
THE GRAND TOUR
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dossier

- Peter Eisenman "The Last Grand Tourist: Travels with Colin Rowe", *Perspecta*, Vol. 41, Grand Tour (2008), pp. 130–139
- Johan Mårtelius: "Carl August Ehrensvärd On Beauty and Utility", *Nordic Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 1, (2011), pp. 102–109
- Jeremy Black: "Social and Political Reflections" from "Italy and the Grand Tour" (2003), pp. 142–165
- Le Corbusier, edited by Ivan Žaknić: "The Parthenon" from *Journey to the East* (2007), pp. 209–239
- Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino: "Introduction: North Versus South" from Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino (ed.) "Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean" (2010) pp. 1–12
- Benedetto Gravagnuolo: "From Schinkel to Le Corbusier: The Myth of the Mediterranean in Modern Architecture", from Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino (ed.) "Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean" (2010) pp. 15–39

texts

INTERVIEW WITH PETER EISENMAN

THE LAST GRAND TOURIST: TRAVELS WITH COLIN ROWE

P41

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The idea of the grand tour in architecture is an English—if not a European—tradition, in which an older experienced traveler initiates a young person to the cultural splendors of southern Europe. In the mid-eighteenth century, Robert Adam established his architectural practice in London after traveling extensively in Italy with his tutors, and Goethe described his 1786–87 travels to Italy in his book *Italienische Reise*, published in 1816–17. While the Grand Tour has come to be seen as an essential part of an architect's education, my travels with Colin Rowe were part of an "accidental" education, but they had a profound impact on the manner in which I would subsequently practice.

In the spring and summer of 1959, I was working for The Architects' Collaborative in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At the time it seemed like heaven, working for Walter Gropius and living in Cambridge. This was supposedly the *summa* of an architect's life, but I soon realized that even Gropius and his associates had no real ideological or philosophic commitment to what I thought was architecture. TAC was so unsatisfying that I went to see a former employer, the architect Percival Goodman. Percy said, "Look Peter, why work your way up the ladder in an office to become a junior partner or maybe a partner? Why don't you come back to graduate school at Columbia?" At the time I was twenty-seven years old. I had been in the army for two years in Korea, I had done my three years of apprenticeship, and I was studying for my architectural license. Because I was in Boston, I applied to MIT as well as Columbia. I was accepted at both, but Goodman wanted me back at Columbia. He said, "You can graduate in one year rather than two." At the time, this was important to me.

But I need to go back to the fall of 1959, when Jim Stirling came to Yale for his first visit. Stirling came down to New York and I was introduced to him through my then roommates, John Fowler (who went on to work with Paul Rudolph) and Michael McKinnell. Jim said, "You know, you ought to go to England. That's where things are happening." New Brutalism was in vogue, and the Smithsons and Team 10 were generating a new energy in England. In the spring of 1960, I applied for a Kinney traveling fellowship, which was worth \$7,500, which in today's dollars was a lot of money. At the same time I also applied for a Fulbright to France. I received both fellowships and decided to go to France. My brother was living in Paris at the time. I arrived on the *Flandre* in Le Havre and took the "boat train" to the Gare du Nord. When I asked a taxi driver, in French, to take me to Rue Git-Le-Coeur, where my brother was living, the driver turned to me and, in the most condescending tone possible, suggested that it would be better if I spoke English. At that moment, I realized that France was not for me. I spent a night with my brother, then turned around and accepted this other fellowship at Cambridge to be a research assistant. Unwittingly, of course, this decision would lead me to Colin Rowe.

I remember our first meetings. I would go to Colin's flat two or three times a week, and he would pull out books, Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Letarouilly's *Edifices de Rome Moderne*, and other books with a series of fantastic plans from the Renaissance. I was taught how to read these plans and to see that specific plans showed certain ideas. I was taught how to understand the nuances of these plans, how they constituted the essence of what is architectural, of what has become the persistencies of architecture. We were not analyzing their function but rather the architectural relationships in these plans. This lay the groundwork for the trip. After several months, Colin suggested that I was the "noble savage" to his Robert Adam, and proposed that we travel in Europe for the summer.

Where did you go?

I was the one who researched the trip. As I was interested in De Stijl and the Bauhaus, we started off in Holland, against Colin's better judgment. We

saw all of Rietveld, Van Tijen and Maaskant, Bijvoet and Duiker at a time when rarely anybody had gone to see this work. We saw the Van Nelle Factory, the Oud Siedlung, Bijvoet and Duiker's Zonnestraal Sanatorium, and of course the Schroeder House. It was then that I realized how much Colin did not like modern architecture.

After Holland, we went down the Rhine, stopping in Krefeld to see Mies's Lange and Ersters houses, which Colin had never seen. In Stuttgart, we saw the Weissenhofsiedlung. I did all the driving in my white Volkswagen Bug while Colin read incessantly to me. Twelve hours, night and day, we did nothing but look, and I would drive while he read, much of it useless trivia, like the shields of popes, the number of Piccolomini popes, etc. It was a total immersion experience. Next came Zurich, where Colin wanted to visit one of the old Texas Rangers, Bernhard Hoesli, who had worked with Le Corbusier and had taught at Texas with Rowe.

In Zurich, we had dinner with Hoesli and his wife. Hoesli had taken us around to see Le Corbusier's work in Zurich, and then showed us his own work in his office. Hoesli was a very bright person, but on this occasion, I became Colin's attack dog. Bernhard asked me, "Well, what do you think of my work?" We had seen that his work was a cross between Wright and Le Corbusier. I immediately said, "Bernhard"—and this is what endeared me to Colin—"Bernhard, I have never had a more exhilarating day. It was the most amazing experience looking at Le Corbusier with you. But I cannot understand how a person who knows so much about architecture can do such bad work." And there was silence. Boom...it was an amazing moment.

Leaving Zurich, we proceeded south through Switzerland to Como. Now we need to go back to Como because that is a major part of my story. Unlike Goethe, who reveled at the Lago di Garda, Colin said it was to be avoided at all costs, except for a brief stop in Sirmione at the foot of the lake, because it was now full of *Tedeschis* of a somewhat different ilk than Goethe. Mussolini had ruled from Salò, on Lago di Garda, in 1944–45, just north of Sirmione. Such was the kind of history that Colin would read as we traveled. I, this so-called noble savage who did not know anything, even though I had been reading *AD* during my year at Columbia and had learned about Brutalism, and even though I had been meeting regularly with Stirling, Smithson, Banham, and other members of the English scene in London, I was still a neophyte.

When Sandy Wilson had come back from Yale, he gave me, as a present for filling in for him, the *Encyclopédie de L'Architecture Nouvelle* by Alberto Sartoris. In that book I saw Giuseppe Terragni's work for the first time—his Casa del Fascio, the Asilo Infantile, and the Giuliani Frigerio apartment block. There was also Cesare Cattaneo's apartment block in Cernobbio just up the road from Como. This fired my imagination and my desire to see these buildings. Thus, when we arrived in Como, we immediately went to the square in front of Casa del Fascio, and, as Colin said, I had a revelation. After having seen De Stijl, Mies, Corbu, the Weissenhofsiedlung, all of these monuments of modern architecture, to see the Casa del Fascio in the flesh was amazing. I was blown away. After Como, we drove to Milano, where we saw the Terragni apartment buildings which nobody really knew at the time. They were only in the Sartoris book. We also saw Terragni's two houses in Seveso and Rebbio on the way.

My mania for collecting architectural magazines from 1918–39 began in Milano. Much of what was modern prewar architecture had been published in Giuseppe Pagano's magazine *Casabella*. This was the focus of my search in used bookstores. I would walk in and say, "Vecchie riviste di Casabella della prima della guerra?" I looked in every little bookstore from Milan to Naples and back to Torino. During that time we discovered many small antiquarian bookstores, some of which I can still visit to this day. But it was only on our last day in Italy that we hit the jackpot in the galleria in Torino, but that is another story.

After Milan, Colin programmed the rest of the trip with High Renaissance and Mannerist architecture and painting, but very little Baroque. I was not allowed to look at Borromini or Bernini. The work we had to see was the basis of the Cambridge course that Colin was giving, called "From Bramante to Vignola," that is, from 1520 to 1570 in northern Italy, both painting and architecture. Of course, this was all new material for me.

We went east to Bergamo to see the *citta alta* and the Scamozzi loggia on the way to the Veneto. We also detoured below the Milano-Venezia autostrada to Mantova, where we stayed for three days. We were now in the heart of Colin Rowe country. We saw Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Te, with the faux rustication and the giant frescoes bursting out of their panels. We spent an afternoon sipping San Pellegrino Aranciadas in front of Alberti's facade for San Andrea. We went to see the little-known church of San Benedetto Po, with its interior by Giulio Romano and its baptistery covered with his frescoes. Twenty years later, when I returned, there were no frescoes, only a restored "original" Romanesque baptistery. The work by Giulio Romano had fallen victim to the "restoration" impulse. Next came the Veneto and the Palladian villas. At that time none of the villas had been documented or catalogued, but Colin knew their locations from his previous visits. We would ask for directions in our primitive Italian and we found—and I still have the slides—ten or twelve Palladian villas that had been previously undocumented in any books at the time, certainly not in the old Baedeker and Michelin Guida Rossa guides that were our constant companions.

How were you documenting the buildings?
Were you taking slides or drawing?

I was taking slides, but not drawing. Learning to see requires something other than slides or drawings. My most important lesson in architecture was the first time I saw a Palladian villa. I cannot remember which one, somewhere in the Veneto. It was hot, probably ninety-six or ninety-seven degrees, and humid, and Colin said, "Sit in front of that facade until you can tell me something that you can't see. In other words, I don't want to know about the rustication, I don't want to know about the proportion of the windows, I don't want to know about the ABA symmetries, or any of those things that Wittkower talks about. I want you to tell me something that is implied in the facade." I remember this moment as if it were yesterday. This is how Colin began to teach me to see as an architect. Anyone can look at window-to-wall relationships, but can anyone see edge stress, the fact that the Venetian windows are moved outboard from the center to create a blank space—a void between the windows—which acts as a negative energy? Such ideas are not found in any books. They are found in seeing architecture.

In this way I began to understand how to look at Palladio, at a portico in relationship to the main body of the building, at the flatness of the facade and its layering. Of course it was very different from looking at Giulio Romano's Palazzo del Te, which displayed different kinds of architectural tropes: a different flatness, a different layering, the implied peeling away of the stone, and the real stone making stone appear thin. We talked about frontality, rotation, and the difference between Greek and Roman space. All of these lessons I learned through looking at the subtleties of the Palladian villas. In Vicenza we saw the Palazzo Godi, which Scamozzi finished after Palladio's death. We saw how much drier Scamozzi was than Palladio. To be able to see dryness was as important as being able to taste dryness in a wine.

We then went to Venice. In retrospect, in Venice, interesting differences between Rowe and Tafuri became clear. Tafuri thought that Sansovino was important, while Rowe infinitely preferred Scamozzi. We saw two Palladian churches, San Giorgio and Redentore, and the layering and compression that occurred on the facades, their frontality. Now I was beginning to see things. And of course we were still doing twelve hours a day. I said, "Hey Colin, come on, let's go to the beach." But no, we could not go to the beach. For Colin, it had to be total immersion. This kind of mentoring would be absolutely impossible today.

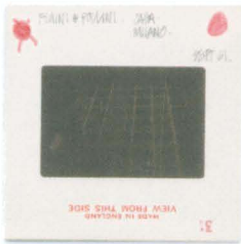
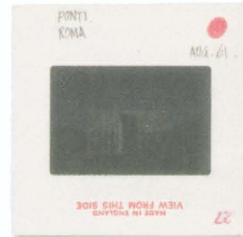
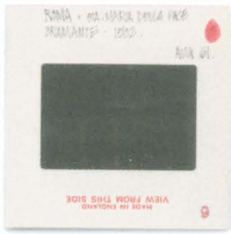
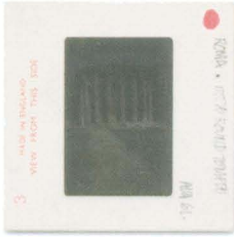
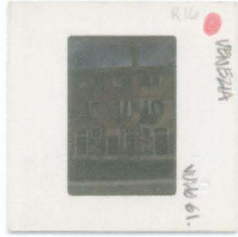
We went into the Veneto, then down to Vicenza, to Verona to see Sanmicheli's city gates, to Padua to see the cathedral. This is where the story also gets interesting, as far as Colin is concerned. He said we could not go to Florence until we had seen Rome, because I needed to understand the influence of Rome on Florentine and Bolognese painting, what he would later call Mannerist painting. In other words, we had to see Raphael, Michelangelo, and Peruzzi before going to Florence. On the way to Rome, we went to Urbino to see the *cortile* of the Ducal Palace and the Piero della Francesca. The next stop was Arezzo, where we ate in the Buca di San Francesco, across from the Vasari Loggia. We went to Borgo San Sepolcro—another one of the things that only Colin would know—which is a little town near Arezzo, with a small church, not yet restored, with frescos done by Piero della Francesca. Many years later I went back and saw them when they were completely restored. But who had been to Borgo San Sepolcro? Colin was meticulous in knowing what to see and where to see it.

