis, ‘Plain Home-Builder: Where is your Vorticist?’, *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, p. 276.

¹²⁵ Arthur Beresford Pite was the Professor of Architecture who taught Etchells during the same period. See Nicholas Bullock, ‘Etchells, Frederick’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

¹²⁶ See Dennis Sharp, ‘Introduction’, in Hermann Muthesius, *The English House, Volume 1: Development* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007) p. xiv; and Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978) pp. 9-16.

in his holistic method involving decoration (stained glass, mosaic, tapestry), cabinet work, pottery and porcelain, textiles, jewellery and enamelling, modelled and carved ornament, bookmaking and printed illustration, cast and wrought metalwork.¹²⁷ This was the foundation of Etchells's education in art, and bore fruit in his later work in publishing and church restoration. Lethaby was a cornerstone of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and he acted as Surveyor of the Fabric of Westminster Abbey from 1906 to 1928. Etchells would later cement his place alongside his old master when he co-authored *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship* with G.W.O. Addleshaw in 1948.¹²⁸

It seems highly likely that Etchells introduced Lewis to Lethaby's writing while he worked on *The Caliph's Design*. The two men were still close after military service. Lewis intended to include Etchells in his unrealised third issue of *Blast* and to use his work to illustrate his architectural theories.¹²⁹ Etchells was also featured in the Group X exhibition Lewis organised at Heal's gallery in the autumn of 1919.¹³⁰ It was around this time, Etchells remembered later in life, that 'Lewis spent nearly a week trying to persuade me not to throw up painting'.¹³¹ But to no avail and beside these avant-garde allegiances, Etchells's subsequent architectural career appears conservative. In the 1920s, he worked under Detmar Blow, a leading figure of Edwardian arts and crafts architecture, on London's Grosvenor Estate designing neo-Georgian houses.¹³² Elizabeth Darling has suggested Etchells's reversion to revival styles equates to an abandonment of the modernist project.¹³³ And yet, it is possible to appreciate the continuing legacy of Etchells's avant-garde experience while he

¹²⁷ W.R. Lethaby, draft syllabus, 7th March 1901, RCA/WRL/2005.

¹²⁸ G. W. O. Addleshaw and Frederick Etchells, *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Inquiry into the Arrangements for Public Worship in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Faber, 1948).

¹²⁹ Lewis to Quinn, 3 September 1919, in Wyndham Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis* (London: Methuen & Co, 1963) p. 111.

¹³⁰ *Group X*, (London: Mansard Gallery, 1920).

¹³¹ Cork, *Vorticism* 1, p. 545.

¹³² James Dunnett, 'Words of Wisdom', *Building Design*, p. 21.

¹³³ Darling, 'Institutionalizing English Modernism', p. 303.

worked on more conservative schemes, in part by noting the national and imperial inflection common to both his modernist and revival design. Lethaby's ideas carry complex architectural baggage when placed within a vorticist discourse, and their influence is crucial to understanding the variegated character of Etchells's affiliations. More than 'the right and active vision', Lethaby's writing and the teaching Etchells received from him introduces revivalism and ecclesiastical architecture to the cocktail of allegiances and antagonisms, blasts and blessings, that formed vorticist architecture and are at their most socially engaged in *The Caliph's Design*. What I am suggesting here is that both modernist and revival architectures answered the call to reform collective, English domestic life – in a public as well as a private sense – in the inter-war years. Etchells's double role in these fields is uniquely well-placed to illustrate this, and as we will now see, his approach to Le Corbusier was decidedly moulded by national identity. Just as Lewis's *Caliph* turned to orientalism to shore-up his project of architectural reform, so Etchells's relied on a narrative of national exceptionalism to introduce English to Le Corbusier's thought.

Toward Translation

Roger Fry's activity in London and Paris immediately after the First World War provides some essential context to the exchange between English and French modernist architectural ideas, which will help us to understand Etchells's later translation. Fry would have undoubtedly been aware of Lewis's brazen post-war pamphlet, and he went on to provide fresh, trenchant expression to his own position on architecture with his lecture 'The Architectural Heresies of a Painter', first delivered to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in May 1921. Fry's lecture was a forthright polemic articulated through ten interrelated 'heresies' through which he presents the primacy of the artist for the

identification of architecture's aesthetic and social 'vices'. He extolls the virtues of 'fundamental structural design' as opposed to 'dressing buildings according to the fashion'. 'Our architecture,' Fry declared, 'does not express plastic ideas but historico-social ideas [...] it is founded on social snobbery.' These comments undoubtedly drew on his pre-war writing and experience of building Durbins, as well as his understanding of impoverished sculptural faculties of 'civilised' Western art when compared to African or Asian equivalents. On the specific character of English architecture, Fry writes

We invented, alas! The "cosy corner," and the cosy corner in one form or another marks out most of our building. In the realm of imaginative form we, this great, imperial, adventurous race, appear as burrowing, furtive, obliterated creatures.¹³⁴

Fry was anxious about the engrained comfortable and domestic quality of his national architecture: no longer could English architecture be seen as the brave and questing art appropriate to the nation's global position, nor had it ever truly held such a role. And in 1921, Fry expressed how in the wake of a war that had extended the nation's imperial territory while undermining its confidence as a superpower, call for architectural reform was deemed urgent enough to voice it directly to the RIBA.

As Fry continued, he advocated for two types of beauty in architecture: natural beauty and aesthetic beauty. He explains that natural beauty results from expression of a mechanical or organic function exemplified by a train engine or a panther, while aesthetic beauty is an essentially abstract judgement of three-dimensional form closely associated with sculpture. The 'immense bare cylinders' of grain silos are singled out for praise alongside 'the lines of the man-o-war, or a racing yacht, or an aeroplane, or a steel bridge' which privilege the

¹³⁴ Roger Fry, 'Architectural Heresies of a Painter: A Lecture Delivered at the Royal Institute of British Architects', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996) pp. 222, 212, 213, 217.

engineer's 'purely mathematical calculation of structural needs'.¹³⁵ These lines appear to indicate Fry's direct experience of Le Corbusier's writing, which deploys the same examples of grain silos and modern vehicles.¹³⁶ Indeed, as Louise Campbell as recently shown, Fry had spent late summer and autumn in Paris in 1920 when he exhibited at the Salon d'Automne. He returned to Paris again the following year when he placed an order for Le Corbusier's journal *l'Esprit Nouveau*, joining his bookselling friends David Garnett and John Rodker who were already subscribers.¹³⁷ Not only do they share specific examples of vehicles and industrial design, but the reoccurrence of 'purely' in Fry's argument indicates his synchronicity (if not thorough sympathy) with Le Corbusier, who was then developing Purism, his aesthetic movement with Amédée Ozenfant in Paris.¹³⁸ Although Fry does not cite Le Corbusier, this evidence suggests his lecture in 1921 was one of the earliest airings in England of architectural criticism directly shaped by the French architect's articles which would eventually be collected as *Vers une architecture*. Etchells was, in turn, likely to have been aware of Fry's lecture, which was immediately published as a pamphlet by Chatto and Windus, and this circulation of ideas further imbeds Fry's influence over Etchells's approach to functional architecture and its popularisation in Britain.¹³⁹ One reason Fry did not mention Le Corbusier by name may have been because many of the ideas the Swiss-Frenchman expressed were felt to be already familiar to an English audience; the basic points of functional, efficient architecture having been expressed not only by Fry himself but, as we

¹³⁵ Fry, 'Architectural Heresies of a Painter', pp. 218, 222.

¹³⁶ Christopher Reed suggests Fry was not aware of Le Corbusier at this early stage. See Christopher Reed, 'Architecture and the Decorative Arts', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 174-5.

¹³⁷ Louise Campbell notes that 'Garnett was invoiced for issues 1-12 on 5 December 1921 and subsequently for nos. 13-24. Rodker ordered issues 3-5 on 16 March 1921. Fry ordered issue 10 on 11 August 1921.' 'Fichiers des abonnés: Revue l'Esprit Nouveau', A2-9 [1921], Fondation Le Corbusier Paris. See Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 164, n. 19.

¹³⁸ Susan L. Ball, *Ozenfant and Purism: The Evolution of a Style, 1915-1930* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981) p. 213.

¹³⁹ Roger Fry, *Architectural Heresies of a Painter: A Lecture Delivered at the Royal Institute of British Architects, May 20th, 1921* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1921).

have seen, Lethaby and Lewis too. All three of these voices converge on Etchells who would soon interpret how this new architecture, which was at once European and international, might reorientate the crisis of the English home.¹⁴⁰ The remainder of this chapter will examine in more detail the climate in which architectural ideas from the continent started to trickle into England in the 1920s, as well as the intervention of Etchells's translation, and its implications for national identity in the inter-war years.

The adoption of Le Corbusier's ideas in England is routinely presented as tentative and tardy, but we have just seen how Fry immediately responded to the provocations of *l'Esprit Nouveau*. Similarly, Lewis had shown an early, lively, and idiosyncratic engagement with notions of rational architectural reform. Nonetheless, these aspersions are broadly accurate for England's mainstream architectural press. From its initial publication in 1924, *Vers une architecture* at first elicited only a minor response. In a breathless article for the *Architects' Journal*, Gordon Holt announced that the book commanded attention and respect. Le Corbusier himself appeared as an archetypal visionary to follow and emulate. With a hint of irony, Holt describes how the Swiss-Frenchman surveyed him with an icy gaze when the two men met in his Paris studio: Le Corbusier is foreign and elemental, of sea and air, shrouded in mystique, the 'stormy petrel of French architecture', not a man but a 'dynamic monstrosity' emanating heretical potential.¹⁴¹ As Holt's lyrical account is engulfed in a futuristic haze, he recalls how 'our eyes danced on the walls, and outside Paris sizzled and hummed delightfully.'¹⁴² More sober assessment was offered by Verner Rees. A few months after Holt's studio visit, Rees made the important contribution of translating passages of Le

¹⁴⁰ With railway bridges and factories, engineers are said to have created 'our most creditable monuments' in Bell, *Art*, p. 221; 'forms of machinery, Factories, new and vaster buildings, bridges and works' Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto II', *Blast*, 1 (1914), 30-42 (p. 40).

¹⁴¹ Le Corbusier's name, a version of his maternal grandfather's surname 'Lecorbésier', also evokes comparison to a raven, 'corbeau' in French.

¹⁴² Gordon Holt, 'Some Views on Architectural Education: Interviews with Leading Parisian Architects: Mons. Le Corbusier-Saugnier', *Architects' Journal*, 23 July 1924, reprinted in *Le Corbusier and Britain: An Anthology*, ed. Irena Murray and Julian Osley (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009) pp. 15-17.

Corbusier's book for English readers of the *Architectural Association Journal*. Little comment was given, only that here was a 'radically minded gentleman' whose 'stimulating' ideas were worthy of extended consideration.¹⁴³

Until Etchells's translation, 'Le Corbusier' would remain a name only known in select circles and reserved for the pages of specialist publications.¹⁴⁴ Tanis Hinchcliffe has observed how architectural theory was, in general, only a minor feature of a discipline still largely taught through practice, rather than within an educational institution. An English phobia of architectural theory was eroded by pedagogues such as C.H. Reilly at the Liverpool School, A.E. Richardson at University College London and Howard Robertson at the Architectural Association after the war.¹⁴⁵ In a less formal context Christopher Hussey, a passionate albeit temporary convert to modernism and an architectural writer (later editor) of *Country Life*, set up the short-lived Vers Group to discuss Le Corbusier's text. The group included Noel Carrington, Serge Chermayeff, Etchells, and Anthony Gibbons Grinling. Hussey's personal copy features a mass of annotations that are testament to close and sustained reading.¹⁴⁶ The significance of this gathering, as Elizabeth Darling writes, lies in its unification of a number of figures who would play leading roles in changing architectural practice in England between the wars, and, through Etchells, the association of this effort with a longer tradition of avant-garde culture.¹⁴⁷ Hussey was almost certainly the driving

¹⁴³ Verner O. Rees, 'Vers une architecture by Le Corbusier', *Architectural Association Journal*, September 1924, reprinted in *Le Corbusier and Britain*, pp. 18, 24.

¹⁴⁴ John Summerson remembered the gradual awakening of architectural students to *Vers une architecture* while faced with ignorant teachers at the Bartlett School: 'One began to look at aircraft, at silos, at the streams of London traffic, at clothes, at furniture, with a new interest. It seemed that there was a horizon beyond the Rome scholarship, beyond successful practice, and, yes, even beyond the Gold Medal. It seemed that the real horizon of architecture was part of the horizon of modern life', John Summerson, 'Library Notes', *Architect and Building News*, 159 (1939), p. 36.

¹⁴⁵ Tanis Hinchcliffe, 'Towards a Translation', *Issues in Architecture, Art, and Design* 2(1992-3), 4-14.

¹⁴⁶ John Cornforth, *The Search for a Style: Country Life and Architecture 1897-1935* (London: Deutsch, 1988) p. 77.

¹⁴⁷ Carrington, brother to the painter Dora Carrington and later a publisher and propagandist of modern design through the Design Industries Association, remembered how in 1924 Hussey 'gave me a copy of Corbusier's "Vers une Architecture" and aroused my interest in modern design.' Facsimile letter from Noel Carrington to John Cornforth, 14 March 1979, Christopher Hussey Archive, Scotney Castle, Kent; Darling, pp. 301-2. See also Noel Carrington, *Industrial Design in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976) p. 136.

force behind a failed attempt by Country Life Books to publish an English translation of *Vers une architecture* as early as 1924.¹⁴⁸ He realised that until Le Corbusier's heady rhetoric could be read in English, its power to energise British architecture and its public would be limited. Even Hussey, who spent his days writing of English country houses and preparing notes on the eighteenth-century aesthetics of the picturesque (addressed at length in chapter four), could see the necessity of a radical new permutation of domestic modernity, beyond that provided by the Ideal Home Exhibition.

John Rodker similarly noticed an opportunity to market Le Corbusier's texts to parts of the English public hungry for modernist ideas.¹⁴⁹ Rodker had been part of a blossoming of avant-garde culture from his childhood in the East End of London where he was close to David Bomberg and a member of the Whitechapel Boys.¹⁵⁰ At Ezra Pound's instigation, Rodker established the Ovid Press in 1919 in order to publish the work of artists and writers neglected by most publishers. It was thanks to him that T.S. Eliot's *Ara Vos Prec* and Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* secured prompt publication, both featuring illustrations by Wadsworth.¹⁵¹ The Ovid Press's other early volumes included a portfolio of drawings by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska selected by Wyndham Lewis, followed by a group of fifteen drawings by Lewis himself, who was then preoccupied with completing *The Caliph's Design*.

¹⁴⁸ Jean-Louis Cohen, 'Introduction' in Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007) pp. 48-9.

¹⁴⁹ It is possible that John Rodker was aware of or involved in Hussey's Vers Group. Confirmation of this and clarification on the group's activities may arise from Hussey's still uncatalogued archive held at his home, Scotney Castle in Kent.

¹⁵⁰ The Whitechapel Boys were loose group of artists and writers of Jewish descent hailing from East London. Its members, in addition to Bomberg and Rodker, were Lazarus Aaronson, Clara Birnberg, Mark Gertler, Morris Goldstein, Jacob Kramer, Joseph Leftwich, Isaac Rosenberg, and Stephen Winsten. For a more detailed examination of Rodker's background see Evelyn Heinz, 'John Rodker and Modernist Material Culture: Theatre, Translation, Publishing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2018).

¹⁵¹ 'It is a nice point whether I should have given ten years to this god-damned métier if you hadn't thought it would be a good thing to have a press', John Rodker to Ezra Pound, 24 Oct 1930, Ezra Pound Papers, Yale, quoted in Gerald W. Cloud, 'John Rodker, Printer and Publisher: A Bibliographical Survey' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Delaware, 2005), p. 11.

It is clear that Etchells and Rodker were involved in the same aesthetic debates from an early stage. Like Lewis, Fry, and Pound, both men were often in Paris after the war, and we have already seen how Rodker was an early subscriber to *l'Esprit Nouveau* from 1921.¹⁵² Although Etchells was not invoiced for copies of the journal, it is likely he was aware Le Corbusier's writing from a similar date given his immersion in the avant-garde scene through visits to the studios of Picasso and Braque and friendships with Modigliani and Gertrude Stein.¹⁵³ Later, he and Rodker shared a mutual acquaintance in Hester Sainsbury – a printmaker associated with the Omega, a collaborator of Rodker's, and the woman Etchells would go on to marry in 1932.¹⁵⁴ Etchells had partnered with Hugh Macdonald to found the Haslewood Press in 1924, and so both men would have found substantial common ground their respective small press printing ventures.

Ultimately, Rodker sympathised with the vorticist cause and its plans for architectural reform, but most importantly he shared Lewis's ambition for Britain's place within a cosmopolitan European culture after the war. In the first issue of *The Tyro*, Rodker published a macabre satire of late Victorian utopianism titled 'Mr Segando and the Fifth Cataclysm' which was riddled with architectural asides.¹⁵⁵ In the same issue, Lewis wrote that 'the best chance for English art is not to stand on its dignity, be stupidly competitive, and land-conscious, but to regard itself as thoroughly involved, for better or for worse, with the main intellectual life of Europe.'¹⁵⁶ Rodker enthusiastically put this plea into action. Ian Patterson notes how he dedicated much of his time to a career as a Paris-based translator and

¹⁵² Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 164 n. 19.

¹⁵³ Dunnett, 'Words of Wisdom', p. 20.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Tucker suggests Etchells and Sainsbury first met in 1915, Peter Tucker, 'Hester Sainsbury: A Book-Illustrator of the 1920s', *Private Library*, 3 (1990), 112-36. I am indebted to Evelyn Heinz for bringing this article to my attention.

¹⁵⁵ John Rodker, 'Mr. Segando and the Fifth Cataclysm', *The Tyro: A Review of the Art of Painting, Sculpture, and Design* (1921), p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ Wyndham Lewis, 'Roger Fry's Rôle of Continental Mediator', *The Tyro: A Review of the Art of Painting, Sculpture, and Design* (1921), p. 3.

multilingual writer, which operated hand-in-hand with his work as a publisher.¹⁵⁷ In a review of Rodker's novel of 1923, *Montagnes Russes*, which was written in both English and French, Auguste Bailly announced

nous assistons à la création d'une littérature essentiellement cosmopolite, créée par des écrivains européens, qui n'ont pas le sentiment, peut-être artificiel, des vieilles limites nationales. [We are witnessing the creation of an essentially cosmopolitan literature, created by European writers, who do not have a sense, perhaps artificially, of old national limits.]¹⁵⁸

Rodker's literary approach emphasised the porosity of national and cultural borders. If his novel could exist in parallel forms on both sides of the Channel, weaving French culture into English and vice versa, a French architecture could be built in England too.

A decade later, Rodker's search for an expansive cultural matrix is expressed in his autobiographical novel *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (1932). He reflected how 'In Paris I feel English, in London a foreigner [...] it is only now, well on in life, I realize how much of a foreigner I am, how much of one I always was.'¹⁵⁹ This sensation is undoubtedly attributable to Rodker's Jewish ancestry of Russian-Polish descent, but it also poses the need for European culture to accommodate identities defined by their hybridity and internationalism. Rodker found himself in need of a home without a domestic politics or culture to call his own. From this perspective, where cosmopolitanism hides a bitter pang of deracination, it is easy to understand the appeal of Le Corbusier's writing: here was an architect understood to be proposing the holistic reorganisation of urban life regardless of national borders. Buildings, and indeed the notion of home itself, Le Corbusier declared, must be reformed along certain universal, harmonious principles. Perhaps the appeal of his houses to Rodker

¹⁵⁷ Ian Patterson, 'Writing on Other Fronts: Translation and John Rodker', *Translation and Literature*, 12 (2003), 88-113.

¹⁵⁸ August Bailly, *The French Quarterly*, 5 (1923), 164-5.

¹⁵⁹ John Rodker, *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (London: Putnam, 1932) p. 16.

was the way they defied gravity and connection with the landscape, hovering rootlessly poised on pilotis. They declared a new world for all regardless of their surroundings. However, the ideal of the cosmopolitan erosion of national distinction presented by Rodker's work would face serious resistance from the urge to Anglicise or localise the modernist architecture's internationalist aspirations.¹⁶⁰ The impetus to finally translate *Vers une architecture* seems likely to have been sparked by the combined activity of Hussey and Etchells and the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in Paris in 1925, when, following the lucrative sale of the rights to *L'Or* by Blaise Cendrars, Rodker wondered in his diary 'now if *Vers une architecture* will be possible'.¹⁶¹

Vers une architecture in 'its English Dress'

Etchells opted to provide a critical introduction to his translation, and in this opening discussion the English inflection of his work is obvious: he presents the book to its readership in 'its English dress'. One of the most immediately noticeable features of the opening pages of Etchells's introduction is their illustration with examples of functional design in England. Take, for instance, the towering form of one of the Liverpool shipyards' new lock gates, looking more like a Manhattan apartment block, or the clinical interior of an operating theatre, accompanied by a quotation from the ongoing discourse in British architectural press praising the design of the hospital for its 'absolute fitness to purpose' (figure 1.11). Though this may imply straightforward agreement with Le Corbusier's examples of functional design,

¹⁶⁰ For Ford Madox Ford's and Bram Fineberg's doubts regarding the success *Montagnes Russes* in two languages, see Patterson, 'Writing on Other Fronts', p. 97.

¹⁶¹ Diary entry, 18 December 1925, Harry Ransom Center, John Rodker Papers, 5.2. Even if Rodker had been willing to translate *Vers une architecture* as early as 1923-4, he would have been unable to print it due to debts and prior commitments to the Cassanova Society. Following the sale of the Cassanova Society to Routledge in February 1925, he immediately set about forming an imprint under his own name which duly announced *Towards a New architecture* as amongst the first texts to be published. See Heinz, 'John Rodker and Modernist Material Culture', pp. 212-227.



Image redacted due to copyright

1.11 Frederick Etchells, 'Introduction' in *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1927), p. xiv-xv.

it had the effect and, perhaps, the intention of relating the text more closely to English experience. Moreover, Etchells's writing is shockingly moderate, presenting Le Corbusier as 'no *fauve*, no "revolutionary", but a sober-minded thinker inspired by a fierce austerity'. From there, he recalls historic attitudes to domestic belonging sympathetic to suburban modernity:

A man of to-day, reading this book may have the impression of something akin to a nightmare. Many of our most cherished ideas in regard to the "Englishman's castle" – the lichened tiled roof, the gabled house, patina – are treated as toys to be discarded, and we are offered instead human warrens of sixty stories, the concrete house hard and clean, fittings as coldly efficient as those of a ship's cabin or of a motor car, and the standardized products of mass production throughout.

Here, Etchells is playing the role of the gentleman-architect weighing up the challenge of this new heresy from across the channel, but we 'need not be unduly alarmed,' he concludes. The provocations of Le Corbusier's text, he assures his reader, will leave their cherished world intact: 'the merely fantastical soon dies' and the best modern design will integrate itself with existing tendencies.¹⁶² It is an open question as to whether or not we can take Etchells's attempt to soften Le Corbusier's radicalism as a gambit that anticipates, and attempts to placate, a negative reaction from readers hostile to modernism.¹⁶³ We might have expected Etchells to endorse the sweeping away of historic design and the unfiltered acceptance of the new, but his project here is one of synthesis and reconciliation: between old 'English' and new 'French' attitudes, between the new radicalism of the avant-garde and the old rationalism of arts and crafts, the two competing sides of his own education that were also representative of divisions within wider English architectural culture.

¹⁶² Etchells, 'Introduction', in Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (London: John Rodker, 1927) pp. xvi, xiv, viii, v-vi.

¹⁶³ I am thinking here of Griselda Pollock's description of avant-garde attempts to navigate differences of race, class, and gender as various 'gambits', see Griselda Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

Etchells's dismissal of the need to reform domestic design is still more surprising. Perhaps with Fry's Durbins and the Ideal Home Exhibition in mind, he aligns himself with well-established attitudes towards English homes:

We claim, and I think rightly, that we have gone far in this country towards solving the problem of the small or medium-sized house that shall be trim, well and economically planned, and pleasant in its general lines. We can hardly claim to have gone as far in matters of town-planning on a large scale, or in the provision of the immense modern structures which will inevitably be needed still more in the near future.

Aside from this quiet gesture to town-planning and his imminent translation of *Urbanisme*, Etchells's words carry the traces of his teachers' and peers' domestic theories as well as the impact of organisations such as the Ideal Home Exhibition. This is a more generous framing of what Fry had recently attacked: the perceived domestic emphasis of English architecture. Yet even while Etchells complains that 'we have been burdened in this country with a timid Arts and Crafts movement', he voices his awareness that labour-saving plans and the rational application of modern materials were not new concepts to British architects.¹⁶⁴ He hardly appears conscious of the crisis of domestic identity that I have been tracing through the course of this chapter. However, by prioritising civic architecture and town-planning Etchells dismissed whole passages of Le Corbusier's text on behalf of the British reader, most notably the claim that 'the problem of the house is a problem of the epoch'.¹⁶⁵ Etchells's assumption that there was no turmoil in the English home proved to be misguided: it was to domestic design that modernist architects in England consistently committed themselves in the years to follow, in part due to the paucity of civic commissions but largely because the privileged capacity of the modernist home – rather than, say, the modernist factory or town hall – to envision a new national lifestyle and identity, which could be at once private and public. On

¹⁶⁴ Etchells, 'Introduction', pp. xvi, xv.

¹⁶⁵ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 227.

one level his comments pay homage to the arts and crafts legacy Fry and the Ideal Home Exhibition sustained; on another level they attempt to inoculate English domestic architecture from the more acute aggressions of Le Corbusier's reform.

Turning to his translation, Etchells demonstrates a marked failure to register Le Corbusier's poetic attitude to domestic design, and urban coexistence more broadly. In recent years, André Bassnett and Susan Lefevre have defined analyses of descriptive translation as those which accept a text – in this case Etchells's translation – as a 'cultural fact' involving 'rewriting' and 'manipulation' that can introduce 'new concepts, new genres, new devices'. This approach can be distinguished from the hierarchical quality judgements involved in normative translation, which comment on the reputed objectivity of a translation. I would like to suggest that once we approach Etchells's translation as a descriptive translation the national and imperial valences produced by his work become clear. The novel features of Etchells's translation are reciprocally defined by the ways in which they work to 'distort and contain' Le Corbusier's original.¹⁶⁶ His notorious revision of Le Corbusier's title is perhaps the best example of this issue. It is implausible that he considered the injection of 'new' to be an accurate translation of the French. Rather, Etchells adopted the title as it had appeared in Gordon Holt's article and interview with Le Corbusier from 1924. The phrase's first use by Holt and enshrinement by Etchells suggests it was a calculated manipulation of the phrase 'toward an architecture' that in English became drained of the multiple meanings behind the original French 'vers' implying poetic 'verse', or 'lines of verse'. This inauthentic overstatement of novelty, courting a public appetite for modernist innovation, comes at the price of the poetic scope of Le Corbusier's writing, and yet Hussey's Vers Group was evidently alive to such linguistic texture. The title of this learned group surely indicates their

¹⁶⁶ André Lefevre and Susan Bassnett, *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990) ix. For a discussion of modernism in translation and the 'domesticating norms of English translation practice', see Rebecca Beasley, 'Modernism's Translations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) pp. 551-70.

close reading of the text in the original as a literary product. By 1940, John Summerson would declare that ‘it is common to hear Le Corbusier described as “the poet of the Modern Movement,”’ before noting that ‘it was different in the nineteen-twenties; then we were struck by the dissonance of his formal arrangements and the harshness of his industrial looking silhouettes’.¹⁶⁷ The decades-long pattern of reaction and re-evaluation Summerson described – from initial shock to the eventual embrace of what Le Corbusier called ‘the poetry of facts’ – should be seen as a product of the knee-jerk interpretation of the foreignised harshness and dissonance Etchells did little to dispel, and indeed amplified.

Etchells’s treatment of the French text was selective and emphasised its functional aspects. Understanding how and why this was the case brings us closer to answering the question posed by Larry Ligo and more recently repeated by Tim Benton: how did the notion of absolute functionalism come to be so dominant in western discourse that it verged on a synonym for ‘modern architecture’?¹⁶⁸ Alternatively, when tailored to our present purposes, how did the notion of absolute functionalism become so dominant in the English reception of Etchells’s translation that it established a stubborn antagonism between modernist architecture and a so-called ‘native’ temperament? A blunt answer is that Etchells and Rodker’s questionable decision to illustrate an operating theatre in the book’s opening pages may have set the tone. Images so readily linked to unhomely discomfort and bodily threat are rejected in Le Corbusier’s original text which (despite rhetorics of health and scientism) included nothing so aggressive and opts instead for illustrations of industrial design. More obliquely, Etchells’s education through the various iterations of functionalism expressed in the work of Fry, Lewis, and Lethaby led him to stress this element to the readers of his

¹⁶⁷ John Summerson, ‘The “Poetry” of Le Corbusier’, *Architect and Building News*, 5 April 1940, in *Le Corbusier and Britain*, p. 117.

¹⁶⁸ Larry L. Ligo, *The Concept of Function in Twentieth Century Architectural Criticism* (New York: UMI Research Press, 1984) p. 5; Tim Benton, ‘The Myth of Function’, in *Modernism in Design*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (London Reaktion, 1990) pp. 35-49 (p. 42).

translation. Simultaneously, to those same readers, the high currency of functionalist ideas in England, due to their essential role in the arts and crafts movement, appears to have created a widespread tunnel-vision which sharpened focus on how Le Corbusier's writing appeared to echo English nineteenth-century theories of design, albeit with an extreme mechanistic twist. According to John Brandon-Jones, interviewed in the late 1970s, when reading *Vers une architecture* and having been brought up on a strict diet of John Ruskin, 'it struck me that many of the ideas were the old stuff in new dress.'¹⁶⁹ All the while, Le Corbusier's more sensitive and poetic contributions were pushed to into a blurry periphery, as we will now see.

Brandon-Jones's confusion is understandable because, paradoxically, Le Corbusier's originality is most evident where he sympathises with the outdated architectural paradigm which he sets out to destroy – the bourgeois domestic retreat, the sentimental cottage-home. For instance, and here I refer to John Goodman's more recent and authoritative translation, in Le Corbusier's chapter on 'Mass-Production Housing', he negotiates between domestic comfort and the home's radical potential. First, he laments how architects and planners cling to outdated building methods and materials in suburban developments, noting the 'devastation of the invaded lands along the way'. The importance of a site's local 'character, its soul' is parodied by a description of architects enchanting planning committees with Pan pipes. These allusive, imaginative, stylistically peculiar lines and a large part of the wider paragraph are entirely excised in Etchells's translation. Then Le Corbusier launches his new vision of the 'house-tool' (*maison-outil*), which 'will no longer be this solidly-built thing which sets out to defy time and decay'. Etchells's choice to translate the French *épaisse* as 'solidly-built' (literally 'thick' or 'heavy'; Goodman's improved translation of 2007 opts for 'squat') invites criticism that these new rapidly and economically built houses are also of poor quality, lacking solidity and liable to collapse. More accurately, Le Corbusier is articulating the

¹⁶⁹ John Brandon-Jones, 'An Interview with John Brandon-Jones', *Architectural Design* (1979), p. 97.

lightness of his proposed buildings, and their thin walls, which will no longer be ‘an archaic entity, heavily rooted in the soil by deep foundations, built “firm and strong”, the object of the devotion on which the cult of the family and the race has so long been concentrated’.¹⁷⁰ Through Etchells’s skewed translation new meanings are generated: what Le Corbusier terms ‘the cult of the family and the race’ is directly implicated with a structure no longer ‘solidly-built’. *Towards a New Architecture* appeared to present the English public with a form of domestic architecture that presaged the decline of their domestic identity. It is hardly surprising that many of them chose to reject or dilute Le Corbusier’s modernism. If adopted, his method would mean the foundations of the ‘National Glory’ could no longer be securely set in the English home, if that home was to be as unsound and porous to contrary cultural identities as Etchells’s translation implied, and as his rug design for the Omega Workshops fifteen years earlier had envisioned. Like the Omega’s attempt to establish the exotic, queer interior that broke old social bonds for the creation of racially and sexually transgressive new ones, and Lewis’s acknowledgement of the ‘promiscuity’ of modernity, now Le Corbusier appeared to challenge conventional familial alliances on which an ailing architectural hegemony and political system of nationhood was founded.

And yet, ‘Everybody, quite rightly, dreams of sheltering himself in a sure and permanent home of his own’, Le Corbusier writes, before the reader can get carried away with the supposedly sweeping reforms he proposed. While that dream of domestic belonging is impossible in ‘the existing state of things’, he makes the case that the forces of identity and belonging at play beneath domestic space (and suburbia) must be redirected and refined, not rejected outright.¹⁷¹ Modernity, he suggests in chorus with Fry and Lewis, will leave individuals vulnerable and deracinated if adequate solutions are not provided. There exists,

¹⁷⁰ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, pp. 255, 237.

¹⁷¹ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, p. 237.

Le Corbusier announces, '*le culte immortel de la maison*' – a phrase that unites both suburban homeowners and modernist agitators. Both groups would become preoccupied with the home as the centre of national and imperial identities, and in that sense, the 'immortal cult' applies just as readily to Englishness in a state of rupture as it does to domestic space.¹⁷²

Nevertheless, rather than Le Corbusier's 'immortal cult', with all its quasi-religious, nationalistic undertones, Etchells's translation prefers the comparatively bland phrase 'the universal love of home'.¹⁷³ With the hieratic resonance of the French original replaced by something closer to Fry's 'cosy corner', any sense of the embedded social system represented by the home is repressed in this garbled transliteration. English inter-war readers are excluded from Le Corbusier's recognition that the domestic drives of modern people are both historically rooted and ripe for contemporary reframing.

Le Corbusier's sensitivity to the existing domestic paradigm continues when he argues that 'suburban railroads' must work in harmony with 'major industries', 'specialised factories', 'financial organisations', and a 'transformed Ecole des Beaux-Arts'. Even before this idea is fully explored in *Urbanisme*, suburbia, alongside urban housing, represents the apotheosis of the 'horribly misshapen' state of this immortal cult.¹⁷⁴ This is confirmed in the drawings and plans used to illustrate the chapter. Take, for instance, the houses built in the Bordeaux suburb of Pessac in 1924 (figure 1.12) which Le Corbusier proudly declares were inspired by the first edition of his text and are featured in the revised version. Short terrace or semi-detached houses of two or three stories are arranged in low density around communal green space. The plans are modest, moderate, and sympathetic to the existing system of suburban development, even while they set about its deconstruction. The far-reaching, Caliph-esque, utopianism of his *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) or the later *Ville Radieuse*

¹⁷² Le Corbusier, 'Maisons en serie', *L'Esprit Nouveau*, 13 (December 1921) and Le Corbusier, *Vers Une Architecture* (Paris: G. Cres 1925) p. 223.

¹⁷³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 264.

¹⁷⁴ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, p. 289.

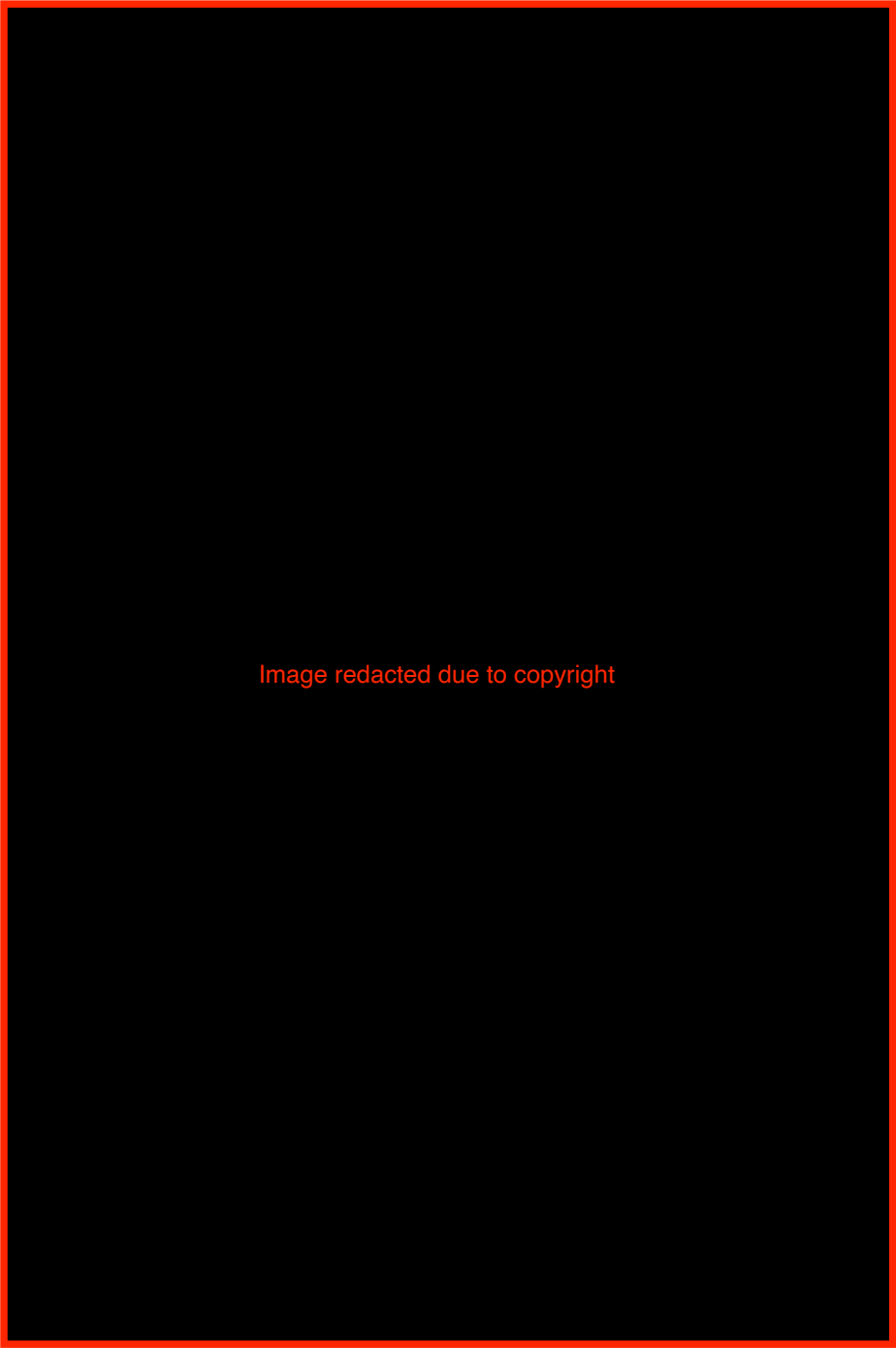


Image redacted due to copyright

1.12 Le Corbusier designs for medium density suburban housing in Pessac, Bordeaux, from *Towards a New Architecture* pp. 252-253

(1930) has not yet reached maturity. At Pessac, the suburban, Garden City paradigm shifted towards industrial materials where walls take no load and interiors are replanned, and towards a way of life where agricultural and domestic space, urban periphery, and rural distance merge.¹⁷⁵

Such subtleties of thought and practice are a distant prospect in Etchells's translation. He made a plain statement on how he understood Le Corbusier in his later introduction to *Urbanisme* or *The City of Tomorrow*: 'We are to forego, or to relegate to a minor place, pleasure arising out of picturesqueness or of what is merely pretty or wilful, and to confine ourselves to the sterner delights which severe and pure forms can give us.'¹⁷⁶ This language still failed to plumb the depths of Le Corbusier's contribution beyond the rationalism of Pugin or the formalism of Fry, and Etchells's talk of confinement and order leaves little room for the passages of Le Corbusier that speak for space and individual liberty. In 1932, after his rapid disenchantment with avant-garde architecture since its zenith in 1921, Fry reduced the state of modern design to basic polarity between 'sensibility' and 'mechanism'.¹⁷⁷ Etchells and his translations seem predisposed to place Le Corbusier in the latter category, and soon after *Towards a New Architecture* was published, Fry denounced modernist architecture as 'desperately theoretical and doctrinaire', despite having read Le Corbusier's original text.¹⁷⁸

By contrast, the text did prompt appreciative comment from Nora Shackleton Heald writing in the *Queen*. Heald notes how Le Corbusier's recommendations could be used to reduce domestic labour and improve the health of the city. Working families deserved better accommodation than the 'strongly built' Victorian terraces of London, and she protested how 'we are building our out-of-date dwellings so firmly that generations of households will be

¹⁷⁵ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, pp. 276-79.

¹⁷⁶ Frederick Etchells, 'Introduction', Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning* (London: Rodker, 1929) p. vii.

¹⁷⁷ Roger Fry, 'Sensibility or Mechanism', *Listener*, 13 (1932), 497-99.

¹⁷⁸ Fry to Bell, letter of 16 May 1929, quoted Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 168.

compelled to go on living in them.’ Clearly influenced by Etchells’s translation of *épaisse* as ‘solidly-built’, Heald nonetheless gathered the core of Le Corbusier’s argument and repurposed it according to her own prioritisation of women’s experiences of domestic architecture: she praised his attention to leisure space for the well-being of children and suggested that the book’s ‘admirable introduction’ did much to show how the new architecture could soon seem familiar to ‘the English eye trained on Tudor beams and thatched gables’.¹⁷⁹ Edwin Lutyens, who would have known Etchells while they were both working at the Grosvenor Estate Office, disagreed. On Le Corbusier’s praise of Canadian grain silos, he wrote

In the spaciousness of the prairie they may stand out as magnificent objects; but take one and place it in an English valley, larded with traditional building and no formula about efficiency and the machine would allay the horror of its aspect.¹⁸⁰

However essential domestic modernity might be to the labour-saving home, there remained the anxiety that modernist aesthetics were a foreign and indeed a horrifically invasive presence, hopelessly alien to ‘Tudor beams and thatched gables’.¹⁸¹ Another reviewer suggested the problem of modernist architecture’s establishment in Britain was explicitly ‘disturbing’ and framed it as an argument between two nations: ‘on a people so essentially poetic and literary as the English, the book has had a much more disturbing effect than the actual experiments of Lurcat, Le Corbusier et Jenneret and Mallet-Stevens.’¹⁸² Ironically, it

¹⁷⁹ N.S.H. (Nora Shackleton Heald), *The Queen*, 23 November 1927, in *Le Corbusier in Britain*, pp. 29-34 (pp. 29, 31).

¹⁸⁰ Edwin Lutyens, ‘Review: *Towards a New Architecture*’, *Observer*, 29 January 1928, in *Le Corbusier and Britain*, pp. 35-38 (p. 36).

¹⁸¹ The myth that functional, industrial architecture was somehow alien to England, home to the industrial revolution, was still being dispelled in J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition in Early Industrial Buildings* (London: Architectural Press, 1958).

¹⁸² P.M. Stratton, ‘The Line from France’, *Architectural Review*, 64 (1928), 1.

was the more poetic aspects of Le Corbusier's text, to which Etchells and his English readers were blind, that may have eased these disturbing effects.

And so Rodker's desperate search for post-war internationalism was quickly overwritten. Le Corbusier's initial introduction to English readers was fretted with the concerns of a nation unsure of its place in Europe and the security of its empire. The public pageantry of the Edwardian era had mutated into an exhibition culture – from the Ideal Home Exhibition to the Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 – which only served to hymn the friable quality of what it celebrated. Continual calls for homes to be solidly built highlighted that many were buttressed by the emotional and economic myths of nation and empire. Rather than England's domestic homeland being the well-spring of the 'National Glory', it was the 'National Glory' that acted as the invisible support to the modern English home besieged by modernism at one gate and faltering imperial confidence at the other: built structures operated in tandem with intangible architectures of identity. As with West's description of George Silverton in Petrick, displays of pomp and power of the nation and empire were prone to be undercut with a deep resounding threat. Ruskin had prophesied as much in 1843 in his purple prose describing Turner's famous reflection on modernity's and empire's epochal shifts, *The Fighting Temeraire*:

under the blazing veil of vaulted fire [...] there is a blue, deep, desolate hollow of darkness, out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea; because the cold deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form.¹⁸³

Behind this decommissioned warship, a floating emblem of the 'National Glory', lurks the inevitable threat of imperial decline on a meteorological scale. When visiting the Empire

¹⁸³ John Ruskin, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin: Modern Painters Vol. 1* (London: George Allen, 1903) p. 275.

Exhibition in Wembley in 1924 Virginia Woolf had a similar experience. She walked amongst 'smooth grey' 'ferro-concrete palaces' and watched 'men like pin cushions, men like pouter pigeons, men like pillar-boxes, pass in procession', before she realises

some appalling catastrophe is impending. The sky is livid, lurid, sulphurine. [...] Dust swirls down the avenues, hisses and hurries like erected cobras round the corner. Pagodas are dissolving into dust. Ferro-concrete is fallible. Colonies are perishing and dispersing in spray of inconceivable beauty and terror which some malignant power illuminates. Ash and violet are the colours of its decay. [...] Cracks like the white roots of trees spread themselves across the firmament. The Empire is perishing; the bands are playing; the exhibition is in ruins. For that is what comes from letting in the sky.¹⁸⁴

Long before modern architecture has been thoroughly integrated into British culture, its iconic material – reinforced concrete – became leavened with ideas of imperial collapse. The modernist ambition, with glass and steel, to 'let in the sky' leads inevitably to the crumbling of imperial structures.¹⁸⁵ Fallible, unsolidly-built, promiscuous, rootless: the distrustful and caustic associations gathered about modernist architecture were legion, and became concentrated through the home and its capacity as a portmanteau concept for comfort, nation, and belonging. If the new architecture was used to give new life to the imperial project, Woolf suggested it was bound to fail.¹⁸⁶ Each of the following chapters will explore how writers, artists, and architects worked to counteract this process, how they constructed differing, intangible architectures of identity which sprung up where the fissures in modern architecture began to show – fissures often initiated and accelerated by the anxieties of national and imperial decline.

¹⁸⁴ Virginia Woolf, 'Thunder at Wembley', in *Collected Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1967) pp. 184-87. First published in *The Nation and Athenaeum*, June 1924.

¹⁸⁵ Scott Cohen, 'The Empire from the Street: Virginia Woolf, Wembley, and Imperial Monuments', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50 (2004), 85-109; and for an extended study of Woolf's critique of empire see Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) and, more recently, Sonita Sarker, 'Woolf and Theories of Postcolonialism', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 110-28.

¹⁸⁶ For Woolf's relationship with housing and the built environment, see Michael H. Whitworth, *Virginia Woolf*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 45-50, and *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, ed. Anna Snaith and Michael H. Whitworth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Chapter Two

Vernacular Modernism:

Englishness and the *Circle* of J.M. Richards

A mason times his mallet
to a lark's twitter
Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*, 1966¹

This chapter leaves behind the linguistic translation of Le Corbusier's text into English in order to consider another form of translation: the adaptation of international modernist domesticity to a practice of home-making that registered local and national specificity in England. Through both the making of homes and making at home, certain English modernists active in painting, sculpture, and architectural design were involved in a drive to localise and particularise the deracinated aesthetics of continental modernism during the 1930s. An essential counterpart to this project was a rhetorical deployment of 'vernacular style' as a creative strategy that might enable the technical and formal innovations of modernism to merge with forms of national distinctiveness. We have already witnessed the difficult birth of modernist architectural ideas in England as the emergence of a discourse that charted the tensions of British imperial decline through domestic space. This chapter turns its attention to that discourse's maturation in the pages of the English architectural press. It recognises modern architecture as a discourse articulated through, and extant in, the printed pages of periodicals, principally the *Architectural Review*.

Although a variety of industry-centric publications contributed this system, such as the weekly *Architect and Building News* and the *Architect's Journal*, the monthly

¹ Basil Bunting, *Briggflatts*, 1st ed. (London: Fulcrum Press; printed at the Golliard Press, 1966) unpaginated.

Architectural Review is remarkable for its attempt to address a wide and non-specialist audience. Not limited to built projects, modernist homes and their attendant identities were constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed in the minds of the public. Here I will consider national identities through a conventional understanding of private domestic space, while the later sections of this thesis will focus on how imperial identities were imagined through public spaces that were nonetheless domestic, for instance city streets and rural landscape. In the art of Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, Eric Ravilious and Peggy Angus, and the architecture of Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, united by the critical writings of J.M. Richards, we can observe how modernists acknowledged that England could no longer be considered the centre of the British Empire and began to confront a fractured English national identity. This was ‘a time of national panic’ as Britain abandoned the Gold Standard, businesses failed, and unemployment rocketed.² What response could the quiet repose of the modernist’s home and the urbane debates of the architectural press mount to such overwhelming economic and social shifts?

John Marx has written of how the modernist novels of Conrad, Joyce, and Woolf ‘revised the very distinctions between British nation and English culture on which empire-building depended’.³ My protagonists in the following pages perform a similar role but their fields of creative activity are considerably broader. Much has already been written on how a search for a distinctively English identity between the wars was conceived as a return to a home both geographical and temporal, to a local soil and history. Jed Esty has described E.M. Forster, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, and Raymond Williams as literary figures who went in search of an England simultaneously older and newer than the nation they inhabited. Their anthropological verse and fiction sought to establish collective roots for a country bereft of

² Raphael Samuel, ‘Introduction: Exciting to Be English’, in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Volume I, History and Politics* ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989) p. xix.

³ John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 1.

imperial security and trapped in the eternal present of modernity.⁴ Meanwhile Alexandra Harris has demonstrated the richness and many-sited quality of that cultural longing for a local and collective self-knowledge. Medieval, Georgian, even Victorian history could be upheld as a means by which the scattered locales of the British Isles could be gathered into the homely fold of a common national, and specifically English, past.⁵

To build on these insights and strike out beyond them, I echo Terry Eagleton's acknowledgment that if nation (like class) is to be surpassed, it must first be accepted. Only by knowing and feeling nationalism does it become possible to move 'all the way through it and out the other side'.⁶ The national identities I will explore in Cumbria, Sussex, and Hampstead are always intermingled with speculative visions of sub-national polity, which seek to negate the nation-state as the authoritative source of belonging and collective affiliation. Once the validity of English culture as the source-code for empire was compromised the need to shore up or create an Englishness that was native, land-bound, and free from imperial associations became clear. I would like to entertain the suggestion that artists and writers in the 1930s who were sensitive to these conditions inevitably tried to look through the defunct category of 'England' toward local bonds of community. I will first turn to the growing reception of modernist architecture in English cultural discourse, before introducing Richards and his essays in the *Architectural Review* and *Circle*. In the second half of the chapter, I will investigate how national identities were explored through the work of artists and architects closely associated with Richards and related to his writing on the vernacular.

⁴ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁵ Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Romantic Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).

⁶ Eagleton is himself extending the view expressed by an African character in Raymond Williams's novel *Second Generation* (1964), see Terry Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) pp. 23-39 (p. 23).

Architecture as Discourse

The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts (Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes) was held in Paris in 1925. The publication of Etchells's translation of Le Corbusier appeared two years later. Modern architecture slowly began to take its place in England's public imagination. Recent interpretations of the period suggest this change was triggered by architectural discourse's entry into popular media.⁷ At first, the architectural press failed to respond to the radical changes happening on the continent during the 1920s. However, the *Architect and Building News*, led by Howard Robertson and F.R. Yerbury, took a more proactive approach between 1925 and 1931. They travelled to Germany, Austria, France, and the Netherlands to experience the most recent architectural innovations and conveyed what Andrew Higgott describes as an 'often highly naïve' and 'pre-canonical sense of modern architecture'. Higgott makes an influential case for the status of the ensuing discourse as architecture itself: from the *Architectural Review* in the 1930s looking forward through the twentieth century, he argues that publications presented a form of paper architecture: 'rather than simply talking about it, or simply representing it, they reify an individual and specific set of assumptions and from that point of view make clear what architecture is and should be'.⁸ If Higgott's position appears prescriptive, Sarah Williams Goldhagen has emphasised how understanding modernist architecture as a discourse offers an escape from the conventionalised composite image of buildings with rectilinear fenestration, structural expression, 'tough-edge and stark', which had been derived from black and white photography in texts that circulated between

⁷ Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernism: Architectural Cultures in Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2007); *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions*, ed. Kester Rattenbury (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁸ Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, p. 20-30, 7.

1919 and 1930. Instead, ‘a heterologous array of individual positions and formal practices’ emerges.⁹ Modern architecture, then, is freed from definition according to ‘actual monuments’ and becomes a construct that exists not in the few built projects scattered across England, but in the pages of magazines and books that manifest architectural ideas and project their future.¹⁰ Architecture is print, is photography, is language, is now, and is in England.

Architectural discourse was also popularised through the recently established British Broadcasting Corporation. Public debates about architecture were heard by millions of households thanks to their radio broadcast.¹¹ Although a well-known episode, it is worth briefly returning to the famous debate staged between Sir Reginald Blomfield and Amyas Connell in 1934. Entitled ‘For and Against Modern Architecture’, it pitted the avant-garde against the establishment and helped set the terms of mainstream architectural discourse in the 1930s. As Shundana Yusaf has argued, radio helped level the playing field in such debates by freeing speakers from the need to present material proof, and I would add this marked an important shift in how architectural discourses of identity became a national concern.¹² The wireless lifted architectural ideas out of the pages of a sluggish press and introduced them to the kitchen table, rendering listeners’ experience at once more personal through the sounds of the speaker’s voice and more collective, shared by millions. Yusaf has demonstrated that the sphere of radio’s influence encompassed not only modernism but also a project of progressive liberalism, popular heritage and the preservation movement: ‘Speech

⁹ Sarah Williams Goldhagen, ‘Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64 (2005), 144-167 (pp. 144-145).

¹⁰ On ‘actual monuments’ see, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1932) p. 37. See also Elizabeth Darling, *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2007) p. 1-3.

¹¹ For a study of John Betjeman’s later radio and TV documentaries for the BBC, see Ashley Maher, *Reconstructing Modernism: British Literature, Modern Architecture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) pp. 189-197.

¹² Shundana Yusaf, *Broadcasting Buildings: Architecture on the Wireless, 1927-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014) p. 66. See also David Trotter, *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain between the Wars* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013).

was publication. It transformed work from a private object into a public one'.¹³ Here we once again return to a regular motif of this thesis: the publicization or nationalisation of private, domestic space. In this regard, Yusaf's, Higgott's, and my own work is reliant on Beatriz Colomina's major contribution to the field in *Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media*. Mass media – film and radio, alongside print – are presented by Colomina as not simply a vehicle for modern architecture but the very mechanism that renders it modern. This entails a reconfiguration of subjectivity and traditional notions of domestic space which is broken open and exposed to the public gaze. The lived experience of modernity, according to Colomina, is necessarily defined by the media that constitute it, of which architecture is a part with buildings and their discursive frameworks forming some of many channels of cultural representation.¹⁴

Through this new 'radiophonic levelling', Connell, a young, gifted New Zealander, a scion of empire recently graduated from the British School at Rome with only two built domestic projects to his name in England, was able to bypass the entrenched institutional advantages of Blomfield, a knight of the realm and a former president and gold medal recipient of the RIBA. Blomfield's position was that modern architecture 'repudiates the past', an approach which originated in 'much loose thinking in France and Germany' and had since 'spread like a plague to this country'. The insular exceptionalism of Blomfield's argument would be countered by Nikolaus Pevsner two years later when he suggested Britain as the birthplace of modern design through the continuities between the arts and crafts movement and the Bauhaus, but for the meantime modernism remained a schism in Blomfield's mission of cultural continuity with a mythic national past.¹⁵ '[T]hat nationalism is a thing of the past, that all art is to be cosmopolitan' is one of a list of 'dangerous fallacies'

¹³ Yusaf, *Broadcasting Buildings*, p. 40.

¹⁴ Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (London: MIT Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936).

Blomfield suggests are committed by modernism. In the face of continental threats to Britain's imperial longevity, modernists' wrong-headed thinking is branded as 'Hitlerism or Bolshevism *in excelsis*'.¹⁶ To stress the internationalism of architecture at a time of growing geopolitical pressure was dangerous precisely because it exacerbated an already crumbling national-imperial identity.

Imperial conflict was the inescapable context of the debate. When a transcript of Blomfield and Connell's argument was published in the *Listener* in late November it appeared directly after a feature on Indian constitutional reform, which condescendingly referred to the growing independence movement on the sub-continent as 'Indian political aspirations'.¹⁷ The architectural debate was then followed by an article by the historian and political theorist G.D.H. Cole, a proponent of guild socialism, decrying the 'economic and imperialist rivalries' fuelling the arms trade and global militarisation.¹⁸ Between these voices we discover Blomfield attempting to enshrine nationalism as an issue of architectural practice. 'For myself,' he declared, 'I am on the hill on which I was born': a statement regarding his aesthetic conservatism but exemplifying his nativistic rhetoric that claimed that modernism was not for England, that the 'very root of art' lay in local soil.¹⁹

In his response, Connell suggested that despite their antagonism the new architecture modernists could meet some of Blomfield's demands for strength and security. He argued that the modern artist 'does precisely aim at maintaining the continuity of art. He endeavours to use intelligently the accumulated experience of the past by understanding its spirit and trying to apply that to the changing conditions and the needs of society'. As I hope to demonstrate over the course of this chapter, the provision of belonging and the concretisation of identity ought to be considered part of the 'needs of society' to which Connell referred in

¹⁶ Reginald Blomfield, 'For and against Modern Architecture', *Listener*, 12 (1934), pp. 885, 886.

¹⁷ Marquess of Linlithgow, 'The India Report', *Listener*, 12 (1934), p. 880.

¹⁸ G.D.H. Cole, 'Hawking War Wares', *Listener*, 12 (1934), p. 888.

¹⁹ Blomfield, 'For and Against Modern Architecture', p. 886.

1934. He is careful to point out that an ‘essentially national inflection’ of modernist architecture is already evident in England, claiming that an architectural student could differentiate between the national application of modernist techniques. Pressing the point further, Connell suggests ‘modern architecture is in the highest sense traditional because it is not content with repeating out-worn and vulgarized forms’.²⁰ These words show the readiness of apologists of modern architecture to claim the ground held by the self-appointed defenders of a normative tradition formed according to a purportedly native temperament, and this was an approach only deepened by Pevsner’s writing over the following two decades. Modernists were to be the new English traditionalists. Where Blomfield’s claims were not absurd or misinformed, Connell suggested modern architecture could meet his demands, the demands of nationalist rhetoric and the continuity of tradition.

The metamorphosis of the media in the early 1920s took place against a backdrop of the growing organisation or, to adopt Elizabeth Darling’s terminology, the ‘institutionalisation’ of modernist architecture.²¹ The Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) was established in 1933 as the British branch of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM). Until this point, Darling writes, ‘the idea that a new movement was under way, and giving birth to a new style or tradition, was still relatively novel to British ears’. Under the relentless and combative leadership of Wells Coates (a Canadian born in Japan and therefore another colonial émigré alongside Connell), the establishment of the MARS Group, which speared futurity with its cosmic title, ‘formed a coherent and manifest architectural presence’ through the decade.²² It followed in the wake of several stuttering attempts to set a steady foundation for modern design in Britain. The Design and Industries Association (DIA), founded in 1915 and led by Harold Stabler, and the

²⁰ A.D. Connell, ‘For and Against Modern Architecture’, p. 886, 887.

²¹ Elizabeth Darling, ‘Institutionalizing English Modernism 1924-33: From the Vers Group to Mars’, *Architectural History*, 55 (2012), pp. 299-320.

²² Darling, *Re-forming Britain*, p. 10.

Twentieth Century Group (TCG), formed in 1930 and centred around Mansfield Forbes, Jack Pritchard, Raymond McGrath and Coates, had both failed. The DIA had quickly lost its progressive edge and relapsed into the promotion of modified arts and crafts doctrine. As Michael Saler writes, ‘members of the DIA believed that many of the English design reformers had lost sight of Ruskin and Morris’s social aims and retreated into an ineffectual antiquarianism’.²³ Meanwhile the TCG had proved unable to reconcile ideological and practical differences of key members (Coates and Forbes) and dissolved without mounting any tangible impact on industry or public.²⁴ Both initiatives could be construed as an attempt to shore up Britain’s uncertain economic position during the Depression by ensuring its power in the export market. Following Britain’s abandonment of the Gold Standard, John Gloag made clear the relationship between the domestic design industries and national superiority. ‘Unless we get onto the design standard again,’ he wrote,

our prestige in overseas markets will, as the world grows more enlightened and artistically expectant, decrease to the vanishing point. Good design is the anonymous export, and it is the foundation of an international structure of propaganda about the superiority of European and American goods.²⁵

Gloag makes clear that any project of British (and Western) aggrandisement must involve the export of high-quality modern design.

But this renaissance of British industry was occasionally an exclusive endeavour.

Wells Coates moulded the MARS Group around a strict nucleus consisting of himself, one of his own employees, David Pleydell-Bouverie, and his trusted deputy, Maxwell Fry. Many modernists were blacklisted by Coates, including Howard Robertson who had done so much to publicise modern architecture in the 1920s, but had failed to accept Siegfried Giedion’s

²³ Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 62.

²⁴ Darling, ‘Institutionalizing English Modernism’, p. 303-311.

²⁵ John Gloag, ‘The Anonymous Export’, *Architectural Review*, 70 (1931), p. 163.

invitation to send a British delegation to CIAM and now strayed too close to a brand of conservative modernism propounded by Blomfield. Crucially, the MARS Group would be a committed avant-garde which would address itself to an intellectual elite, those leaders in industry and government with power to redirect society, ‘the sort of people who could effect change from above’.²⁶ They would not prioritise public propagandising through exhibitions as the DIA and avant-garde art formations such as Unit One, of which Coates had been a member, had done before them, although ‘An Exhibition of the Elements of Modern Architecture’ at the New Burlington Galleries in 1938 was one exception.

The Blomfield-Connell debate and this quick sketch of the state of modernist organising through the late 1920s and early 1930s is repeated here in order to highlight the incipient quality of modernist architecture in the period. Through institutional structures and discourses maintained through the press, modernist architecture as idea and discourse had arrived before its material states. This recognition of the significance of architectural discourses ultimately helps focus our attention on the scale of the writerly contribution made by the central figure of this chapter: James Maude Richards. A trained architect turned writer, Richards was assistant, then full editor of the *Architectural Review* from 1935 to 1971.²⁷ He was a member of the MARS Group, but he was deeply sceptical about the elite, avant-garde approach taken by Coates, preferring what he defined as the ‘principle of anonymity’ achieved through a mass, vernacular culture. Accordingly, he was alive to the need to remake English national identity through modern architecture, claiming in 1940 that England was ‘the headquarters of modern architecture’.²⁸ There is undoubtedly a militaristic and

²⁶ Darling, ‘Institutionalizing English Modernism’, p. 314.

²⁷ Richards was assistant editor until 1937 when he replaced Hubert De Cronin Hastings as editor. He left the magazine to join the Ministry of Information in 1942, spending time in Cairo and returning to the Architectural Press in 1946. Prior to working at the *Review* Richards studied at the Architectural Association and wrote for *The Architect and Building News*. See J. M. Richards, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).

²⁸ J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940) p. 5.

nationalistic tenor to this declaration made at the beginning of the Second World War, siting England as the centre of power for a burgeoning but fugitive architectural school that claimed international relevance. It was, according to Nicholas Bullock, a ‘not wholly unreasonable’ statement and acts as testament to a set of activities, labelled ‘narratives of modernity’ by Darling, which promoted modern architecture and established its hegemony of after the war, centring it within English domestic life.²⁹ What concerns me here is the shift from the somewhat blunt notion of an emergent national school described by Connell in 1934 toward Richards, and a network of artists and writers surrounding him, who developed a more nuanced conception of how modern architecture could become engrained in and revivify England’s ailing national identity.

A committed Marxist, Richards was wary of his power as an editor to force tastes or opinions upon a public he saw as the true wellspring of cultural transformation. As we will see, the approach he took during the 1930s draws attention to problems inherent in Coates’s top-down approach. These problems are reinscribed by Higgott’s analysis of architectural writing’s ability to ‘reify an individual and specific set of assumptions and from that point of view make clear what architecture is and should be’. It is curious that, as editor of the *Architectural Review*, Richards was uncomfortable with the notion that architectural discourse, whether in print or speech, could be exclusively defined by editorial frameworks and individual writers. According to this definition, maintained by much recent scholarship, modern architecture is shaped only by an intellectual elite who dictate what it is and should be, rather than by lived experience.³⁰ Hence the mild absurdity of suggesting that architectural discourse in popular media initiated a change in England’s public’s relationship with domestic modernity. As the previous chapter has shown in relation to the Ideal Home

²⁹ Nicholas Bullock, 'The Constructive Idea in Architecture', in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982) p. 37; Darling, *Re-forming Britain*, pp. 1-10.

³⁰ Yusaf recognises this by revealing the philosophical underpinning of the BBC: nineteenth-century liberalism and ideals of founder John Reith. See *Broadcasting Buildings*, pp. 9-14.

Exhibition, the material conditions of modern life had already changed irrespective of aesthetics and developments in modernist building techniques. Slum clearance had accelerated since the Working Classes Act of 1875, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Movement had begun in 1898, and the post-war 'Addison' Act in 1919 prepared homes for returning soldiers according to new standards of space and light.³¹ The kitchen tables or living rooms where people gathered to listen to the heated debates of Blomfield and Connell were already living a form of modern domesticity realised through social changes and the physical function of homes, even if it was not yet thoroughly reflected in a modernist environment. That the experience of modernity precedes and thereafter reciprocally defines modern design is a necessary corrective to histories that focus on modernist formal invention as the sole markers of cultural engagement with modernity. This will be the focus of my reading of Richards and his network. Self-governing patterns of architectural life and popular cultural attitudes – particularly evident in attitudes towards the home and a national history – are less overt, but still traceable experiences that precede and thus alter how we historicize modern design. My method of tracing these patterns aligns with Richards's Marxist politics and it is also in sympathy with the feminist design history of Judith Attfield who has argued for the domestic interior 'as a cultural symptom of the dynamic process of social identity formation rather than the way it is usually discussed – as a question of design form or style'.³² What I aim to show is that Richards, in addition to the artists and architects he praised and befriended, was acting in the service of deeper social requirements of what modernist homes must be. Even if he did orchestrate public engagement with modernism in

³¹ R. C. K. Ensor, *England, 1870-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936) pp. 127-8; José Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914*, (London: Penguin, 1994) p. 53; Peter Scott, *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life between the Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) pp. 36-39.

³² Judith Attfield, 'Moving Home: Changing Attitudes to Residence and Identity', *Journal of Architecture* 7(2002), pp. 249-262 (p. 260).

his editorial role at the *Architectural Review*, he did so in response to a widely regarded crisis of national identity.

J.M. Richards in the *Architectural Review*

The *Architectural Review* was founded in 1896 by Percy Hastings and it became a particularly important organ of modern culture in Britain when its ownership and editorship passed to his son, Hubert de Cronin Hastings, in 1927. ‘H de C’, as he was occasionally known, made far-reaching changes to his father’s magazine, expanding its range to include coverage of landscape architecture, interior design, visual art, archaeology, and building design. Now an art and, to some extent, literary magazine with a specialisation in architecture, the *Review*’s eclecticism, the range and quality of writers it attracted, as well as the cultural influence wielded by its editors, made it a particularly sensitive barometer for the wide-ranging cultural crisis surrounding English domestic identity between the wars. It can be understood as fusing a literary culture of *belles-lettres*, to which Hastings aspired, with the brute pragmatism, social engagement, and visual experimentation in layout and typography of modernist design.³³ Richards would rise to replace Hastings as editor in 1937, but Hastings’s influence never faded and jointly they embodied an open-minded editorial policy that did not fit easily into the stance taken by their absolutist friends in the MARS Group. Looking back on this time from the 1970s in his autobiography, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella*, Richards remembered worrying that the *Review*’s remit was too wide, and by no means solely dedicated to its support for modern architecture: ‘It was already in danger of skimming too lightly over too many surfaces’ he wrote, but equally acknowledged that diversity provided a

³³ Erdem Erten, 'Shaping "the Second Half Century": The Architectural Review 1947-1971' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004).

remedy for the isolation of modern architects in England, detached from the discourses of continental practitioners.³⁴ Moreover, Richards recognized that a diverse magazine would attract greater public attention, even address a national consciousness. A single issue published soon after he had taken his post as assistant editor includes articles on Walter Gropius, eighteenth-century Indian graveyards, cinema design, and the Mexican muralist movement, in addition to a supplement on furniture design and decoration.³⁵ This, he states, was a distinct strength of the *Architectural Review* and indeed his reason for editing it for over forty years.³⁶

Nonetheless, in a momentous year for modern design in England, Richards's writing was unequivocal in its endorsement of modern architecture as a necessary new cultural force. His first extended article in the *Architectural Review* titled 'Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic' appeared in December 1935. It followed in the wake of Herbert Read's *Art and Industry* (1935) and the Royal Academy's 'Exhibition of British Art in Industry' open from January until March 1935. The January issue of the *Review* had been dedicated to a consideration of industrial design with a review of the Royal Academy show and an extended criticism on recent publications including Read's text, John Gloag's *Industrial Art Explained* and Geoffrey Holme's *Industrial Design and the Future* (all 1934).³⁷ Richards's article is written with these texts in mind and quotes extensively from Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilisation* (1934) as well as P. Morton Shand's forthcoming translation of Walter

³⁴ He attributes this same function of helping architects in England feel supported and involved to the MARS Group as an arm of CIAM. Richards, *Memoirs*, p. 135.

³⁵ The article on Gropius was by Richards himself and the decoration supplement featured Raymond McGrath's interior design for the BBC's Broadcasting House, see 'Walter Gropius', *Architectural Review* 78 (1935), 44-46.

³⁶ Richards, *Memoirs*, p. 136.

³⁷ This efflorescence publishing and exhibition-making was prompted partly in response to the Gorrell Report commissioned to investigate the state of British industrial design. It recommended three main measures: improved art education, a closer relationship between leading artists and industry, and improved displays of the best examples of British design at home and abroad. See Ronald Barnes, *Art and Industry: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade under the Chairmanship of Lord Gorell on the Production and Exhibition of Articles of Good Design and Everyday Use*, (London: H.M.S.O., 1932); Saler, *Avant-garde in Interwar England*, p. 126.

Gropius's *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (1935). Richards's lengthy article, split between two issues, sets out to synthesise key arguments from this intimidating array of publications and attempts to offer an easily digestible introduction to their significance for the lay reader. The cultural changes represented by modern design, Richards suggests, reflect nothing less than a fundamental evolution of man's attempt to instil order in his relationship with time and space. 'The machine,' he writes,

instead of becoming an extension of his own faculties, becomes, for man, a mechanical equivalent for nature: a physical manifestation of the world of order and scientific thinking giving him a sense, in inventing power machinery, of himself contributing to the orderliness of the universe.³⁸

What is striking about these lines is how Richards establishes a relationship between the individual and what he suggests is, with some grandiosity, a cosmic system. He points out the flourishing of the natural sciences as part of the industrial revolution and the altered relationship between man and nature this brought about. Although still buried deep within Richards's thinking, this claim that modernism can relate the part to the whole, the microcosm to the macrocosm, is the foundation for its deployment as a means of resolving collective national identity as the troubled decade of the thirties wore on.

Despite the fervour of Richards's argument, he does not present a smooth veneer of unthinking adherence to the new creed of the international style. At several points he checks and moderates any overdevelopment of the machine aesthetic. For instance, he pauses his attack on Victorian decoration to point out that 'there is no reason why a vocabulary of machine ornament should not emerge' – before second guessing himself – 'though ornament in the sense of elaboration is hardly compatible with the compulsion towards simplicity'. One can read Richards's internal conflict in such passages as he questions whether, truly,

³⁸ J. M. Richards, 'Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic', *Architectural Review*, 78 (1935), 211-19 (pp. 212-13).

ornament can be straightforwardly consigned to the past. With more confidence, during a discussion of using the machine as a design precedent, he notes that the idea ‘that an efficient machine is *ipso facto* a work of art is a belief, that of pure functionalism, that cannot be seriously sustained’.³⁹ This registers and anticipates criticism from his readers, following directly from the position of Blomfield’s radio debate the preceding year, that, if design ought to aspire to the condition of the machine, machines themselves must become the paragon of aesthetic value.

Having presented himself as prophet of the ‘machine age’ of ‘order’ and ‘conformity’, perhaps the most important observation with which Richards attempts to alleviate his readers’ anxiety arrives at the end of the article. He stresses that it is not humanity that must alter themselves to machines but that ‘the machine itself is a human product, undergoing a constant process of humanization [...] that the designer’s primary function is the civilization of technology’.⁴⁰ This argument is plainly derived from Mumford’s *Technics and Civilization*, but with the emphases appropriate to Richards’s popular readership the argument takes on a different texture in his hands. The designer could become the softener and localiser of the technical novelties of modern architecture. Civilisation as a justification and force of colonisation also played a central role in the ideology of the British Empire.⁴¹ Richards, like Mumford, is suggesting the savagery of ‘technological sublime’ presented by modernity, whether in an American or British context, must be tamed, civilised, or domesticated by the hand of the designer.⁴² Just as Britain was haunted by premonitions of its imperial collapse, modernism appeared as both the nation’s uncivilised aggressor and its potential means of defence and security.

³⁹ Richards, ‘Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic’, p. 213.

⁴⁰ Richards, ‘Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic’, p. 218.

⁴¹ See John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁴² See David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (London: MIT Press, 1994).

For Richards, the domestication of modern design was dependent upon its popularity. In recent years Jessica Kelly has conducted vital research into Richards's work and has made it possible to place him precisely in relation to the architectural networks and discourses he was partly responsible for constructing. Following Higgott and Colomina, she notes how 'the conception of writing, editing and publishing as the practice of making modern architecture' is a crucial part of the *Architectural Review*'s place in British inter-war culture. Not only did it promote a particular 'style' of architecture (modernism), but it also cultivated 'a role for architects, as experts, who would direct the public's engagement with architecture. In this sense modernism was not a style but a relationship between architects and the public'.⁴³ Articles such as 'Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic' typify such a relationship, with Richards placing himself squarely between Gropius's, Read's, and Mumford's theoretical apparatus and the lay public. Kelly has explored how remarks made in an editorial note – likely penned by Richards – to a series of articles by C. H. Reilly, set out this position. The note explains the magazine's aim 'not so much to elevate the understanding of the architect as to fan the ardour of the layman, who is today increasingly tempted to follow the cultural trends of architectural thought'.⁴⁴ A nuanced interest in architectural design, its history and technical background, became accessible for a general reader for the first time in the 1930s, and this editorial note explains the public interest was already present, and the concerns of *Architectural Review* were constructed around it. At the same time, in Richards's words, 'the machine has destroyed the belief that a thing is more beautiful because more expertly made or because more difficult to make', ensuring modern products were more affordable.⁴⁵ Modern design consequently became not only intellectually but materially accessible to the English public. If

⁴³ Jessica Kelly, 'To Fan the Ardour of the Layman': The Architectural Review, the Mars Group and the Cultivation of Middle Class Audiences for Modernism in Britain, 1933-1940', *Journal of Design History*, 29 (2016), pp. 350-365 (p. 353). Kelly's monograph on Richards, titled *No More Giants: J.M. Richards, Modernism and The Architectural Review*, is forthcoming in 2022.

⁴⁴ C. H. Reilly, 'Criticism: 1. The Town Hall Problem', *Architectural Review*, 77 (1935), p. 113.

⁴⁵ Richards, 'Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic', p. 213.

the inter-war period signalled a move away from the material underpinnings of class, Kelly writes, ‘culture could be used to construct alternative identities to those prescribed by economic or social’ hierarchies.⁴⁶ True to Richards’s Marxist politics, this notion that anyone might own and speak intelligently about modern design enabled social mobility, but the proliferation of alternative identities raised the issue of where or to whom modernism belonged.

The term ‘the General Reader’ I have been using is also used by Kelly who takes it to describe the target for Richards’s architectural discourse. It is a label that combines the ‘layman’ of the *Architectural Review* with the ‘middlebrow’ of the BBC and ‘Penguin Public’, the readership or emergent new social class defined by Allen Lane’s publishing venture established in 1935.⁴⁷ These worlds were closely interlinked, with Richards appearing on BBC broadcasts from 1937, the same year he was commissioned by Allen Lane to write *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* for the Pelican imprint of Penguin Books. The version of Richards that appears in the opening pages of that volume is a different man to the one who enthusiastically but equivocally heralded the machine age in 1935. The publication was expressly intended to engage popular audiences, and Richards takes this opportunity to sympathize with the mass perception of modern architecture. He ventriloquizes the ‘Man in the Street’ who is bewildered by the new architecture but, despite his natural conservatism, feels it ‘must have something to it, because it looks clean and efficient and not too pompous’. Functionalism, or ‘fitness for purpose’, ‘at least sounds sensible if rather inhuman’. Concluding, Richards notes that this man in the street,

⁴⁶ Kelly, “‘To fan the ardour of the layman’”, p. 354.