Down through Toscana we went. We made an important stop in Gubbio, which is a tough hill town lacking the saccharine qualities of Assisi and San Gimignano. From there we went to Todi, where I had my first *spaghetti carbonara* in a restaurant called Da Umbria, with a magnificent view of the valley. Of course, we made the obligatory stop at Sangallo's Santa Maria della Consolazione. From Todi we went to Perugia, Orvieto, and Viterbo, to the Villa Lante, to, finally, Rome, which was a literal feast for Colin. We saw the *Stanze di Raffaello*, in which I began to understand the three periods of Raphael's paintings, and *The Fire in the Borgo* by Giulio Romano. I began to understand how this late period led to the painting of Parmigianino, Pontormo, and Bronzino. Painters were an integral part of understanding the architecture. Piero della Francesca was the first to bring a certain layered frontality of space that architects like Bramante pick up. Rome is a chapter by itself. Included in our tour was every Roman wall church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Carlo Rainaldi's Santa Maria in Campitelli. It was in Rome that I got my first introduction to Luigi Moretti. We went to the Fencing Academy, which was in pristine condition, then to Casa Girasole and Casa Astrea. Colin had been impressed by Moretti's magazine, *Spazio*.

After a detour to Naples, we started north from Rome. I remember this was one of the highlights outside of Siena. By this time I was pretty beat, really exhausted, and particularly tired of being lectured, read to, and told what to do twelve hours of every day. We were driving along just outside of Siena when Colin said—and this was the way he would say things—“In 2 kilometers we're going to take the right bifurcation.” A couple of minutes later he said, “Now remember, in 1 kilometer we're going to take the bifurcation to the right.” And I began to steam. So when we reached the bifurcation, I went speeding by to the left. I had had it. It was done. And Colin said, “I said right.” I said, “I heard you.” He said, “I said right,” again. I said, “I heard you.” He said, “Stop the car.” So I said OK. I stopped the car. And he got out, closed the door, and I continued on.

He walked back?

No, he hitchhiked to Siena, where we met up at the hotel, both having cooled off. After Siena we went to Florence, then Bologna. Bologna is memorable because we looked at Vignola's Loggia dei Banchi and at the Carraccis and Guido Reni in the Bologna Gallery. Then we went to Lucca to see the Pontormos. We looked at a lot of painting, but at the same time, I was trying to collect issues of *Casabella*. We arrived in Torino on our last day in Italy. I remember this distinctly. We went to a shop in the glass galleria in Torino, an old white-haired man with a fascist beard, split in the middle—clearly an old fascist—was sitting outside the bookstore. We asked him if he had any old *Casabella* magazines, and he replied that yes, he did. And I said, “Could we see them?” So he goes into the store and tells the assistant to go downstairs to the basement. And he said, “Look, I don't want to bring them all up, which ones specifically are you looking for?” And I said, “Why don't you just bring up some magazines from 1932?” So he brings up a complete year, in mint condition. So I asked if there were more,





and he said yes. So I said, "Why don't you bring them all up?" He brings up a hundred plus issues. It was amazing. I mean, a trove of mint-condition magazines from the 1930s. Now, I knew they were worth \$10 apiece, that is, 6,000 lire. But if I bought a hundred magazines, that would be \$1,000. I didn't have that much. I was making the equivalent of \$2,000 a year, and with my fellowship for \$7,500 we had bought a car, traveled, etc. We did not have much money at that point. So I asked what he wanted for them. He said, really quickly, 60 lire a piece. Not 600 but 60. I said, "Too much, I'll give you 20." We agreed on 20 lire a copy. He had never sold these magazines, nobody had ever asked for them. I could have bought the entire store, which had all of the Futurist and Fascist material one could ever want.

After Torino, we went back up through France, to Chambéry and Nancy—a city Colin loved. Then we went into Paris and looked at what he considered to be French neoclassical architecture by the architects Duc and Duban, people who are hardly known. We looked at Le Corbusier, of course. And I remember, also going to his office at 35, Rue de Sevres. We stood outside on the doorstep, and I looked at Colin and said, "What the hell am I gonna say to this guy?" He said, "Ring the doorbell, come on, come on." And I said, "No, no, no, I can't do that, I don't know what to do." So we turned around and walked away.

What happened when you returned to Cambridge?

Leslie Martin, asked me if I would stay on to teach a second year. At the time I did not want to be a teacher, I wanted to be an architect, so I asked if I could work as an architect. Martin suggested that since I already had my license, I would not want to work as a draftsman, and that it would be difficult to find any other architectural work. Then he said, "I will do something which is highly irregular. Why don't you do a Ph.D.? You can do it in two years instead of three and still teach first year." Being a teacher at Cambridge, one was supposed to be sitting at high table in college, but as a research student, one was supposed to be sitting with lesser mortals. Martin, with his political acumen, was able to work it out, suggesting I do a Ph.D. under his guidance.

I had never thought about getting a Ph.D., but I decided to do the thesis. This was perhaps another example of my accidental education. I also saw that there would be some problem for me in establishing my distance from Colin Rowe. Rowe's last year in Cambridge was from the fall of 1961 to the spring of 1962. During that time I decided to write about the formal basis of modern architecture as an analytic work on four distinct architects: Terragni, Le Corbusier, Aalto, and Wright, much to Rowe's chagrin. I finished my Ph.D. in 1963, the year after Colin left.

How did the trip with Rowe influence your work?

Without it, I would not be who I am today. There is no question that my education made it impossible for me to be what I would call an ordinary practicing architect. The two trips—Colin and I made a second tour in the summer of 1962—and the Ph.D. were all part of it. My idea of what it was to be a practicing architect changed completely. Even today, I am amazed that I have done major buildings.

Being mentored by one of the three great historians and critics of the latter part of the twentieth century—those being Banham, Rowe, and Tafuri—was the most intensive experience I had. The time I spent with Rowe was my education. In those two years, those two trips, I received an education that would be impossible to have in any other way. I both carried this education forward and needed to react against it.

Later, there were other mentors, Tafuri and Jacques Derrida. Percival Goodman had been my first mentor. I was open to being mentored, and the times were such that mentoring was possible. This would be impossible today. With Rowe I learned about much more than architecture, from the Carraccis and Guido Reni in the Bologna gallery to the Vignola loggia in Bologna.

This was the time that Rowe was writing about Le Corbusier's La Tourette. He took me to the Cistercian monastery Le Thoronet, which is the formal

underpinning of La Tourette. How many students even know about this, much less have been there? All of this information was practically imprinted on my brain, because it was passed to me in a very passionate way. I truly was a “noble savage,” like a sponge soaking up this material. The thought of having a Ph.D., the thought of teaching had never ever occurred to me. I also did not realize that it was going to put me off of the conventional route to becoming a practicing architect.

Why did you decide to leave England?

First of all, it was too claustrophobic, too homogeneous. I missed a certain sense of humor that was American. I also missed a certain capacity to be able to be “me.” I could not live forever as an expatriate. Even though I could have stayed, I never would have practiced architecture in England. I knew I wanted someday to build buildings. That was very important. I could not become a historian like Colin.

Is this kind of learning still possible? Why don't you travel with your advanced studios, if you are trying to teach your students to see in the same way that Colin taught you? Or maybe you're not trying to do the same thing?

The first-year class that I teach at Yale is an attempt to teach students how to see architecture as architects. It is something that does not come naturally. Yale's Dean Robert Stern has said there is a disjunction between the first and third year in the studio. We needed to find a course that mediated between first year and third year. How does that knowledge move into the studio?

I am trying to set up a series of case studies to show how Rem Koolhaas moves from Palladio and Schinkel to Le Corbusier to Rem Koolhaas. I am trying to define the persistencies of architecture. What are those things that do not change, what things have changed, where are the fertile areas for change? How do you take the knowledge of Bramante and Palladio and use it in a studio with Zaha Hadid? How does Hadid do it? How does Frank Gehry do it? I want to show examples where masters have been able to take material from the discipline of architecture and manipulate it so that it becomes present. How do you produce work that does not rely on graphics or Photoshop or computers, work that relies on the capacity to integrate architectural knowledge into the present? In other words, what are the present situations? Venturi, Moneo, Koolhaas, Porphyrios, Krier, Graves, all these architects have had very good educations and have integrated that education into their practice, whether you agree or not with their current directions.

You said earlier that this kind of travel is no longer possible, that you cannot travel today the way that you traveled with Colin Rowe as your “cicerone.” Is it not desirable, or is it simply not possible? And if it is not possible, why is that? What has changed?

The world was much smaller in those days, and slower. One knew everybody that there was to know. One does not know everybody in the world anymore. In those days you either went to college at Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, or you were out. When I applied to college, for example, I applied to Harvard and Cornell—that was it. I did not apply to six schools or eight schools. The world has become more varied and diffuse and the old days of what it was like at Yale are not same as what it is like today. Peter Eisenman, for one, does not have the time or money to take off and travel for two or three months. And I am married. You have to be an unmarried architectural critic who is willing to spend their time for nothing, *for nothing*, to do this. Nobody paid Colin to do it. We each paid our own way. Do I think that it is a way to learn? Absolutely. Do I think one should be paid to mentor? Absolutely. But I think the world has changed.

What is interesting is that I married my first wife that summer after Rowe left. We were on the road going from Florence to Arezzo, repeating, as our honeymoon, the trip that Rowe and I had taken. We drive off the main road to a little place, and there is a side road coming in from Cortona. We go by and I pull up in the parking lot of this restaurant where there are no other cars, and I look in the rear view mirror and there is a little green MG, which is what Rowe was driving, and I said to my wife, “Liz, you won't believe this but Colin Rowe has just pulled up behind us!” And it was true. Rowe was with Alvin Boyarsky, who was then the next in line to take this grand tour. The danger about mentoring is the risk that you never get out from under it.

Because the mentor is doctrinaire, or because it is an intellectual shadow?

Usually the mentor produces an intellectual shadow. Colin Rowe was never doctrinaire. He never insisted on anything but the way you learned. The way the trip was programmed was according to an attitude that Colin had about Mannerist painting and architecture and the way it related to modernism. I still see through Mannerist eyes. For example, when we were in Rome the first time, we saw no Borromini and no Bernini. Instead, we saw Carlo Rainaldi and Vignola. We went to Santa Maria in Campitelli, by Rainaldi. It was only a few years ago that I realized that Rudolf Wittkower, Rowe's mentor, had written a long article on the intersection of Palladio and Borromini with Rainaldi in 1935. Rainaldi had haunted me without my understanding until I read Wittkower's article, which Rowe never told me about.

If it had not been for Rowe, I would not be who I am today. But also, if I had not escaped from Rowe, I would not be who I am today.

It seems that architects today are traveling out of a professional rather than an intellectual interest. For example, many architects from our generation are building their careers in European offices. A stop in Rotterdam has become *de rigueur*. Do you think that travel has become more of a tool for professional advancement than intellectual development?

There is a reason for this kind of travel, and that is because people do not know how or what to see today. I know people who have spent a year in Rotterdam and have never gone to see the Zonnestraal, for example. They would not even know where the hell it is. They haven't gone to see Oud's houses in Scheveningen because for some reason that history has eluded them. Nobody has taught them about those things. In other words, nobody has analyzed Johnson's International Style show and asked "Where did he get these things? Where did he pick up these pieces? Johnson was so literate, he saw and knew everything. Just being around Philip, I learned a lot about the 1930s in Europe and his travels and why he made the choices he made for the 1932 show. Students today can go and work with Rem, Zaha, Herzog and de Meuron, but students are not curious as to how these architects put this information together.

Meaning the source material that supports the intellectual position of these architects?

How else does one become free of stylisms of convention, unless one has an education? To me education is the most important thing.

CARL AUGUST EHRENSVÄRD ON BEAUTY AND UTILITY

Johan Mårtelius

The life of Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745–1800) centred on two occupations. One was his military career as an admiral and the head of the Swedish navy, a position of importance during a period of escalating conflicts between Sweden and Russia. The other was that of an artist and intellectual, using his pen as much for sketches and tinted drawings as for writings focused on the arts. As a field combining traditions of the visual arts and military engineering, architecture naturally held a central position among his interests, especially since during his career he also designed at least one quite remarkable building. Yet his writings on architecture were comparatively few, and his attitudes show a certain ambivalence towards the architectural culture. In the art of building, as he once wrote with some disdain, “number governs everything.”¹ And much as he enjoyed producing sketches of all kinds throughout his life, often using cartoons to comment on the official cultural and political scene, Ehrensvärd seemed to dislike the calculated drawings that were the focus of the architectural profession.

An important step in developing his interests in architecture came in 1780 when he risked his military career by setting off on a two-year journey to Italy. This voyage widened his experience considerably, becoming a grand tour whose major purpose was to allow him to see for himself the places and art works from the renaissance and antiquity. His short account of this journey was first printed in 1786, along with thirty-eight plates produced from his sketches of landscapes and people, along with a few examples of vernacular architecture. Ehrensvärd’s admiration for classical architecture is revealed by some textual comments which briefly refer to the Greek temples of Paestum and Agrigento and the Pantheon in Rome. The importance of these architectural impressions seems to have been strengthened when somewhere along the way he learned that Carl Fredrik Adelcrantz, the First Commissioner of the Board of Public Works and Buildings, was planning to resign. Ehrensvärd thereupon apparently made plans to become his successor, which further stimulated his interests in the art of building. After returning to Sweden, he was reportedly more concerned with civil architecture than with his military duties.²

In 1786, the year he published the account of his tour, Ehrensvärd also published another piece of writing, *The Philosophy of the Free Arts*. Like his book on the Italian journey, this seventy-eight-page volume was composed of fragmentary and sometimes aphoristic pieces on the conditions and values of the arts. The different sections—with titles such as “On Beauty,” “On the Free Arts,” and “On Painting”—are presented



The Inventory chamber in Karlskrona. Photo by Johan Mårtelius.

as dialogues. The short section dealing with architecture, “On Building,” follows general accounts of beauty and the free arts and is centrally placed. Later sections deal with the pictorial arts and finally with taste, genius, human nature, and climate. This organization implies that architecture has a fundamental role among the arts. “Which are the free arts?” he asks—the first question in the section on the free arts—and answers, “building, painting, and sculpture,” in that order.³ In another context, when Ehrensvärd gives examples of beautiful objects he lists the square house, the colonnade, the flat roof, and the door. He regarded architecture as the fundamental art, and understood the other arts to be its subdivisions.⁴ As he says of painting, in the section immediately following “On Building,” the nature of the picture emanates from the wall of the building, when the wall section has been framed by fillets and an empty space has been left in between.

Ehrensvärd’s enlightened outlook on the world and the role of architecture as a primary art, fundamentally related to human conditions, was not exceptional in this time. Accounts of the primary role of architecture in human civilization had been given by Vitruvius, Alberti, and other classical writers, and accords with a general interest in the return to origins voiced in the mid-eighteenth century. In architecture this was represented above all by Marc-Antoine Laugier, whose work is likely to have been known by Ehrensvärd.⁵

Ehrensvärd’s own writing, characterized by short lapidary phrases as part of a dialogue, shows a preference for an enlightened, unornamented style that parallels his preferences in architecture. In language and poetry, as in the visual arts, he

preferred a simple approach, not without repetitions but avoiding extravagance and complexity. "Oracular" was the label given to his writings by Karl Warburg in 1893.⁶

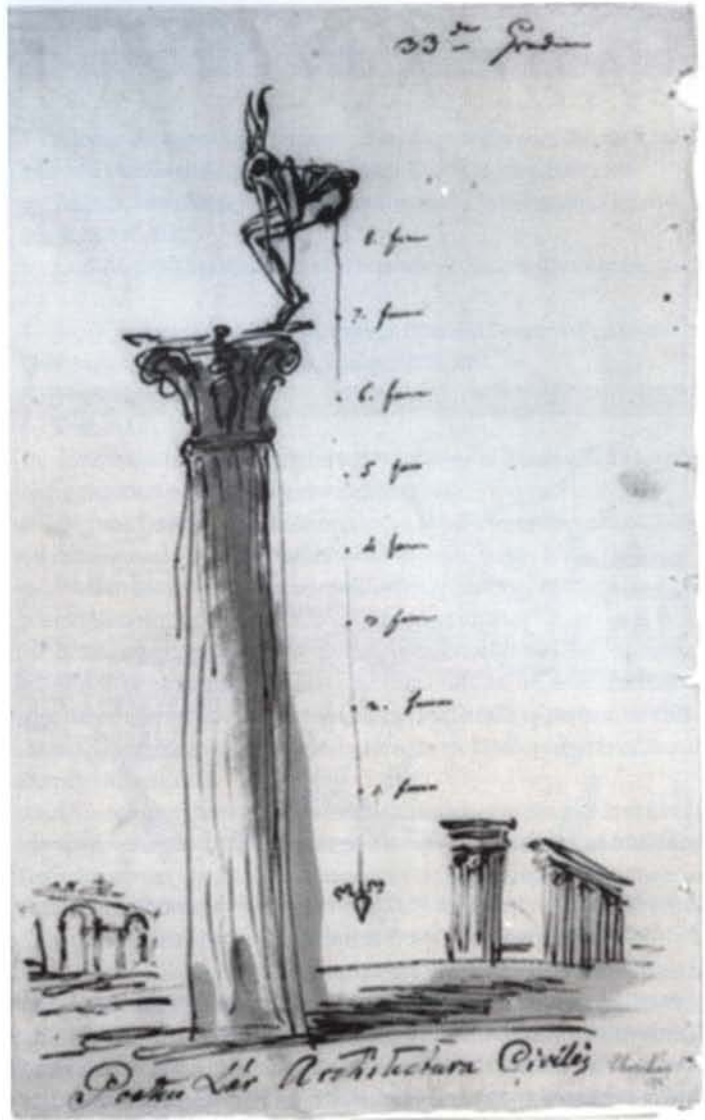
This somewhat choppy style of writing can, however, also be seen as a reflection of the military culture of efficiency in verbal communication.⁷ The culture of militarism had dominated Ehrensvärd's life since his childhood and early military training by his father, the field marshal Augustin Ehrensvärd, at the island fortress of Sveaborg outside of Helsinki. But rather than forming an interest in contemporary fortifications, this background seems to have encouraged a preference for the structural simplicity of Greek temples. Besides representing the typology Ehrensvärd favoured, a columnar system covered by a geometrically plain roof, the Greek temple might also be related to the repetitive order organized by basic square geometry represented by the military phalanx.⁸

Ehrensvärd was conscious of the effect of his reductive style of writing and compared it to his sketches, an ideal of outline drawings focusing on the essential aspects of the motif. To an extent, this was also an aristocratic attitude, suggesting that elaborate explanations and elucidating details were needed only by the uneducated. In this sense his texts as well as his drawings and architectural works reveal his beliefs that everything should follow nature and necessity. Greek temples were exponents of this fundamental quality.

Admiration for Greek architecture, shared at the time by many radical professionals, was in Ehrensvärd's case also filtered through a geographical perspective stressing the importance of climate and regional features. In this regard he was obviously influenced by Montesquieu.⁹ The architectural ideal, for Ehrensvärd, was a basic climatic shield consisting of a flat covering resting on four supports. The fundamental element in architecture is the roof or covering, the major climatic component in a building and the key to its quality. In the section "On Beauty" in *The Philosophy of the Free Arts*, Ehrensvärd claims, "A temple and a barn are more beautiful than mansard roofs and church towers."¹⁰ The challenge for Nordic architecture was to maintain a Greek simplicity despite an unfavourable climate, to avoid the types of complex solutions represented by French or Baroque buildings.

This ideal of elementary classical temples and vernacular utility buildings is expressed in the opening passage of "On Building," where Ehrensvärd defines a building as "a roof or covering on supports, with or without walls". Columns are the most significant elements in architecture and, because they manifest the basic quality of a building, are also its major sources of beauty. As Ehrensvärd wrote elsewhere, "There is nothing in the world as comprehensible as a colonnade, one understands supports that carry a covering."¹¹

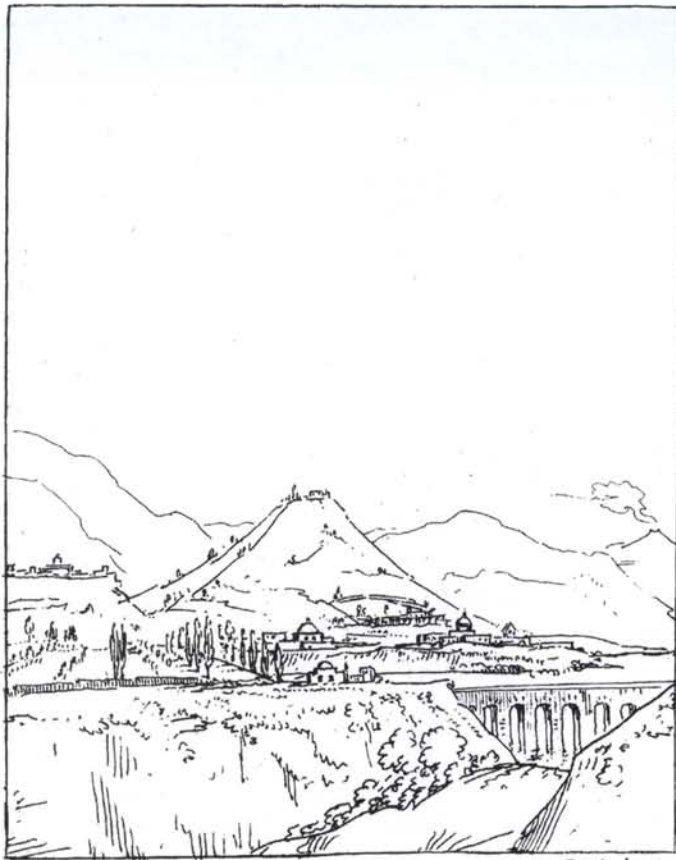
Beauty in architecture, according to "On Beauty," results from the fulfilment of three requirements. First come the "true needs" of a person in sound condition. Second are the structural laws of wood. Thus, in relation to the three Vitruvian terms, *venustas* was seen as resulting from *utilitas* and *firmitas*. But third, Ehrensvärd stated that "the detail work would need to be cleaned up in order for the building to present itself to the eye as complete." Reduction was the active force belonging to beauty itself. But only the ideal man, as in the classical Vitruvian metaphor, gives birth to beauty in architecture. A man in inferior condition has inferior needs as well as inferior judgement.



"The architect learns from *Architectura civilis*". Drawing from the 1790's. Ehrensvärd was critical of the calculating and mathematical component in the architectural discipline, regarding the art of building to be closely connected to nature.

Ehrensvärd repeatedly emphasizes the primacy of wood as a source material for architecture. The shading tree represents the primary house, but wooden construction also favours the elementary geometry of straight lines, squares, and the round column, giving a material base to the Vitruvian square and circle. Wood is the origin, the source, the first link in a chain of development, historically and conceptually. Wood is the starting point because it is readily available, but also because it naturally expresses its own sound qualities.

Although Ehrensvärd strongly favours the Mediterranean climate and landscape over the Nordic regions, the Scandinavian tradition of wooden architecture had a powerful influence on him. Obviously, he was aware that the square-timber house with low-pitched roof formed an archetypal Nordic dwelling. Nevertheless, he found the lack of high-quality wood to be a problem in the inferior Nordic climate. The round shape that he connected to the nature of trees was represented more genuinely in the leafy trees dominating southern regions than in the Nordic firs and pines. An unfavourable climate might



A landscape view, published in 1786 along with Ehrensvärd's report from his Italian journey, connecting mountains and domed buildings.

destroy beauty, creating difficulties in protecting wood from the weather. And Nordic regions also lacked resources to quarry stone, which is the weather-resistant imitator of wood. Stone lacks inherent form, in Ehrensvärd's view, though it adds permanency, while metal as a material in buildings lacks both form and permanency.

Besides the flat roof on supports, the other archetype identified by Ehrensvärd was the burrow. The burrow, the origin of vaulted architecture, along with wood provided the basic laws of building. Stone merely mimicked trees and burrows. Because of this, the natural architectural approach should be to imitate wood above earth and imitate burrows (for cellars) below it. In this manner Ehrensvärd established a hierarchy in which the Greek type of temple was superior to the Roman vaulted building.

In Ehrensvärd's understanding, the beauty and usefulness of architecture, the Vitruvian *venustas* and *utilitas*, are strongly interrelated. In nature, as he stated over and over again, they are always linked, and so should they be in the works of humans. The tree, or at least the leafy tree, is his primary example. This view is manifested also in a text titled "On the Beauty of the Useful," a few pages from a large collection of notes that, like most of his writings, never found their way into print.¹² Beauty, as he claims in this text, resides not in what is merely useful but in its visual representation. The lamb is beautiful but not the piece of meat, the fruit but not the seed. What is useful becomes beautiful only when it is naturally represented by visual clarity. Therefore "a house is more beautiful than its cellar". This may reflect Laugier's narrative on the origins of architecture,

where he describes early man's rejection of the darkness of caves in favour of the elemental constructed hut.¹³ From this point of view all vaulted and domed spaces above ground would be judged as being basically inferior to roofs built on wooden trusses. To achieve harmony, vaulted or domed buildings needed to adhere closely to the laws of nature.

The archetype to be followed in domed buildings, according to Ehrensvärd, is the mountain, a conclusion that appears to be the logical result of connecting domed and vaulted spaces with the burrow. From this point of view, Ehrensvärd's criticism of Saint Peter's in Rome was logical. In early letters from his journey to Rome, he expressed a strong admiration for its architecture, but in his travel notes from Italy as published he makes extensive critical commentary.¹⁴ The early plans by Bramante and Michelangelo were both judged superior to the seventeenth-century constructed version. The unity of the dome with its substructure was now lacking, and the dome was "standing naked in the air".¹⁵ Contemporary domed buildings are, according to Ehrensvärd, confusing, made to seem light, with their elevated vaulting appearing dangerous. This he considered a mistake, although, as he noted generously, it was appreciated by some people.