⁴⁷ ‘The Penguin Public’ was coined by Mass Observation and understood as those ‘under 40, university educated, belonging to a local library, interested in books and politically conscious’; Fiona Courage, ‘Mass Observing Penguin 1946–47’, research paper at ‘75 Years of Penguin Books’ conference, University of Bristol, 29 June 2010, quoted in Kelly “‘To fan the ardour of the layman’”, p. 352.

dislikes something familiar replaced by something unfamiliar without very evident reason, and he has an idea that the people who are responsible for the new architecture are cranks, foreigners, revolutionaries or other kinds of people he disapproves of.⁴⁸

In this exercise in empathy, Richards made clear that packaging matters. Modern architecture, regardless of its improvements in domestic planning, labour saving technologies, even sanitization, would not become popular unless its aesthetic envelope could meet with public approval. He saw how familiarity was paramount, and functionalism could accord with ‘common sense’. This was the main mission of Richards’s *Introduction to Modern Architecture* and his career as an editor, journalist, and activist over the preceding five years.

Indeed, the softening of architecture – making it physically and visually more comfortable – would become part of Richards’s approach to modernism throughout the rest of his career.⁴⁹ He worked toward not only the public acceptance of modernism but also the public’s active participation in architectural design – a notion to which I will return in my conclusion. Writing during the war, he claimed that ‘creative activity can only be encouraged among the mass of people by building on a foundation of their own existing modes of expression’. Consequently,

sophisticated standards of taste and criticism can be conveniently forgotten. The methods pursued under the guidance of such standards is to offer people ‘good architecture’ and hope they will come to like it by habit. New habits are all very well but they are not the product of feeling, and the art of architecture requires the support of intense feeling. People can only learn to feel intensely by starting with things that already mean something to them emotionally, and while the values on which the critics insist on basing their ideas of architectural right and wrong remain aloof [... the general public] will have no strong feelings about architecture.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ J.M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940) p. 10.

⁴⁹ For what is still a useful, general study of the home as tradition of bourgeois comfort, see Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, (London: Penguin, 1987).

⁵⁰ J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd edn (London: J. Murray, 1973) pp. 79-80.

Aside from reminding us that the strength of feeling associated with the home is essential to public engagement with modern architecture, these remarks against sophistication are a direct extension (or revision) of Richards's bold opening to his *Introduction to Modern Architecture*, which declared 'we have no taste, only habits – and generally bad habits. We shall only acquire taste by making pains to develop our visual sensibility and our knowledge'.⁵¹ Richards was arguing for modernist culture to make a more generous approach to the community it set out to serve or create. Popular culture appeared predisposed to traditionalism. Thus, only through exploring possibilities of how create an architecture of feeling could modernism begin make England feel at home in the modern world. This meant dealing with issues of identity and nationalism. Having established the general trajectory of Richards's thought in the late 1930s we can now turn to the detail of how he proposed to resolve this quandary through recourse to the vernacular.

Vernacular Discourse

Richards has presented us with two opposing camps: the familiar, homely, domestic, historic, and national tendencies of the general public, and the rapidly changing materials, aesthetics, and internationalism of modernism. His writing challenged the apparent paradox that any new architectural vitality in England must embrace them both, and he set about disturbing the distinctions between these two (largely false) categories. In 1937, he penned an essay that speaks to and troubles the dichotomy, an essay which is essential for helping us establish how modernist architecture could court and accommodate national identity.⁵²

⁵¹ Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, p. 12.

⁵² On the capacity of the vernacular to reinforce ideas of 'nation' and 'homeland' denoted by the German words 'heimat', as well as its use as a tool to 'dismantle the heroic agenda of modernism', which has consistently informed the following discussion, see *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, ed. Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

Leslie Martin, then teaching at the University of Hull and later to become head architect of the London County Council, approached Richards to contribute to an exciting new project. Martin was editing, with the Russian sculptor Naum Gabo and painter Ben Nicholson, *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*. Sadie Speight, Martin's architectural partner and wife, took on the role of organising secretary for the publication, and together they set about commissioning articles, capitalising on the overarching architectural quality of the project based on Gabo's terminology of 'constructive art'. *Circle* intended to move between architecture, painting, sculpture, choreography, typography and areas of social and natural science, enveloping them as a singly unity. Its related attempt to claim an English place amongst the international voices that announced the emergence of a 'NEW cultural unity' based on a common 'constructive' tendency has been well recounted.⁵³ As Jane Beckett has written, *Circle* was programmatic and ambitious in both form and content, 'it was a large book, not a modest, little magazine and it intended [...] to show that the ideas inherent in its contents were not the temporary mood of an artistic sect'.⁵⁴ They improved on the intentions of Unit One earlier in the decade by expanding the role of architecture to become the conceptual glue at the spine of the publication, a unifying force for an otherwise miscellaneous range of aesthetic and political positions joined more by social contacts than rigorous editorial policy.⁵⁵ Under Speight's and Martin's supervision, architecture furnished this fresh statement of abstract aesthetics with practical, social, and political momentum. Le Corbusier, Siegfried Giedion, Walter Gropius, Barbara Hepworth, Leonide Massine, Piet Mondrian, Lewis Mumford, Richard Neutra, Herbert Read, and Jan Tschichold are some the contributors that indicate the transatlantic and European chorus

⁵³ 'Editorial', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, ed. J. L. Martin, Ben Nicholson, and Naum Gabo (London: Faber & Faber, 1937) p. v.

⁵⁴ Jane Beckett, 'Circle: The Theory and Patronage of Constructive Art in the Thirties', in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982) p. 11

⁵⁵ John Gage, 'Art and Life', in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982) p. 43.

Richards now joined.⁵⁶ Notably, when Richards received his commission, he was the only contributor to inquire about the editors' desired audience. He asked whether they intended 'to appeal to the general public, or to a limited especially well informed (aesthetically and architecturally) public [...] Do you want it to be specialised or general? How elementary?'⁵⁷ This attention to the tone of his article regarding the common reader marked him out amongst his peers. But more than that, it foreshadowed the content of his article which prioritised the relationship between elite, intellectual architectural discourse, and its interpretation by 'laymen'. He set about establishing a basis for how international modernism could be turned to address the local and national crises of identity in England.

Titled 'The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity', the essay showed Richards reconstituting English architectural history around a single consistent thread running through the previous three hundred years. The best building of any period, he claimed, was the product of vernacular expression, rather than individual achievement. The nineteenth century was rejected on the basis that, 'as Lethaby phrased it, a battle of the styles that indicates that true style is absent', while

Periods productive of good architecture, on the other hand – good architecture in the sense of a live universal language, not in the sense of isolated good architectural monuments – can be said to owe this fortunate condition to a *unity* of purpose, not only pervading the specialised spheres of architectural and industrial design, but existing in these spheres as an echo or reflection of a unity of social and cultural purpose pervading the whole of life.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Caroline Maclean, *Circles and Squares: The Lives and Art of the Hampstead Modernists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020) .

⁵⁷ Letter from J. M. Richards to Leslie Martin, 2 September 1936, Leslie Martin Papers, RIBA Archive, London, MAL/1

⁵⁸ J. M. Richards, 'The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, ed. J.L. Martin, Naum Gabo, and Ben Nicholson (London: Faber and Faber, 1937) p. 185.

Here again we find Richards foregrounding the potential of modern architecture to create unity and live up to that somewhat mysterious criterion of a 'live universal language'. He seeks to create a discourse that could involve mainstream society in an architecture of feeling, not cold, inscrutable built monuments.⁵⁹ Good architecture, when freed from elite sophistication, could recover a lost 'social and cultural purpose'.

It is worth briefly contrasting Richards's position here with T.S. Eliot's writing of approximately the same period. Although it will be explored at length in chapter four, Eliot's intellectual project shortly before and during World War II, through its extension of the dissociation of sensibility, shared marked similarities with Richards's: both sought to reach back to an earlier period of English history in order to reinvigorate their national culture and mend the fissures of modernity. However, where Richards's 'live universal language' refers through analogy to architecture's capacity to represent and promote cultural unity, Eliot wrote of the English language itself as truly global successor to the imperial language of Latin.⁶⁰ In line with his Marxist sympathies, and running against the theory of culture Eliot was developing, the social and cultural unity Richards describes spreads across all areas of art and design and to all areas of the class hierarchy, thereby eroding the inequalities conventional high culture worked to entrench. Such '*unity of purpose*', he suggests, existed in the medieval period but arose most assertively in the eighteenth century when social stability (and we might add imperial supremacy) helped to promote a 'mass of small houses' of high quality built through a 'standardised design vocabulary'.⁶¹ This reasoning can be summarised as Richards's attempt to isolate a quality in building that is historical and familiar as well as

⁵⁹ Elsewhere in *Circle*, Lewis Mumford derided the notion of modernist monuments on more extreme grounds, associating them with history and death unbefitting for a future-focussed society which should 'travel light': 'if it is a monument it cannot be modern, if it is modern, it cannot be a monument'. Lewis Mumford, 'The Death of the Monument', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, ed. J.L. Martin, Naum Gabo, and Ben Nicholson (London: Faber and Faber 1937) p. 264.

⁶⁰ See T. S. Eliot, 'Vergil and the Christian World', *Listener*, 46 (1951), 411-12, 423-4.

⁶¹ Richards, 'The Condition of Architecture', pp. 186, 188.

being innovative. His ‘Principle of Anonymity’ is a popular principle transferable between architectural epochs, traced through English history, and now applied to modernist practice.

The anonymity of the architecture Richards has in mind stems from ‘the elimination of personality from the process of manufacture’. These words may act as further evidence that he was influenced by Eliot, yet once we realise this phrase was quoted directly from Mumford’s *Technics and Civilisation*, it is clear Richards was heavily influenced by his American colleague, in addition to Eliot, who was beginning to claim his hegemonic status within English letters. In the context of Mumford’s text ‘the elimination of personality’ pertains to the machine age following the industrial revolution when technology ensures the maker’s mark is effaced from the object in addition to the corporatisation and exploitation of labour. Richards’s repurposing of this line eloquently communicates the new direction he applied to Mumford’s insights. He referred not to industrial conditions of production but to the work of mostly unnamed Georgian master craftsmen as distinct from the famed architects of the age: Robert Adam, William Kent, John Soane, and Christopher Wren, for instance. Such unknown craftsmen were anonymous not because the homes they built purposefully or mechanically effaced the marks of their personality but because they did not reach the high-water mark of wealth and status considered worthy of the historical record. Below this mark, Richards points out, lies a sea of creative production which in the eighteenth century reached a remarkably high level of quality.

Parts of John Summerson’s *Georgian London*, published in 1945, charted this history of vernacular craftsmen and provided a scholarly basis for a growing preservation movement that would heighten sensitivity to the value of eighteenth-century vernacular building.⁶² These Georgian histories were, however, already in circulation in the 1930s: see, for instance, Margaret Jourdain’s prolific writing on Georgian interiors and furniture makers, and

⁶² John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Pleiades Books, 1945).

Frederick Etchells's writing under the pseudonym 'Batty Langley' in a series of letters featured in Betjeman's *Ghastly Good Taste*.⁶³ Although a comic name that Etchells and Betjeman would have enjoyed, its choice was guided by a sincere interest in Batty Langley (1696-1751), who was an architect and garden designer, but held a more important role as one of the figures who provided architectural source material to vernacular craftsmen through the publication of influential texts such as *The City and Country Builder's and Workman's Treasury of Designs* (1740) and practical guidance in *A Sure Guide to Builders* (1726).⁶⁴ An article in the *Architectural Review* from 1930 recounts how Langley, 'formed a school of excellent workmen, although his taste as an architect was deservedly derided'.⁶⁵ It may have been this unfashionableness and the use of 'Batty Langley Gothic' as a term of derision in the mid-eighteenth century that attracted Etchells and Betjeman.

In advance of the publication of *Ghastly Good Taste*, the faux exchange of letters between Batty Langley (Etchells) and the fictional Lord Ongley (Betjeman) appeared across several pages of the *Architects Journal* in 1933. It stages the awkward persuasion of the moneyed patron into more advanced tastes, away from the classical and toward the gothic, and appears in the journal's letters segment. This pastiche of early nineteenth-century discourse is an affectionate glance at frivolous historic shifts in architectural fashion, but it is also a more sober remark on how style and popular taste develops. It communicates a tension between the influence of those with economic capital – aristocratic direction to consult Vitruvius and 'be guided by *ratiocinatio*' – and the separate influence of those with cultural

⁶³ John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste, or a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1933) pp. 49-54.

⁶⁴ Similar efforts were made to improve architectural design in a classical manner in the inter-war years, see for instance, Mervyn E. MacCarthy, *The Practical Exemplar of Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1927), approvingly reviewed by C. H. Reilly, 'Recent Books: Vernacular Architecture', *Architectural Review* 62 (1927), 269-70.

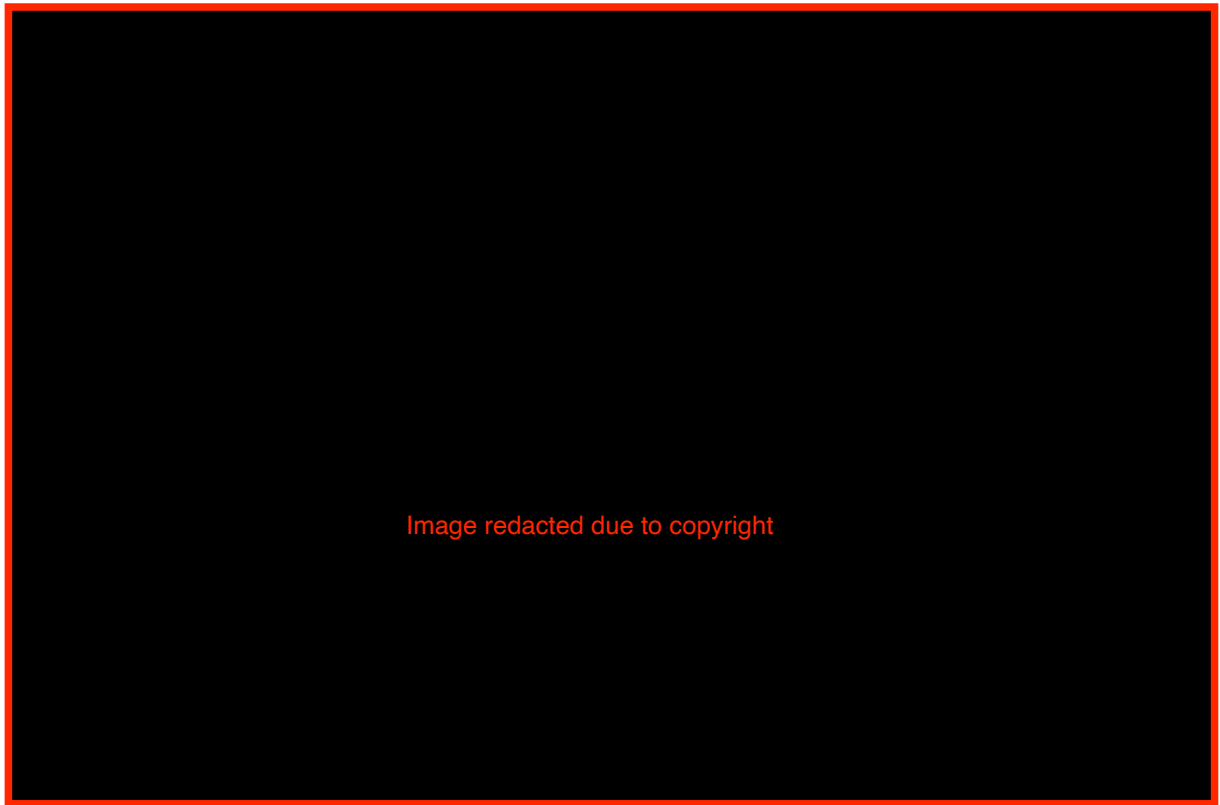
⁶⁵ Nathaniel Lloyd, 'A History of the English House XXII - the Eighteenth Century', *Architectural Review*, 68 (1930), p. 16.

capital – the architect’s assurance that the new style ‘*Fandango is in*’.⁶⁶ The very next page of the journal includes photographs and plans of a modernist house designed by Etchells in Surrey, all crisp angular lines in white rendered brick amply glazed with Crittal windows and featuring a front door faced in a metal veneer on a plywood backing (figure 2.1). Although few readers would recognise Etchells as Langley, this odd collision in the *Architects Journal* suggested how the problematic performed by Etchells and Betjeman’s mock-Georgian debate might make landfall on the modernist present.

Like Langley two hundred years earlier, Etchells and Richards were interested in bridging the gap between the elite and the popular, reconciling the international with the local. Richards was particularly convinced by the vernacular as the ideal tool for achieving these goals. In his *Circle* essay, referring to the Palladian roots of Georgian architecture, he asserted that ‘though the architecture of the eighteenth century was based on an imported mode [...] it absorbed that mode into a genuine folk art’.⁶⁷ This is a simple idea: anonymous craftsmen across the country would produce work in harmony with certain principles of aesthetics and function, and would assimilate internationalism into local expressions of architectural form. Without detailed knowledge of Inigo Jones or the folios of Andrea Palladio, they would nonetheless build within the classical tradition. I would like to stress that what Richards is describing, and what he saw historical figures like Batty Langley as achieving, is not the hierarchical mediation of elite culture through a classicising tendency. Langley’s texts may have provided examples of classical orders and rules of proportion, but local craftsmen and builders were left to alter them to local conditions. The notion of cultural percolation and the patrician overtones it carries are assiduously avoided in Richards’s essay. Instead, as Jessica Kelly describes it, he highlights a ‘spontaneous and vital architecture of

⁶⁶ Frederick Etchells and John Betjeman, ‘Batty Langley and His Patron Lord Ongley’, *Architects’ Journal* 78 (1933), p. 206.

⁶⁷ Richards, ‘The Condition of Architecture’, p. 189.



2.1 Double page spread showing Betjeman's and Etchells's letters as Lord Ongley and Batty Langley facing Etchells design for a house at Leatherhead, *Architects Journal*, 17 August 1933, pp. 206-207

ordinary people' created through the vernacular adaptation of canonical influence.⁶⁸ Through cultural guidance and exchange, without the imposition of authority, the unruly vernacular consistently answers back against received wisdom. The classical paradigm at the heart of T.S. Eliot's work – that man is essentially corrupt and in need to direction – is broadly accepted in Richards's cultural model, but it is heavily moderated by a more romantic faith in the essential contribution of innate creativity.

With the concluding statements of his essay, Richards brings his historical arguments to bear on the present:

Whether we can expand this potential tradition into a new folk architecture, owing as little as the work of the Georgian architect-builder or of the Victorian architect-engineer to the exploitation of personality or connoisseurship, one of recognisable standards – a true vernacular – depends on the growth of what Lethaby called 'a movement in the common mind'. We can start by giving the common mind its opportunity.⁶⁹

His argument is that vernacular continuity from the eighteenth to the twentieth century is provided by the synthesis of functional Victorian engineering and folk Georgian domestic design. Lethaby once again appears as a prophet of the modern and reconciler of tradition to progressive impulses. Through that attempt to create 'a movement in the common mind' Richards establishes vernacular architecture as an absent and necessary aspect of modern architecture; necessary because it could translate avant-garde production to popular applications, but crucially also because it could generate a collective identity based on a homeland where architecture became consistent and expressive of a national community with local variation.⁷⁰ A few years later he plainly stated that 'vernacular idiom' in contemporary architecture should 'have the same relation to Le Corbusier as a Georgian farmhouse had to

⁶⁸ Jessica Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism: J. M. Richards, Modernism and the Vernacular in British Architecture', *Architectural History*, 58 (2015), pp. 229-259 (p. 231).

⁶⁹ Richards, 'The Condition of Architecture', p. 189.

⁷⁰ Umbach and Hüppauf, *Vernacular Modernism*, pp. 1-9.

William Kent'.⁷¹ But this was a failed project. As Kelly has already observed, Richards thought intellectual (as opposed to 'vulgar') modernist discourse had ignored its responsibility to address ordinary people. As a result, everyday and often domestic spaces such as suburbia were forced to resort to revival styles or poor imitations of modernism.⁷²

One of the principal limitations of the existing scholarship on vernacular modernism is that it does not assess how the vernacular might relate to English national identity during the 1930s, in which Richards played a major role. Although Maiken Umbach has illustrated the inextricable links between the globalising forces of empire and the search for 'national types' based on place, these insights have not yet been brought to bear on the specific conditions of the British Empire and English national around the time Richards was writing.⁷³ Moreover, the relation between Richards's work and the artists represented in *Circle* has been given surprisingly short shrift. In order to get a better handle on how Richards's theory and practice of architectural discourse relates to the growing crisis of English national-imperial identity (and efforts to position modernist homes as a response), I will now explore how the art of Winifred Nicholson, Ben Nicholson, and Barbara Hepworth engaged with Richards's ideas through locality and craft. Throughout this discussion I will show how Richards's thinking in the pages of *Circle* was borne out through practical experiments in making and living that leavened English nationalism with modernist aesthetics.

Cumbria, Hampstead: Ben Nicholson's Reliefs

⁷¹ J. M. Richards, 'Criticism', *Architectural Review*, 89 (1941), p. 132.

⁷² Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism', p. 231.

⁷³ Erdem Erten, 'The Hollow Victory' of Modern Architecture and the Quest for the Vernacular: J. M. Richards and 'the Functional Tradition', in *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular*, ed. Peter Guillery (London: Routledge, 2011) pp. 145-68; Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism'; Maiken Umbach, 'The Deutscher Werkbund, Globalisation, and the Invention of Modern Vernaculars', in *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, pp. 114-40.

Before turning to Ben Nicholson's reliefs and their publication in *Circle*, it is worth considering an important precedent to this 'international survey of constructivist art'. In 1933, Unit One was launched. It was conceived as an avant-garde group consisting of painters John Armstrong, John Bigge, Edward Burra, Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, and Edward Wadsworth; sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore; and architects Wells Coates and Colin Lucas. Due to Unit One spanning abstraction and surrealism – the two major streams of modern art in England in the 1930s – the group was disparate and short lived, like the initial attempts at architectural institutionalisation occurring simultaneously. Unit One nonetheless professed to provide a public showcase of an English school of modern art through exhibitions and the press. In the volume published to accompany the group's formation, Nash argued that, far from eliminating considerations of national identity, the international character of contemporary art only served to give them clearer focus. International modernism,

by destroying the false values of nationalism, opens the way for a purely academic approach to the question of national idiosyncrasy, and, in proportion as art becomes more abstract, so the nuances of national or racial distinction become more subtle and, consequently, more interesting to trace.⁷⁴

Exactly what Nash meant by a purely academic approach to 'national idiosyncrasy' is, perhaps, deliberately opaque, but it is clear he saw English national identity as something that must flourish as the globalising strategies of modern, abstract art took hold. Nash's comments appear to indicate that England's 'national and racial distinction' – however dubious this notion may be – could become more nuanced and obvious as it emerged from its imperial shadow, with modern art as the necessary vehicle for this process. I am going to consider the

⁷⁴ Paul Nash, in *Unit 1: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture*, ed. Herbert Read (London Cassell and Company, 1934) p. 80.

extent to which the project of formulating a new English identity through modernism announced by Nash resounded through the publication of *Circle* four years later, became rearticulated in Richards's writing on the vernacular, and presents an essential context for how we might understand a set of painted reliefs by Ben Nicholson.

Ben Nicholson's reliefs act as bundles of citations that direct the viewer back to the domestic spaces and intimate relationships that were responsible for their inception. They are physically and conceptually marked by domesticity, craft and locality. The painter Winifred Nicholson (née Roberts) and the sculptor Barbara Hepworth, who were consecutively married to Ben Nicholson, both played a pivotal role in the creation of these works and prompt the attention I will pay not only to the objects themselves but to the spaces that produced them. In the pages of *Circle*, the reliefs are surrounded by the geometric abstract art of Jean Arp, Kazimir Malevich, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Piet Mondrian, and Sophie Tauber-Arp. Ben Nicholson's serene white plains, indented with circles or set within successively stepped rectangles and squares, at first seem at home amongst these products of the European avant-garde. But as we shall see, they can be read as an attempt to initiate a sense of what Nash termed English 'national and racial distinction' illuminated by its close comparison with international abstraction, and achieved by the application of the vernacular techniques that Richards theorized elsewhere in the publication.

A national identity relating to an historic and 'primitive' temperament can be traced through the *Circle* reliefs back to Ben and Winifred Nicholson's home between 1923 and 1933, Banks Head in Cumberland. While the next chapter will focus on London, a crucial and underappreciated context for Ben's white reliefs lies far from the imperial capital in this rural setting to the north of England. Banks Head was located near the land owned by Winifred Nicholson's grandfather, the 8th Earl of Carlisle, and she later wrote of how the house

welcomed us and we bought it at once. The earth of Cumberland is my earth, way back to the medieval, to the Roman times, the Celtic bronze-age times. I have always lived in Cumberland – the call of the Curlew is my call, the tremble of the harebell is my tremble of life, the blue mists of lonely fells is my mystery, and the silver gleam when the sun does come out is my pathway.⁷⁵

Immediately these words begin to evoke what Raphael Samuel has termed the images of ‘rusticity, chronicles of ancient sunlight’ revealed when historic Englishness, ‘umbilically tied’ to language and literature, emerged to supplant British identity.⁷⁶ According to Winifred Nicholson, the ideas and paintings generated at Banks Head would evoke a primal and hereditary power considered missing from spiritually impoverished English modernism. It was, in her words, ‘a grey farmstead, a little house built of the Roman Wall stones, a byre and a barn, on the line of the Roman Wall overlooking the great valley of the Irthing river, and over towards the blue-grey fells’.⁷⁷ The ‘Roman Wall’ is Hadrian’s Wall and there is clear relish in Winifred’s description of her modern vision founded on recycled, ancient stone. Setting out to realise their new vision for modernist domesticity, the couple had the cottage windows enlarged with capacious sills to maximise their view and let the northern light in.

A photograph taken in 1936 by Arthur Jackson, Hepworth’s cousin and a member of the group associated with *Circle*, shows their decorative scheme was sparse with their walls and cupboards coated in pale paint (figure 2.2) A rag rug made by their neighbour’s daughter, Mary Berwick, to a pattern of Ben’s design titled *Animal Squares*, covered the bare stone flags in the kitchen (figure 2.3).⁷⁸ ‘Banks Head’s altar was its hearth’, Winifred Nicholson

⁷⁵ Winifred Nicholson, ‘Banks Head – and Prydie’, in *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) p. 43.

⁷⁶ Samuel is referring to the fascist sympathies Henry Williamson and his novel series *A Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight*. Samuel, *Patriotism* 1, p. xii.

⁷⁷ Winifred Nicholson, *Unknown Colour*, p. 43.

⁷⁸ The dog asleep on the rug is called Slinky, the named used for later woven rug design by Nicholson, see Richard Chamberlain and Annamarie Stapleton, *Artists’ Textiles: Artist Designed Textiles 1940-1976* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors’ Club, 2012) p. 23.

asserted as a dedicated follower of the then popular Christian Science movement.⁷⁹ There, in front of the nineteenth-century cast iron range as a source of heat, light, and sustenance, stood traditional furniture: comfy armchairs in plain upholstery. Their son Jake recalled that this was a space in which ‘Victorian ornamentation was banned’, and David Bomberg described the atmosphere the Nicholsons created in their homes as ‘Spartan, puritan, thrifty’.⁸⁰ Nonetheless it would be difficult to describe the scene in Jackson’s photo as unhomely. Piet Mondrian’s *Composition with Double Line and Yellow* (1932) is displayed above the bookcase and its black rectilinear lines form a relation with their partners on the cupboard panels nearby. Its horizontals, raised to the top of the composition, find their echoes in the raised dark line of the kitchen range. Within that range, the white niche-like enclosure – a functional alcove containing a hot plate for the kettle – forms a space pregnant with quiet energy, suggestive of a tabernacle, and finds connection with the lower right corner of Mondrian’s painting. The painting is locked in a reciprocal relationship with the bookshelves, cupboard doors, great black range, and the square stone flooring. These are functional features of the room that have parallel and unassailable aesthetic qualities.

Another photograph taken at Banks Head shows shelves used to display a variety of objects (figure 2.4). It features glassware and a range of other ceramics, some holding cut plants or paint brushes. The slipware jugs on the top shelf are a traditional shape based on medieval examples. Simple and hardy, it was a form adopted by Bernard Leach (who Ben would later befriend in Cornwall) and is still produced today in his studio’s collection of ‘standardware’ designed for regular domestic use. Ben Nicholson’s own *Two Circles* (1934), one of his earliest white reliefs, given as a gift to Winifred Nicholson, sits alongside a dark plate and above a painting of ship by Alfred Wallis. This might be considered a decorative

⁷⁹ Winifred Nicholson, *Unknown Colour*, p. 44

⁸⁰ Jake Nicholson, ‘What Does an Artist Look for in a Painting Place?’, in *A Painters’ Place: Banks Head Cumberland, 1924-31* (Bristol Abbot Hall Gallery with Redcliffe Press, 1991) p. 10; quoted in Jeremy Lewison, *Ben Nicholson* (London: Tate Gallery, 1993) p. 21.

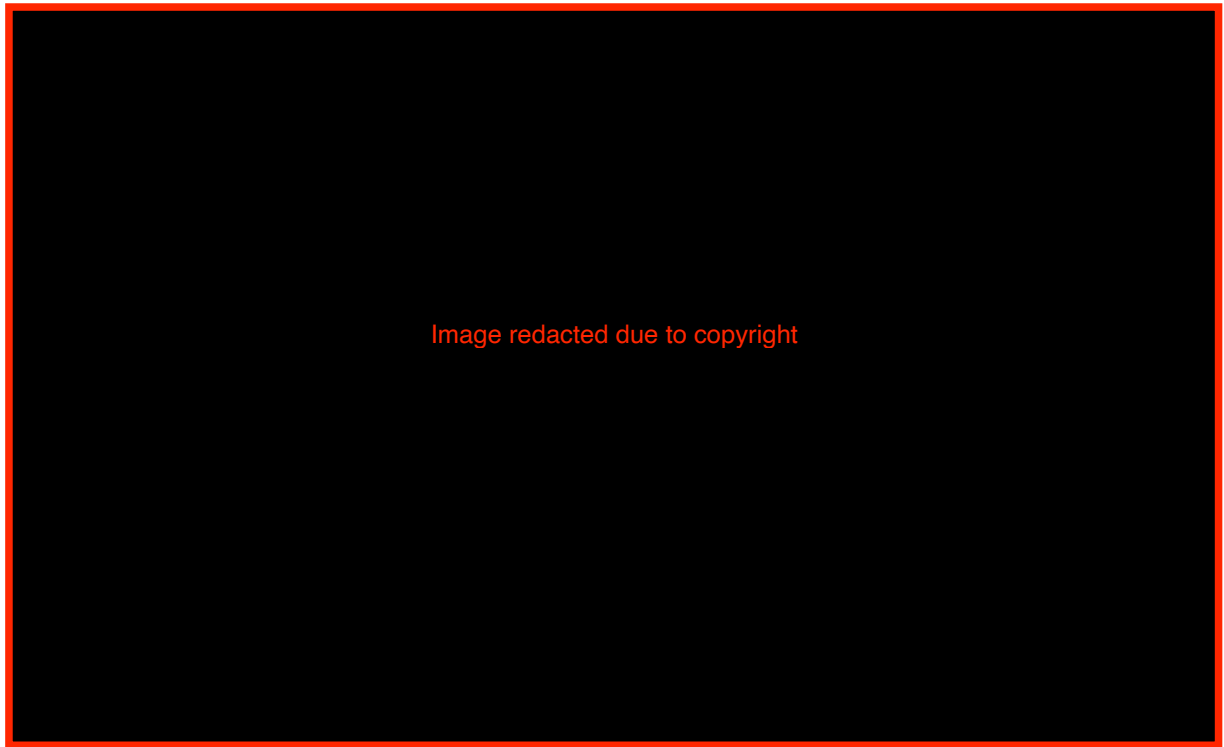


Image redacted due to copyright

2.2 Arthur Jackson, the 'front kitchen' at Banks Head, photograph print, 1936, Tate London. Winifred's dog, named Slinky, lies asleep on the rug designed by Nicholson named *Animal Squares*.

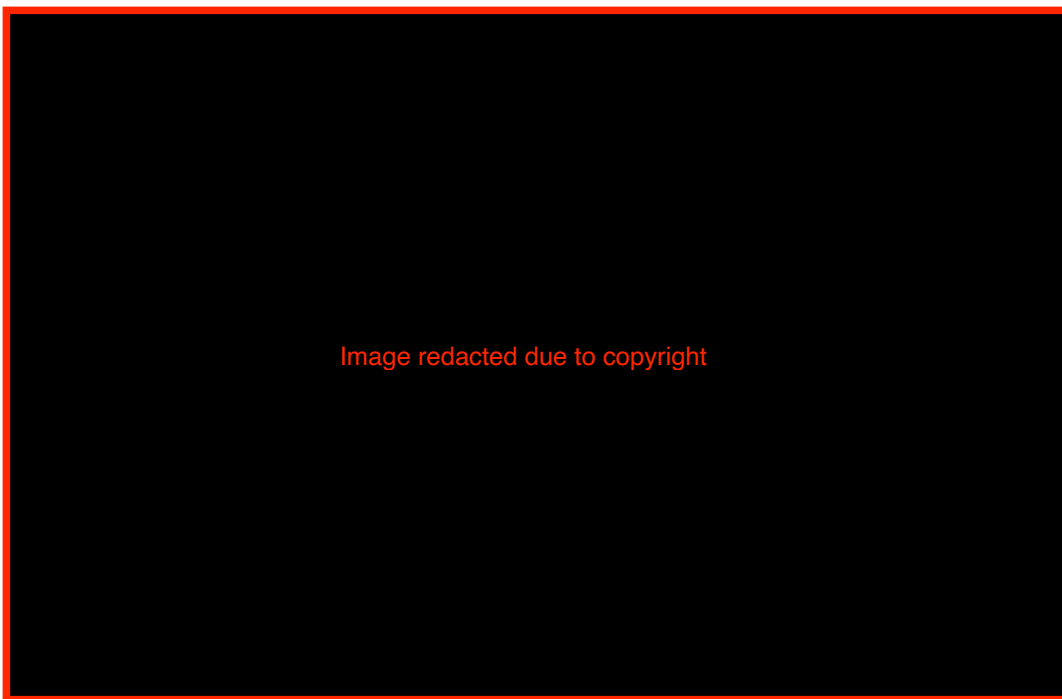
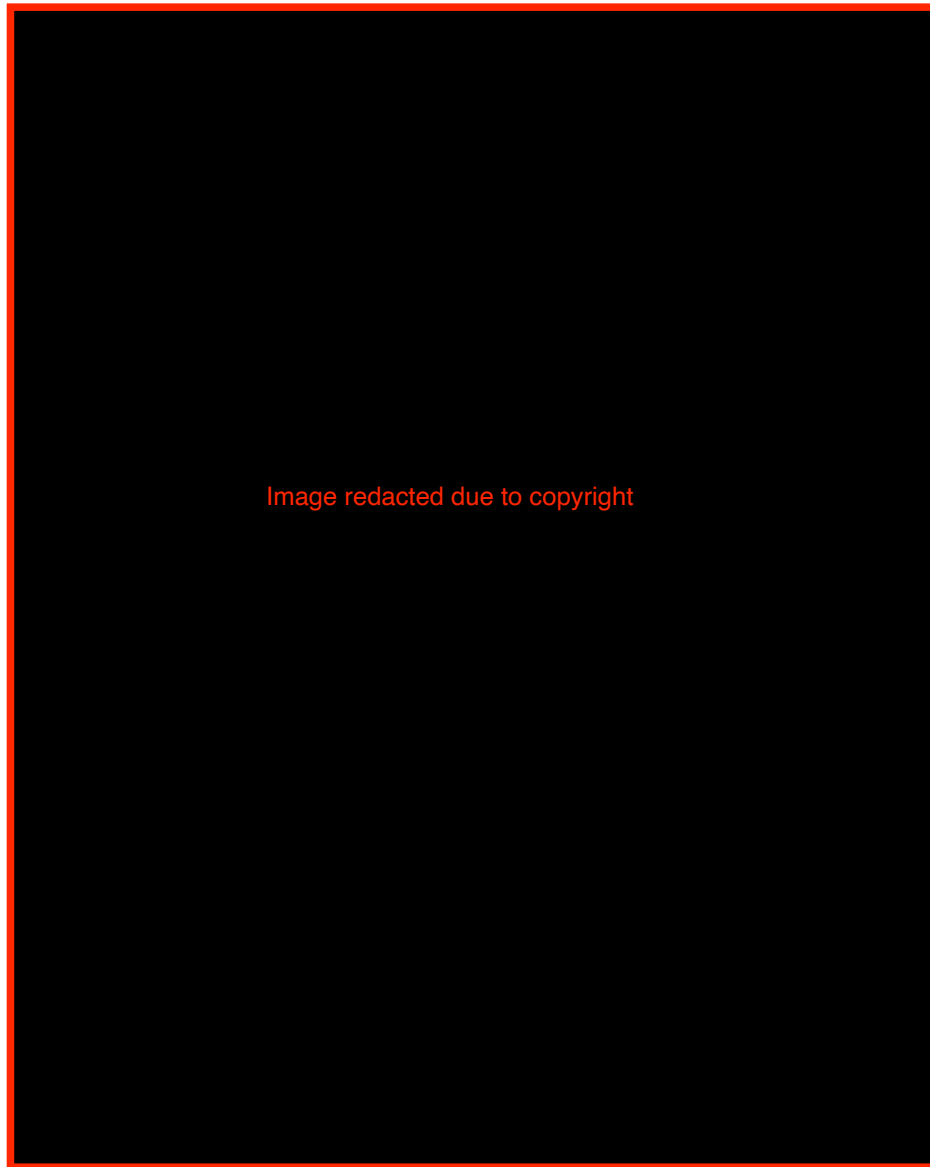


Image redacted due to copyright

2.3 Ben Nicholson (designer) and Mary Berwick (worked), *Animal Squares*, hand-hooked rag rug, c. 1925, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.



2.4 Shelves at Banks Head with object belonging to Winifred Nicholson, from Winifred Nicholson, *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987) p. 215.

From left to right, from top row: Staite Murray pot; painting by Jean Hugo; two Bernard Leach jugs; jar of shells; Egyptian alabaster; Lucie Rie cup and saucer and plate; glass goblet; Ben Nicholson *Two Circles*; glass bottle; Alfred Wallis painting; striped mug with brushes; two Hans Coper pots; stone; Lucie Rie jug and cup and saucer; striped jug and mug; Ben Nicholson painted box lid.

display, but the ceramics, like the kitchen range, have a functional purpose. While kitchen ranges are usually a site of domestic labour, Winifred Nicholson's inherited wealth meant the challenge of running Bank's Head was eased by servants; the artists' distance from the strain of preparing meals and washing pots allowed for the aestheticization of their everyday space.⁸¹ As an ensemble, the domestic space created at Banks Head troubled the binaries of decoration and function, crafted and machined, ancient and modern.

Beyond the walls of Banks Head, the weathered fells of Cumberland and Scotland further north informed the development of Ben Nicholson's painting between the wars. Writing to Herbert Read in 1944, he remembered how after leaving the Slade School of Art he had reacted against his father, William Nicholson, a famous and respected society painter. He condemned his father's 'sophistication' in preference for his mother's 'primitive character'.⁸² His mother, the painter Mabel Pryde, was Scottish, and both Ben and Winifred were eager to associate his creative practice with that alternative national heritage. Later in life, Winifred Nicholson recalled how 'all the Scots ancestry of him came into play, the Scots stark simplicity, the order of the tartan square lines, the agility and the lilt of the sword dance and the reel'.⁸³ This assessment of what made Ben Nicholson's work Scottish is more precise than his own description of his mother's influence. His attempt to claim Mabel's 'primitive' heritage appears motivated by its non-Englishness, an otherness that was gendered as private and domestic in contrast to his father's public-oriented sophistication. This bid to induct his mother's primitivism into an English modernist idiom should be seen in the context of earlier attempts to revivify English art through exposure to African and aboriginal art we have

⁸¹ Chris Stephens draws attention to similarities between this image and the 'deliberately nostalgic' illustration published in Gertrude Jekyll's *Old English Household Life*, (London: Batsford, 1925), see Chris Stephens, 'Ben Nicholson: Modernism, Craft, and the English Vernacular', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, ed. David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, and Fiona Russell (London: Yale University Press, 2002) p. 239.

⁸² Letter from Nicholson to Read, n.d. [1944], TGA 8717.1.3. Underlined in the original.

⁸³ Winifred Nicholson, *Unknown Colour*, p. 43.

already encountered through Roger Fry. Similarly relevant is the way primitivism and domesticity are explicitly bound together by Ben Nicholson, as he wrote later in the same letter: ‘she said after listening to a lot of talk about art it made her want to go and scrub the kitchen table. Scrubbing the top of a very well used kitchen table is very close to the way I work’.⁸⁴ Domestic labour is figured as an antidote to the sophistication of the English artistic establishment; through Ben’s method of carving, planning, and sanding his white reliefs he absorbed this domestic primitivism into his art and challenged his patrilineal norms.

In addition to the interior of Banks Head, these comments encourage viewing Ben Nicholson’s reliefs in *Circle* not according to the remote zones of pictorial and sculptural modernist abstraction, but as part of a holistic drive to reinvigorate English modernism through rural domesticity and a vernacular refashioning of its dogmatic simplicity.⁸⁵ With this alternative genealogy in mind, the avant-garde inheritance of cubism or Mondrian’s grids is replaced or conjoined with the ‘traditional’ Scottish craft of tartan manufacture passed down through generations. But Winifred’s invocation of these clichéd traditions should also remind us of Eric Hobsbawm’s and Terence Ranger’s famous study of the invention of national traditions as a divisive strategy of colonial rule and economic exploitation.⁸⁶ I want to be clear, as I stress the Englishness of Nicholson’s practice, that this is not a repetition of the erasure of local or Scottish identities, but rather shows how those identities were co-opted and assimilated into a conception of a vital English modernism through Unit One and *Circle*. For all the wild primitivism of the Celtic periphery Ben claimed to embody, when he exhibited in the heart of empire and when his works were acquired for national collections, he was paraded as an English artist.

⁸⁴ Letter from Nicholson to Read, n.d. [1944], TGA 8717.1.3.

⁸⁵ Stephens, ‘Ben Nicholson’, p. 239

⁸⁶ See Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland’, and Terence Ranger, ‘The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

In 1931, Ben Nicholson met Barbara Hepworth and fell in love.⁸⁷ While Winifred Nicholson had already established ideas of craft and historic local identity in her creative life with Ben Nicholson, Hepworth can be understood as the catalyst for the sculptural character of his subsequent work. Their home and studio at No. 7 The Mall in Hampstead became a space in which the two artists worked closely, allowing methods and motifs to drift between the works they were producing in parallel only meters apart from one another. Ben Nicholson had moved in in March 1932 and a joint exhibition at the Tooth Gallery resulted later that year.⁸⁸ The property was originally designed in 1872 with large north facing windows for use by artists living nearby and was later refitted with a mezzanine bedroom and downstairs living space. The buildings' open spaces were heavily glazed and bathed in natural light. Compact and multipurpose, they broadly conformed to the expectations of modernist domesticity and so still attracted artists in the thirties.⁸⁹ At No. 7, Nicholson and Hepworth struggled to maintain liveable conditions in a home cluttered with chisels, paintbrushes, canvas, wood dust and stone debris, but they were also situated at the heart of Hampstead's network of modern artists: Cecil Stephenson lived at No. 6, Herbert and Ludo Read lived at No. 3, Henry Moore lived around the corner at 11a Parkhill Road, and all were but a short distance from the white-rendered Isokon Building on Lawn Road, completed by Wells Coates in 1933.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ For a biographical account of Ben, Winifred and Barbara in their Hampstead context, see Maclean, *Circles and Squares*, pp. 1-50.

⁸⁸ Lee Beard has traced the connections displayed between the sculptor and the painter's work through the arrangement and photography of both the gallery space and No. 7, see Lee Beard, "'Modernist Cell' or 'Gentle Nest': Ben Nicholson, Art, Design and the Modern Interior 1924-39", (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2003), pp. 130-33. On the photographic representation of Hepworth's sculpture studio see, Jon Wood, Penelope Curtis, and Maurice Raynal, *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera*, (Leeds: Henry Moore Foundation, 2001).

⁸⁹ Beard, "'Modernist Cell' or 'Gentle Nest'", p. 128; Jeremy Lewison, 'Ben Nicholson: Between Art and Craft', in *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Tanya Ed Harrod (London: Crafts Council, 1997) p. 196.

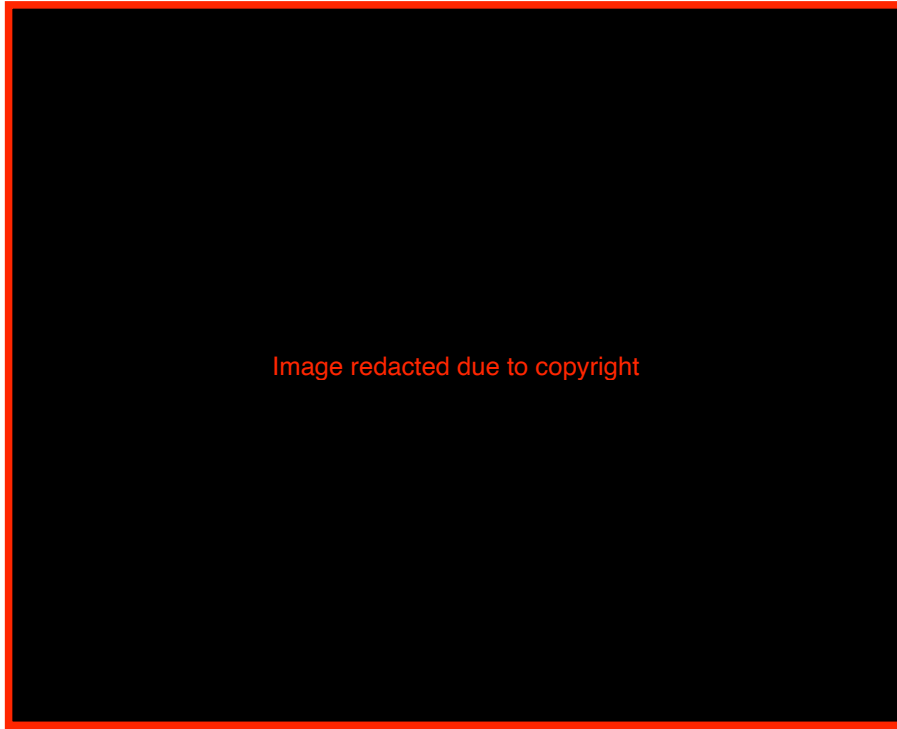
⁹⁰ See Sally Festing, *Barbara Hepworth: A Life of Forms*, (London: Penguin, 1996), and Sarah Jane Checkland, *Ben Nicholson: The Vicious Circles of His Life and Art* (London: John Murray, 2000).

When considering how the art produced at No. 7 The Mall relates to Richards's writing on the English vernacular, Nicholson's and Hepworth's printed textiles are crucial. Although Nicholson's practice of preparing linoleum blocks for printing is conventionally and accurately thought of as paving the way for his adoption of shallow carved relief in 1933, both artists' fabric designs deserve attention on their own terms as artworks that encouraged what Richards later called for: the transmission of modernist design into a true folk art.⁹¹ At the beginning of summer in 1932, Hepworth wrote to Nicholson in Paris, 'I'm absolutely bitten by this printing business can't get on with carving at all [...] I've just done my first 2 colours + to-night superimposed a third just for fun'.⁹² Designs such as Nicholson's *Numbers* (1932-33) and Hepworth's *Design of Fabric* (c.1933) (figures 2.5 & 2.6) are the evidence of their joyous and experimental approach to a new medium. Like the Omega Workshops before them, the rough freedom of both artists' designs and the overt anti-professionalism of their finished product emphasized pleasure in the act of making and ensured the hand of the artist was visible as a mark of authenticity.⁹³ Nicholson would even intentionally print certain blocks inverted to prove he was responsible for each piece's creation, and both artists applied pigment heavily so the cut negative surface of the linoleum as well as the smooth design imprinted, leaving a weathered and textural appearance. This affectedly slap-dash approach, privileging formal concept and immediacy of aesthetic emotion before finish, was undoubtedly in part derived from the so-called 'naïve' or 'primitive' work of Alfred Wallis, who Ben and Christopher Wood had met in 1928, and should be seen as an extension of

⁹¹ Nicholson himself would claim that his reliefs were prompted by the happy accident of a wood chip falling out as surface he was incising, see Jeremy Lewison, *Ben Nicholson* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1991) p. 15. Lucy Pratt and Lee Beard have both argued Ben's lino-cutting and his discussions with Barbara on the topic provide a more convincing context for his decision to work in relief, see Lucy Pratt, 'Ben Nicholson's Block-Printed Textiles at the V&A: An Art Form on Fabric', *Apollo*, 148 (1998), p. 28; Beard, "'Modernist Cell' or 'Gentle Nest'", pp. 143-50.

⁹² Letter from Hepworth to Nicholson, May 1932. TGA 8717.1.1.74.

⁹³ Roger Fry, 'The Artist as Decorator', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1996) pp. 207-11.



2.5 Ben Nicholson, *Numbers*, 1933, lino printed cotton, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



2.6 Barbara Hepworth, *Design for Fabric*, c.1933, lino printed cotton, Kettles Yard, University of Cambridge.

Mable Pryde's 'primitive character' mentioned earlier.⁹⁴ These were 'most amusing and beautiful' works, according to the collector Cyril Reddihough writing to Nicholson, and they could now be assimilated into the visual language of everyday life in England, a vernacular 'fabric of one-ness and a vigorous rhythm'.⁹⁵ Reddihough's descriptive language is both indicative of earlier twentieth-century Bergsonian aesthetics being applied to medieval carving and prehistoric cave paintings by Herbert Read at that time, and anticipates the call for unity whether national or international that would soon arise in *Circle*.⁹⁶

Although at first their textiles were given as gifts to friends, Nicholson and Hepworth soon pursued more commercial outlets. The art market in England had almost collapsed due to the after-effects of the Wall Street Crash in 1929. Artists were forced to find a way to make their living, often by either turning to domestic design or by drastically reducing the price of their paintings.⁹⁷ As economic conditions were improving in 1934, Douglas Goldring noted how these reduced prices meant that a 'vast army of middle-class flat-dwellers who formerly only aspired to reproductions are beginning to purchase originals'.⁹⁸ Hepworth succeeded in having her designs produced by Allan Walton and Nicholson made the first public exhibition of his designs in the 'Room and Book' exhibition at Zwemmer's Gallery in 1932 organised by Paul Nash.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Jovan Nicholson, 'Art and Life', in *Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray: Art and Life, 1920-1931* (London: Philip Wilson, 2013) pp. 35-43.

⁹⁵ Cyril Reddihough to Ben Nicholson, undated letter, TGA 8717.1.2.3816.

⁹⁶ Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931).

⁹⁷ Andrew Stephenson, 'Strategies of Situation: British Modernism and the Slump c.1929-1934', *Oxford Art Journal*, 14 (1991), 30-51.

⁹⁸ Douglas Goldring, 'Artists and Pictures', *The Studio*, 107 (1934), p. 100. Recent scholarship on Goldring has often focussed on his earlier literary writing, see Helen Southworth, 'Douglas Goldring's the Tramp: An Open Air Magazine (1910-1911) and Modernist Geographies', *Literature and History*, 18 (2009), 35-53; Guy Woodward, 'Douglas Goldring: 'An Englishman' and 1916', *Literature and History*, 26 (2017), 195-212. However, he was closely involved in avant-garde art in the 1930s and was instrumental in the founding of the Georgian Group, which will be addressed at length in chapter three.

⁹⁹ Walton commissioned a number of other artists to create screen printed fabric including Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Frank Dobson, and Cedric Morris. See John Potvin, 'Colour Wars: Personality, Textiles and the Art of the Interior in 1930s Britain', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 16 (2015), pp. 25-41; Allan Walton, 'Furnishing Textiles', *Journal of the Royal Society of the Arts*, 83, (1934), p. 168.

Introducing the exhibition, Nash attempted to engage a broad audience: ‘certain matters of aesthetics cannot be said to appeal to everyone: but a room and a book are, as it were, common property’. Taking issue with the ongoing influence of the Ideal Home Exhibition, he then proceeded to state his ambition that the works of modern design on display would replace the suburban preference for the faux-antique:

What is the alleged ideal home offered to the dwellers of Metroland? A gabled house with bogus beams and lattice windows. And Mr Drage’s idea of what the city man likes to come back to in the evenings? A sham ingle nook and a gas log fire. With what sort of curtains and rugs does the city man’s wife brighten up the drawing room? Old English chintzes and Persian Carpets. What is that his mother-in-law is irritably working on her tambour? A tea-cosy of Jacobean design. And so it goes on. An endless dance of ancient masks like a fearful fancy-dress ball composed of nothing but travesties of the Jacobeans and poor old Queen Anne. It is time we woke up and took interest in our times.¹⁰⁰

Lucy Pratt has argued that it should not be assumed that Ben’s designs were conceived for upholstery fabrics for the domestic interior and that they could have been used as printed wall hangings more akin to his earlier paintings which had used printing methods.¹⁰¹ While this may be a possibility, it is beyond doubt that the designs were later applied to furniture and curtains in a bid to target the suburban market Nash addressed, as is shown in a photograph of Herbert Read’s study from 1933 (figure 2.7). Ben’s fabrics were displayed alongside those of his sister Nancy, who was herself instrumental in realising the textiles through her workshop and expertise at the Poulk Press.¹⁰² At the same time Ben, like Etchells before him, was designing more rugs.¹⁰³ At least three were made with brightly coloured, geometric shapes that are more playful and homely, with traces of influence from time spent in Paris

¹⁰⁰ Paul Nash, *Room and Book* (London: Soncino Press, 1932) p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Pratt, ‘Ben Nicholson’s Block-printed Textiles at the V&A’ p. 28.

¹⁰² On Nancy Nicholson, see Sophie Bowness and Tim Nicholson, ‘The Textile Designs of Nancy Nicholson’, *Apollo*, 154 (2001), 17-23.

¹⁰³ The three identified rugs are: *Rug*, ca.1933, Victoria and Albert Museum T.66-1992; ‘Rug’ c. 1930, see Bonhams 19 June 2019, lot 38; and ‘Slinky’ worked by Joan Bravington, see Chamberlain and Stapleton, *Artists’ Textiles 1940-1976*, p. 29.

with Picasso and Joan Miro, than might be expected from the artist who had the reputation of living ‘in a seclusion as austere as that of a medieval monk in his cell’.¹⁰⁴ (figures 2.8 & 2.9)

Later in the 1930s, Ben worked to produce a new series of textiles in time for the publication of *Circle*. These included *Counterpoint*, *Three Circles*, and *Horizontal* (figures 2.10, 2.11, & 2.12) which were produced by Edinburgh Weavers under the audacious artistic direction of Alistair Morton. Just as it would in his future reliefs, texture played an important role in Ben’s design *Vertical* where four different variations of cotton and rayon were used to create subtle shades of white. Louise Campbell describes how such designs were presented as ‘modern yet traditional, gratifyingly prestigious get excitingly avant-garde’.¹⁰⁵ As we will soon see in more detail, Morton, who was also an artist, had commissioned Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight to build him a house and studio on the Cumberland fells not far from Banks Head. These later fabrics would be amongst the last Nicholson was directly involved in designing and carrying out: he noticed they would be less lucrative at £1 a yard than his paintings at £20 each which were now beginning to sell well, although Nancy would continue producing them and consulting him into the nineteen-seventies. Alongside Barbara’s *Pillar* (1937) they appear more highly finished than those produced at the beginning of the decade but they now formed part of a body of work connected through *Circle* that attempted to claim a place for constructive art in the reclamation of English national identity and a hazily defined cultural unity.

The reassertion of a specifically English identity through domestic art is carried from Ben’s experiences at Banks Head and No. 7 The Mall into his reliefs. Paul Nash used the term ‘equivalents’ to describe Nicholson’s earlier still lifes. This was his preferred language for abstract form, but when he came to review one of the earliest public exhibitions of the

¹⁰⁴ Cyril Reddihough, ‘Foreword’, *New Paintings by Ben Nicholson*, Lefevre Galley, London, March 1930, quoted in Jovan Nicholson, ‘Art and Life’, p. 174.

¹⁰⁵ Louise Campbell, *Studio Lives: Architect, Art and Artist in 20th-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 2019) p. 234.

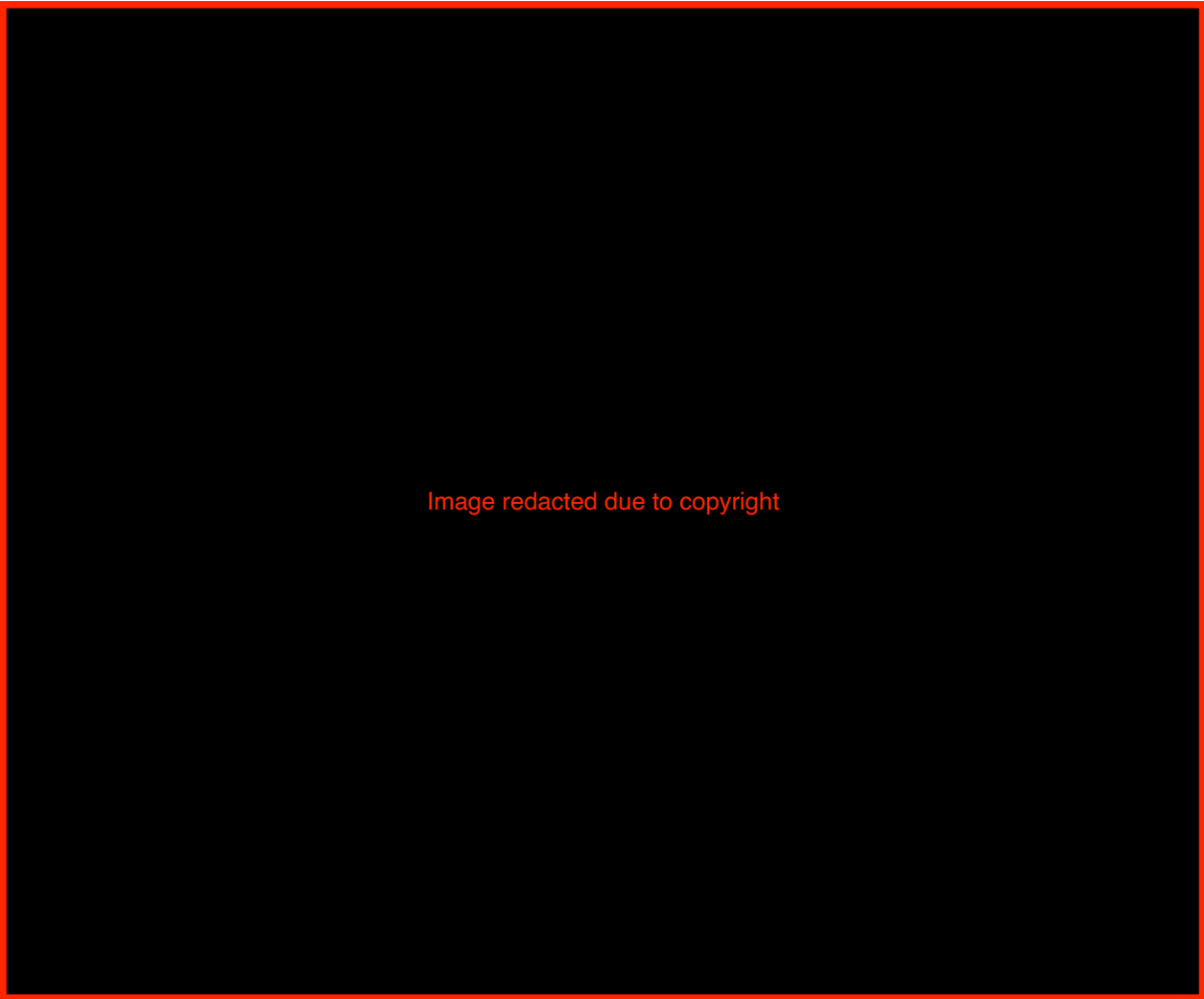


Image redacted due to copyright

2.7 Interior of No. 3 The Mall, Parkhill Road, 1933 (Herbert Read's study), from Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (eds.) *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, (London: Lund Humphries and Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993) p. 8.

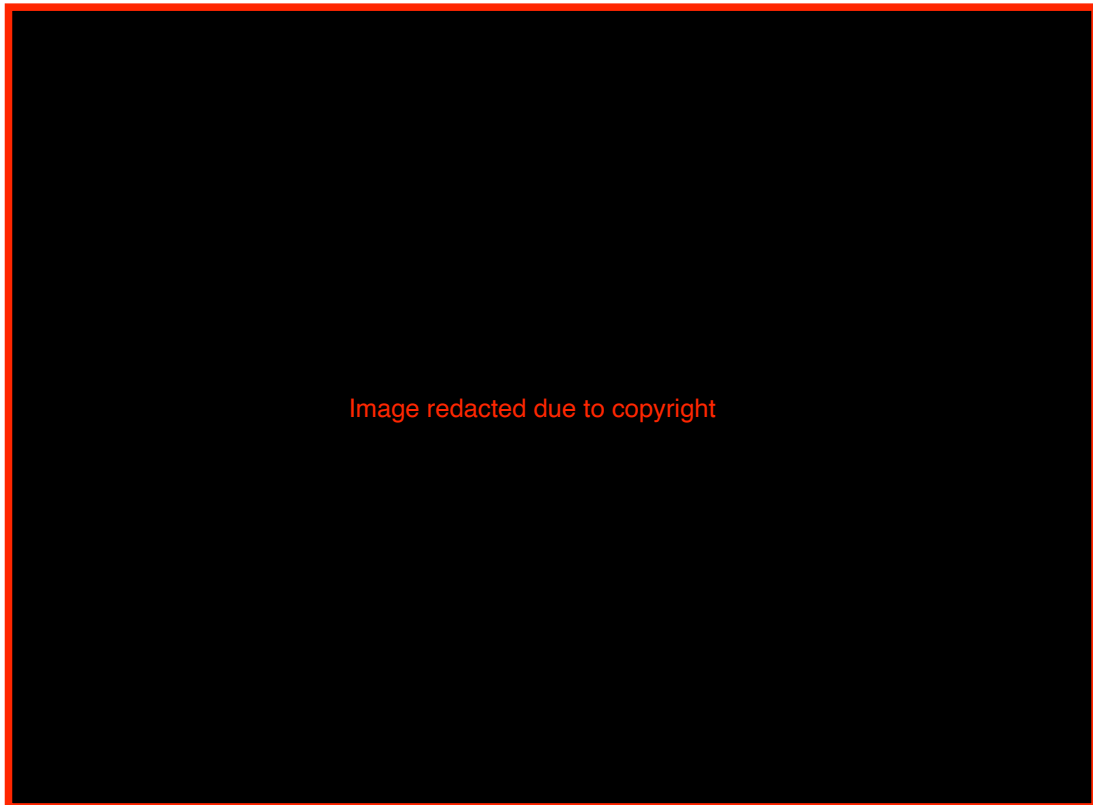


Image redacted due to copyright

2.8 Ben Nicholson (worked by Joan Bravington), *Rug*, hand knotted woollen pile, c. 1933, Victoria and Albert Gallery, London

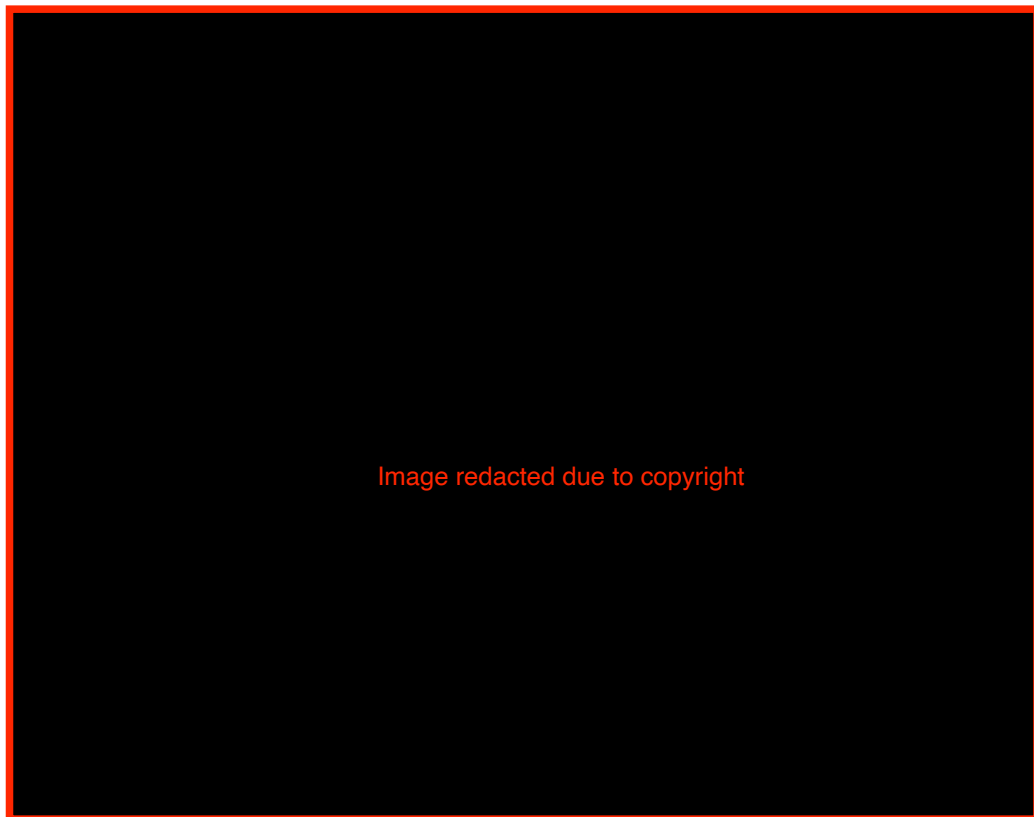
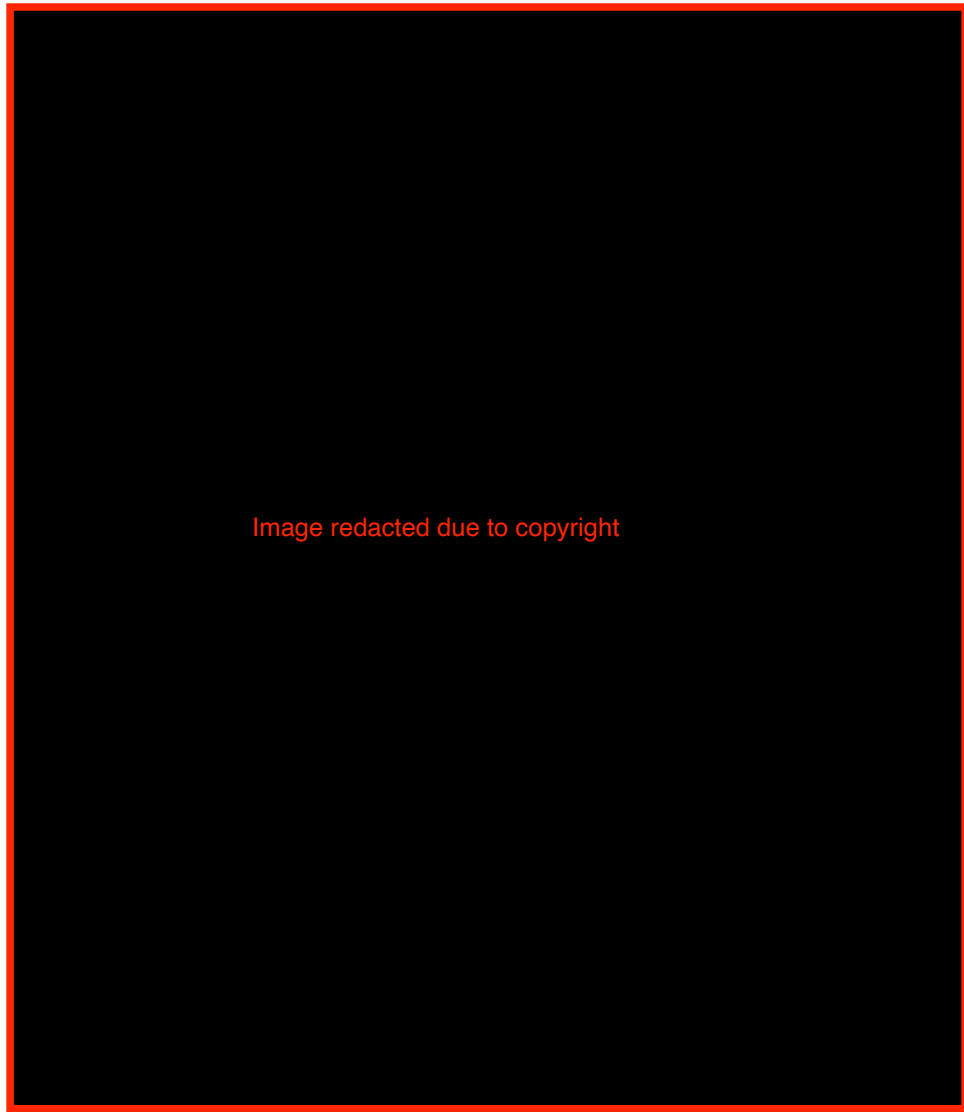
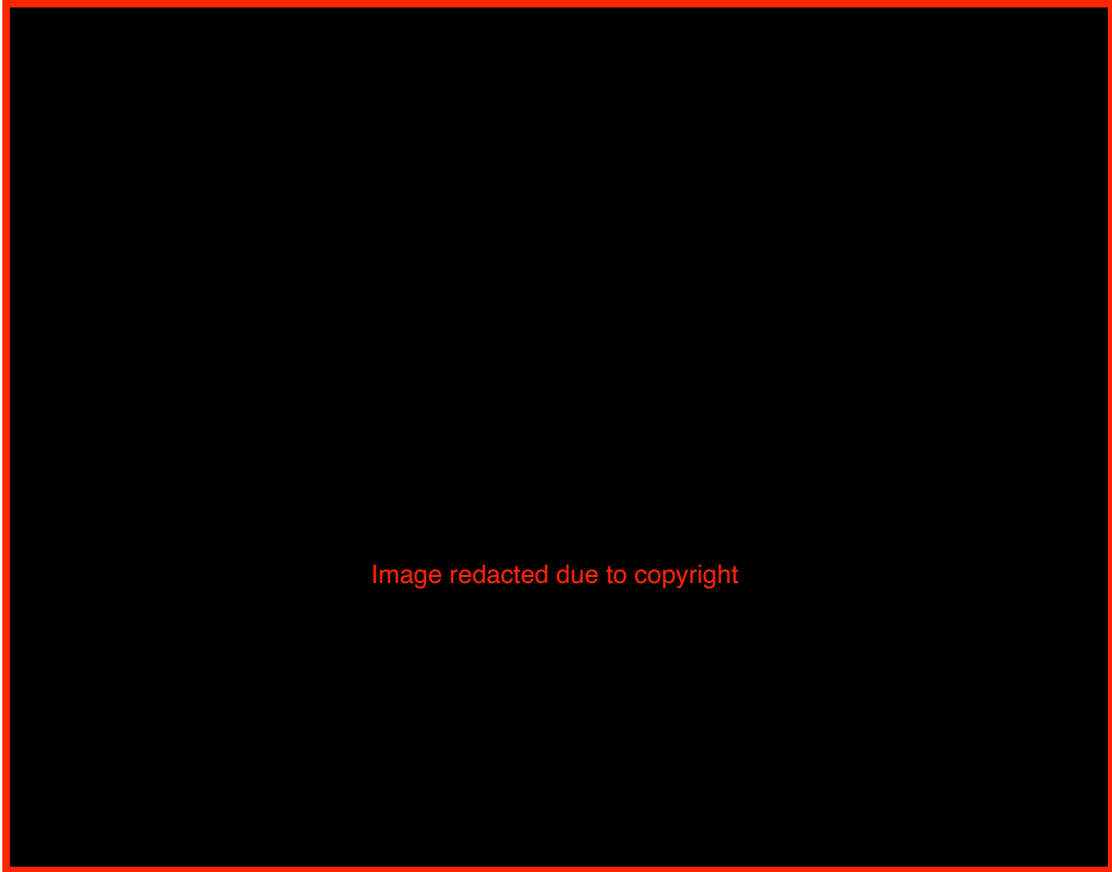


Image redacted due to copyright

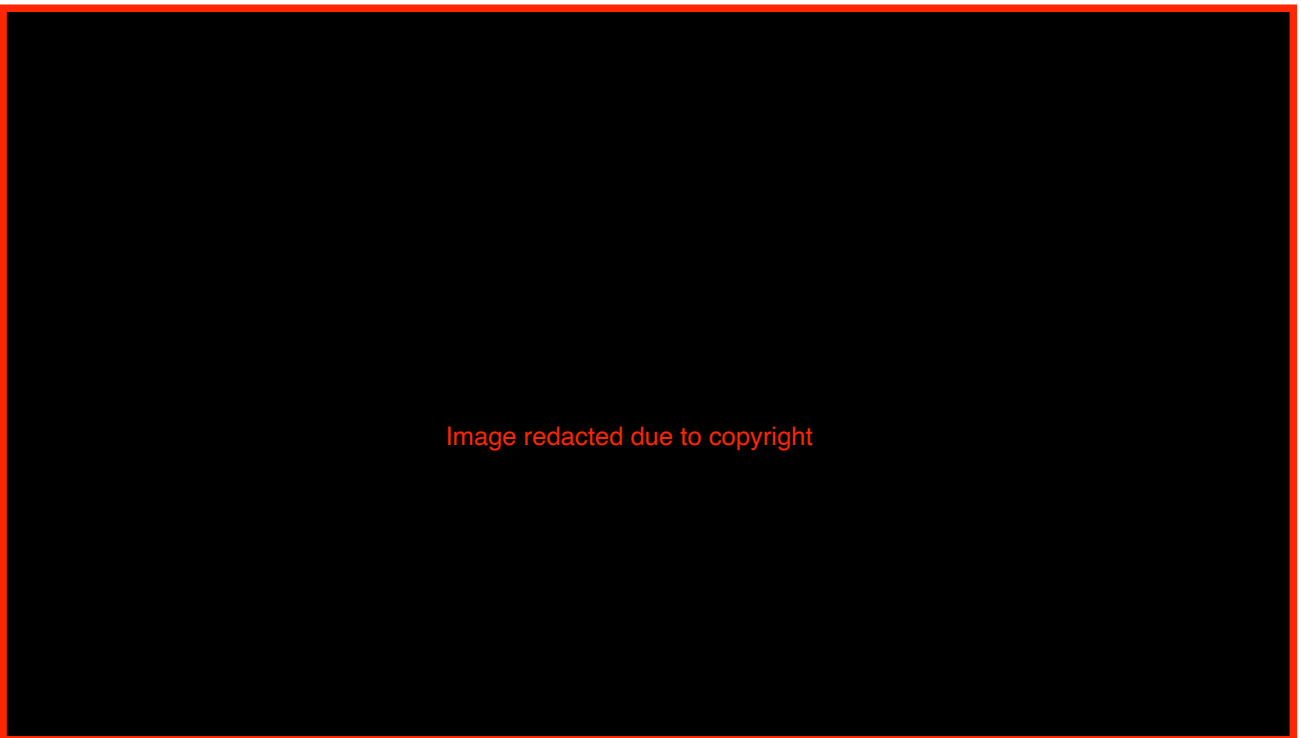
2.9 Ben Nicholson (worked by Joan Bravington), *Slinky*, hand knotted woollen pile, 1933, private collection, from Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, and Annamarie Stapleton, *Artists' Textiles: Artist Designed Textiles 1940-1976* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2012) p. 29.



2.10 Ben Nicholson, *Counterpoint*, jacquard woven rayon and cotton, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.



2.11 Ben Nicholson, *Three Circles*, screen printed cotton and rayon, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.