Ehrensvärd identified the Pantheon in Rome as a model for domed buildings. Here the dome is integrated with the supporting walls. The concluding dialogues in "On Building" comment on the Pantheon and what it represents, elaborating on reflections from his journey. The interior is a monumental imitation of the burrow, illusory as such, while the exterior mixes the two archetypes, earth and wood. These confusions of types and of image with reality are fundamentally a mistake in Ehrensvärd's view, but in the Pantheon they are balanced with masterful assurance and pleasing to the eye. Ehrensvärd seems to find the attraction of vaulting above ground, with the dangers they evoke, to be unavoidable, and he found the Pantheon as opposed to Saint Peter's to be a proper solution. The dangers of vaulting and high elevations must be accepted, he notes, but in conclusion, what makes architecture the art form related to truth and serious taste is that it is stable, without movement. Immobility, connection to the eternal laws and expressions of nature, is what makes architecture foremost among the arts.

As the example of the Pantheon showed, ideal beauty could not always be achieved. Ehrensvärd therefore used a series of expressions for relative beauty and ugliness. Examples of ugliness are steep roofs, projections, and expression of movement in facades. These things should always be avoided. As a compromise, prettiness could then be achieved by striving for a modest size, which would diminish the effect of disorder. However, a more attractive solution could be found, even in larger buildings, by creating an appearance of order, hiding what is disorderly. Architecture of good quality, according to the chief admiral, concealed its inherent complexities and irregularities as much as possible through expressions of clarity and order.

Ehrensvärd's own practice as architect adds up to only a few individual buildings, and depended on cooperation with Henric af Chapman, the shipbuilder and director of the naval shipyard in Karlskrona. In all cases, however, the results expressed Ehrensvärd's views. His main achievement was the inventory chamber in Karlskrona, a large-scale storage building for naval equipment, completed in 1786. This building synthesized the classical temple and the barn, both in function and design.

Its reduced detailing, with twenty rows of repetitive openings, emphasizes stereometric volume. In the design process Ehrensvärd considered adding Doric porticos of extremely squat proportions. In the end, however, these were sacrificed in favour of the purity of the walled architecture.¹⁶

In addition to this piece of monumental architecture, Ehrensvärd's other major involvement in building design was of Chapman's Doric vernacular house near Karlskrona.¹⁷ This house, named Skärva, was basically a wooden version of a Greek temple, related both to Nordic vernacular and to the origin of the Doric temple. Ehrensvärd's fundamental preoccupation with wooden structures was, to a degree, part of a Nordic theme. The square shape he favoured had a natural connection to horizontal timber construction. This is evident in the square main hall of Skärva, despite its bevelled corners.

Military discipline (including the need to maintain a distance from the horrors of combat through a sense of humour and of the absurd), along with the limits imposed by climate, seem to have been the main inspiration for Ehrensvärd's Nordic interpretation of the reforming architectural ideas that were spreading in contemporary France and Europe. Ehrensvärd expressed criticism of the artificial, theatrical appearance of Gustav III's royal court, though in some ways he was respectful of the king himself. In this critical approach to politics and power it may be argued that his architectural ideal, of always seeking an honest and genuine relationship between man and nature, played a part.

Even though Ehrensvärd was deeply involved in contemporary artistic circles, with such colleagues as Johan Tobias Sergel, Louis Masreliez and Olof Tempelman, he largely remained an outsider. As a writer and aesthete in the spirit of the Enlightenment, his achievements were recognized in the following century, for instance in an essay by the poet P.D.A. Atterbom, written in 1841.¹⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, however, despite growing interest in neoclassical architecture during the 1910s and 1920s, Ehrensvärd's writings and architectural works were rarely recognized. His collected writings were published in three volumes in the 1920s, but his radical views on architecture seem to have scarcely entered the reformist movement of the profession during this period. It is tempting, however, to suggest the influence of Ehrensvärd's views on domed structures on some works by E G Asplund. The Pantheonic Woodland Chapel (1918–20) may reflect Ehrensvärd's preferences, but even more so the Stockholm City Library. There the likewise Pantheonic domed central element of the original project was modified (in 1923, coinciding with the publication of Ehrensvärd's relevant texts) into becoming a flat topped cylinder, firmly resting on the ground, and where the interior wall surface was treated in an irregular manner, evoking a primitive burrow. During the last half-century Ragnar Josephson and Sten Åke Nilsson, two professors of art history at Lund University, and others, have commented sensitively on his work and opinions.¹⁹ The central position he gives to architecture among the arts may yet inspire and reward further research.

NOTES

- 1 A letter quoted in Karl Warburg, *Karl August Ehrensvärd. En lefnadsbild från gustavianska tiden* (Stockholm: F. & G. Beijer, 1893), 99.
- 2 Ragnar Josephson, *Carl August Ehrensvärd* (Stockholm: Norstedt & Söner, 1963), 214.
- 3 Carl-August Ehrensvärd, *De fria konstens filosofi* (Stockholm 1786), 30.
- 4 In *En ny filosofi (A New Philosophy)*. Gunhild Bergh (ed.), *Skrifter av Carl August Ehrensvärd*, 2 (Stockholm 1923), 276.
- 5 Warburg, *op.cit.*, 105.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 7 Josephson refers to military questionnaires in Ehrensvärd's archive using similar dialogues. Josephson, *op.cit.*, 172.
- 8 Cf John Onians, *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999), 9–56.
- 9 Warburg considered Ehrensvärd to be, above everything else, a disciple of Montesquieu. Warburg, *op.cit.* 106.
- 10 Ehrensvärd, *De fria konstens filosofi* (Stockholm 1786), 15.
- 11 Beskowska reseboken, quoted in Josephson, *op. cit.*, 152. The column was the subject of the first article, following the introduction, in Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture* (Paris 1755), probably of importance to Ehrensvärd.
- 12 This is one out of eighty-two short pieces under the heading *Utkast styckevis till en filosofi* (Outline in pieces for a philosophy). Gunhild Bergh (ed.), *Skrifter av Carl August Ehrensvärd*, 3, (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers forlag 1925), 82–84.
- 13 Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, 9.
- 14 Sten Åke Nilsson, *1700-talets ansikte: Carl August Ehrensvärd* (Stockholm: Nordstedt 1996), 117–20.
- 15 Carl-August Ehrensvärd, *Resa till Italien och andra skrifter* (Täby/Stockholm: Lind & Co 1999), 37.
- 16 Johan Mårtelius, "Örlogsstadens byggnader" in *Arkitektur i Karlskrona* (Stockholm 1991), 23. The Doric porticos survive in models exposed at Marinmuseet, Karlskrona.
- 17 Kerstin Barup, Mats Edström, *Skärva: Creating a Place in the Country* (Stockholm: Byggförlaget 1991).
- 18 P.D.A. Atterbom, *Svenska siare och skaldar eller Grunddragen af svenska vitterhetens häfder intill och med Gustaf III:s tidevarf*, Första delen, III (Uppsala 1841).
- 19 Josephson, *Carl August Ehrensvärd* and Nilsson, *1700-talets ansikte*, are the major publications.

ON BUILDING

Carl August Ehrensvärd

What is a building?

It is a roof or covering on supports, with or without walls.

In what ways is a building related to the laws of beauty?

If a building were to be constructed perfectly in accordance with the true needs of a person in sound condition—in accordance with the structural laws of wood as well—then beauty in a general sense would create itself; however, the detail work would need to be cleaned up for the building to present itself to the eye as complete.

Why would that be the case if the house were built only for a person without faults?

Because a weak individual's needs of pride and comfort, with the gadgetry these entail, would destroy the possibility of making a beautiful thing.

Is there nothing else which destroys the possibility of making a beautiful thing?

Yes, weakness in the character of an individual disturbs his bowels; then things are neither felt nor judged rightly.

Is there nothing else which destroys the possibility of making a beautiful thing?

Climate obstructs beauty in a building, partly owing to lack of access to convenient and durable materials, partly owing to the measurements and steps one must take in the manner of building to prevent its early destruction, and partly owing to the lack of power to work solid rock.

Where is beauty grounded in a building?

In the properties of wood.

Not in the properties of stone, which is more durable?

No.

Not in the properties of metals, which are stronger?

No.

What are the properties of wood?

Straight lines, four corners, and the roundness of logs for columns.

What are the properties of stone?

One imitates wood with it, and it withstands time.

What are the properties of metals?

They have no properties of form; one can melt, strike, and shape them at will. Since a house is possessed of a given natural form according to the nature of wood, if one had nothing to build with but metals the natural form of the house would be unknown.

Does the shape of a wooden house have an intrinsic nature embedded within it?

Yes.

Where does it come from?

It comes from the fact that a person's instinct, his needs and what nature provides to fulfill them, are linked in a chain. And wood is the foremost material provided for a building.

Why is wood the primary or nearest thing in nature that, as material for a house, fulfills a person's needs?

Because of all building materials wood is the easiest to work, and because a house of wood is the most wholesome.

From whence are vaults derived?

From burrows and their entrances. For when one digs into the earth horizontally, sand and soil fall down and create a vault.

What kinds of natural materials, then, determine the laws of building?

Wood and earthworks.

Stone then imposes no laws upon building?

No, stone is nothing but what I make of it, and in stone I imitate wood.

What is the correct and natural way of building, to please the eye and for useful purposes?

Imitate wood aboveground, and build a vault in the cellar.

Can one depart from these laws and preserve beauty?

No, one loses true beauty and falls into playthings, among which can be found attractive, pretty, ugly, and hideous versions of buildings.

What is hideous in buildings?

All houses that carry high roofs, for it is as if the eye were asked to believe that part of the house has been destroyed, and that it was hastily repaired, with a big roof containing the lost storey.

Om Byggnad.

HVAD är en byggnad?

Det är et tak eller et skjul på styltor, med eller utan väggar.

På hvad sätt äger en byggnad et sammanhang med lagarne af det vackra?

Om efter människans fanna behof i et friskt tilstånd man fullkomligt verkstälde en byggnad, efter trädets fasthets lagar tillika, få skulle det vackra i allmänna utseendet skapa sig sjelf, men fordrade derjemte en flags städning i smådelarne för at visa ögat en färdiggörelse.

Hvar-



Building blocks by Carl August Ehrensvärd, used for experimentation and architectural models. From Marin Museum Karlsskrona. Photo: Jens Lindhe

What is ugly in buildings?

All houses built with projections, and in whose facades so-called "movement" appears.

What is pretty in buildings?

All houses are pretty that distract the eye from a certain disorder they have by being just the right size, whereby they minimize their faults.

What is attractive in buildings?

Those buildings can be considered attractive which exhibit a certain size and which, however complicated by disorder, nevertheless win the eye's pardon by satisfying it through a type of deceptive loveliness.

Can you give an example of the last case?

The Pantheon in Rome is a great imitation of the globe of the earth. It has a rounded hollowness, a single opening at the highest part of the vault, and its interior is a perfect likeness of truth. But the exterior is a conglomeration of earthwork mixed with woodwork. The relationship between these faults of assembly is masterfully calculated, one approves of the whole structure,

and prefers to view it with satisfaction, rather than to analyse it.

Do round structures such as the Pantheon lose their attractiveness when set atop towers?

These are the domes being built nowadays. For an even greater absurdity they are naked and not enclosed in walls; they resemble a lightness in shape, and give the eye a feeling of insecurity when it beholds them, so large and so high. The Pantheon is well thought out; it is as it were contained in side walls, not high in the air, and it imparts security and the satisfaction of feeling safe next to so great an object.

One often sees aboveground buildings with arches, and most of the buildings in Europe are constructed with ornamented vaults. The reason people of certain cultures like vaults is that vaults appear to be dangerous, a great mass hanging in the air, and it takes a mass of a certain great size to move certain peoples.

Which of the free arts is most demanding of a true and serious taste?

Building, for it stands still and has no movement.

ON THE BEAUTY OF USEFUL THINGS

Carl August Ehrensvärd

There are two kinds of useful things in the world: those which concern the world in general, and those which concern man alone. That which concerns the world in general are those things which Nature herself has brought forth. That which concerns man alone is that which man brings forth.

That which concerns man is also divided into two parts.

That which Nature produces and which is useful to man for his outer state appears beautiful to people. That which Nature produces and which is useful for his inner state is not so beautiful.

A flower is more beautiful than a seed. The same is true of human works.

A house is more beautiful than its cellar. One must examine this statement more closely, and give more examples.

A view of a beautiful landscape that depicts the spring captivates the eye; one would like to go and live there. Everything one sees in a landscape belongs to the outer aspect of man. One feels the play of fresh weather, the grass seems to invite one to rest, the tree spreads its shade, one's feet seem to press the ground, and one's thoughts wander off in search of a shepherdess.

When one sees a fully mature crop uprooted, or a lamb prepared for the oven, beauty has vanished, and these things have pertinence only to the inner aspect of man.

Everything man produces is of a similar nature in that regard.