2.12 Ben Nicholson, *Horizontal*, jacquard-woven cotton and rayon, 1937, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Part of the Constructivist Fabrics series made in collaboration with Alastair Morton.

new white reliefs for the *Architectural Review* in 1935, he suggested they went a step further to become ‘utterly self-contained’, detached from the domestic world from which they emerged, a step Nash applauded as ‘the most logical and satisfying’ Nicholson could have made.¹⁰⁶ However, as any holistic scrutiny of his art over the inter-war years reveals, Nicholson’s abstraction is not non-representational but progressively evolves from still life subjects: his rectangles are the essential traces of tabletops compressed into quiet poetry, and his circles are the echoes jugs and bowls. One particular work encapsulates this process and connects it to the white reliefs. *1929 (still life)* shows a tabletop abstracted as a white rectangle with its legs protruding at the bottom of the composition (figure 2.13). On the table sits the still life arrangement of a mug, bowl, plate and vase set against non-local patches of the artist’s favoured russet-red. Slips of grey suggest shadows and to the left of the composition two bright, pure patches, one black, one white, offset the worn texture of the colour surfaces throughout the rest of the painting, which reveal the warp and weft of the canvas. Diffusions of airy pigment migrate across the composition when not contained by inscribed pencil lines (predecessors of the later sgraffito markings) that demarcate the domestic objects. This work is of particular interest because it was reworked in 1935 following Nicholson’s first white reliefs, and it clearly displays the relationship between those works and his earlier still lifes. The circular plate is, like the tabletop, flattened against the picture surface to form its abstract geometric equivalent.

Nash’s language allowed for the differentiation of Nicholson’s reliefs from his still lifes, insisting upon the integrity and independence of abstract form. The subsequent historicization of the reliefs by Clement Greenberg and Charles Harrison has deepened this distinction until ‘abstract’ and ‘domestic’ are held as diametric opposites. Greenbergian formalism created the climate for the post-war interpretation of Nicholson’s work

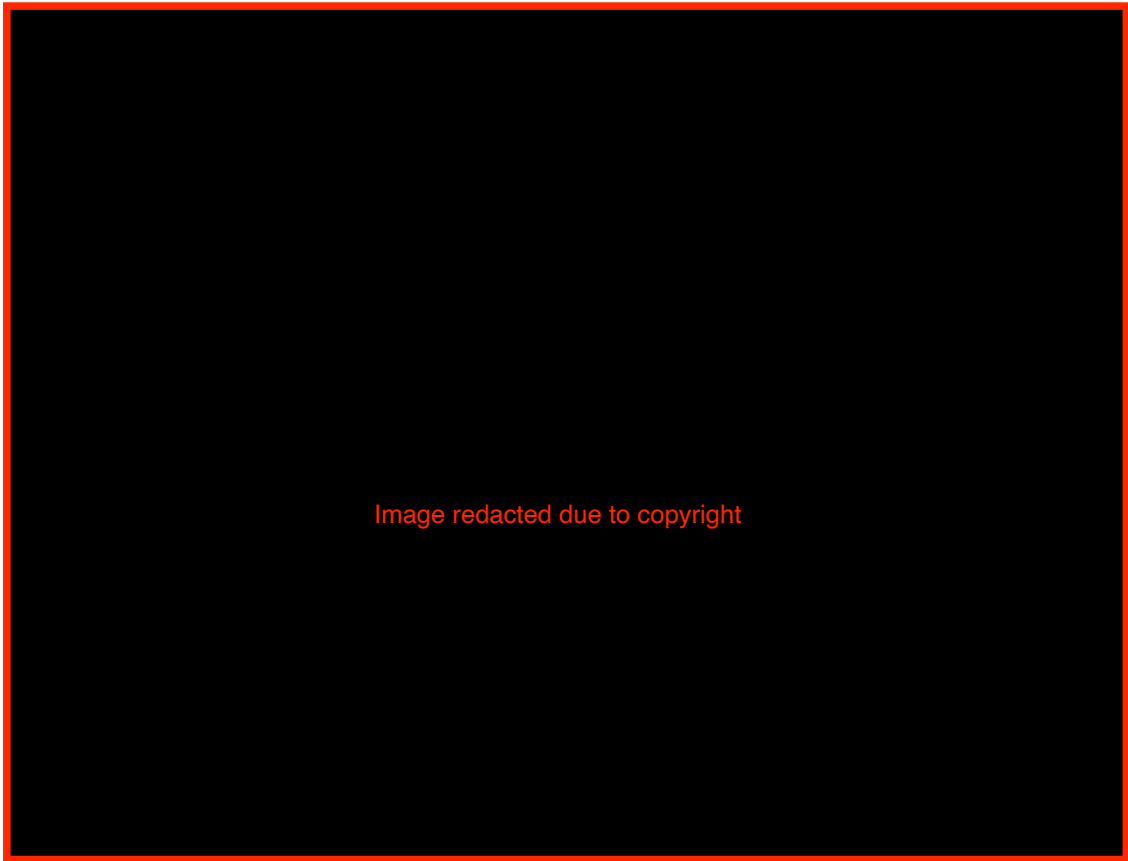
¹⁰⁶ Paul Nash, ‘Ben Nicholson’s Carved Reliefs’, *Architectural Review*, 78 (1935), p. 142.

culminating in Harrison's claim, at the end of the 1960s, that the 'inviolability' of Nicholson's work enabled them to 'sustain such rigorous abstraction without lapsing into the merely decorative'.¹⁰⁷ Harrison has gone on to argue that such abstraction also involved the concomitant rejection of any national or local associations in the white reliefs; they turn their back on landscape and radically depart from figurative norms, becoming the embodiment of Nicholson's allegiance to a European aesthetic network, instead of the supposedly reactionary and parochial associations of British art.¹⁰⁸ This forms an obvious parallel with the progressive internationalism assumed by many modernist architects such as Coates and Lucas at the time, but as we have already seen the cultural nexus of national history, vernacular and the interpretation of the international style is too complex to allow such rigid distinctions. Chris Stephens has since intervened to show how, through Nicholson's use of domestic craft and vernacular expression, the reliefs were never disassociated from their domestic origins. 'Even in his white reliefs – those acmes of reductive modernism' Stephens writes, 'one can read a residual Englishness which, conscious or not, could have served to mollify contemporary anxieties over what were commonly seen as foreign extremes'. Stephens's language here is precise. He locates the power of Nicholson's white reliefs in their ability to combine international modernism with the indexical traces of a national identity, rather than in their ability to claim equal footing with the European avant-garde alone. When 'modernist practices' and 'a radical Englishness' are combined in Nicholson's work, Stephens claims both are refreshed.¹⁰⁹ This serves to mollify anxieties of aesthetic extremes figured as foreign, but I am arguing that anxieties regarding a more deep-rooted crisis of national identity and Britain's political power are at play in these reliefs.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Harrison, *Ben Nicholson* (London: Tate Gallery, 1969) p. 30.

¹⁰⁸ Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism, 1900-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981) pp. 258-64.

¹⁰⁹ Stephens, 'Ben Nicholson', pp. 225, 226.



2.13 Ben Nicholson, *Still Life (1929)*, oil and pencil on canvas, 1929 reworked 1935, Yale Centre for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut.

Nicholson's method of creating his reliefs involved initially carving the support and establishing the depth and shape of the relief. He often used board but occasionally wood (one of his largest reliefs, *1935 (white relief)* (Tate) was carved from a mahogany table top). Having sanded and smoothed the surface, he would then alternate between applying successive layers of plaster and scraping the surface with a razor, a technique he had applied to earlier paintings. This enabled him to achieve a fine control over the minor undulations and imperfections on the surface of the reliefs which became particularly visible under raking light. By 1935 he was creating reliefs covered in white paint – five of which he selected to feature in *Circle* (figure 2.14) – but he also produced others in a buff, or dusty beige colour with richly variegated surfaces. With their facture full of chips, nicks, and natural grain of the wood on show, Stephens suggests 'subtle variations invest the reliefs with a certain weather-worn naturalness, even organicism, while the preservation of chisel marks, despite numerous layers of thick household paint, serves as witness to the artist's carving of the board'.¹¹⁰ Instead of pristine, precise, and mathematical objects, these works were presented by Nicholson as products that had grown from the land beneath his feet, crafted by specifically English traditions of visual culture, bearing the faults and marks of their maker as we had seen before in the printed textiles.

In one example published in *Circle*, the upper left area of the work, on a lower part of the relief, is given a noticeably rougher texture than the dominant plane (figure 2.15). Titled *1935 (Quai d'Auteuil)*, this work was made while Nicholson was visiting Winifred Nicholson and his children in Paris.¹¹¹ Nicholson and his co-editors of *Circle* opted to show a Peruvian carving in stone next to *Quai d'Auteuil* (figure 2.16). The intended affinities are clear: both reliefs present a seemingly abstract arrangement of circles and rectangles, both have heavily

¹¹⁰ Stephens, 'Ben Nicholson', p. 230.

¹¹¹ This work was acquired by The Hepworth Wakefield in September 2021.

textured surfaces, and despite the monochrome reproduction of the images it is clear both are light in colour.¹¹² Such a juxtaposition ultimately suggests the ‘primitive’ character of Nicholson’s work as an English parallel to its ancient, non-European example.¹¹³ Just as the reliefs were promiscuously placed between the national and the international, so too were they pulled between the civilised and the primitive, the distant past and an imminent future. The vorticists had once claimed to ‘discharge ourselves on both sides’.¹¹⁴ But Nicholson later reflected that ‘once I’d tried a strong-man Wynd. Lewis phase I decided hard and strong led nowhere whereas sensitive even if temporarily weak could lead somewhere eventually’.¹¹⁵ Nicholson’s development of a nation- and land-bound modernism, which drew in memories of the Swiss snow and fused them with the locality of English craft, overturned Lewis’s earlier example to successfully engage itself on both sides.¹¹⁶

My discussion of Nicholson’s white reliefs may appear to have drifted away from architectural issues, but on the contrary, when these works were reviewed architecture was positioned as the conduit between Nicholson’s rarefied abstractions and the concerns of popular audiences. Nicholson’s art was, in short, inherently connected to the drive to establish an English architectural vernacular. When the relief entitled *Two Circles* was first exhibited at the Seven and Five show at the Leicester Galleries in March 1934, Douglas

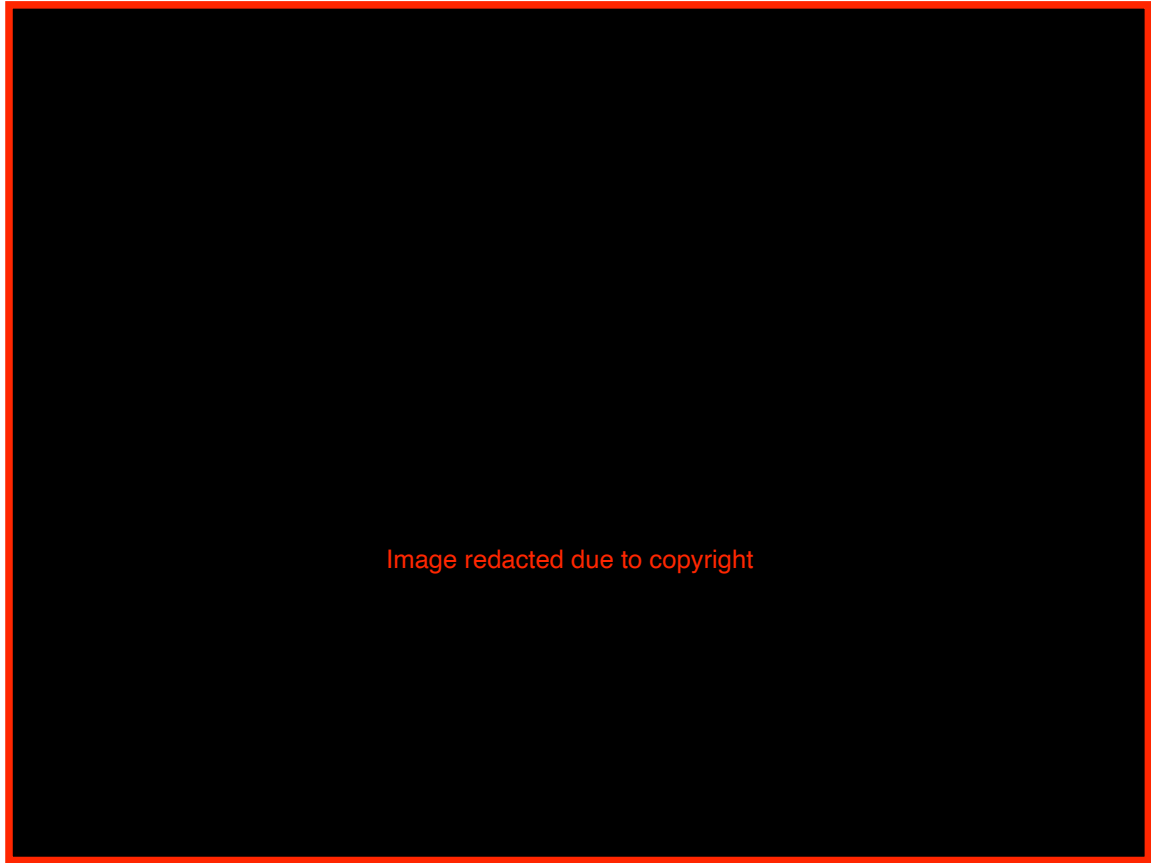
¹¹² The Peruvian carving may depict a trapped bird or other animal with the central circle representing an eye. For an exploration of how the circles in Nicholson’s reliefs evolved from the depiction of eyes in works such as 1933 (*St Remy, Provence*) and the linocut series *Foxy and Frankie*, see Beard, ““Modernist Cell” or “Gentle Nest”” p. 171.

¹¹³ In 1962, Nicholson appeared to distinguish between his reliefs of the mid-30s and those made later in Cornwall and Switzerland: ‘both the white ones & the later primitive reliefs – are what I’d choose to stand or fall by’. Letter to Herbert Read, 16 May [1962], TGA 8717.1.3.

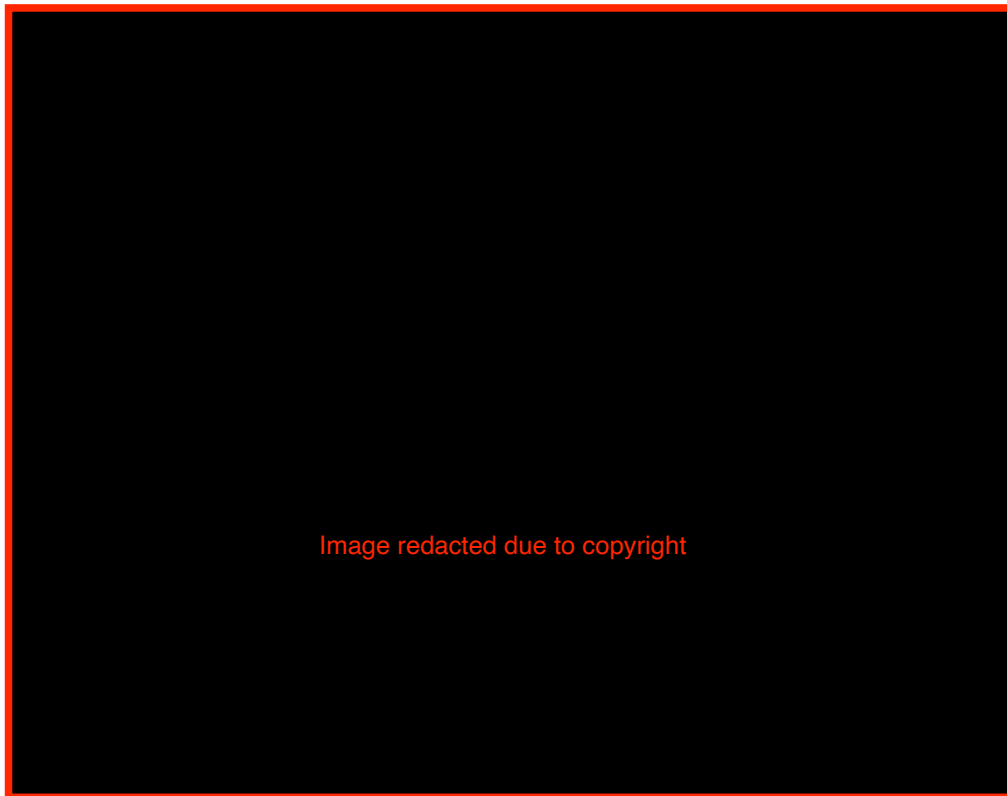
¹¹⁴ Wyndham Lewis, ‘Manifesto II’, *Blast*, 1 (1914), p. 30.

¹¹⁵ Ben Nicholson to John Summerson, 15 September [1944] TGA.20048.1.68.

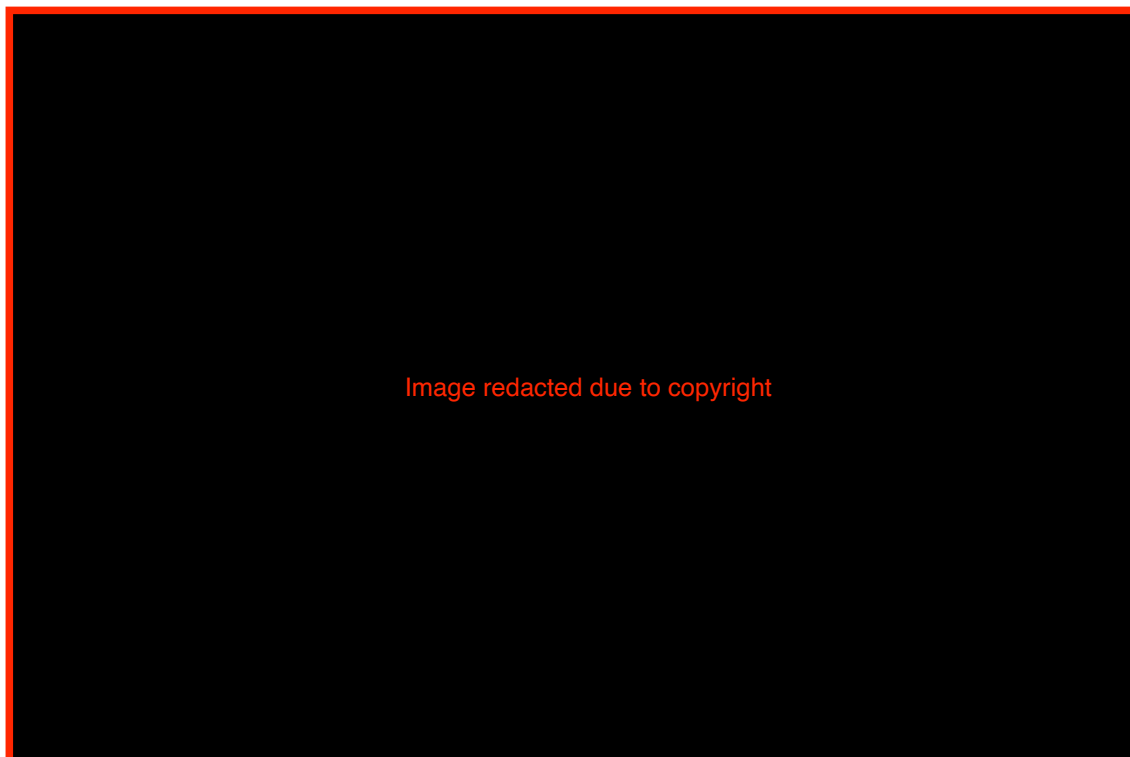
¹¹⁶ For links between Nicholson and British Studio Pottery of Bernard Leach, William Staite Murray, and Lucie Rie, see Julian Stair, ‘Factive Plasticity: The Abstract Pottery of William Staite Murray’, in *Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray: Art and Life, 1920-1931* (London: Philip Wilson, 2013) and Edmund de Waal, ‘Ben Nicholson’, in *Ben Nicholson: From the Studio* (Chichester: Pallant House Gallery, 2021).



2.14 Plates of Nicholson's white reliefs in *Circle: International Surevey of Constructivist Art*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), painting plates 7-9.



2.15 Ben Nicholson, *1935 (Quai d'Auteuil)*, 1935, oil on carved board, The Hepworth, Wakefield.



2.16 Nicholson's *Quai d'Auteuil* (1935) compared with a stone carving from Tiahuanaco, Peru, from *Circle*, sculpture plates 7a and 7b.

Goldring commented with some amusement in his review for *The Studio* that it could not fail to

get a rise out of the amateur or professional observer [...] for it carries simplification to the *n*th degree. Take the lid off a packing case, plane it, extract the nails, gouge out the two circles, a large one and a small one, paint the whole surface white, frame it and you have your picture.¹¹⁷

If Goldring's comments playfully attacked the extreme simplicity of Nicholson's abstraction, they also stressed its connection with the everyday, the domestic. It is no coincidence that both Goldring and that other valiant defender of the Georgian, John Summerson, were interested in Nicholson's work. Both were central figures in the movement for Georgian preservation whose interest in eighteenth-century building helped establish their sympathy with Richards's 'principle of anonymity'. The geometric emphasis on proportion and pale finish of Nicholson's abstracts undoubtedly appealed to their taste for the stuccoed classical facades of Georgian London.

Summerson was a key supporter and collector of Nicholson's work, and when he reviewed Nicholson's exhibition at Reid and Lefevre Galleries in March 1939 for the *Listener*, he offered a response to those accusing the abstract artist of detachment. They 'should remind themselves that it is to the work of artists in the abstract tradition that the whole of the modern vernacular in architecture, in industrial design, in printing, in publicity art, owes its origins'. Summerson is not simply using 'the modern vernacular' to denote modernist design in general terms but is rather writing in the pattern of Richards's search how for modernism could engage and integrate with popular culture and the everyday life of the nation. Nicholson's abstracts borrowed from that vernacular and joined its attempt to synthesise contrary aesthetic forms. The term 'abstract tradition' used by Summerson

¹¹⁷ Douglas Goldring, 'Artists and Pictures', *The Studio*, 107, (1934), p. 267.

indicates an attempt to soften the new at a time when, to many of his readers, the phrase would still have appeared oxymoronic. Nicholson's art, he concludes, is 'not exactly a popular art. It has no social importance in the obvious sense of wide appreciation' but like science 'its results reach out a very long way from the common world of everyday affairs and everyday visual experience'.¹¹⁸

Summerson is here participating in a long-running critical trend. Four years earlier, in 1935, Herbert Read had also worried about the issue of Nicholson's social detachment. A popular and great modern art movement would not be possible, Read suggested, until Marxism had delivered a truly classless society, and in the meantime art like Nicholson's would appear dilettantish. But mistakenly so, because Nicholson's work was 'intimately linked' with modernist architecture which is itself concerned with the practical and political problem of 'a scientific transformation of our cities, our dwellings, the whole structure of our future existence'.¹¹⁹ More straightforwardly, in another review of Nicholson's work published in 1935, Read declared 'they are the best paintings to go with the new architecture'.¹²⁰ Summerson is more specific in his comparison of Nicholson's work to a building's façade. It is 'architectural form detached from its functional mooring and raised to poetic level'.¹²¹ Paul Nash and Leslie Martin similarly suggested the reliefs' suitability as architectural ornaments, with Nash recommending they could be embedded into a wall (apparently disregarding Nicholson's own insistence on frames), and Martin imagining them forming a free-standing folding wall partition.¹²² In one of Martin's essays, written in the wake of *Circle*, he writes that 'since architecture has now shed its decoration painting, if necessary, can once again be introduced in its own right; not decoratively as a means of

¹¹⁸ John Summerson, 'Abstract Painters', *Listener*, 21, (16th March 1939), p. 574.

¹¹⁹ Herbert Read, 'Ben Nicholson and the Future of Painting', *Listener*, 15 (9 October 1935), p. 605.

¹²⁰ Herbert Read, 'Ben Nicholson's Recent Work', *Axis* 2 (April 1935), p. 16.

¹²¹ Summerson, 'Abstract Painters', p. 574.

¹²² Nash, 'Ben Nicholson's Carved Reliefs', p. 142; J. L. Martin, 'Architecture and the Painter: with special reference to the work of Ben Nicholson', *Focus*, 3 (1939), p. 65.

covering a blank wall, but as an architectural element'.¹²³ Exemplified by the Nicholsons' interior at Banks Head, decoration, as a category of visual culture, had been not been destroyed but assimilated and merged into function as the holistic impression of architectural and social space; the reliefs revealed the avant-garde's path back to social utility through architecture.

In November 1935, Richards himself reviewed the exhibition of Nicholson's work at the Lefevre Gallery together with the Seven and Five Society at Zwemmer Gallery (now compressed to the suitably modernist moniker '7 & 5'). It appeared in the pages of *Axis*, a 'quarterly review of contemporary "abstract" painting and sculpture' edited by Myfanwy Evans from Fawley Bottom, her cottage in the Oxfordshire countryside, and counting her husband John Piper, Geoffrey Grigson and Jean Helion amongst its notable contributors. With its eye-catching geometric covers, designed by Piper, *Axis* charted the rise of abstract art in Britain through an enriched relationship with the European avant-garde, and its confluence with predominantly English ideas of tradition, landscape and romanticism. They mapped 'newly elastic approaches to modernism', Alexandra Harris writes, that 'refused to see [modern buildings] as utopian worlds in white isolation'.¹²⁴ In his review, Richards focussed on mediating the public's relationship with Nicholson's white reliefs:

The public, always searching for a label to apply – for a comforting explanation of what it does not understand, or does not wish to – will no doubt recognise in these carvings an affinity with the superficial appearance of modern architecture [...] and Ben Nicholson's latest work will be relegated for ever to the same class as the plaster cornice and the marble mantelpiece – spots of decorative relief work how charmingly in keeping with the modern interior.

¹²³ Martin, 'Architecture and the Painter', p. 64.

¹²⁴ Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, pp. 43-44. Alan Powers notes the 'subtle proposal implicit in *Axis* that international modernism offers an education for the eye, through which the value of national traditions can be better understood'. Alan Powers, 'The Reluctant Romantics: *Axis* Magazine 1935-37', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, ed. David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, and Fiona Russell (London: Yale University Press, 2002) p. 267.

Contrary to his contemporaries including Martin and Read, Richards condemned what he anticipated to be the public's assumption: Nicholson's pure white surfaces were designed as decorative additions to complement modern homes of the kind then beginning to receive sustained coverage in the pages of the *Architectural Review*. But he was at pains to distinguish between the reliefs and the cornicing they seemed to imitate, acknowledging that 'Ben Nicholson's reliefs have an affinity with modern architecture; that is the test of their vitality as it is the vitality of any art; purely through a community of feeling and a similar concern for formal significance' but not through straightforward visual imitation of line and surface.¹²⁵ Although Read's, Martin's, and the expected public interpretation of the reliefs may have been valid, Richards himself was eager to point out that a deeper link existed between Nicholson's art and modern architecture. That link, as I have shown, was one of a new modernist vernacular that registered Englishness in manner that at once comforted anxieties of belonging or identity and strode into the future.

Flint and Fabric: Furlongs and Brackenfell

To conclude this chapter, I would now like to turn to look briefly at how Richards's writing on the vernacular and Nicholson's reliefs relate to two houses. The first is Furlongs, a flint-walled cottage on the Sussex Downs belonging to Peggy Angus, an artist, designer, who was married to Richards from 1938 to 1947. The second is Brackenfell, some three hundred miles away in Cumberland, a house commissioned by Alastair Morton for himself and his family from Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight. Respectively, one shaped Richards's understanding of rural domestic life and the vernacular architecture of southern England, while the other provides a suggestion of how the accumulated experiments of the years between 1934 and

¹²⁵ J. M. Richards, 'Ben Nicholson at the Lefevre: 7 & 5 at Zwemmers', *Axis*, 4 (November 1935), pp. 21-24.

1938 informed modern architecture's renewed attention to local materials, landscape, comfort, and traditional methods. These general trends, suggesting 'that modernist style could be sourced by ancient native traditions', have already been addressed by Louise Campbell, Alan Powers, and Frances Spalding.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the coalescence of these arguments around the idea of an English vernacular in line with Richards's 'principle of anonymity' has been set out by Jessica Kelly's rigorous work on what she terms 'vulgar modernism', and Erdem Erten.¹²⁷ Breaking away from these well-charted waters, my aim in the following pages is to show how Furlongs and Brackenfell share an umbilical connection, one a 'true' vernacular the other a modernist derivation. Drawing on the preceding discussion of Richards's architectural discourse, we will see how this need to connect modernist innovation with 'ancient native traditions' can be brought to bear on wider issues of England's imperial identity. When globalising effects of modernist and imperial culture were felt in England, what kind of home could be created to prepare the modern subject for these new realities?

Peggy Angus, the person responsible for the domestic phenomenon of Furlongs, was a gifted artist and designer of textiles, wallpapers, and other industrial products. In Angus's obituary, Tanya Harrod described her 'great respect for vernacular and folk art, together with a passionate belief in art's social purpose'.¹²⁸ She had attended the Royal College of Art as part of a prodigious cohort including Helen Binyon, Hepworth, Enid Marx, Henry Moore, Eric Ravilious and his good friend Edward Bawden. In 1932 she visited the USSR, returning to England to help establish the Artist International Association and bringing with her with a sample collection of books printed using lithography. This ultimately motivated Ravilious, in collaboration with Noel Carrington, to produce a number of illustrated editions with Country

¹²⁶ Frances Spalding, *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 72.

¹²⁷ Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism'; Erten, 'The "Hollow Victory"'.

¹²⁸ By contrast Angus expressed her distain for the avant-garde when she described it as 'scribbling to let off steam', see Tanya Harrod, 'Obituary: Peggy Angus', *Independent*, 2 November 1993, p. 27.

Life Books, including *High Street* which was accompanied by a text by Richards.¹²⁹ She and Richards were introduced through Tirzah Garwood, a family friend of Richards's who eventually married Ravilious. Garwood and Angus were instrumental in the decoration of the Bawden's Georgian home, named Brick House in Great Barfield, Essex, as well as the Ravilious household in Castle Hedingham, in a rich cavalcade of colourful wallpapers with folk motifs. While Ravilious and Bawden exhibited publicly, including at Nash's Room and Book exhibition in 1932, Garwood and Angus made domestic spaces of incomparable creative and social significance for those who used them.

In 1934, when Angus made the decision to rent a small cottage on the Glynde Estate near Lewes, she ultimately set about creating what has been described as 'a legendary place of hospitality, where electricity and mains water never penetrated'.¹³⁰ This nineteenth-century dwelling was one of a pair built for farmworkers, the other still occupied by a farmer named Dick Freeman. Modern conveniences of the kind seen at the Ideal Home Exhibition were a distant prospect indeed: water was drawn from a nearby well, the house lacked a plumbed toilet, and only had a basic stove on which to cook.¹³¹ Domestic life on the downs entailed physical reconnection with the land and Angus brought her game array of creative friends with her. On a typical weekend at Furlongs in the late 1930s one might find Helen Binyon discussing the work of Samuel Palmer with John Piper and Myfanwy Evans. Serge Chermayeff might appear with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and offer an invite to his recently completed house, Bentley Wood, nearby. Oliver Hill, who had earlier employed Ravilious and Garwood to complete murals at his Midland Hotel in Morecambe, could be found stopping in with talk of his upcoming design for the British Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition. This was a domestic environment where friendship and living well mattered more

¹²⁹ Alan Powers and James Russell, in *Eric Ravilious: The Story of High Street* (Norwich: Mainstone Press, 2008).

¹³⁰ Andy Friend, *Ravilious & Co: The Pattern of Friendship* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017) p. 154.

¹³¹ Alan Powers, *Eric Ravilious: Artist and Designer* (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2013) p. 85.

than defining one's modernity by the company of machines and novel materials; where a 'chaotic festival of creativity unfolded amid earthen floors, leaking well buckets, and tensions over turns to shop and cook'.¹³²

A great deal of Furlongs's atmosphere was due to Angus herself, and the scale of her impact has been suppressed by Richards who chose not to mention his marriage to her in his autobiography. The role of Furlongs has, therefore, also remained an underappreciated factor in Richards's thinking in the period, only recently redressed by Kelly who records how Richards went as far as attempting to involve Hubert de Cronin Hastings in his wife's domestic project by inviting him over for tea.¹³³ Some measure of the house's importance can be gauged by Ravilious's comments which immediately understood Furlongs and its people to be a fertile environment for his art. Looking back on the eve of war he thanked Angus and Richards, writing that

I was glad you both liked my new pictures. The Furlongs period is more or less responsible for all of them [...] Furlongs altered my whole outlook and way of painting, I think because the colour of the landscape was so lovely and the design so beautifully obvious (only because Essex is walking country to me, and a place to play ball games) that I simply had to abandon my tinted drawings: and high time too. It was very clever of you to find a place like that, and I shall always be grateful to you for the excitement it gave me.¹³⁴

Ravilious is describing a major development in his approach to watercolour painting. He shifted from drawing in pencil with colour added or 'tinted' later, a method favoured while he was first working in and around Brick House, to a more complete use of pigment to structure his work. He began to build volume and establish line independent of preliminary drawing. In a fascinating turn, he states that Angus's finding Furlongs and the creative

¹³² Friend, *Ravilious & Co*, p. 154.

¹³³ Letter from Richards to Peggy Angus, undated, Peggy Angus Archive, East Sussex Records Office, Lewes.

¹³⁴ Letter from Ravilious to Angus, 15th May 1939, in *Eric Ravilious: Landscape, Letters & Design, I*, 2 vols, ed. Anne Ullmann (Upper Denby: Fleece Press, 2008) p. 473.

atmosphere of friendship she fostered there were essential elements to the technical development in his art, although his growing understanding of eighteenth-century watercolourists such as John Sell Cotman and Francis Towne might have played an equally important role. This working process of applying pigment freed from premeditated line suggests a more direct, organic realisation of pictorial design akin to Richards's definition of the vernacular. Ravilious's notion of a 'design so beautifully obvious' in the connection between landscape and the house is, in Kelly's words, 'linked with Richards's ideas about vernacular architecture as unconscious, inevitable and separate from taste. While Ravilious used Furlongs for the subjects of his art, Richards cultivated the cottage as an extension to his work in the discussion and promotion of modernism in architecture'.¹³⁵ The vernacular nature of Furlongs became inherent in Ravilious's painting method and subject, just as it did in Richards's contemporaneous writing.

This can be seen in one of the first works Ravilious completed there, titled simply, *Furlongs* (1934, figure 2.17). Modernity is banished. The hay ricks rise taller and more fully formed than the house, below a sky pressed to the upper limits of the composition by the cresting downs. De-mechanised agriculture and fields built up from two-tone hatching of dull green and gold, like skin thickened through labour, press close to the garden wall. Limits are held in check: endless expansion of space or abstraction is reined in to preserve a comfortable sense of domestic containment and of a specific action performed in a particular place. Ravilious's characteristic fidgeting patterns are active on grass and flint wall alike, an architectural handling that pre-empts or perhaps informs John Piper's later description of vernacular flint detailing as 'suitably decorative and "rustic"' on eighteenth-century buildings, occasionally 'startling in its velvet-like richness of colour and texture'.¹³⁶ Piper

¹³⁵ Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism', p. 240.

¹³⁶ John Piper, 'Flint', *Architectural Review*, 96 (1944), p. 150. Piper's rural home, Fawley Bottom in the Chilterns, was also flint-built and has been described by Frances Spalding as 'Four-square, unpretentious [...] a

enjoyed flint as a building material because it was often dug from local soil, a fact implied by the patterned texture Ravilious gives Furlongs's flint walls as they rise out of chalky downs, highlighted with white underpainting.¹³⁷ This integral relationship between land and building resonates in a characteristic Richards observed in Ravilious's art: where Bawden is praised for his superior 'spatial sense', Ravilious has a 'greater concentration on pattern and the rendering of the earth's surface and the things that lie about on it'.¹³⁸ As we shall see again in chapter four in the context of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, the notion of a unifying pattern, whether aesthetic or social, became an important proxy for a rejuvenated sense of English identity as the calendar turned from the 1930s to the 1940s.¹³⁹ Although this quotation from Richards evokes Ravilious's representations of decaying machinery and farm tools discarded mid-furrow, buildings are also suggested in his curiously vague image of things that lie casually scattered on the earth's surface. Left lying about, cradled by the downs, Furlongs itself epitomises the unconscious and inevitable quality of vernacular architecture rooted in its local environment around which newly authentic ideas of national belonging might cluster.

The drive or train from Furlongs to Hampstead would not have been onerous, and in 1936, the newlyweds Jim and Peggy corresponded about their social lives ricocheting between city and country. Richards reported that

Ben [Nicholson]'s sherry party was a good one arranged to welcome some of the abstract artists from Paris who had come over for the Lefevre show. Serge [Chermayeff] was there [...] [We] called for Barbara [Hepworth] at their house and went to the Russian film [...] the evening I spent with some people called Martin from Hull [...] whom I met at Ben's.¹⁴⁰

sequestered place, enclosed and embraced by the narrow valley which winds its way along the foot of the Chilterns'. Spalding, *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper*, pp. 65-66.

¹³⁷ Spalding, *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper*, p. 104.

¹³⁸ J. M. Richards, *Edward Bawden* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946) p. 11.

¹³⁹ Consistencies between Eliot's and Ravilious's landscapes have already been noted in Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in Four Quartets* (London: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁴⁰ Letter from Richards to Peggy Angus, April 1936, Peggy Angus Archive, East Sussex Record Office, Lewes, quoted in Kelly, 'Vulgar Modernism', p. 238.



2.17 Eric Ravilious, *Furlongs*, 1934, watercolour and body colour on paper, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.

Richards's letter is a fascinating snapshot of the cosmopolitan pre-war art scene in London and Hampstead in contrast to the rough domesticity of Furlongs. It also introduces two important figures. The 'people called Martin' were Sadie Speight and Leslie Martin who would soon to become collaborators on *Circle*. The couple had met in 1926 as fellow students of architecture at the University of Manchester. They married in 1935 and were living and working in Hull at its nascent School of Architecture at the time *Circle* was produced. Martin was appointed head of the school charged with expanding it as a regional centre for design. He approached Richards for a contribution and received the essay on Georgian vernacular in *Circle*.¹⁴¹

Speight's role as the publication's secretary is little recognised and Jill Seddon has shown her influence extended far into the editorial domain through the translation of articles, the layout of the publication, and extensive correspondence with Barbara Hepworth.¹⁴² Yet, by far the most complete expression of Speight's and Martin's ideas in relation to the constructivist movement and vernacular domesticity is not contained in the pages of *Circle*. In 1937, Martin and Speight were commissioned by Alastair Morton to create a house for his young family in Cumbria. Morton was the third generation to manage Morton Sundour Fabrics, a firm stretching back to the 1870s. His father, James, had established Edinburgh Weavers, an experimental subsidiary of Morton Sundour, in 1927 and built up a large collection of folk textiles, rugs, fabric and tapestry. Nikolaus Pevsner recognised this work in an evolving arts and crafts tradition and their links to Morris & Co. (alongside Frank Warner and D. T. and F. J. Donald) when he credited them as those who 'consciously transferred this

¹⁴¹ *Circle* Correspondence RIBA Archive, London, MaL/1.

¹⁴² Jill Seddon, "Part-Time Practice as Before": The Career of Sadie Speight, Architect', in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, ed. Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) p. 151.

unconscious tradition of exquisite weaving to the factory'.¹⁴³ We have already seen how this view that an 'unconscious tradition' was necessary for good art was shared by Richards and an essential feature of the vernacular.

James and Alastair Morton, father and son, toured Germany together visiting design schools in 1932. When Alastair was appointed to manage Edinburgh Weavers he employed Crawford's Advertising Agency to help revitalise the firm's marketing, probably visiting their new offices in central London designed by Etchells. Through the mercurial Ashley Havinden at Crawford's, Morton was introduced to a network of modern artists including Nicholson, Moholy-Nagy, and Marcel Breuer. Campbell records that it was most likely through Nicholson that Morton was introduced to his new architects.¹⁴⁴ Martin and Speight had recently undertaken work for Winifred Nicholson's brother Wilfred Roberts near the eventual site of Brackenfell and had visited her at Banks Head during the summers when she returned from Paris.¹⁴⁵ Morton was an enthusiastic collector of Ben Nicholson's works which were ultimately displayed in Brackenfell. Once completed in 1938, Morton's house stood on a rolling hillside east of Carlisle not far from the Nicholsons' cottage.¹⁴⁶ Like Ben's reliefs, the increasingly thin veneer of modernist 'style' would be worn away still further at Brackenfell to reveal a dialogic basis in craft and folk traditions. Despite one being a new building and the other being built from the ancient stone of Hadrian's Wall, Brackenfell

¹⁴³ Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937) p. 55. See also Christine Boydell, 'Textiles in the Modern House', in *The Modern House Revisited*, ed. Neil R. Bingham (London: Twentieth Century Society, 1996) pp. 53-64.

¹⁴⁴ Louise Campbell, 'Constructivism and Contextualism in a Modern Country House: The Design of Brackenfell (Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight 1937-38)', *Architectural History*, 50 (2007), pp. 247-266 (p. 251). Nicholson himself would later commission a house-studio from Martin in 1960 in Switzerland, see Leslie Martin, *Buildings & Ideas, 1933-83 from the Studio of Leslie Martin and His Associates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) p. 174.

¹⁴⁵ Trevor Dannatt, 'Early Years: Towards a New Order', in *Architecture, Education and Research: The Work of Leslie Martin: Papers and Selected Articles*, ed. Leslie Martin, Peter Carolin, and Trevor Dannatt (London: Academy Editions, 1996).

¹⁴⁶ Morton was himself an abstract painter who took instruction from Ben, although his work did not appear in *Circle*. Richard Calvocoressi notes that one of Morton's compositions was reproduced as part of a set of promotional postcards issued the *Circle* editors, see Richard Calvocoressi, *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers: Abstract Art and Textile Design, 1935-46* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1978) pp. 6, 23.

shared Banks Head's use of natural materials, its rooted relationship to the landscape, its function as a domestic studio and site of artistic labour, and its vernacular qualities.

In its design Brackenfell departed from the starched modernism that characterised the modernist milieu in *Circle* as well as Speight's and Martin's earlier work (figures 2.18 & 2.19). They opted for a red brick cavity wall structure, dressed in areas of local stone, and perched atop the sloping site with views of the Lakeland Fells to the south and the coast to the west. Reflecting on Morton's insistence that the house be at the top of the hill 'for the air and the view', Martin later remarked that 'I myself might have cut it more closely into the landscape.'¹⁴⁷ Like countless rural vernacular buildings, Brackenfell turned its back to the harsher weather, with its north façade dominated by a concrete lintel forming a grey bar which separates the two-story structure. A porte-cochère extends from the lintel and combines with a covered walkway along the front of the house to create an intricate sculptural arrangement of pale local stone, the crisp sheen of red brick, concrete and a glazed area, with successive stages of interiority. The texture of the stone caught in the glancing northern light indicates Martin's and Speight's sensitivity to Nicholson's work in relief. The porte-cochère is gently curved around a turning circle for vehicles and may have been inspired by Berthold Lubetkin's use of a similar design at his Highpoint flats in Hampstead, a paraboloid form that recurs in his post-war work. Preference for this curvature over rigid angles has been described by John Allan as shifting a design from an 'implied imperative' to an 'expression of choice' through which 'the composition is knit into the undulating limestone country, rather than imposed mechanically upon it'.¹⁴⁸ Allan is referring to Lubetkin's master-planning of Peterlee in County Durham in the late 1940s and early 1950s, notably another instance of modernist architecture landing in a rural northern landscape,

¹⁴⁷ Letter quoted in J.M. Henderson, 'How Far Does Brackenfell Represent the Modern Movement?' (unpublished dissertation, Open University 1975) p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ John Allan, *Berthold Lubetkin: Architecture and the Tradition of Progress*, 2nd edn (London: Black Dog Press, 2012) p. 488.

forced to adapt. Yet his words resonate equally well with Brackenfell which through its entrance introduced its bond to the local area with regional stone and a flexible attitude to modern functionalism.

Moments when the modern shakes hands with the traditional can be found at Brackenfell when the canted brick wall on the studio's south window acknowledges both the sculptural influence of Morton's modernist colleagues while also highlighting 'the thickness of the embrasure [...] typical of fortified dwellings in the area'. Through such details, Campbell has shown how Brackenfell combined 'an Arts and Crafts concern with local materials, a rational approach to planning and equipment, and baroque spatial devices' in addition to it conveying 'a growing contextualism, informed by Winifred Nicholson's interest in vernacular tradition, together with Morton's own love of landscape'.¹⁴⁹ As we will see again in the next chapter in reference to Ernő Goldfinger's home at 2 Willow Road, Brackenfell is an artist's house – the first-floor studio with a painting window and in-built storage for Morton's textile collection forms an essential part of the design. But art permeated the structure and spaces of the house. Ben Nicholson's reliefs were displayed alongside Morton's own abstracts and Hepworth's *Conoid, Sphere, and Hollow II* (1937): a fitting setting for Morton's development of his new line of Constructivist Fabrics. Speight is considered to be primarily responsible for designing the interior with highlights including the living room's stone hearth and wooden mantel which echo the building's exterior. The linear plan places the principal rooms on the building's south side which track the transit of the sun across the fells below through the generous glazing. As in many other modernist homes, this emphasised the importance of the view as part of the home, an extension of the domestic environment. Looking out across its local context the house raises questions about its physical, aesthetic, and social relationship to the vernacular buildings scattered across the

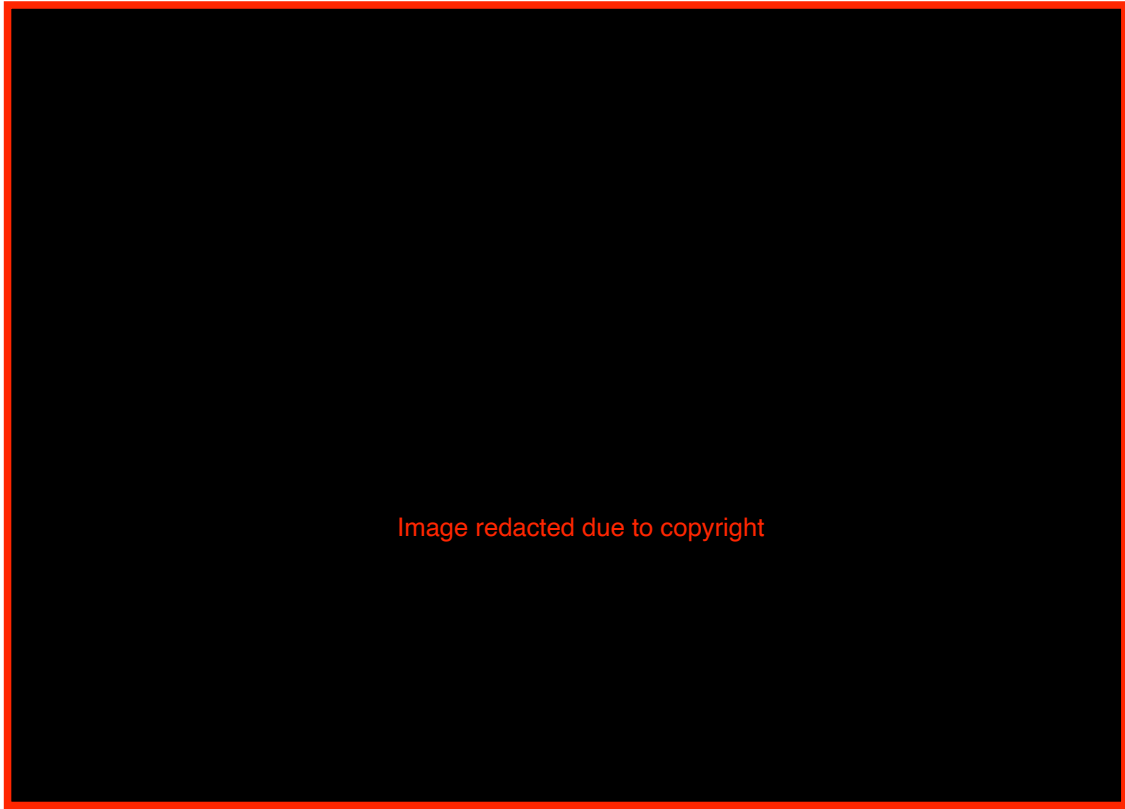
¹⁴⁹ Campbell, *Studio Lives*, p. 236; Campbell, 'The Design of Brackenfell', pp. 256-7

surrounding topography. Could this new architecture fit amongst the farmer's dwellings and ancient stone of Banks Head? Could the art Brackenfell contained anchor itself in the folk traditions and putatively cohesive communities of an unspecified, older England, and thereby provide that same sense of belonging to those cut adrift by modernity in the 1930s?

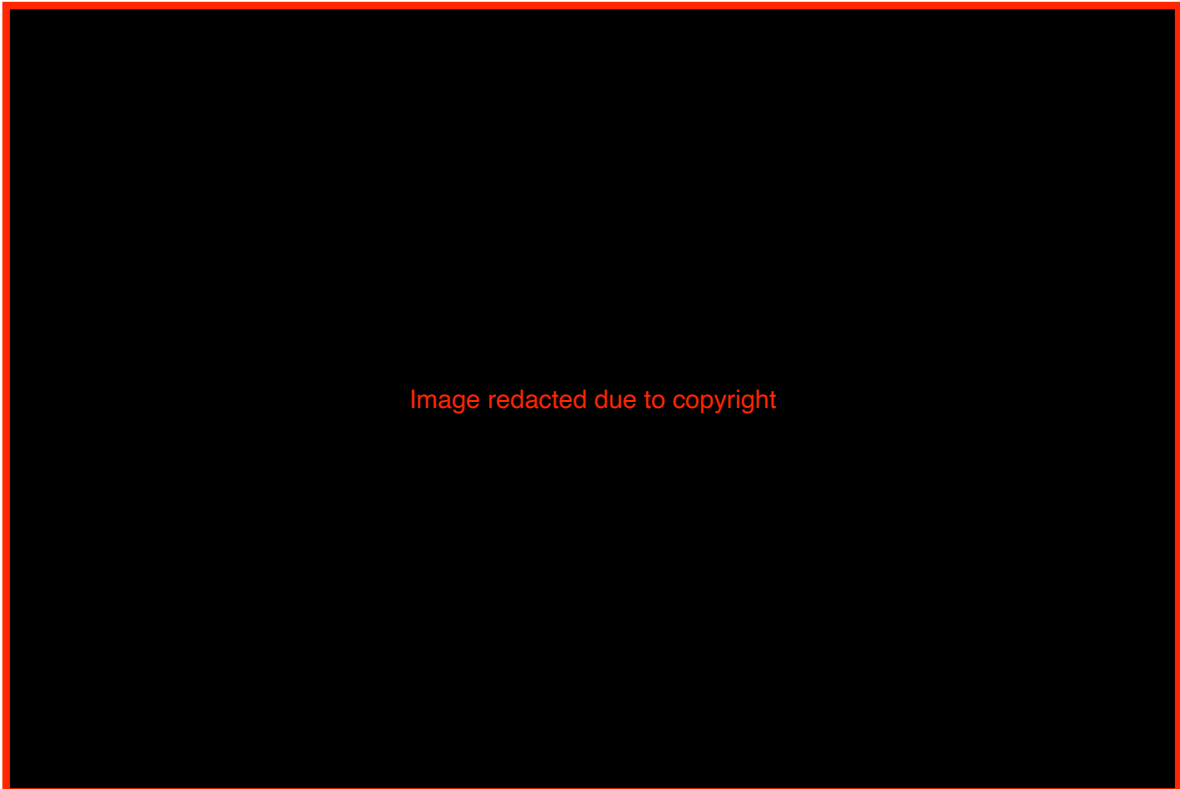
Speight and Martin appear to have explored these ideas in the photography and sketches they used to develop and document their building. Brackenfell is shown peeping out above the cresting hill as if battened down against the bitter north westerly winds (figures 2.20 & 2.21). The extrusions of bracken in the foreground threaten to take precedence, signalling the house's relationship with the natural environment written into its name. When Richards oversaw the publication of Morton's home in the *Architectural Review* in July 1939, this visual logic was repeated. The house welcomes and integrates the natural environment as much as it raises itself above it. It is a rectilinear, self-conscious construction responding to nature's abstract laws, as the physicist and crystallographer J.D. Bernal had written of in *Circle*. Simultaneously, it is redeemed as a product cultivated from the ground, like Furlongs as depicted by Ravilious in 1934. The attraction of such moorland sites has long been trenched in their 'untameable and hostile, desolate and uncultivated' qualities according to Corinne Fowler.¹⁵⁰ But Brackenfell appears as a triumphant act of domestication: 'How lovely it must be for you living in the new house', Hepworth wrote to Morton in 1940, 'with clear shapes, plenty of warmth and a good studio'.¹⁵¹ The unforgiving location of his new house, so accentuated by its presentation in the architectural press, is attractive precisely because it amplifies the achievement of domestic comfort. Brackenfell stands as one of Martin's and Speight's most significant early commissions, a mission statement on the role

¹⁵⁰ Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural Britain's Colonial Connections* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2020) p. 183.

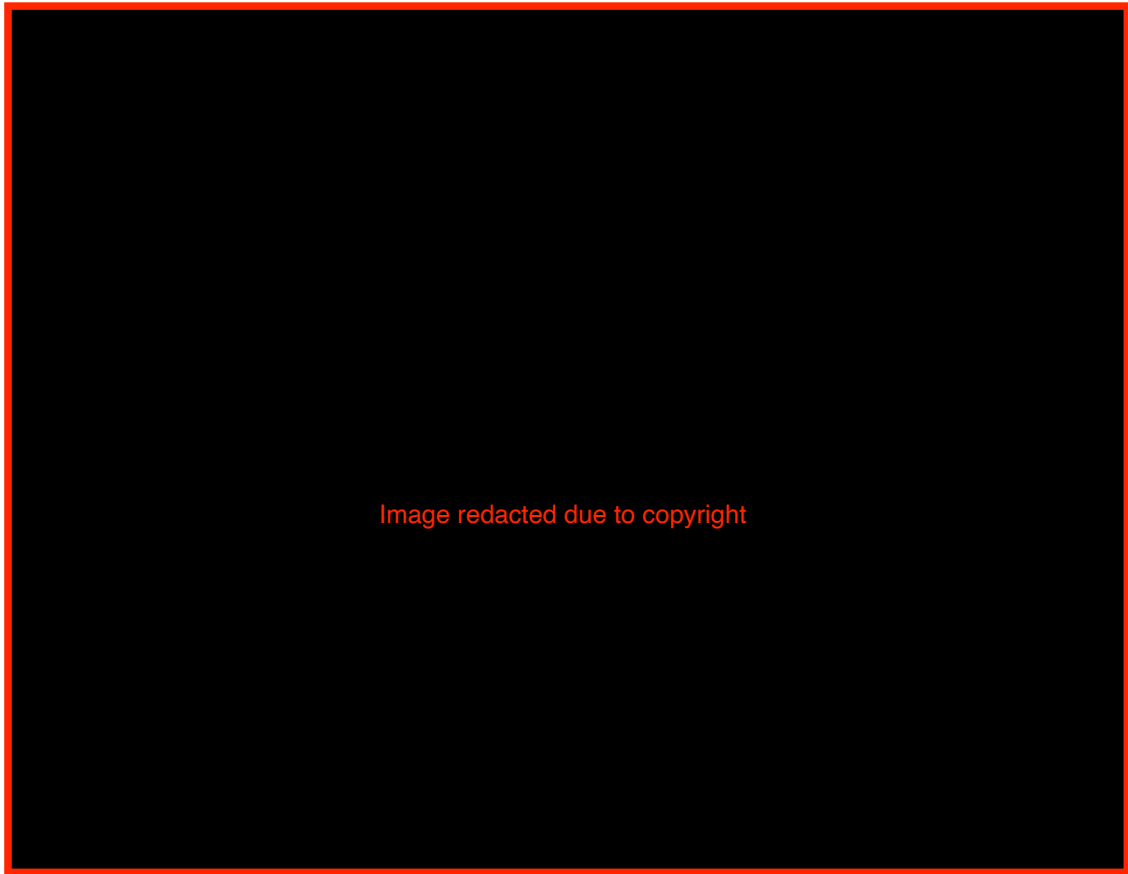
¹⁵¹ Quoted in Calvocoressi, *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers*, p. 14.



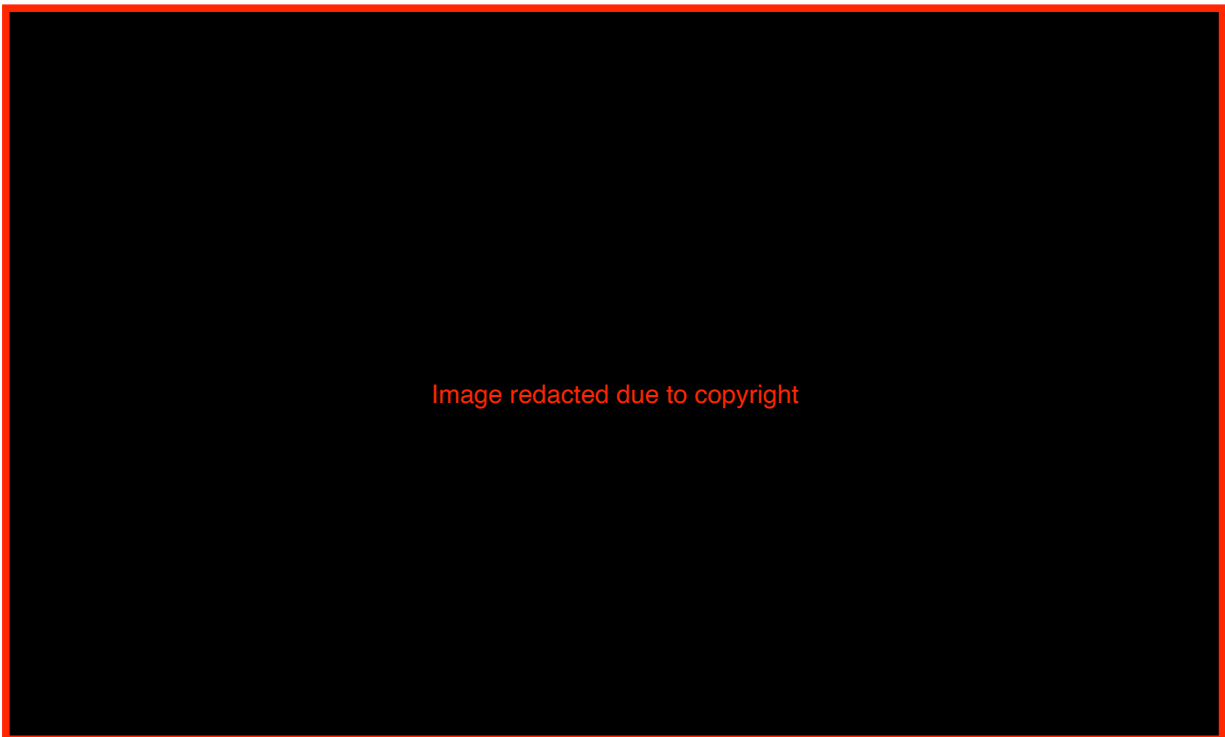
2.18 Brackenfell, north façade, designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, 1938, RIBA photographic library (photographed in 2004)



2.19 Brackenfell, stairway and hall, designed by Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, 1938, RIBA photographic library (photographed in 2004)



2.20 Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, Brackenfell from the south, 1938, black and white photo print, Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight photographic collection, RIBA Archives, London.



2.21 Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight, Brackenfell from the north, 1938, pencil and ink on paper, RIBA Archives, London (RIBA126103)

the new architecture had to play in making the English public feel at home when faced with astringent modernity.

It may seem obtuse to suggest that Nicholson's white reliefs embody a sensitive, domestic art practice that attempted to reforge a social and cultural cohesion sundered by modernity. His reliefs were taken as reverential icons of the most advanced and dehumanising art by contemporary audiences. Works such as *Quai d'Auteuil* were understood to contravene the basic principles of pictorial convention. In conjunction with such harsh abstractions, one could only expect a domestic architecture that denied its occupants a measure of comfort in traditional furnishing, enclosure within thick stone walls, and ideological security swaddled in a mythic national past. But as we have seen at Banks Head, Furlongs, and Brackenfell, this assumption was far from reality. The veins of vernacular thinking that I have traced through these houses and in the pages of *Circle* – in the work of Richards, Nicholson, Speight and Martin – set out to prove why it was not necessary to limit oneself to choose between sterile modernism and the reactionary alternative. The Ideal Home Exhibition had already shown that technological improvements to peoples' lives need not come at the cost of feeling rooted in a national culture. It had laid forth a challenge that Richards and his cohort took up: how could aesthetic changes to domestic space in line with modern art – as a necessary response to modernity – prepare a future-proof national identity as a new war approached? While those associated with *Circle* were developing this project that we have just considered, a similar movement to re-evaluate architectural heritage and defend Georgian buildings from destruction was gathering momentum, and that is the story to which I now turn.

Chapter Three

Imperial Pilgrimage: London, Homelessness and Georgian Preservation

The Caesars have fallen in the east and west; echoes rule the wave lapped thresholds on the Bosphorus; tourists eat lunch in the Forbidden City. But the King of England still goes to Westminster to be crowned, mightier than the Caesars or the Sultan or the Son of Heaven.

Robert Byron, *How We Celebrate the Coronation*, 1937

In 1936, England faced the famous constitutional crisis surrounding the succession of Edward VIII to the throne, his abdication, and the eventual coronation of his brother who was crowned King George VI on 12 May 1937. This moment of global resonance was also one of national introspection. Visitors from across the world and Britain's colonial territories flocked to the 'heart of empire'.¹ Would London glow under the limelight as the pre-eminent imperial metropolis or fluff her lines? Robert Byron, the travel writer, critic, and deputy chairman of the newly established Georgian Group, marked this auspicious occasion by noting the steady continuity of the English monarchy. In contrast to the imperial rulers of Turkey and China, 'the King of England still goes to Westminster to be crowned'.² Given the uncertainty of the preceding months, however, this is hardly the statement of confidence it appears to be. Nagging in the shadows behind Byron's words is the question that if imperial leaders had fallen elsewhere, how much longer could England's power as the core of the British Empire be assured?

¹ Charles G.F. Masterman, quoted in Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (London: Yale University Press, 1999) p. 2

² Robert Byron, *How We Celebrate the Coronation: A Word to London's Visitors* (London: Architectural Press, 1937) p. 1.

Byron wrote these lines in a pamphlet protesting the destruction of London's Georgian architecture. Precisely at the historic moment when the capital ought to be bathed in imperial glory, he noted, its monumental sites of eighteenth-century pageantry were being torn down. He looked to buildings that had been constructed as Britain consolidated its imperial power before 1800 and those which announced its hegemony as a superpower after the Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. Byron joined a chorus of literary and architectural voices that suggested political and civic principles – pertaining to domestic identity as much as British influence overseas – could be embodied in London's historic urban fabric. His argument was clear: the preservation of architecture built between 1714 and 1830 had an essential role to play in safeguarding the vitality of the Empire and shoring up a faltering national identity.

Byron was educated at Eton and Oxford and graduated in 1925. He then spent the late 1920s and 1930s carving a path as a travel writer through Europe, India, Tibet, Soviet Russia, Afghanistan, and Persia. His texts often dwelt on the architectural achievements of Hellenistic Greece or the Middle East, for instance in the acclaimed *Road to Oxiana* (1937), based on his journey from Palestine to Peshawar in India (now in Pakistan) in 1933-34.³ Yet in the coronation year he turned his attention home, to England and its national architecture. He became instrumental in the early years of an architectural preservation society, the Georgian Group, and wrote not a far-flung travel guide but *Imperial Pilgrimage* (1937) a short text on London for 'the Londoner and visitor' alike.⁴

Douglas Goldring and George Harcourt Johnstone, Lord Derwent, were the two prime movers in the creation of the Georgian Group, initially established in April 1937 as a subsection of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). They would soon

³ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) pp. 79-112.

⁴ For a biographical account of Byron, see James Knox, *Robert Byron* (London: John Murray, 2003) .

be joined by Byron. Goldring and Derwent set out to defend buildings constructed after the reign of Queen Anne which were unprotected by the Ancient Monuments Act of 1931 and threatened by developers. A slew of cultural and aristocratic figures formed its early membership: John Betjeman, Arthur Trystan Edwards, Katharine Ada Esdaile, Christopher Hussey, Margaret Jourdain, James Lees-Milne, Una Pope-Hennessy, J.M. Richards, Albert Richardson, John Summerson, and Gerald Wellesley, amongst others.⁵ The formidable expertise of these assembled individuals was also sensitive to the ongoing debates about modernist architecture which have preoccupied my two previous chapters. Betjeman, Richards, and Summerson were simultaneously members of the Georgian Group and the MARS Group and, as we have just seen, they combined this architectural interest with commentary on modernist art and literature, including that of Ben Nicholson.

Often centred on Summerson, these links between the preservation movement and the avant-garde are well-recognised. Many historians of the period have demonstrated the enmeshed nature of the preservation movement and the drive to revolutionise English domestic life through modern architecture; these apparently contrary impulses were in fact allied and interwoven.⁶ Others have recently emphasised the political ramifications of the Georgian Group as a force in the reformation of the public's relationship with architecture as a civic art, as well as the ways in which the revival of interest in eighteenth-century architecture informed the Englishness of contemporary cultural discourses.⁷ This chapter

⁵ Neal Shasore, 'Georgian Group, Founding Members of (1937 – C.1947)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁶ Jane Pavitt, 'The Georgians and Moderns: Preservation and Modernism in Britain in the 1930s', (unpublished masters thesis, Royal College of Art, 1991); Michaela Rosso, 'John N. Summerson and Tales of Modern Architecture', *Journal of Architecture*, 5 (2000), pp. 65-89; Alan Powers, 'John Summerson and Modernism', in *Twentieth-Century Architecture and Its Histories*, ed. Louise Campbell (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000) pp. 153-76; Elizabeth McKellar, 'Populism Versus Professionalism: John Summerson and the Twentieth-Century Creation of the "Georgian"', in *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture*, ed. Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004) pp. 35-56.

⁷ Neal Shasore, 'Architecture and the Public in Interwar Britain', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford 2015); William Whyte, 'The Englishness of English Architecture: Modernism and the Making of a National International Style, 1927-1957', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), pp. 441-465.

seeks to give the Georgian Group a fresh setting in a literary context, one that reveals its relation to the imperial and domestic crisis that was affecting England at the time of the King's coronation and the group's formation. It is troubling that imperialism and nationalism have not featured more prominently in recent scholarship on the topic, especially given the explicitly imperial framing of both Byron's work already mentioned and of the classical architecture in question.⁸ With specific attention to domestic architecture, I will present the preservation movement as a response to the faltering sense of belonging brought about by Britain's imperial decline. This was a public, often domestic, heritage deployed as salve to private, personal anxieties. Byron is taken as an example of someone who felt the old rug of imperial nationalism slipping from under his feet and set about nailing it to the floorboards.

For the compromised imperial identities motivating Byron and his cohort to become the foundation for action, they first required articulation. To explore this, I will turn to the poetic expression of what can be termed an immaterial or ontological homelessness in the work of four writers: W.H. Auden in tandem with Christopher Isherwood, John Betjeman, and Geoffrey Grigson. Having established the propensity for their work to dwell upon precise ideas of domestic collapse, disidentification, and deracination, I will explore their overlap with contemporary architectural debates, leading to an examination of the causes for the Georgian Group's formation and its subsequent campaigns. The final portion of the chapter will turn to three examples of how the defence and historicization of Georgian architecture informed modernist attempts to deliver a viable new architecture for an English identity laid bare by imperial decline. This drive to establish coherent local identities and communities – through a historicism that was nonetheless forward-looking – was centred on the urban domestic terrace, as distinct from the low-density suburban homes encountered in chapter

⁸ One good exception is Mark Crinson, 'Georgianism and the Tenements, Dublin 1908-1926', *Art History*, 29 (2006), pp. 625-659.

one. Elizabeth Denby, Trystan Edwards, and Ernő Goldfinger all developed plans for low-rise, high-density housing derived from the typology of the terrace as it emerged in the eighteenth century. Although they accorded with J.M. Richards's calls for a modernist iteration of the English vernacular, all three projects were unrealised and so too was the attempt to envision a coherent English community in the wake of empire.

Writing home and homelessness

Before turning to the work of Auden, Betjeman, and Grigson, I would like to set out some differences and continuities between the general prevalence of alienation as a condition of urban modernity prior to the twentieth century, and the ontological homelessness I will go on to describe in relation to England in the 1930s and the decline of empire. Reaching as far back as *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), Charles Dickens gave an early analysis of urban alienation by distinguishing between rural and urban vagrancy:

To be shelterless and alone in the open country, hearing the wind moan and watching for day through the whole long weary night; to listen to the falling rain, and crouch for warmth beneath the lee of some old barn or rick, or in the hollow of a tree; are dismal things – but not so dismal as the wandering up and down where shelter is, and beds and sleepers are by thousands; a houseless rejected creature.

This is a description of material homelessness following the rapid growth of metropolitan populations since the late eighteenth century, as London's Georgian thoroughfares and terraces were built. However, Dickens extended this experience to more abstract territories by considering the alienation involved in urban life regardless of whether one is 'houseless':

to feel, by the wretched contrast with everything on every hand, more utterly alone and cast away than in a trackless desert; this is a kind of suffering, on which the rivers of great cities close full many a time, and which the solitude in crowds alone awakens.⁹

Dickens implied that material homelessness might be resolved by property – a warm hearth and a soft bed – but social dislocation in the urban scene endures.

Barnaby Rudge's concerns and the novel's historical situation in the 1780s may appear far removed from the issues of at stake in the inter-war poetry of Auden, Betjeman or Grigson. However, such passages have provided a basis for what Raymond Williams described as the alienated state of the modern subject in the early twentieth century. Williams established urban alienation as a much older phenomenon than modernism, ranging back to the industrial revolution. He suggested urban alienation was one of the chief factors of 'metropolitan perception' which gives rise to the thematic and formal characteristics of high modernism. Immigration in the metropolis, from abroad and from rural areas, led to urban anomie as a common feature of writing since Dickens, Henry Fielding, Elizabeth Gaskell, and William Wordsworth. These articulations of strangeness and difference led to a deeper, aesthetic distinction when immigrant innovators created 'the only community available to them: a community of their medium; of their practices', that is, a formal experimentalism stemming from a heightened awareness of language as a medium rather than 'customary and naturalised'. Williams proceeds to demonstrate how imperialism conditioned experiences of the city and the social and cultural relations it supported in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Beyond both city and nation in their older senses', the magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals enabled diversified access to

⁹ Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*, ed. Clive Hurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) ch. 15, p. 150.

patronage and 'subordinate cultures'.¹⁰ This was, in essence, a globalised intellectual exchange staged within the intricately networked urban environment of the metropole.

In recent decades, applications and reinterpretations of Williams's theory of 'metropolitan perception' have become commonplace in studies of modernism in Britain, yet a problem arises when it proves inapplicable to late modernist conditions. Jed Esty has confronted this issue by suggesting that the late modernist writing of Auden, Eliot, and Woolf demonstrates a retreat from metropolitan perception in search of closer contact with a homogenous, organic, national community. At a time of imperial contraction, they rejected the community of the formalist avant-garde and turned instead to local, national, and crucially rural communities construed as native precursors to the alienated society of urban modernity. According to Esty, these writers variously turn their back on urban space in order to reclaim a myth of national coherence after empire.¹¹ However, if we look beyond this precisely circumscribed and exclusively literary argument, it becomes clear that the cultural shift Esty describes also involves reinvestment in metropolitan communities and identities. The city, and particularly London as the imperial core, took on renewed importance as the principal site of English identity formation when faced with a shrinking empire. Writers in the late thirties reached longingly through history and preservation for the first flush of imperialism's 'magnetic concentration of wealth and power' in London during the eighteenth century.¹² This is most clearly shown through the writing on architecture, homes, and through practical attempts to build or preserve architecture that would best revive or sustain those earlier values of community and (aesthetic) coherence.

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism', in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989) pp. 37-48 (p. 45). See also Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2011) pp. 233-247.

¹¹ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003) ch. 1 and 3.

¹² Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions', p. 44.

Following Dickens's writing in *Barnaby Rudge*, selecting the more specific language of 'homelessness' to the general rubric of 'alienation' is helpful when tracing these links between London and late modernist attempts to root themselves more confidently in English history. First, it highlights the specifically architectural nature of alienation as it arises from the rapid growth of metropolitan populations since the eighteenth century. From the time of the construction of London's Georgian thoroughfares and terraces, these issues continue to develop in the twentieth century with England's urban population increasing threefold between 1851 to 1911, from approximately 9.5 million to 28.5 million.¹³ Williams's 'alienation' diagnoses a social problem of the industrial revolution with concrete causes: capitalist urbanisation and insufficient housing provision which causes the masses to 'crowd by one another as if they had nothing in common [...] The Dissolution of mankind into monads', as Friedrich Engels documented.¹⁴ The significance of the built environment is registered by Williams's reference to Henry Fielding's fear of crime and 'concealment' in London and Westminster due to 'the late vast increases in their suburbs, the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense numbers of lanes, alleys, courts and bye-places'.¹⁵

In a second sense, emphasising homelessness adds a well-established train of modernist thought to Williams's comments. In 1881, Friedrich Nietzsche identified himself as part of a homeless community in *The Gay Science*:

We who are homeless. Among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honourable sense [...] We children of the future, how could we be at home in this today? We feel disfavour for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home even in this fragile, broken time of transition;

¹³ John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985*, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1986) p. 140-1. For an influential techno-cultural analysis of the rupture caused by early nineteenth-century (urban) modernity in the experience of observing subject, see Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1892) p. 24, quoted by Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions', p. 41.

¹⁵ Henry Fielding, *The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding: An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, and Related Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press and Wesleyan University Press, 1988) p. 131, quoted in Williams, 'Metropolitan Perceptions', p. 41.

as for its “realities”, we do not believe that they will last. The ice that still supports people today has become very thin; the wind that brings the thaw is blowing; we ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin realities.¹⁶

Nietzsche describes the new condition of the modern, post-romantic subject experiencing a fundamental shift in cultural values, a final anti-positivist break in the previous generation’s epistemic ‘ice’. Through a metaphorical twist to Dickens’s weathered language of wind and ice, Nietzsche insists that, even with material comforts, a ‘broken time’, some rupture of history, causes a form of ontological homelessness to become characteristic of the modern age. He claims that the ‘children of the future’, his dubious category of an empowered cultural elect, are those who feel such homelessness acutely. Their homelessness could be used as a tool to de-value its opposite, homefulness: the stability of bourgeois domesticity and stultifying conformity to systems of thought that it represents, whether nationalist or metaphysical. Writing in a relevantly similar but philosophically distinct vein at the outbreak of World War I, György Lukács described the development of the novel form itself as an expression of ‘transcendental homelessness’, a broken relationship between ‘the form-giving subject and the world of created forms’. What he described as a transcendental historical and philosophical alignment between a given period and the art forms it produces had been lost, and the novel voiced that disjunction. He argued ‘the ultimate basis of artistic creation has become homeless’.¹⁷

As Amy Morris points out, those who are physically homeless exchange the freedom ‘to dream and wander’ for ‘a stark bodily vulnerability and acute socio-economic disempowerment’. For those like Nietzsche, homelessness can be claimed as a form of

¹⁶ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (New York: Random House, 1974) p. 338.

¹⁷ György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (London: Merlin Press, 1971) p. 40-41. Cf. Adorno’s remark that ‘it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home’, Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 3.

spiritual courage and independence of thought, an ‘ethical refusal to assimilate to worldly convention’ which confers the power to critique and threaten society.¹⁸ For those working in the social conditions Lukács and Williams differently described, a sense of homelessness is an inevitable state. The form of homelessness set out in the following pages through the work of Auden, Isherwood, Betjeman, and Grigson is indebted to these earlier, more material manifestations of alienation, such as Dickens and Engels presented, but also to the full scope of homelessness, described by Nietzsche and Lukács.¹⁹ I will demonstrate how their work signalled a new emphasis on the fractured state of English nationalism and the empire through their use of anthologies and descriptions of domestic space.

Two essays by Auden, published in 1936 and 1938, resonate with these issues traced through Dickens and Lukács. They set out to reaffirm the poet’s role in fending off homelessness – or ‘disillusionment’ – and encouraging a coherent national community.²⁰ In ‘Poetry, Poets, and Taste’ published in *The Highway*, Auden stated the need to correct the elitism of poetry that had led to its perception as a ‘cissy occupation’, ‘something which concerns itself with only the Higher Life, or what some snob with a genius for nauseating titles has called “High-grade living”’.²¹ This could be achieved, he suggested, through highlighting poetry’s potential involvement with everyday life: ‘there is solemn poetry and light poetry, comic poetry and serious poetry, pure poetry and obscene poetry’. In his insistent reminder of the range of registers available to the modern poet – light as well as solemn – Auden points out the necessity to move his art closer to working class realities and

¹⁸ Amy Morris, ‘He’s Just a Bum, but Who Ain’t?’: The Mirror of Homelessness’, in *Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogues*, ed. Bojana Petrić and Sanja Bahun (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) p. 100.

¹⁹ A useful intermediary between discourses of exile and my own approach has been Bojana Petrić and Sanja Bahun, ‘Introduction: Homing in on Home’, in *Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogues*, ed. Bojana Petrić and Sanja Bahun (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) pp. 1-15.

²⁰ See Lukács, part 2, ch. 2 ‘The romanticism of disillusionment’, pp. 112-132.

²¹ W. H. Auden, ‘Poetry, Poets, and Taste’, in *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1977) p. 358. All subsequent quotations from Auden will refer to this edition unless otherwise stated and will appear parenthetically in the main text. For a full catalogue of Auden’s published writing see B. C. Bloomfield, *W.H. Auden: A Bibliography, 1924-1969* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972).

so advance, through shared communal values that escape class division, the collective coherence of his society.

These comments can be understood as a prelude to his introduction and selection of the *Oxford Book of Light Verse* two years later. In that volume, he noted the fraught relationship between the poet and their society: 'The more homogeneous a society, the closer the artist is to the everyday life of his time, the easier it is for him to be able to communicate what he perceives, but the harder for him to see honestly and truthfully'. On the other hand, 'the more unstable a society, and the more detached from it the artist, the clearer he can see, but the harder it is for him to convey it to others' (364). The first position enables the artist who is integrated in 'the life of his time' to use common language and everyday diction in their writing. The second, conversely, leads to ever more complex diction being used to describe the social ills so easily discernible to the aloof artist. Auden's is an historical argument in approximate conformity with Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility' (discussed in more detail in chapter four) and Lukács's description of the fallen state of modern society and its potential for rebirth: he traces a shift from coherence and stability in the age of Shakespeare, Donne and Milton – the last traces of a 'homogeneous' medieval society 'united in its religious faith and view of the universe' (364) – and the unstable modernity, industrialisation, and globalisation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Auden is also describing options available to the artist in the twentieth century. The role of the artist, he claimed, was to mediate between social divisions. His now classic anthology of light verse reflected this remit by presenting a playful but critically incisive *mélange* ranging from Lord Byron's *Don Juan* and pieces by Betjeman to historic ballads, nursery rhymes and nonsense verse. In its selection and introduction, *Light Verse* rallied behind William Wordsworth's rejection of elevated style and commitment to write using 'natural' language. This was a position Auden had already declared in 'Poetry, Poets and

Taste' when he confessed, 'Personally the kind of poetry I should like to write but can't is "the thoughts of wise men in the speech of the common people"' (358). With this nod to Yeats and Aristotelian rhetoric, Auden set out to merge his new, modernist community of formal experimentalism with a more traditional communities who treated language as customary and naturalised, to borrow Williams's terminology.²² But the reason Auden explains he 'can't' achieve this goal is provided in *Light Verse* when he refers to the 'almost savage torpor' of modernity experienced by Wordsworth. His description of his Romantic forebear 'isolated in an amorphous society with no real communal ties, bewildered by its complexity, horrified by its ugliness and power' (363-4) is also a description of his own position. He is articulating both the rapid social changes of Wordsworth's early industrial world, and the alienation that was, to return once again to Wyndham Lewis's phrase, the 'chief diagnostic' of twentieth-century modernity.²³

Auden's sensitivity to the artist's alienation from society marked a shift in his work in the late 1930s. Patrick Miller has recently described the 'cryptic, elliptical character' of Auden's language in the early part of the decade, and suggests that this is due to the inherent instability of the themes Auden addresses: 'pedagogy, national identity, aerial warfare, domestic retrospection' and the experience of total war in the absence of 'moral, ethical or political imperatives'.²⁴ By contrast, in his poetry that was contemporary with *Light Verse*, Auden was actively developing an approach that self-consciously performed these same tropes while acknowledging their strained relationship with a longed-for stability and surety in both aesthetic and social terms.

²² Matthew Arnold's praise of Homer's 'natural thoughts in natural words' is also suggested. See Matthew Arnold, *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, MI, 1960) p. 205

²³ Wyndham Lewis, 'The New Egos', *Blast*, 1 (1914), p. 141.

²⁴ Christopher Patrick Miller, 'What the War Is Doing with Us: W. H. Auden, Total War, and War Literature', *Modernism/Modernity*, 26 (2019), pp. 309-327, (p. 312).

That need to domesticate twentieth-century experience, to make it homely and coherent, is addressed during his 'Journey to Iceland' in 1936. He thinks of home, but his mind settles only on 'the world with its mendicant shadow', before concluding that 'our time has no favourite suburb; no local features' (204). In 'Detective Story', written on the same trip and maintaining a preoccupation with dishonesty, Auden interrogates how it feels to exist without belonging:

For who is ever quite without his landscape,
The straggling village street, the house in trees,
All near the church, or else the gloomy town house,
The one with the Corinthian pillars, or
The tiny workmanlike flat: in any case
A home, the centre of where the three or four things
That happen to a man do happen? Yes,
Who cannot draw the map of his life [...]
Where the body of his happiness was first discovered? (204)

Domestic settings stage the poet's examination of how lives are rooted in 'local features', whether the village street or the flat which takes on the attributes of its inhabitants, 'workmanlike' in its modernity. The architecturally distinctive townhouse with 'Corinthian pillars' is gloomy, unhomely: even a classical style, whether authentically historic or a revived tradition, cannot offer succour to the hollow, placeless experience the poem attempts to circumscribe. The drawing of a map of one's life is deployed by Auden as a means of introspection, of examining one's growth and origins, and the framing of his speaker's questions in the negative – 'For who is ever quite without [...] Who cannot' – suggests the later conclusion of the poem: all are homeless, map-less and rootless. The centre of one's existence, 'a home', can no longer be counted upon and searching for it is fruitless, 'an enigma always | And with a buried past'. Regardless of wealth and material circumstances, whether 'unknown tramp' or 'rich man', homelessness shapes the common experience when

The truth about our happiness comes out
How much it owed to blackmail and philandering. (204)

The force of betrayal here is history's promise of social totality, or at least the incommensurable nature of that promise with contemporary experience. Auden is here attempting what Fredric Jameson has called 'cognitive mapping': the struggle to understand a coherent future for a socialist society, and he places the impenetrable historical cypher of the home at the centre of this tribulating process.²⁵

As Annabel Williams has recently explored, Auden often escaped England including through three major journeys in the thirties: the aforementioned trip to Iceland, to the Spanish Civil War and lastly to China.²⁶ *Journey to a War*, his account together with Isherwood of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1938, contains perhaps the strongest presentation of the two writers' experience of colonial fracture. Isherwood's 'Travel Diary' describes their passage into the Pearl River Delta and arrival at the British Consulate within a foreign concession on an island named Shameen. Isherwood describes how 'warehouses began to crowd the banks' with 'Union Jacks, swastikas, or Stars and Stripes painted upon their roofs' to ward off bombing by Japanese planes. National flags superimposed on architecture here act as defensive tools, symbolising imperial power while also prophesising the wider imperial conflicts and territorial claims to come. Upon arrival, the British houses are 'well-proportioned and unpretentious, with large airy verandas and balconies' and a 'wide central avenue of lawns and trees'. So 'pleasant' and 'cultured' are the surroundings Isherwood suggests 'you might fancy yourself at home in one of the pleasanter London suburbs'.²⁷

²⁵ Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) p. 52; Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988) pp. 347-357.

²⁶ Annabel Williams, 'Late Modernist Travel Literature, 1930-1949: Home, Nationalism, and War' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2018)

²⁷ Christopher Isherwood, 'Travel Diary', in *Journey to a War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973) p. 20.

There is evident absurdity in the calm continuation of English domesticity in such incongruous surroundings as a wartime colonial setting. Isherwood is conscious of the patrolling gunboats and ‘a succession of dull, heavy thuds’ of nearby air raids, when his

eyes moved over this charming room, taking in the tea-cups, the dish of scones, the book-case with Chesterton’s essays and Kipling’s poems, the framed photograph of an Oxford college. My brain tried to relate these images to the sounds outside; the whine of the power-diving bomber, the distant thump of explosions. Understand, I told myself, that those noises, these objects are part of a single integrated scene. Wake up. It’s all quite real. And, at that moment, I really did wake up. At that moment, suddenly, I arrived in China.²⁸

Isherwood tries and fails to cling onto a stable image of empire embedded in domestic interior. The colonial fantasy of civilised control over distant lands, a stubbornly sustained bourgeois ideal of domestic identification, is shattered by the sound of bombs. Englishness resides in Kipling’s poems and the photographic trace of Oxford architecture, but Auden and Isherwood are attuned to how the fall of Britain’s empire and related global conflict could cause even the most familiar environment to become unhomely. The values assigned to domestic paraphernalia in this scene – cultural authority, imperium, comfort, home – no longer hold true as they feel the power ebb away from British culture.²⁹ Similarly, in Sonnet XVI, from his sequence contained in *Journey to a War*, Auden described refugees ‘as narrators find their memory gone, | Homeless, disterred, these know themselves defeated’.³⁰ It may seem flippancy to draw parallels between this experience and that of the homelessness experienced in English culture, but Auden here attempts to establish an empathetic link between the two. Between both Auden and Isherwood’s contributions to *Journey to a War*, the instability of English identity without imperial confidence causes them to identify

²⁸ Isherwood, ‘Travel Diary’, p. 21.

²⁹ See Thomas S. Davis, *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) p. 15-16, for a similar but brief reading of this same passage; and Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 94-102.

³⁰ Auden, ‘Sonnet XVI’, *Journey to a War*, p. 255.

themselves as homeless and stateless. Colonial practices of cartography, memorialisation, and domestication – the secular rites whereby the coloniser situates and comforts themselves spatially and temporally – had fallen apart.³¹ As Auden had written in *Light Verse*: ‘the problem for the modern poet, as for everyone else to-day, is how to find or form a genuine community, in which each has his valued place and can feel at home’. (367-8)

Auden owed much of his rise to literary prominence in the 1930s to Geoffrey Grigson, the editor of *New Verse*. Since 1933, Grigson’s magazine had promoted Auden’s writing, as well as that of Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, Dylan Thomas, amongst others. In Grigson’s informal manifesto penned for the magazine’s first issue, he makes clear his ambition to racinate modernist poetry. ‘Poetry,’ he wrote, ‘by its words (to borrow a metaphor of Eliot’s) and so by itself drives roots down to draw from all human experience’.³² As Auden had done in *Light Verse*, Grigson anthologised historic literature at the same time as he worked on contemporary writing and publishing.³³ *The Romantics* (1942) exemplifies Grigson’s anthological imagination and was intended as a storehouse of English culture threatened from abroad. The year before it was published, Grigson had complained that in England ‘we still only have the beginnings of an art history’.³⁴ To counteract this lack of national self-knowledge, *The Romantics* set out to (re)map and preserve late eighteenth-century culture in one motion. It acted as a historiography of a national culture and as a tactical domestication of modernism through its historicization according to an eighteenth-century heritage. Without wishing to dismiss the historical engagement of high modernism, I suggest we must understand anthologies such as Grigson’s as late modernist clots of national history that placed new emphasis on an island-bound Englishness.

³¹ Cf. Jameson, ‘Modernism and Imperialism’, pp. 51-53, 64.

³² Geoffrey Grigson, ‘Why New Verse’, *New Verse*, 1 (January 1933), pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

³³ Harris argues that such anthologies ‘saw their task as an urgent saving up of England’s heritage’, Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Romantic Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010) p. 144.

³⁴ Geoffrey Grigson, ‘Samuel Palmer: The Politics of an Artist’, *Horizon*, 4 (1941), pp. 314-28 (p. 314).

In his preface to *The Romantics*, Grigson aspired to deliver the unfiltered totality of Romantic culture afresh to the mid-twentieth century. He set out to gather not only verse and prose but ‘the philosophers and the politicians’. Nonetheless, ‘everything cannot be here,’ he lamented, expressing frustration with the authorised economy standards applied to wartime publishing: ‘I wanted images; the natural philosophers or scientists and the theologians – bits are here, perhaps not enough’.³⁵ With short extracts of dizzying diversity rarely more than a page in length, a frantic, wartime urgency causes Grigson’s compendium to feel stuffed full of scraps and fragments. But still not enough, perhaps, to distract from scant meals under rationing, the sound of nearby bombs in the air raid shelter, and broken glass bursting from burnt-out homes along with people’s belongings. The fragmentary quality of the collection expresses this context. When reviewed alongside John Piper’s *British Romantic Artists* (1942), the *Listener* heralded it as ‘fresh nourishment’, ‘a minor revolution in taste’: ‘when Europe is almost entirely given over to oppression and destruction [these volumes are] not unfitting for making the most of our own inheritance’. Yet the fractured language of Grigson’s preface, cracked with punctuation and half statements – described in the review as ‘not a little congested’ – hints at the futility of literature in such circumstances and its intimidating remit to heal the manifest wounds of society.³⁶

Although he would not ‘apologise for some things left out’, Grigson could be confident in his ability to perform through research and compilation what the architectural preservationists could not: the swift collection and protection of cultural heritage. He insists that his contemporary public use the romantics as an example and ‘follow them in their actuality, precisely, in their images, their words and their paint and their buildings and their music’ and search out

³⁵ Geoffrey Grigson, *The Romantics: An Anthology* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1942) p. ix

³⁶ ‘The Listener’s Book Chronicle’, *Listener*, 28 (1942), pp. 792, 794. See also Glyn Pursglove, ‘Geoffrey Grigson as Anthologist’, in *“My Rebellious and Imperfect Eye”: Observing Geoffrey Grigson*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and R. M. Healey (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) pp. 203–20 (pp. 210–212).

the antiquaries, the anatomists, the speculators, the transaction of all societies, looking at buildings, the gardens the curved mahogany doors and ivory door plates; the auriculas and the pinks, the carved flowers on the pillar (as on the reredos of Christ Church, Bristol), the fabrics...³⁷

This breathless cavalcade of historic traces is a joyful exercise in recitation as well as an entreaty to go, look, learn and preserve. Grigson establishes the anthology's role in actualising abstract notions of heritage, condensing them until they became pocket-sized artefacts, and book-bound commodities. His book made a diffuse literary inheritance something that could be physically given to subsequent generations.³⁸ Yet he stresses its role as a starting point leading to the crafted and built monuments of predominantly Georgian romanticism. He wrote, spliced, and gathered in search of a coherent whole and in recognition of the neglect and destruction threatening Georgian architecture.

Similar themes can be found in Grigson's poetry. If Auden and Isherwood were concerned with the fraying edge of English domestic identity, in his lyrical verse gathered in his second volume, *Under the Cliff* (1943), Grigson turned his attention to specifically domestic and architectural fissures closer to home. In 'April at a Scene of Childhood', his speaker presents a pageant of lost pleasures: conversations with friends, natural features of 'leaves and yellow-centred flower', the 'ivied fork' of a tree producing a 'blunt owl' and finally 'the afternoon glitter round the enormous tower'. These are precise images, bordered off from one another: the tower's ethereal glitter is 'marked' while the leaves are 'odd-cut' and harsh consonant line-stops on 'talk' and 'fork' lend sharp outlines of Blakean specificity to these generalised poetic images. Nature, language and the architectural tower fail to cohere

³⁷ Grigson, *The Romantics*, p. viii.

³⁸ An intriguing example of this is David Gascoyne's copy of *The Romantics* in my possession which includes scribbled notes on the end papers forming what appears to be shopping list of titles including *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (1888), *Phantasmion* by Sara Coleridge (1837), *Melmoth* by Charles Maturin (1820), and *The Night Land* by William Hope Hodgson (1912).

into some semblance of tradition, history, or community. They are ‘not that old unconscious entity’ in the poem’s second stanza. Grigson’s speaker closes by asking ‘how to have them allied [...] now separate’, how to create the combination of society, culture and nature that would achieve a community able to heal after the attacks of modernity.³⁹

It is tempting to describe such eulogies to lost unity as commentary on the conflict engulfing the world as Grigson wrote, but Marina MacKay has recognised the ‘virtually continuous violence’ that shaped the early twentieth century. To this I would like to add that the collapse of an imperial and domestic identity before the outbreak of war in Europe was received in England as widespread metaphysical violence and contributed to the proliferation of cultural mediations on loss.⁴⁰ Just as Richards had called for a revived, modernist engagement with the unconscious tradition of vernacular architecture and the healing of a fractured society, Grigson elegised a once cohesive world. Accordingly, in a welcome contribution to the limited scholarship on Grigson, Stephanie Kuduk Weiner has shown Grigson goes beyond simply remarking on that sundered link of an ‘unconscious’ traditional past and the anxious modernist present. Throughout *Under the Cliff* and *The Scilly Isles* (1946), poems of tribute – for instance ‘On a Picture by Henri Rousseau’, ‘On Reading W. H. Auden’s “The Sea and the Mirror”’, ‘David Hume’, and ‘John Clare’ – and the consistent merging of themes and forms of modernism and romanticism, Grigson makes visible his attempt to fill ‘the gap between tradition and modernity’.⁴¹ Regardless of these attempts at healing, war presses at the boundaries of memory in ‘April at a Scene of Childhood’: the bombing of Nazi warplanes ‘Rattle loose the doors of the hollow house I loved’. The hollowness of the poem’s house evokes the bombed-out shells of homes that Grigson and his

³⁹ Geoffrey Grigson, *Under the Cliff: And Other Poems* (London: Routledge, 1943) p. 32.

⁴⁰ Marina MacKay, *Modernism, War, and Violence*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017) p. 1.

⁴¹ Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, ‘Geoffrey Grigson’s Embrace of Influence’, *Review of English Studies*, 68 (2017), pp. 968-985; Sam Smiles, ‘Ancient Country: Nash and Prehistory’, in *Paul Nash: Modern Artist, Ancient Landscape*, ed. Jemima Montagu (London: Tate, 2003) p. 34.

public encountered across towns and cities in 1942, but in metaphysical terms, that domestic hollowness generates the same sense of ontological instability that characterised the more distant and itinerant subjects of Auden's poetry, now brought to a disturbing, shuddering climax centred on Grigson's memory of a childhood home.

'The Children' continues Grigson's focus on notions of corruption and cultural dispersion. The poem becomes more overt in its deployment of domestic loss as a metonym for a broader collapse of communal values:

The rooms were pulled down, but they always abide
In the minds of the children born in them:
The cupboard, the horse, and the faded hem,
And the ceiling cracks from side to side

Memories, for Grigson's nearly lyric speaker, are all that sustain the material domestic realities of the past. The cupboard, horse, and hem appear as fleeting mental images rendered unsustainable by the structural failure of the canopy that contains them – the ceiling. History and domestic heritage are crucial here:

but all of them now are shut out from the past
And are scared by the future arriving fast⁴²

Grigson's use of 'them' at this juncture appears to indicate 'The Children' of the poem's title. Yet it may also refer to 'the rooms' mentioned earlier in this final stanza. Both interpretations can operate simultaneously in a move that forms a compound impression of the children Grigson places at the centre of his poem and their remembered homes, the apparitions of historic architecture arising at its conclusion. Both the children and their buildings are presented as victims of an ahistorical present and the rapid onslaught of modernity in the

⁴² Grigson, *Under the Cliff*, pp. 36-37.

future. This was a subject Grigson had been writing on for some time, echoing from his ominous ancestral voice in 'October 1939' which begins with 'I live in the broken house' and closes by foretelling a 'brutal future'.⁴³ Houses are presented as leaky intergenerational freighters of formerly secure meaning; the notion of home, an immaterial yet vulnerable entanglement of emotion and identity, nourishment and comfort, is cast adrift from its embattled physical basis in both national identity and domestic architecture. The war to which Grigson's poetry refers – at times directly but often through circumlocution – is positioned as the culmination of earlier conditions of modernity that led to experiences of homelessness. Houses soon to be destroyed by war had already ceased to be homes, their inhabitants robbed of their historical parentage.

Grigson was well aware of efforts to preserve Georgian architecture through the Georgian Group since its establishment in 1937. He had edited John Summerson's chapter on modernist architecture in *The Arts To-day* (1935), alongside Auden's essay on psychoanalysis, and had an omnivorous cultural attitude evidenced through his work as an art critic.⁴⁴ Yet, from this fertile network of young poets, John Betjeman had perhaps the greatest claim to involvement in architectural debates, being a member of both the MARS Group and the Georgian Group. His poetry is often dismissed as too light and too popular and not nearly political enough to be considered alongside Auden and the *New Verse* writers gathered together by Grigson. While this might be true of the homefulness of Betjeman's merry lyrics like 'The Outer Suburbs' or the gentle satire of 'The Garden City' published in *Mount Zion* in

⁴³ Geoffrey Grigson, *Collected Poems, 1924-1962* (London: Phoenix House, 1963) p. 59.

⁴⁴ See Stuart Sillars, 'Geoffrey Grigson as Art Critic', in *"My Rebellious and Imperfect Eye": Observing Geoffrey Grigson*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and R. M. Healey (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) pp. 191-205. Grigson would go on to be one of the founders of the Institute for Contemporary Arts, alongside Herbert Read, Roland Penrose and others.

1931, as the decade wore on his verse began to articulate the homelessness and instability of national identity.⁴⁵

In sympathy with Byron's *How We Celebrate the Coronation*, 'The Death of King George V' witnesses Betjeman reflecting on the atmosphere of cultural change and uncertainty following the death of Britain's monarch and the fraught succession that followed. It is an extremely well-known poem but that should not nullify the atmosphere of defamiliarization, even alienation, Betjeman set out to create. Considering modernisation and continuity, Betjeman's poem is rooted in Britain's status as a fading imperial power captured in a passing moment. The poet uses the transitional space of an airport to describe a constitution, a technology, and an identity in limbo. Now a plane, not a carriage, delivers the new king, Edward VIII, to London while

Old men in country houses hear clocks ticking
Over thick carpets with a deadened force;

Old men who never cheated, never doubted,
Communicated monthly, sit and stare
At the new suburb stretched beyond the run-way
Where a young man lands hatless from the air.⁴⁶

Betjeman's aging aristocrats in their rural seats have doubt cast across their lives by the uncertainty of new management. Their clocks' ominous ticking with 'deadened force' as well as the 'new suburb' convey the threats then mounting to owners of historic houses. Decline in agricultural income, difficulties sourcing adequate staff to run large properties, and crucially death duties of fifty per cent prompted by the economic slump in the early 1930s left the financial position of 'old men in country houses' untenable. Stately homes on the edges of

⁴⁵ John Betjeman, *Mount Zion, or in Touch with the Infinite* (London: James Press, 1931) was published by Edward James, richly illustrated by Hubert de Cronin Hastings and with images collected from other sources, and featured a cover and endpapers that confirm the volume's place as an early instance of the English fusion of surrealism and Victoriana.

⁴⁶ John Betjeman, *Collected Poems* (London: John Murray, 2006) p. 35.

towns and cities were being sold off and demolished by speculative builders to make way for new suburbs. In 1934, Philip Carr, 11th Marquis of Lothian delivered a speech entitled 'England's Country Houses: A Case for their Preservation' at the National Trust's AGM. He encouraged the Trust to acquire properties while insisting on the easing of taxes and the preservation of houses over a century old which had 'definite historic or architectural merit' (a peremptory alignment with the historical remit of the Georgian Group upto 1830).⁴⁷ Partially due to Carr's protest, the National Trust Act was passed in July 1937, putting in place tax exemptions and provisions allowing those fading upper class families to remain in their homes under certain conditions, including 'the access to and enjoyment of such buildings, places, and chattels by the public'.⁴⁸ Death duties targeted hereditary wealth being passed to the next generation, but as Peter Mandler has shown, the art, architecture and domestic items this wealth maintained was seen as the cultural inheritance of the entire nation.⁴⁹

Once country houses were under the hammer and new suburban houses framed as an aesthetic disgrace, where, Betjeman's poem demands, could the Englishman turn for a home in the modern age? The historic Palladian mansions with their picturesque gardens were being gutted of their contents and demolished or sanitised by the National Trust, while the poorly built suburbs that blanket the English landscape were described by Osbert Lancaster as the slums of the future.⁵⁰ Both were possible answers to the homelessness of modern England, one spiritual, founded on a conservative identity, the other physical and practical, but both appeared to be crumbling in the moment Edward VIII 'lands hatless from the air'. The homelessness Betjeman crystallised in his verse is unresolved.

⁴⁷ See Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (London: Yale University Press, 1997) p. 414.

⁴⁸ *The National Trust Acts, 1907 to 1939: With Extracts from Finance Acts, 1910, 1931 and 1937* (London: National Trust, 1940).

⁴⁹ Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, p. 415.

⁵⁰ Osbert Lancaster, *Pillar to Post: The Pocket-Lamp of Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1938) p. 44, 68.

In a later poem, published in *Old Lights for New Chancels* in 1940, Betjeman is overt in his struggle to reach back to the Georgian period. ‘An Incident in the Early Life of Ebenezer Jones, Poet, 1828’ is a versified account of an incident in Jones’s school days in Highgate, London. Jones (1820-1860) was a London-born occasional poet and writer whose first collection of work, *Studies of Sensation and Event* (1843), received unforgiving reviews from the English literary establishment upon its release. Yet almost thirty years later Dante Gabriel Rossetti described Jones as ‘the most striking instance of neglected genius in the modern school of poetry’. This initial unfashionableness (still in force in the 1930s) mixed with the ‘vivid disorderly power’ Rossetti ascribed to Jones’s verse, may well have attracted Betjeman.⁵¹ His poem arranges a hazily nostalgic scene:

The still-new stucco on the London clay,
Hot summer silence over Holloway.

Dissenting chapels, tea-bowers, lovers’ lairs,
Neat new-built villas, ample Grecian squares,
Remaining orchards ripening Windsor pears.

Hot silence where the older mansions hide
On Highgate Hill’s thick elm-encrusted side.⁵²

The tangibility of Hampstead’s Georgian heritage is suggested through place names and architectural features: the classical architecture of Georgian squares, freshly rendered stucco alongside older houses. In the early nineteenth-century moment Betjeman described Hampstead was steadily merging with London’s northern fringe, so this passage is a scene of suburban expansion, but one that Betjeman would be willing to accept. At the time Betjeman wrote, this gold tinted Georgian suburb was threatened by London’s continuing urban sprawl.

⁵¹ Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ‘Ebenezer Jones’, *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1870), p. 154; see Richard Garnett and Katharine Chubbuck, ‘Jones, Ebenezer (1820–1860), Poet’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵² Betjeman, *Collected Poems*, p. 49-50.

If it was to disappear, the poem suggests that one must at least create a personal verse-fantasy of it.

The death of a dog at the hands of a ‘choleric usher’ is the crucial moment in Jones’s original prose narrative, which is reprinted at the beginning of Betjeman’s poem. But the architectural setting in Hampstead takes precedence and the dog’s fate appears only obliquely as ‘he flung it, flung it, and it never stirred’ in one of the final stanzas. Betjeman was known to satirically fabricate historical sources, exemplified by his dialogue between Batty Langley and Lord Ongley in *Ghastly Good Taste*.⁵³ Such fabrication is a form of Baroque pleasure in artificiality and a taunt to the scholarly rigour Betjeman routinely dismissed. By adding his verse to Jones’s first-hand account, Betjeman simultaneously asserts his poem’s authority as a link to an actual event and acknowledges his divergence from historical fidelity. By embracing myth, Betjeman deploys Georgian architecture as a monumental fortification against a crisis of English identity. The resulting verse-fantasy behaves like a revival style, self-consciously questioning its own historicity, and his coy game of historical revival and revision continues in several other poems collected in *Continual Dew*. Purposefully at odds with modern poetry’s genealogy of *vers libre* and the French symbolists, he adopts traditional verse forms associated with hymns, folk rhymes and the highly regulated verse of the eighteenth century. Thus, in sympathy with Peggy Angus riffing on folk art, and confirmed by his inclusion in Auden’s *Light Verse*, Betjeman’s studied rejection of modernist poetic schema sought to reassert the poet’s role in society and counteract the cultural alienation endemic to England.

Betjeman’s prodigious activity as an architectural critic was consistent with the social analysis embedded in his poetry, as well as at that of Auden, Grigson, and the work of the

⁵³ See also, the fictive village of ‘Tickleby Tomcat’ and the improbable ‘Mr Sussex Tankard’ in John Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939) pp. 12-13.

Georgian Group. Rather than survey his numerous articles for the architectural press, I would like to take just one of his texts to demonstrate how the alienation I have been tracing shifted from light verse to the sober matter of architectural preservation. Initially given as a lecture to the Group Theatre shortly before its closure in 1939, *Antiquarian Prejudice* sees Betjeman reflect on the biases of current conservationism in England. Its salient points in this discussion of homelessness are centred on its combination of the need to critique the fashionable preference for Tudor and medieval antiquarianism with a modernist approach to the provision of millions of homes to a nation facing a housing crisis and an imminent war. Briefly stated, *Antiquarian Prejudice* addresses solutions to a popular disidentification with modernism and a more literal, physical homelessness during the late 1930s, collapsing both into a series of shared concerns.

The central drive of Betjeman's polemic is that the tastes of a conservative architectural establishment inhibit the development of modernism and the preservation movement alike. He denounces the 'timidity miscalled "tradition" but really antiquarianism, which enslaves be-knighted architects'. The blinkered preservation of England's medieval and Tudor buildings directly shaped popular esteem for imitations of these styles in domestic buildings. Higher up the architectural hierarchy, Sir Reginald Blomfield and his ilk were targeted by Betjeman because they failed to 'let the new frightening materials that they never knew when they were young men do the job for them as Paxton let cast iron or glass do his job at the Crystal Palace'. Betjeman's argument is a generational one: just as the supply of mahogany from the colonies in the eighteenth century led to the simple curves and broad span of the Regency card table, and the development of plate glass in the Victorian age facilitated Joseph Paxton's grand glasshouse of the Great Exhibition in 1851, so the newly perfected modernist materials and building techniques such as reinforced concrete were the rightful inheritance of the inter-war generation. Betjeman even goes as far as to undermine

the criticism that modern design in steel, glass, and concrete is ‘Bolshevistic’ by pointing out the replacement of constructivism with an authoritarian classicism then in favour in Russia.⁵⁴ The implication is that a fully developed tradition – a Georgian modernism – is needed, while the phrase ‘antiquarian prejudice’ is used with typical fluidity by Betjeman as a weapon to attack all remaining opposition.

When turning to domestic architecture, Betjeman declares that suburbia’s imitation of ‘Tudor’ style is a particularly egregious example of how ‘antiquarian prejudice’ shaped English architecture and blighted the national landscape. Searching for an alternative, he admits

that in certain villages of limestone, chalk or brick, the old methods of building are the right ones [...] But for our suburbs, this is to say for the bulk of our population, it can only be a form of bogus traditionalism backed by certain sinister influences from the building trade [...] The houses once built, however badly, cannot be removed except at great expense. When the focus of the population shifts, many London suburbs will be deserted and terrifying like the pit villages of the north, from which much of London’s new population has come.

Betjeman ultimately settles on a solution by endorsing

the production of decent and convenient mass-produced houses. These houses should be pre-fabricated, as was the Crystal Palace, they should be and could be as well-planned as sound and weather-proof as the best brick-built house. Pre-fabrication could make it possible to remove these houses from one place to another when they were wanted, and the land they occupied could go back to agriculture.⁵⁵

Here we find an indication of Betjeman’s imminent, post-war retreat from avant-garde architecture in his recognition that ‘the old methods of building are the right ones’. But there is also a more subtle conservatism at play when Betjeman sets out a two-tier system of

⁵⁴ Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice*, pp. 15, 16, 17.

⁵⁵ Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice*, pp. 20-21.

housing provision: local vernacular, possibly neo-Georgian houses for those who can afford them, and masses of prefabs for the urban poor and lower-middle classes turned out from the metropolitan slums.

There can be no doubt that these remarks are rooted in established modernist ideas circulating in MARS, and are prescient in their anticipation of prefabricated solutions forming a crucial part of the British government's response to the acute housing shortage brought about by the war.⁵⁶ Betjeman himself notes that 'experiments in houses of this sort have been made successfully in Germany and America'. Barely three years later the Royal Institute for British Architects was itself extolling the virtues of prefabrication, albeit in defensive terms, in their exhibition *Towards a New Britain* (a nod to Frederick Etchells's title for Le Corbusier's germinal text, yet to become thoroughly hackneyed). The catalogue announced

Standardization and prefabrication affect the aesthetic result only in so far as they rule out the chance of individuality which in the middle-ages every village mason could achieve. [...] If we want beauty we must achieve it in terms of our century, with a full use of the machines and the materials at our disposal.⁵⁷

On a more practical level, a Ministry of Health circular issued to the London County Council in 1945 shows how local authorities were assessing certain prefabricated design, which were either proposed or already built, in terms of 'strength and stability', 'thermal insulation', 'fire hazard', 'maintenance and durability' and 'vermin infestation'.⁵⁸ The technical note assesses the relative success of seven construction methods – such as the British Iron and Steel

⁵⁶ See John Broughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018) pp. 62-107. On the 1933 CIAM conference see John R. Gold, 'Creating the Charter of Athens: Ciam and the Functional City, 1933-43', *Town Planning Review*, 69 (1998), 225-247. After the war John Gloag and Grey Wornum collaborated on a book on prefabrication, John Gloag and Grey Wornum, *House out of Factory* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1946) .

⁵⁷ Royal Institute of British Architects, *Towards a New Britain*, (London: Architectural Press, 1943) p. 130.

⁵⁸ 'Technical note on some types of permanent prefabricated houses', Ministry of Health Circular 182/45, 16 October 1945, London, London Metropolitan Archives, LCC.CL.HGS.01.38.

Federation Type A, the Braithwaite House and the Airey, Howard and Easiform Houses. If the war heightened the urgency of building prefabricated houses, it also set about addressing the teething pains that would make the new techniques acceptable to the British public.

Huge advances in prefabrication were made. John Boughton explains how on the Excalibur Estate in Catford high quality prefabs were built by German and Italian prisoners of war from 1945 to 1946: ‘with their fitted kitchens, running hot water, built-in storage, and electric lighting and sockets – [they were] state-of-the-art dwellings in their time’.⁵⁹ These homes served a material need, but they also resolved more immaterial problems. Ashley Maher describes how prefabrication joined wider discourses around modernist progress and became a vehicle for popular commitment to British state power during the war. Faith in modernism’s power to ameliorate the housing crisis, heightened by the Blitz but equally obvious to Betjeman in 1939, was bound up with support for a national project of modernisation and unification in which house building became a priority.⁶⁰ Prefabrication, it would seem, could provide belonging within a coherent political identity and national community in addition to a roof over one’s head, ameliorating the homelessness, experienced by Dickens’s wanderer of the earth, Auden’s traveller and Grigson’s romantic children alike.

Following these audacious modernist recommendations, Betjeman’s lecture culminates with a direct appeal to preserve Georgian architecture, and a warning to the author of this thesis. He takes amusing swipes at ‘the expert’ (who ‘lives in a museum where everything is as divorced from its setting as he is from aesthetic appreciation’) and ‘the research student’ (who is destined only for ‘arrogance and antiques’), before denouncing their

⁵⁹ Six houses on the Excalibur Estate have now been Grade II listed by Historic England. Boughton recounts the response of one young and initially sceptical family on entering an Excalibur house: ‘We opened the door and my wife said “What a lovely big hall! We can get the pram in here.” There was a toilet and a bathroom. I’d been used to a toilet in the garden. The kitchen had an Electrolux refrigerator, a New World gas stove, plenty of cupboards. There was a nice garden. It was like coming into a fortune. My wife said “Start measuring for the lino.”’ Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, p. 92.

⁶⁰ Ashley Maher, *Reconstructing Modernism: British Literature, Modern Architecture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) ch. 4.

imposition of an ‘authoritative attitude’ on history.⁶¹ Specifically, he takes issue with the periodisation of the ongoing Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments formed through the Ancient Monuments of 1931 which ignored buildings dated after 1714. ‘Antiquarian Prejudice’, then, was the common enemy of both modernism and the Georgian era; both became bound together as that which the academic snobbery of the period denigrated or ignored.

Losing Georgian London

At the end of *Antiquarian Prejudice*, while quoting from a critical review of the Royal Commission, Betjeman describes the legislation as ‘not only absurdly inadequate, it is also definitely harmful’.⁶² The potential and actual harm done to eighteenth-century architecture due to its lack of protection motivated both his lecture and the formation of the Georgian Group. When seeking to understand how the work of architectural preservation related to a new sense of national-imperial identity as fading or friable, the loss of London’s Georgian buildings in the inter-war years is a particularly fruitful starting point. The monumental character of those threatened buildings, many of which were modelled on the imperial architecture of classical antiquity, forced England to gaze upon the ruins of its own imperial grandeur and despair. Between Gavin Stamp’s reliable and often-quoted outline of the early years of the Georgian Group, including the motivating factors for their formation, Douglas Goldring’s scathing and dejected first-hand account of the same period in *Facing the Odds*, and James Knox’s retelling in his biography of Byron, we are left with what seems like a full

⁶¹ Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice*, pp. 22-26.

⁶² Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice*, p. 28.

picture of the committee's workings and the key figures involved.⁶³ Yet as Neal Shasore has noted, the role of learned and well-connected women such as Una Pope-Hennessy and Katherine Ada Esdaile in these early phases of the Georgian Group has often gone unrecognised.⁶⁴ I do not want to repeat these excellent accounts, and doing so would risk affirming John Summerson's comment from 1974 that the Georgian is 'over-written, over-studied, over-estimated'.⁶⁵ However, I do want to lay fresh emphasis on the organisation's imperial links and rhetoric, principally to allow more accurate estimation of its role in this transitional moment for English national identity.

Writing from the vantage point of 1940, the Regent Street quadrant was the first major loss remarked upon by Goldring. Originally designed by John Nash in 1810, the broad, sweeping thoroughfare had been a modern replacement of the previous medieval road layout and it introduced commercial colonnades. In pale stone and crisp Italianate detailing, designs for the entire quadrant were adopted by parliament and published in 1813. Plans were made for its redevelopment when the ninety-nine-year leases of the buildings were due to expire almost a century later and designs by Sir Reginald Blomfield were selected to replace those of Nash. Blomfield's muscular neo-baroque substitute paid minor homage to the classicism it replaced, as part of the so-called Wrenaissance, but his was a style fit for the weightier, more established imperium of Britain's capital in the early twentieth century. The classicist's dubious claim to hold the inheritance of Western civilisation was sustained but Blomfield provided a monumental quality suitable for the modern metropole. Brick structures were replaced by steel frames, stucco render with a robust cladding of Portland stone.

⁶³ Gavin Stamp, 'How We Celebrated the Coronation: The Foundation and Early Years of the Georgian Group', *Georgian Group Journal*, 20 (2012), pp. 1-22; Douglas Goldring, *Facing the Odds* (London: Cassell, 1940) see ch. 3 & 4; Knox, *Robert Byron*.

⁶⁴ Shasore, 'The Georgian Group'; on Margaret Jourdain and the Georgian Group in the broader context of Georgian revival, see Harris, p. 70-75.

⁶⁵ John Summerson, 'Georgian Bricks and Mortar', a lecture given at the Royal College of Art, 22 October, 1974, quoted in McKellar, p. 35.

Another Georgian casualty of the inter-war years was Waterloo Bridge. The original Bridge, completed in 1815 to John Rennie's designs, was set for demolition in the early 1930s by London County Council due to subsidence. A vicious debate ensued, questioning whether to retain and rebuild the existing design onto a reinforced and re-founded structure or to summarily replace it with a modern alternative. Blomfield, despite what many preservationists considered his vandalism on Regent Street, was a vocal supporter of Rennie's design: double Doric columns punctuating a nine-arch structure of timber and granite. W.R. Lethaby supported it too and was denounced together with Blomfield by their opposition as 'short sighted fanatics' – the words of Harold P. Clunn who was more concerned with modernising the traffic flow over the bridge.⁶⁶

In its symbolic rather than merely practical capacity, the location of Waterloo Bridge was crucial. At the heart of modern London between the City and Westminster, it formed part of a spectacular Georgian vista on the Thames between the Adelphi Terrace by the Adam brothers (1768-1772) and Sir William Chambers's Somerset House (1776). The scene was captured at the bridge's grand opening in 1817 by John Constable in *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge (Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817)* (c. 1831-31, figure 3.1), and in a brighter, Italianate view by the Scottish painter Alexander Nasmyth in *A Prospect of London, seen from the Earl of Cassilis's Privy Garden, with Waterloo Bridge*, (1826, figure 3.2). Nasmyth evidently revels in the massed classical ornament of the Adelphi's forty-one bay frontage, its detail picked out in late summer sun that clears away cloud to the east and illuminates the white masonry of the bridge. Constable's scene provides no such clarity. His canvas is loaded with swept marks and tipped white giving an impression of wetness that overwhelms the scene and the Thames itself seems to rise to meet the rain-laden clouds.

⁶⁶ Harold P. Clunn, *The Face of London: The Record of a Century's Changes and Development* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1932) p. 40.

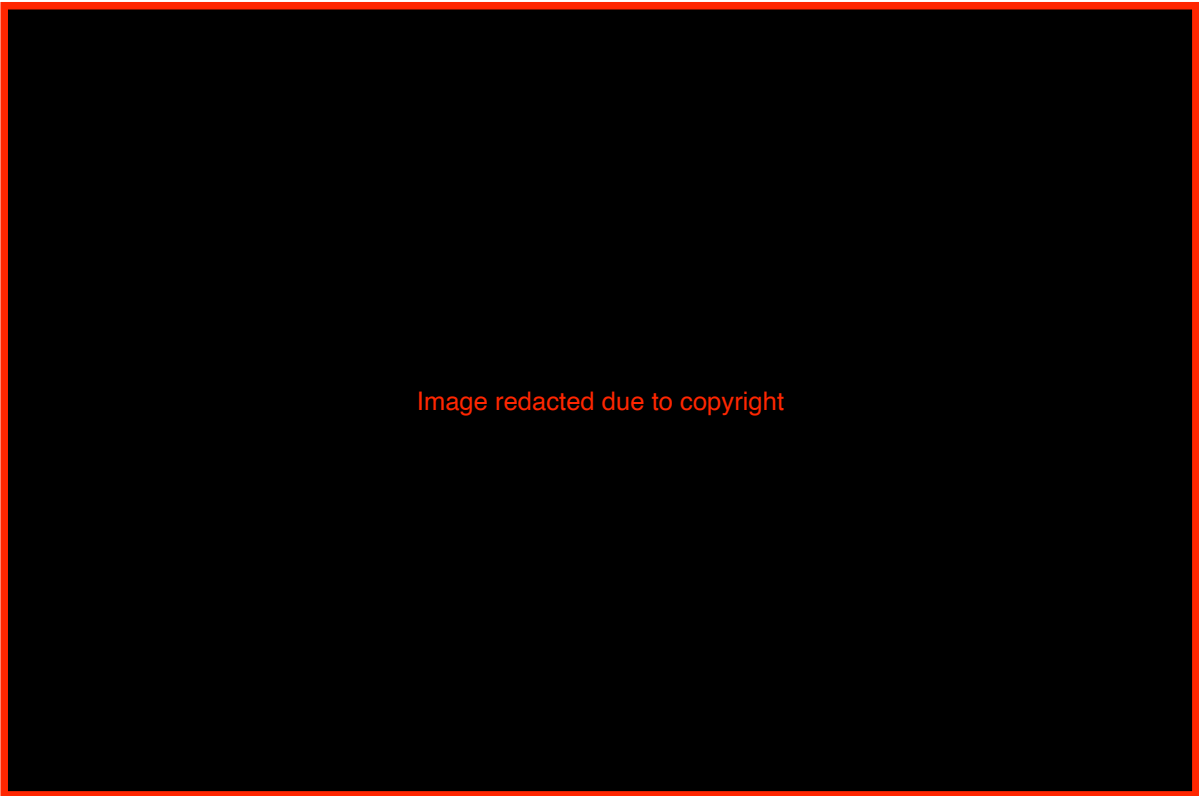


Image redacted due to copyright

3.1 John Constable, *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')*, 1832, oil on canvas, Tate, London.

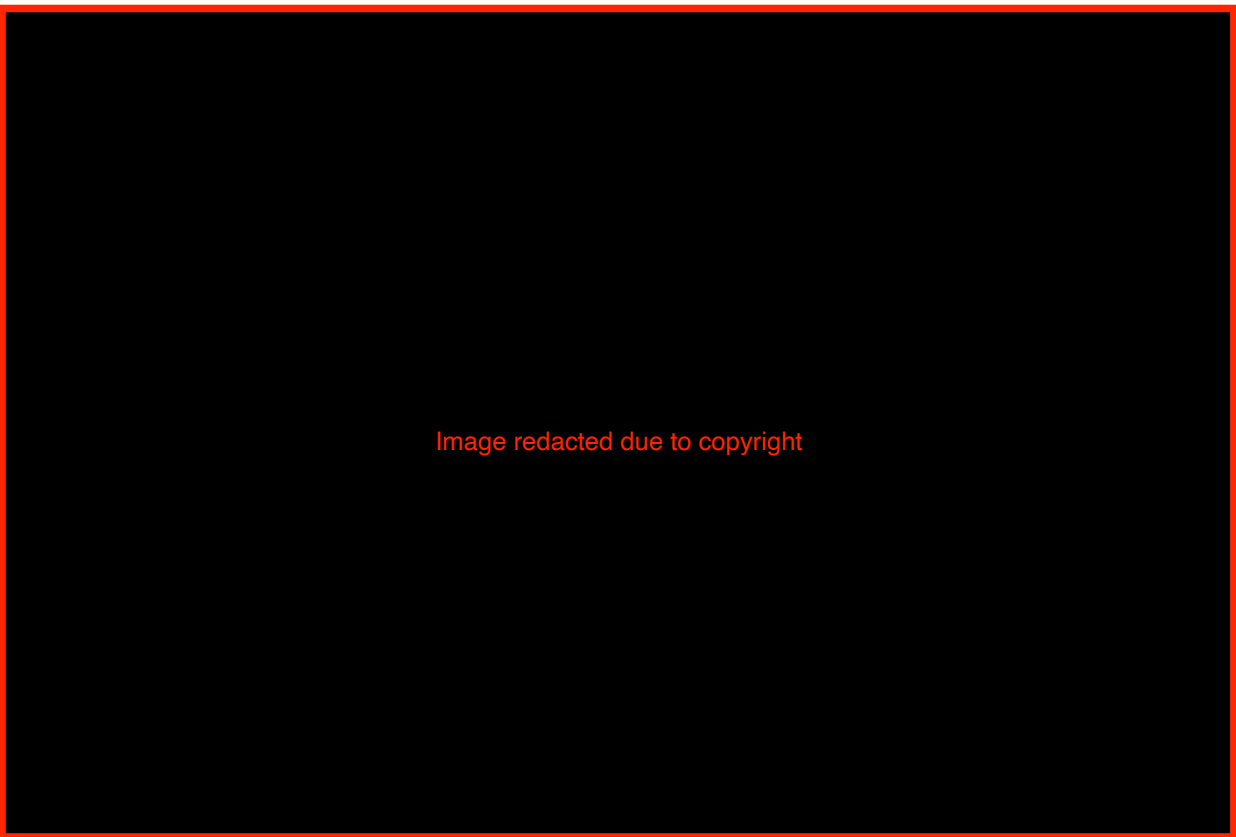


Image redacted due to copyright

3.2 Alexander Nasmyth, *A Prospect of London, Seen From the Earl of Cassilis's Privy Garden, with Waterloo Bridge Beyond*, 1826, oil on canvas, private collection.

Both paintings – the first placed in a national collection, the second still in private hands – represent a version of Georgian history that seemed to be lost in the demolition of Waterloo Bridge. Nasmyth presented a vision of London as a classical metropolis, outward-looking in its evocation of a European, Claudian landscape bathed in Roman light, a preeminent Imperial power. Constable, meanwhile, offers a vision of state pageantry wrapped in the soggy robes of local climate, a romantic celebration of national victory over Napoleon. For those witnessing its demolition in 1934, to have lost Rennie’s Waterloo Bridge was not just the tragedy of an architectural treasure cast asunder, it became a shattered fantasy and a premonition of decline: the deposition of the bridge’s monumental symbolism suggested that the might and measure of genteel civilisation that had built the British Empire was now, also, subsiding. And for those acutely concerned with the preservation of Georgian architecture, a secure national identity (which Betjeman had been unable to locate in either country houses or new suburbia) was contingent upon the maintenance of similar eighteenth-century monuments in the imperial capital.⁶⁷

The panic and anger felt by Goldring, Byron and their network is understandable when considering how, in addition to Waterloo Bridge, the Adelphi Terrace was also lost in the early 1930s. In Stamp’s words, this was the ‘final catalyst’ for the creation of the Georgian Group.⁶⁸ The Adelphi was based on the waterside façade of Diocletian’s Palace in modern day Croatia. Robert Adam had visited and popularised this building through his extensive edition of engravings published in 1764. Adam designed a terrace of upmarket homes with a façade based on this imperial pleasure ground, which over time gained a reputation for attracting notable cultural figures including J.M. Barrie, John Galsworthy,

⁶⁷ Sir Giles Gilbert Scott’s design for the current bridge was eventually completed in 1942. Peter Lind, the engineer contracted for the project, managed to salvage the structural elm from Rennie’s bridge for use in his Surrey home designed by Ian Forbes in a neo-Georgian style, see Christopher Hussey, ‘Hamstone House, St. George’s Hill, Surrey: The Home of Mr. Peter Lind’, *Country Life*, 86 (1939), pp. 284-288.

⁶⁸ Stamp, ‘How we celebrated’, p.6.

David Garrick, Thomas Hardy, and George Bernard Shaw. Its fate was sealed in 1933 when a large portion of the building was sold to an American developer who replaced it with a vast construction in a blockish and clumsy art deco style. Douglas Goldring had attempted to avert the disaster through journalistic means; the architect and principal of the Bartlett School, Albert Richardson, had pleaded the enduring utility of the terrace; Robert Byron denounced the shady dealings of Parliament who authorised the development, considering it an issue 'of such importance to the imperial capital'.⁶⁹ All were central figures in the soon-to-be-formed organisation dedicated to preserving Georgian architecture. For the architecturally initiated there could hardly be a more pregnant symbol of Britain's fading imperial might than the Adelphi lying prematurely in ruin (figure 3.3).

Conflict in the Committee

Conversations between Goldring and Lord Derwent in 1936 can be considered the genesis of the Georgian Group. Derwent introduced a motion to the House of Lords late that year proposing substantive government protection for buildings constructed since 1714. The problem had been highlighted over a decade earlier by Arthur Trystan Edwards in his book *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (1924). There Edwards explained that Georgian buildings were in peril because, in the example of Regent Street, it

had not the virtue of great age. It had nothing to recommend it apart from incomparable beauty. And with the offense of being comparatively new it combined the still worse offence of being faced with rather delicate material. It positively invited the pick-axe!⁷⁰

⁶⁹ A. E. Richardson, 'Must the Adelphi Go?', *Architectural Review*, 73 (1933), pp. 99-100 (p. 100); Byron, p. 15.

⁷⁰ A. Trystan Edwards, *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (London: P. Allan & Co, 1924) p. 106.

These lines made a ‘profound impression’ on Goldring who later reflected that without them ‘there would probably have been no Georgian Group’.⁷¹ More recently, Shasore has described Edwards’s writing as ‘a reclamation of the “essential modernity” of the Regency and late Georgian period’, and Edwards was not alone in claiming this characteristic for Georgian architecture at this time.⁷² His former teacher at Liverpool, C.H. Reilly, was pursuing similar ideas in his buildings, planning and pedagogy, as a means of reinventing not only modernist doctrine but also English identity.⁷³ From its preference for simplicity and restrained ornamentation, to its tendency towards whiteness in stucco render or light stone, and shared faith in classical geometric planning, modernism and Georgian architecture were treated as kindred architectural systems. Modernity and innovation, therefore, was in part what cursed the Adelphi Terrace. These Georgian homes sat too close to the modern age and perhaps sat too comfortably in the context of modernist architecture to weather the ‘lingering prejudices of the Victorians combined with sheer ignorance’ of the early twentieth century.⁷⁴ ‘Our tradition,’ wrote the leading modernist Maxwell Fry in 1934, ‘is the mental outlook of late Georgian architecture before its disintegration by nineteenth-century industrialization’.⁷⁵

The necessity for a new committee to counteract such prejudices was due to the perceived inactivity of the SPAB. Stamp has suggested the SPAB did campaign to save later eighteenth-century architecture, but the fact remains that it was unable to prevent the major losses of the thirties.⁷⁶ The two organisations’ symbiotic relationship would be strained.

⁷¹ Goldring, *Facing the Odds*, pp. 47-8

⁷² Neal Shasore, “A Stammering Bundle of Welsh Idealism”: Arthur Trystan Edwards and Principles of Civic Design in Interwar Britain’, *Architectural History*, 61 (2018), p. 186.

⁷³ Alan Powers, ‘C. H. Reilly: Regency, Englishness and Modernism’, *Journal of Architecture*, 5 (2000), pp. 47-64

⁷⁴ Stamp, ‘How we Celebrated’, p. 1.

⁷⁵ E. M. F. [Maxwell Fry], ‘Modernismus’, *Architects’ Journal*, 79 (1934), p. 368. Fry had completed work experience in the New York firm Carrère and Hastings responsible for developing the site of Devonshire House. He claimed the moment he witnessed steel framed flats clad in Portland stone rising from where the grand Georgian building had once stood was the moment of his conversion to modern architecture. Maxwell Fry, *Autobiographical Sketches* (London Elek, 1975) p. 136.

⁷⁶ Stamp, ‘How we Celebrated’, p. 15.



Image redacted due to copyright

3.3 'The Heart of the Adelphi Vanishes', *The Sphere*, June 30, 1936.

James Lees Milne recalled how ‘We despised the SPAB in those days; we thought they were all fuddy-duddies’.⁷⁷ Yet while its parent society had been running steadily since its foundation by William Morris in 1877, in-fighting blighted the initial years of the Georgian Group. Only weeks after its first meeting, Douglas Goldring pressed his proprietorial claim over the group to William Palmer, a representative of both organisations, writing that ‘The Georgian Group, for better or worse, is just as much the product of my own brain as any of the novels, poems and travel book in the past thirty years’.⁷⁸ The books to which Goldring is referring include *The Fortune* (1917), a novel which reflected his anti-war and anti-imperial stance as a conscientious objector, a propagandising mission that was extended into *Black Curtain* (1920) and *Nobody Knows* (1923).

Goldring attempted to cast himself as the Georgian Group’s true founder, and this has been reaffirmed by Stamp, but his attempt to claim the power of authorial control over an essentially collaborative set of activities seems excessive. When faced with social slights from members of the Mayfair elite on the executive committee, a lack of support with casework, and the realisation that meetings were more like a sherry party than a learned and purposeful society, Goldring resigned his post as secretary in December 1937.⁷⁹ As Harris writes, ‘he was not rich; he did not own a Georgian mansion, he was not an aristocrat, and he did not want to be an aristocrat’.⁸⁰ Goldring’s involvement in the literary avant-garde might help us to recast him as often-frustrated editorial force in Georgian Group’s nascent months, rather than the true founder of the organisation. Having started his journalistic career at *Country Life* before the First World War, he met Ford Madox Ford, ‘the principal formative

⁷⁷ Quoted in Stamp, ‘How we Celebrated’, p. 5.

⁷⁸ Douglas Goldring to William Palmer, 30 July 1937, SPAB archives, quoted in Stamp, ‘How we Celebrated’ p. 7.

⁷⁹ Stamp, ‘How we Celebrated’, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, p. 73.

influence on his life' and became sub-editor of the *English Review*.⁸¹ He funded and edited *The Tramp*, a short-lived monthly dedicated to 'the cult for the open-air' from 1910 to 1911, and later assisted Wyndham Lewis in the publication of *Blast*.⁸² The war inspired him to weave socialist, pacifist and anti-imperialist propaganda into his later writing, and in the inter-war years his name carried the currency of a dyed in the wool modernist agitator. It was a quality that influenced the Georgian Group's torpid first year when it was 'happy to cast itself as the *enfant terrible* of a staid and placid preservationist establishment' – an attitude that owes much to the earlier avant-garde.⁸³ Indeed, this literary context serves as a reminder of the thin and permeable membrane that existed between the preservation movement and the poets already discussed, and ultimately attempts at wholesale modernist reform of English culture. An anti-nationalist attitude can even be seen infiltrating Goldring's approach to the Georgian Group: commenting on the associational culture of committees and campaigns, he describes the system as only a way 'to waste time and money on wholly unprofitable forms of patriotic endeavour'.⁸⁴ If Goldring's influence in the Georgian Group could be said to offset its potential to glorify England's imperial past and lobby for the entrenchment of an identity founded on imperial supremacy, then his eventual ousting from the group only confirmed its ideological leanings.

A significant number of Anglo-Irish aristocrats were among the individuals Goldring found himself straining against. They included a later chairman of the group, The Earl of Rosse whose family seat was Birr Castle in County Offaly; Dame Una Pope-Hennessy who had been part of Lady Gregory's circle alongside Yeats at the eighteenth-century Coole

⁸¹ Douglas Goldring, *South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review Circle* (London: Constable, 1943) p. xvi.

⁸² Douglas Goldring, *Odd Man Out: The Autobiography of a 'Propaganda Novelist'* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1935) p. 105; see Helen Southworth, 'Douglas Goldring's the Tramp: An Open Air Magazine (1910-1911) and Modernist Geographies', *Literature and History*, 18 (2009), pp. 35–53.

⁸³ Shasore, 'The Georgian Group'.

⁸⁴ Goldring, *Odd Man Out*, p. 31.

House near Galway, and was outraged by the poet's inaction to save it from destruction; Gerry Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, born in Dublin and later a neo-Georgian architect commissioned by Lord Berners for his Farringdon Folly; and Summerson himself who, although not an aristocrat, wrote nostalgically of his family's Coolmore Estate in Ireland to Ben Nicholson in 1939 and published articles in the *Architectural Review* under the pseudonym, 'John Coolmore'.⁸⁵ Others had a background in colonial administration, for instance Rupert Gunnis who worked in Uganda and Cyprus before becoming a collector of eighteenth-century English sculpture; or, more significantly, Lord Salisbury who was Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs under Churchill from 1940 to 1942, later Secretary of State for the Colonies, and president of the English-Speaking Union intended to promote the dominance of the English language throughout the Empire. Salisbury had a reputation for extreme dedication to the imperialist project, fiercely defending and sustaining white majority governments in Southern Rhodesia and South Africa and working to suppress independence movements elsewhere in Africa. He held a position on the Georgian Group's Executive Committee after the war.⁸⁶

Byron himself was frank about how the Georgian Group set out to maintain and defend Britain's imperial glory. In *Imperial Pilgrimage* he introduces 'London as a symbol', not only of wealth and power, though he makes sure to stress these factors, but of liberty: 'During the last hundred years, the British Empire has changed from an assemblage of conquered territories into one of free peoples and peoples becoming free, united by a common will to liberty and a sense of mutual convenience'. The 'long, slow and difficult' road leading to this so-called 'happy state' is worth commemorating, he claims. Acting more as tour guide than preservationist, Byron directs the reader through Georgian London and his

⁸⁵ Letter from John Summerson to Ben Nicholson, 2 December 1939, London, Tate Archives, TGA 8717/1/2/4613.

⁸⁶ For details of precisely when these all these individuals held their memberships and certain posts within the Georgian Group see Shasore, 'The Georgian Group'.

selected illustrations highlight sites where one might pay homage and swear fealty to the Empire: Captain Cook's Statue on the Mall, Clive of India's House in the Georgian terrace of Berkeley Square, and Cecil Rhodes's eighteenth-century childhood home further afield in Bishop's Stortford. 'London', Byron claims with a trace of doubt and desperation, is 'the source of a still vital impulse, shared by the Empire at large and symbolised by the Crown, to keep freedom alive for the world'.⁸⁷

Extending his argument to preservation, in *How we Celebrate the Coronation*, first published in the *Architectural Review*, Byron is clear that Georgian architecture is the best means of keeping this delicate flame of 'freedom' and imperial power alive:

Confused as London is, her streets commemorate our history and institutions more visibly than any other town or monument. And since our history and institutions have affected a large proportion of the world's population, we cannot be surprised if our visitors look behind the decorations in search of her past. Ugliness! What does ugliness matter if it illustrates the birth of liberty?

Byron writes of ugliness, but he is really referring to the unplanned, chaotic quality of the city's architectural fabric. Private wealth and property, self-determination verging on eccentricity, freedom from the autocrat's controlling hand, a Haussmann or a Speer: these were libertarian virtues written into the urban scene of London according to Byron, and my next and final chapter will explore how these ideas evolved through the picturesque revival and the work of Nikolaus Pevsner and Hubert de Cronin Hastings. Here, however, Byron is presenting a paean to the age of urban and imperial expansion and the realisation of England's modern identity.

We might be eager to question Byron's rosy interpretation of the British empire, but there is no doubt *How We Celebrate the Coronation* is a virtuosic piece of polemical writing.

⁸⁷ Robert Byron, *Imperial Pilgrimage* (London: London Transport, 1937) pp. 7-8.

He invites visitors to ‘Deluge your contempt upon the only nation in Europe that destroys its birthright for the sake of a dividend’. He even goes as far as to call for a boycott of London by Coronation tourists asking them to ‘do us the service of saving London and of teaching the missionaries of Western civilisation how to civilise themselves’.⁸⁸ This is a particularly interesting formulation as it undermines the old and failing imperial mentality only to replace it with a refreshed version. He folds the colonial logic of ‘civilisation’ back on itself. Britain had lost its way and become ‘barbaric’ through the destruction of its own ‘birthright’ – a revival of older imperial principles was required. And at this point it is worth noting that the word ‘Georgian’ is barely mentioned in the pamphlet. If someone with little knowledge of architectural periodisation was asked to define what exactly Byron is defending here, they would surely reach for terms like Augustan, eighteenth-century and imperial – only in his conclusion does he define the rationale behind his tirade: the dearth of legislation protecting architecture and the bias of what Betjeman called ‘antiquarian prejudice’.⁸⁹

Byron used the idea of a beleaguered empire to energise his polemic. Predictably, this leads to some ugly rhetoric. He fights on multiple fronts describing how ‘England and the empire are being defrauded of their ancient capital [...] by the leeches of Whitehall and the spiders of the Church, by the long-nosed vampires of high finance and the desperate avarice of hereditary lords’. Later, this barely veiled antisemitism becomes overt, and the dysfunction of the empire is complete:

nothing is surprising anymore. If the Bishop of London, having destroyed all the churches in London, were to erect mosques in their place; if the Commissioners of Crown Lands, having destroyed all the palaces in London, were to force the King into a flat; if the Jews, having destroyed all the houses in London, were to turn the land into a bacon-farm; if the Dukes went pig-sticking on camels in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey and the British Museum made a bonfire of the Elgin marbles to see if stone would burn – I still should not be surprised. Go back gentle visitor, to your own more

⁸⁸ Byron, *How We Celebrate*, p. 1-2, 3.

⁸⁹ Betjeman, *Antiquarian Prejudice*.

rational country, and reflect, with perhaps a tear for me, that the founders of the British Empire cannot govern a single town.⁹⁰

This makes for distressing reading in the context of pogroms in Germany and Russia on the eve of World War II, and is sadly reflective of widespread antisemitism found in the upper ranks of inter-war British society.⁹¹ When taken in the context of Lord Salisbury's colonial record it sets up an alignment between the early promotion of Georgian preservation and an emergent ethnonationalism which would grow and mutate through the twentieth century through a reckoning with immigration and England's post-imperial identity. Byron's pamphlet is a blunt deployment of race and identity which places Georgian architecture as both the primary victim and the means of counteracting the destabilisation of English selfhood. Conversely, Goldring's rejoinder to Byron's imperialism can be found in a chapter of *Facing the Odds* titled 'A Cockney Pilgrimage', where he dedicated himself to 'less beaten tracks and more squalid neighbourhoods'. Here is a different eighteenth-century heritage, albeit still from a public-schooled Oxford-educated perspective, one that embraced the working-class pub as well as Carlton House Terrace, a somewhat romanticised view of the 'little Yiddisher boy' as the ideal Cockney and the assimilated communities of Islington, as well as the integrity of 'the Jews of Whitechapel' as 'a foreign colony'.⁹² For Goldring, Georgian architecture was the canvas over which this social picture spread, offering coherence; for Byron it was a weapon of Empire with which the financial and political future of England could be decided; for both men, it became an architecture of identity which demanded preservation.

⁹⁰ Byron, *How We Celebrate*, p. 2, 24.

⁹¹ While Paul Fussell has noted Byron rejected Hitler and Nazi Germany, his anti-semitism should be seen in the context of his close relationship with the Mitford family, and indeed he attended the last Nuremberg Rally with Unity Mitford in 1938. Paul Fussell, 'Introduction', in *The Road to Oxiana*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) p. ix.

⁹² Goldring, *Facing the Odds*, pp. 97, 118.

Angus Acworth was another important figure in the Georgian Group and the last I will consider. He was a founding member, and a close friend of Byron and Rosse from Oxford, with a background in law. He became ‘a driving force’ who served a period as treasurer from 1944 to 1968 and acting secretary from 1945 to 1958, and drafted the group’s constitution in 1946.⁹³ Using his legal training, Acworth had played a key role in amending the Town and Country Planning Act of 1944. This legislation was intended to provide a framework for reconstruction and housing provision following widespread bomb damage. With Acworth’s intervention it also protected historic buildings by introducing a system of listing, something he had first proposed to the Office of Works in 1938 but which had been rejected as impractical. In effect, his amendments led to new, urban, and largely domestic developments becoming wrapped around existing architectural features of historic significance. Acworth considered it one of his greatest achievements and in 1970 looked back proudly on ‘25 Years of Listing’ in the *Architectural Review*.⁹⁴ This work was made possible through close collaboration with the planner William Holford, successor to Patrick Abercrombie as Professor of Civic Design at Liverpool School of Architecture, and Harry Strauss, who was conveniently parliamentary secretary to the first minister for town and country planning as well as a member of the Georgian Group.⁹⁵ Under Acworth’s guidance, the Georgian Group formed a potent mix of architectural expertise and access to the levers of power that enabled them to have a major impact on how England looked and how its people lived as they attempted to piece together their identity in the aftermath of conflict.

Once again, these domestic English concerns are mirrored by a distant vision of colonial influence. After the war, following discussion with the Jamaican Historical Society

⁹³ Simon Swynfen Jervis, 'Acworth, Angus Whiteford (1898–1981), Financier and Conservationist', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹⁴ Angus Whiteford Acworth and Anthony Wagner, '25 Year of Listing: Making the Lists', *Architectural Review* 148 (1970), pp. 308-310.

⁹⁵ Jervis, *ODNB*.

and the British Council, and a tour made in November 1946, Acworth completed a report on *Buildings of Architectural or Historical Interest in the British West Indies* (1951). The document details the respective ‘architectural wealth’ and histories of Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, the Windward and Leeward Islands, and British Guiana, as well as reflecting on ‘Prospects for Protective Legislation’ and providing a draft bill.⁹⁶ Acworth’s papers relating to the project, now held at the Bodleian Library, also include legal documents for the lease for the Haughton Hall plantation in 1776 and the conveyance of a plantation and eighty-six slaves from Sir Simon Haughton Clarke to Dame Ann Clark in 1798.⁹⁷ Making the most of his research, Acworth produced a trade book on the topic, titled *Treasure in the Caribbean: A First Study of Georgian Building in the British West Indies*, dedicated ‘to all those who, in a spirit of high endeavour, have carried the English way of life beyond the seas’.⁹⁸

Ultimately, Acworth helped draft legislation which in 1958 created the Jamaican National Trust Commission. Looking back on this experience in September 1962 he noted how this work had been directly based on the Town and Country Planning Act 1944.⁹⁹ He also promoted archival services in the colony until its independence in 1962.¹⁰⁰ Such efforts could be applauded as the crucial maintenance of local cultural heritage for future generations. Yet on the other hand, Acworth was ensuring the projection of British cultural

⁹⁶ Angus Whiteford Acworth, *Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest in the British West Indies: A Report with Proposals as to the Best Means of Protecting Them from Damage or Destruction (Otherwise Than by Acts of God)* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1951).

⁹⁷ I have not been able to ascertain exactly why or how these legal documents came to be in Acworth’s possession or this archive, which was donated by the Society of Antiquaries. Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Correspondence and reports of Angus Whiteford Acworth, FSA, MSS. W. Ind. S. 70, Box 1. Cited hereafter as ‘Acworth Papers’ by box and file number.

⁹⁸ Angus Whiteford Acworth, *Treasure in the Caribbean: A First Study of Georgian Buildings in the British West Indies* (London: Pleiades Books, 1949).

⁹⁹ Letter from Acworth to T.A.L. Concannon, Town Planning Department, Kingston, Jamaica, 4 September 1961, Acworth Papers, Box 2, File 3.

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence shows how Acworth was in favour of removing the islands’ archival material to England, before being persuaded to consolidate their various collections in Jamaica. Letter from Acworth to H. Jenkison, Deputy Keeper of Records, Public Record Office, 17 February 1948, Acworth Papers, Box 2, File 2.

power into the age of colonial independence, and the legislative enshrinement of British values. Certainly, these histories of violent racial exploitation, where Georgian heritage was the built infrastructure of the slave trade – ports, large mansions, administrative buildings – raise questions of what should be remembered and how, but the ethics of heritage management are not my focus here. Acworth’s role displays the continuity between attempts to reform domestic life in England through mechanisms such as the Town and Country Planning Acts and the nation’s relationship with its status as a fading imperial power. Through Acworth and through the activity of the Georgian Group more broadly, a direct line can be traced from the architectures of domestic English identity and the institutional structures of faltering colonial administration in the 1930s and 1940s. To accentuate this link, we need only recall the decidedly domestic character of the Georgian Group’s founding motivations, be that their calls to preserve great ‘private palaces’ such as Dorchester House, protection of Sir Joseph Banks’s and Sir Joshua Reynolds’s homes, or Byron’s view of the Adelphi as ‘a monument to the Adams’ vision of modern urban requirements’ which in turned inspired the threatened urban terraces of Bedford and Berkeley Squares.¹⁰¹

To be clear, the preceding pages have not set out to tarnish the reputation of the Georgian Group as inherently or thoroughly disposed to a colonial ideology, or at least to no greater extent than the wider ruling classes in the 1930s. Goldring’s deviation from the majority makes this clear, as does the blatant impossibility of pigeon-holing an organisation with a large membership spanning almost a century. What has been demonstrated is the specifically domestic and colonial dimensions of what Alison Light has called, ‘the hysteria of the dispossessed, the fears of increasing egalitarianism, a reaction to the march of labour and working-class activism imagined as the onslaught of “barbarians” and vandals’ which consumed and indeed motivated many within the Georgian Group, and refracted differently

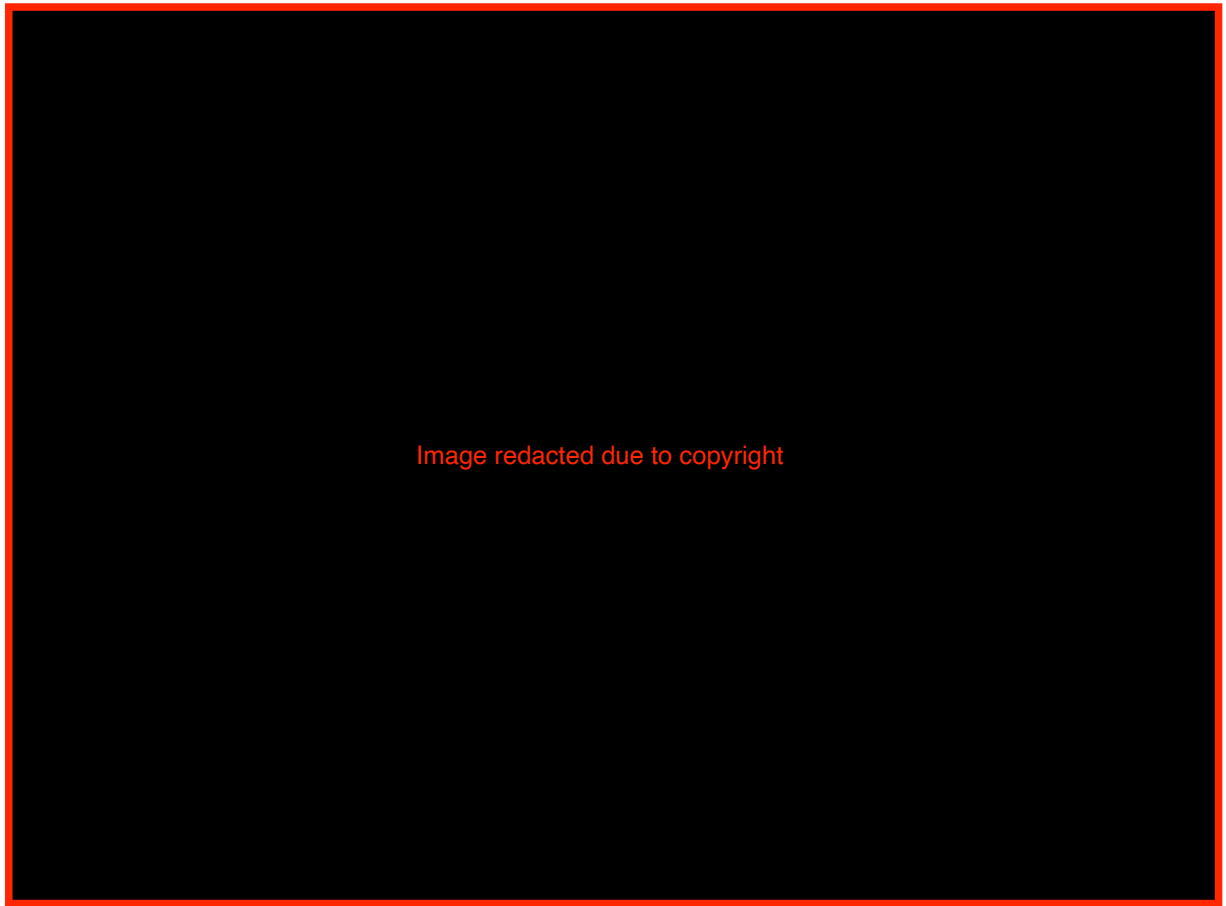
¹⁰¹ Byron, *How We Celebrate*, p. 17.

through the domestic imaginaries of Auden, Betjeman, and Grigson. Light is in fact referring to Byron and a group of travel writers considered in Paul Fussell's *Abroad*, but I hope to have shown how this is an analysis more widely applicable to the anxious state of English domestic identity in the period. There is a 'sense of wounded masculine pride which emanates from these writers', Light continues, '[d]riven into exile, many modernist prophets and minor cognoscenti lament both the proletarianization and the domestication of national life'.¹⁰² Although this is a sound assessment, I have stressed Byron and others were actively engaged in a process whereby a great public identity – Englishness and its troubled relationship with empire – became funnelled into the highly charged spaces of domestic architecture. Not simply lamented, the domestication of national life ensured homes both modern and Georgian were figured as new architectures of collective belonging. To round off this chapter, I will now offer a brief study of how architects in the 1930s responded to Georgian architecture, specifically the Georgian domestic terrace. I will demonstrate how an old typology – partially established by the Adam Brothers at the Adelphi – could be revived to provide a new 'vision for modern urban requirements' in the twentieth century, providing belonging and community in homes that were nonetheless modernist.

New Terraces for Old England

2 Willow Road, a house built by Ernö Goldfinger in Hampstead, North London, is a particularly apposite example of a modern home built with Georgian principles in mind. Completed in 1939, the building is a product of the same moment that led to the formation of the Georgian Group (figure 3.4). Since 2 Willow Road's acquisition by the National Trust in

¹⁰² Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 7. Other writers considered by Fussell include Auden, Norman Douglas, Graham Greene, and Evelyn Waugh.