What belongs first of all to the works of a human being is beauty. The bowl from which he eats, his bow and arrow, the cloth he wraps around himself. The plaits which keep the hair out of his eyes, the shorn heads of men. His simple house—when these parts are made to meet his obvious needs, the eye understands them and is captivated. One might say all these things belong only to the outer man, but when his inner self is involved, the appearance of things changes, another view arises, and other things become significant.

When man's health is weakened and it becomes impossible to go on living his life in a simple manner, his inner difficulties are soon manifested in his actions. His house becomes peculiar, he invents carts, he dresses in more and tighter clothing, the eye becomes confused, but there is still more.

Nature herself does not always perfect her products. At times she breaks down, and suffers obstruction. What she gives man to work with is not always good, and the weather people have to live with is disagreeable in most parts of the world. In this way man is prevented on the one hand from getting clean materials to work with, and on the other from bringing his work to completion. Besides this it happens that people can go endlessly far in weakness, and thus develop their inward defects to a high degree, before they are destroyed, so that things become even worse. And this kind of fundamental mixture of the objectionable qualities in Nature and humankind sadly offends the eye.

Consequently, with man-made objects, the so-called useful things are not always the beautiful things.

People could grind their flour themselves, but they have windmills.

They could live by the products of their own climate, but they have ships.

They could tolerate a little rain, a little wind, a little jolting, but they have carriages with springs and coaches with roofs and windows.

They could use the whole cloth, but have it cut and tailored.

They could be satisfied with their natural shape, but make corsets.

They procured their prey better with the bow, but have guns. Their houses could be beautiful, but they are in need of much space, and must drive their carriage in.

And so forth.

Cold destroys walls.

Water and snow require high roofs.

A hard climate imposes too many needs.

12. Social and Political Reflections

Lord Cholm—y's intended departure for the Continent, is not, it seems to revive the languid flame of love in a personal visit to Miss Dal-ble, that affair having been long at an end and the lady perfectly happy in the arms of a new *inamorato*: his Lordship's tour however is not to be of a very solitary nature, as one of the most accomplished women of this island has actually consented to accompany!

Readers of the *Morning Herald* of 11 April 1781 would not have been surprised by such an item of fashionable gossip. Indeed, George, 4th Earl of Cholmondeley (1749–1827), who had travelled extensively in Italy in the early 1770s, went to Italy in 1781–2 with Elizabeth Armitstead (1750–1842), a leading London courtesan, who was subsequently to travel to Italy with Charles James Fox in 1788, to marry him in 1795, and to go to Italy with him again in 1802. The notion of tourism as a means for the pursuit of pleasure was well established and any focus on the didactic goal of travel was constantly undercut by a very different reality of pleasure: the discourse of social benefit clashing, as so often, with the dictates of individual pleasure, although, in this case, the pleasure was not restricted to socialising and sex. Elizabeth Armitstead also appreciated the paintings she saw, especially the Correggios in Parma and the Guercinos in Cento.

Travel to Italy in the eighteenth century can be seen as representing the summation of both processes – benefit and pleasure, and much of the interest in reading the accounts of contemporary tourists reflects the presence there of differing aspirations. Italy was at once the focus of artistic and, more generally, cultural education, and a peninsula of pleasure, whether the delights in question were, for example, those of opera or the more sensual joys for which Venice was noted.

Yet the attraction of Italy for some was being undercut by the degree to which it seemed to represent the past, not simply the past of Classical splendour and culture, but also the past of the present. For the British, modern Italy appeared a land in the grip of reaction. Its



33. *Dr James Hay as Bearleader*, by Pier Leone Ghezzi, c. 1725. Hay, who died in 1746, was a Scottish doctor who acted as a bearleader on at least eight occasions between 1704, when he accompanied Nicholas Bacon to Italy, and 1730, when he was in Rome with Richard and William Wynne. Hay was fairly dour, critical of sloth and concerned about costs. He was keen to ensure the education of his charges, and favoured Padua for Lord James Compton in 1707 as a safer place than Venice to learn Italian.

reputation as a haunt of superstition was exacerbated by Italy's connection with Jacobitism, specifically as the place where the last Stuarts took refuge and ended their days. James Stuart (1688–1766), 'James III' from 1701, lived in Italy for most of his life from 1717. He spent much of his time in Rome, although he also lived in Urbino, Bologna and Albano. His son, Charles Edward (1720–88), 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', lived in Italy until 1744, returning in 1766. Charles's brother, Henry, Cardinal Duke of York (1725–1807), 'Henry IX' from 1788, lived in Italy for most of his life, although he was in France in 1745–7. He presided over the Papal conclaves of 1758, 1774–5 and 1799, an apt symbol of the link between Jacobitism and the Catholic Church. Papal support for the Jacobite claim ensured that no British diplomat could be accredited to the Papal States. Difficulties could be created by Italian states over the passports of British travellers, while inconvenience was created for tourists by the travels of

the Jacobite princes. Britain broke off diplomatic relations with the Duke of Parma in 1728 due to the latter's reception of 'James III'. Similar tension over the reception of Charles Edward in Venice in 1737 led to a breach in diplomatic relations that lasted until 1744. While the Jacobite court was at Bologna or Avignon, it was easy for British tourists to avoid it, but this was not the case with Rome.

Before the defeat at Culloden in 1746, Jacobite visitors to Rome excited the suspicion of the British government and the criticism of some commentators. Several visitors made little effort to hide their views. Henry, 3rd Duke of Beaufort (1707–45) visited 'James III' in Rome in 1726 on numerous occasions and held a grand entertainment to mark the anniversary of the Stuart Restoration in 1660. John Bagshaw, the consul in Genoa, reported in 1731 that at Rome there had arrived 'a vast number of English gentlemen most of them visited the Pretender for whom they had brought several remittances'.

Other tourists felt under pressure from the Jacobites. In 1730, William Mildmay wrote from Rome that they were 'diligent in intruding themselves into the company of all travellers'. Four years earlier, John Mills was 'determined' not to go near Bologna 'as long as the Pretender is there'.¹

More generally, Italy appeared to be dominated by autocratic rulers and Catholic superstition. Tourists were frequently presented to the Pope, the Kings of Naples and Sardinia, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Dukes of Modena and Parma, and the Governor of Milan, but these meetings did not generally provide occasions for any positive evaluation of Italian politics or government. George, Earl of Euston (1715–47), the heir to Charles, 2nd Duke of Grafton and later an MP, was received by Charles Emmanuel III at Turin in 1734, and the king discussed international relations with him, leading a British diplomat to send a report, but most tourists had little positive to say about government in the Italian states.

There was a longstanding negative portrayal of Italian rulers and courts. A mixture of Jacobean 'blood-drama' and a belief that the politics of these rulers and courts was motivated by Machiavellian cynicism remained potent, and it was repeated in popular histories and other sources. This affected John, 5th Earl of Cork's *Letters from Italy* (1775), which he had written in Florence in 1754. In this book, the later Medici were presented as treacherous, debauched and evil. William Mildmay had certainly been less than impressed in 1731 by Giovanni Gastone de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany from 1723 until 1737. He presented him as enjoying seeing carried out the sexual acts, particularly sodomy, which his drunkenness had rendered him unfit to perform.

Most tourists left less lurid accounts, but there was still an impression of control and coercion that suggested a government very different to that of Britain. In December 1699, Richard Creed presented Francesco Maria Farnese, ruler of Parma and Piacenza from 1694 until 1727, as a harsh figure: 'the Duke is the great landlord and all his subjects are his slaves and pay him what he demands'. The Duke of Mantua was more lurid, although also tyrannical:

Ferdinando Carlo Gonzagia the second [r. 1665–1706]; he is a very plain man to look on, just like an English farmer, and every day drives himself all the town over in a little calash with one footman; he has four pistols in it; he is about 50 years old, but he is a man of pleasure. He has at least eighty misses in his keeping, and he keeps them handsomely; and they perform his operas; for they are all handsome and all sing or dance; he has about 70 children in town; but none by his Duchess [Anna Isabella]; he is very absolute, imprisons who he pleases; he hangs and raises money at his pleasure; he spends all, for he has no heirs.

Creed, however, was also sufficiently perceptive to appreciate the tension and divisions beneath the commanding appearance of absolutist states with their suggestion of a unity of purpose. In Milan, he noted that the Governor of the citadel was not under the control of the Governor of the town and suggested that he was intended as a check on the latter.

The use of the language of tyranny was increasingly uncommon, but a critical account of the extent and ambition of government authority was still offered. Visiting Turin in 1726, John Mills wrote that Victor Amadeus II, ruler of Savoy-Piedmont from 1675 until 1730, was 'very well beloved' by his subjects. However:

whether it is out of politics or natural curiosity he knows everything that is done in every house in Turin, and if there is any irregularity or debauch committed, he is sure to punish or reprimand accordingly . . . The subjects here are forbid conversing with or going to the house of any foreign minister. I am told this piece of policy prevails in all states through Italy.

Mills noted a different form of control in Lombardy, which had been conquered by Austrian forces in the War of the Spanish Succession and gained by the Emperor Charles VI (r. 1711–40), the Habsburg ruler, under the Peace of Utrecht of 1713:

In Milan there are two factions one for and the other against the Emperor. On enquiry I learned that the latter is much the strongest, besides having the common people on their side. Never was government more hated and more feared than is the German [Austrian] in the Milanese on account of the oppressions the people lie under, which are more than they are able to bear, and more burthensome than under any of their former masters. They would be glad of an opportunity of getting rid of it had they anything to help them, but the Emperor has 30,000 men to keep them in awe and makes the people pay for the maintenance of a great many more. He is adding new fortifications to all the towns I passed through in the Milanese.²

Austrian control of Naples from 1707 until 1734, which was indeed unpopular, did not impress Edward Southwell in 1726:

And indeed the Neapolitans suffer so many additional taxes and impositions under the present government, that the least spark would kindle them into a flame, and induce them to recall the Spaniards. All the gabelles are not only high, but mortgaged out to pay the interest of the public debts, and every fresh tax is immediately sold off for ever, to create a present plenty, so that there is no country, wherein the public are more harassed and whence the prince draws less advantage. The Emperor has had thoughts of borrowing money at 3 per cent from the Genoese or of raising a bank wherewith to pay off these public debts, and to take the taxes into his own hands, but that would ruin the state creditors who perhaps draw 8 or 10 per cent for the original sums they have advanced; and perhaps the Emperor will let the debt continue or rather raise them out of the same policy as King William [III, r. 1689–1702] used with us, because where a title is precarious, the more money the natives lend to the Prince, the deeper must they be engaged to support *him* in his possession, from whom alone they must depend for interest and principal.

Again, the princes and nobles have no further power over their vassals, nor any present share in the state, but the magistrates are men of low families and hard study, who have fortunes to make . . . Then the Spaniards spent part of their gains in the country, and though the Viceroy commonly made an immense estate, yet the King was not rapacious; but the Germans [Austrians] fleece the country, all is sent to Vienna. Nay the 70,000 licensed whores at Naples are discontented, and cry out that they owe their rags and misery to the Germans, who are good economists, and most of them married; whereas the Spaniards were rich and vicious, and left the Neapolitans money enough to be good customers also.

As to the 60,000 persons who live there by the law, frequent revolutions produce new quarrels, new titles and new business, and they will flourish, as long as the pride, envy and malice of mankind.³

Such references to current politics were uncommon, and became far more so in 1749–91 when Italy was at peace and Britain played scant role in its politics. Instead, the political references became less specific, while timeless reflections on the rhythms of history and its relationship with culture became more common.

While Britain was playing an active role in Italian politics in the first half of the eighteenth century, tourist comments in part reflected the nature of British foreign policy. Thus, in 1725–31, when British relations with Charles VI were poor and he was seen as a supporter of Jacobitism and of a Catholic league, it was unsurprising that Southwell had a negative impression of Austrian-ruled Naples and Mills of Austrian-ruled Lombardy.

Later in the century, more sympathetic remarks were made. Robert Gray (1762–1834), a cleric who toured Italy in 1791–2, praised Grand Duke Leopold's legislation and legal reforms in Tuscany (1765–90), and Charles Abbot also noted them, not least the raising of the age at which girls could enter convents, although he wrote that Leopold's economical approach to

expenditure made him unpopular. Edward, Duke of York (1739–67), a brother of George III, was interested in the copy of Beccaria's *Dei Delitti e Delle Pene*, a call for the end of capital punishment, which he was given when he visited Milan in 1764. Arriving there seven years later, Shelburne remarked that the Inquisition was now weak – ‘only the name remains’ – and that there had been a major shift in the culture:

Found in the room of the chief inquisitor Mirabeau's book in favour of atheism . . . The Literati, by all accounts new in Italy – at present you may be recommended from town to town from one set of literati to the other, as formerly from convent to convent . . . Beccaria just taken into the new Council of Trade.

Shelburne, nevertheless, added that the government was ‘afraid to trust the people of the country’.⁴ More generally, however, there was a marked failure among tourists to realise the degree to which there was an Enlightenment in Italy and, more specifically, to understand the extent to which, particularly in Lombardy, Parma and Tuscany, there were attempts to ‘reform’ and ‘modernise’ government and society as understood by contemporary standards.

Instead, a shift in the attitude towards Italian republicanism during the century had a major impact on the response to Italy. In the seventeenth century, Venice had appeared not only as a seat of pleasure but also as a model of civic virtue. Genoa had never enjoyed the same renown, but it had benefited from the favourable interest displayed in Italian republics. They could be seen to resonate with Classical values which were closely associated with republicanism. In *The Jacobite's Journal* of 12 March (os) 1748, the Whig novelist-magistrate Henry Fielding (who never visited Italy) wrote of ‘Greek and Latin authors which have been the bane of the Jacobite cause, and inspired men with the love of Athenian liberty and old Rome, and taught them to hate tyrants and arbitrary governments’. Virtue was held to be a republican characteristic, the product of states with a ‘balanced’ constitution such as republican Rome, and British tourists displayed sympathy for republican relics such as Lucca and San Marino. Thanks to the traditional positive impression of republicanism, it was possible to differentiate between the degenerate modern and the noble ancient inhabitants of towns such as Florence, Pisa and Siena. The medieval republicanism of these towns was praised and their decline associated with their subsequent loss of independence.

By the eighteenth century, the perception of Italian republics was less positive. As yet there was no widespread aesthetic of splendid decay to lend romantic appeal to Venice. Although the city's attraction was still strong as a centre of culture and, even more, pleasure, politically it was seen as an increasingly inconsequential state, a model only of rigidity. Francis, Marquess of Tavistock advised John, Earl of Upper Ossory in 1763 ‘to study a little the constitution of the Republic of Venice, in order to inspire you with a proper dread of aristocracy – I am sure it is very useful for an Englishman’. The following year, Henry, Viscount Palmerston criticised the power of the Council of Ten to seize and kill without trial, and

wrote of the government, 'under the form of an oligarchy it seems to be a perfect tyranny'. However, he added:

These powers though enormously great yet often changing hands and those who exercise them one moment being subject to them the next are not often abused and they are agreeable to the common people who are in general below any apprehension of them for themselves and who find in them their best defence against the nobles whose tyranny would be very great over their inferiors were it not for this check. The people in general are attached to this government and live happy under it: the taxes are not heavy, they have generally plenty and it is the policy of the state to encourage every pursuit of pleasure in all ranks of people.⁵

In 1755, George, Viscount Villiers provided a very different social echo when he visited the Doge's Palace: 'The entrance is open to everybody, and the stairs are in a most beastly condition from what is called the Liberty of the People.' He preferred access to be limited. Seven years later, John Hinchliffe used his visit to Venice in order to denounce Italian government as a whole, and, as with denunciations by others, to treat this as part of a denunciation of an entire culture:

If states like men have their different ages in which they in a manner naturally flourish and decay, this of Italy surely is near its grave. Not only the blessing itself is gone, but the very love and idea of Liberty, and a low sneaking politique is substituted in the place of manly generous sentiments. The case is much the same with morality; we exclaim in our part of the world against the passions, as the corrupters of men, but here men seem to me to have corrupted the passions – The conveniences and sometimes the very necessities of life are sacrificed to a vain appearance of magnificence . . . A very extraordinary affair that happened here some weeks ago will give your Grace [Augustus, 3rd Duke of Grafton] a sketch of that liberty so much boasted of in this republic. An Avagador (somewhat like a tribune of the people) lodged a complaint before the Grand Council against the inquisitors of state; the charge gave occasion to a debate whether or no that office should not be entirely abolished; the majority were for its continuance; and the city testified its satisfaction in the determination by illuminations and every other demonstration of joy, as if it was an acquisition to be pleased with, that three despotic governors were continued, who have the power to hang, drown or perpetually imprison them; a few days after, the Avagador was imprisoned at Verona where it is generally thought he will spend the remainder of his life. The common people I am informed by an ingenious Abbé . . . are not so extravagant in their sentiments of the affair, as at first sight one would naturally imagine. Among the fifteen hundred nobles there are at least a third said he reduced to a state of absolute beggary, whose circumstances would tempt them to oppression were it

not for the sword which is held over their heads by an invisible thread . . . in my opinion liberty is at best but very precarious when it depends upon absolute power for its support. The Sardinian monarch [Charles Emmanuel III] seems to be a snowball from mountains gathering as it goes. It is the only power I believe that your Grace has observed which is at all in a rising state.⁶

Indeed Italy was to be united around the Piedmontese state the following century.

Genoa's reputation was damaged by the rebellions of its Corsican colony, and it also seemed inconsequential and rigid. According to Edward Thomas, 'the people are ruled by many tyrants who use them as slaves. Their being so fond of having the crown [of Corsica] up everywhere, I think, is a tacit approbation of monarchy, but I could not but smile to see the motto they put under it, *Libertas*. This is fit only for the crown of England.' Shelburne, who visited Genoa in 1771, and who had contacts with enlightened European opinion-makers, was dismayed by the state:

all corruption . . . no public spirit – everything jobbed – no Liberty of the Press – that and all personal liberty at the mercy of Inquisitors of State . . . No military knowledge or spirit. Fortifications ruinous . . . Several raw materials allowed to be exported – upon the solicitation of particular merchants, who obtain laws to pass by bribery to answer the purpose of their particular trade.⁷

Genoa had also suffered physical damage during the Austrian siege of 1747–8. In 1730, William Mildmay condemned the distortion of the Genoese constitution by the nobles who sought to avoid burdens. In contrast, the small republic of Lucca was essentially a pleasant curiosity, a lovely backwater. Mildmay thought that the frequent ministerial changes in Lucca decreed by the constitution were bad for the constancy of government policy. Palmerston used Lucca and Tuscany to counterpoint liberty and despotism: 'The condition of its people is happy compared with that of the Grand Duke's subjects and by a natural consequence its small territory is extremely full of inhabitants.'⁸

Francis Drake (1721–95) extended his denunciation of modern Italy to include the republics. An Anglican cleric, Drake was in no doubt that Catholicism had contributed greatly to Italy's fall. From 1746, he was a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, where Gibbon spent 'fourteen months the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life', and Drake's remarks indicate the reflections that could be passed on to the next generation:

It is impossible to make any parallel between the customs, fashions, religion, or policy, of the Italians with those of our own country, because the contrast is too apparent, to admit of any resemblance. The difference is this, that those who are subject to an hierarchy, or a despotick prince, are not even allowed to act, or think for themselves, but submit their persons and consciences to the guidance, and power of the prince, or the priest . . .

An happy Englishman, who has never been beyond the narrow confines of his own Country, can have no idea, that a nation, whose situation on the face of the globe, allows them all the blessings, and advantages of life, and who once were masters of the then known world, are now become for these two reasons, the poorest and meanest of mankind. The whole riches of the country are in the hands of the priests, or the princes of the different states, or amongst very few of the nobles, while the bulk of the people languish and labour under the greatest wants, and necessities. The present Greeks, and modern Italians are striking instances, how nature can degenerate in mankind, by tyranny and oppression. To consider the Italians, under what government we please, whether under an hierarchy, republic or monarchy, there appears the same abject spirit and degeneracy of soul . . . contrary to the known policy of all well regulated governments, the poverty, and ignorance of the subject, is esteemed the security of the state, and instead of encouraging arts, and sciences, trade, or manufactures, they rather discourage all useful industry, and knowledge, least the people should grow too rich to be slaves, or too knowing to be bigots. Whoever has seen the immense repositories of riches, in the chapel at Loreto, the sacristy of San Genaro, at Naples, of San Ambrosio and Carlo, at Milan, San Marco at Venice, the Jesuit churches at Rome, and in all their convents, and monasteries, will not then be surpris'd at the disette [shortages] and penury of the lower class. Here are almost all the riches of the country amassed together, in holy lumber, which are of no use, but to enrich a shrine, or make a figure at a procession, where the infatuated people revere and even adore the very causes of their own ruin . . . Where commerce . . . is thus despised and left to the lower people . . . Italy must still continue poor.

Aside from this unremittingly hostile account, Drake had more specific criticisms of Genoa's republican constitution that, in part, reflected the conservatism of Tory Oxford:

A power to do mischief in one person, is much easier controlled, than where it is lodged in many; a large body of men in authority, may, by their influence on their dependents, and unanimity amongst themselves, continue their tyranny, in defiance of all opposition. In a monarchy, the distributive, and executive justice is better ministered, than in an aristocracy, where the wheels of government are so clogged by so many jarring interests, and so many parties of equal authority, in the administration.⁹

Enthusiastic about Classical Athens and Rome, from which they claimed to derive their mores and culture, British tourists were, on the whole, ambivalent, if not hostile, in their reaction to the achievements, both medieval and Baroque, of Catholic Italy. The great triumphs of this culture that were most readily accessible were its architectural and artistic achievements, but, for Protestant tourists, their continued association with Catholic religious practices provided an unwelcome context.

If the current political interest of Italy was in decline, the peninsula was also of scant or declining interest in other fields. The numerous tourists interested in military activities – in viewing manoeuvres or attending military academies – aimed essentially for Prussia for the former and France for the latter. The prestige of Italy as a land of the present was in decline. It was still important in spheres such as science, medicine and music, but even in these it was in apparently relative decline, especially by the second half of the century. A musical world that looked to Vienna, Mannheim and Paris had less time for Italy. Furthermore, transalpine Europe was now more advanced in science.

For British tourists, this tendency was accentuated by the particular development of Britain in this period. Tourists from the social élite of a burgeoning economy and an apparently successful political system, from a great and powerful world empire, were less inclined to feel a sense of inferiority than in the seventeenth century; at that time, to its own people, Britain had seemed superior in little besides its Protestantism. By the eighteenth century, in spite of the popularity of Batoni, Mengs, Piranesi and other Rome-based artists, it appeared that the country of Newton and Sloane, Reynolds and Watt, had little to learn from modern Italy. One of the more successful books by an Italian author read in Britain was the 1739 English edition of Francesco Algarotti's *Il Newtonianismo per le Dame* (1737), in which the theories of light and gravitation were explained in a series of dialogues: an Italian serving to reflect back British greatness. Algarotti (1712–64) spent much of the late 1730s in London, becoming a fellow of the Royal Society. In a similar fashion, Giovanni Canaletto (1697–1768), with his splendid canvases, used talents developed to depict Venice to show the glories of modern London which he visited in 1746–50 and 1755–6. A neo-imperial, modern pride in London was expressed in his views. They reflected an abrupt shift in national self-confidence. Victory over France and Spain in the Seven Years War and growing economic strength led to a degree of national complacency.

The London on show had modern buildings, such as the Greenwich Observatory, Somerset House and Westminster Bridge, as well as the rebuilt Westminster Abbey. There was no contemporary equivalent in Venice, and this offers an important clue to shifting views about Italy. In Rome, Pope Sixtus V (r. 1585–90) had had a major impact in helping dramatise the city with a Baroque reshaping. The arterial roads of the period provided triumphant views, and the Baroque left impressive churches. What was lacking, from the British perspective, was an equivalent secular architecture. Despite the Palazzo della Consulta, there was no Bank of Rome to match those in Amsterdam or London.

Tourists concentrated on cities in the eighteenth century: they spent most of their time there and, until the end of the century, there was no cult of mountains or seaside to detract from this metropolitan focus. British tourists saw no modern townscape in Italy to match that of London, although there was a smaller modern townscape in Turin. In addition, although individual tastes varied, in general, British commentators showed a marked

preference for modern over old architecture: for the Classical (seen as a reborn modern style that looked back to the qualities of the ancient world) over the Gothic. This was true both of individual buildings and of townscapes.

Much of Italy was a bad disappointment from this perspective. George Berkeley (1685–1753), the philosopher, praised the regularity of Catania, rebuilt in Baroque style after the devastating earthquake of 1693, but few tourists penetrated as far as Sicily, which he visited in 1717–18. Those who did were more interested in Greek remains and they were more likely to visit Palermo or Messina than Catania. Turin, with its rectilinear street pattern and squares, met with approval: in 1750, Edward Thomas found ‘the city the most regular and beautiful for its size in the world’.¹⁰

Most Italian cities, however, seemed cramped, their close-packed medieval centres and narrow, twisting streets associated with dirt, disease and poverty. Villiers disliked towns with narrow streets, such as Lucca and Genoa.¹¹ As in the countryside, moral order was apparently reflected by images of the city, and, moreover, this replicated and reinforced ideologies and the socio-cultural order. This tied into the wider metaphor of the city/*urbs* as a reflection of society; of the shifting meanings that urban landscape accumulates and loses. Italy was found wanting from this perspective. The dominant buildings across much of Italy were generally ecclesiastical in purpose and that did not commend them to most British tourists. Cathedrals such as Padua, Pisa and Verona (‘a heavy lumpish building’, according to Robson)¹² were medieval and gloomy, as were Lucca’s churches. There were new palaces, particularly the Bourbon creations of Caserta and Colorno, but they were outside Naples and Parma respectively and did not become great sights. Visiting Turin in 1788, Charles Abbot claimed ‘The Castello del Re deserves to be admitted for its beautiful front and that only – behind it are two old lofty Gothic towers.’¹³ For him, they could not match the work of Filippo Juvara (1678–1736), who was responsible for a number of important works in and around Turin in the early eighteenth century.