3.4 Dell and Wainwright, 2 *Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.

1994, a wealth of scholarship, including a biography of Goldfinger by Nigel Warburton, has emerged to evaluate the house's place within inter-war modernist architecture and Goldfinger's oeuvre, particularly his well-known post-war social housing at Balfron and Trellick Towers.¹⁰³ What appears to have become lost in these accounts is Willow Road's role in forging a link between England's Georgian past and its modernist present.¹⁰⁴ The house's prominent role as representative of modernist architecture in the National Trust's portfolio also extends its relevance to discussions of heritage. With modernism thus repositioned as part of our twenty-first-century national heritage, Nigel Whiteley writes, 2 Willow Road becomes 'significant in somehow contributing positively to the construction of [our] present day *identity*'.¹⁰⁵ The depth of Willow Road's engagement with that identity, stretching both back in time to Georgian England and forward to our present moment, can only be revealed by recourse to archival documents still held at the house, which is the central property of a three-house terrace Goldfinger took as a home for himself and his young family, and is fittingly still home to their personal papers. Materials in Goldfinger's extensive professional archive held by the Royal Institute of British Architects augment these findings and place this iconic modern home at the heart of debates around national identity, community, and the place of avant-garde domesticity within popular English culture.

¹⁰³ Nigel Warburton, *Ernö Goldfinger: The Life of an Architect* (London: Routledge, 2004); Robert Elwall, *Ernö Goldfinger* (London: Academy Editions, 1996); David Roberts, 'Make Public: Performing Public Housing in Ernő Goldfinger's Balfron Tower', *Journal of Architecture*, 22 (2017), 123–150; James Dunnett and Nigel Hiscock, "'To This Measure of Man": Proportional Design in the Work of Ernő Goldfinger', in *Twentieth-Century Architecture and Its Histories*, ed. Louise Campbell (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000). For work prior to the Trust's acquisition see James Dunnett and Gavin Stamp, *Ernö Goldfinger* (London: Architectural Association, 1983).

¹⁰⁴ This is often remarked upon but rarely developed at length. Warburton recounts how Goldfinger declared Georgian architecture a 'major influence' on Willow Road in an interview for Hungarian television in 1984, *Ernö Goldfinger*, p. 38; see also Alan Powers, 'Goldfinger's Terrace at Willow Road', in *Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished*, ed. Barry Bergdoll, Werner Oechslin, and Robin Middleton (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006) pp. 353–64; and on Adolf Loos's role in introducing Goldfinger to the 'elegant simplicity of Georgian furniture', see Kathryn Felus, 'The Furniture of Ernő Goldfinger at 2 Willow Road', *Apollo*, 143 (1996), 47–51.

¹⁰⁵ Nigel Whiteley, 'Modern Architecture, Heritage and Englishness', *Architectural History*, 38 (1995), 220–237 (p. 222).

In 1938, Goldfinger's project at Willow Road, already facing serious financial challenges, hit a major setback when his initial designs were rejected by Hampstead Borough Council. The rejection triggered a public outburst of statements attacking and defending modern architecture's position in England, and in Hampstead. Both sides of the debate drew substantially from the preservationist discourses already discussed. The qualities which on the surface made Goldfinger an unlikely candidate for the development of a strain of Georgian modernism were also the qualities which galvanised his opponents against him: he had been educated in the Beaux Arts ateliers of Paris, working under the tutelage of Léon Jaussely, professor of archaeology, and Auguste Perret, who pioneered the use of reinforced concrete.¹⁰⁶ A career involving interior and furniture design and a handful of more substantial built projects followed but Willow Road was Goldfinger's most significant endeavour to date.¹⁰⁷ In Warburton's words, it 'was to be a combination of manifesto, practice piece, and advertisement'.¹⁰⁸

After the war, at the height of his fame in 1965, Goldfinger declared that young architects should follow his example and build their own house first, as a learning exercise and at their own expense.¹⁰⁹ Yet letters from Ernő and his wife Ursula (née Blackwell) to her uncle Geoffrey Blackwell reveal that almost the entire cost of the project was not at Ernő's expense but raised from Ursula's stocks and shares. As heiress to the Crosse and Blackwell food company fortune, Ursula Goldfinger's financial power was significant, provided her actions were signed off by her father and uncle and timely arrangements could be made to release the funds. Geoffrey Blackwell recommended Ursula sell '£625 Madras & Southern

¹⁰⁶ Warburton, *Ernő Goldfinger*, ch. 3 & 4.

¹⁰⁷ Goldfinger's first house was in fact a studio built for the artist Humphrey Waterfield in 1937: Hill Pasture, in Broxted Essex. Details of Waterfield's life and the landscape he created at Hill Pasture can be found in the Giles Waterfield Archive at the Paul Mellon Centre, London.

¹⁰⁸ Warburton, *Ernő Goldfinger*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁹ 'A young architect ought to be made to build his own house first. It is the only way to learn. And at his own expense. I don't know in all cases, but he ought to have the chance to show what his ideas really are'. Quoted in Clisby Kent, 'Goldfinger: Britain's Most Consistent Modernist', *House and Garden*, (February 1965), p. 34.

Mahratta Railway' and '£1000 Bradford Corporation' stock in July 1938, a reminder of the colonial, industrial high capitalist soil from which Goldfinger's domestic vision rose.¹¹⁰ Such assets helped Goldfinger overcome the financial problems hindering his career and foreground the role Ursula Goldfinger had at this time as financier and advisor helping to shape their shared architectural project. Yet Ernő remained an outsider, a Hungarian-Polish Jewish émigré in search of work and sanctuary from fascism on the continent. A modernist exile, Goldfinger was cast adrift and in search of a new home. In many ways he arrived in England as a follower of an international, strangely placeless architecture: a member of CIAM, a regular of the Café du Dome in Paris where modern architects gathered, friend and collaborator to established modernists both in France and England such as Charlotte Perriand and Berthold Lubetkin. Could his response to his critics in Hampstead Borough Council and his plans for his houses on Willow Road display his cultural affinity with Englishness and his new home country without compromising his modernist principles?

The controversy surrounding Goldfinger's development at Willow Road began on 18 December 1937. A letter from Henry Brooke, honorary secretary of Hampstead Heath and Old Hampstead Preservation Society, was published in the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*. It denounced Goldfinger's plans for a "modern" angular house in reinforced concrete', which would, Brooke wrote, 'damage irretrievably the "atmosphere" of the approach from the Heath to Downshire Hill'.¹¹¹ Brooke wrote in defence of the set of four, squat cottages that stood on the site, set back from the road. In attempting to preserve these buildings, his organisation was attempting to provide a conservative check to the architectural and social changes in the area. The nebulous 'atmosphere' he described – a gesture toward the preservation of Hampstead as a bucolic pre-metropolitan village, or genteel eighteenth-

¹¹⁰ Letter from Geoffrey to Ursula Blackwell, 13 July 1938, London, RIBA Archive, Ernő Goldfinger Papers, GolEr/240/13.

¹¹¹ 'Concrete Houses Facing the Heath: Protest by the Hampstead Protection Society', *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 18 December 1937.

century proto-suburb – was imperilled by Goldfinger’s modernism. Not only that, but it would also be lost ‘irretrievably’, a telling choice of word that reveals a broader attitude to architectural planning in the period. It implies that in certain areas ‘atmosphere’ could be retrieved, patched up, and revived by judicious application of revival styles and assiduous adherence to their buildings’ context.

A response was launched by Goldfinger, his partner for the project Gerald Flower, and their allies. Ralph Tubbs and Henry Cadbury-Brown were the first to respond. Both had worked under Goldfinger on the designs for Willow Road having graduated from the Architectural Association.¹¹² Brooke invited members of the public to voice their distaste for the plans to the London County Council (LCC) planning office, but Goldfinger’s mentees voiced their support by comparing the proposals to ‘the best examples of English Architecture in the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries’. Against Brooke’s disgust for the building’s rectangular shape, they made specific reference to ‘Kenwood House by Robert Adam’ and ‘Cromwell House by Christopher Wren’, both in the vicinity.¹¹³ Tubbs and Cadbury-Brown establish their designs as a formal echo and fitting modernisation of the historic country houses built nearby and now subsumed into London.

The artist and collector Roland Penrose, a resident of 21 Downshire Hill, followed this letter with a two-pronged attack on Brooke’s aspersions. Penrose was a leading figure in the surrealist movement, well connected with leading European modernists including Picasso, and he became a close friend of the Goldfingers, who shared his love of surrealist art. In his opinion, the proposals were both aesthetically appropriate to their context and practically necessary to replace the extant cottages, which ‘picturesque as they are, are scarcely fit for

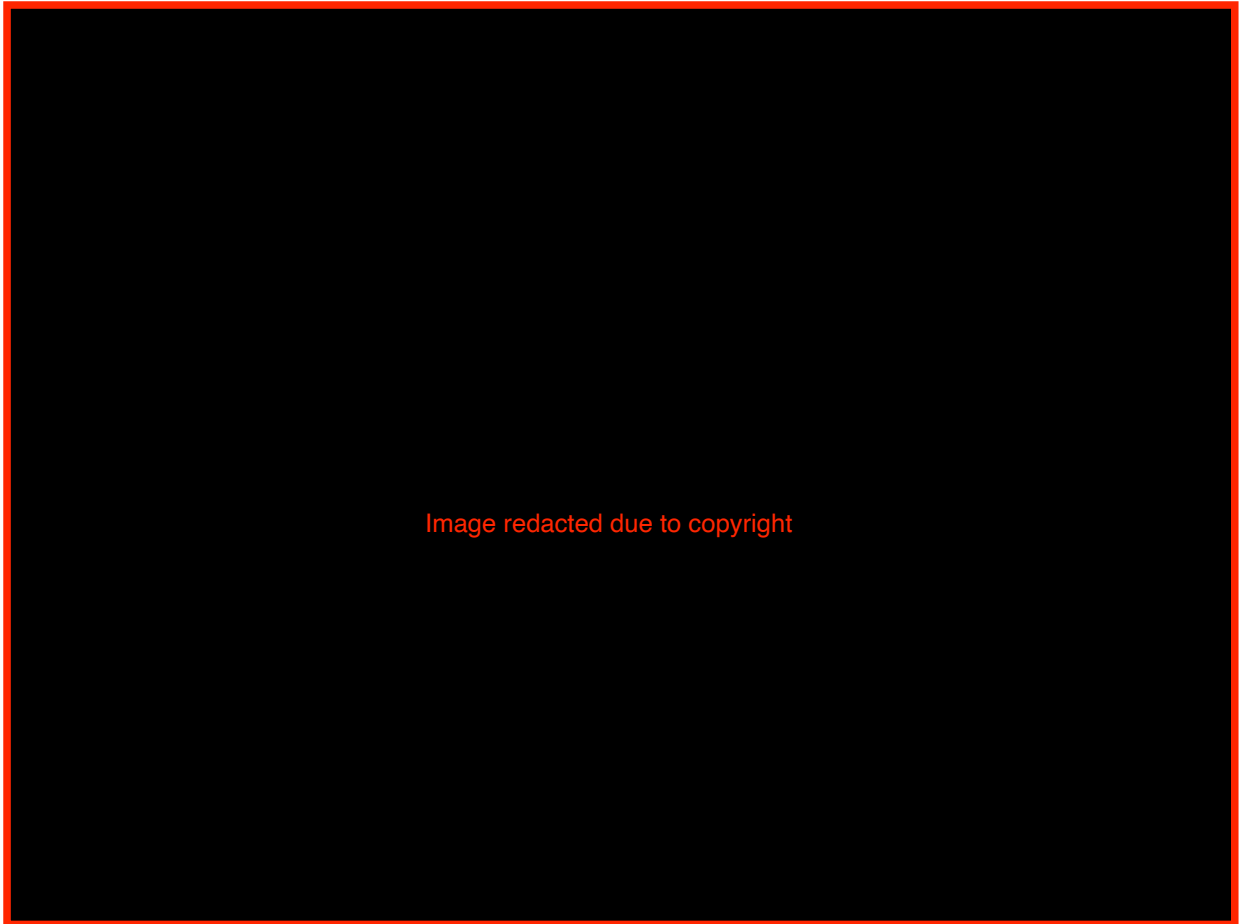
¹¹² For an account of Tubbs and Cadbury-Brown’s time working under Goldfinger, see Alan Powers, ‘The Dance of Life: Order and Disorder in the Architecture of H. T. Cadbury-Brown’, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 10 (2006), pp. 13-24.

¹¹³ The seventeenth-century Cromwell House in Highgate is no longer attributed to Wren. Letter from R. Tubbs and H.T. Cadbury-Brown to LCC, 20 December 1937, Ernő Goldfinger Papers, Box 241 folder 1.

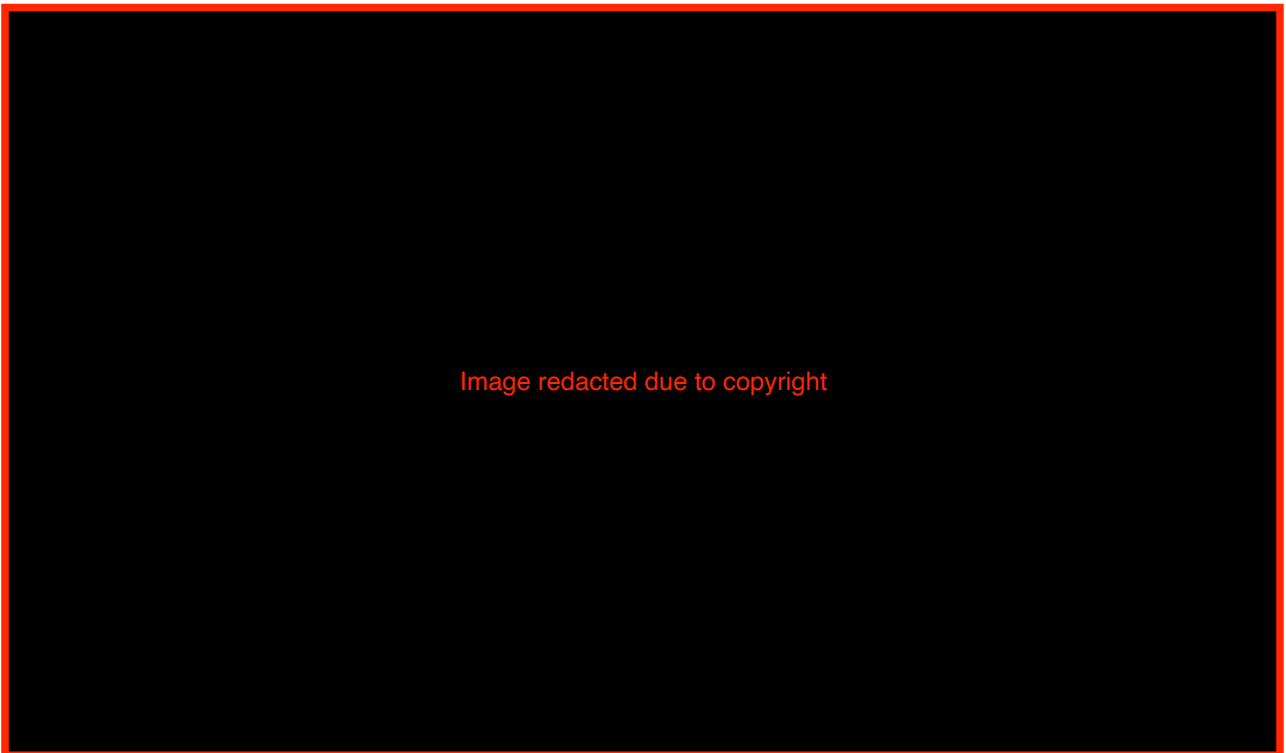
human habitation'. Penrose claimed that the plans were 'completely in harmony with the early nineteenth-century severity' and 'sobriety' of their proposed surroundings. With sympathy, he noted that the old world 'atmosphere' to which Brooke clung would be lost but, vitally, the new houses would be 'worthy of a nation in search for health'.¹¹⁴ These sentiments aligned with the long-standing association of modernist design with health, placing Goldfinger's project as the partial realisation of the inter-war dream of Victorian slum housing cleared and replaced with utopian modern dwellings. Penrose's comments are literal – he rightly saw how Goldfinger's project would be a critical contribution to the building of high standard social housing in the future – but his language of a 'nation in search for health' also projects a sense of national consciousness, perhaps even introspection, that conveys a search for community and shared social values.

While developing his design, Goldfinger photographed the dilapidated cottages on the Willow Road site (figure 3.5). They are presented slumped behind hedgerows with cascading trees on either side. Each property is allotted its narrow strip of land leading to a front door. These images bear comparison with another housing project of which Goldfinger would have undoubtedly been aware. In 1937, Kensal House in West London was completed by Elizabeth Denby and Maxwell Fry as one of the first communal, modernist housing developments in the capital. When the committed communist and Austrian émigré from the Bauhaus, Edith Tudor-Hart (née Suschitzky) photographed the project, she staged compositions that rejoiced in the uncluttered geometries of the new concrete flats that stand as if carved from a single block of stone. She chose a bright winter day when shadows are sharp and surrounding trees, isolated natural features, are stripped of their foliage: dark black trunks laid against white ripolined skin of the structures without an inch of ivy in sight (figure 3.6). As Ashley Maher has demonstrated, the architectural shifts in the late 1930s were

¹¹⁴ Letter from Roland Penrose to LCC, undated, Ernő Goldfinger Papers, Box 241 folder 1.



3.5 Ernő Goldfinger[?], *Cottages on Willow Road*, c. May 1937, black and white photo print, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.



3.6 Edith Tudor Hart, *Kensal House*, London, 1937, black and white photo print, RIBA.

intimately linked to the political anxieties of the period regarding fascism and communism.¹¹⁵

Rationally planned modernist homes such as Kensal House became emblems of political progress that catered to the needs of the working classes, providing space, light, and health where dingy and overcrowded conditions had become endemic.

Goldfinger's documentation of the Willow Road cottages' fenced-in privacy is at odds with the open recreation yards and collective entrances of Kensal House. Where Fry's and Denby's housing was open to the sky, at Willow Road the sky is blotted out by the neighbouring buildings on Downshire Hill. Goldfinger chose to photograph the cottages sometime around May 1937 while they were decked in bunting and Union Jacks celebrating the coronation of George VI, incidentally part of the same historic process which is taken by Betjeman as his subject in 'The Death of King George V'. In contrast to Betjeman's social conservatism, Goldfinger enthusiastically supported international communism by hosting an exhibition of surrealist art at his home to raise funds for the Aid for Russia campaign during the war, and in 1946 he designed the new headquarters of the British Communist Party and the *Daily Worker*. He was diametrically opposed to displays of royalist patriotism such as the one he photographed at Willow Road. His new building represented the bulldozing of this old world and its replacement with a new politics, and if not a 'healthy' then a necessary ideological shift for a nation seeking solutions to urban development and its transitional state within global politics.

Given this context we might expect Goldfinger's new plans to be a radical break with the past, but objects in his personal papers demonstrate his fascination with the Georgian history of the land around his home, the same land and history of 'Highgate Hill's thick elm-encrusted side' imagined by Betjeman. Goldfinger owned a small, mass-produced print reproduction of a watercolour by George Sidney Shepherd from 1833 (figure 3.7).

¹¹⁵ Maher, *Reconstructing Modernism*, ch. 3.

Shepherd's watercolour is a raised view, observed from upon the Heath showing the corner of Downshire Hill and the four cottages demolished in 1938 to make way for 1 to 3 Willow Road. The white, four-square buildings of South End Road feature prominently, with a scattering of pedestrians, horse-and-cart traffic and birds in the foreground. This image is archived together with a facsimile of an apparently contemporaneous census form for the cottages at 1 to 4 Willow Road (figure 3.8). The census lists the Tibbles, Websters, Dukes and Pickfords – four families, and fifteen individuals in total – accommodated there. The implied contrast between the cramped conditions of the cottages, barely distinguishable from their surrounding landscape in the Shepherd watercolour, and the high-windowed symmetry of the classically proportioned buildings is evident. Although it is possible these papers came into Goldfinger's possession after the completion of 1 to 3 Willow Road, it is reasonable to assume they formed part of his research into the site between 1937 and 1938.

In the context of these documents, it is worth highlighting the language of one letter sent to the local paper attacking Goldfinger's proposals. Sub-headed 'A Resident's Lament', A. W. Bradbury of Gardnor Road mourned the loss of Hampstead's 'ancient charm' and claimed it was becoming increasingly difficult to 'recapture a glimpse of the lovely village which was the inspiration of poets and artists who made it their home in the long-past days before huge blocks of flats had been reared in the gardens of old houses'.¹¹⁶ This is an intoxicating and commonplace image of timeless romanticism closely linked to Betjeman's own halcyon dreaming of 'tea bowers, lover's lairs' and ripening pears. However, Goldfinger's Georgian census constitutes a counterpoint to these fantasies and reveals the harsh reality of 'old-world' Hampstead. The data show that Joseph and Eliza Tibble at 1 Willow Road cared for five children all under the age of twelve using his earnings as a

¹¹⁶ Bradbury's letter also takes aim at modernist developments in previously 'leafy Frognal', home to Maxwell Fry's Sun House (1936) and Connell Ward and Lucas's 66 Frognal Way (1938). A.W. Bradbury to the editor, *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 8 January 1938.

A large rectangular area that has been completely redacted with a solid black fill. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

3.7 Cut out print reproduction of George Sidney Shepherd, *View on Hampstead Heath (End of Downshire Hill)*, 1833, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.

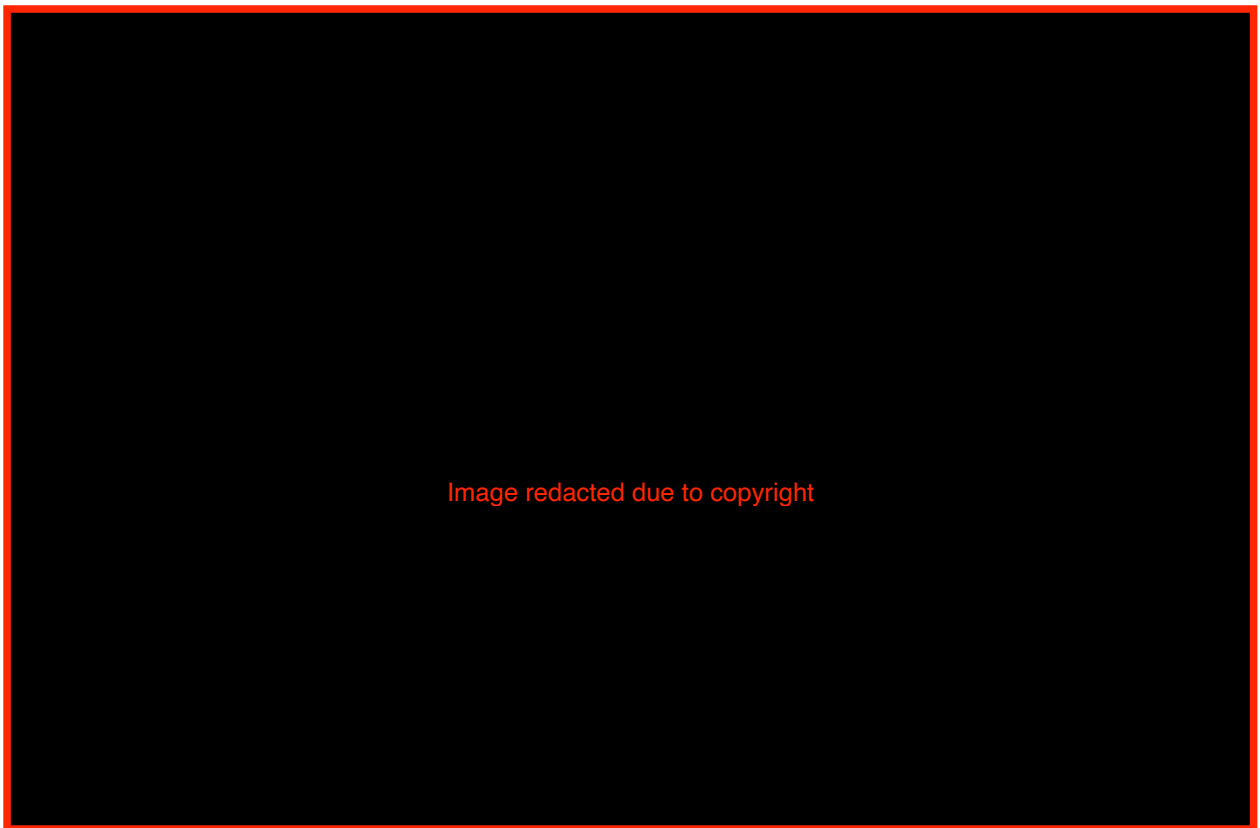
A large rectangular area that has been completely redacted with a solid black fill. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

3.8 Reproduction of early nineteenth-century census data for 1 to 5 Willow Road, Goldfinger Family Archive, 2 Willow Road, National Trust.

‘cowkeeper’; Edward Webster next door made ends meet working as a bricklayer’s labourer; seventy-seven-year-old Edward Duke at 3 Willow Road had been a gardener but was now unemployed while his wife Jane, aged seventy-three, still worked as a laundress.¹¹⁷ Poor living conditions and the daily hardships of large families and low wages can be inferred, and Goldfinger’s awareness of them cuts through Betjeman and Bradbury’s nostalgic myth of early nineteenth-century poets and painters. Affluent residents of Georgian Hampstead could enjoy the spacious living rooms and large sash windows, but Goldfinger was acutely conscious that their impoverished neighbours had lived in unhealthy conditions. The issue was plainly stated in a response he wrote to the LCC clarifying and debunking points made in Henry Brooke’s initial letter. He describes his design as ‘mainly inspired’ by the bright, spacious houses on Downshire Hill and South End Road, which are the focus of Shepherd’s watercolour, particularly ‘the fenestration of the proposed houses, their height and general appearance’.¹¹⁸ Goldfinger sought to replace outdated workers’ housing with modernised equivalents of the nearby homes usually reserved for the upper-middle classes. To revive the Georgian tradition, on Goldfinger’s terms, was to radically disrupt the inequalities that allowed that tradition to thrive, while making use of its many qualities of natural light and classical proportions he admired.

Classicism is an important feature of the finished design at Willow Road. Later in life Goldfinger voiced the desire ‘to be remembered as a Classical architect, not a kasbah architect’.¹¹⁹ This distinction speaks of Goldfinger’s eagerness to distance himself from those he saw as second-rate followers of Le Corbusier who built the gleaming white concrete

¹¹⁷ 2 Willow Road Archive, FC3/D3/Box 24.

¹¹⁸ Ernő Goldfinger and Gerald Flower to Chairman, Town Planning Committee, LCC, 10 January 1938, Ernő Goldfinger Papers, Box 241 folder 1. An article in the *Builder*, which offered a detailed description of the proposed houses, immediately recognised them as ‘an attempt to re-introduce (although on a small scale) the conception of the terraced houses of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries’, *Builder*, 4 January 1938.

¹¹⁹ Ernő Goldfinger, interviewed by Gavin Stamp in Gavin Stamp and James Dunnett, *Ernő Goldfinger* (London: Architectural Association, 1983) p. 9.

structures of high modernism that effaced the texture of material and constructional processes: what he labelled ‘kasbah’ architecture, austere, alien and fortified. Goldfinger had long recognised, as Etchells had shown the English-speaking world in 1927, that Le Corbusier relied on classical principles of design for his reinvigorated approach to architecture. He had solicited Le Corbusier’s teaching while a young student in the ateliers of Paris, but was rebuffed and directed to August Perret instead.¹²⁰ Now a mature architect in England, he would go straight to the source, bypassing Le Corbusier en route to the classical wellspring of his modernity. A series of carefully staged photographs of Ernő and Ursula made by the surrealist Eileen Agar, now in the Tate collection, display this interest in classicism (figures 3.9a & 3.9b). In some the young couple are laughing together, in others Ernő is posed at his desk littered with pencils, sheets of drawings and apparatus. Most significantly, both Ernő and Ursula are presented seated in front of the large wooden framing device built into the living room wall which is filled with sections, elevations, and details of the Pantheon in Rome, an icon of classical architecture famous for its early use of concrete in its domed ceiling and deep-pillared portico on the Piazza della Rotonda. Its oculus was redeployed by Goldfinger to flood his building’s spiral stairwells with light. These drawings still adorn the study in 2 Willow Road (alongside a caustic cartoon of Prince Charles), but in Agar’s photographs they act as projections of the sitter’s thoughts billowing out behind them and emblazoning their allegiance to the classical tradition. The photographs form part of a mission statement on how Goldfinger’s career – a joint investment between Ernő and Ursula – would develop, and how their new home should be interpreted.¹²¹

For Goldfinger, Georgian architecture translated classicism from an ancient to a modern context. In a typically uncompromising comment, he argued that England’s principal

¹²⁰ Warburton, *Ernő Goldfinger*, pp. 19-26.

¹²¹ 2 Willow Road’s design emulates the Pantheon’s oculus in its use of a circular skylight at the top of the staircase as well as in its extensive use of structural concrete.

contribution to the history of architecture was Georgian classicism, in particular the urban terrace.¹²² Upon moving to England in 1934, he had rented offices for his architectural practice in an exceptionally well-preserved example of London's Georgian terraces, Bedford Square – one of many eighteenth-century terraced squares in London prior to the war and now one the finest examples to survive German bombing. That same year Clough Williams-Ellis and John Summerson, in *Architecture Here and Now*, published their diagram of ebbing and flowing of romantic and classical influence in architecture since the end of the Georgian period. With a new classical inspiration marked out in the twentieth century, re-establishing a lost 'order' after the 'confusion' of the Victorian era, modernist architecture assimilated elements of both traditions (figure 3.10).¹²³ While Goldfinger occupied his Bedford Square offices, Summerson began work on *Georgian London*, a pivotal text in the architectural history of the capital eventually published in 1945. Summerson's text praised avenues of terraced housing in stock brick for their 'respectable and uniform standard of design', built during the huge surge in house building around London's periphery in the long aftermath of the Great Fire of London.¹²⁴ Bedford Square, according to Summerson, was 'one of the most valuable relics in Georgian London'.¹²⁵ Goldfinger may have read these lines with approval, grateful for a fully researched account of the typology he emulated at Willow Road. Although no copy of Summerson's *Georgian London* remains in Goldfinger's library at 2 Willow Road several other of his volumes are there, including Summerson's volume of Penguin Modern Painters, *Ben Nicholson* (1948), a short account of nearby Kenwood House and its collections produced for London County Council (1956), and Summerson's monograph on *Inigo Jones*

¹²² Goldfinger 'Problem of Character', Letter to *Architects' Journal* 17 July 1958, GolEr 389.

¹²³ Clough Williams-Ellis and John Summerson, *Architecture Here and Now* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1934) p. 7. See Whyte, 'The Englishness of English Architecture', pp. 452-454 and the extensive literature on Summerson and modernism, fn. 6.

¹²⁴ John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, 2003) p. 185

¹²⁵ Summerson, *Georgian London*, p. 182.

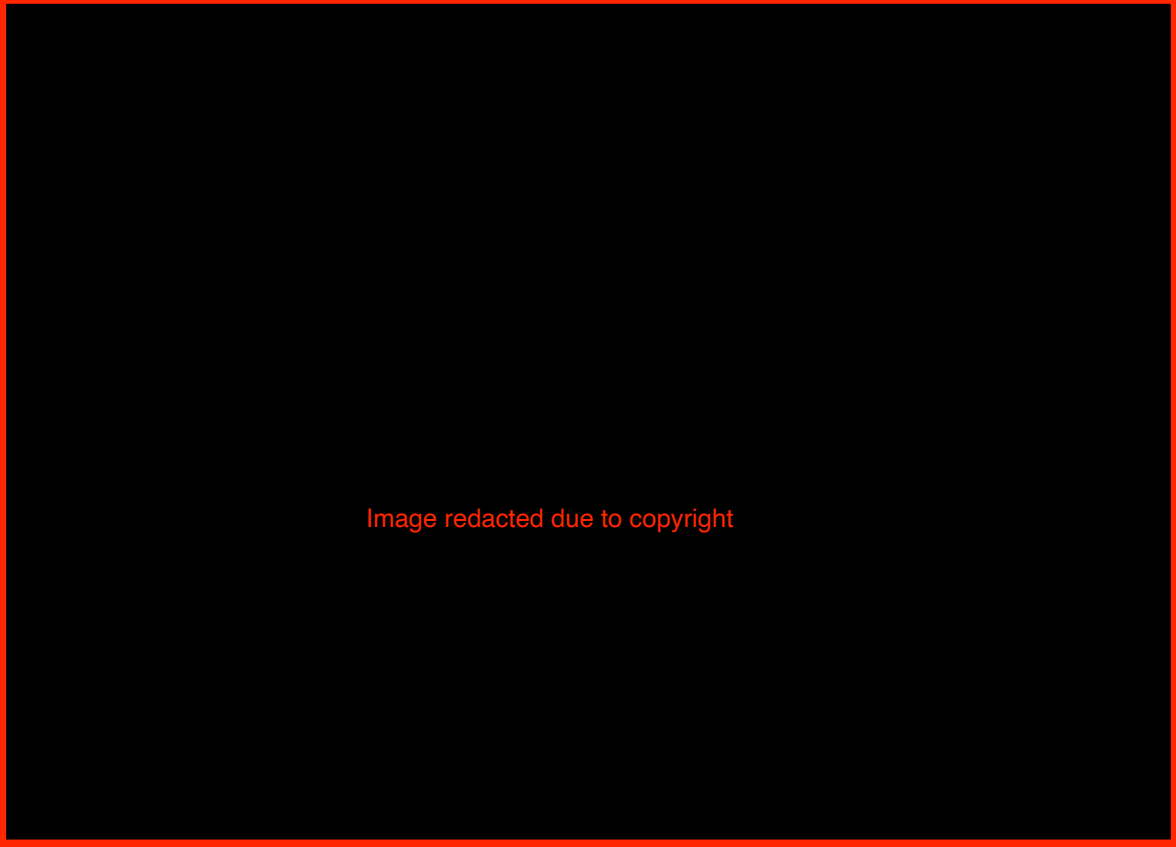


Image redacted due to copyright

3.9a Eileen Agar, *Ernö Goldfinger at 2 Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Tate, London.

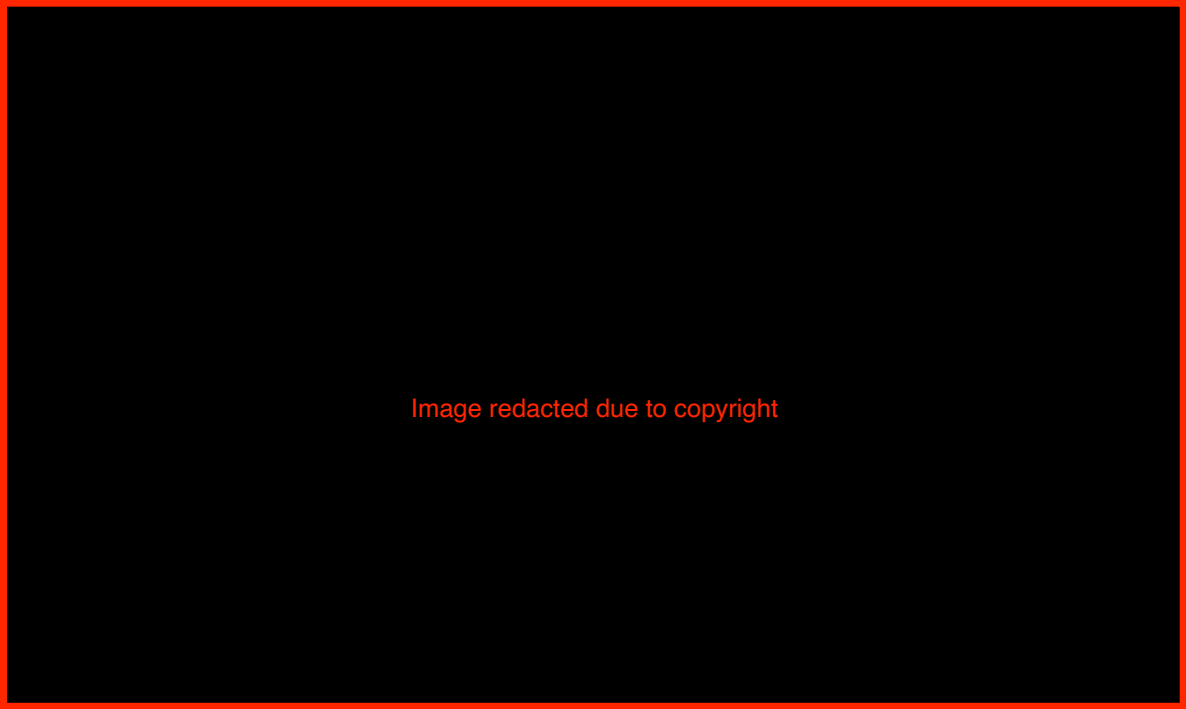
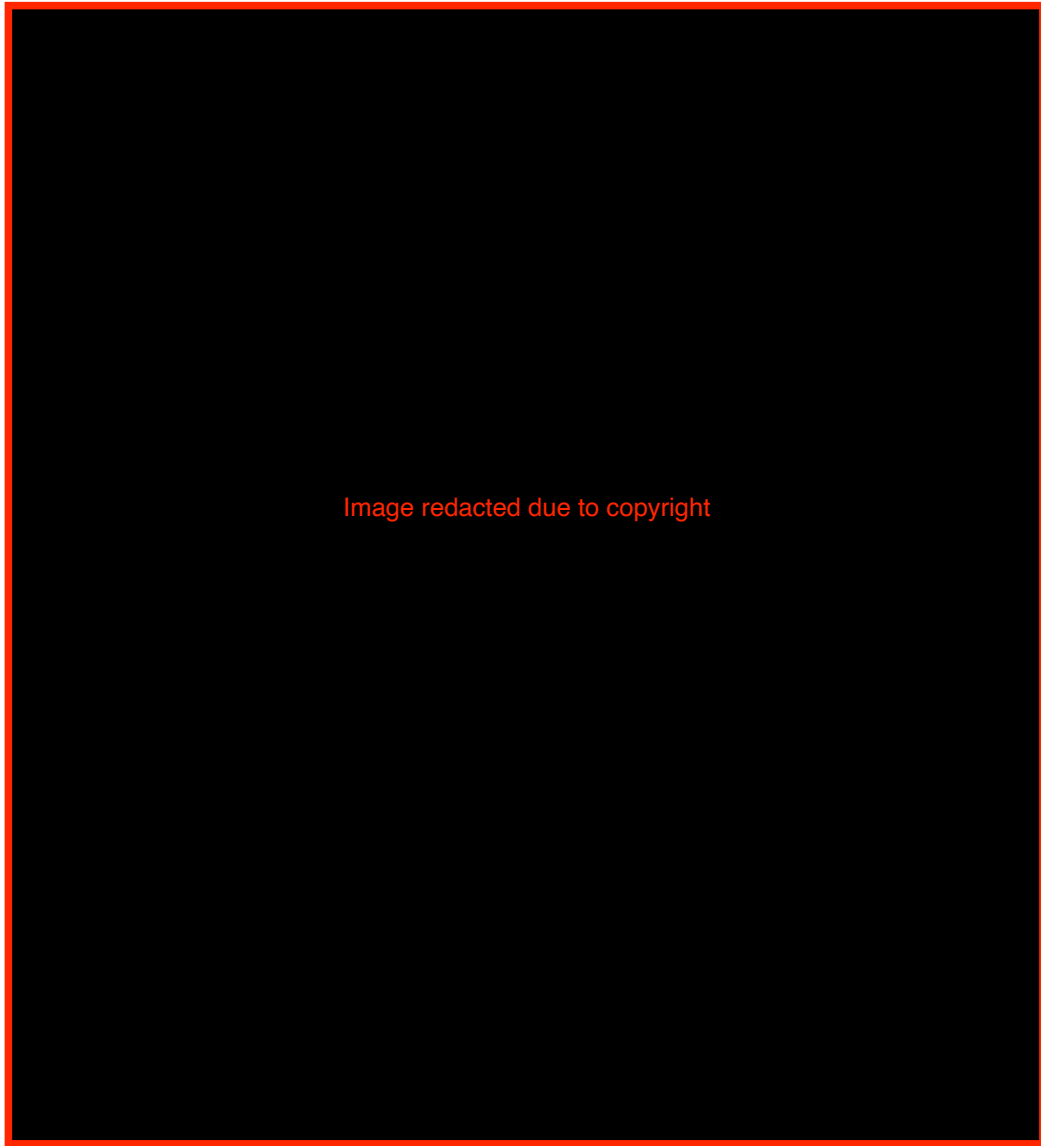


Image redacted due to copyright

3.9b Eileen Agar, *Ursula Blackwell at 2 Willow Road*, 1939, black and white photo print, Tate, London.



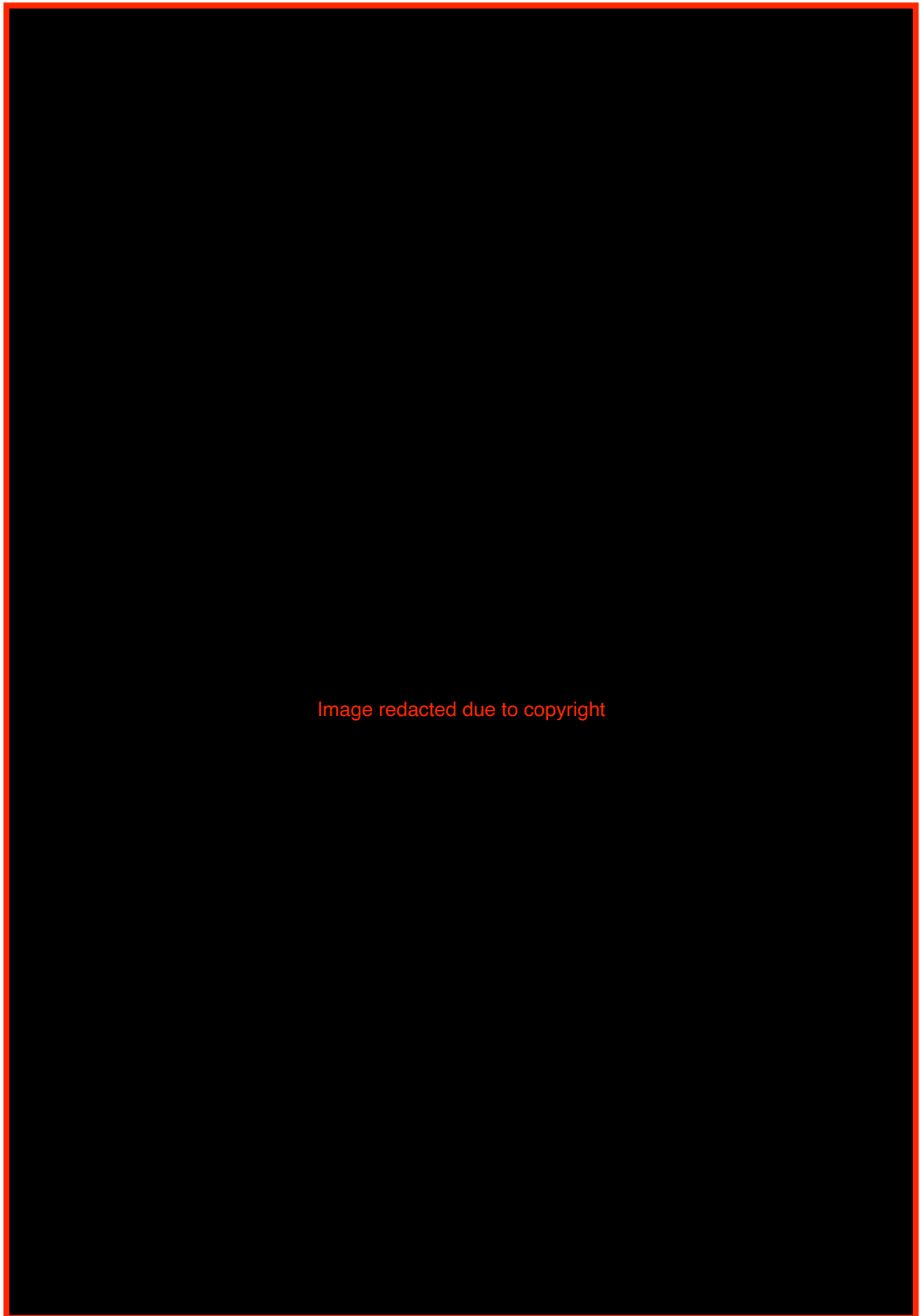
3.10 'The Story of English House Design 1830–1930', from Clough Williams-Ellis and John Summerson, *Architecture Here and Now* (T. Nelson and Sons: London, 1934).

(1964, Goldfinger owned the 1966 edition). In addition to writing *Georgian London*, Summerson had been commissioned for a series of lectures on the topic by the recently founded Courtauld Institute of Art in the late 1930s. Although those lectures were never delivered Summerson did broadcast his views in defence of domestic vernacular architecture of the eighteenth century in a debate on the BBC titled 'Farewell, Brunswick Square: A Discussion on Disappearing Georgian London'.¹²⁶

An article in the *Architectural Review* in April 1940 introduced Goldfinger's finished building to the public. A double page spread presents the main façade (figure 3.11). The seven square windows on the second floor are spaced evenly within the brick walls that leave little of the concrete structure on show. Below, a bar of glazing set back within a white concrete frame opens up the first floor, and itself contains another white frame. These successive reductions in scale mediate between the expanse of the entire building and the human scale of its interior operating a device for looking from and to. A spatial relationship is established between the subject standing at the window on the first floor and the passer-by at street level.¹²⁷ Initial plans had positioned the building closer to the roadside pavement but due to planning objections Goldfinger set the house back behind a low wall with four shuttered concrete pillars forming a small portico for the three front doors: separate parts of a single whole. 'The decline of the street – and an attempt to restore it' is the heading provided for this display by the *Architectural Review*. The upper portion of the pages is given over to a drawing of the extant building extended on either side to form a 'hypothetical square'. Accompanying photographs narrate modern society's 'striving for individuality': they show the departure from the large-scale standardisation of the Royal Crescent in Bath through

¹²⁶ Broadcast on 4 January 1938, with contributions from Robert Byron, W. Craven-Ellis M.P., and W. Stanley Edgson, in addition to Summerson.

¹²⁷ Goldfinger described his theory of spatial enclosure as the basis of the unity between private domestic space and public street space in Ernő Goldfinger, 'The Sensation of Space', *Architectural Review*, 90 (1941), 129-131; Ernő Goldfinger, 'Urbanism and Spatial Order', *Architectural Review* 90 (1941), 163-166; Ernő Goldfinger, 'The Elements of Enclosed Space', *Architectural Review*, 91 (1942), 5-8.



3.11 'Three Houses at Willow Road, Hampstead', from *Architectural Review*, April 1940.

coherent Georgian townhouses, to the variegated façade of the Victorian terrace, until arriving at the large-gardened, hotchpotch of suburban semis: ‘contemporary convention’.¹²⁸

Willow Road’s design prompts a discussion of the street as an integral solution to issues in town planning, described as ‘our most important legacy from the Georgian period; an expression not only of architectural but of social values’.¹²⁹ Jeremy Gould’s foundational scholarship on modernist houses observes precedents for Willow Road in Lubetkin’s terrace on Genesta Road in Plumstead and Samuel and Harding’s house at nearby Arkwright Road. Although both gesture towards Goldfinger’s design neither combine the brick facing with envisioned extension of the façade along a street – two key methods that highlight Goldfinger’s engagement with Georgian terrace typology. Similarly, neither embrace the Georgian interior plan. If, as Gould remarks, the ‘horizontal emphasis’ of Willow Road masks its height, then it should not distract from the vertical arrangement of the interiors of each house.¹³⁰ According to Summerson’s *Georgian London*, the French had learned to ‘live horizontally’ in the eighteenth century (and the same could be said of Le Corbusier’s designs at the Villa Savoye or on the Weißenhoff Estate). Goldfinger turned away from that approach and followed the contrary ‘vertical living idiom’ that developed in Georgian England.¹³¹ He centred each house around a spiral staircase held within a drum of reinforced concrete. This served to both structurally support the house (a feature also used in various forms by Lubetkin, and a product of their shared experiences in Atelier Perret), and solved problems of flow between rooms with minimal landing space on the first floor. As in the Georgian townhouse, the living spaces were elevated to the first floor. The interior way of life,

¹²⁸ ‘Three Houses at Willow Road, Hampstead’, *Architectural Review*, 87 (1940), p. 126.

¹²⁹ ‘Three Houses at Willow Road, Hampstead’, p. 125.

¹³⁰ Jeremy Gould, *Modern Houses in Britain, 1919-1939* (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 1977) p. 23.

¹³¹ Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 51-3.

therefore, not just the façade and street community of Georgian England, was emulated in Goldfinger's building.

The importance of Goldfinger's broader civic vision as represented through Willow Road is underlined by a conceptual drawing now held by RIBA (figure 3.12). It shows a figure in the open portico of a building overlooking a square. The tree branches in the square are tipped with the lime green buds of spring and on the opposite side a familiar elevation appears. It is of course Willow Road's façade that makes up the central block with extended wings forming a modular construction able to be repeated and varied. To the left, the square continues in the same plan disappearing down a street where a distant radio mast rises. When compared to views of Bedford Square, the similarities are plain to see, but the scale of Goldfinger's imagined scheme demonstrates that he is addressing the housing needs of the working classes on a national scale. The figure, depicted with close cropped dark hair and a relaxed suit, offers a human scale thus locating the viewer spatially, and has more than a passing similarity to Goldfinger himself, who was well-known for having his tailoring completed on Saville Row in the English style.¹³² This, he claimed, was due to English wools being perfectly suited to the climate of these northern isles. It is an Anglophilic trait he shared with many of his fellow émigrés arriving in the 1930s from Gropius to Pevsner and, as Warburton suggests, picked up from Goldfinger's early acquaintance with Adolf Loos who vocally stated his affection and interest in British culture.¹³³ The suiting we know Goldfinger to have favoured is, therefore, locked in dialogue with the terraced square he presents in this drawing. Both were English traditions he wholeheartedly embraced, on the one hand due to

¹³² Warburton, *Ernö Goldfinger*, p. 70.

¹³³ Warburton, *Ernö Goldfinger*, p. 36.



Image redacted due to copyright

3.12 Ernő Goldfinger, concept drawing, c. 1938-1939, watercolour pencil and ink on paper, Ernő Goldfinger Collection, RIBA Archives, London.

their functional appeal, but on the other due to their ability to signal his assimilation into English culture, to make himself at home in a foreign land.¹³⁴

Willow Road was one indication of how the Georgian terrace might be adapted to modern architects' political and aesthetic concerns, but the full scale of this vision was ultimately unrealised. Goldfinger was not the only one to have his proposals for an English future of high-density low-rise housing consigned to the drawing board. Elizabeth Denby's project at Kensal House has already been mentioned and, through her partnership with Maxwell Fry, she also completed a block of twenty low rent, working-class flats: Sassoon House in Peckham. These were developments of four or five stories that loudly stated their allegiance to continental modernism, and during use Sassoon House incurred high maintenance costs and its windows and render proved unable to withstand London's climate.¹³⁵ Turning instead to a form of housing that, as William Whyte has argued, was marked as distinctively English, Denby made brick-built terraced density an active issue of debate in the 1930s. Her trail-blazing address titled 'Rehousing from the Slum Dweller's Point of View' was the first sessional paper in the RIBA's history to be given by a woman. She stated that

with all my heart I agree with the working man and woman that the choice for a town dweller between a flat at fifty [dwellings] and a cottage at twelve [dwellings] to the acre is choice between two impractical and unnecessary extremes. [...] The rows of terrace cottages built in the Regency days, with a small garden in front and a long one behind, were built at a density of thirty-five and forty dwelling to the acre.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ It is worth noting how Goldfinger's engagement with the terrace evolved after the war, for instance in his three-storey block of flats in the assuredly Georgian site of 10 Regents Park Road, London (1954) and the short terrace within a larger scheme at Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire (1956) as well as for commercial use at Carr & Co. Offices in Birmingham (1954), and 45-46 Albemarle Street, London (1956). For illustrations see Dunnett and Stamp, *Ernö Goldfinger*, pp. 93-95, 98-99, 101.

¹³⁵ Anthony Jackson, *The Politics of Architecture: A History of Modern Architecture in Britain* (London: Architectural Press, 1970) p. 100; Jane Stevenson, *Baroque between the Wars: Alternative Style in the Arts, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) p. 141.

¹³⁶ Elizabeth Denby, 'Rehousing from the Slum Dweller's Point of View', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 44 (1936), 64-87 (p. 66).

The Georgian terrace is here presented as the Goldilocks solution to urban planning. Denby overturned the norms that had governed both private and municipal housebuilding in the inter-war years since the Tudor Walters report in 1918. The Tudor Walters housing standard had set out certain minimum requirements for indoor and outdoor space and, through the Addison Act of 1919, became the basis for inter-war attempts to provide ‘homes fit for heroes’ through suburban development.¹³⁷ ‘We seem to have forgotten’, Denby declared, ‘the beauty of closely planned urban development in England’ of the eighteenth century, ‘our best English period’.¹³⁸ Denby was heavily criticised for these heterodox comments addressed to the assembled profession at the RIBA, and her emphasis on the lived experience of those inhabiting her buildings was a step against the grain.¹³⁹

Her plans for All-Europe House, submitted to the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition in 1939, suggest how her imagined terraces might have been realised. Echeloned to form individuated blocks for each dwelling, rather than a conventional terrace with an uninterrupted façade, these homes were a modernised iteration of a type already recognisable to the ‘slum dwellers’ she set out to rehouse: the dilapidated tenements from which they were being evicted. Her plans appear to show the houses constructed in stock brick, rational and well-proportioned with a front and back garden. This traditional envelope enclosed an interior fitted with what Elizabeth Darling calls ‘all the mod cons’ yet the spatial planning ‘eschewed Denby’s existenz-minimum principles in favour of the working kitchen common to most working-class homes’. As a part of Denby’s ‘prototypical assimilation of the Georgian and the modernist’, these plans were an attempt to combine popular and avant-garde tastes in a

¹³⁷ See Peter Scott, *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) ch. 1 and 2; Mark Swenarton, 'Tudor Walters and Tudorbethan: Reassessing Britain's Inter-War Suburbs', *Planning Perspectives*, 17 (2002), 267-286.

¹³⁸ Denby, ‘Rehousing’, p. 79.

¹³⁹ See Shasore, ‘Designs on Democracy’.

domestic form ‘that both looked and felt like home’.¹⁴⁰ All-Europe House, although it remained unbuilt, would be housing answerable to the demands and predilections of its occupants, rather than its architect. Denby took control of the placement of furniture and fittings to maximise restricted space, modern building techniques shut out draughts and central heating revolutionised comfort in the winter months, but these features were ultimately delivered within the aesthetic language of home: brick construction in a broadly Georgian vernacular. All-Europe House, like Willow Road, demonstrated a synthesis of modernist ‘technics’ and historicism.

If suburban sprawl was construed by many modernists as a dissipation of England’s power, simultaneously leeching off metropolitan *élan vital* and rural resources, schemes such as Denby’s sought to re-centre communities in the previously declining urban core. Another key voice in pursuing these goals was Arthur Trystan Edwards, one of the most persistent promoters of modern terraced housing in the Georgian tradition. As already mentioned, Edwards was a member of the Georgian Group from its founding in 1937. He had studied under Reilly at Liverpool, absorbing his teacher’s love for the Regency period, and was one of the first to graduate from the school’s postgraduate diploma in civic design.¹⁴¹ A diverse career followed including work within Albert Richardson’s firm in the neo-Georgian style, an appointment in the Local Government Board working under Raymond Unwin on social housing on the Garden City model, and several publications including *The Things Which Are Seen* (1921) – a volume of aesthetic theory setting out his principles of civic design – and *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (1924) – a text which applied over a decade of thinking in a civic context to the design of individual buildings and their interrelation, with a

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Darling, “‘A Live Universal Language’: The Georgian as Motif in Interwar English Architectural Modernism”, in *Neo-Georgian Architecture 1880-1970: A Reappraisal*, ed. Julian Holder and Elizabeth McKellar (Swindon: Historic England, 2016) p. 174. For a study of how ‘existenz-minimum’ domestic planning emerged, see Eric Mumford, ‘Ciam and Its Outcomes’, *Urban Planning*, 4 (2019), 291-298.

¹⁴¹ Powers, ‘C. H. Reilly’.

distinctively Georgian emphasis. The value Edwards saw in Georgian culture lay in the emergence of a 'civic' society. The civic ideal, for Edwards, merged the contemporary and the historic, it was a constant and, according to Shasore even 'elided, or subsumed, the public, commercial and domestic realms by creating a higher ideal to which well-mannered buildings deferred in the urban hierarchy'.¹⁴² Edwards's ambition was to develop a conception of urban space in which a city's constituent parts – public as well as private – were dissolved into civic ideal with established social norms, class relations, communal identities, and even aesthetic standards. Only through such means could urban planning produce civic belonging and the feeling of home.

Despite his prodigious output Edwards's proposals for inter-war town planning were largely overlooked in his time and since. He was championed by Mansfield Forbes and participated in the intellectual coterie at Finella with its interiors designed by Raymond McGrath (1927-29), as well as receiving praise from political campaigner Aubrey Westlake.¹⁴³ But his writing was eccentric, and he failed to make progress with some of his major projects; a cartoon published in 1931 shows him trampling the designs of Le Corbusier and Erich Mendelsohn, demonstrating his iconoclastic verve, keen to dissent from canonical modernism (figure 3.13). Yet Edwards equally rejected the demands of the Garden City movement for only twelve dwellings per acre. Against fears of high density based on health, he wrote, 'Our towns should be so beautiful that everybody would wish to stay inside them', and continued to argue that 'if they are unhealthy, we must make them healthy. If they are noisy, we must take steps to make them less so. If they are too smoky, we must abolish smoke'.¹⁴⁴ It is such ambitious, reformist remarks that show Edwards ready to make a sudden

¹⁴² Shasore, "'A Stammering Bundle of Welsh Idealism'", p. 184.

¹⁴³ See Elizabeth Darling, 'Finella, Mansfield Forbes, Raymond McGrath, and Modernist Architecture in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 50 (2011), pp.125-155; Simon Pepper and Peter Richmond, 'Upward or Outward? Politics, Planning and Council Flats, 1919-1939', *Journal of Architecture*, 13 (2008), 53-90 (p. 79).

¹⁴⁴ A. Trystan Edwards, 'A Criticism of the Garden City Movement', *Town Planning Review*, 4 (1913), 150-57 (p. 154).

interruption against the architectural hegemony of his time and causes his traditionalist positions to reverberate with radical intention.

One instance of these attributes in action is Edwards's Hundred New Towns campaign. Conceived in 1933, Edwards intended this project as radical enfranchisement of the general public on the question of collective social reform through civic design. It capitalised on the failure of 'homes fit for heroes' by marketing itself as a grassroots association of veterans which dismissed esteemed architects and prioritised the layman's experience. Under Edwards's guiding hand, the twentieth-century revival of Georgian civic values was central to the Hundred New Towns Association. He designed and advocated for the construction of small new urban centres across the country – seventy-six in England, fifteen in Scotland and nine in Wales. This process of decentralisation away from London relied on his proposals of circular plans with sector-based zoning: wedges were dedicated to industry, commerce, shopping, residential and a green slice of parkland (figure 3.14). These towns would be fully provided with amenities and thus independent of any nearby metropolis. None would be built within twenty-five miles of Charing Cross Station, for instance. Residential units would combine in terraces and squares of a density of around twenty to thirty homes per acre, not dissimilar to Goldfinger's plans. The project even invited brick facing and painted stucco on steel or concrete frames, 'a clear nod to Georgian and Regency precedent'.¹⁴⁵ Despite such faith in the Georgian tradition, these were not outmoded proposals. Published pamphlets used to launch the project illustrated the kind of terraces Edwards had in mind: in drawings with fresh watercolour washes, each house features a roof garden, typical of the high modernist obsession with the benefits of fresh air and sunlight; the rows of terraced homes featured ample, regular and simple fenestration to maximise light, including a glazed back door opening out on the green public space of the square (figure

¹⁴⁵ Shasore, "A Stammering Bundle of Welsh Idealism", p. 192.

3.14). These proposals suggested a new template for Britain's public to feel at home in the modern world, without being alienated from comforting national traditions, but thoroughly escaping the conditions that blighted the slum terraces of Georgian and Victorian past: nothing less than a 'Scheme of National Reconstruction'.¹⁴⁶ Having displayed these plans at an exhibition in 1936, Edwards even insinuated that Denby's closely related ideas in her address to the RIBA that same year had been lifted from his work.¹⁴⁷

Neal Shasore's recent work has ensured a place for Edwards's ideas in any understanding of architects' attempts to reform English society between the wars. He has traced Edwards's involvement in Liberal Anglicanism as a motivation for his interest in 'community', as well as his involvement with Edward Holloway and the Economic Reform Club – an offshoot of the Social Credit movement rooted in the ideas of Alfred Orage and C. H. Douglas – and ultimately the far-reaching skein of eugenicist thinking in the Hundred New Towns Association's ambition to 'Make an A1 population'.¹⁴⁸ It is beyond the scope of this chapter to thoroughly engage with fascinating and problematic legacy left by Edwards but in the context of Denby and Goldfinger, he is a central figure in architectural attempts to respond to a crisis of domestic identity in England, articulated by Auden, Betjeman and Grigson, through the provision of new housing indebted to Georgian architecture. Collectively their proposals recognised what Mark Fisher stated in 2009: that 'Tradition counts for nothing when it is no longer contested or modified. A culture that is merely preserved is not culture at all'.¹⁴⁹ Although this comment is an implicit critique of the Georgian Group, their formation in 1937, and the corollary poetic articulation of an

¹⁴⁶ Shasore, "A Stammering Bundle of Welsh Idealism", p. 186.

¹⁴⁷ A. Trystan Edwards, 'Correspondence: The Hundred New Towns Association', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 44 (1936), p.150.

See Thesis ch. Manners p. 154

¹⁴⁸ A. Trystan Edwards, *A Hundred New Towns for Britain: A Scheme of National Reconstruction Proposed by J 47485* (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1934) p.20; Shasore, 'Architecture and the Public', ch. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009) p. 3.

ontological homelessness in England, played an essential role in laying the conceptual groundwork for Goldfinger's, Denby's, and Edwards's practical attempts at resolutions, even if in each case they were unrealised designs. They remained paper architectures of identity, not the material solutions called for by the dislocated inhabitants at the heart of empire.



Image redacted due to copyright

3.13 Cartoon of Arthur Trystan Edwards, from 'Personalities IV. Mr A. Trystan Edwards, MA, ARIBA', *Architectural Design and Construction* (September 1931), p. 469.



Image redacted due to copyright

3.14 From Arthur Trystan Edwards, 'A "Model" Town Designed for Traffic', *Town Planning Review*, 14.1 (May 1930), pp. 34–41 (p. 35).



Image redacted due to copyright

3.15 'As many as possible of the new Dwellings should be provided with Roof Gardens', from Arthur Trystan Edwards, *A Hundred New Towns for Britain. An Appeal to the Electorate* 3rd edn, (London, 1934) p. 52.

Chapter Four

The Congruity of the Pattern:

T.S. Eliot, Townscape, the Picturesque

Space is in fact liberty of movement. That is its value to us, and as such it enters our physical consciousness. We adapt ourselves instinctively to the spaces in which we stand, project ourselves into them, fill them ideally with our movements.

Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 1914¹

On the opposite side of Hampstead Heath to Willow Road, north towards Golders Green, lies 2 Wildwood Terrace (figure 4.1). It is a resolutely unassuming house constructed in red brick and tucked away from adjacent roads behind leafy screens. Nikolaus Pevsner's *Buildings of England* described it as 'surprisingly urban Gothic' in style, 'overlooking the unkempt woodland of the Heath extension'.² It is surprising that such an unremarkable terrace, built between 1886 and 1887, should feature in Pevsner's guide at all, but this house was his own home that he shared with his wife Lola and their children from 1936. Pevsner's life was woven into his work on the *Buildings of England*, and here he makes a place for himself in his adopted country. The view from the house over the Heath was important to Pevsner, as it had been to Goldfinger at Willow Road: the spaces of home and landscape could be considered one continuous domestic zone and Pevsner's peripatetic surveys of England, restlessly tracing his way around town and country, county by county, can be read as an act of homemaking, where cataloguing a culture translated into domestic belonging. Pevsner

¹ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*, 2nd edn (London: Constable, 1924) p. 227.

² Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 4: North* (London: Penguin, 1998) p. 235.

A large black rectangular area covering the top half of the page, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.1 Wildwood Terrace, Hampstead

could assuage his sense of alienation and make himself at home in England by writing its history.³ Geoffrey Grigson, who lived next door to the Pevsners at 3 Wildwood Terrace, had felt a similar alienation when he reflected on a national lack of historical self-knowledge and complained that in England ‘we still lack the basis of an art history’.⁴ When the ‘Bow Street runners’ called at dawn to arrest and intern Pevsner at the beginning of the war, Grigson rushed out to press a copy of Shakespeare’s sonnets into Pevsner’s hand.⁵ Grigson might have had his German friend and neighbour in mind when he wrote of his hope for England to achieve a national practice of historiography comparable to the *Kunstgeschichte* Pevsner had adopted from Wilhelm Pinder at the University of Leipzig as a doctoral student.

The year Pevsner and his family moved into Wildwood Terrace he published his hugely influential text on the emergence of modernist architecture, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*. It contained an important passage describing innovation in large-scale district planning by German modernists after World War I, which began to articulate a relationship between built architecture, the landscape beyond it, and the roving subject, and laid the basis for Pevsner’s later work during the 1940s:

Here too is the conquest of space, the spanning of great distances, the rational coordination of heterogeneous functions that fascinates architects. The profound affinity of this modern enthusiasm for *planning* (architectural as well as political) with the style of Gropius’s Fagus factory is evident. [...] Calculation and vision have worked together, as they did in the days of the cathedral builders, of Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Michelangelo.⁶

This passage presents the ‘conquest of space’ as an essential part of the modernist paradigm within Western architectural thinking, and the revised edition of the text describes it as ‘the

³ ‘Englishness of course is the purpose of my journey’, quoted in Susie Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011) p. 801.

⁴ Geoffrey Grigson, ‘Samuel Palmer: The Politics of an Artist’, *Horizon*, 4 (1941), 314–328 (p. 314).

⁵ Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner*, p. 273.

⁶ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936) p. 204.

eternal concern of Western architecture'.⁷ Gropius is offered as the inheritor of a cultural history of the occident, one preoccupied with demarcating and claiming ownership over space through architectural and political means. Modernist material innovation with glass and steel allowed air and light to 'pass freely through walls so that the closed-in space is no longer different in essence from the great universe of space outside' and so Gropius's factories with their vast spans became the distant progeny of Brunelleschi's Florentine dome.⁸ Pevsner noticed how this was a kindred impulse to tabula rasa district planning, exemplified by *Landesplanung* in the Ruhr Valley following World War I. The modernist conquest of space was equally applicable to the microcosm of an individual building as it was to entire landscapes which reached towards the universality of the macrocosm.

The district planning Pevsner describes is assuredly urban, but his argument finds connection with rural landscape through his later comments in *The Englishness of English Art*. The idea for this volume was originally conceived as a course of lectures at Birkbeck College in 1941, not long after Pevsner had been released from internment as an enemy alien.⁹ After a wartime delay, it provided material for his Reith Lectures in 1955 and was immediately published in expanded form. At the book's conclusion Pevsner argued for the suitability of rationalist architecture to the English temperament, suggesting what he claimed as the uniquely English and romantic idea of *genius loci*, which attends to the unique characteristics of a site, translated perfectly into modernist doctrine: 'In planning and architecture to-day "each case on its own merit" is called functionalism'. This might seem a peculiar and strained argument out of context, but Pevsner was reaching the height of his powers as a cultural commentator and naturalised analyser of his adopted nation at this time.

⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner and Pamela Todd, *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, 4th edn (London: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 162.

⁸ He acknowledges this is what Frank Lloyd Wright termed the 'aetherealization' of architecture in 1901, Pevsner, *Pioneers*, p. 202.

⁹ A number of well-connected individuals successfully lobbied for Pevsner's swift release including Frank Pick, Sir Frederick Kenyon, and J.A.R. Munro, see Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner*, p. 282.

Previous chapters of *The Englishness of English Art* had set out a national aesthetic temperament, a ‘racial’ pre-disposition for certain forms in art and design based on geography and climate. From Hogarth’s line of beauty, and an analysis of the ornamental schemes of Chippendale furniture, Pevsner arrives at the eighteenth-century theory of the picturesque as an aesthetic mode which carries forward the typical characteristics of English art. Shifting away from his historical register, he then suggests that post-war reconstruction of landscaped mass housing schemes as well as urban space could act as the fulfilment of the picturesque through modern means. The lectures had opened with the complaint that England had lost its eighteenth-century pioneering spirit – ‘Where is that restless enterprise now? Gone the way of the East India Company?’ – but they closed with the assertion that the picturesque tradition ‘shows that no country is aesthetically better provided to solve [contemporary problems] and thereby leave its imprint on other countries than England’.¹⁰ A proposed revival of the picturesque and its application to architecture and planning is presented as the necessary vehicle for maintaining English national character and the nation’s colonial influence.

These post-war comments on the picturesque offer a sympathetic context to his writing on ‘the conquest of space, the spanning of great distances’ two decades earlier. The picturesque, on the one hand, is romantic and seemingly historicist; his notion of the conquest of space, on the other, invokes the bold, though tradition-conscious, stride of modernist innovation. The years that intervened between these two related ideas witnessed a flourishing of interest in the picturesque, and a vision of Englishness closely associated with it, through magazine articles, landscape painting, speculative architecture, and canonical literature. This chapter sets out to examine this material which ranges from Christopher Hussey’s revival of

¹⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art: An Expanded and Annotated Version of the Reith Lectures Broadcast in October and November 1955* (London: Architectural Press, 1956) pp. 177, 17, 179.

picturesque aesthetic theory to Pevsner's writings, and ultimately the late phase of T.S. Eliot's career. Its goal is to understand how the picturesque confronted the crisis of English domestic identity prompted by imperial decline.

One of the principal forums for this intellectual bridge between modernist thought and the picturesque was the *Architectural Review*. When J.M. Richards left his post as the magazine's editor to join the war effort in 1942, Pevsner was trained to replace him and supply a measure of scholarly rigour to the publication's output. Pevsner worked closely with Hubert de Cronin Hastings, the owner and co-editor, as well as with Richards upon his return in 1945. Under Hastings's and Richards's guidance, the picturesque had been a simmering interest in the pages of the *Architectural Review* since the mid-30s, with Pevsner's tenure as staff writer beginning in 1936. By the time Pevsner was appointed editor, Hastings was ready to launch a full-scale campaign to reconsider and repopularise the picturesque in relation to contemporary architectural practice, directing it to the mission of post-war reconstruction and the broader cultural reform of Britain. Hastings immediately commissioned Pevsner to produce a study of the picturesque as a particularly English contribution to principles of architectural ornamentation and planning. Although the intended monograph by Pevsner was never published, his work informed his ideas in *The Englishness of English Art* and the *Architectural Review*'s 'Townscape' campaign, launched in 1949. This campaign set out apply the aesthetic theories of picturesque, as it had been developed by Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight to Britain's post-war urban spaces. Hastings's and Pevsner's approach to the picturesque eventually coloured much of the *Review*'s activity until 1971 when Hastings disbanded the architectural board.¹¹

¹¹ Mathew Aitchison and John Macarthur, 'Pevsner's Townscape', in *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010) pp. 1-43.

Remarks on the British architectural establishment's interest in the picturesque in the late 1930s and 1940s now make frequent appearances in architectural histories of the period. Erdem Erten's work on the Pevsner-Hastings-Richards editorial partnership has offered a foundational study of the essentially interdisciplinary nature of their work, stepping easily from the nuances of urban planning and traffic flows to their popularisation of esoteric history and their visions of social reform.¹² John Macarthur and Mathew Aitchison have since illustrated the ideological variety encompassed by the picturesque at the *Architectural Review* and Aitchison has taken the initiative to publish Pevsner's *Visual Planning and the Picturesque* from the manuscript initially commissioned by Hastings in 1942, now held at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.¹³ These histories tell of a remarkable shift in the application of the picturesque to urban rather than rural subjects, a divergent narrative from the customary accounts of the picturesque in its rural capacity as landscaping for the grounds of country houses. Christopher Tunnard is often the focus of this latter approach due to his use of eighteenth-century aesthetics in his domestic gardens for modern houses, most notably at Serge Chermayeff's Bentley Wood, and expounded in his *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938).¹⁴ Tunnard is the prime representative of what John Dixon Hunt describes as the 'historical and theoretical inadequacies' of modernist landscape architects, dismissing Tunnard specifically as 'sloppy and useless', based on the contention that the further the

¹² Erdem Erten, 'Shaping "the Second Half Century": The Architectural Review 1947-1971', (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004).

¹³ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010); John Macarthur and Mathew Aitchison, 'Oxford Versus the Bath Road: Empiricism and Romanticism in the Architectural Review's Picturesque Revival', *Journal of Architecture* 17 (2012), pp. 51-68; John Macarthur, 'The Revenge of the Picturesque', Redux', *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 643-653; John Macarthur, Mathew Aitchison, and Jasper Cepl, 'Das Malerische and the Picturesque: Seeing Architecture in Translation', *Architectural Histories*, 7 (2019), 1-16; John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007); Mathew Aitchison, 'Townscape: Scope, Scale and Extent', *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 621-642. See also, Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Romantic Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010) pp. 229-233; Alan Powers, *Serge Chermayeff: Designer, Architect, Teacher* (London: RIBA Publications, 2001) pp. 133-136. See also Jane Brown, *The English Garden through the 20th Century* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Garden Art Press, 2002) and Jane Brown, *The Modern Garden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

picturesque strays from the supposedly authentic break in modern culture – 1800, as suggested by Yves Alain Bois, rather than modernism's 1900 – the less valuable and theoretically rigorous it becomes.¹⁵ More recently, John Macarthur's work accepts that such a harsh condemnation is not without justification, but is nevertheless a reductive account of how the picturesque can riot promiscuously through history when applied to 'numerous tropes and strategies of modern art and architecture that have nothing to do with cloying images of rural life' which were its initial focus. Without losing contact with the theoretical foundation established in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this more generous approach enables a continued appreciation for what is most curious, destabilising, and productive about the picturesque.¹⁶

In this chapter I am looking to intervene within this critical history in an attempt to understand how the meaning of the picturesque oscillates in the hands of modernist writers. The forces causing this oscillation are consistent with those featured in previous chapters: domestic Englishness and imperial decline. It is odd that writing on the picturesque's application to urban space in twentieth-century England, which briefly flourished between 2009 and 2012, and writing on the imperial picturesque have not been brought into association.¹⁷ Across the Global South, Britain's territorial claims and attempts to control indigenous populations have operated in unison with the picturesque and should be considered part of the web of association I am seeking to build around Pevsner's western tradition of the 'conquest of space'. Pratapadiya Pal and Vidya Dehejia have described the deployment of the picturesque by British artists in India; in *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy

¹⁵ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (London: MIT Press, 1992); Yve-Alain Bois, 'A Picturesque Stroll around "Clara-Clara"', *October*, 29 (1984), 32-62 (p. 61).

¹⁶ Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷ In addition Macarthur and Aitchison's work see, Alan Powers, 'Townscape as a Model of Organised Complexity', *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 691-702; Erdem Erten, 'Thomas Sharp's Collaboration with H. De C. Hastings: The Formulation of Townscape as Urban Design Pedagogy', *Planning Perspectives*, 24 (2009), 29-49; Erdem Erten, 'I, the World, the Devil and the Flesh: Manplan, Civilia and H. De C. Hastings', *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 703-718.

Mitchell has argued that British tourists travelled east viewing new territories as ‘a recurrence of a picture one had seen before’ and ‘looking for the same kind of structure “raised in their imagination”’; and Nigel Leask develops the essentially familiarising function of picturesque as a mechanism for travellers to claim a landscape and feel at home.¹⁸ Moving west, Geoff Quilley has described the use of the picturesque to naturalise and aestheticize slave labour in George Robertson’s views of Jamaican plantations in the late eighteenth century; and in the south, Ian McLean has argued that ‘the genius of the picturesque is making from topography a discourse of identity’, in his case settler identities articulated through paintings made by some of the earliest colonisers of Sydney Cove in 1794.¹⁹ Bearing in mind this colonial function of the picturesque, how can we make sense of its domestic revival and reapplication to English towns and fields at the period of imperial contraction? Indeed, when asking why the picturesque was a particularly powerful tool for architects and writers seeking a more buoyant national identity before and during the World War II, its contribution to Britain’s colonial ideology seems to be a crucial area of concern.