There was no combination of recent buildings in Italy to compare with those constructed in London since the Great Fire of 1666. This period has been seen as one of the great rebuilding of British cities. Brick buildings with large windows were erected in a regular ‘Classical’ style along and around new boulevards, squares and circles. Parks, theatres, assembly rooms, subscription libraries, racecourses and other leisure facilities were opened in many towns. The total stock of public buildings in the West Riding of Yorkshire alone rose from about ninety in 1700 to over 500 by 1840. This was also the period of the creation of Georgian Bath, Liverpool and Dublin, the New Town of Edinburgh, and the West End of London. Urban building and rebuilding in Britain, especially in London, was seen as rational, measured and modern, and as representing the wider health and progress of Britain. Aside from Turin, which lacked the commercial dynamism of British cities, there was no major equivalent in Italy. The nearest was the free port of Livorno, which was

presented as a dynamic city where commerce brought people and prosperity. Freeman found it in 1727 'entirely filled with merchants of all countrys, very populous, streets handsome and straight, with a good Palazzo in the middle of the town a playhouse . . .', but most Italian cities seemed very different to British tourists.

A similar contrast also appeared to exist in the countryside, although tourists devoted far less attention to it. Much of Italy seemed poorly cultivated or barren, not least (but not only) compared to the new-model agriculture of enclosing England. This was the age of Agricultural Revolution in Britain, particularly lowland England and Scotland.

Italy seemed backward and its social politics were presented as regressive, which fuelled notions of the British as an 'elect' nation. In 1728, Freeman travelled between Bologna and Milan 'through the finest country which can be seen full of corn, wine and oil all of which would be exceeding cheap' were it not for the policies of the 'little Dukes' and the Emperor, the ruler of Lombardy. He commented on the way in which peasants were taxed even on eggs, butter and herbs.¹⁴ Villiers linked the unpopularity of the governments of Naples and Milan to high taxes, while he claimed that the trade of Venice and Rome was in decline. Shelburne claimed that in Milan the 'nobility and best people' were 'taken up with little schemes to throw the weight of taxes on the lower sort'.¹⁵

Although parts of Italy, especially Lombardy, impressed tourists as well cultivated, it was a different rural landscape to that of Britain. In 1788, Abbot noted:

Having crossed the Tiber in going out of Borghetto we were suddenly surprised with the appearance of pasture ground, enclosures and hedges, with a winding road through them, which made both of us at once agree that we had seen nothing so much like England since we left it.

The Campagna near Rome swiftly disillusioned him and he explicitly compared it to earlier accounts of its productivity: 'The total reverse of Milton's Description and of Claudian's in the Journey of Honorius upon the approaches to the world's great metropolis'.¹⁶ The habit of judging Italy by past descriptions was well established.

In Italy, there was no series of new stately homes open to respectable tourists as in Britain, no Castle Howard or Blenheim. The same was true of landscape gardens. Some were spectacular, most obviously Vanvitelli's at Caserta, but the British did not find anything to challenge the quantity and range provided by William Kent, 'Capability' Brown and others. This was an important indication of what appeared to be an Italian failure to create a benign and harmonious man-made landscape to match the splendours of nature.

Tourists paid great attention to Palladianism and, particularly in the first half of the century, a visit to see the buildings near Vicenza designed by Andrea Palladio (1508–80) was considered an essential part of the Italian section of the Grand Tour, but they were appreciating the works

of a long-dead architect. Furthermore, Palladianism marked a key cultural shift: English Palladians, the architect, collector and patron Richard, 3rd Earl of Burlington (1694–1753) and the painter and architect William Kent (1685–1748), who visited Italy in 1714–15 and 1719, and 1709–19 respectively, abandoned Baroque Rome for Vicenza and presented the Baroque as Catholic, ‘absolutist’ and architecturally impure. In his *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715), the Scottish Palladian architect Colen Campbell (1676–1729), a protégé of Burlington, criticised the Baroque on moral as well as cultural grounds:

How affected and licentious are the works of Bernini and Fontana. How wildly extravagant are the designs of Borromini, who has endeavoured to debauch mankind with his old and chimerical beauties, where the parts are without proportion, solids without their true bearing, heaps of materials without strength, excessive ornaments without grace, and the whole without symmetry.

In contrast, the conception of a Palladian landscape permitted a fusing of urban and rural into one holistic and encompassing vision of order, which could be appreciated and appropriated by British tourists.¹⁷ Most of rural Italy, however, did not offer Palladian gems. More mundanely, the pleasure of travelling through Italy compared to Britain deteriorated during the century, because the Italian road system did not improve anywhere near as much as that of Britain (or France). There was nothing to match the major turnpiking of English routes from mid-century.

John, Lord Hervey (1696–1743), touring Italy with Stephen Fox (1704–76), versified his comments in 1729:

Throughout all Italy beside,
 What does one find, but Want and Pride?
 Farces of Superstitious folly,
 Decay, Distress, and Melancholy:
 The Havock of Despotick Power,
 A Country rich, its owners poor;
 Unpeopled towns, and Lands untilled,
 Bods uncloathed, and mouths unfilled.
 The nobles miserably great,
 In painted Domes, and empty state,
 Too proud to work, too poor to eat,
 No arts the meaner sort employ,
 They nought improve, nor ought enjoy.
 Each blown from misery grows a Saint,
 He prays from Idleness, and fasts from Want.¹⁸

These impressions were of varied importance for individual tourists, but, in combination, they helped to mark the degree to which Italy increasingly appeared a country of the past; and that became, for many, its glory, especially in the way Giovanni Piranesi (1720–78) and other artists immortalised that past. This shift can be considered in a number of lights. The degree to which Italy's past was embraced, while its present was shunned, reflected a changing perception of both past and present and of the interplay of the two. There was a sense of double atrophy in the contrast between the present and both the Classical past *and* the Renaissance past. As already mentioned, contemporary Italy appeared less attractive, and certainly no model, both because of changes in Britain and because the reasons why Italy had been criticised the previous century – Catholicism, Papacy, autocratic government and rigid social practices – were no longer matched by the same degree of compensatory respect for Italian republics and praise of her culture and intellectual life.

The links between contemporary Italy and her past glories appeared more tenuous in the eighteenth century. This was particularly a consequence of the declining reputation of modern Venice. The republican liberty and energy of Classical Rome could be presented through the refracting example of Venice in the seventeenth century, but such an association appeared less credible in the eighteenth. Alan Brodrick (1702–47), later 2nd Viscount Midleton, was disabused of his notion 'of the grandeur of the noble Venetians' when he visited the Senate in 1724.¹⁹ Instead, there was greater interest in republicans and republics outside Italy, especially, in the second half of the century, in Corsica, Geneva and the United States of America, each of which appeared more dynamic and more of a model than Venice, let alone Genoa.

It is also important to note the great increase in interest in Classical Italy among tourists in the eighteenth century, and the impact that this had on the perception of modern Italy. Richard Creed, who visited Rome in 1699–1700, made only one mention of Roman remains: his was very much an account of Baroque Rome. Such an emphasis would have been unthinkable sixty years later, and indeed, in 1705, Metcalfe Robinson (*c.* 1683–1736) wrote to his father, Sir William Robinson of Newby Park, from what he termed

the famousst place in the world and the first motive that induced me to become a traveller: for indeed ever since I knew the name of Rome, and much more as I got an insight into its greatness and the stupendous effects of it in buildings, aqueducts, ways, sculpture etc. which yet are to be admired in these glorious remains of antiquity; I found always my desire increase of having a better knowledge of them, than is to be found in descriptions, and rather to admire the things themselves.²⁰

The excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii played a major role in the development of European taste, in part thanks to the relative inaccessibility of Classical remains in Turkish-ruled Greece and Asia Minor. Neo-classical excitement and enthusiasm, not to say hype, in



34. *British Connoisseurs in Rome*, attributed to James Russel, c. 1751. The group in front of the Coliseum and the Arch of Constantine includes James, 4th Viscount Charlemont, Sir Thomas Kennedy, and, possibly, Joseph Leeson and Sir Charles Turner. Russel acted as an antiquary for tourists, as well as an art dealer. Charlemont played an active role in the tourist community in Rome from the summer of 1750 until May 1751, returning that autumn and staying until October 1752 and again in the winter of 1753–4. Kennedy, who was in Rome for much of 1751–2, was in Charlemont's circle.

the 1770s and 1780s about the discoveries was very influential. There were also important excavations in and around Rome. The Neo-classical painter and archaeologist Gavin Hamilton (1723–98) excavated Hadrian's villa at Tivoli in 1769, and did his utmost to make this a major site on the tourist itinerary. The sculptures and other remains that were discovered in such excavations helped to bring an important aesthetic appeal to interest in the Classical world.

British tourists had a strong grounding in the Classics and many compared the sites with descriptions by Horace, Lucan, Pliny, Strabo and Virgil. The sculptures themselves, however, and, more generally, the entire Neo-classical aesthetic, for example Johann Winckelmann's ecstatic description of the Apollo Belvedere, helped to give the Classical world greater

appeal. The British sought to appropriate Classical Italy and to make it a part of their cultural heritage that was defined on British terms.

Thus tourists became more engaged with Italy's past. This affected their response to what they saw, and also their itinerary. For example, the Greek Doric temples at Paestum near Naples attracted increased tourist attention from mid-century. They played a major role in the controversy of the late 1760s over the respective merits of Greek and Roman styles and in the revival of the use of the Doric order. The Greek remains of Agrigento in Sicily also excited interest. Thus, to a certain extent, the Grand Tour moved southwards geographically as well as further back in time, as the roots of the Classical, and thus modern, world appeared to be within the grasp of tourists. The moves south and back in time were linked, and had a common impact.

Such sites were a world away from the Italy that modern reformers were striving to create. Indeed they gained much of their appeal from the degree to which past glory contrasted with a setting of present insignificance, poverty and backwardness. The remains thus served to demonstrate the cyclical nature of history: Italy, particularly Rome, was a *memento mori* of civilisation. James Thoburn claimed that Rome was no more than a third of the size it had been. Edward Southwell wrote from Rome in 1726,

I have spent 3 months with great pleasure and some profit among the ancient and modern curiosities of this famous city, which have cost me daily reading and application and filled 140 pages in my journal, and I must own these heaps of magnificent ruins, and the view of so many places not only renowned for the actions and fate of so many heroes, but by the pens of so many famous writers do fill the mind with great ideas of the Roman grandeur as also with various reflections upon the vicissitudes of all human things.²¹

Edward Gibbon wrote that the Capitoline Hill 'gave ample scope for moralising on the vicissitudes of fortune, which spares neither man nor the proudest of his works, which buries empires and cities in a common grave'.²²

Such reflections were a standard cultural trope. Italy was now a stage depicting their validity. The replacement in Classical Rome of republicanism by the autocracy of imperial rule was blamed on the enervating consequences of the spread of luxury produced by the wealth brought by conquest, a warning to the great modern empire, Britain. In Italy, it seemed possible to witness the decline both of Classical Rome and of post-Classical European civilisation. A stereotypical perception of Italy and the Italians as a country and a people both elevated and humiliated by the past had emerged. The very countryside seemed ruined. In the winter of 1699–1700, Creed wrote in Rome:

The country or Campania of Rome turns to very little account; there not being people to manage it, it is naturally low, but for want of care is all boggy; and so produces a very ill

unwholesome air; the Roman government depopulates and ruins all the country; here it ruins the soil as well as the body.

In the *London Journal* of 4 November 1727, 'Philopatris' claimed 'All our travellers observe . . . Italy is almost quite dispeopled, and the people in it are reduced to a misery that scarce can be imagined by those that have not seen it'. This criticism was even extended to Britain's ally, Charles Emmanuel III of Sardinia, ruler of Savoy-Piedmont. Edward Thomas wrote in 1750, 'All the people here from the first to the last notwithstanding the goodness of their King are slaves, not one daring to go out of the Kingdom without His Majesty's special licence, and they are all obliged to take up arms when he commands them. British Liberty how invaluable a treasure art thou?' In 1764, Holroyd criticised Charles Emmanuel's treatment of his Savoyard subjects: 'he and his father though great and much commended princes have always racked their subjects very much'.

The results could be seen in the living standards of the people and in their environment. In 1788, James Buller thought 'the villages in Piedmont better built than in France and the streets of the towns much wider – But the want of glass in the windows which are not always supplied with paper and the iron bars look very bad.'²³ Turin, however, aroused a more favourable response, not least by Richard Pococke in 1734. He linked the appeal of some active Italian cities to those of Classical Rome, noting of Turin, 'at the ends of many streets you see the hills and mountains, which makes it look like *urbs in rure*, and this place pleases me much.'²⁴ This *urbs in rure* quality was also seen in Florence, Genoa and Naples, although not in Venice. It looked towards the *urbs* in ruins appeal of Classical Rome. Aside from the powerful aesthetic appeal of both *urbs in rure* and *urbs* in ruins, there was also a striking juxtaposition of sights, as well as a remembered vivid contrast with the bustling mercantile metropolis of London which filled the eye with action. The latter suggested success and progress.