After establishing a brief history and definition of the picturesque, I will focus on its rise to prominence through Christopher Hussey’s *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927) and subsequently in the pages of the *Architectural Review* in the 1930s, rather than retrace Erten’s steps studying the magazine’s post-war promotion of townscape. The picturesque can be understood as one of the narratives of colonialism in addition to Georgian

¹⁸ Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) pp. 97-127; Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 30, 21; Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 166-78. See also Julia Kuehn, *A Female Poetics of Empire: From Eliot to Woolf* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2014) ch. 6.

¹⁹ Geoff Quilley, 'Pastoral Plantations: The Slave Trade and the Representation of British Colonial Landscape in the Late Eighteenth-Century', in *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, ed. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) pp. 106-128; Ian McLean, 'The Expanded Field of the Picturesque: Contested Identities and Empire in Sydney Cove 1794', in *Art and the British Empire*, ed. T. J. Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) pp. 23-37. Tim Barringer’s Mellon Lectures delivered in 2019 and titled ‘Global Landscape in the Age of Empire’ also surveyed examples of the colonial picturesque, particularly in the Global South.

preservation which arose through anxieties of imperial decline, a counterpart to Elizabeth Darling's inter-war 'narratives of modernity' which prepared Britain for modernist architectural hegemony after 1945. Pevsner's *Englishness* would claim the picturesque as the preeminent architecture of English identity, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the year of its publication was the year of the Suez Crisis taken as the terminal point in Britain's span as an imperial power.²⁰ Through the latter half of this chapter I will read Eliot's *Four Quartets* and its counterparts in prose, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948), against Hastings and Pevsner's promotion of the picturesque, placing them as sympathetic attempts to renegotiate English identity.

A Point of View: Hussey's *Picturesque*

By the early twentieth century, the definition of the picturesque had strayed far from its initial theorisation over one hundred years earlier. It had passed from an aesthetic category hotly debated by William Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight into a popular and simplistic way of describing romantic and sentimentalised rural scenes. Picturesqueness was seen as a characteristic of country life rapidly diminishing in face of industrialisation and suburbanisation.²¹ It was in this malaise of cottage scenes and idealised farm life, enduring well into the Edwardian period and indeed to the present day, that Christopher Hussey approached the picturesque in the nineteen-twenties.

²⁰ See William Vaughan, 'Behind Pevsner: Englishness as an Art Historical Category', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, ed. David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt, and Fiona Russell (London: Yale University Press, 2002) pp. 347-369 (p. 347).

²¹ See Jennifer M. Green, "'The Right Thing in the Right Place': P. H. Emerson and the Picturesque Photograph", in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (London: University of California Press, 1995) pp. 88-109 and Lara Baker Whelan, *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Earlier chapters have encountered Hussey establishing the Vers Group for the discussion of Le Corbusier and modern architecture in 1923, and his involvement with the Design and Industries Association, taking a leading role in the Exhibition of British Industrial Art in Relation to the Home at Dorland Hall in 1933. However, Hussey merged his modernist propagandising with a sincere affection for a traditional, aristocratic vision of English culture. Having been hired as a young writer by the editor of *Country Life*, Henry Avray Tipping, Hussey rose through the ranks of the magazine, first to architectural editor, then general editor in 1933. He would ultimately dedicate much of his career to writing on county houses and their landscapes.²² *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* is perhaps the most complete example of Hussey's desire to integrate the aesthetic ruptures of modernism within a revived English tradition (figure 4.2). It is a landmark text not only due to its influence on the later writing of Hastings, Pevsner and Richards, but also because it encouraged a deepened appreciation for the aesthetic systems that shaped writing on country houses for which Hussey and his magazine was renowned. Hussey's attempt to recover the aesthetic foundations of the picturesque through the work of Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight made available new connections between modernism and a late eighteenth-century moment of colonial trade and travel, burgeoning romantic aesthetics, and rapid industrialisation in the wake of agricultural enclosure.

From the outset Hussey's book announces itself as a history as well as an exercise in the picturesque. The writing was completed at Scotney Castle, Hussey's hereditary family home, which featured two main buildings: a fourteenth-century moated castle with an adjoining manor house positioned at the bottom of a gentle valley; and the new house of 1835 designed by Anthony Salvin under the instruction of Hussey's grandfather, poised atop the

²² See John Cornforth, *The Search for a Style: Country Life and Architecture 1897-1935* (London: Deutsch, 1988) and John Cornforth, 'Hussey, Christopher Edward Clive (1899-1970), Architectural Historian', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

rising slope to northwest of the castle. Sitting in his grandfather's Salvin study, Hussey could look out of the window and admire the grounds. His view was guided across terraced lawns to where a chasm of craggy rocks revealed itself, the quarry from which the stone for the new house was drawn. Through an opening in the mature trees as their foliage mixed with lower rhododendrons cascading down the valley, the old castle appears with its glistening moat at the most distant focal point (figure 4.3). Its crumbling and ivied masonry was raw fodder for a voracious Victorian appetite for medievalism and the romantic picturesque, but Hussey made clear how his grandfather had conceived the view according to the principles established by Uvedale Price in *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794). The volume itself still held its place on the bookshelf to his left. Hussey's perspective, therefore, was not that of a neutral commentator, but that of someone personally and directly invested in the picturesque. Over the course of his book, he would present an idea that would later be developed by Pevsner: in the twentieth century there could be no such thing as a neutral commentator on the picturesque as an aesthetic practice – to be English was to be personally and directly invested in the picturesque. They extended the picturesque from its aesthetic parameters as a way of seeing into a pervasive impact on England's land management and cultural taste, heralding now twentieth-century writers on the picturesque articulated landscape as a cultural discourse which expressed changing attitudes to modernity, nationhood, and belonging.²³

Of course, where Hussey differed from the general population was that his family formed part of a tiny elite of landowners that had historically directed the application of the picturesque to landscapes in England and abroad since the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, he hoped the picturesque could 'enable the imagination to form the habit of feeling through

²³ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Introduction', in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) p. 1.

A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.2 John Ward, dust jacket for Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, (London: Putnam, 1927), Scotney Castle Archives.

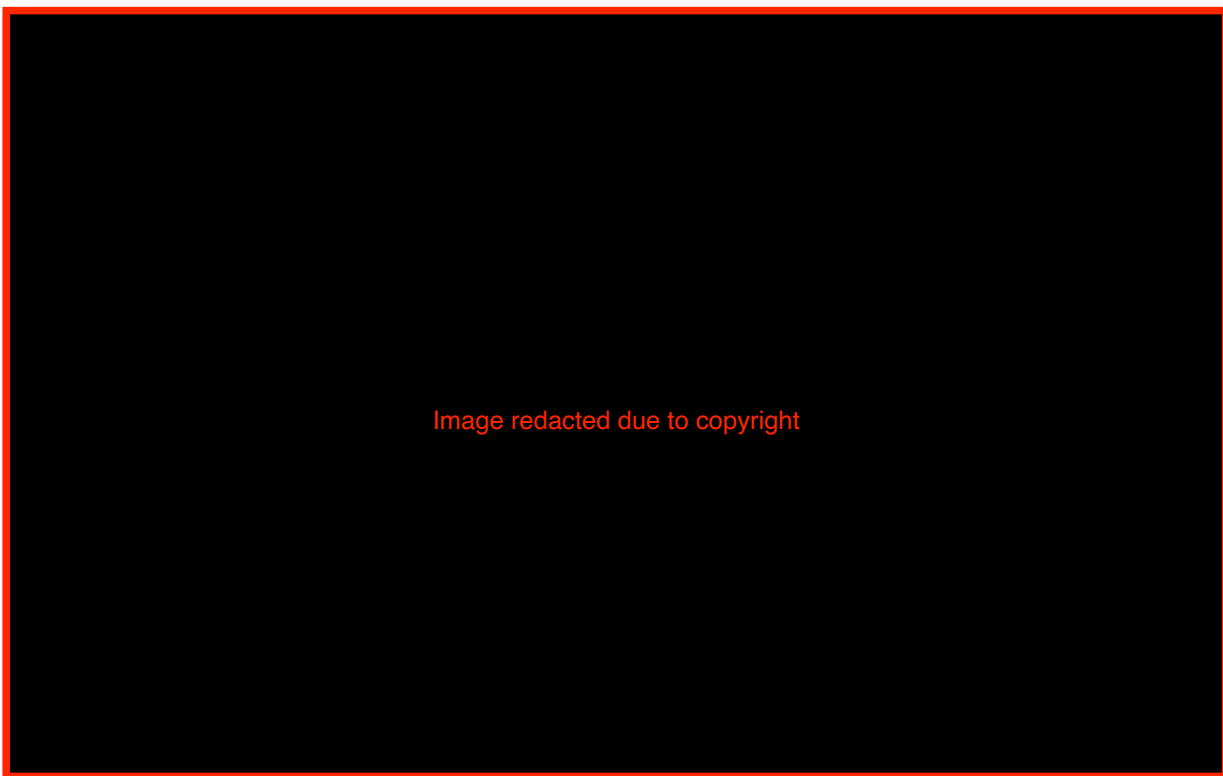
A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.3 Scotney Castle from the south-east.

the eyes' not only for an exclusive sect of dilettantes but for all areas of society.²⁴ Hussey would have read with approval as Price declared that 'When I speak of a painter, I do not mean merely a professor, but any man (artist or not) of a liberal mind, with a strong feeling for nature as well as art'.²⁵ This act of democratisation aligned with Price's Liberal political motives as we will explore later, but according to Hussey it was contingent upon Knight's argument for the specifically abstract quality of picturesque:

He [Knight] maintained that colour as revealed by light did possess objective qualities when perceived abstractly, apart from the object it denoted. This abstract kind of vision was the painter's, or picturesque, point of view. Nothing was intrinsically picturesque, but many objects, when viewed thus abstractly had picturesque, or pictorial, beauty.

This intervention within the theory of aesthetic experience by Knight became, for Hussey, an important precedent for the ideas of his contemporaries Roger Fry and Clive Bell who are cited in the opening pages of his book. 'To acquire the painter's capacity for abstract vision, the layman needed to be thoroughly acquainted with pictures,' Hussey continued, 'Picturesque qualities, Knight maintained, were the abstract, emotive qualities that alone had aesthetic value. All other kinds of beauty were associative – with sex, prosperity, wealth, content, and so on – and were non-aesthetic'.²⁶ What Hussey offers is, in effect, a historical precedent for the more controversial aesthetic debates associated with formalist Bloomsbury writers.²⁷ Hussey implied that if such seemingly revolutionary ideas regarding the democratisation of aesthetic experience away from literary associations were in fact the foundation of the one of the most widespread and quintessentially English modes of painting

²⁴ Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927) p. 4.

²⁵ Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1794; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) p. 9n.

²⁶ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, pp. 16, 16-17.

²⁷ It should be noted that Fry himself did not acknowledge this lineage. However, the picturesque, alongside the associationism of Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) can be considered precursors to Fry's formalism with in a long history of modern aesthetics.

and seeing in the eighteenth century, then acceptance of their recent, modernist guise of formalism could be more easily achieved.

However, one important distinction remains: while Fry argued that an appreciation of abstract, formal qualities in modern painting was innate, Hussey followed Price's writing by suggesting that one must be taught through the study of painting to view landscape abstractly. An aesthetic education, which enabled the lay-reader to 'feel through the eyes', is the end that Hussey's book was designed to fulfil for a twentieth-century audience. This was the primary reason for the book's role as a key inspiration for the *Architectural Review*'s stated mission to 'to re-educate the eye' of their popular readership after World War II.²⁸ With this broad audience in mind, Hussey picked up the picturesque due to its personal connection to his own life, family and home, but the personal and the public are intimately connected in this rationale which leads to more expansive ambition of modernising England's relationship with its national, visual identity. Hussey's text moved towards the popular acceptance and understanding of the picturesque as a reclamation of English national identity.

Hussey provides little comment on the imperial dimensions of the picturesque. Nevertheless, traces of the mode's applicability to colonial contexts and its connection to the expansionary logic of empire, concerning the visibility of travel and conquest, punctuate his book. He is quick to remark on the connection between material and aesthetic development in the eighteenth century: 'As soon as the western traveller had decent roads, and was relieved from the fear of robbery and murder whenever he passed by a wood, he began to look about him with relish'. A global and not simply a European perspective is in play here. The wealthy coloniser, as well as the aristocratic landowner, fearing the depredations of local communities, is only able to look up and aestheticize the foreign land into a landscape when it is domesticated by safe routes of travel. Moreover, the picturesque itself acts as a

²⁸ J. M. Richards and others, 'The Second Half Century', *Architectural Review*, 101 (1947), 21-26 (pp. 23-25).

domesticating technology. Rather than simply relying on decent roads, the picturesque helped to imaginatively pave the way for their extension. In Hussey's words, suitable picturesque objects include 'old gnarled trees, sandy banks, water and windmills, rough heaths, rustic bridges, stumps, logs, ruts, hovels, unkempt persons and shaggy animals'.²⁹ Through their assimilation into what, with Knight, we are encouraged to think of as abstract elements forming a picturesque whole, the recalcitrant concrete and associative values of such objects – for instance, the horror of a wild animal or a brigand in a painting by Salvator Rosa, or the hazy distances of Gaspar Poussin, or the dreadful poverty of Thomas Gainsborough's cottage scenes – are brought under the control of traveller. The very notion of a picturesque 'prospect' carries with it its later definition as a verb 'to prospect' for raw materials ripe extraction. Here the raw material of aesthetic emotion is mined and refined by the educated eye of the traveller.³⁰

The picturesque emerges as means by which the repelling effects of the wild and alien may be overcome and appropriated as familiar and beautiful. In Hussey's summary of Price's *Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801), this process of appropriation is described as an extraction of abstract qualities akin to Fry's and Bell's formalism. 'The scene had a beauty belonging exclusively to the sense of vision, made up of light variously gradated, and quite independent of the persons and things that composed it', Hussey writes. The material reality of the aggressive native or local peasant, the crumbling cottage or the hobbling beggar is held at bay not only by the physical distance of pictorial space within which such features are sited but also by the 'pure' visual qualities assigned to them by Price. The artist subsequently performs the role of miner in extracting these raw

²⁹ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, pp. 7, 11.

³⁰ If this appears to verge on a cynical reading of Hussey's text, I am building upon a critical tendency that understands the capacity of picturesque theory to bridge between colonial spaces, for instance Gilpin's views of the Wye and the landscapes of Ceylon, as argued in Elizabeth Mjelde, 'The Imperial Wye', *Romanticism*, 19 (2013), 153-162.

materials from their ‘natural’ occurrence in the land: ‘It was the abstract beauty that the painter perceived and was able to transmit in a picture [... a] layman could not perceive this beauty until it was separated in the artist’s imagination’.³¹ Hussey’s definition of landscape created and made tradable – in terms of the refinement abstract aesthetics as well as the production of paintings – conforms precisely with W.T.J. Mitchell’s writing on landscape in Marxist terms as a fetishized commodity: ‘Dig out all the gold in the mountainside’, Mitchell writes, ‘and its wealth is exhausted. But how many photographs, postcards, paintings and awestruck “sightings” of the Grand Canyon will it take to exhaust its value as a landscape?’. The touristic imagination of the picturesque accords with this conception of landscape as commodity created and reproduced by artists. Indeed, Mitchell has suggested that in picturesque views of colonial territories the ‘real subject’ is not the depicted territory itself, ‘but European imperial “vision”’.³²

The appropriative gaze of the picturesque is in evidence in some of its earliest writing and emphasises its sympathy with Pevsner’s ‘conquest of space’. Just as Pevsner noted the continuity between interior space and landscape, Horace Walpole’s famous description of the supposed invention of the ha-ha by William Kent noted similar continuities:

At the moment of its creation appeared Kent, painter enough to taste the charms of landscape, bold and opinionative enough to dare and dictate, and born with a genius to strike out a great system from the twilight of imperfect essays. He leapt the fence and saw all nature was a garden.³³

The ha-ha, a sunken wall that separated garden from pasture with no perceivable interruption of the view, allowed for the seamless unity of a house’s immediate surroundings and the

³¹ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, p. 70.

³² W.T.J. Mitchell, ‘Imperial Landscape’, in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.T.J. Mitchell (1994. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) pp. 15, 19.

³³ Horace Walpole, ‘On Modern Gardening’, in *Anecdotes of Painting in England... to Which Is Added the Modern Taste in Gardening* (London: J. Dodsley, 1782) pp. 247-316 (p. 289).

landscape beyond, private pleasure grafted to tenanted production. In the mere act of looking, the picturesque viewer claimed uninterrupted control over the landscape they surveyed, an issue borne out by William Gilpin's recommendation of how an artist might adapt a landscape to enhance its picturesque qualities. The artist, he writes,

has no right, we allow, to add a magnificent castle – an impending rock – or a river, to adorn his foreground. These are *new features*. But he may certainly break an ill-formed hillock; and shovel earth about him as he pleases, without offence. He may pull up a piece of awkward paling – he may throw down a cottage – he may even turn the course of a road or river, a few yards on this side of that. These trivial alterations may greatly add to the beauty of his composition.³⁴

Autocratic control or 'trivial alterations' within a landscape, such as rerouting a river or laying a road, when performed in sketching pencil or paint, laid the imaginative foundation of the material alteration of the new world, without regard for the presence of indigenous or labouring communities.³⁵

As Hussey recognised, the significance of Price and Knight's writing is not simply as aesthetic theory but as a concrete system for land management. 'In their hands,' he writes, 'the Picturesque ceases to be a mere concept and becomes a set of working principles for gardeners, architects and travellers'.³⁶ The picturesque could be stretched beyond the domain of the painter and poet and casual gardener to an increasingly professionalised class of profit-oriented landowners who may adopt and blend all the roles of gardener, architect and traveller Hussey mentioned; after all what is the settler colonial mindset if not the traveller turned gardener? In this context, domestication is the act making oneself at home where one does not belong – both in foreign territories where domestication carries all the violence and

³⁴ William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772: On Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (London R. Blamire, 1776) xxviii-xxix.

³⁵ For a more extensive discussion of the picturesque as appropriation, albeit with reduced emphasis on colonialism, see Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, ch. 5.

³⁶ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, p. 65.

indigenous displacement of colonial conquest, and a homeland left compromised by modernity. As Jill Casid has demonstrated, histories of empire and horticulture are entangled. Exploitation, extraction, cultivation, breeding: such words work metaphorically across human, botanical, mineral, sexual and topographical contexts made apparent by etymological links such as that between ‘diaspora’ and ‘spore’. Ultimately, Casid argues that ‘the practices of landscaping that emerged in the eighteenth century are inextricable from the contested terrain of empire within which they operated’.³⁷ The picturesque as it was theorised by landowners such as Price and Knight, and as it was revived by Hussey in the inter-war years, was inextricably bound up with the capitalist-imperial vision of land and wealth.

In summary, Hussey heralded a return to what was later understood by Hubert de Cronin Hastings as the ‘true rock’ of the picturesque, drawing together sources that had been considered lost to Victorian romanticism: early comments by Joseph Addison, William Chambers, William Temple and Horace Walpole, the divisive example set by Capability Brown, later work by Humphrey Repton, and the theoretical substance of Burke, Gilpin, Knight and Price.³⁸ This act of resurrection brought with it modes of vision and pictorial or constructive practices that struck to an Englishness at the core of Britain’s colonial identity. Casid reminds us of how the outward-looking function of the picturesque necessarily involved a mirrored, inward-looking vision, how ‘landscaping functioned as an imperial mode that defined and transformed the “heartlands” of nations as well as the conceived national borders, contact zones, and colonial peripheries’.³⁹ The inter-war years heralded a new stage for the transformative power of the picturesque landscape, as the foundations of the British Empire began to fracture. The nature of that transformation was best articulated by

³⁷ Jill H. Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) p. xxi.

³⁸ Ivor de Wolfe, ‘Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price’, *Architectural Review*, 106 (1949), 354-362.

³⁹ Casid, *Sowing Empire*, p. xxi.

those who picked up Hussey's gauntlet, and his sheaf of citations, and set about applying the picturesque to England's domestic spaces in the 1930s and 1940s, to which we now turn our attention.

Publicising the Picturesque

Years before Hastings and Pevsner would lead a coordinated campaign to rehabilitate the picturesque, the *Architectural Review* published articles which indicated the editors' sustained interest in its practical application to the English landscape. Later in life Pevsner reflected that 'surely Hussey's *Picturesque* and our day-to-day work for the *Review* were really one and the same thing', and so traced a link from 1927 through over a decade of articles which enabled them to theorise 'Townscape'.⁴⁰ Their 'Townscape' campaign would ultimately attempt to introduce picturesque principles to the 'visual planning' of British cities, considering elements of material texture, sudden contrast in buildings' period or style, variegated street furniture, and the mobile human subject at the centre of this urban fabric. One early glimpse of the picturesque emerging in the pages of the *Architectural Review* is a feature of proposals for a block of flats on the edge of Windsor's Great Park at St Leonard's Hill. The new building by Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry was planned to replace an eighteenth-century country house set within landscaped grounds and mature woodland. Upon arrival in England in 1934, Gropius lived with his wife Ise at Lawn Road Flats and entered into practice for the Isokon Company, headed by Jack Pritchard. The project at St. Leonard's Hill was one of three such schemes hatched by Pritchard to provide Gropius with work, the

⁴⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Conclusions', in *The Picturesque Garden and Its Influence Outside the British Isles*, ed. Nikolaus Pevsner (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1974) pp. 119-21 (p. 119).

others being in Manchester and Birmingham.⁴¹ All were planned as communal blocks of flats with shared facilities similar to those Gropius had developed for workers' accommodation in Germany, only now the housing would cater to young professionals and intellectuals, a bourgeois rather than proletarian modernist lifestyle. All three of these projects were developed and promoted by Pritchard's Isokon Control Company, and after initial planning and fundraising all would fail.

The site of St. Leonard's Hill was a familiar one to the architectural press. In an article published in 1901, *Country Life* had praised it as the picturesque locale *par excellence*: 'perhaps from no other point does Windsor Castle present so fine a picture as St. Leonard's Hill, whence a romantic prospect is disclosed also of the Thames Valley and the region of Windsor Forest' where once 'over its sylvan crest there often floated the sound of the huntsman's horn'.⁴² Yet over thirty years later, by the time it reappeared in the *Architectural Review*, any echoes of this Arcadian idyll had faded from the landscape which was now compromised by that familiar encrustation of jerry-built suburb: 'from the ramparts of Windsor Castle the river meadows that once stretched in unbroken green are disappearing beneath the plague of brick and tile'. The article, titled 'Cry Stop to Havoc: Or Preservation by Development', bemoaned the invasion of suburban sprawl into the picture-postcard scenery of rural England. It presented high density modernist blocks as a solution to the encroachment. By building on the central plot of land while leaving the surrounding landscape untouched the 'windows of every flat look out over parkland and forest, preserved for all time'. The picturesque landscape of the estate is, therefore, an integral and major part of the interior space of Gropius's apartments, in a manner not dissimilar to the study

⁴¹ Fiona MacCarthy, *Walter Gropius: Visionary Founder of the Bauhaus* (London: Faber & Faber, 2019); for an account of Gropius's place within the network of modernists in Hampstead, see Caroline Maclean, *Circles and Squares: The Lives and Art of the Hampstead Modernists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020) ch. 4.

⁴² [Anon], 'Country Homes Gardens Old & New: St. Leonard's Hill, Windsor, the Seat of Sir Francis Barry', *Country Life*, 9 (1901), 368-371 (p. 368).

Hussey's grandfather built for himself at Scotney Castle. Gropius's building is, the article concludes, 'one of the first efforts to reconcile the English tradition of good living to the contemporary requirements of town and country life'.⁴³

Molly and Jack Pritchard were responsible for promoting the St. Leonard's Hill development along these lines. They produced a glossy brochure showcasing the new building complete with floor plans of specimen flats and artist's impressions of the glamorous lifestyle on offer. It shows childless couples in formal attire attending dinners and social spaces on offer at the scheme (figure 4.4). The text relays the developer's and architect's intentions 'to provide all the amenities of living that are to be found in a really comfortable country house, with such services as will relieve of the business of household management'. The building was to have its own tennis and squash courts, bowling alley, swimming pool, cinema, barber shop, riding stables, cocktail bar, communal lounge, library, and detached nurse's for young children. Service kitchens could provide meals to the rooms via express elevators. This was undoubtedly a modern lifestyle, but it was one that served a social elite that could afford such amenities – an aspirational demographic which turned to the aristocratic life of leisure, garden parties, and the outsourcing of domestic labour for their guiding example. It is significant that the new tenants of St. Leonard's Hill could look out over the picturesque swathes of Windsor Forest and almost hear the huntsman's horn *Country Life* had described in 1901, because the ideal lifestyle on offer had not meaningfully departed from that earlier paradigm of the hierarchical privilege of the landed gentry: 'all flats have the same general amenities, none can be overlooked from other flats, but some, in key positions, are superior to others'.⁴⁴

⁴³ [Anon.], 'Cry Stop to Havoc or Preservation by Development', *Architectural Review*, 77 (1935), 188-192. The site has now been consumed by a low-density residential estate and is bordered to the southwest by the theme park Legoland.

⁴⁴ 'St Leonard's Hill, Windsor', Information brochure for proposed flats by Walter Gropius and E. Maxwell Fry (sponsored by the Isokon Control Company Ltd.), London, RIBA Archive, Edwin Maxwell Fry Papers, FrE/1/5.



Image redacted due to copyright

4.4 Isokon Company promotional brochure for St. Leonard's Hill, 1935, RIBA Archive, London.

Owen Hatherley has, with some justification, condemned how ‘laments’ over the fate of the country houses ‘appear bafflingly dominant’ in histories of the modernist architecture when contrasted with attention given to ‘unromantic’ state provision of functional housing for the working classes.⁴⁵ But proposals such as Gropius’s and Fry’s at St Leonard’s Hill, and Elizabeth Denby’s Georgian-inspired terraces (conceived directly after her collaboration on social housing with Fry at Sassoon and Kensal House), illustrate how there is no easy distinction between romantic visions of the national past and cold, clear-sighted efforts to deliver mass housing. Legislative reform and the activities of the National Trust undoubtedly ensured an oversized place for country houses in the social, economic, and imaginative life of modern Britain. Their architecture and their contents were reconstrued as the rightful inheritance not only of the aristocrats they housed (and such families would, wherever possible, maintain ownership of their stately homes) but also of the entire nation who would be granted access for a limited number of days per calendar year, subject to the National Trust Act. This joint ownership – of a single high-class family on the one hand, and the abstract nation on the other – was mutually attractive for two reasons: tax and tourism. While the financial position of the land-owning gentry became untenable due to death duties and reduction of income from agriculture, the motoring masses emerged from the suburbs eager for a pleasant destination on a sunny weekend.⁴⁶ This prosaic relationship belies a complex web of cultural connections surround country houses and their landscapes, but which was made visible at schemes such as St. Leonard’s Hill. Coverage of Gropius’s proposals in the

⁴⁵ Owen Hatherley, *The Ministry of Nostalgia* (London: Verso, 2017) p. 75.

⁴⁶ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Yale University Press, 1990) p. 92; Peter Mandler, ‘Art, Death and Taxes: The Taxation of Works of Art in Britain, 1796-1914’, *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 74 (2001), 271–91.

Architectural Review sought to reframe more poetic questions of national identity surrounding the integration of popular culture and previously aristocratic spaces.⁴⁷

In the same issue as the Gropius plans, an article by W.A. Eden imagined the demolition of Blenheim Palace and its replacement with modernist flats (figure 4.5).⁴⁸ These provocative visual suggestions used photomontage to display how high-density flats could preserve rural landscape, but Eden's argument, which spanned articles in three consecutive issues, went further to present opportunities for the picturesque 'improvement' of both town and country, providing an important precedent for later writing on townscape by Pevsner and Hastings. The picturesque is integrally involved in this project due to its capacity to evoke a feeling of security and belonging. The picturesque creates a 'home-like' quality can be 'imparted to the landscape by reducing scale through tree planting and enclosures'. This is nothing less than the 'distinguishing feature' of the English rural tradition according to Eden; via an acknowledgement of England's changed position on the global stage, the task in the present moment, he concludes, is to make the national landscape 'more expressive of the idea of our common home'. Arable farming which once supported the social unit of the English village is now carried out by colonial territories and international competitors: Australia, Argentina and the USA. With the domestic security of England disturbed, and the relationship between its colonial 'periphery' and putative homeland shifted, Eden declares that 'these are some of the conditions out of which it is our business to create a new home for the community'. Just as Raymond Williams would later recognise in *The Country and the City*, England relied on colonial raw materials, crops, and manpower which existed within a globalised system of exploitation pushed out the colonial fringe, and so destabilised the very

⁴⁷ An estimated 221 houses were lost to demolition in the years 1920–39, compared to 79 lost between 1870 and 1919. Ben Cowell, 'Saving Country Houses and Their Collections in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', in *Art and the Country House*, ed. by Martin Postle (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.17658/ACH/TE580> accessed, 9 March 2021; Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, pp. 117–9.

⁴⁸ Eden was a minor architectural writer; for his most significant contribution to the period's architectural discourse was *The Process of Architectural Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1942).

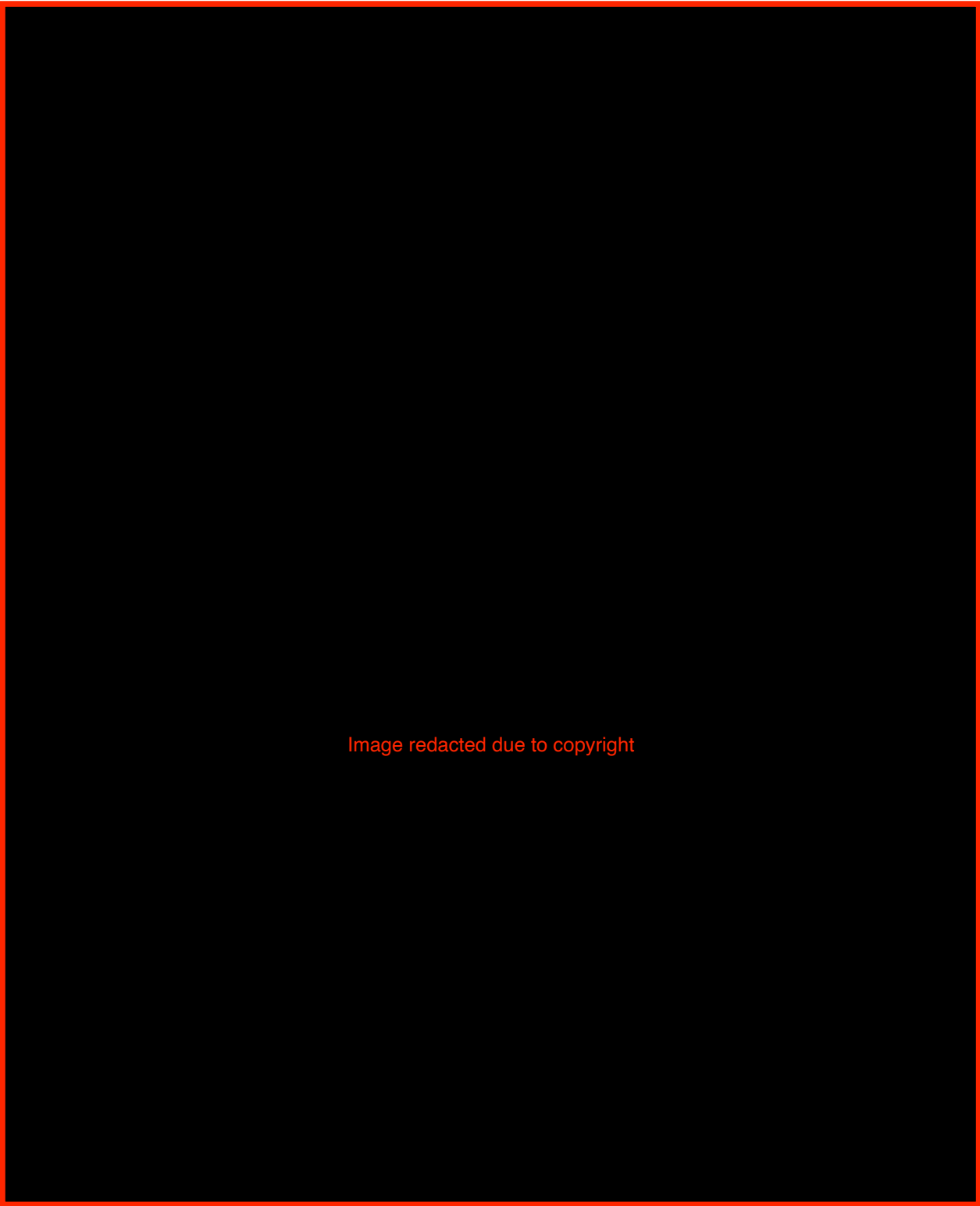


Image redacted due to copyright

4.5 Double page spread considering the preservation of parkland by comparing high- and low-density housing on the site of Blenheim Palace from W.A. Eden, 'The English Tradition in the Countryside: III The Re-birth of the Tradition', *Architectural Review* 77 (1935), 193-202 (pp. 195-196).

distinction between centre and periphery, metropole and foreign territory. As the national, 'native' landscape could no longer provide the physical sustenance of its population, its capacity to provide emotional comfort and belonging, to behave as home, was undermined. Part of the solution, Eden announced, was that 'the salvation of the countryside must be sought for in the reconstruction of the towns', an issue that would later become a clarion call of townscape.

Eden's article and the feature on St. Leonard's Hill are just two examples of the wide range of writing around similar themes that presaged the formation of townscape. As early as December 1931, Betjeman elegised locality and community flattened under 'the culture of industrialisation'.⁴⁹ In 1935, a counterpart to Eden's series on 'The English Tradition in the Countryside' was provided by the well-known planner Thomas Sharp under the title 'The English Tradition in the Town'. Aitchison labels these articles 'largely exercises in nationalist chauvinism' and Sharp would go on to publish key texts which sat at the intersection of reconstruction and a retreat into rural Englishness by placing landscape gardening as a model for urban planning. 'Of all artificiality' he wrote, expressing a central concern of the picturesque in the context of the organic development of villages, 'the most barren and depressing is the conscious imitation of the unconscious and "natural"'.⁵⁰ In 1939, Geoffrey Jellicoe, the garden designer and architect, wrote effusive praise of Tunnard's turn to 'the English Park of the eighteenth century' while Ruari MacLean applauded Nicolette Gray's revival of Victorian typefaces.⁵¹ That same year, John Piper published his celebration of variety and archaism in his topographical journey from 'London to Bath', embracing ornament and the vernacular along the way; the following year, Hastings published Piper's

⁴⁹ John Betjeman, 'The Death of Modernism', *Architectural Review*, 70 (1931), 161.

⁵⁰ Thomas Sharp, *Town and Countryside: Some Aspects of Urban and Rural Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932) p. 66. See Thomas Sharp, *Town Planning* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940) and Thomas Sharp, *The Anatomy of the Village* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946).

⁵¹ G. A. Jellicoe, 'Books: The Dynamic Garden: Gardens in the Modern Landscape', *Architectural Review*, 85 (1939), 151-2 (p. 152).

account of the 'Decrepit Glory' of the Hafod estate in Wales designed by Thomas Johnes (1748-1816), a landscape based on the writings of Uvedale Price with tumbling cataracts, wooded screens, and buildings by Salvin and John Nash.⁵² Frances Spalding, Piper's biographer, notes how Hafod 'achieved supreme status as an example of the Picturesque'.⁵³

If these articles and their authors appear scattered and incohesive, Matthew Aitchison's painstaking scholarship has offered them structure by describing four groups of writers who helped shape townscape in the *Architectural Review*: forerunners, initiators, developers, and contributors. Hastings and Pevsner are credited as the only two initiators of the movement, those who launched and directed the editorial campaign. Forerunners are understood as a large and varied group, including those like Eden, Piper and Sharp, who provided the primordial soup of ideas and articles on diverse topics out of which the organised principles of townscape would later emerge as an architectural and town planning movement.⁵⁴ Developers are a smaller group, including Ian Nairn, Hugh Casson, Sylvia Crowe and Gordon Cullen, who were closely aligned with Hastings and Pevsner's ideas and expanded upon the work of the forerunners after 1949. Lastly, the contributors were, according to Aitchison, another large and diverse group of authors who in various ways added minor material or criticised the movement from the 1950s onwards, but otherwise offered little original content to townscape that had not been provided by its founding figures.

In total Aitchison's impressive survey covers around 1,200 articles and approximately 200 individual authors. These numbers and the sheer historical span of

⁵² John Piper, 'London to Bath: A Topographical and Critical Survey of the Bath Road', *Architectural Review*, 85 (1939), 229-246; John Piper, 'Decrepit Glory: A Tour of Hafod', *Architectural Review*, 87 (1940), 207-210. See John Macarthur, 'Townscape, Anti-Scrape and Surrealism: Paul Nash and John Piper in the Architectural Review', *Journal of Architecture*, 14 (2009), 387-406.

⁵³ Frances Spalding, *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 142.

⁵⁴ Others include, Lionel Brett, Gordon Cullen, Frederick Gibberd, Goldfinger (thanks to his articles on the enclosure of space), Grigson, Amédée Ozenfant, Roland Penrose, Kenneth Rowntree, and Summerson, see Matthew Aitchison, 'Visual Planning and Exterior Furnishing: A Critical History of the Early Townscape Movement, 1930 to 1949' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Queensland 2009), appendix 1, pp. 305-359.

townscape from its first roots in the 1930s to its decaying fruit in the seventies gives some impression of its bewildering scale. Aitchison rightly points out that his framework provides much-needed clarity to an otherwise sprawling and multiform intellectual project, while he himself acknowledges the limitations of such rigid categorisation amid in the face of such diversity; given the debt townscape owes to the eclecticism and unexpected encounters of surrealism, and its political basis in liberalism, keeping its contributors in an unfettered state of free association might be more in-keeping with the spirit Pevsner and Hastings attempted to establish for their campaign.

There would indeed have been little to distinguish Pevsner's and Hastings's initial articles on the picturesque from the other writing on related topics when they first appeared during and immediately after the war. The manner in which these writings relate to national identity is, I would argue, a particularly pervasive skein of thought throughout the movement, and through these earliest articles we can see in nascent form that their intellectual project was as much about making England at home in its own land, without the imperial grandeur of the preceding decades, as it was about urban reform. As Hastings wrote, when he eventually launched townscape in 1949 under the pseudonym Ivor de Wolfe, 'When the missing science, the science of Man, comes into its own, the influence of national character on the art and technics of a given society may be a matter for specialists to fix rather than for men of letters to speculate about'.⁵⁵ Hastings's persistent use of irony casts scorn across any 'science of Man' and proclaims his identity as a man of letters, but this comment simultaneously expresses the respective roles he and Pevsner assumed in their propaganda for the picturesque: Pevsner, the specialist offering technical knowledge and scholarly rigour; Hastings, as proprietor and executive editor of the magazine, the purveyor of *belles-lettres*, the generator and provider of a broad social and aesthetic foundation for his partner's nuts

⁵⁵ de Wolfe, 'Townscape', p. 361

and bolts. Although Hastings dismissed the validity of ‘the science of Man’, his astute decision to involve Pevsner showed he was not numb to the value of systematic historiography.

Pevsner’s work at the *Architectural Review* was guided by his rigorous art historical training under Heinrich Wölfflin and Wilhelm Pinder in Germany. Wölfflin’s development of *Kunstwissenschaft* (the science of art), which focussed on minute analysis of formal elements in an artwork isolated from any association with people, ideas, or socio-cultural trends, had been central to Pevsner’s study in Munich. However, he soon took a greater interest in more expansive theories of *Kulturgeschichte* (cultural history) which understood the development of art as part of a holistic and organic process encompassing aesthetic, literary, political, economic, and social considerations. This led him to Pinder in Leipzig who was lecturing on Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* when Pevsner first took an interest in him in 1922. In her biography of Pevsner, Susie Harries asserts that Pinder became the most potent influence on Pevsner’s intellectual life. He encouraged an emphasis on *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*, loosely translated as ‘the history of art as the history of ideas’, which attempted to study cultural currents or ‘spirit’ of an era or a nation existing below the physical manifestations of art. This form of art history was closely linked to the notion of the *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, which attempted to describe ‘a polyphony of voices from different generations’ working alongside one another in a given period: ‘it was the job of the art historian to identify the rhythmic impulse of the generations, identify the problem engrossing each, and decipher the pattern that was made by their interweaving’.⁵⁶ As we will see, even though Pevsner often refrained from making political comments on nationalism prior to his Reith lectures while he settled himself in England, especially when compared to Hastings’s many and direct statements on English ‘radical’ liberalism in connection with the

⁵⁶ Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner*, pp. 56-57.

picturesque, he worked in Pinder's tradition of isolating racial characteristics of art and championing national culture: 'He loved pattern and order, and he loved to locate himself'.⁵⁷

Over two articles in 1944, 'Price on Picturesque Planning', in the February issue, and 'The Genesis of the Picturesque', in the November issue, Pevsner introduced the history and theory of the picturesque to his readers. The first presents a summary of Uvedale Price's theory of the picturesque in the form of a florilegium, a series of quotations interlinked by an editorial narrative, which was Pevsner's preferred format for introducing textual evidence on a specific topic, and one which he used repeatedly elsewhere.⁵⁸ Given what we have already seen of Hussey's work, readers of *The Picturesque* would have found plenty of familiar detail in Pevsner's summary of Price: he outlines Price's chief contributions: differentiation from Burke's dichotomy of the sublime and the beautiful, his debt to Sir Joshua Reynolds's thirteenth discourse (which had been the subject of an earlier article by Pevsner entitled 'Heritage of Compromise' published in February 1942), and his attacks on Capability Brown and Humphry Repton. Pevsner distilled several fundamental tenets of the picturesque from Price's writing and paired them, where necessary, with terms he considered more suitable to the twentieth century: 'roughness' or abruptness, 'irritation' or stimulation, 'piquancy' or sudden contrasts, 'variety', 'intricacy', 'curiosity', and 'accident'.⁵⁹ These were qualities that John Piper had found in abundance in the vernacular styles on the Bath Road, and Ruari MacLean had praised in Nicolette Gray's study of Victorian typography. Pevsner then commended Price's acknowledgement that even an aesthetically displeasing object – a

⁵⁷ Harries, *Nikolaus Pevsner*, p. 87. In later writing, Pevsner would follow Hastings's lead in remarking on the significance of liberalism in its French, American and English forms to the formation of the picturesque: 'This art – a purely English creation, in stark contrast to the French grandiosity and formalism of Versailles, just like English liberalism is in contrast to French absolutism – this spontaneous, complex, romantic art is England's greatest contribution to European culture', Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Festival of Britain', from 'Il Festival di Londra', *Comunità*, October 1951, trans. Sabine Eiche, in *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, p. 195. See also Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, p. 178. For an overview of townscape's politics see Anthony Raynsford, 'Urban Contrast and Neo-Toryism: On the Social and Political Symbolism of the Architectural Review's Townscape Campaign', *Planning Perspectives*, 30 (2015), 95-128.

⁵⁸ See Aitchison and Macarthur, 'Pevsner's Townscape', p. 9.

⁵⁹ [Nikolaus Pevsner], 'Price on Picturesque Planning', *Architectural Review*, 95 (1944), 47-50 (pp. 47-48).

peasant's run-down hovel, or a blasted oak, for instance – could be considered picturesquely beautiful when appropriately contextualised. The famous example Price deployed to illustrate his point was Rembrandt's study of a slaughtered ox (figure 4.6).⁶⁰ The butchered carcass is a horrifying object in itself, but when subjected to the painter's gaze a specific kind of picturesque pleasure can be taken in its representation in paint. In a surprising leap that speaks to Pevsner's fertile relationship with Hastings, this became the foundation of his attempts to encourage architectural diversity in the urban fabric. In an example later offered by Hastings, one might be repulsed by the fussy exterior of a Victorian shop front coated in brownish gold paint, but within a visual composition of variety promoting stimulating and surprising contrasts encouraging an aesthetic curiosity on the part of the viewer, the encrustation of Victorian ornament could, like a grotto or a spraying cataract, be considered a valued part of the picturesque whole.⁶¹

Pevsner goes on to suggest why the picturesque painter and improver of landscape is best placed to inform a new approach to urban planning. Their developed aesthetic code can accept certain forms of 'deformity' – for instance, the weathered roughness of broken stonework, or a storm-blasted tree softened by time. Simultaneously, Price's model of picturesque taste censures 'insipidity' which is relieved by deformity, roughness and surprise, emphasising the value of a scene which is neither wholly beautiful nor overwhelmingly ugly. 'Hence,' writes Pevsner, the picturesque painter 'is the one to tell us how a stretch of scenery, rural or urban, can be converted into a landscape, that is a piece of three-dimensional art, planned to give visual pleasure'. What Pevsner sets out, primarily through minor interjections within Price's argument, is the suitability of the picturesque to 'the urban pattern' even while it was originally 'proffered with a view to conditions on a country estate only'.⁶² The urban

⁶⁰ See Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, p. 83

⁶¹ de Wolfe, 'Townscape'.

⁶² [Pevsner], 'Price on Picturesque Planning', p. 47.



Image redacted due to copyright

4.6 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Carcase of an Ox*, c. 1640-45, oil on panel, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.

environment, he suggests, is ripe for improvement according to picturesque principles, allowing older buildings to remain and become incorporated within an 'improved' scene which embraces the effects of water, street furniture, material texture, vegetation, and colour, apprehended as a holistic visual impression.

At the close of Pevsner's article, he exposes the extent to which he intended this new approach to depart from modernist plans for tabula rasa urban planning, most famously Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* which had been published in 1935 and promoted by CIAM throughout the 1930s. 'Price is at his greatest,' Pevsner writes, when he leaves

behind the accepted dogmas and fashions of his generation. The man who could defend the compartmented 'Dutch' garden and Handel's music in 1790, without fear of being branded a reactionary, should be more to us than a representative of a style of the past. Such latitude of aesthetic sensibility raises him out of the eighteenth century to an undated position in the history of aesthetic theory.⁶³

Pevsner's admiration of Price is such that he transcends the chronological frame of the German's usually rigid historiography; Price's significance is in his resonance with the collective imagination of Pevsner's own generation, acting as progenitor of an aesthetic theory equally applicable to a twentieth-century urban setting as to the rural view of an eighteenth-century landowner. In practice, Pevsner endorsed seeing the city as a pictorial whole, working with existing architecture and embracing the sudden contrasts that would inevitably result from buildings that replaced the bombed carcasses spotting English cities. These lines also anticipate the resurgence of interest in Victorian architecture associated with figures such as J.M. Richards, Piper, and Betjeman after the war. If Price could, at the dawn of the nineteenth century, turn to the culture of his parents' generation for sources of aesthetic renewal, Pevsner demanded his contemporaries assume a similar level of intellectual courage

⁶³ [Pevsner], 'Price on Picturesque Planning', p. 50.

to think beyond the planning paradigm provided to them by modernist orthodoxy. Although Aitchison and Macarthur have suggested that modernism's unpopularity does not appear to concern Pevsner to the extent that it does Hastings, here we see him acknowledging the need to rethink how his contemporary popular culture applied blinkers to one's aesthetic experience.⁶⁴ Pevsner seemed to suggest that such limited vision left modern subjects shut out from their past. Pevsner's picturesque was still to be a conquest of space, but rather than steam roller the old to clear the way for the new, the old would be reframed and revitalised alongside the new. The conquest of space would also be a conquest of history, of a reconciliation with England's past unlocking of the rich seams of cultural identity buried there.

After townscape had been formally announced, Gordon Cullen's and Hugh Casson's illustrations and architectural work would set about exploring what Price's principles might look like when applied to the mid-twentieth-century city. They similarly stressed attending to the way the picturesque could organically combine the jumble of England's urban fabric into unexpected views through alleys and the orchestral effects of awnings, lampposts, shop signs and paving material. For instance, Cullen's 'Townscape Casebook' (1949) encouraged links between the freedoms supposedly enshrined in English caselaw and the freely flourishing picturesque beauty of English cities, according with Robert Byron's earlier comments on London as an exercise in architectural freedom and the city as a symbol of its political identity (figure 4.7). In later work, *Townscape* (1961) and *Concise Townscape* (1971), Cullen offered a more conservative interpretation of Pevsner's proposals which melted into contextualism.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Aitchison and Macarthur, 'Pevsner's Townscape', p. 17.

⁶⁵ Aitchison and Macarthur, 'Pevsner's Townscape', pp. 13-14.

Before these visual applications were fleshed out, the *Architectural Review* was preoccupied with demonstrating the Englishness of the picturesque. Casson's and Cullen's drawings rested on a nationalist dichotomy of the strict, 'rational', axial symmetry of seventeenth-century gardens in the French style, all carefully trimmed box and geometric topiary typified by the work of André Le Nôtre, versus the irregularly planned English style, all open, unregulated views and mature, unkempt trees. Commenting on plans for London's reconstruction in 1943, Lionel Brett's article entitled 'The New Haussmann' condemned the Royal Academy's proposals for their 'boring axes and banal symmetries of the *Beaux-Arts*' in contrast to 'English qualities' of flow and rhythm 'looser and more organic than the grids of Le Corbusier and MARS'.⁶⁶ These comments map historic differences in garden design onto Brett's own preference irregular, informal planning, but such visual and functional debates operated in tandem with the grander political stakes of London's reconstruction. On the same Royal Academy plan, John Summerson wrote that there was 'no mistaking the seriousness of the general intention to carve symmetry into the irregular face of London, to give a patch here and a patch there a sense of nobility and Imperial affirmation'.⁶⁷ The classical order of axial symmetry was seen as an attempt to confirm the power and status of London's imperial identity, but we would be naïve to assume similar motivations of imperial affirmation and national aggrandisement were not in play for those who opposed the Royal Academy's proposals. For both parties, 'civilisation' as Brett phrased it, was 'disintegrating'.⁶⁸

This was the context in which Pevsner set out a scholarly basis for the Englishness of the picturesque in his article 'The Genesis of the Picturesque', which was later expanded as

⁶⁶ Lionel Brett, 'The New Haussmann', *Architectural Review*, 93 (1943), 23-26 (p.23). For an alternative history which places Le Corbusier as the pinnacle of picturesque achievement, see Richard A. Etlin, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: The Romantic Legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ John Summerson, 'The Royal Academy Committee's Plan for London', *Architect and Building News*, 172 (1942), 77-78 (p.77).

⁶⁸ Brett, 'The New Haussmann', p. 23.

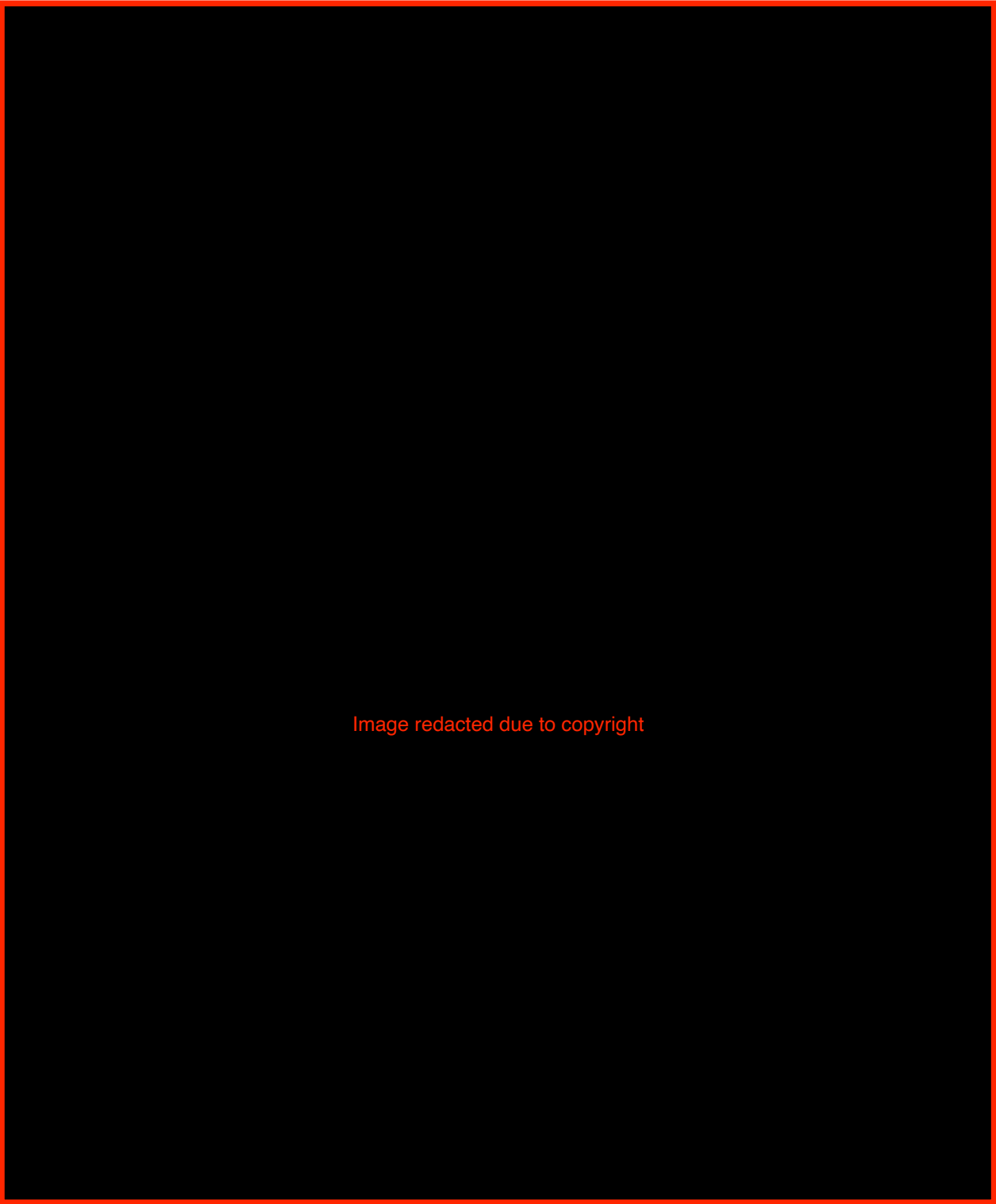


Image redacted due to copyright

4.7 Gordon Cullen, 'Townscape Casebook', *Architectural Review*, 106 (1949), 363-374 (pp. 364-365)

part two of his unpublished monograph. Returning to the format of a florilegium, Pevsner illustrated how this English style, as it emerged in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries through the writing of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Batty Langley, George Mason, Sir William Temple, and James Thomson, could symbolise national identity. He presents lines from Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711), referring to France as a nation 'born to serve' while 'we, brave Britons, foreign laws despise'.⁶⁹ George Mason's *Essay on Design in Gardening* (1768) declares '[O]ur country is a *school of landscape*' and in England 'independency has been strongly asserted in matters of taste, as in religion and government' – a quotation based on a differentiation between English liberalism and perceived French authoritarianism. Bolder still is Horace Walpole's 'We have given the true model of gardening to the world', while Joseph Wharton's essay on Pope (1752) argues that in modern gardening 'this kingdom claims a preference over every nation in Europe'. If colonial pretensions as a constituent part of England's national identity are somewhat latent in these quotes, they appear more clearly in William Chambers's recommendation to 'convert a whole province into a garden'.⁷⁰ By using these quotations, Pevsner maintains a careful distance from the political implications of the picturesque. He does not digress into an extended discussion of the anxieties of American independence that caused Mason to comment on 'independency', nor on the colonial nature of Chambers's experience in China, but remains dedicated to his discussion of the formal development of the picturesque directed toward establishing national characteristics.⁷¹ In line with his training in *Kulturgeschichte*, Pevsner shapes the historical validity of the picturesque as a secure vessel for England's self-conscious cultural identity into the twentieth century.

⁶⁹ It is amusing to note that even as Walpole extols British liberty, he does so using classical, Latinate syntax.

⁷⁰ Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, pp. 101, 103.

⁷¹ George Mason (1735-1806) of St. Alban, London, is not to be confused with George Mason (1725-1792) of Fairfax County, Virginia, the American revolutionary and politician.

The examples Pevsner deployed to illustrate the informal and irregular quality of English cities are telling. In the monograph he prepared at Hastings's request, he presented certain Oxford colleges, Lincoln's Inn in London, and the sector planning of Bath as instances of the 'natural' occurrence of the picturesque. His processions through these sites, which prefigure the 'perambulations' that are such a prominent feature of *The Buildings of England*, are communicated through a series of commissioned photographs which rework the older picturesque promenade through a landscape where views, waterways, or ornamental features are revealed (figure 4.8a, b & c).⁷² Pevsner praises the variegated textures, architectural periods, and spatial extension experienced when moving through the compartmented, human-scale spaces of Oxford and Lincoln's Inn, yet by doing so he implicitly mounts a defence of the continued influence of an educational powerhouse and legal authority at the heart of the English state. The rule of law and the schooling system, with Oxford as its apogee, were exported by the British Empire, and it was, after all, the ubiquitous photography of the Oxford colleges that Isherwood remarked upon while in China in *Journey to a War*, buildings which only a small fraction of English society would have access to or knowledge of.

A few years earlier, in 1938, Virginia Woolf had published an anti-war and anti-fascist critique of the same patriarchal institutions Pevsner praised. *Three Guineas*, Sonita Sarkar argues, is 'not anti-nation but rather anti-nationalist [...] opposing the prevailing masculinist terms of Englishness'.⁷³ This is partially achieved through a series of photographs showing representatives of five pillars of England's institutional authority dressed in ceremonial robes: the military, the government, the educational and judicial systems, and the

⁷² Aitchison and Macarthur are circumspect regarding who created these photographs, but Pevsner gave detailed instructions for them, and the photographs held in the Getty Archive are stamped by Dell and Wainwright, see 'Pevsner's Townscape', pp. 11-12.

⁷³ Sonita Sarker, 'Woolf and Theories of Postcolonialism', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 110-28 (p. 114).

church (figure 4.9a & b). Whereas Woolf's photographs assume the position of the critical spectator, scrutinising the mortar-boarded don and the bewigged judge, Pevsner's architectural tour from eye-level gives the view from their first-person perspective. The photographs Woolf selected are posed against her narrator's memory of images of 'dead bodies and ruined houses', evidence of fascist war atrocities circulated during the Spanish Civil War, and thus implicate the men depicted in a cycle of conflict on the eve of its extension in World War II.⁷⁴ Woolf's photographs then merge into a single textual image of a man adorned in the paraphernalia of nationalism, 'called in German and Italian Führer or Duce; in our own language, Tyrant or Dictator'. This man is evidently aligned with the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini, but with the linguistic shift to 'our own language', he has a relevance that strikes closer to home.⁷⁵ Kathy Phillips has argued the imperial scale of Woolf's critique 'is not far to seek', while Sarker suggests her statement that 'As a woman, I have no country' acknowledges her subordinated status and acts as a foundation for 'anti-colonial' solidarity.⁷⁶

The bond between Woolf's and Pevsner's selections of photographs is further enriched by their joint connections to the language of film. Pevsner hoped to evoke the moving eye of the film camera in his photo-series, and his images perform a sequential, documentary account of movement through space.⁷⁷ Woolf, on the other hand, uses her text to establish a montage of images using a shot-counter-shot technique to associate the men in ceremonial robes, the described figure of the Tyrant, and the aforementioned photographs of

⁷⁴ Jessica Berman, 'Woolf and the Private Sphere', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 461-74 .

⁷⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938) p. 217.

⁷⁶ Kathy J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf against Empire*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994) ; Sarker, 'Woolf and Theories of Postcolonialism', p. 115.

⁷⁷ For Le Corbusier's use of the picturesque promenade in Maison la Roche and the 'cinematographic' quality of space experienced through sequential pictorialization in relation of Walter Benjamin's writing on *Erfahrung*, see Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, p. 164.

A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.8a View of Front Quad, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 59

A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.8b View of the Founders' Building, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 61



Image redacted due to copyright

4.8c View of Fell Tower through Tom Quad, Christ Church, Oxford, from Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Mathew Aitchison, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010) p. 55.

A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.9a From Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

4.9b From Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

atrocities in Spain.⁷⁸ The gendered subjectivity of this experience is evident from the narrator's introduction to the images which are 'of your world as it appears to us who see it from the threshold of the private house'.⁷⁹ It is the affective power of the assemblage of images in *Three Guineas*, viewed through admittedly simplified dichotomy from the feminine domestic sphere to the public patriarchal sphere, which allows the narrator to dislodge and make visible the power relations inherent in nationalist pageantry. Pevsner, meanwhile, through his strictly empirical approach, absorbs rather than deflects the authorities which emanate from the buildings in Oxford and Lincoln's Inn. This approach is sustained in his images of Bath which present a city with a privileged role in English history as the site for the summer sojourns of the monied elites and landed aristocracy in the eighteenth century while the picturesque was under formation. The variety of Georgian terraces Pevsner applauds was thanks to that accumulation and concentration of wealth.⁸⁰

Collectively, from the cloistered passages and ivied ashlar of Oxford to the grandiosity of Bath's Royal Crescent, Pevsner's case-studies leave a knotted legacy. The supposed natural occurrence of picturesque planning at these sites represents an elision of, and a buttress to the patriarchal, educational, legislative, and financial power which historically influenced town planning in England. What is at stake here is the identity of the picturesque and of England: what was posing as freedom was rather the entrenchment of ancient power. While Woolf sought to renegotiate English identity away from forms of chauvinist nationalism, Pevsner returned to an old model and attempted to give it new life. He was not the first to view Oxford like this, and nor would he be the last: Raymond Unwin

⁷⁸ Naomi Toth, 'Arguing with Photographs: Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, and Modernist Political Engagement', *Modernism/modernity*, 28 (2021), 67-90 (pp. 81-2).

⁷⁹ Woolf, *Three Guineas*, p. 26; Maggie Humm, 'Memory, Photography, and Modernism: The 'Dead Bodies and Ruined Houses' of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28 (2003), 645-663.

⁸⁰ The 'Treasure Hunts' Pevsner published under the pseudonym F.R. Donner were a more egalitarian precursor to his 'perambulations', see Anne Hultzsch, 'Architectural History from Eye-Level: Nikolaus Pevsner's 'Treasure Hunts' in the *Architectural Review*, 1942', *Journal of Architecture*, 19 (2014), 382-401.

assumed similar perspectives in his *Town Planning* (1909), and the images Pevsner commissioned were ultimately reused and published in Thomas Sharp's *Oxford Replanned* (1948). Such picturesque visuality was revived precisely because of the specific connections it held to England's national self-image, and its reliance on colonial status as comfort, an intoxicating prospect for a nation struggling to retain the trappings of its former imperial glory.

Unsurprisingly, Hastings shared many of Pevsner's concerns. In 'Exterior Furnishing or Sharawaggi: The Art of Making Urban Landscape', also published in 1944, he presents the clearest exposition of the townscape idea prior to its launch five years later. Where Pevsner was exegetical, Hastings prioritises social and political issues. The problem at the heart of modern architecture, he argued, is that both the Garden City movement and modernism have failed to present a viable future to the English public. Although the Garden City movement had quickly lapsed into a sullied, suburban form, its popular success was rooted in providing England's working classes, represented by everyman figures Bill and Billy Brown, with an attractive image: 'a kind of popular picture [...] of the ideal and decent world of the Browns, if they were abstemious and never swore, might hope to inhabit'.⁸¹ Hastings signals his distaste for the suburban way of life and the anti-virile social and ethical conformity it apparently reproduced.⁸² It was woefully inadequate 'as a physical solution to the problems arising out of the industrial revolution', by which he means urbanisation. However, in its provision of an ideal national domestic identity suburbia was to be admired and emulated. Hastings mused that 'it gained the national ear, or rather filled the national eye'. He noticed that the mythos of the suburban ideal gained potency through its clarity, in part because it

⁸¹ The Editor, 'Exterior Furnishing or Sharawaggi: The Art of Making Urban Landscape', *Architectural Review*, 95 (1944), 3-8 (p. 3).

⁸² For Hastings's extensive critique of suburbia see, Ivor de Wolfe, *Civilian: The End of Suburban Man*, (London: Architectural Press, 1971) ; Erdem Erten, 'I, The World, The Devil and The Flesh'; and John Macarthur, 'The Smell of Politics: Hubert De Cronin Hastings and Liberalism in Architectural Discourse', *GTA Papers: Grand Gestures*, 4 (2020), 22-45.

was a bastardised version of Garden City principles. On these terms, modernism was an abject failure. However exciting exhibitions of mechanised futures ‘with helicopters and air-buses’ might seem, ‘a man of common-sense does not forget all the important things he does on two legs’. This modernist camp, labelled the ‘Bauhausians’, ‘have boldness and architectural imagination’, Hastings admitted, ‘[b]ut their new world does not appear to incorporate any of the old ones, and to many quiet people it seems that, like other revolutionaries, they may destroy more than they can possibly create’.⁸³

Hastings’s heady rhetoric manages to combine aristocratic snobbery with the modernist machismo he claimed to decry. It is nonetheless easy to imagine readers warming to his charismatic prose announcing a third path between the arts and crafts cottages of ‘Port Sunlight and MARS’. He suggests ‘a national picture-making attitude exists among us and has done for centuries’. This national predisposition – the picturesque – is presented as a pragmatic compromise that encourages society to ‘give up its day dreams’. Christopher Hussey, who is mentioned by name in the article and was planning an ultimately unrealised second edition of *The Picturesque*, certainly approved of these comments; copies of the *Architectural Review* still held at Scotney carry fervent annotations of Hastings’s words with key sections underlined. Hastings’s approach of compromise and catholicity rejected the absolutes of tabula rasa planning and accepted that English cities ‘will always be an extraordinary hotchpotch of competing elements; that the visual problem is to coax these competitors into a larger harmony’. This passage prompted a flurry of emphasis from Hussey’s pen.⁸⁴

The title of Hastings’s article ‘Exterior Furnishing’ indicates his central analogy between private domestic decoration and his proposed visual planning of the public realm.

⁸³ [Hastings], ‘Exterior Furnishing’, pp. 3, 7.

⁸⁴ [Hastings], ‘Exterior Furnishing’, pp. 3, 5. See Christopher Hussey Archive, Scotney Castle.

The picturesque naturally occurs in the decorative clutter of everyday domestic interiors and is, Hastings stresses, a peculiarly English trait opposed to the tightly controlled arrangements of Louis XV furniture in the apartment of a wealthy French couple. ‘The fear of one’s modern cupboard clashing with the Victorian atmosphere of a room, or one’s Victorian chandelier looking out of place in an Aalto environment is wholly unjustified’, Hastings assures his reader, ‘the aesthetic qualities of the individual items are quite irrelevant. Let them be ugly, let them be incongruous. What matters alone is the unity and congruity of the pattern’.⁸⁵ This phrase, ‘the unity and congruity of the pattern’, is a crucial one in the context of attempts to establish a coherent English identity, from Richards’s writing on the vernacular to Georgian terraces, and will feature later in my discussion of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. Here, Hastings’s pattern recurs, fractal-like, through various scales of design: domestic interiors, entire buildings, street scenes, and eventually the city itself. Kenneth Rowntree’s illustrations translated these ideas into visual form for the article (figure 4.10). Wallpapers are translated into external wall textures and varied surfaces, upholstery is replaced by urban vegetation, sundry ornaments are translated into objects and embellishments in the street-scene; all are welcomed into a ‘unity and congruity of pattern’ by maintaining an assortment of historic buildings alongside sympathetic modern additions. At its root, Hastings’s analogy enforces a bond between the home of the individual and the home of the collective. Where the comfort of soft furnishings and a secure identity might be sought out in one’s living room, so too could the public realm provide a collective identity to a modern England and offer coherence to its national past.

The question of what Hastings’s recommendations signify in broader political terms is answered by his assertion that the picturesque is democratic and whiggish:

⁸⁵ [Hastings], ‘Exterior Furnishing’, p. 6.

Landscape principles were Whig principles; from Horace Walpole to Uvedale Price the prophets of the [picturesque] movement were fond of drawing parallels between their free landscape and, in Walpole's words, this "Empire of free men", the opposite of course being the totalitarian French with their insistence on slavish symmetry.⁸⁶

This passage makes explicit the political motive behind the broader townscape movement, a motive that is particularly visible in the context of Walpole's comment of 'an Empire of Freemen' delivered in his commentary on the political satires of William Mason.⁸⁷ He describes a causal link between Britain's attaining an ideal form of constitutional government and the realisation of a similarly ideal form of landscape gardening and management:

what paradise was England while it attained her Constitution – for perhaps it is no paradox to say, that the reason why Taste in Gardening was never discovered before the end of the present Century, is, that It was the result of all the happy combinations of an Empire of Freemen, an Empire formed by Trade, not by a military & conquering Spirit, maintained by the valour of independent Property, enjoying long tranquillity after virtuous struggle, & employing its opulence & good sense on the refinement of rational pleasures.⁸⁸

For Walpole, picturesque landscape stands as visual testament to the liberal political system of England and its empire. Walpole's Whigs had successfully restrained Tory royalism over the preceding century and elevated principles of global trade and individual rights to property and land. As Hastings acknowledged, Walpole's rhetoric of freedom was staged against French autocracy which was accorded its own visual form in rigid symmetrical planning, anathema to the supposedly English codes of free movement, self-determination, the right to property unimpeded by the crown. Walpole's statement is also, quite obviously, a startling manipulation of the forces by which Britain's empire was expanded. Rather than a legacy of

⁸⁶ [Hastings], 'Exterior Furnishing', p. 7.

⁸⁷ The poet William Mason (1724-1797) is not to be confused with George Mason (1735-1806), author of *Essay on Design in Gardening* (1768) quoted by Pevsner.

⁸⁸ Horace Walpole, *Satirical Poems Published Anonymously by William Mason: With Notes by Horace Walpole, Now First Printed from His Manuscript* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) p. 43. For a dedicated discussion of the historiography and politics of Walpole's writing see Stephen Bending, 'Horace Walpole and Eighteenth-Century Garden History', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 57 (1994), 209- 226.



Image redacted due to copyright

4.10 Illustration by Kenneth Rowntree from The Editor [Hastings], 'Exterior Furnishing or sharawaggi: the art of making urban landscape', *Architectural Review* 95, (1944), p. 6.

violence and exploitation, he would have the Empire considered as a harmonious alliance of free individuals involved in mutually beneficial trade, allotted equal rights, and enjoying equal dividends of this paradisaical system.⁸⁹

Now, why would Hastings, writing in the 1940s, elect to revive this history of the English landscape garden and its relationship with an idealised empire? Clues are provided in his official introduction of townscape to the readership of the *Architectural Review* in 1949, which featured a still more extensive discussion of how Whig liberalism directed the journal's recommendations for town planning. Writing under the pseudonym Ivor de Wolfe, Hastings's subtitle, 'A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy founded on the true rock of Sir Uvedale Price', sets out the ambitious breadth of his new movement. Not simply a set of recommendations for town planning, this was to be a new intellectual and aesthetic structure for England's national identity based on eighteenth-century principles. Indeed, the majority of the essay is exclusively a discussion of liberalism in England and France. Only in the closing pages does the translation of this history into 'a modern picturesque theory' reveal itself. The article's purpose, Hastings declares, is to set out

a specimen case – Picturesque Theory – and by relating it to its political background try whether there isn't some correspondence which would permit the terminology of the one to be used for the better understanding of the other. If, in the process one seems to be writing not about town planning and landscape but about democracy, and liberalism, that is only to be expected; that is, so to speak, describing red nasturtiums in terms of grave, deep oboe notes.

Through his typically stylised, slightly eccentric writing, Hastings attempted to establish an intuitive connection between forms of governance and forms of a landscape. 'Politics can smell too, can't it?' he suggested, basing his argument on the inspired example of

⁸⁹ For a more recent scholarly account of the picturesque as a manifestation of liberalism see Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Baudelaire's synaesthetic imagination fuelled by 'Swedenborg's *correspondences* and large quantities of hasheesh'. He presents landscape architecture and politics as strangely distant yet as intuitively connected as the smell of a flower to a musical note.⁹⁰ This gambit allows him to construct the English landscape as broadly apolitical, so fundamental to the national temperament that it stands above and beyond factional distinctions, while at the same time placing it as manifestation of a distinct political creed – liberalism – that he would have enshrined and entangled with the picturesque at the heart of the nation's self-conception. His cultural model appeals to what he considered a common-sense, intuitive link between 'freedom and free forms', one able to persuade the public as a simple image of how culture was interrelated with political philosophy. So even as Hastings dressed his prose in intellectual curlicues – witty asides for the cognoscenti, reeling leaps in period and context – his article was aimed at promoting popular critical engagement with English national identity as it emerged at the junction between politics and aesthetics.

Late Eliot, Landscape and Empire

Stefan Collini's notion of 'the Whig interpretation of English literature' is a useful tool for connecting Pevsner's and Hastings's work on the picturesque with a broader cultural field, and specifically with T.S. Eliot. Collini argues that throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'a crucial vehicle for establishing and negotiating a relevant sense of national identity has been provided by that symbolic and emotionally charged selection of writing called "English literature"'.⁹¹ As a result, the intellectual, moral and political significance

⁹⁰ It is odd that Hastings felt he had to labour his point of connecting politics and landscape through the metaphor of synaesthesia given the politicised nature of modern architecture and the English rural ideal during the inter-war years. See Ashley Maher, *Reconstructing Modernism: British Literature, Modern Architecture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁹¹ Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 347.

accrued by ‘English literature’ during the twentieth century was vast, and the circumscription of the canon was subject to rancorous dispute. These disputes challenged, reworked, and rewrote the history of English identity as manifest in literary-intellectual discourse. By the 1930s, following the advent of modernism, the increasingly unstable position of the canon is, for Collini, symptomatic of ‘the disintegration’ of this liberal interpretative system. The understanding of England’s democratic identity we have just seen propounded by Walpole shifted after 1800 from an oppositional, fringe suggestion of what national culture could and should be to a centralised, widely held, self-congratulatory and ‘essentialist’ view of English identity. During the Victorian era this process was managed by the codification of the English language in the form of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and a national canon which claimed a national identity through an unbroken lineage of authors. When Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch was lecturing ‘On the lineage of English literature’ in Cambridge in 1915, he looked back at the impact of volumes such as Edward A. Freeman’s *The History of the Norman Conquest* (1867-79) and John Richard Green’s *A Short History of the English People* (1874). He proclaimed that through such volumes, ‘as through the parting of clouds of darkness, we beheld our ancestry, literary as well as political, radiantly legitimised’.⁹²

This newly sanctified literary heritage is closely connected with the attempts to demarcate and preserve a holistic ‘English’ architectural heritage whether through vernacular traditions or the preservation of London’s imperial Georgian cityscapes discussed in my previous chapters. Still more noteworthy is the correspondence between the *Oxford English Dictionary* and Pevsner’s closely comparable attempts to compile a comprehensive account of the nation’s architecture in *The Buildings of England*, his writings on townscape, and *The Englishness of English Art*. Pevsner’s efforts to work from local specificity into a unified

⁹² Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Cambridge Lectures* (London: J.M. Dent, 1943) p. 22, cited in Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 359.

document of the nation's architecture are comparatively belated as Collini considers the Whig interpretation of English literature to be decaying by the time Pevsner and Hastings are writing. Nonetheless, Pevsner and Hastings are conscious of the 'sense of historical possession' Collini describes which was lost in the twentieth century. It is the work of T.S. Eliot through the 1930s and 1940s which encapsulates this phenomenon felt by English writers: the failure or struggle 'of mastering the times by successfully adapting to them'.⁹³ Despite Eliot's self-professed Anglo-Catholic identity and his Tory politics developed through his late prose, Collini asserts that Eliot was embroiled in a dispute around the cultural politics of Englishness that associates him with more liberal antecedents.

Alongside Eliot, Pevsner and Hastings are in search of a sense of Englishness and domestic identification that seemed to be deserting them, and their resuscitation of an explicitly Whig intellectual history expands Collini's thesis into architectural space. Collini writes of how 'reassessments of major authors' such as Eliot's comments on Milton in 1947, 'have continued to provide some of the most highly publicised occasions for addressing questions of national cultural identity', but it is clear this also applies, perhaps predominantly so, to architectural criticism of historic approaches to building and planning in the immediate post-war years.⁹⁴ Rather than the Whig interpretation of English culture relying on literature as the chief forum of criticism and intellectual dispute in the period, the evident vitality of intellectual exchange in the *Architectural Review* suggests that at least some of literature's pre-eminence ebbed away into not only the architectural press and adjacent visual cultures but also to major public architectural expositions and projects. The Festival of Britain in 1951, overseen by Hugh Casson and planned according to picturesque principles, and Patrick Abercrombie's plans for the reconstruction of cities throughout the country, were vehicles for

⁹³ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 371.

⁹⁴ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 372.

the publicization of the latest ideas on the built environment and their concomitant re-visioning of the nation's liberal self.⁹⁵ New homes stood as new architectures of identity providing newly secured national histories. As an exercise in national self-representation, an image especially prone to reformation as the urban fabric of Britain lay in tatters, the architecture of reconstruction as much a reconstructed literary canon could be considered the engine of recovery for England's national identity, now carried from the nineteenth into the twentieth century.

Rather than erasing Eliot, placing him alongside Hastings and Pevsner reveals the extent of his connection with their positions on Englishness and indeed the picturesque. Erdem Erten has already considered how Hastings used Eliot's notion of the separating and unifying power of culture, articulated in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, to establish his own distinction between culture and civilisation in his lengthy treatise *The Unnatural History of Man*. Eliot's understanding of culture was highly influential for Hastings and helped steer the *Architectural Review*'s treatment of architectural content, especially on anonymity and vernacular architectures. In 1954, the magazine even reprinted a medley of extracts from Eliot's essays, presenting architectural examples in the place of his poetic sources, and replacing references to poets with architects in an attempt to translate Eliot's position on creativity to the architectural profession.⁹⁶ Eliot, meanwhile, used *The Criterion* to respond to debates surrounding architectural preservation and the National Trust's growing

⁹⁵ See Nick Beech, 'Et Tu, Peter?' Some Kinds of Real-(or Not So) Politik at the Festival of Britain', *Journal of Architecture*, 17 (2012), 747-762; Jo Littler, "'Festering Britain': The 1951 Festival of Britain, National Identity and the Representation of the Commonwealth', in *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain*, ed. Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (Aldershot Ashgate, 2006) pp. 21-42 ; Junichi Hasegawa, 'The Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction in 1940s Britain', *Twentieth-century British History*, 10 (1999), 137-161; John Pendlebury, 'Planning the Historic City: Reconstruction Plans in the United Kingdom in the 1940s', *Town Planning Review*, 74 (2003), 371-393; Alayna Heinonen, 'A Tonic to the Empire?: The 1951 Festival of Britain and the Empire-Commonwealth', *Britain and the World*, 8 (2015), 76-99; Frank Mort, 'Fantasies of Metropolitan Life: Planning London in the 1940s', *Journal of British Studies*, 43 (2004), 120-151.

⁹⁶ It should be noted that where Eliot lobbied for maintaining social classes and the dissemination of culture by elites, Hastings was more receptive to Marxism and envisioned an egalitarian world state. See Erten, 'Shaping "The Second Half Century"', pp. 135-137.

portfolio in 1934. Like Hastings, he was concerned with preservation insofar as it could suffuse culture and generate a reformation of societal values. The beauty of England, he wrote, was not to be found in ‘the more remote hills and moors’ but ‘the ordinary countryside which is largely the work of generations of humanizing labour. And if this cannot be preserved, and preserved *alive*, it is of small good that the land should be dotted with little museums of scenery’.⁹⁷ Eliot’s often overlooked views on rural preservation are germane to any reading of his later work but I would like to trace the extensive connections between Hastings’s architectural imagination and Eliot’s poetry and cultural commentary through the picturesque.⁹⁸

In expressly political terms, Eliot was a staunch and vicious critic of liberalism, and he would have read Hastings’s invocation of the Rousseauian dictum ‘be thyself’ with disdain. It was in *After Strange Gods*, the published volume of his Page-Barbour lectures at the University of Virginia in 1933, that Eliot denounced ‘Western’ society as ‘worm-eaten with liberalism’.⁹⁹ This was the opening salvo of over two decades of writing against England’s liberal-democratic order which destroyed ‘traditional social habits’ and dissolved a society’s ‘natural collective consciousness’.¹⁰⁰ These ideas set their roots in Eliot’s earlier intellectual development and were expounded at length in *The Idea of a Christian Society* as well as *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*.¹⁰¹ His distance from Hastings’s liberalism is

⁹⁷ T.S. Eliot, ‘A Commentary’, *Criterion: A Literary Review*, 14 (1934), 86-90 (p. 88).

⁹⁸ Eliot is here writing against the Victorian fetishization of alpine scenery promoted by Ruskin, but his view on preservation shares an affinity with Ruskin’s definition of the picturesque which praised ‘that agedness in the midst of active life which binds the old and the new into harmony’ that he observed in the old tower of Calais church. In contrast Ruskin presents the English tendency to present ‘our new street, our new inn, our green shaven lawn, and our piece of ruin emerging from it, – a mere *specimen* of the Middle Ages put on a bit of velvet carpet to be shown’, John Ruskin, ‘Modern Painters IV’, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904) 39 vols, 6, pp. 11-12.

⁹⁹ T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934) p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: Volume 5 Tradition and Orthodoxy 1934-1939*, ed. Iman Javadi, Ronald Schuchard, and Jayme Stayer (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017) pp. 683-747 (p. 689).

¹⁰¹ His anti-Rousseauism is closely affiliated with the writing of his Harvard mentor Irving Babbitt, although he would go on to attack Babbitt’s humanism as an understanding of culture deracinated from racial, temporal and

best demonstrated by his suggestion that culture's promotion of individuality was a kind of heresy. For Eliot, an individual's personality is, 'because of its freedom, terribly *limited* by prejudice and self-conceit, capable of much good or great mischief according to the natural goodness or impurity of man: and we are all, naturally impure'.¹⁰² He dismisses liberalism due to its mistaken estimate of the unboundedness of human nature and he casts derision on its implicit assumption that the more liberty with which a society is provided, the fewer ills will arise. This position stems from Eliot's engagement with the conflict between romanticism and classicism since the early 1920s, and which coloured his view of religious faith at the time he converted to the Church of England in 1927.¹⁰³ The following year, in his preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes* he would make his famous declaration that he was a 'classicist in literature, royalist in politics and anglo-catholic in religion'.¹⁰⁴ Later in that volume he denounced 'the myth of human goodness which for liberal thought replaces the belief in Divine Grace' – an attack on the vision of society created by romanticism which sets up his position in *After Strange Gods*.¹⁰⁵ 'Eternal rather than pragmatic principles inform Eliot's assessment of liberalism', writes George Panichas, 'Against what he sees as liberalism's relativism he posits the absolute; against its meliorism he asserts the tragic element; against its naturalism he upholds the supernatural; against its secularism he places the Incarnation'.¹⁰⁶

geographical particulars. Eliot, *Selected Essays 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932) p. 386; see also Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰² Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, pp. 58-68.

¹⁰³ David Goldie, *A Critical Difference: T.S. Eliot and John Middleton Murry in English Literary Criticism, 1919-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ T.S. Eliot, 'Preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*', in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: Volume 3, Literature, Politics, and Belief, 1927-1929*, ed. Frances Dickey, Jennifer Formichelli, Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015) pp. 513-514 (p. 513).

¹⁰⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'Niccolò Machiavelli', in *Complete Prose: Volume 3*, pp. 111-121 (p. 117). Originally printed in the *Times Literary Supplement* (16 June 1927), this essay was later collected in *For Lancelot Andrewes*.

¹⁰⁶ George A. Panichas, 'T.S. Eliot and the Critique of Liberalism', *Modern Age* 18 (1974), 145-162 (p. 146).

Eliot's resistance to liberalism recurs in his view of the British Empire. In his analysis of *The Rock*, Eliot's pageant-play of 1934, Jed Esty has observed that Eliot places Britain's imperial project firmly in the past tense. With the end of the Pax Britannica, the age of empire building dissipated, and this heralded an opportunity to stress England's potential for domestic regeneration independent of 'overseas colonialism as an index of Western triumph and progress'. Eliot's view, according to Esty, is that the Empire had only propagated 'the disorder of liberal modernity' and confirmed England's status as an irredeemably modernised land of 'spiritual and cultural anomie'.¹⁰⁷ Two decades after it was written, this assessment of Eliot remains robust and captures the ambitions of *The Rock* to regenerate English cultural traditions in the mid-century. However, Esty rightly does not go as far arguing Eliot wrote directly against imperialism.¹⁰⁸ More recently, Jeremy Diaper has extended Esty's reading of Eliot's turn toward agricultural communities as the basis for rejuvenated English identity. Under a rubric of 'organicism', Diaper affirms Eliot's Virgilian turn to the land in his late work which stakes English identity in the pastoral.¹⁰⁹ There would seem to be little place for examining Eliot's relationship with the picturesque amid these differing critical currents.

Nevertheless, affiliating Eliot's late writing with picturesque theory need not contribute to the conventional attempts to claim him as either a romantic or a classicist, nor must it claim his poetry itself as picturesque and diminish the significance of Virgil to his intellectual project.¹¹⁰ Instead, it emphasises his classicism and its unique strain of imperialism. The picturesque, defined by Hussey as an 'interregnum between classic and

¹⁰⁷ Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003) p. 72.

¹⁰⁸ Eliot does come close to associating romanticism and imperialism in 1919, when he wonders 'to what extent Romanticism is incorporate in Imperialism [...] to what extent Romanticism has possessed the imagination of Imperialists' T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1950) p. 28; cited in Esty, *A Shrinking Island*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁹ Jeremy Diaper, *T.S. Eliot and Organicism* (Clemson, South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2021).

¹¹⁰ See Goldie, *A Critical Difference* and Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in Four Quartets* (London: Routledge, 1991) for classicism; Edward Lobb, *T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) and C. K. Stead, *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1977) for romanticism.

romantic art', can operate as a mode of landscape poetry, as well as an imaginative vision of an ideal society, and means of appropriating colonial space.¹¹¹ Eliot's debt to it must therefore cut across these strata, through the formal application of picturesque methods, in addition to his social vision and views on empire. The 'dissociation of sensibility', as he redefined it in 1947, plays an important role in this regard.¹¹² Eliot theorised this shift in England's social imagination, which he claimed unfolded in the mid-seventeenth century at the time of the Civil War, to describe the success of the metaphysical poets and explain the limitations of subsequent English verse, particularly the constrained metre and diction of Pope.¹¹³ It remained a central concern in his late prose and *Four Quartets* where he traced his ancestral line back to Sir Thomas Elyot (c.1490-1546) at East Coker and reflected on the challenge of reviving the lost cultural coherence of the age of Milton. Yet Collini has recently noted how figures such as Christopher Hill and Frank Kermode, writing in the 1950s, explored how Eliot's was not a remote theory of poetic history but carried economic and political ramifications for the way England was governed.¹¹⁴ The dissociation of sensibility was an attempt to design history and explain 'in a subtly agreeable way the torment and division of modern life' by instilling a form of system and order.¹¹⁵ The picturesque, on the other hand, has similar motives as a method of designing landscape and pictorial composition in such a way as to design society, and aesthetically mollify modernity's fracturing and abrasive effects.

¹¹¹ Hussey, *The Picturesque* p. 4; for a challenge to this definition see Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1989).

¹¹² The two principal essays in which Eliot discusses the 'dissociation of sensibility' are 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921) and 'Milton II' (1947).

¹¹³ T.S. Eliot, 'What is a Classic?' in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: Volume 6, The War Years 1940-1946*, ed. David Chinitz and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017) pp. 669-687.

¹¹⁴ Stefan Collini, *The Nostalgic Imagination: History in English Criticism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) pp. 45-7. See Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957) p. 140.

¹¹⁵ Kermode, *Romantic Image* pp. 140, 166.

In his late writing Eliot is reaching back to an idealised form of an agrarian society, but it is an ideal constructed around England's pre-enclosed rural landscape. He explained in *The Idea of a Christian Society* that 'I am not advocating any complete reversion to any earlier state of things, real or idealised', pre-empting any reductive account of his vision of social reform as bluntly reactionary. However, in the same breath, he described his purpose as constructing 'the idea, or ideal, of a community small enough to consist of a nexus of direct personal relationships, in which all iniquities and turpitudes will take the simple and easily appreciable form of wrong relations between one person and another'.¹¹⁶ This is broadly comparable to the ideal presented by the picturesque landscapes of English painters since Gainsborough, where the rural poor and their dilapidated homes are presented not as the victims of a rapidly enclosed landscape but as the pre-Fall, rustic, and organic inhabitants of it. 'In its celebration of the irregular, pre-enclosed landscape,' Ann Bermingham writes, 'the picturesque harkened back nostalgically to an old order of rural paternalism, in its portrayal of dilapidation and ruin, the picturesque sentimentalised the loss of this old order'.¹¹⁷ I am not arguing that Eliot also sentimentalised the landscapes that appear in the *Quartets*. Indeed, he is calling for community so small and cohesive that no touristic spectacle of rural poverty would be possible – the guilty party, the fetishising aristocrat, would be held to account. In this sense he is writing against the picturesque as a failed attempt to reclaim 'this old order' of rural community. But in Eliot's implicit opposition to the picturesque we should be alive to the ways in which his late work was ideologically entangled with the social history of the English landscape and its representation, as described by Bermingham. The forces of enclosure were concentrated during the late eighteenth century, which became a boom period for agriculture due to war with France and a collapse in the import market. The more efficient

¹¹⁶ Eliot, *Idea of a Christian Society*, p. 698.

¹¹⁷ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, (London: University of California Press, 1986) p. 70.

land created by enclosure took advantage of these conditions and ‘the relationship between landowners and their dependents shifted from a paternalistic, quasi-feudal system of reciprocal rights and duties to an industrial employer-employee relationship, bonded by a cash nexus’.¹¹⁸ For Eliot, the period of mass enclosure, where physical barriers barred the peasantry from access to common land and separated the community into the management of individual landowners, signalled a lost ‘unity and congruity of the pattern’ of English life.

Through his contempt for romanticism, Eliot would have disavowed any formal debt to the picturesque, but his attempt to reforge a social pattern through rural landscape is consistent with it. *Four Quartets*, when read against their author’s imperious influence, can be placed firmly within a tradition of meditative landscape poetry. Each of the four poems are locodescriptive, each taking its local site as departure into abstract reflection: Burnt Norton, a manor house in the Cotswolds he visited with Emily Hale; East Coker, his ancestral village in Somerset; the Dry Salvages, a cluster of rocks off the coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts; and Little Gidding, a Cambridgeshire village, home to an Anglican community established in 1628. In 1928, Eliot himself wrote of the development of this type of poem in the seventeenth century by Sir John Denham, particularly ‘Cooper’s Hill’ (1642). Although Eliot’s estimation of Denham is low – ‘of wit, in either the modern or the Augustan sense, he had none’ – including a severely unfavourable comparison with Dryden, the effect of the poem, he suggests, is to ‘set the model for a succession of didactic or meditative monologues suggested by the contemplation of natural scenery’.¹¹⁹ Although writing more than a century before the aesthetic enquiries of Burke, Price, and Knight, Denham’s poem already stresses the visual impression of a landscape which ‘swells | into my eye’ ‘easie and unforc’d’, the product of untampered nature, without the ‘horror’ of a sublime ‘precipice’.

¹¹⁸ Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, p. 74.

¹¹⁹ [T.S. Eliot], ‘Sir John Denham’, *Complete Prose: Volume 3*, pp. 463-66 (p. 464).

Denham was a contemporary of the metaphysical poets and no Romantic. Yet those who were inspired by his example went on to develop what M.H. Abrams has described as the 'greater romantic lyric'. In a description that could easily apply to Eliot's *Quartets*, such a poem

faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding, which is the result of the intervening mediation.¹²⁰

Abrams's definition calls to mind lyrics such as Coleridge's 'Lime Tree Bower', 'Eolian Harp' and Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', and it has encouraged Julia Reibetanz to 'consider *Four Quartets* as poetry of place, a work standing squarely in the tradition of English landscape poetry'. This argument is supported on a structural and metrical level as *Four Quartets* follows Tintern Abbey's movement between 'prosaic and conversational mode to a more formal and patterned speech'.¹²¹ To labour the point, such patterning of Eliot's speech, consisting of repetitions and concerned with classical geometries both written and described ('the box circle', 'joined in circles', 'the evening circle', 'between pole and topic'¹²²) are an architectonic feature of the *Quartets* which returns us to the 'unity and congruity' of a social pattern in England. Reibetanz's somewhat blunt assertion can be furnished with more sensitivity by acknowledging that where Coleridge behaved as a merely a vessel or conduit for the natural music of a given landscape, Eliot receives instruction from a strict social order written into the landscape through generations of labour and religious observance. Both shift

¹²⁰ M.H. Abrams, 'Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric', in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles, Frederick A. Pottle, and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 528.

¹²¹ Julia Maniates Reibetanz, *A Reading of Eliot's Four Quartets*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) pp. 194-97.

¹²² T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909-1962*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2002) pp. 178, 185, 193, 201. All further references to Eliot's poetry are taken from this volume and will appear parenthetically by page number in the main text.

between mental and physical space, but a history of church and nation and the temporal contingency of the present preoccupies Eliot. Against the poetic truth and originality of poems such as ‘Tintern Abbey’, Eliot offers the heavenly authority and tradition, a divinely ordained pattern.

One of the best-known passages of the *Quartets* and perhaps its most prominent description of landscape arrives in the first section of ‘East Coker’. The opening lines of the poem, with oracular drama, introduce it as a return to a native territory that is both temporal and spatial: ‘In my beginning is my end’. These words reverse Mary Queens of Scots’ famous words upon her beheading in 1587, to which Eliot later returns: ‘In my end is my beginning’. By adopting the words of a Catholic Scot executed in Protestant England, Eliot raises the spectre of sectarian conflict that had been (and would remain) such a central feature of British identity. As much as they imply that Christians have no earthly home (with England especially hostile to those who subscribed to Catholic doctrine), these words also raise the fraught relationship between English identity and its Celtic periphery and the European continent.¹²³ Questions of preservation and renewal follow closely, furnished in domestic images, and are fused with the trappings of modernity:

In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.
Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires (184)

The cyclical nature of the rise and fall of houses – genealogical as much as architectural – stresses the continued theme of timelessness with which the previous quartet had ended. Eliot stages his homecoming beyond the material existence of built culture. He fends off straightforward

¹²³ I am grateful to Harry Daniels for prompting me to think more deeply about these lines. For a book length discussion of Eliot’s faith, see Barry Spurr, *Anglo-Catholic in Religion: T.S. Eliot and Christianity*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010).

nostalgia for a mirage of ‘old stone’. What is described is timelessly present, carried over from the ‘here, now, always’ (183) of ‘Burnt Norton’, a consistent base note of Eliot’s English identity the poem sets out to explore uninhibited by the interruptions contemporaneity launches into the landscape: ‘a factory or a by-pass’. With the time-lapse imagination of the archaeologist, Eliot reels back and forth through the history that scarred and remade England’s rural landscape.

All this acts as a primer for the arrival of a description of the Somerset countryside around the village of East Coker, the home of Eliot’s ancestors and his Tudor namesake Sir Thomas Elyot. The ensuing description of a twilight landscape takes the reader through time as well as through a rural view:

Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon,
Where you lean against a bank while a van passes,
And the deep lane insists on the direction
Into the village, in the electric heat
Hypnotised. In a warm haze the sultry light
Is absorbed, not refracted, by grey stone. (184)

This passage has been taken by Steve Ellis as a rare and somewhat marginal example of a ‘natural description’ in Eliot’s poem sequence. The landscapes of the *Quartets*, he suggests, are defined instead by their ‘abstract severity’ and are ‘conspicuously devoid of picturesque detail’. Ellis is here using the word ‘picturesque’ according to two definitions simultaneously: the quaint, topographically vague sketches of ‘Merrie England’ exemplified by Edmund Blunden’s *English Villages* (1941) and *Cricket Country* (1944); and the ‘Wordsworthian swooning over mists and mountain peaks’ which sites the romantic picturesque in recessional vistas of spectacular scenery.¹²⁴ Neither alpine nor saccharine, the scene at East Coker clearly

¹²⁴ Ellis, *English Eliot*, pp. 101, 93, 81.

represents the ‘ordinary’ landscape Eliot had claimed as the primary beauty of England back in 1934. The communities which have historically shaped these rural spaces play an inextricable part of the beauty they exhibit. That beauty exists, for Eliot, as part of the classical principles of tradition and continuity embodied by rural, largely pre-enclosure communities organised on semi-feudal lines like that of his Tudor forbears of East Coker.

However, in Ellis’s hurry to dismiss any suggestion of romanticism in this passage, he overwrites its animating internal tension related to the picturesque. John Barrell’s work on the emergence of descriptive structure in romantic landscape poetry is helpful for confronting and understanding this taut romantic-classic link rather than explaining it away. Barrell offers an analysis of how a locodescriptive method developed by James Thomson was derived from the landscape painting of Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin. Claude’s pastoral and mythological landscapes played an important role in the evolution of the picturesque in England during the eighteenth century being collected and exhibited widely in elite circles. Barrell convincingly demonstrates how Thomson’s descriptive passages in his long, four-part poem *The Seasons*, written between 1726 and 1730, lead the eye through successive, receding layers of landscape in a manner close to Claude. The analogy Barrell constructs is ‘between the composition of a landscape’, the depth and distribution of focal features amongst contrasting areas of light and shade, ‘and the verbal structure – the syntax particularly’.¹²⁵

A comparison between the earlier passage from ‘East Coker’ and the main passage Barrell studies reveal some surprising affinities. The extract under consideration is Thomson’s description of Hagley Park in ‘Spring’:

Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow
The bursting prospect spreads immense around;
And snatch'd o'er hill and dale, and wood and lawn.

¹²⁵ John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) p. 17.

And verdant field, and darkening heath between;
 And villages enbosom'd soft in trees.
 And spiry towns by surging columns mark'd
 Of household smoak, your eye excursive roams:
 Wide-stretching from the Hall, in whose kind haunt
 The hospitable Genius lingers still,
 To where the broken landskip, by degrees
 Ascending, roughens into rigid hills;
 O'er which the Cambrian mountains, like far clouds
 That skirt the blue horizon, dusky rise.¹²⁶

Barrell picks out several key characteristics: the landscape is viewed from an elevated position; the viewer's attention is then 'snatch'd' to the horizon line before being pulled back through the strained syntax and the landscape's features to the subject of that verb, 'your eye'; these landscape features are clothed in contrasting swathes of light and dark – 'verdant field', 'darkening heath' – which lead the roaming eye to the village and Hagley Hall itself, before surging out again, with the phrase 'wide-stretching', to more distant points; finally, each of Thomson's clauses act as a grammatical strata adding additional depth, and the view returns to where it began: the 'blue horizon' formed by 'far' cloud-like mountains.

The stages through which Thomson permits the reader's eye to access his landscape is, according to Barrell, directly comparable with Claude's and Poussin's methods. Their paintings, and we are given Poussin's *Summer* (1661-4, figure 4.11) as an example, are

arranged as to encourage the direct flight of the eye over the landscape towards the area of light invariably located a little below the level of the horizon. In this journey from foreground to horizon, the eye passes over the objects and the areas of ground intervening, registering about them at most only their tonal value, and a rapid diminution of their size. Only after this initial journey has been made [...] does the eye return to examine, at leisure, the objects it has passed on the way.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ James Thomson, 'Spring', in *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) l. 950-962.

¹²⁷ Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, p. 19

It is the pulsating cyclicity of the experience of these landscapes that Barrell emphasises: the experience of the eye drawn between the shaded foreground formed by a *coulisse* – a feature, clump of trees or a building to one side of the picture framing the landscape – and the bright horizon, and it is the importation of this experience from painting into poetic description by Thomson that he claims is novel.

It would clearly be a fool's errand to set about searching for ways to fit Eliot's description of East Coker too strictly into Barrell's model, but this section of the *Quartets* is surely indebted to the profoundly influential form of landscape description Thomson helped establish, and which would in turn shape the accelerating popularity of the picturesque into the nineteenth century. First, Eliot describes how 'the light falls | Across the open field'. The line break gives the light distinct status: light itself is what we see first, as 'falls' calls to mind the setting sun poised on the horizon. The light leaves 'the deep lane | Shuttered with branches' so that at least part of the foreground view is here constructed with a *coulisse* forming the long shadows of twilight with the illuminated open field beyond. It is only after these successive clauses, in the fourth line, that Eliot delivers the observer of the scene: 'you lean against a bank while a van passes'. Your eye is pulled into the scene by the van where 'the deep lane insists on the direction | Into the village'. Through the repeated description of 'the deep lane' we can recognise that the viewer is in an elevated position enabling them to follow the vehicle's progress down 'into the village'. Line breaks mark this progression into the scene as the knotted syntax compels us through each line until we discover the subject 'you' to be 'hypnotised'. It seems the experience of landscape, the insistent pull of our eye through the scene back towards the horizon we first understood atmospherically, is what carries this hypnotic effect.

That 'you' are hypnotised in this passage is remarkable as it inverts the romantic, freely roaming eye of Thomson's precedent which constructed and commands the landscape.

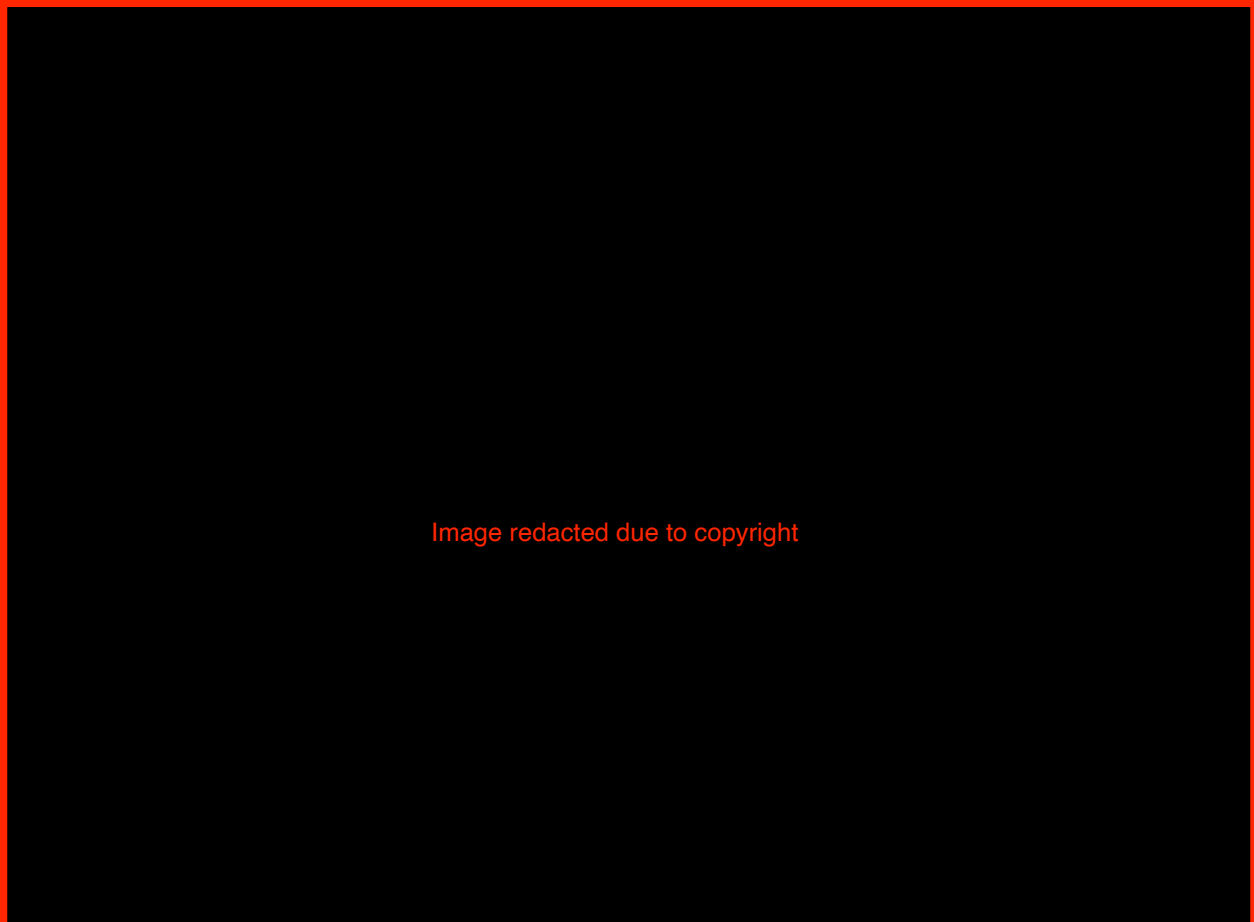


Image redacted due to copyright

4.11 Nicolas Poussin, *Summer*, 1660-1664, oil on canvas, Louvre Museum, Paris.

For Eliot, that power is reversed as ‘you’ are enthralled by the landscape and follow its instruction. According to Barrell, ‘the main point of this insistence on a high viewpoint is that it creates a space between the landscape and the observer, similar in its effect to the space between a picture and whoever is looking at it’. Consequently, Thomson’s viewer is detached and fixed; even while their eye moves with apparent liberty, the landscape itself remains ‘*over there*’.¹²⁸ Likewise, after a stanza break, Eliot’s imaginative journey into the landscape at East Coker is contingent upon distance: ‘In that open field | If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close’ (184). The fragile pictorial quality of this scene is recognised in Esty’s description of it as a *tableau vivant* and echoes through a later moment in ‘East Coker’ that should remind us of the etymological root of ‘picturesque’ from the Italian *pittoresco*, usually applied to the painting of scenes for theatre.¹²⁹ Eliot’s speaker relates an experience on a London underground train pausing between stations, conversation between strangers rises and falls as darkness descends:

Which shall be the darkness of God. As, in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the bold imposing facade are all being rolled away— (187-188)

Landscape scenery is, like the vision of dancers at East Coker, what is held before our eyes before the darkness of the revelation descends. The viewer’s proximity endangers and ultimately unveils the pictorial illusion of an organic community as a necessary precursor to divine vision in darkness. Just as the brief conversation between commuting strangers is the weak prelude to a more profound unity, so the community at East Coker performing a

¹²⁸ Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, p. 21

¹²⁹ Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 144; for an etymological summary of the picturesque see Macarthur, *The Picturesque*, p. 4.

‘dignified and commodious sacrament’ (185) only gestures towards ‘a further union, a deeper communion’ (191).

Eliot’s conflicted Anglo-American identity inevitably amplified the sense of distance in ‘East Coker’. Any experience of belonging is withheld. Like Pevsner’s journeys mapping out the genetic code of England’s architecture and measuring it against his own, *Four Quartets* is a verse-tour of the locations on both sides of the Atlantic which set the bounds of Eliot’s cultural and national identity.¹³⁰ Both ‘Burnt Norton’ and ‘Little Gidding’ open with physical directions for movement that bear a resemblance with Pevsner’s topographic directions: ‘Down the passage’, ‘Towards the door’, ‘Through the first gate’ (177); ‘If you came this way’, ‘when you leave the road | And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull façade’ (201-2). While insistently pictorial or cinematographic, these are spiritual as well as topographical directions which orbit an essential void in Eliot’s identity leading only to ‘Dry the pool, dry concrete’ (178) and a ‘husk of meaning’ (202). As Simon Grumble has pointed out, the status of Englishness is a particularly vexed category as it lacks a strict legal definition. While being an American was a status to which anyone could aspire and realise, to become English was made a more elusive prospect due to one’s official status, achieved by Eliot, being that of a British subject.¹³¹ The path to Englishness, as distinct from Britishness, therefore lacked a procedural mechanism and instead relied on vague and perhaps incomplete anointment via parentage or personal habits of everyday life: ‘I am becoming very English in my tea-drinking habits / awkwardness in class-relations’.¹³² Eliot saw himself as a ‘métèque’, a resident foreigner (which, as we will see later, carries a colonial dimension) who

¹³⁰ Eliot went on to emphasise the bounded nature of culture according to local, regional, and national limits, see *Note Towards a Definition of Culture* in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: Volume 7, A European Society, 1947-1953*, ed. Iman Javadi and Ronald Schuchard, (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2017) pp. 194-287 (p. 197).

¹³¹ On the colonialism, Englishness, and Britishness see Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), introduction.

¹³² Quoted in Simon Grumble, ‘Englishness’, in *T.S. Eliot in Context*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 43-51 (p. 45).

nonetheless claimed ‘wholly English’ heredity.¹³³ It is hardly surprising, then, given this tortured identity of both alien and native, that the poet himself is not dancing in the mud with the Tudor peasantry with their ‘loam feet’ and their deaths ‘nourishing the corn’ (185). And yet, like the compositional and syntactical structure of Claude and Thomson which draws the excursive eye around their scenes, Eliot’s insistent cyclicalality carves out the comfort and security of a local, national, and spiritual homecoming. This is evident from ‘East Coker’s’ opening phrase, ‘In my beginning is my end’ (184), which is inverted at its close, ‘In my end is my beginning’ (191). The tri-syllabic tumble of ‘beginning’ which ends unstressed in the first instance is resolved in the simple, firm destination of ‘end’; when inverted that same tumble gathers momentum for a new beginning. Like the visual loop of Claudian composition, Eliot establishes a closed circle which circumscribes a boundary around his and the reader’s visual experience and establishes the essential condition of homely security, confirming that ‘Home is where one starts from’ (190).¹³⁴

When considering his early impressions of England while studying in Oxford, it becomes clear that Eliot is viewing East Coker, and perhaps Little Gidding, where ‘the hedgerow | Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom’ (201), in a picturesque way. Writing to Eleanor Hinkley in 1914 he commented on how the English countryside, when compared to the French, ‘seems more solid and massive, and the trees are bigger and more beautiful; the little villages more picturesque. The middle-class localities, the rows of semi-detached villas, are certainly far uglier than any I can remember in France’.¹³⁵ His views undoubtedly underwent considerable intellectual maturation in the three decades between

¹³³ T.S. Eliot, ‘Rudyard Kipling: Address to the Académie Septentrionale’, in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: Volume 8, Still and Still Moving, 1954-1965* ed. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard, (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019) pp. 293-311 (p. 302).

¹³⁴ For some carefully traced links between Eliot’s geometric, patterned verse in *Four Quartets* and modernist architecture and abstract art of the thirties see Ellis, ch. 2.

¹³⁵ Letter from Eliot to Eleanor Hinkley, 14 October 1914, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot. Volume 1, 1898-1922*, Rev. edn (London: Faber and Faber, 2009) p. 67.

these comments and the publication of the *Quartets*, but here is the nascent state of Eliot's view of the English village as political and cultural unit. He views the village as a working-class community, distinct from the middle-class suburbs. Writing to Hinkley again three years later, he gave his estimation of the working classes that might inhabit the English village:

This class of person is really the most attractive in England, in many ways; it is not so petrified in snobism and prejudice as the middle classes, and yet is very humble. To an American, the English working classes are impressive because of their fundamental conservatism; they are not, as a whole, aggressive and insolent like the same people in America.¹³⁶

Eliot is held at a distance by his American identity and assumes the anthropologist's gaze. In addition to his mention of English villages as picturesque, his projects an image of the working classes as essentially docile, happy with their lot, and conservative while culturally open-minded, devoid of snobbery. Alun Howkins's authoritative work on rural England before 1920 shows what little similarity Eliot's account bears to the historical record, but in Eliot's assumption of this perspective on the poor as idealised or even noble, he performs a similar exercise to Uvedale Price's aesthetic assimilation of abject poverty a little over a century earlier.¹³⁷

Ultimately, Eliot's attempt to reach back to the seventeenth-century culture, prior to the picturesque and before the dissociation of sensibility, is articulated by formal as well as descriptive means. Later in 'East Coker', in the steady, inevitable cadence of classical tetrameter, changing seasons and universal cycles of creation and destruction are described, moving from a human-scale natural world 'under feet' to the cosmic conflict of the

¹³⁶ Letter from Eliot to Eleanor Hinkley, 23 March 1917, *Letters*, p. 184

¹³⁷ Alun Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925*, (London: Routledge, 1992) ; Alun Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk, 1872-1923*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) .

horoscopes: the ‘Scorpion fights against the Sun’ as ‘Comets weep and Leonids fly’. No sooner has the poet presented these affected lines than he allows the speaker to break through the metre and declare them ‘A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion’ (186). These passages can be interpreted as an affectionate pastiche of the octosyllabic line of works such as Milton’s *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, serving to highlight the futility of attempting to resurrect such historical style as a valid mode for contemporary poetry. It is worn out in the sense that the methods of those who wrote before the dissociation of sensibility are no longer apt for the fallen state of Eliot’s modern world. Eliot had also noted John Denham’s ‘pleasing exercise in octosyllabics which anticipate the rhythm of Swift more than they echo that of Milton or the metaphysicals’ in his review of Denham’s work in 1928.¹³⁸ Although Eliot never wrote at length on Thomson, the ambivalence of this passage leaves scope for its application to *The Seasons* as another locodescriptive poetic fashion that Eliot had no interest in replicating but nonetheless conditioned the writing of his own long, four-part, intensely elemental and time-centric sequence of poems.

Questions of poetic precedent and renewal are extended in ‘What is a Classic?’, written as Eliot was completing the *Quartets*, in which he notes that Pope falls short of the high status he affords Virgil and Dante. We are ‘conscious of all the resources of the English speech upon which Pope does not draw’, he writes, and consequently the Augustan poet is doomed to represent only a ‘particular epoch’.¹³⁹ Related to these formal restrictions is a restriction of ‘religious sensibility’ present in Pope’s age, resulting in a ‘provinciality which indicates the disintegration of Christendom, the decay of a common belief and a common culture’.¹⁴⁰ Pope, and by extension his contemporary Thomson, therefore preside over the collapse of the organic community Eliot attempted to regain or defend; in Esty’s terms, they

¹³⁸ Eliot, ‘Sir John Denham’, p. 465.

¹³⁹ Eliot, ‘What is a Classic?’, *Complete Prose: Volume 6*, p. 678.

¹⁴⁰ Eliot, ‘What is a Classic?’, p. 676.

witness ‘the long hard fall from gemeinschaft to gesellschaft’ which was still in progress in Eliot’s age.¹⁴¹

With particular relevance to the picturesque, Eliot describes Pope’s achievements by claiming ‘the eighteenth century had perfected its formal garden, only by restricting the area under cultivation’.¹⁴² This might seem an awkward metaphor given Pope’s promotion of non-formal, ‘natural’ gardens in his fourth epistle already discussed, but it tells us much about Eliot’s notion of the true classic in terms of landscape: an extended, perhaps even unbounded, formal garden of potentially imperial proportions, combining the control and pattern of classical garden design with the limitless extension of the picturesque. It is particularly striking to find, towards the end of ‘East Coker’, Eliot’s reflections on the lost culture and poetic achievement of Milton’s age bound up with an image of territorial conquest:

And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate – but there is no competition –
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again, and now under conditions
That seem unpropitious. (190)

Eliot’s notion of a flourishing English poetic tradition in the twentieth century worthy of his forebears is here tied to landscape through the conquering and civilising motive of empire. The ‘men whom one cannot hope | to emulate’ are poets as well as imperialists. In an early draft of his essay on Tennyson his highest praise of the Victorian laureate is that he can be compared ‘not only to the Virgil of the Eclogues, but to the Virgil of the Aeneid, the poet of Empire, the laureate of the Imperial Theme’.¹⁴³ To end this chapter, as a means of gaining a

¹⁴¹ Esty, *Shrinking Island*, p. 144.

¹⁴² Eliot, ‘What is a Classic?’, p. 676.

¹⁴³ Eliot later cut these lines from the final version of his essay on Tennyson, dismissing them as a ‘bad start’, ‘In Memoriam’, *Complete Prose: Volume 5*, pp. 331-3.

more complete understanding of what Eliot means by the 'Imperial Theme' and his place in relation to it, it is worth exploring his interpretation of Virgil as well as his important essay on Rudyard Kipling written in the 1940s which together contextualise his mission in the *Quartets*.

Eliot's work on Virgil was a major preoccupation while he was writing the *Quartets*. It formed part of an intellectual project broadly indebted to the classical notion of *translatio imperii et studii*. He had served as the Virgil Society's inaugural president from 1943 to 1944 and 'What is a Classic?' was delivered as his presidential address. Gareth Reeves has demonstrated how Eliot's notion of a transnational Christian Empire, and its local basis in an agrarian ideal, is developed through his reading of Virgil. Reeves notes how the work of the Catholic German writer Theodor Haecker provided Eliot with 'a useful diagram of the imperialist position' based on Virgil.¹⁴⁴ Virgil, for both Eliot and Haecker, was taken up as an Adventist Christian who, through the action of divine grace, helps to reveal the ancient Roman Empire as a form of the Holy Roman Empire and the Church.¹⁴⁵ Here we see Eliot's understanding of a continuous and indeed eternal existence of the Church from the pre-Christian era extending up to and beyond the present. As Kermode writes, 'it is from this belief that Eliot derives his universalist or imperialist classic [...] the empire is the paradigm of the classic: a perpetuity, a transcendent entity, however remote its provinces, however extraordinary its temporal vicissitudes'.¹⁴⁶ Virgil's greatness, according to Eliot himself, is as a prophet of a timeless and absolute Christian empire: his articulation of the relationship between Greek and Roman culture is orientated towards 'their reconciliation under an all-embracing destiny', that is, the flourishing of Christianity and its ultimate goal as the single world faith; the gods that guide Aeneas 'are themselves, we feel, only instruments of a

¹⁴⁴ Gareth Reeves, *T.S. Eliot: A Virgilian Poet* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) p. 99.

¹⁴⁵ See Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (New York: Viking Press, 1975) pp. 27-8.

¹⁴⁶ Kermode, *The Classic*, p. 28.

greater inscrutable power'.¹⁴⁷ Eliot is, therefore, positioning himself as the inheritor of Virgil's Christianising mission.

On 9 September 1951, his promotion of Virgil reached a wider audience when his lecture titled 'Virgil and the Christian World' was broadcast on the BBC. Astute listeners could begin to see how the *Quartets* had envisioned an ideal empire as a progressive refinement of the existing (and rapidly changing) world-system in the 1940s, just as 'the civilisation of Rome' was 'refined by the sensibility of Virgil'.¹⁴⁸ Or, as phrased in 'Little Gidding', 'love of country | Begins as attachment to our own field of action'. (206) If the love of Britain was no longer viable with the collapse of empire, love of England could be rebuilt through locality. Reeves, amongst many others, has commented on this consistency between the *Quartets* and *The Idea of a Christian Society* where 'the agrarian hierarchy became for Eliot the paradigm or prototype for an orderly society'. He argues that by evoking this ideal Eliot is not calling for a restructuring of English society and culture according to an agricultural lifestyle, but is deploying it as a 'metaphysical pattern' – in other words a means of setting abstract principles whereby the ontological (and domestic) condition of England might be improved. 'Only through devotion to the particular location,' Eliot writes, 'that is to the provincial and partial, can the ideal of empire be aspired to. Only the specific agrarian example can provide terms which will render intelligible an ideal that may be apprehended but never realised'.¹⁴⁹ Or, as Eliot formulates it in his lecture,

He [Virgil] set an ideal for Rome, and for empire in general, which was never realized in history; but the ideal of empire as Virgil sees it is a noble one. His devotion to Rome was founded on devotion to the land; to the particular region, to the particular village, and to the family in the village.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Eliot, 'What is a Classic?', p. 667.

¹⁴⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Virgil and the Christian World', *Complete Prose: Volume 7*, pp. 627-640 (p. 630).

¹⁴⁹ Reeves, *Virgilian Poet*, pp. 114, 115.

¹⁵⁰ Eliot, 'Virgil and the Christian World', p. 632.

These lines bear witness to the merging of Eliot's ideal of a picturesque Christian community he imagined at East Coker and his imperial ideal of a limitless Christian empire, one particular the other general, one a local landscape, the other a boundless domain.¹⁵¹ He draws together a local space and a limitless space beyond its boundaries, and translates his vision of a metaphysical pattern into something palpable even if it 'unheard', 'unseen', 'empty' and 'hidden' like the spectral visions in Burnt Norton's garden and each subsequent quartet: East Coker's dancers, the vanished fishermen of Dry Salvages, and the 'dead master' of Little Gidding.

By conceptualising this link of the part to the whole, microcosm and macrocosm, Eliot brushes up against the picturesque, the same picturesque which is the spanning of great distances described by Pevsner and the assimilation of these new territories into a homely grammar of familiarity and ownership. This connection appears most clearly in some lines from Virgil to which Eliot refers in his lecture:

His ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;
Imperium sine fine dedi . . .
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos . . .¹⁵²

*For these I set neither bounds nor periods of empire;
dominion without end have I bestowed...
remember thou, O Roman, to rule the nations with thy sway
(these shall be thine arts) to crown Peace with Law,
to spare the humbled, and to tame in war the proud!*

¹⁵¹ Ellis here agrees with Donald Davie that Eliot is advocating a wholesale return to a 'Maurasian vision of England inhabited by a land-based peasantry firmly fixed in their neo-feudal station', Ellis, *English Eliot*, p. 103; Donald Davie, 'The Anglican Eliot', in *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of "the Wasteland"*, ed. A. Walton Litz (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973) pp. 181-96.

¹⁵² *Aeneid* I.278-79; VI.851-53; quoted with translation in Eliot 'Virgil and the Christian World', p. 635.

As timeless and boundless, fitting terms for the picturesque also, Virgil's ideal empire is shared with Eliot who echoes these words into the twentieth century, as the dissipation of the British Empire, founded on liberalism, became evident.¹⁵³

If Virgil is understood as the predominantly spiritual-imperial influence on Eliot, then Kipling was his secular counterpart. It is through Kipling that we are given a glimpse of how Eliot understands the practical remit of the British Empire, and his relation to it as a poet. In his introduction to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (1941), Eliot relates how Kipling's impression of empire was not a matter of intellectual considerations of its positive or negative role, but instead he understood the basic reality of the imperial paradigm: 'It was an awareness of grandeur, certainly, but it was much more an awareness of responsibility'. This is, in essence, the famous case of the white man's burden, but Eliot handles it in a self-conscious and self-contradictory manner:

I cannot find any justification for the charge that he held a doctrine of race superiority. He believed that the British have a greater aptitude for ruling than other people, and that they include a greater number of kindly, incorruptible and unselfseeking men capable of administration.¹⁵⁴

Eliot is wary of the contrarian stance he is taking, not only on the defence of Kipling as a truly great writer of verse and 'all in all, the greatest Englishman of letters of his time', but also on the defence of empire, 'for too many people, an Empire has become something to apologize for'.¹⁵⁵ It is possible that his high estimation of Kipling was driven in part by his own ego. Eliot spoke of himself as successor to Kipling when he took up an honorary fellowship at Magdalene College, Cambridge as well as at the Académie Septentrionale in

¹⁵³ Liberalism 'tends to release energy rather than accumulate it, to relax, rather than to fortify. It is a movement not so much defined by its end, as by its starting point; away from, rather than towards, something definite', Eliot, *Idea of a Christian Society*, p. 689.

¹⁵⁴ Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling', *Complete Prose: Volume 6*, pp. 210-238 (pp. 224, 227).

¹⁵⁵ Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling: Address to the Académie Septentrionale', p. 308; Eliot, 'Rudyard Kipling', p. 223.

Paris – both positions recently held by Kipling. He positioned himself as the inheritor of Kipling’s mantle as the preeminent figure of English letters, and a poet of the ‘Imperial Theme’. Eliot identified with Kipling’s status as an outsider, as a ‘*métèque*’:

undoubtedly the difference of early environment to which Kipling’s foreignness is due gave him an understanding of the English countryside different from the understanding of a man born and brought up in it, and provoked in him thoughts about it which the natives would do well to heed.¹⁵⁶

Like Kipling, Eliot saw himself returning to a homeland he had never known in his early life, and brought with him the critical clarity of a settler. We can see in this formulation a physical, migratory marker for the self-colonising process following the contraction or decline of empire that has been so well charted in recent years.¹⁵⁷

With this return toward native ground, Kipling helps Eliot explore the notion of England as the heart of empire, but London’s position as the grand Edwardian metropole has been abandoned, its classical Georgian buildings decaying, bombed, or voluntarily demolished. Instead, the imperial centre is now a rural, organic, timeless community. As the material reality of the British Empire looked increasingly untenable, just as Woolf had sensed at the Empire Exhibition in 1924, Eliot looked towards its deferral into a spiritual realm. Here, in the context of Kipling’s relationship with Sussex, the Virgilian empire rescues the regrettable impermanence of Britain’s supremacy:

In his later phase England and a particular corner of England become the centre of his vision. He is more concerned with the problem of the soundness of the core of empire; this core is something older, more natural and more permanent. But at the same time his vision takes a larger view, and he sees the Roman Empire and the place of England in it. The vision is almost that of an idea of empire laid up in heaven.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Eliot, ‘Rudyard Kipling’, p. 226.

¹⁵⁷ In a mid-twentieth century context, I refer to Esty, *A Shrinking Island*; in a twenty-first-century context, Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia: How the British Conquered Themselves* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

¹⁵⁸ Eliot, ‘Rudyard Kipling’, p. 225.

The core of empire is unsound, a description fitting the structural, architectural nature of the phenomenon where spiritual and political as well as architectural foundations are faulty, and the edifice is crumbling. The *Quartets* propose the solution of a return to ‘the life of significant soil’ (200), and the security of the poet’s eventual burial in the churchyard at East Coker.

Throughout this chapter I have been trying to break a path toward an understanding of Eliot’s late work in relation to a broad field of architectural and social critique. In its most basic form, my argument has been that Eliot’s concern for social reform on a Christian and rural basis shares a mission with the reforms proposed by Pevsner and Hastings at the *Architectural Review*. Their politics differed: one high Tory, the other evangelically Liberal. Their desired goal was also contrasted: one envisioned an agrarian community, the other a pragmatic urban fabric constructed on the basis of ‘exterior furnishing’. And yet both Eliot and the editors of the *Architectural Review* were united in their cause to domesticate modernity. As we have seen, this project was in both cases centred on a process of imperial retrenchment through a reinvigorated imperial history whether Georgian or Roman, as well as the social and aesthetic conditions of the picturesque. The picturesque – whether in its implicit but essential role in the social history of the English countryside, or explicitly in its late eighteenth-century theorisation – enabled these twentieth-century writers to grasp a notion of social congruity and establish a pattern in the chaos of modern life. It also acted as the insidious continuation of imperial ideology and identity into the post-war moment.

Conclusion

Homecomings, or Apocalyptic Wallpaper

In February 1946, J.M. Richards returned to England after almost three years in Cairo working for the Ministry of Information. I would like to conclude this thesis by describing his story of colonial travel and return to England through his writing about the location with which I began in chapter one: suburbia. Richards's homecoming presents a means of highlighting how the ideas I have presented in the preceding pages invite extension in future scholarship and how they complicate existing narratives of interwar domesticity and its imperial dimensions when projected into the post-war period. He is, in many ways, a representative figure of the ambivalence I have been attempting to trace, and his several reappearances – through his association with *Circle*, his work at the *Architectural Review*, or now with his writing on suburbia – is indicative of the difficulty of gathering the diverse intersections of architectural modernity and national identity.

Richards had been posted to Egypt in April 1943, charged with editing the Arabic fortnightly magazine *Akbar El Harb* (*The Greatest War*). Richards's experience at the *Architectural Review* qualified him for the job, but he neither spoke nor read Arabic, and until then had left London only for brief periods in Toronto and Dublin. *Akbar El Harb* was a picture magazine run for propaganda purposes by the British Government. In Richards's own words, it aimed to 'keep the peoples of the Arab world on the Allies' side and inform them about the progress of events military and political'.¹ Although this mission ostensibly falls under the umbrella of the war effort, Richards's activities are inextricably connected to

¹ J. M. Richards, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980) pp. 171, 173.

what would become the Britain's attempts to cling onto colonial territory and influence in East Africa and the Middle East after the war.

His own rhetoric in his autobiography, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella*, indicates his sympathy with the colonial project. The circuitous journey to Cairo involved sailing in a naval convoy to Ghana in West Africa (then part of the British Gold Coast), before travelling by Sunderland flying boat along the Congo River, to Lake Albert, and up the Nile. Richards's bathetic description of the dense and inhospitable jungle of the Belgian Congo as resembling 'from the air an interminable bed of parsley' gives a distinctly domestic frame to the colonial landscape. Progressing east, the forest thins until it becomes an open grassland 'furnished with trees like an English park'. This picturesque vision of the savannah is clearly related to the visual mechanics of familiarity discussed in my previous chapter. Richards takes particular pleasure in staying at the Grand Hotel of Khartoum, which, although shabby, 'still had the air, and the well-trained servants, of those great hotels that the builders of the British empire [sic] strung out in the last century across the East'. His destination, Shepherds at Cairo, is listed as another example.² While based in Cairo, Richards travelled the region visiting the various Press Attachés in national embassies. These included a striking number of literary figures and Richards's personal acquaintances, including Osbert Lancaster in Athens (soon to be co-editor of the *Architectural Review*), Patrick Balfour in Cairo itself (a member of the Georgian Group), Stewart Perowne and Freya Stark in Baghdad (the former a historian, the latter a travel writer and explorer), and Lawrence Durrell in Alexandria (a novelist). These were Richards's contacts and collaborators in promoting 'the Allied way of thinking' to their respective local populations.³

² The others are 'the Raffles at Singapore, the Taj Mahal at Bombay, the Peninsula at Kowloon', Richards, *Memoirs*, p. 170.

³ Richards, *Memoirs*, pp. 169, 170, 183.

During this three-year secondment, Richards found time to write what would become the first book he published after the war. *The Castles on the Ground* (1946) was a study of suburban architecture, chiefly the mature leafy streets and well-kept gardens of the suburbs built at the turn of the century. It included long, self-indulgent, sentimentalised descriptions of suburban life. He notes the precise detail of ‘the screen of privet hedge and may and laburnum which separates the garden scent of new grass cuttings from the warm peppery scent that radiates from asphalt pavements in summertime’. On entering a typical house, the reader is greeted by a compact entrance hall where dappled sunlight streams in through ‘the bottle glass on the front door’, and a ‘fumed oak hatstand’, smelling faintly of furniture polish, crowds next to a ‘folding perambulator’ made of American cloth. His description takes on an almost religious quality as it enters a domestic sanctum:

The far part of the hall is lighter because a door is slightly ajar, and through it there is a glimpse of the drawing room: a sofa with loose covers in flowered chintz, faded with much laundering, cream paint, the corner of a piano with framed photographs on it and a bay window with leaded panes, the centre part opening to the ground and leading down a couple of steps to the bright garden.

Like each of Eliot’s establishing descriptions of his English locations, Richards’s description leads our eye through a sequential view. This image is an architectural ideal, but it is also an escape from the colonial setting in which Richards was writing. From the book’s opening page, he dreams himself into suburbia where ‘Everything is in its place’ and ‘the abruptness, the barbarities of the world are far away’.⁴ One is reminded of Virginia Woolf’s suggestion that upon reading an essay our mind recreates the author’s room in which it was written, ‘his

⁴ J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd edn (London: J. Murray, 1973) pp. 13-14. This neatly accords with Svetlana Boym’s definition of home: ‘To feel at home is to be comfortably unaware of things, to know that things are in their places and so are you’, Svetlana Boym, *The Off-Modern*, (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2017) p. 80. See Annabel Williams, ‘Late Modernist Travel Literature, 1930-1949: Home, Nationalism, and War’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2018) pp. 211-212.

head, his cat, his writing table, and the time of the day thrown in.’⁵ We might infer, therefore, that ‘the barbarities’ in question are the shocks and violence of wartime, yet they also imply Richards’s life on the colonial periphery, and call in the image of his flat adjoining a mosque ‘far from any part of Cairo customarily inhabited by Europeans’, which he found ‘dusty, noisy – the teeming local population appeared to stay up, and form themselves into shouting processions, all night’.⁶ Elsewhere in his memoirs, Richards comments approvingly of the architecture and lifestyle of Cairo, Jeddah, and Jerusalem – but there is no escaping his construction of the native English suburb as the safe, contemplative, inviolable retreat from the active, imperial contact zone with the uncivilised or incomprehensible Other.

Richards’s suburbia should be familiar to us by now. We first saw it in the home of the Thompsons in Warley where Joe Lampton lodges in Braine’s *Room at the Top*. The chintz sofa and photographs arranged on the piano in *The Castles on the Ground* bear comparison with Joe’s fragmentary remembrance of curtains and photographs in his parents bombed-out home. However, the former cohere in a way the latter do not; Richards’s description of what he calls ‘the ordinary Englishman’s home’ is ‘an idyllic picture’, an emanation of everything the author longed for and saw as the potential state of his domestic environment.⁷ Second, Rebecca West’s portrayal of Petrick in ‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ shares Richards’s conception of the all-enveloping nature of the suburb, as well as its exoticism. The main difference between their work is that West’s suburban domesticity *is* the colonial contact zone, not the secure retreat. Petrick is new, unheimlich, and soulless, whereas Richards’s suburbia is embedded, organic, and creative, but both are strangely enrapturing. West, Braine, and Richards are all of piece in their deployment of the home as way of interrogating identity and pointing up the instability of collective belonging. Taking

⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 166.

⁶ Richards, *Memoirs*, p. 182.

⁷ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, p. 14.

‘Indissoluble Matrimony’ and *Room at the Top* as two waypoints in 1914 and 1957, how can we make sense of Richards’s address to the inward ‘pilgrim’ visiting suburbia based on all we have encountered throughout the preceding chapters?

As Eliot writes in his memorable and often-cited lines at the emotional and spiritual crescendo of *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

At the end of our wandering through the interwar years, when returning to the suburbia newly presented in Richards’s text, we can see more clearly its debts to English national identity and imperial decline. This is conjointly based on the first blush of nationalism in Etchells’s translation of Le Corbusier I explored in chapter one, and its development through Richards’s own writing on the vernacular in chapter two, as well as the search for belonging and domestic solidity in the work of Auden, Betjeman and Grigson in chapter three. But empire and home also emerge from these lines by Eliot, which are pregnant with several possible interpretations as his cycle of poems draws to a close. The poet describes the Christian soul exploring faith and fated to unceasing wandering in search of divine grace. The only ending, which mysteriously emerges from infinity, is the Divine Revelation and an ultimate communion with God. But set against this heavenly tenor there is also a more secular and earth-bound bass note. Eliot’s exploration and homecoming is also a colonial return to a native land. The traveller, perhaps endowed with a picturesque vision, returns home, ‘When the last of earth left to discover | Is that which was the beginning’. The beginning is, of course, both the physical, domestic metropole or locale and the temporal moment of the *creatio ex nihilo*, of God as the unmoved mover. His metaphysical arrival back to where he

started is, perhaps, the apotheosis of the inward turn that I have been describing in interwar English culture.

The roving eye of Richards's suburban subject is similar: he

finds he is no longer looking at the picture from the outside. The well-furnished scene has become a kind of well-stocked jungle – not a fearsome one, because stocked with tame trees, tame houses and tame gardens – but one from which all other worlds are shut out. Suburbia has closed in round him, and is so completely a world of its own that it is the untidy, incalculable city from which he has come, or the countryside with its frightening expanse of sky, that seems strange and unreal.

There is indubitably something threatening about this all-enveloping spectacle of the suburb, with its hypnotic quality, like Eliot's East Coker. Despite its presentation as a retreat, the colonial logic of Richards's perspective creeps in as he consistently describes the suburb as a jungle. At other times his tone is expeditionary, as if he is conducting an anthropological study of suburbia. It is a 'voyage of discovery' on which, if 'we want to learn more about the peculiar nature of the suburbs, we must try to find out who these people are and what they have in common to bring them together.' The author is wary of endorsing that which had been roundly criticised in architectural discourse over the preceding decades, and so he struggles to free himself from the dominant perspective of an outsider looking in. Such an outsider 'is a rare enough animal in this jungle, it being a characteristic of the suburban world that it keeps itself to itself and seldom receives visitors from worlds outside'.⁸

Richards is, indeed, barely recognisable as a former leading propagandist of modernist architecture, but he demanded that the post-war period attended to the castles on the ground not the castles in the sky promised in the abstract utopianism of modernist planners. The ink had hardly dried on his Pelican *Introduction to Modern Architecture* (1940) before he had begun, in Cairo, to construct this nostalgic defence of anti-modern sentiment

⁸ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, pp. 29-30, 61, 49, 68, 33

embodied in the ‘ornamental ridge of the red-tiled roof’.⁹ But *The Castles on the Ground* is not such a blunt endorsement of suburban style and a betrayal of modernism as it was taken for by many of his critics, foremost among them Reyner Banham.¹⁰ Despite its thick outer layer of colonial ideology and seemingly regressive domesticity which retreated into Victoriana away from modernist social housing and planning, there is an essential value in *The Castles on the Ground* that Banham was not aware of or not willing to accommodate. It introduced an idea that I would like to suggest is a product of the various debates, antagonisms, flourishings, and failures I have charted through avant-garde and popular domestic culture in this thesis. That idea was labelled ‘participation’ by Richards later in life, by which he meant a user-centred and user-generated architectural form. The principle of suburbia was upheld not to be generally and unequivocally endorsed but rather as an example of architecture ‘created from the inside by people who lived in it’.¹¹

To achieve this, suburbia combined two crucial elements of Richards’s thinking: the picturesque tradition and the vernacular. The visual variety of the suburbs, where multifarious elements combined to form a cohesive whole, both in the domestic interior and exterior, was akin to theatrical scene painting, Richards claimed. They created an ‘elaborately synthetic picture’, which ‘is in many senses identical with the English Picturesque tradition’. John Piper, who was himself beginning to work extensively on theatrical scene painting after the war, provided illustrations for the book which captured Richards’s vision of ‘roof peaks, chimneys and gables peeping out from behind tree and hedgerow’ and which ‘stand as the insignia of Metroland itself’ (figure 5.1a & 5.1b).¹² This engagement with the picturesque is testament to the close network of intellectual exchange Richards maintained with Hastings and Pevsner even while he was in Cairo, and holds particular relevance to Hastings’s article

⁹ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, p. 13.

¹⁰ Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966) p. 13.

¹¹ Richards, *Memoirs*, p. 188.

¹² Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, pp. 24, 26-27

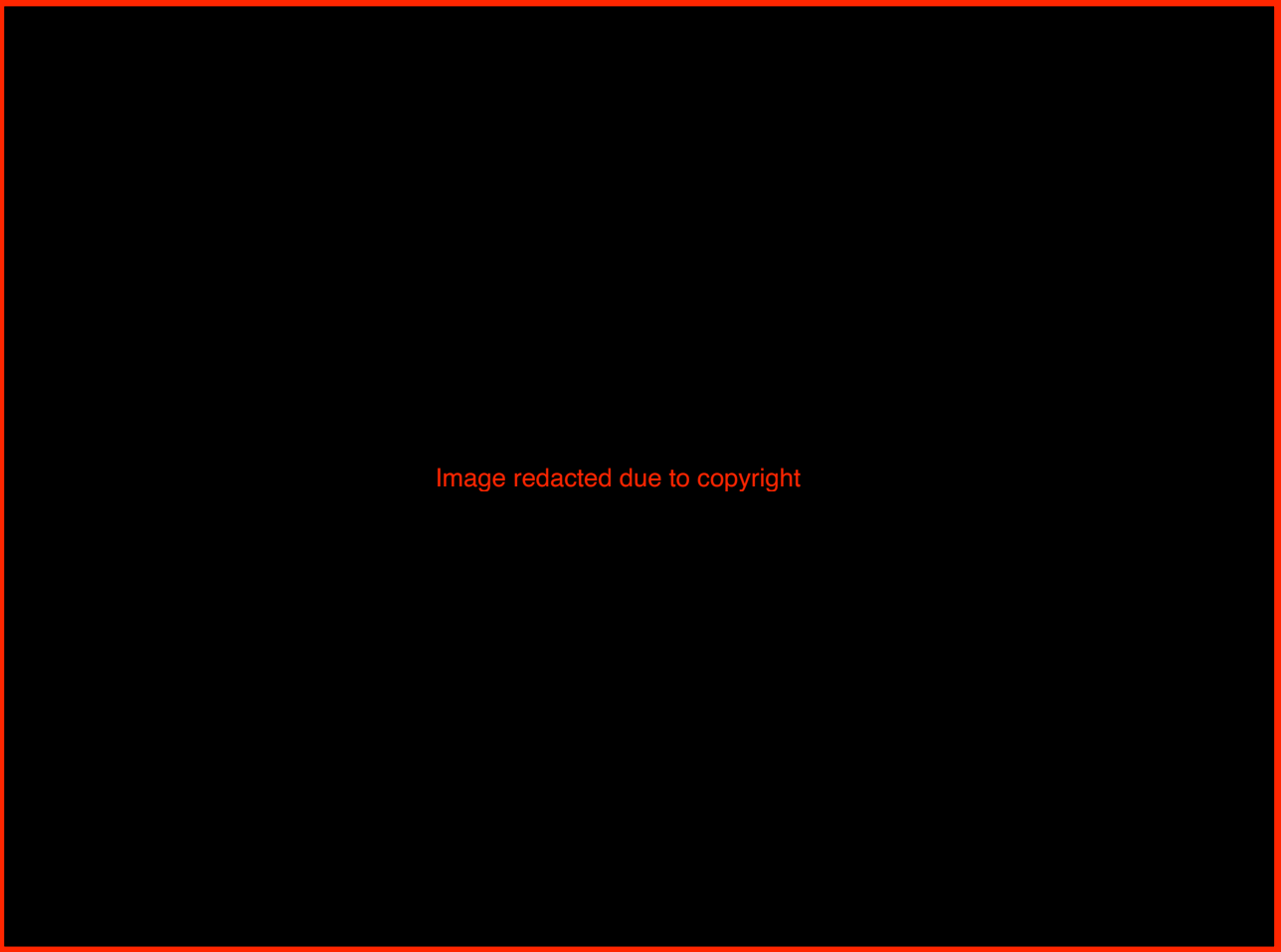
A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.1a John Piper illustration from J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: An Anatomy of Suburbia*, (London: Architectural Press, 1973), facing p. 41.

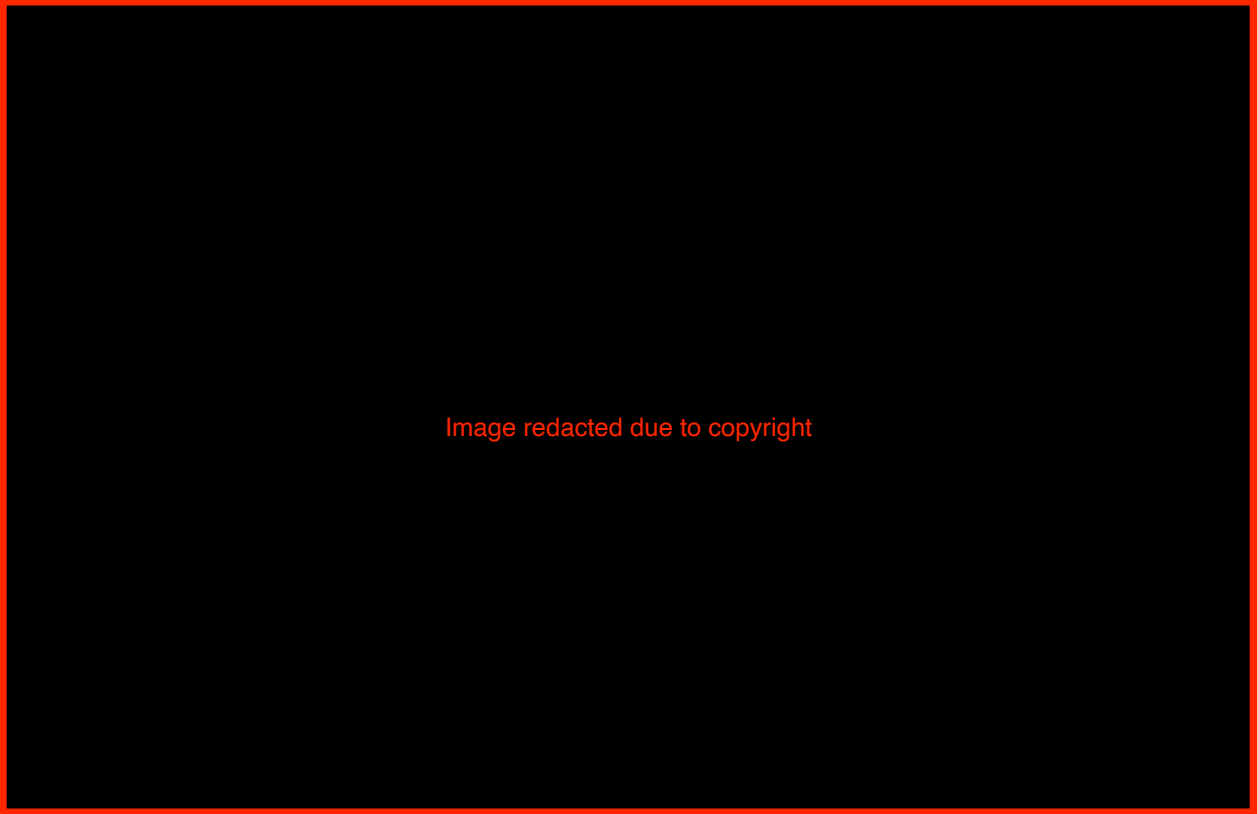
A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.1b John Piper illustration from J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: An Anatomy of Suburbia*, (London: Architectural Press, 1973), facing p. 25.

on interior furnishings. Nonetheless, Richards comes much closer to a rosy endorsement of suburbia than Hastings ever would.

Simultaneously, Richards praises suburbia as ‘a true contemporary vernacular’. This is due to the casual or accidental nature of the aesthetic effects generated by verdant gardens, and ornamental features selected by individual households. ‘It is one of the attributes of a vernacular’, Richards writes,

that its characteristic effects are not produced selfconsciously [sic] but through the operation of an instinctive sense of style, and suburban architecture at its best may therefore be said to represent the true vernacular development of the Picturesque landscape tradition.¹³

Suburbia is, therefore, created through the active involvement of the inhabitants whose efforts, through the right cultural conditions, result in an authentic architectural mode.

Interpreting this notion of participation presented in *The Castles on the Ground*, Jessica Kelly has argued that Richards articulated his belief ‘that architects, as specialists, had a responsibility to guide the evolution of culture’.¹⁴ There is no doubt that this is an important feature of his intellectual project, one that was highlighted by the rapid increase in professional architects in tandem with perceived public disaffection with modernism.¹⁵ He carved out a place for the architect as one who might gently promote vernacular expression, as we have already seen in chapter two. However, as I hope to have shown, we can be more specific about the kind of architectural responsibility Richards envisioned. He believed that architects must intercede where culture approached a state of dissipation or dis-location. Not merely guiding the evolution of culture, he believed that architects, and especially domestic

¹³ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, pp. 18, 30

¹⁴ Jessica Kelly, ‘Vulgar Modernism: J. M. Richards, Modernism and the Vernacular in British Architecture’, *Architectural History*, 58 (2015), 229-259, (p. 230).

¹⁵ For a more extensive discussion of the architect’s relationship to the interwar public, see Neal Shasore, ‘Architecture and the Public in Interwar Britain’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford 2015).

architects and planners, could enable society to reforge an experience of rootedness and belonging that had deserted modernity. He searched for a living vernacular as an attempt to reach beyond the authorised narratives of nation building that were, quite evidently, crumbling. He turned towards the spoken vernacular of architecture, not the officious printed texts or state monuments that had, under Benedict Anderson's famous terminology, created the imagined communities of modern nationalism. We have seen how he was not alone in this belief: Peggy Angus, during and since her brief sympathy with Richards in the 1930s, saw folk art, Marxism, and industrial design as the path to a similar reconciliation; Eliot thought he, as a writer, could also contribute to his own conservative version of this process, if only the coherent social unity of the village could be reconfigured; Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth believed they too could heal the wounds of modernity through art objects designed to be lived amongst and used to inform a way of life; Ernő Goldfinger, making himself at home in England forged his identity in tandem with a collective national self by suffusing modernism with Georgianism.

Richards's position is made clear as he provides an extraordinary assessment of why suburbia is attractive. In a passage worth quoting at length, he writes of how suburbia provides its inhabitants with

two things: a sense of belonging to a fairly sympathetic world and an opportunity of making out of that world something personal to themselves – in fact an outlet for their idealistic and creative instincts [...] one is concerned with shutting out an unkind world and the other is actively concerned with putting something – be it only a mirage or a façade of make-believe – in its place

These two tendencies, to escape and to create, he terms the negative and positive roles of the suburban environment. When considering the first

we must not expect the enterprise appropriate to a mind that looks outward at an expanding world with confidence in its own relation to it; we must expect qualities more appropriate to a mind that look secretively inward in search of a world where an illusion of security can be obtained by grasping hold of whatever may serve as an anchorage to the past.¹⁶

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the literary and architectural constructions of not only the suburban home, but also the modernist studio, the Georgian terrace, and stately home in its picturesque landscape cooperated on a joint mission to provide an illusion of security and an anchorage in the past, and were all destabilised or bolstered in response to a national insecurity regarding interior domestic scene's relation to an expanding and unruly world beyond. Richards's text subtly registered Britain's slide from pre-eminence within the world system and indicated how this new reality harboured far-reaching ramifications for English identity and its cultural formulations.

Richards's argument is inconceivable without the three decades of domestic debate I have been mapping out. This began with the suburban dream of the Ideal Home Exhibition and the emergence of architectural modernity in England, continued with the notion of architecture as a published discourse that can be made and remade in the minds of readers, mutated through the embattled domestic security of the 1930s and the urge to conserve structures of identity alongside built fabric of Georgian London, and ultimately arrived in the *Architectural Review's* townscape campaign and its literary correlate in Eliot's writing. These various architectures of English identity reverberate through post-war narratives of reconstruction and the attempted return to a confected notion of normative Englishness. As we have already seen, the distressing impossibility of this task is set out in Braine's *Room at the Top*, but we might also turn to how domestic Englishness was staged and critiqued in the middlebrow suburban fiction of Barbara Pym, Angus Wilson's *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956),

¹⁶ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, pp. 38-9.

and what Al Alvarez termed the ‘Gentility Principle’ in 1962: the malady of conservative post-war poetry in which ‘gentility reigns supreme [...] a belief that life is always more or less orderly, people always more or less polite, their emotions and habits more or less decent and more or less controllable’.¹⁷ In counterpoint to the bold and laudable narratives of Britain’s multicultural and postcolonial history, beset with racial conflict and economic hardship, I have sought to give an account of the stubborn domestic bedrock of English identity as it was desperately forged by conservative cultural forces in the interwar years and endured into the post-war era. In his new introduction to the 1973 edition of *The Castles on the Ground*, Richards remarked on how ‘with the social decay and the gradual depopulation of the city centres, the power base of the nation and the source of its attitudes and opinions is moving daily away from the cities’.¹⁸ He refers to a retreat from metropolitan perception, as described by Raymond Williams, and his commentary on this theme has prompted me through the preceding chapters to place renewed focus on the material and imaginative changes occurring to domestic architectures in England that signalled the nation’s shifting sense of self. These architectures of the home and of identity were forged through a literary-architectural dialogue I have attempted to bring to light.

Even in more radical and self-consciously avant-garde post-war circles, the vestiges of the enmeshed nature of domestic modernism and national identity remain. In *The New Brutalism* (1966), Reyner Banham provided an architectural parallel to Alvarez’s comment when he denounced the picturesque theory promoted by Hastings, Pevsner, and Richards which ‘seemed to be employed to justify, even sanctify, a willingness to compromise away

¹⁷ Al Alvarez, ‘The New Poetry, or Beyond the Gentility Principle’, in *The New Poetry*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962) pp. 21-32 (p. 25). Key scholarship on this issue already includes, Peter J. Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2007); Nicola Wilson, *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015); Praseeda Gopinath, *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities after Empire* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

¹⁸ Richards, *Castles on the Ground*, p. 3.

every “real” architectural value, to surrender to all that was most provincial and second rate in British social and intellectual life.’ And yet the strain of Englishness I have discussed lives on in the distinctly English frame of Banham’s text as well as his acknowledgement of Britain’s (imperial) decline in his description of ‘a grand old British lost cause hurling its gentlemanly defiance to the world.’¹⁹ Banham is here declaring the hopelessly outmoded quality of both townscape and the timid, Russophilic, stock brick domesticity of the London County Council’s architectural office. Although these were separate schools of thought, one example them overlapping is Frederick Gibberd’s housing scheme at The Lawn in Harlow New Town (figure 5.2). Gibberd’s scheme involved the first domestic point block in the country, featuring an innovative butterfly plan enabling each flat in the tower to have a south facing balcony. This was of particular importance as the tower preserved the surrounding green space in which the mature oaks were maintained and supported with new planting. Indeed, Gibberd’s housing and landscape occupied the site of Mark Hall, a country house destroyed by fire in 1947. But according to Banham this was ‘absolutely trivial’ to a new generation facing ‘social chaos, a world in ruins, the prospect of nuclear annihilation and what appeared to be complete abandonment of architectural standards by their elders.’²⁰

The new brutalist art and architecture Banham championed would engage itself with these conditions rather than seeking an escape. Only through the human subject’s immersion in the new ruin-ridden, commercialised society through a critical relationship mediated by artists and architects could anything close to an adequate relationship with the modern world be achieved.²¹ The power Richards had sought to put back into the hands of the general population of England was now reclaimed by a reinvigorated avant-garde. Predictably,

¹⁹ Banham is describing the ‘grotesque mixture of Stalinist conspiratorial techniques [...] and traditional method of British snobbery’ in the architects department of the London County Council after the war, Banham, *The New Brutalism*, p. 13, 11

²⁰ Banham, *The New Brutalism*, p. 12.

²¹ Ben Highmore, *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2017) ch. 3.

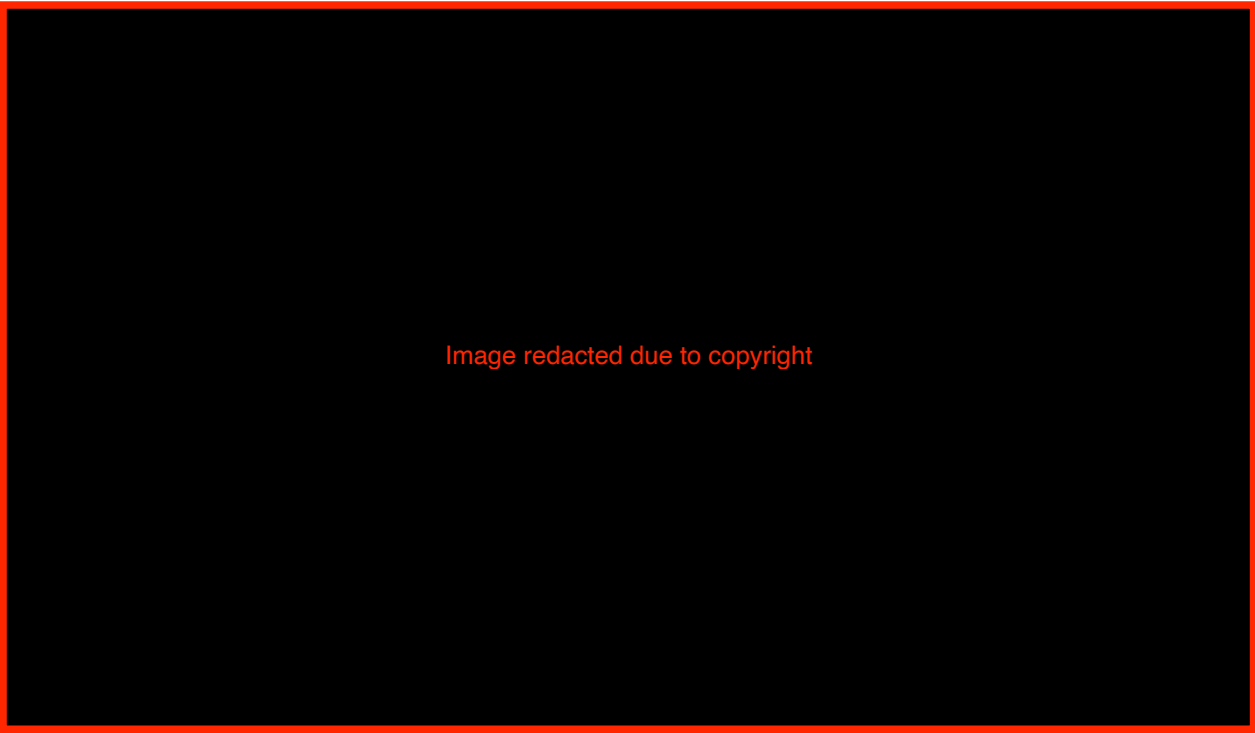


Image redacted due to copyright

5.2 Frederick Gibberd, Housing at the Lawn, Harlow New Town, 1951, from Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism*, (London: Architectural Press, 1966), p. 13.

domestic space continued to play a pivotal role in this dynamic. On 5 August 1954, Hammer Prints Ltd was founded by Nigel and Judith Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi. The company was established to sell ‘textiles, wallpaper, statuary, ceramics, furniture and photographic equipment and materials’ made by the founders, and registered to an address in rural Essex, The King’s Head in the small village of Thorpe-le-Soken.²² The house has been an inn frequented by smugglers in the sixteenth century and would become both home and workshop of those involved in this short-lived venture. It was a familiar building to Nigel Henderson who had visited it regularly before the war when staying with friends of his mother, Adrian and Karin Stephen. The Stephens, both psychoanalysts, lived in Bloomsbury near to the London residences of Adrian’s sisters, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, and used the King’s Head as their weekend house. Their daughter, Judith, eventually married Nigel in 1943 and she would go on to provide administrative support and bookkeeping for Hammer Prints. Nigel Henderson and Paolozzi had met through the Central School of Arts and Crafts and resolved to apply their skills and knowledge in screen printing and photographic manipulation to provide a stream of income and carry their art into the post-war home.

The Hendersons had lived amongst those who had been intimately connected to the Omega Workshops. In Judith’s case she has grown up watching the walls and furniture of Charleston Farmhouse accrue painted decoration at the hand of her aunt and Duncan Grant, and Nigel himself later visited Charleston with Judith and their children (figure 5.3).²³ Like the Omega, Hammer Prints was a transitory project – Paolozzi withdrew from the business in 1958 and production ended in 1962 – but while it lasted, it extended and challenged a tradition of domestic modernist stretching back to 1913 where this thesis began. It has been suggested that Henderson was unaware of other avant-garde textile production such as

²² *Memorandum and Articles of Association of Hammer Prints Limited*, 1954. Tate Archive, TGA 9211.7.1.1.1 Nigel Henderson.

²³ Highmore, *Art of Brutalism*, p. 131.

Hepworth's and Nicholson's lino-printed fabrics from 1933 due, presumably, to their limited production.²⁴ If that is true it is significantly less plausible that he remained unaware of their later Constructivists Fabrics series from 1937 made in collaboration with Alastair Morton. Henderson was by that time twenty years of age and living in central London with the Stephens. He had been introduced to surrealism by his mother's friend Peggy Guggenheim who he described as a 'kind of fairy godmother' and visited the studios of Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, and Yves Tanguy before himself exhibiting at Guggenheim Jeune in London in 1938.²⁵ He was, therefore, exceptionally engrossed in avant-garde circles and the friction between surrealist and constructivist groups mediated by Herbert Read.²⁶

When turning to the fabric and wallpaper designs produced by Hammer Prints, Henderson's earlier exposure to the domestic modernism of the Omega Workshops is visible only in the extent to which he and Paolozzi opposed their predecessor's decorative principles. Ben Highmore has argued the fidgeting blankets of broken marks in monochrome patterns such as *Sgraffito* and *Newsprint* can be considered a reaction against the doctrine of significant form propounded by Clive Bell in 1914, which called for the simplification of form and emphasis of colour (figures 5.4).²⁷ Meanwhile Hilary Floe reads the same designs as 'an apotheosis of the 1950s fascination with the texture of damage': 'In contrast to the aspirational quality of most home furnishings – whether sleekly futuristic or reassuringly traditional – the visual sources for these prints are aggressively anti-aspirational, even crude, embracing an aesthetic of dereliction.'²⁸ The sea change on show in the output of Hammer

²⁴ Lesley Jackson, 'Inside out - Outside In: The Guerilla Fabrics of Hammer Prints', in *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer Prints Ltd, 1954-75*, ed. Michelle Cotton (Colchester, Essex: Firstsite, 2013) p. 95.

²⁵ Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001) p. 15-16.

²⁶ See Read's pronouncement of the supremacy of romantic (surrealist) art over classical (constructivist) art in Herbert Read, 'Introduction', in *Surrealism*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936) pp. 17-91. Read would go on to found the Institute for Contemporary Arts in 1946, an important centre of post-war artists such as Henderson and Paolozzi and home to the Independent Group.

²⁷ Highmore, *Art of Brutalism*, p. 130-131.

²⁸ Hilary Floe, 'The End of the Streamlined Era: Art and Imperfection in Postwar Britain', in *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain 1945-1965*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Prestel and Barbican, 2022) p. 46.

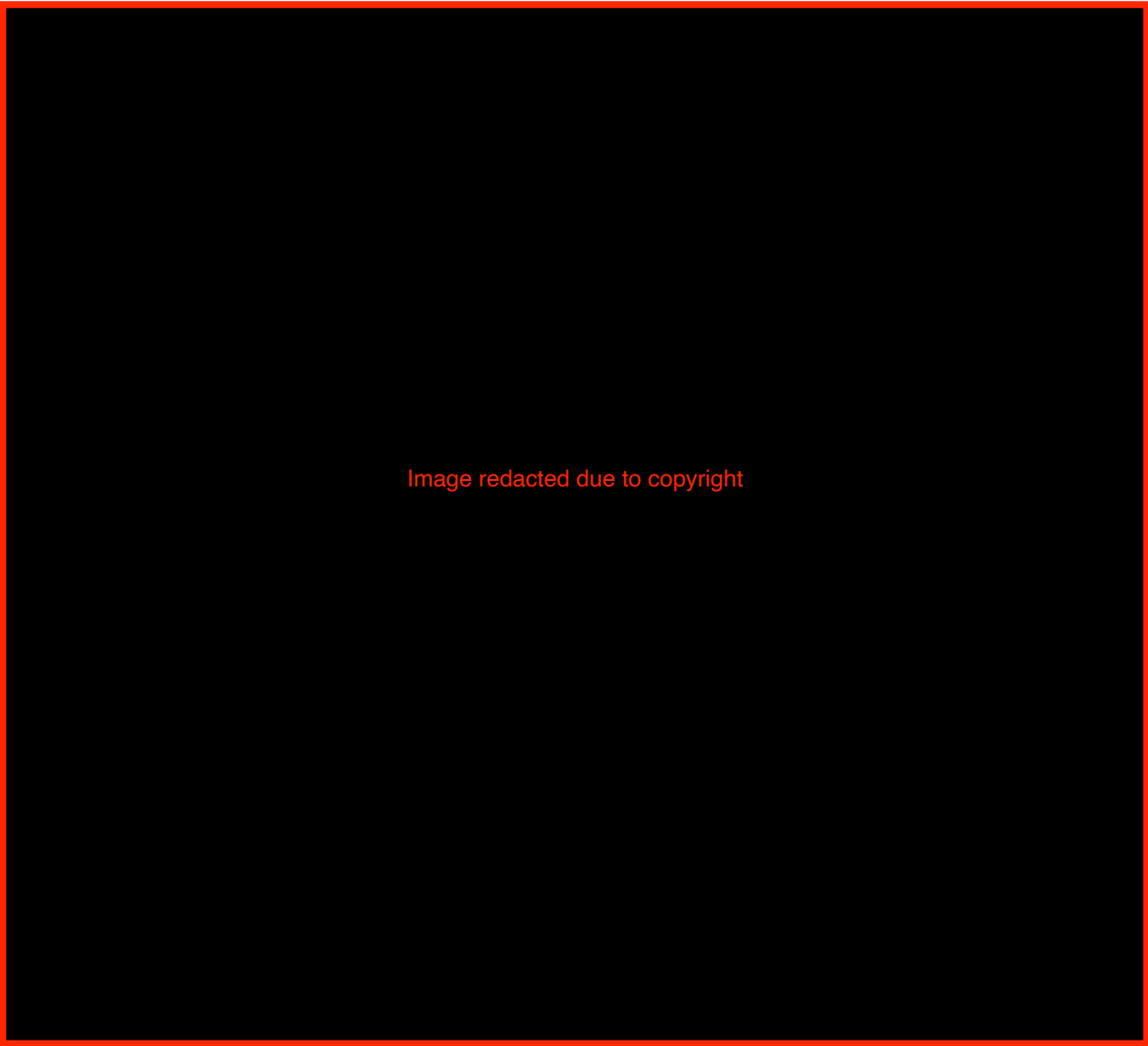


Image redacted due to copyright

5.3 From left: Judith Stephen (later Henderson), Duncan Grant, and Angelica Bell, in Clive and Vanessa Bell's garden at Charleston, Sussex, c. 1923. Photograph by Vanessa Bell. Tate.

Prints is indicated by Henderson's early impression of Paolozzi as someone understood 'with formidable clarity that art was not to be derived from art in polite circles, but re-sensed and fused from the enormous mass of material'.²⁹ Pevsner's post-war historiography of English art, with its propulsive logic towards the picturesque, was assuredly 'art in polite circles', as was his placement of William Morris as a modernist forefather, a lineage Banham vociferously resisted.³⁰ Hammer Prints, and the project of brutalist art more generally, proposed an alternative value system to that of the connoisseur, one that could metabolise the ruined fragments of culture, commercial mass media, man's newly distorted relationship with the natural world in the atomic age.³¹ As Highmore describes it, the figure of the 'anti-connoisseur' emerged: their 'wallpaper, curtains, lamp-stands, and textiles don't offer this subject respite, but rather a mode of attunement towards, and for, a mass-produced society. The brutalist subject is prepared for the modern world through a form of domestic modernism'.³² This appears to be the opposite of Richards's suburban retreat in search of 'a sense of belonging to a fairly sympathetic world', but belonging itself it was not yet ruled out as a by-product of designs that registered the material reality of life in post-war England and welcomed it into the home.

The most intriguing product of Hammer Prints with which to end this thesis is their *Townscape* pattern designed in 1955, shortly after the company's founding (figure 5.5). It features the same inundation of frenetic marks as *Sgraffito* and *Newsprint* but the blotches of black and sweeping lines are softer and more human than the other designs, suggesting a chaotic urban plan with buildings, doors, and bridges depicted. It is also one of the only Hammer Prints designs to feature legible text with 'man', 'turtles', 'f[ast/art]', 'magic',

²⁹ Henderson, quoted in Walsh, *Nigel Henderson*, pp. 17-19.

³⁰ Banham, *The New Brutalism*, pp. 11-13.

³¹ For an interwar context on artistic resistance to commercialism, a position Highmore suggests is inverted in brutalist art, see Walter L. Adamson, *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (London: University of California Press, 2007).

³² Highmore, *Art of Brutalism*, pp. 106-8.

‘stampede’ and ‘horizon’ which emerge from a sea of apparently automatic drawing to comic and absurd effect. Connections to surrealist practice are further confirmed by the inclusion of drawings by the Henderson’s children, most prominently a gentleman in a 1930s sports car.

It is not mere conjecture to suggest that Hammer Print’s *Townscape* is a direct satire on the *Architectural Review*’s contemporary promotion of the picturesque urban planning under the same title. Henderson’s and Paolozzi’s connections with architectural discourse were abundant. In 1952, Paolozzi had provided ceiling paper for the office of Ronald Jenkins at Ove Arup and Partners, designed by Peter and Alison Smithson.³³ That same year Jane Drew commissioned Paolozzi to create a mural for the offices of her architectural practice with Maxwell Fry (Fry, Drew and Partners) as well as using his pre-Hammer fabric patterns for curtains and upholstery in her own home. An image of Drew’s interior was published in the *Architectural Review* in March that year as part of an article on a new generation of English textile designers including Terence Conran, Lucienne Day, Patrick Heron, John Minton, Vera Spencer, and Graham Sutherland.³⁴ A design by Paolozzi was used for the issue’s front cover (figures 5.6a & 5.6b). Banham’s initial article on ‘The New Brutalism’ was published in the *Architectural Review* in 1955, the same year as the *Townscape* pattern was created, and it placed Henderson and Paolozzi at the centre of the new movement. Later, in 1967, both Paolozzi and Henderson were involved in the Smithson’s summative volume *Urban Structuring: Studies of Peter and Alison Smithson* (1967) in which their work was explicitly credited as a visual guide for new methods of architectural planning.³⁵ It is also possible that the *Townscape* pattern affectionately mocks Gordon Cullen’s style of drawing which circulated in the pages of the *Architectural Review* throughout the 1950s but is typified

³³ See Highmore, *Art of Brutalism*, pp. 124-5.

³⁴ Although the article labels these designers as English, this elided Paolozzi’s background as Scottish-Italian, Douglas Newton, ‘Printed Textiles: A Selection from the Work of the Younger English Designers’, *Architectural Review*, 111 (1952), 190-195.

³⁵ Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *Urban Structuring: Studies of Alison & Peter Smithson* (London: Studio Vista, 1967) pp. 34-5.

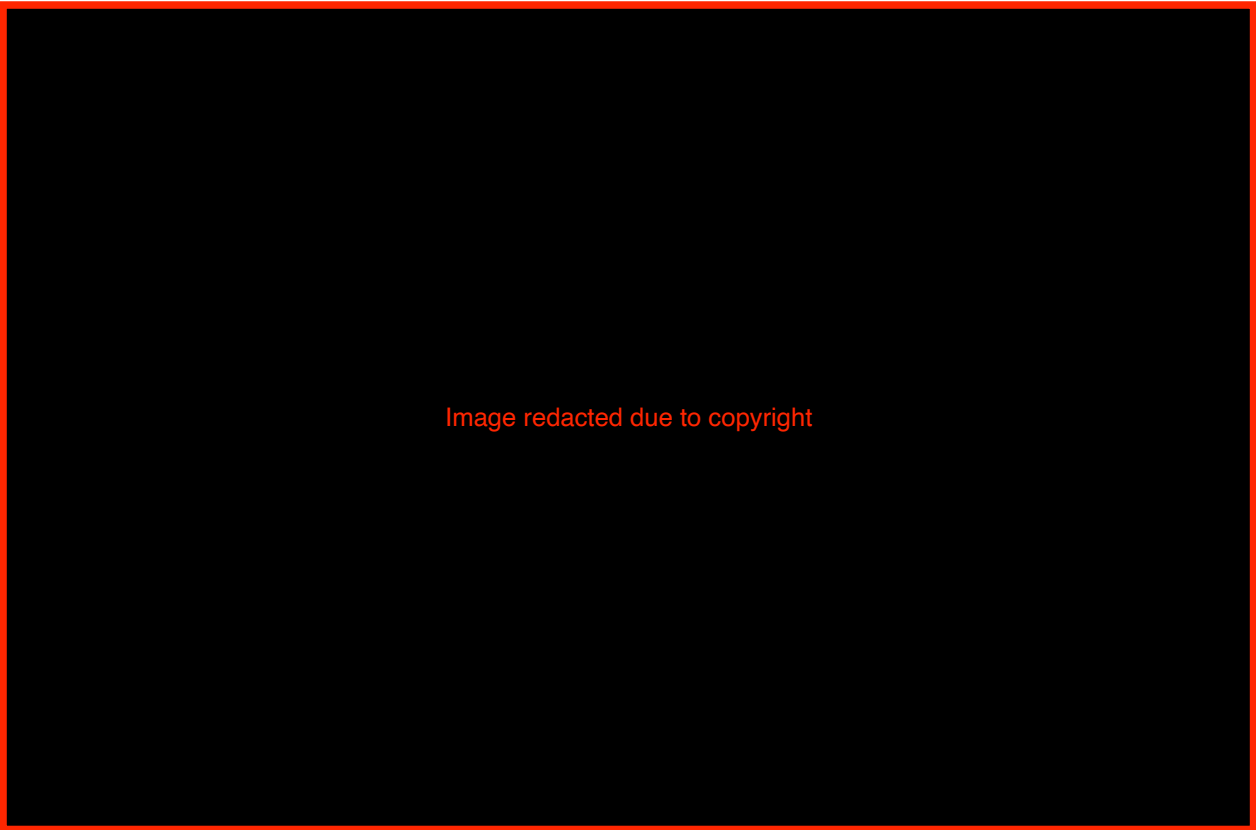
A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.4 Hammer Prints Ltd (Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi), *Sgraffito*, c. 1955 from Jane Alison and others, *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain, 1945-1965*, (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022) p. 196.

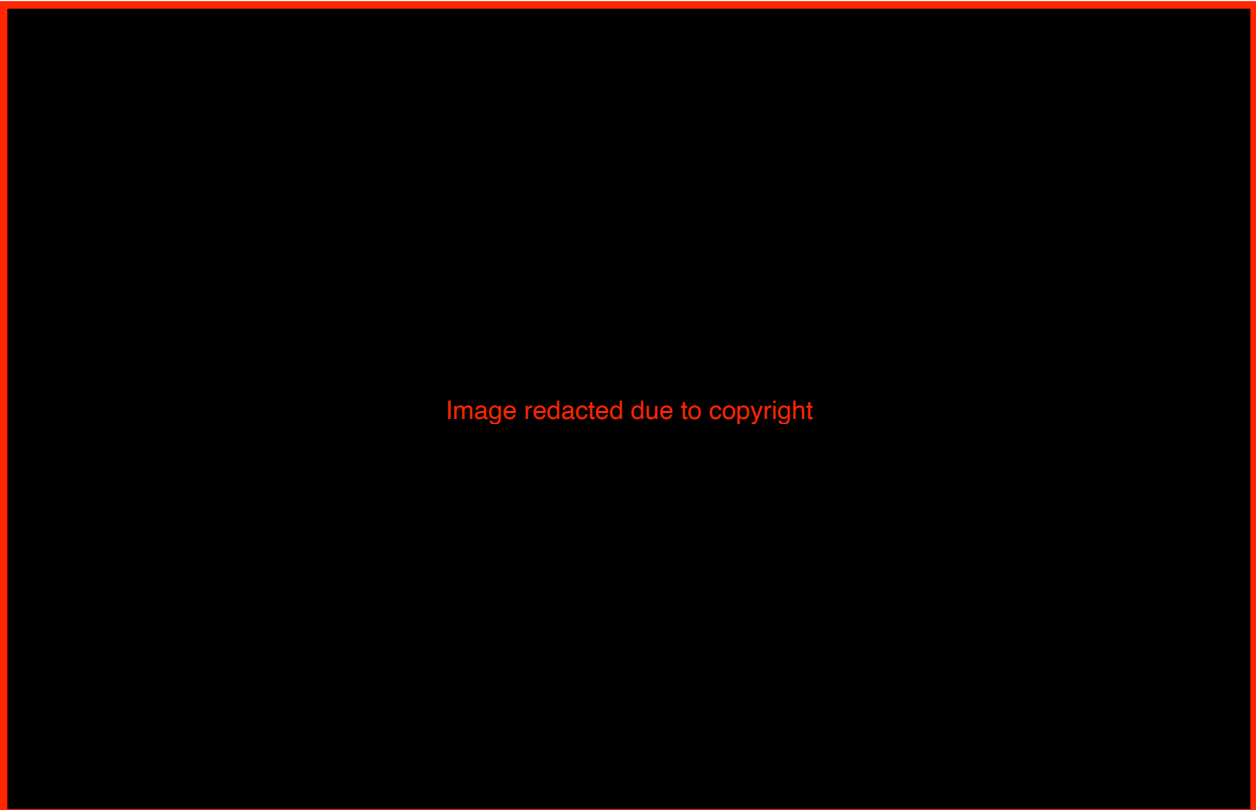
A large black rectangular area with a red border, indicating a redacted image.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.5 Hammer Prints Ltd (Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi), *Townscape*, c. 1955 from Jane Alison and others, *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain, 1945-1965*, (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022) p. 197.

by his dust jacket for his drawings gathered in 1961 to form a major visual exposition of townscape (figure 5.7). Just as Henderson and Paolozzi turned their attention to the detritus of bombsites and the ‘as found’ patina of soot-marked city walls, the writers of townscape demanded their readers ‘focus on the floor’ of the city with its myriad patterns, and carefully studied the texture of walls as sculptural medium, ‘naturally’ occurring in the English urban scene.³⁶

Contrary to American abstract impressionism as the dominant interpretive frame for Hammer Prints, these links to townscape and interwar domestic modernism place Henderson’s and Paolozzi’s work in closer association with their predecessors than is often acknowledged. Highmore rightly observes that Harold Rosenberg’s essay of 1952, ‘The American Action Painters’, which was taken as an apologia for Jackson Pollock’s art, became an authoritative text for those associated with the ICA and the Independent Group in the 1950s. Situated in Marxist and existentialist thought, Rosenberg’s essay expressed worries about the commercialisation of an artist’s output which would compromise a painting’s unique character as the indexical mark of the artist’s social and psychological conditions – that is, a direct physical link to reality. Once experienced only as trademark, as ‘a Pollock’, the artist and their work has capitulated to ‘the permanence of the commonplace and decorates it with his own daily annihilation. The result is apocalyptic wallpaper.’³⁷ Highmore insightfully suggests that Hammer Prints took this not as a warning but as an invitation, and their designs were part of ‘the brutalist goal to become critically entangled’ with a ‘murky world of commodity exchange and mass production’.³⁸

³⁶ Andrew Hammer, ‘Wallscape: Texture as Sculpture’, *Architectural Review*, 111 (1952), 57-58; Gordon Cullen, ‘Focus on the Floor’, *Architectural Review* 111 (1952), 32-42.

³⁷ Harold Rosenberg, ‘The American Action Painters’, in *The Tradition of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962) pp. 23-39 (p. 34). This essay was first published in *Art News* in December 1952.

³⁸ Highmore, *Art of Brutalism*, p. 122.

Does this not bear resemblance to Richards's temptation to immerse himself in suburbia, that paragon of consumerism and mass production? Does Richards not also call for the suburban subject (surely an 'anti-connoisseur' in the making) to develop a critical entanglement with modern world, even if this is coded in terms of retreat and escape? Do Richards and his colleagues not also advocate furnishing cities like homes and homes like cities with substantial debts to surrealism? Ultimately, does the domestic modernism of Hammer Prints not also seek to build a new mode of belonging for the modern world? These tentative questions push at the outermost historical and methodological limits of this thesis, but they are made possible by the preceding chapters which have argued for the centrality of domestic space in the renegotiation of intimate, personal identities of nation and empire with the changing face of the public world prior to the mid-century. The brutalist interiors of Hammer Prints undoubtedly heralded a new aesthetic and ethic but when we attend to what inspired their patterns – 'primitive art, micro-zoology, the natural patterns formed by organic objects' – the extent to which they engaged with their contemporary conditions is necessarily tempered by their debt to the earlier activities of inter-war domestic modernists who shared many of their interests.³⁹ The *Townscape* pattern exemplified their desire to not only metabolise their new post-war conditions but also to twist their historical inheritance as it was presented by Cullen, Hastings, Pevsner, and Richards. The preparation of the brutalist subject for the modern world involved facing up to the scars of war and the possibility of nuclear annihilation, but it also involved reconciling oneself to an acute uncertainty regarding English identity as understood through imperial decline and domestic space.

³⁹ Eduardo Paolozzi in Terence Conran, *Printed Textile Design* (London: Studio Publications, 1957) p. 52.

A large rectangular area that has been completely redacted, appearing as a solid black field. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.6a Eduardo Paolozzi, front cover of the *Architectural Review* 111, March 1952.

A large rectangular area that has been completely redacted, appearing as a solid black field. It is framed by a thin red border.

Image redacted due to copyright

5.6b Jane Drew's home with curtain and upholstery fabrics by Paolozzi, from Douglas Newton, 'Printed Textiles: A Selection from the Work of the Younger English Designers', *Architectural Review*, 111 (1952), 190-195 (p. 194).



Image redacted due to copyright

5.7 Gordon Cullen, dust jacket, *Townscape*, (London: Architectural Press, 1961).

Bibliography

Archival Sources

Angus Acworth Papers, Bodleian Library Special Collections, Oxford.
Christopher Hussey Papers, Scotney Castle, National Trust, Kent.
Goldfinger Family Papers, 2 Willow Road, National Trust, London.
Ernö Goldfinger Papers and Drawings, RIBA Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Leslie Martin Papers, RIBA Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Ben Nicholson Papers, Tate Gallery Archives, London.
Sadie Speight Papers, RIBA Archive, 66 Portland Place, London.

- Abrams, M.H. 'Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric', in *From Sensibility to Romanticism : Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, eds. Frederick W. Hilles, Frederick A. Pottle and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965)
- Acworth, Angus Whiteford. *Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest in the British West Indies: A Report with Proposals as to the Best Means of Protecting Them from Damage or Destruction (Otherwise Than by Acts of God)*, Colonial Research Studies (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1951)
- . *Treasure in the Caribbean: A First Study of Georgian Buildings in the British West Indies*, Georgian Handbooks (London: Pleiades Books, 1949)
- Acworth, Angus Whiteford, and Anthony Wagner. '25 Year of Listing: Making the Lists' *Architectural Review*, 148.885 (1970), 308-10
- Adamson, Walter L. *Embattled Avant-Gardes: Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (London: University of California Press, 2007)
- Addleshaw, G. W. O., and Frederick Etchells. *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship: An Inquiry into the Arrangements for Public Worship in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948)
- Addison, Adrian. *Mail Men: The Story of the Daily Mail, The Paper that Divided and Conquered Britain* (London: Atlantic Books, 2017)
- Adorno, Theodor W. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005)
- Aitchison, Mathew. 'Townscape: Scope, Scale and Extent', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.5 (2012), 621-42
- . 'Visual Planning and Exterior Furnishing: A Critical History of the Early Townscape Movement, 1930 to 1949', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Queensland 2009
- Aitchison, Mathew, and John Macarthur. 'Pevsner's Townscape', in *Visual Planning and the Picturesque*, ed. Matthew Aitchison (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), pp. 1-43

- Alison, Jane, and others. *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain 1945-1965*, (London: Barbican and Prestel, 2022)
- Allan, John. *Berthold Lubetkin: Architecture and the Tradition of Progress*, 2nd ed (London: Black Dog Press, 2012)
- Alvarez, Al. 'The New Poetry, or Beyond the Gentility Principle', in *The New Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 21-32
- Andrews, Malcolm. *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989)
- Archer, John. 'Colonial Suburbs in South Asia, 1700–1850, and the Spaces of Modernity', in *Visions of Suburbia*, ed. Roger Silverton (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 26-54
- Armond, Kate. 'Wyndham Lewis and the Parables of Expressionist Architecture', *Modernist Cultures*, 9.2 (2014), 282-303
- Attfield, Judith. 'Moving Home: Changing Attitudes to Residence and Identity', *Journal of Architecture*, 7.3 (2002), 249-62
- Auden, W. H. *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber and Faber. 1977)
- Ball, Susan L. *Ozenfant and Purism: The Evolution of a Style, 1915-1930*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981)
- Ballantyne, Andrew, and Andrew Law. *Tudoresque: In Pursuit of the Ideal Home* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011)
- Banham, Reyner. *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London: Architectural Press, 1966)
- Barczewski, Stephanie L. *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014)
- Barnes, Felicity. 'Bringing Another Empire Alive? The Empire Marketing Board and the Construction of Dominion Identity, 1926-33', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42.1 (2014), 61-85
- Barnes, Ronald. *Art and Industry: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Board of Trade under the Chairmanship of Lord Gorell on the Production and Exhibition of Articles of Good Design and Everyday Use* (London: H.M.S.O., 1932)
- Barrell, John. *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972)
- Baucom, Ian. *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999)
- Beard, Lee. "'Modernist Cell' or 'Gentle Nest': Ben Nicholson, Art, Design and the Modern Interior 1924-39", unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2003
- Beasley, Rebecca. 'Modernism's Translations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wolleager and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 551-70
- Beaumont, Matthew, and Michael J. Freeman. *The Railway and Modernity: Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007)
- Beckett, Jane. 'Circle: The Theory and Patronage of Constructive Art in the Thirties', in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982), p. 11-19

- Beddoe, Deirdre. *Back to Home and Duty: Women between the Wars, 1918-1939* (London: Pandora, 1989)
- Beech, Nick. "Et Tu, Peter?" Some Kinds of Real-(or Not So) Politik at the Festival of Britain', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.5 (2012), 747-62
- Bell, Clive. *Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1914)
- Bell, Quentin, and Stephen Chaplin. 'The Ideal Home Rumpus', *Apollo*, 80.32 (1964), 288-94.
- Bending, Stephen. 'Horace Walpole and Eighteenth-Century Garden History', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 57.1 (1994), 209-26
- Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings: 1927-1934*, vol. 2 (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003)
- Benton, Tim. 'The Myth of Function', in *Modernism in Design*, ed. Paul Greenhalgh (London: Reaktion, 1990), pp. 35-49
- Berman, Jessica. 'Woolf and the Private Sphere', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 461-74
- Bermingham, Ann. *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (London: University of California Press, 1986)
- Best, R.H. 'The Future Urban Acreage', *Town and Country Planning*, 32.8 (1964), 352.
- Betjeman, John. *Antiquarian Prejudice* (London: Hogarth Press, 1939)
- . *Collected Poems* (London: John Murray, 2006)
- . 'The Death of Modernism', *Architectural Review*, 70.421 (1931), 161
- . *Ghastly Good Taste, or a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1933)
- . *Mount Zion, or in Touch with the Infinite* (London: James Press, 1931)
- . 'Obituary: Frederick Etchells', *Architectural Review*, 154.920 (1973), 271
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Blomfield, Reginald and Amyas Connell. 'For and against Modern Architecture' *Listener* 12.307 (1934), 885-6
- Bloomfield, B. C. *W.H. Auden: A Bibliography, 1924-1969* (Charlottesville, N.C.: University Press of Virginia, 1972)
- Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, 2nd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Bois, Yve-Alain. 'A Picturesque Stroll around "Clara-Clara"', *October*, 29 (1984), 33-62.
- Bowness, Sophie, and Tim Nicholson. 'The Textile Designs of Nancy Nicholson', *Apollo* 154.476 (2001), 17-23
- Boydell, Christine. 'Textiles in the Modern House' in *The Modern House Revisited*, ed. Neil R. Bingham (London: Twentieth Century Society, 1996) pp. 51-64.
- Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001)
- . *The Off-Modern* (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2017)
- Braine, John. *Room at the Top* (London: Arrow, 2000)
- Brandon-Jones, John. 'An Interview with John Brandon-Jones', *Architectural Design*, 24 (1979)
- Brett, Lionel. 'The New Haussmann', *Architectural Review* 93.553 (1943), 23-26
- Broughton, John. *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018)

- Brown, Jane. *The English Garden through the 20th Century* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Garden Art Press, 2002)
- . *The Modern Garden* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000)
- Bullock, Nicholas. 'The Constructive Idea in Architecture' in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982), pp. 33-37
- Burden, Robert. *Travel, Modernism and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2016)
- Burnett, John. *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1986)
- Byron, Robert. *How We Celebrate the Coronation: A Word to London's Visitors* (London: Architectural Press, 1937)
- . *Imperial Pilgrimage* (London: London Transport, 1937)
- . *Road to Oxania* (London: Macmillan, 1937)
- Calvocoressi, Richard. *Alastair Morton and Edinburgh Weavers: Abstract Art and Textile Design, 1935-46* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1978)
- Campbell, Joan. *The German Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Campbell, Louise. 'Constructivism and Contextualism in a Modern Country House: The Design of Brackenfell (Leslie Martin and Sadie Speight 1937-38)', *Architectural History*, 50 (2007), 247-66
- . *Studio Lives: Architect, Art and Artist in 20th-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 2019)
- Cannadine, David. *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Yale University Press, 1990)
- Carrington, Noel. *Industrial Design in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976)
- Carswell, John. *Blue & White: Chinese Porcelain around the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2000)
- Casid, Jill H. *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005)
- Chamberlain, Richard, and Annamarie Stapleton. *Artists' Textiles: Artist Designed Textiles 1940-1976* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2012)
- Checkland, Sarah Jane. *Ben Nicholson: The Vicious Circles of His Life and Art* (London: John Murray, 2000)
- Cherry, Bridget, and Nikolaus Pevsner. *London 4: North, Buildings of England* (London: Penguin, 1998)
- Cloud, Gerald W. 'John Rodker, Printer and Publisher: A Bibliographical Survey', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Delaware, 2005
- Clunn, Harold P. *The Face of London: The Record of a Century's Changes and Development* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1932)
- Cohen, Scott. 'The Empire from the Street: Virginia Woolf, Wembley, and Imperial Monuments', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50.1 (2004), 85-109
- Collini, Stefan. *The Nostalgic Imagination: History in English Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)
- . *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)

- Collins, Judith. *The Omega Workshops* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1984)
- Colomina, Beatriz. *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (London: MIT Press, 1996)
- Conran, Terence. *Printed Textile Design* (London: Studio Publications, 1957)
- Copley, Stephen, and Peter Garside. *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Corbusier, Le. *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London: Rodker, 1929)
- . *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007)
- . *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (London John Rodker, 1927)
- . *Vers Une Architecture*. Nouvelle Édition Revue Et Augmentée (Paris: G. Cres 1925)
- Cork, Richard. *David Bomberg* (London: Yale University Press, 1987)
- . *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age: Origins and Development*, 2 vols (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976)
- Cornforth, John. 'Hussey, Christopher Edward Clive (1899–1970), Architectural Historian.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online
- . *The Search for a Style: Country Life and Architecture 1897-1935* (London: Deutsch, 1988)
- 'Country Homes Gardens Old & New: St. Leonard's Hill, Windsor, the Seat of Sir Francis Barry', *Country Life*, 9.220 (1901), 368-71.
- Cowell, Ben. 'Saving Country Houses and Their Collections in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', in *Art and the Country House*, ed. Martin Postle (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2020) online
- Craig, Peter. 'The House That Jerry Built? Building Societies, the State and the Politics of Owner-Occupation', *Housing Studies*, 1.2 (1986), 87-108
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: MIT Press, 1990)
- Crinson, Mark. 'Georgianism and the Tenements, Dublin 1908-1926', *Art History*, 29.4 (2006), 625-59.
- . *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2018)
- . *Rebuilding Babel: Modern Architecture and Internationalism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017)
- 'Cry Stop to Havoc or Preservation by Development', *Architectural Review*, 77.462 (1935), 188-92
- Cullen, Gordon. 'Focus on the Floor', *Architectural Review*, 111.661 (1952), 32-42
- Dannatt, Trevor. 'Early Years: Towards a New Order', in *Architecture, Education and Research: The Work of Leslie Martin: Papers and Selected Articles*, ed. Leslie Martin, Peter Carolin and Trevor Dannatt (London: Academy Editions, 1996)
- Darling, Elizabeth. 'Finella, Mansfield Forbes, Raymond Mcgrath, and Modernist Architecture in Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 50.1 (2011), 125-55
- . 'Institutionalizing English Modernism 1924-33: From the Vers Group to Mars', *Architectural History*, 55 (2012), 299-320

- . '“A Live Universal Language”: The Georgian as Motif in Interwar English Architectural Modernism', in *Neo-Georgian Architecture 1880-1970: A Reappraisal*, ed. Elizabeth McKellar and Julian Holder (Swindon: Historic England, 2016)
- . *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2007)
- Dassù, Marta, and Edoardo Campanella. *Anglo Nostalgia: The Politics of Emotion in a Fractured West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)
- Davie, Donald. 'The Anglican Eliot', *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of "the Wasteland"*, ed. A. Walton Litz (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 181-96
- Davis, Thomas S. *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016)
- de Waal, Edmund. 'Ben Nicholson', *Ben Nicholson: From the Studio* (Chichester: Pallant House Gallery, 2021)
- Denby, Elizabeth. 'Rehousing from the Slum Dweller's Point of View', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 44 (1936), 64-87
- Diaper, Jeremy. *T.S. Eliot and Organicism* (Clemson, South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2021)
- Dickens, Charles. *Barnaby Rudge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Dunnett, James. 'Words of Wisdom', *Building Design*, 838 (1987), 21-2
- Dunnett, James, and Nigel Hiscock. '“To This Measure of Man”: Proportional Design in the Work of Ernő Goldfinger', in *Twentieth-Century Architecture and Its Histories* ed. Lousie Campbell (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000)
- Dunnett, James, and Gavin Stamp. *Ernő Goldfinger* (London: Architectural Association, 1983)
- Eagleton, Terry. 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 23-39
- Edwards, A. Trystan. 'Correspondence: The Hundred New Towns Association', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 44 (1936)
- . 'A Criticism of the Garden City Movement.' *Town Planning Review* 4 (1913), 150-57
- . *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (London: P. Allan & Co, 1924)
- . *A Hundred New Towns for Britain: A Scheme of National Reconstruction Proposed by J 47485* (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1934)
- Edwards, Arthur M. *The Design of Suburbia: A Critical Study in Environmental History* (London: Pembridge, 1981)
- Edwards, Paul. "What Were Red Duet?" *Wyndham Lewis Annual*.1 (1994), pp. 34-38.
- . *Wyndham Lewis: Painter and Writer* (London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art 2000)
- Eliot, T. S. *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934)
- . *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002)
- . *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1950)
- . 'Vergil and the Christian World', *Listener*, 46 (1951), 411-12, 423-4
- . 'A Commentary', *Criterion: A Literary Review*, 14 (1934), 86-90
- . *The Letters of T. S. Eliot. Volume 1, 1898-1922*. ed. Valerie Eliot, John Haffenden, Hugh Haughton, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2009)

- . *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot*, 8 vols, ed. Ronald Schuchard and others (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014-17)
- Ellis, Steve. *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in Four Quartets* (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Elwall, Robert. *Ernö Goldfinger* (London: Academy Editions, 1996)
- Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, trans. Florence Kelley Wischenewetzky (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1892)
- Ensor, R. C. K. *England, 1870-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936)
- Erten, Erdem. "'The Hollow Victory' of Modern Architecture and the Quest for the Vernacular: J. M. Richards and 'the Functional Tradition'", in *Built from Below: British Architecture and the Vernacular*, ed. Peter Guillery (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 145-68
- . 'I, the World, the Devil and the Flesh: Manplan, Civilia and H. De C. Hastings', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.5 (2012), 703-18
- . 'Shaping "the Second Half Century": The Architectural Review 1947-1971', unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004
- . 'Thomas Sharp's Collaboration with H. De C. Hastings: The Formulation of Townscape as Urban Design Pedagogy', *Planning Perspectives* 24.1 (2009), 29-49
- Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- Etchells, Frederick, and John Betjeman. 'Batty Langley and His Patron Lord Ongley', *Architects' Journal*, 78 (1933), 205-06
- Etlin, Richard A. *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: The Romantic Legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994)
- Fallan, Kjetil. "'One Must Offer Something for Everyone": Designing Crockery for Consumer Consent in 1950s Norway', *Journal of Design History*, 22.2 (2009), 133-49
- Farrington, Jane. *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Lund Humphries in association with the City of Manchester Art Galleries, 1980)
- Felus, Kathryn. 'The Furniture of Ernő Goldfinger at 2 Willow Road', *Apollo*, 143.410 (1996), 47-51
- Femi, Caleb. *Poor* (London: Penguin, 2020)
- Festing, Sally. *Barbara Hepworth: A Life of Forms* (London: Penguin, 1996)
- Fielding, Henry. *The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding: An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, and Related Writings*, ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Oxford: Oxford University Press and Wesleyan University Press, 1988)
- Fisher, Fiona. 'Inside London's Railway Termini, c.1870-1939', *London Journal*, 45.2 (2020), 211-39
- Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009)
- . *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2014)
- Fletcher, Ian Christopher, Laura E. Nym Mayhall, and Philippa Levine (eds.), *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race* (London: Routledge, 2000)

- Floe, Hilary. 'The End of the Streamlined Era: Art and Imperfection in Postwar Britain', in *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain 1945-1965*, ed. Jane Alison (London: Prestel and Barbican, 2022)
- Fowler, Corinne. *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural Britain's Colonial Connections* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2020)
- Freedgood, Elaine. *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006)
- Friend, Andy. *Ravilious & Co: The Pattern of Friendship* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017)
- Fry, Maxwell. *Autobiographical Sketches*, (London: Elek, 1975)
- . 'Modernismus', *Architects' Journal*, 79 (1934), 368
- Fry, Roger. 'Architectural Heresies of a Painter: A Lecture Delivered at the Royal Institute of British Architects', in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), pp. 212-229
- . 'The Artist as Decorator' in *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 207-211
- . 'Art and Socialism', in *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), pp. 36-51
- . 'A Possible Domestic Architecture', *Vision and Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), pp. 179-183
- . 'Sensibility or Mechanism', *Listener*, 13.631 (1932), 497-99
- Fussell, Paul. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)
- . 'Introduction', in Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Gage, John. 'Art and Life', in *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934-40*, ed. Jeremy Lewison (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard Gallery, 1982), pp. 43-46
- Garnett, Richard, and Katharine Chubbuck. "Jones, Ebenezer (1820–1860), Poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online
- Gasiorek, Andrzej. 'Architecture or Revolution? Le Corbusier and Wyndham Lewis', in *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (London: Routledge, 2005)
- Gerstein, Alexandra. *Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913-19* (London: Courtauld Gallery in association with Fontanka, 2009)
- Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)
- Gilbert, David. 'The Edwardian Olympics: Suburban Modernity and the White City Games', in *The Edwardian Sense: Art, Design, and Performance in Britain, 1901-1910*, ed. Morna O'Neill and Michael Hatt (London: Yale Center for British Art and Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2010), pp. 73-97
- Gilbert, David, and Rebecca Preston. "'Stop Being So English": Suburban Modernity and National Identity in the Twentieth Century', in *Geographies of British Modernity: Space and Society in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Gilbert, David Matless and Brian Short (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 187-203

- Gilpin, William. *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772: On Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*, vol. 1 (London: R. Blamire, 1776)
- Girouard, Mark. *Cities and People: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 1985)
- Gloag, John. 'The Anonymous Export', *Architectural Review*, 70.421 (1931), 163
- Gloag, John, and Grey Wornum. *House Out of Factory* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1946)
- Godden, Geoffrey A. *Oriental Export Market Porcelain and Its Influence on European Wares* (London: Granada, 1979)
- Gold, John R. 'Creating the Charter of Athens: Ciam and the Functional City, 1933-43', *Town Planning Review*, 69.3 (1998), 225-47
- Goldfinger, Ernő. 'The Elements of Enclosed Space', *Architectural Review*, 91.541 (1942), 5-8.
- . 'The Sensation of Space', *Architectural Review*, 90.539 (1941), 129-31
- . 'Urbanism and Spatial Order' *Architectural Review*, 90.540 (1941), 163-66
- Goldhagen, Sarah Williams. 'Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64.2 (2005), 144-67
- Goldie, David. *A Critical Difference: T.S. Eliot and John Middleton Murry in English Literary Criticism, 1919-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)
- Goldring, Douglas. 'Artists and Pictures', *The Studio*, 107.491 (1934), 100.
- . *Facing the Odds* (London: Cassell, 1940)
- . *Odd Man Out: The Autobiography of a 'Propaganda Novelist'* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1935)
- . *South Lodge: Reminiscences of Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford and the English Review Circle* (London: Constable, 1943)
- Gopal, Priyamvada. *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019)
- Gopinath, Praseeda. *Scarecrows of Chivalry: English Masculinities after Empire* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2013)
- Gould, Jeremy. *Modern Houses in Britain, 1919-1939* (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 1977)
- Green, Jennifer M. "'The Right Thing in the Right Place": P. H. Emerson and the Picturesque Photograph', in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T Christ and John O. Jordan (London: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 88-109
- Grigson, Geoffrey. *Collected Poems, 1924-1962* (London: Phoenix House, 1963)
- . *The Romantics: An Anthology* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1942)
- . 'Samuel Palmer: The Politics of an Artist', *Horizon* 4 (1941), 314-28
- . *Under the Cliff: And Other Poems* (London: Routledge, 1943)
- . 'Why New Verse', *New Verse*, 1 (January 1933), 1-2
- Group X* (London: Mansard Gallery, 1920)
- Grimble, Simon. 'Englishness', in *T.S. Eliot in Context*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 43-51
- Hammer, Andrew. 'Wallscape: Texture as Sculpture', *Architectural Review*, 111.661 (1952), 57-58
- Harries, Susie. *Nikolaus Pevsner: The Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2011)

- Harris, Alexandra. *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Romantic Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010)
- Harris, José. *Private Lives, Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914* (London: Penguin, 1994)
- Harrison, Charles. *Ben Nicholson* (London: Tate Gallery, 1969)
- . *English Art and Modernism, 1900-1939* (London: Allen Lane, 1981)
- Harvey, David. *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985)
- Hasegawa, Junichi. 'The Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction in 1940s Britain', *Twentieth-Century British History*, 10.2 (1999), 137-61
- Hasting, H. de C. 'Exterior Furnishing or Sharawadgi: The Art of Making Urban Landscape', *Architectural Review*, 95.565 (1944), 3-8
- Hatherley, Owen. 'Casting Spells: The Vortex and the Absence of a British Avant-Garde', *Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies*, 1 (2010), 1-18
- . *Militant Modernism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2008)
- . *The Ministry of Nostalgia* (London: Verso, 2017)
- Head, Philip. 'Vorticism and Architecture', *Journal of Wyndham Lewis Studies* 2 (2011), 45-67
- Heinonen, Alayna. 'A Tonic to the Empire?: The 1951 Festival of Britain and the Empire-Commonwealth', *Britain and the World*, 8.1 (2015), 76-99
- Heinz, Evelyn. 'John Rodker and Modernist Material Culture: Theatre, Translation, Publishing', unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2018
- Henderson, J.M. 'How Far Does Brackenfell Represent the Modern Movement?', unpublished dissertation, Open University 1975
- Hertz, Erich. 'The Gender of Form and British Modernism: Rebecca West's Vorticism and Blast', *Women's Studies*, 45.4 (2016), 356-69
- Higgott, Andrew. *Mediating Modernism: Architectural Cultures in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2007)
- Highmore, Ben. *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2017)
- Hinchcliffe, Tanis. 'Towards a Translation', *Issues in Architecture, Art, and Design* 2.2 (1992-3), 4-14
- Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1932)
- Holroyd, Michael. *Augustus John: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976)
- Howkins, Alun. *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside since 1900* (London: Routledge, 2003)
- . *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk, 1872-1923*, History Workshop Series (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985)
- . *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925* (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Hulme, T. E. *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1924)
- Hultsch, Anne. 'Architectural History from Eye-Level: Nikolaus Pevsner's "Treasure Hunts" in the Architectural Review, 1942', *Journal of Architecture*, 19.3 (2014), 382-401
- Humble, Nicola. *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel, 1920s to 1950s: Class, Domesticity, and Bohemianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

- Humm, Maggie. 'Memory, Photography, and Modernism: The "Dead Bodies and Ruined Houses" of Virginia Woolf's Three Guineas' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28.2 (2003), 645-63
- Humphreys, Richard. *Wyndham Lewis* (London: Tate, 2004)
- Hunt, John Dixon. *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (London: MIT Press, 1992)
- Hussey, Christopher. 'Hamstone House, St. George's Hill, Surrey: The Home of Mr. Peter Lind', *Country Life*, 86.2226 (1939), 284-88
- . *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927)
- Isherwood, Christopher and W.H. Auden, *Journey to a War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973)
- Jackson, Anthony. *The Politics of Architecture: A History of Modern Architecture in Britain* (London: Architectural Press, 1970)
- Jackson, Lesley. 'Inside out - Outside In: The Guerilla Fabrics of Hammer Prints', in *Nigel Henderson & Eduardo Paolozzi: Hammer Prints Ltd, 1954-75* ed. Michelle Cotton (Colchester, Essex: Firstsite, 2013)
- Jaffer, Amin. *Luxury Goods from India: The Art of the Indian Cabinet-Maker* (London: V&A Publications, 2002)
- James, C. L. R. *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013)
- Jameson, Fredric. 'Cognitive Mapping' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988)
- . 'Modernism and Imperialism', in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 43-66
- Jellicoe, G. A. 'Books: The Dynamic Garden: Gardens in the Modern Landscape', *Architectural Review*, 85.508 (1939), 151-52
- Jervis, Simon Swynfen. 'Acworth, Angus Whiteford (1898–1981), Financier and Conservationist', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Kalliney, Peter J. *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2007)
- Kearney, Hugh. 'Four Nations or One?' in *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom*, ed. Bernard Crick (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 1-7
- Kelly, Jessica. "'To Fan the Ardour of the Layman": The Architectural Review, the Mars Group and the Cultivation of Middle Class Audiences for Modernism in Britain, 1933-1940', *Journal of Design History*, 29.4 (2016), 350-65
- . 'Vulgar Modernism: J. M. Richards, Modernism and the Vernacular in British Architecture', *Architectural History*, 58 (2015), 229-59
- Kenny, Michael. *The Politics of English Nationhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Kermode, Frank. *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (New York: Viking Press, 1975)
- . *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957)
- Klein, Scott W. 'Modernist Babylons: Utopian Aesthetics and Urban Spectacle in D. W. Griffith and Wyndham Lewis', *Modernist Cultures*, 5.1 (2010), 9-29
- Knox, James. *Robert Byron* (London: John Murray, 2003)

- Kuchta, Todd. *Semi-Detached Empire: Suburbia and the Colonization of Britain, 1880 to the Present* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010)
- Kuehn, Julia. *A Female Poetics of Empire: From Eliot to Woolf* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2014)
- Kumar, Krishan. 'Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?', *Theory and Society*, 39.2 (2010), 119-43
- . 'Negotiating English Identity: Englishness, Britishness and the Future of the United Kingdom', *Nations and Nationalism*, 16.3 (2010), 469-87
- Lancaster, Osbert. *Pillar to Post: The Pocket-Lamp of Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1938)
- Law, Michael John. *The Experience of Suburban Modernity*, Studies in Popular Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014)
- Lawrence, D. H. 'Then Disaster Looms Ahead: Mining-Camp Civilization', *Architectural Review*, 68.405 (1930), 47-50
- Leaf, Michael. 'The Suburbanisation of Jakarta: A Concurrence of Economics and Ideology', *Third World Planning Review*, 16.4 (1994), 341-56
- Leask, Nigel. *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: 'From an Antique Land'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Lefevere, André, and Susan Bassnett. *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990)
- Lethaby, W.R. *Architecture: An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912)
- Lewis, Wyndham. *The Caliph's Design: Architects! Where Is Your Vortex?* (London: Egoist Press, 1919)
- . *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. W.K. Rose (London: Methuen & Co, 1963)
- . 'Manifesto I', *Blast* 1 (1914), 9-29
- . 'Manifesto II', *Blast* 1 (1914), 30-42
- . 'The New Egos', *Blast* 1 (1914), 141-2
- . 'Plain Home-Builder: Where Is Your Vorticist?' *Architectural Review*, 76.456 (1934), 155-58
- . 'Roger Fry's Rôle of Continental Mediator', *The Tyro: A Review of the Art of Painting, Sculpture, and Design*, 1 (1921), 3
- Lewison, Jeremy. *Ben Nicholson* (London: Tate Gallery, 1993)
- . *Ben Nicholson* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1991)
- . 'Ben Nicholson: Between Art and Craft', in *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Tanya Harrod (London: Crafts Council, 1997)
- Light, Alison. *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991)
- Ligo, Larry L. *The Concept of Function in Twentieth Century Architectural Criticism* (New York: UMI Research Press, 1984)
- Little Palaces: House and Home in the Inter-War Suburbs*, 2nd ed (London: Middlesex University Press, 2003)
- Littler, Jo. "'Festering Britain": The 1951 Festival of Britain, National Identity and the Representation of the Commonwealth', in *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain*, ed. Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 21-42

- Lloyd, Nathaniel. 'A History of the English House XXII - the Eighteenth Century', *Architectural Review*, 68.404 (1930), 15-23
- Lobb, Edward. *T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)
- Lukács, György. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1971)
- Macarthur, John. *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (London: Routledge, 2007)
- . "'The Revenge of the Picturesque", Redux', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.5 (2012), 643-53
- . 'The Smell of Politics: Hubert De Cronin Hastings and Liberalism in Architectural Discourse', *GTA Papers: Grand Gestures*, 4 (2020), 22-45
- . 'Townscape, Anti-Scrape and Surrealism: Paul Nash and John Piper in the Architectural Review', *Journal of Architecture*, 14.3 (2009): 387-406
- Macarthur, John, and Mathew Aitchison. 'Oxford Versus the Bath Road: Empiricism and Romanticism in the Architectural Review's Picturesque Revival', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.1 (2012), 51-68
- Macarthur, John, Mathew Aitchison, and Jasper Cepl. 'Das Malerische and the Picturesque: Seeing Architecture in Translation', *Architectural Histories*, 7.1 (2019), 1-16
- MacCarthy, Fiona. *Walter Gropius: Visionary Founder of the Bauhaus* (London: Faber and Faber, 2019)
- MacKay, Marina. *Modernism, War, and Violence* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017)
- MacKenzie, John M. *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)
- Maclean, Caroline. *Circles and Squares: The Lives and Art of the Hampstead Modernists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)
- Maher, Ashley. *Reconstructing Modernism: British Literature, Modern Architecture, and the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)
- Mandler, Peter. 'Art, Death and Taxes: The Taxation of Works of Art in Britain, 1796-1914', *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 74.185 (2001), 271-97
- . *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (London: Yale University Press, 1997)
- Mao, Douglas (ed.) *The New Modernist Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)
- Martin, J. L. *Buildings & Ideas, 1933-83 from the Studio of Leslie Martin and His Associates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- Martin, J. L., Ben Nicholson and Naum Gabo (eds.), *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937)
- Marx, John. *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Matless, David. *Landscape and Englishness*, 2nd ed (London: Reaktion Books, 2016)
- McKellar, Elizabeth. 'Populism Versus Professionalism: John Summerson and the Twentieth-Century Creation of the "Georgian"', in *Articulating British Classicism: New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Architecture*, ed. Barbara Arciszewska and Elizabeth McKellar (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 35-56

- McLean, Ian. 'The Expanded Field of the Picturesque: Contested Identities and Empire in Sydney Cove 1794', in *Art and the British Empire*, ed. T.J. Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)
- Miller, Christopher Patrick. 'What the War Is Doing with Us: W. H. Auden, Total War, and War Literature', *Modernism/Modernity*, 26.2 (2019), 309-27
- Mitchell, Peter. *Imperial Nostalgia: How the British Conquered Themselves* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021)
- Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- Mitchell, W. J. T. (ed.), *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002)
- Mjelde, Elizabeth. 'The Imperial Wye', *Romanticism*, 19.2 (2013), 153-62
- Moon, Iris. 'Unhomely: Redefining British Decorative Arts', *British Art Studies*, 21 (2021) online
- Morris, Amy. "'He's Just a Bum, but Who Ain't?": The Mirror of Homelessness', in Bojana Petrić and Sanja Bahun, *Thinking Home: Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)
- Mort, Frank. 'Fantasies of Metropolitan Life: Planning London in the 1940s', *Journal of British Studies*, 43.1 (2004), 120-51
- Mourant, Chris. 'Rebecca West, the Forgotten Vorticist?', *Modernist Cultures*, 14.4 (2019), 469-97
- Mumford, Eric. 'Ciam and Its Outcomes', *Urban Planning* 4.3 (2019), 291-98
- Mumford, Lewis. 'The Death of the Monument', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, ed. J.L. Martin, Naum Gabo and Ben Nicholson (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), pp. 263-270
- Murray, Irena, and Julian Osley (eds.). *Le Corbusier and Britain: An Anthology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009)
- Muthesius, Hermann. *The English House, Volume 1: Development*, trans. Janet Seligman and Stewart Spencer (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007)
- Nairn, Ian, and Nikolaus Pevsner. *Surrey, Buildings of England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962)
- Nairn, Tom. *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2021)
- Nash, Paul. 'Ben Nicholson's Carved Reliefs', *Architectural Review*, 78.467 (1935), 142
- . *Room and Book* (London: Soncino Press, 1932)
- . *The National Trust Acts, 1907 to 1939: With Extracts from Finance Acts, 1910, 1931 and 1937* (London: National Trust, 1940)
- Nava, Mica. 'Modernity Tamed? Women Shoppers and the Rationalisation of Consumption in the Inter-War Period', in *All the World and Her Husband: Women in Twentieth-Century Consumer Culture*, ed. Maggie Andrews and Mary M. Talbot (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 46-64
- Neild, Susan M. 'Colonial Urbanism: The Development of Madras City in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13.2 (1979), 217-46
- Newton, Douglas. 'Printed Textiles: A Selection from the Work of the Younger English Designers', *Architectural Review*, 111.663 (1952), 190-95

- Nicholson, Jake. 'What Does an Artist Look for in a Painting Place?' in *A Painters' Place: Banks Head Cumberland, 1924-31* (Bristol: Abbot Hall Gallery with Redcliffe Press, 1991)
- Nicholson, Jovan. 'Art and Life', in *Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray: Art and Life, 1920-1931* (London: Philip Wilson, 2013)
- Nicholson, Winifred. *Unknown Colour: Paintings, Letters, Writings by Winifred Nicholson*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (London: Faber and Faber, 1987)
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974)
- Niven, Alex. *New Model Island: How to Build a Radical Culture Beyond the Idea of England* (London: Repeater, 2019)
- North, Michael. *The Political Aesthetic of Yeats, Eliot and Pound* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Nye, David E. *American Technological Sublime* (London: MIT Press, 1994)
- Oliver, Paul, Ian Davis, and Ian Bentley. *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and Its Enemies* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1981)
- Pal, Pratapaditya, and Vidya Dehejia. *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986)
- Panichas, George A. 'T.S. Eliot and the Critique of Liberalism', *Modern Age*, 18.2 (1974), 145-62
- Patterson, Ian. 'Writing on Other Fronts: Translation and John Rodker', *Translation and Literature* 12.1 (2003), 88-113
- Pavitt, Jane. 'The Georgians and Moderns: Preservation and Modernism in Britain in the 1930s', unpublished masters thesis, Royal College of Art, 1991
- Pendlebury, John. 'Planning the Historic City: Reconstruction Plans in the United Kingdom in the 1940s', *Town Planning Review*, 74.4 (2003), 371-93
- Pepper, Simon, and Peter Richmond. 'Upward or Outward? Politics, Planning and Council Flats, 1919-1939', *Journal of Architecture*, 13.1 (2008), 53-90
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. 'Conclusions', in *The Picturesque Garden and Its Influence Outside the British Isles*, ed. Nikolaus Pevsner (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1974), pp. 119-22
- . *The Englishness of English Art: An Expanded and Annotated Version of the Reith Lectures Broadcast in October and November 1955* (London: Architectural Press, 1956)
- . *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937)
- . *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936)
- . 'Price on Picturesque Planning', *Architectural Review*, 95.566 (1944), 47-50
- Pevsner, Nikolaus, and Pamela Todd. *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, 4th ed (London: Yale University Press, 2005)
- Phillips, Kathy J. *Virginia Woolf against Empire* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994)
- Piper, John. 'Decrepit Glory: A Tour of Hafod', *Architectural Review*, 87.523 (1940), 207-10
- . 'Flint', *Architectural Review*, 96.575 (1944), 149

- . 'London to Bath: A Topographical and Critical Survey of the Bath Road', *Architectural Review*, 85.510 (1939), 229-46
- . *Buildings and Prospects* (London: Architectural Press, 1948)
- Pollock, Griselda. *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888-1893: Gender and the Colour of Art History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992)
- Potvin, John. 'Colour Wars: Personality, Textiles and the Art of the Interior in 1930s Britain', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 16.1 (2015), 25-41
- Powers, Alan. 'C. H. Reilly: Regency, Englishness and Modernism', *Journal of Architecture* 5.1 (2000), 47-64
- . 'The Dance of Life: Order and Disorder in the Architecture of H. T. Cadbury-Brown', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 10.1 (2006), 13-24
- . *Eric Ravilious: Artist and Designer* (Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2013)
- . 'Goldfinger's Terrace at Willow Road', in *Fragments: Architecture and the Unfinished*, ed. Barry Bergdoll, Werner Oechslin, and Robin Middleton (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006)
- . 'John Summerson and Modernism', in *Twentieth-Century Architecture and Its Histories*, ed. Louise Campbell (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000), pp. 153-76
- . 'The Reluctant Romantics: Axis Magazine 1935-37', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, ed. David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell (London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 248-274
- . *Serge Chermayeff: Designer, Architect, Teacher* (London: RIBA Publications, 2001)
- . 'Townscape as a Model of Organised Complexity', *Journal of Architecture*, 17.5 (2012), 691-702
- Powers, Alan, and James Russell. *Eric Ravilious: The Story of High Street* (Norwich: Mainstone Press, 2008)
- Pratt, Lucy. 'Ben Nicholson's Block-Printed Textiles at the V&A: An Art Form on Fabric', *Apollo*, 148.439 (1998), 24-33
- Price, Uvedale. *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful: And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1794; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Pugh, Martin. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)
- Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore. *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St. Marie's, Oscott* (London: John Weale, 1841)
- Pursglove, Glyn. 'Geoffrey Grigson as Anthologist' in 'My Rebellious and Imperfect Eye': *Observing Geoffrey Grigson*, ed. C.C. Barfoot and R.M. Healey (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 203-20
- Quiller-Couch, Arthur. *Cambridge Lectures* (London: J.M. Dent, 1943)
- Quilley, Geoff. 'Pastoral Plantations: The Slave Trade and the Representation of British Colonial Landscape in the Late Eighteenth-Century' in *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830*, ed. Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 106-128

- Ranger, Terence. 'The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 211-262
- Rattenbury, Kester (ed.). *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London: Routledge, 2002)
- Raynsford, Anthony. 'Urban Contrast and Neo-Toryism: On the Social and Political Symbolism of the Architectural Review's Townscape Campaign', *Planning Perspectives*, 30.1 (2015), 95-128
- Read, Herbert. 'Introduction' in *Surrealism*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), pp. 17-91
- . *The Meaning of Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1931)
- . (ed.) *Unit 1: The Modern Movement in English Architecture, Painting and Sculpture* (London: Cassell and Company, 1934)
- Reed, Christopher. 'Architecture and the Decorative Arts', in *A Roger Fry Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 167-191
- . *Bloomsbury Rooms: Modernism, Subculture, and Domesticity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, 2004)
- Reeves, Gareth. *T.S. Eliot: A Virgilian Poet* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989)
- Reibetanz, Julia Maniates. *A Reading of Eliot's Four Quartets* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983)
- Reilly, C. H. 'Criticism: 1. The Town Hall Problem', *Architectural Review*, 77.460 (1935), 113
- . 'Recent Books: Vernacular Architecture', *Architectural Review*, 62.373 (1927), 269-70
- Richards, J. M. 'Ben Nicholson at the Lefevre: 7 & 5 at Zwemmers', *Axis*, 4 (November 1935), 21-24
- . *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd ed (London: J. Murray, 1973)
- . 'The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, pp. 184-189
- . 'Criticism', *Architectural Review*, 89 (1941), 132
- . *Edward Bawden*, Penguin Modern Painters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946)
- . *The Functional Tradition in Early Industrial Buildings* (London: Architectural Press, 1958)
- . *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940)
- . *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980)
- . 'Towards a Rationalist Aesthetic', *Architectural Review*, 78.469 (1935), 211-19
- Richards, J. M., et al. 'The Second Half Century', *Architectural Review*, 101.601 (1947), 21-26
- Richards, Jeffrey, and John M. MacKenzie. *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)
- Richardson, A. E. 'Must the Adelphi Go?', *Architectural Review*, 73.436 (1933), 99-100
- Roberts, David. 'Make Public: Performing Public Housing in Ernő Goldfinger's Balfron Tower', *Journal of Architecture*, 22.1 (2017), 123-50
- Robinson, Sidney K. *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- Rodker, John. *Memoirs of Other Fronts* (London: Putnam, 1932)
- . 'Mr. Segando and the Fifth Cataclysm', *The Tyro: A Review of the Art of Painting, Sculpture, and Design*, 1 (1921), 8

- Rosenberg, Harold. 'The American Action Painters', in *The Tradition of the New* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), pp. 23-39
- Rosner, Victoria. *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)
- Rossetti, Dante Gabriel. 'Ebenezer Jones', *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1870), 154
- Rosso, Michaela. 'John N. Summerson and Tales of Modern Architecture', *Journal of Architecture*, 5 (2000), 65-89
- Rubens, Godfrey. *William Richard Lethaby: His Life and Work, 1857-1931* (London: Architectural Press, 1986)
- Ruskin, John. *Modern Painters: Volume I*, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 3, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903)
- . *Modern Painters: Volume IV, The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 6, ed. Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904)
- Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 1987)
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994)
- . *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979)
- Saler, Michael T. *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
- Samuel, Raphael. 'Introduction: Exciting to Be English', in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity. Volume I, History and Politics*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989)
- . *Theatres of Memory: The Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994)
- Sarker, Sonita. 'Woolf and Theories of Postcolonialism', in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, ed. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 110-28
- Scott, Bonnie Kime. *Refiguring Modernism: The Women of 1928*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)
- Scott, Geoffrey. *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste*, 2nd ed (London: Constable, 1924)
- Scott, Peter. *The Making of the Modern British Home: The Suburban Semi and Family Life between the Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Seddon, Jill. "'Part-Time Practice as Before": The Career of Sadie Speight, Architect', in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, ed. Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)
- Seshagiri, Urmila. *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010)
- Sharp, Thomas. *The Anatomy of the Village* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1946)
- . *Town and Countryside: Some Aspects of Urban and Rural Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932)
- . *Town Planning* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1940)
- Shasore, Neal. 'Architecture and the Public in Interwar Britain', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford 2015

- . 'Georgian Group, Founding Members of (1937 – c.1947)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) online
- . "'A Stammering Bundle of Welsh Idealism': Arthur Trystan Edwards and Principles of Civic Design in Interwar Britain', *Architectural History*, 61 (2018), 175-203
- Sillars, Stuart. 'Geoffrey Grigson as Art Critic' in *"My Rebellious and Imperfect Eye": Observing Geoffrey Grigson*, pp. 191-205
- Smiles, Sam. 'Ancient Country: Nash and Prehistory', in *Paul Nash: Modern Artist, Ancient Landscape*, ed. Jemima Montagu (London: Tate, 2003)
- Smith, Wareham. *Spilt Ink* (London: Ernest Benn, 1932)
- Smithson, Alison, and Peter Smithson. *Urban Structuring: Studies of Alison & Peter Smithson* (London: Studio Vista, 1967)
- Snaith, Anna, and Michael H. Whitworth (eds.), *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
- Southworth, Helen. 'Douglas Goldring's the Tramp: An Open Air Magazine (1910-1911) and Modernist Geographies', *Literature and History*, 18.1 (2009), 35-53
- Spalding, Frances. *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- . *Roger Fry: Art and Life* (London: Granada, 1980)
- Spurr, Barry. *Anglo-Catholic in Religion: T.S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010)
- Spurr, David. *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012)
- Stair, Julian. 'Factive Plasticity: The Abstract Pottery of William Staite Murray', in *Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis, William Staite Murray: Art and Life, 1920-1931* (London: Philip Wilson, 2013)
- Stamp, Gavin. 'How We Celebrated the Coronation: The Foundation and Early Years of the Georgian Group', *Georgian Group Journal*, 20 (2012), 1-22
- Stasi, Paul. *Modernism, Imperialism, and the Historical Sense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Stead, C. K. *The New Poetic: Yeats to Eliot* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1977)
- Stephens, Chris. 'Ben Nicholson: Modernism, Craft, and the English Vernacular', in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, pp. 225-247
- Stephenson, A. 'Strategies of Situation: British Modernism and the Slump c.1929-1934', *Oxford Art Journal*, 14.2 (1991), 30-51
- Stevenson, Jane. *Baroque between the Wars: Alternative Style in the Arts, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)
- Stirner, Max. *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918)
- Stratton, P.M. 'The Line from France', *Architectural Review* 64.380 (1928), 1
- Sugg Ryan, Deborah. *The Ideal Home through the 20th Century* (London: Hazar, 1997)
- . *Ideal Homes, 1918-39: Domestic Design and Suburban Modernism*, Studies in Design and Material Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)
- Summerson, John. *Georgian London* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, 2003)

- . *Georgian London* (London: Pleiades Books, 1945)
- . 'Library Notes', *Architect and Building News*, 159 (1939)
- . 'The Royal Academy Committee's Plan for London', *Architect and Building News*, 172 (1942), 77-78
- Swenarton, Mark. 'Tudor Walters and Tudorbethan: Reassessing Britain's Inter-War Suburbs', *Planning Perspectives*, 17.3 (2002), 267-86
- Swenarton, Mark, and Sandra Taylor. 'The Scale and Nature of the Growth of Owner-Occupation in Britain between the Wars', *Economic History Review*, 38.3 (1985), 373-391
- Thomson, James. *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
- 'Three Houses at Willow Road, Hampstead', *Architectural Review*, 87.521 (1940), 126-30
- Tooze, Adam. *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London: Allen Lane, 2014)
- Toth, Naomi. 'Arguing with Photographs: Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, and Modernist Political Engagement', *Modernism/modernity* 28.1 (2021), 67-90
- Trotter, David. *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain between the Wars* (London: Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Tucker, Peter. 'Hester Sainsbury: A Book-Illustrator of the 1920s', *Private Library* 3.3 (1990)
- Ullmann, Anne (ed.), *Eric Ravilious: Landscape, Letters & Design*, vol. 1 (Upper Denby: Fleece Press, 2008)
- Umbach, Maiken. 'The Deutscher Werkbund, Globalisation, and the Invention of Modern Vernaculars', in *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, ed. Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 114-40
- Vaughan, William. 'Behind Pevsner: Englishness as an Art Historical Category' in *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past, 1880-1940*, pp. 347-368
- Wainwright, Clive. 'The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century', in *Modernism in Design*, pp. 26-39
- Walpole, Horace. 'On Modern Gardening', *Anecdotes of Painting in England... to Which Is Added the Modern Taste in Gardening* (London: J. Dodsley, 1782), pp. 247-316
- . *Satirical Poems Published Anonymously by William Mason: With Notes by Horace Walpole, Now First Printed from His Manuscript*, ed. Paget Jackson Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926)
- Walsh, Victoria. *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001)
- Warburton, Nigel. *Ernö Goldfinger: The Life of an Architect* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Ward, Stuart (ed.). *British Culture and the End of Empire*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)
- Ward, Stuart, and Astrid Rasch (eds.). *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)
- Weaver, Lawrence. *Houses and Gardens by E.L. Lutyens* (London: Country Life, 1913; repr. 1925)
- Webster, Wendy. *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Weiner, Stephanie Kuduk. 'Geoffrey Grigson's Embrace of Influence', *Review of English Studies*, 68.287 (2017), 968-85

- Wellings, Ben. 'Brexit, Nationalism and Disintegration in the European Union and the United Kingdom', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 29.3 (2021), 322-34
- Wellings, Ben, and Michael Kenny. 'Nairn's England and the Progressive Dilemma: Reappraising Tom Nairn on English Nationalism', *Nations and Nationalism*, 25.3 (2019), 847-65
- Wells, H. G. *Anticipations of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902)
- West, Rebecca. 'Correspondence: A Reply to Mr. Hubert Wales', *The Freewoman*, 1.17 (1912), 331
- . 'Indissoluble Matrimony', *Blast* 1 (1914), 98-117
- . *Return of the Soldier* (London: Penguin, 1998)
- Whelan, Lara Baker. *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era* (New York: Routledge, 2010)
- Whiteley, Nigel. 'Modern Architecture, Heritage and Englishness', *Architectural History*, 38 (1995), 220-37
- Whitworth, Michael H. *Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Whyte, William. 'The Englishness of English Architecture: Modernism and the Making of a National International Style, 1927-1957', *Journal of British Studies*, 48.2 (2009), 441-65
- Williams, Annabel. 'Late Modernist Travel Literature, 1930-1949: Home, Nationalism, and War', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2018
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City* (Nottingham: Spokesman, 2011)
- . 'Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism' in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), 37-48
- Williams-Ellis, Clough, and John Summerson. *Architecture Here and Now* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1934)
- Wilson, Nicola. *Home in British Working-Class Fiction* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015)
- Winkiel, Laura A. *Modernism, Race and Manifestos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Wolfe, Ivor de. *Civilia: The End of Suburban Man* (London: Architectural Press, 1971)
- . 'Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price', *Architectural Review*, 106.636 (1949), 354-62
- Wood, Jon, Penelope Curtis, and Maurice Raynal. *Close Encounters: The Sculptor's Studio in the Age of the Camera* (Leeds: Henry Moore Foundation, 2001)
- Woodward, Guy. 'Douglas Goldring: 'An Englishman' and 1916', *Literature and History* 26.2 (2017), 195-212
- Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando: A Biography*, ed. Michael H. Whitworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- . *Three Guineas*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938)
- . 'Thunder at Wembley', in *Collected Essays*, ed. Leonard Woolf, vol. 4 (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), pp. 184-87
- Woolf, Virginia. *Roger Fry: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1940)
- Woudstra, Rixt. 'Countering Independence: Architecture, Decolonization and the Design of Stability', in *Architecture and Action*, ed. J. Meejin Yoon and Irina Chernyakova (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019), pp. 130-131

- Wright, Patrick. *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain*
(London: Verso, 1985)
- Yusaf, Shundana. *Broadcasting Buildings: Architecture on the Wireless, 1927-1945*
(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014)