The kingdom of Naples came in for particular criticism from tourists. Visiting in 1794, John, 2nd Lord Boringdon (1772–1840) wrote: 'Nothing could exceed the infatuation and bad government of the court of Naples . . . acts of the greatest tyranny and injustice. The Duc d'Arpini was exiled, merely from the police having discovered in his apartments some numbers of the French journal the *Moniteur*, which I had lent him.'²⁵ Naples was already acquiring the reputation for autocracy and conservatism that was to help garner support for Italian unification around the kingdom of Piedmont in the 1850s and 1860s. Tyranny, however, was not discerned only in Naples. In Florence in 1788, Charles Abbot noted: 'At the door of the theatre we saw a man masked observing everybody who entered. It is usual here, and at all the theatres in Italy, for government to station such a person there.' This sense of surveillance was also found elsewhere, George, Viscount Villiers writing 'the Gondoliers are in the secret of all the intrigues but are obliged to tell everything to the Inquisitors of State and are generally employed as spies by them.'²⁶

Eighteenth-century Britain was an example of the process by which modern, progressive nations frequently resorted to Rome in two ways: first to claim Rome's mantle of civilisation and, second, to observe the spectre of empires-fallen, both to reflect their present potency, by contrast, and also, on occasion, as an admonishment against complacency. The remembrance of the Classical past was linked to the process by which impressions of Britain were reconstituted in, and by, Italy.²⁷ Similarly, in the 1920s and 1930s, at a time of relentless modernising, Italian Fascism turned to the Classical past in order to lay claim to Rome's historical legitimacy, but also as a counterpoint to such modernism.

The popularity of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (1776–88) helped further to focus the sense of the vicissitudes of the past and the related morality of history on the decline of Rome. That Rome was now the centre of Catholicism only emphasised this sense of flux and decline in the perception of Protestant Britons. For those who wished to make comparisons with modern Britain as a warning about possible decline, Rome had great potency. The imaginative map and idiom of such comparisons was to be widened, as Britain acquired an Indian-based Oriental empire from the 1750s on. This encouraged comparison with imperial Rome because, unlike Britain's North American empire, but like that of imperial Rome, the new British empire in India had no ethnic underpinning and was clearly imperial. Writers in the tradition of civic humanism, and, later, Romantic writers, such as Byron, Shelley and De Quincey, searched for points of reference around which to discuss and resonate their anxieties about the effects of empire upon metropolitan culture.²⁸ Imperial Rome was the obvious parallel.

In 1792, Thomas Brand wrote from Palermo to his friend, longstanding correspondent and fellow Anglican divine, the Reverend Robert Wharton, who had not visited Sicily when he toured Italy in 1775–6:

We have had a little specimen of Sicilian travelling in a three days excursion to Segesta where is the finest remain of Doric Architecture in the Island. – It is in excellent preservation and commands a country which once I suppose was unequalled over the whole surface of the globe – What a country would this be with spirit of commerce and industry with well educated nobles and with a government regulated by Wisdom and Equity. And what a desert it is at present. For about 16 miles from Palermo the road is excellent, thanks to a bishop of great wealth and public spirit – beyond it is rugged and precipice or mud. There is not a wheel in the whole country, the roads are mere paths for a single mule and the few huts scattered round are as bad as Hottentot Kraals – we slept at Alcamo – Climate and Nature will do a great deal cramp them as you will: hence the vast population of the little towns – but they have the air of savages and it is still prudent tho' not absolutely necessary to go armed and attended by what is called a Campieri.

Brand continued by comparing England and Sicily: 'the two countries which are the extremes of Civilisation and negligence'.²⁹ In short, Italians were unfit to inherit their Classical

past, and it was reasonable, indeed necessary, for it to be appropriated by the 'civilised' British. Similarly, the Tribuna, the big octagonal room that was central to the experience of visiting the Galleria (or Uffizi Gallery) in Florence, the ultimate 'art gallery' of eighteenth-century tourism, was seen as an important context for aesthetic display on the part of tourists, as in the posing *milordi* of Johan Zoffany's painting of the Tribuna commissioned by Queen Charlotte in 1772 and largely finished by the close of 1773.³⁰

In 1764, Palmerston expressed the view not only that the modern Italians, or at least Romans, were unworthy of their past, but also that they were actively opposing its appreciation: 'It is grievous to think what treasures of sculpture are still concealed in the earth . . . Every discouragement is thrown in the way of those who would search.' Palmerston's perception of oppression extended to individual works of Classical splendour: Trajan's Arch in Benevento, Italy's best-preserved triumphal arch, was 'oppressed by buildings that are joined to it on each side and are even continued over the top of it'.³¹ Aside from the commonplace that modern Italy was not worthy of its Classical past, came the view that it was not even worthy of its subsequent culture. In 1788, Charles Abbot wrote:

It seems in some degree ridiculous that the Genoese should abound in pictures and statues commemorating their former heroes and victories in the Great Council Chamber of the Ducal Palace, at a time when their navy is reduced to a few galleys – Corsica lost – and their very existence at the mercy of the Court of Sardinia.³²

An impression of neglect was also captured by many visitors. Mitchell complained about spoiled frescos in Bologna 'sadly mangled either by ignorant or invidious people'. Villiers noted that the neglected Palazzo Trevisano on Murano was falling into ruin, and claimed, 'The paintings in general at Venice are lost for want of care.' John Stackhouse wrote of Mantua: 'The different works of Giulio Romano in and near this town are the chief objects of a traveller's curiosity. This great master has distinguished himself nowhere more than at the Palazzo de Te . . . but I was sorry to find his works both within and out of doors both falling into ruin, owing to the negligence and poverty of the present owner.'³³

Although less common, it was also possible to argue that tourism was helping to corrupt Italy. Philip Francis claimed in 1772:

The English have contributed to corrupt the morals of the Italians. Besides our disregard of money, we are too honest and too generous a people, to deal upon equal terms with such dirty knaves . . . upon the whole it is a disadvantage to the country, that they have so many curiosities to show strangers. It is inconceivable how many people are diverted by this idle occupation from labouring to get their bread. Every blackguard is a cicerone.³⁴

Appreciation of the wonders of Classical, Renaissance and/or Baroque civilisation did not therefore lead to a positive appraisal of modern Italy. The opposite was the case: Italy was seen as 'decivilised'. In contrast, the 'South Seas' of the Pacific Ocean that were being explored by the western Europeans from the 1760s, and were making a powerful impact on fashionable opinion, were seen as at once uncivilised by European standards and yet as offering a glimpse of primitive virtue in the form of a true society populated by communal 'noble savages'. The same was sometimes argued of Native Americans.

There was no sense in these cases of the fall from civilised grace that Italy seemed to provide. Indeed much of Italy seemed decadent, fallen as a consequence of cultural, social and psychological faults from Classical splendour, and, as such, part not of the reforming Europe of apparently Enlightened progress, but an extension of the Orient. This was a period of growing Orientalism, seen not only in interest in India, but also, in a different form, in the response to the Classical remains in the Near East. Greek remains in Italy, such as Paestum and Agrigento, invited reflections similar to Palmyra and other stages in the imaginative East. Robert Wood (?1717–71), who spent much time in Italy between at least 1738 and 1755, published *The Ruins of Palmyra* in 1753 and *The Ruins of Baalbec* in 1757; he was later an MP. The excitement aroused by Wood's works helped to increase interest in Greek remains in Italy and also affected the perception of them.

A perception of decline was not simply an impression derived from deserted ruins such as Paestum. A sense of decay was also felt by many tourists visiting the cities, for example Francis Drake at Pisa and Siena. John Mitford wrote in 1776 of reaching

the decayed town of Pisa . . . The buildings erected as receptacles for the victorious galleys of the republic, are now made the stables of the prince. The loss of liberty has reduced this once flourishing town from one hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants to about fifteen thousand.

Earlier, William Freeman had found Pisa 'a large handsome town but entirely dispeopled'. Abbot thought the quays 'not disfigured by dirt or business'.³⁵ The *Flying-Post: or The Post Master*, a London newspaper, in its issue of 2 October 1718 printed a long letter describing Messina allegedly written by a gentleman on his travels. This was a bleak picture of decline, of uninhabited and decaying houses, narrow and poorly paved streets with few people in them, and those with a melancholy air, very poorly turned out soldiers, and many robbers; but also with numerous, well-dressed, privileged clerics who involved themselves in worldly affairs. The implication was that these two aspects were linked: clerical influence was cause and consequence of decline.

Rome was more populous and active than Messina, but the contrast between Classical and modern Rome was still one that emphasised present decay, while the city's earlier role as a focus of Spanish Habsburg and Counter-Reformation interests and power did not excite

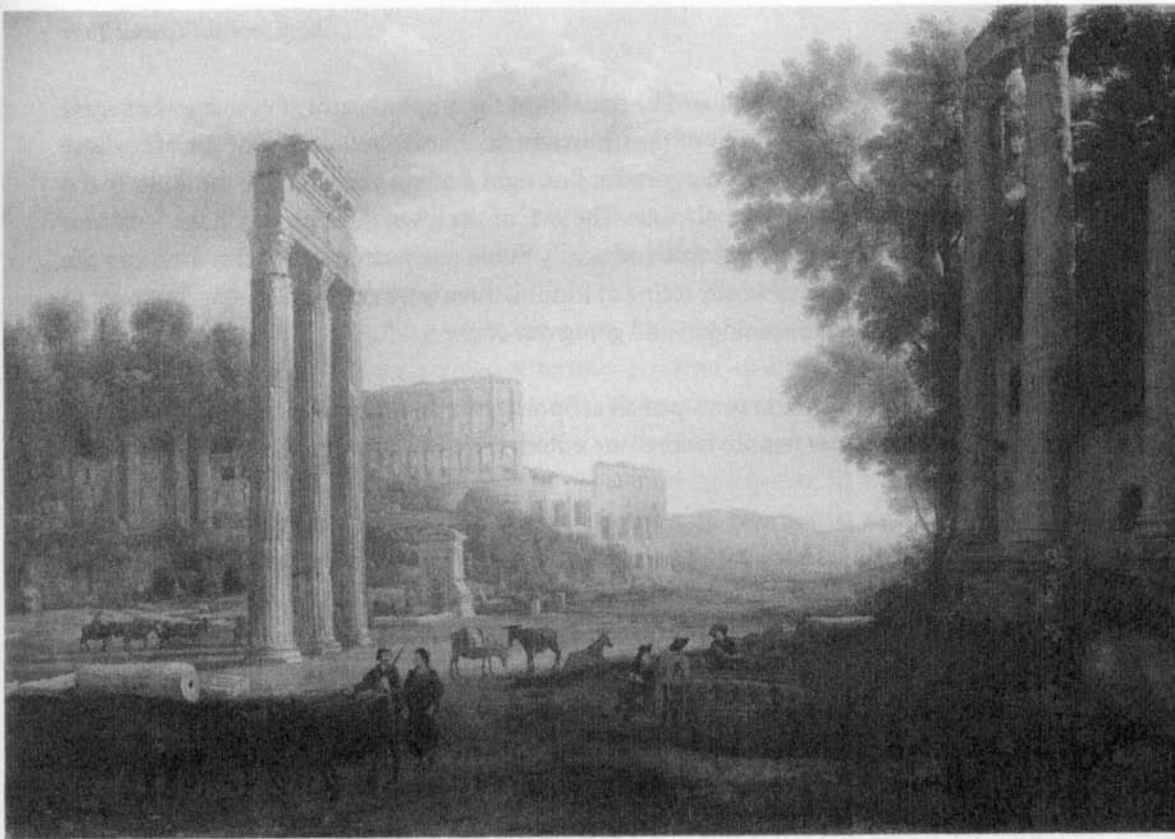
sympathy. Henry Carr (born after 1694), a member of a Durham landed family, wrote thence to his brother-in-law in 1739,

As to the appearance of the town itself considering the very great numbers of palaces that are in it I believe most people are disappointed, for setting aside the churches, pillars and obelisks which are of themselves a great ornament the rest does not answer one's expectation, the lower part of fine palaces being frequently let off and divided into little shops and greatness and meanness are so jumbled together (as we often see them in life in the same person) that the appearance they make upon the whole is but very indifferent, and even where the palaces are not so disguised, the contiguous houses being often ill built there is not any of them which strikes the eye at once like Grosvenor or St. James's Square, or several other squares and streets we have in London.³⁶

This contrast was a commonplace. The elegance and extent of the new townscape in west London impressed contemporaries. Aside from the contrast between Rome and London, that between Classical and modern Rome was also frequent. In 1760, George Keate (1729–97), who toured Italy in 1754–5, published his *Ancient and Modern Rome, a Poem written in Rome in the Year 1755*. Piranesi's etchings of contemporary Rome, *Vedute di Roma*, which appeared from the late 1740s, led to tourists being disappointed when they saw the reality, some of which they found squalid.

The tourists tell us as much about Britain and the British as about Italy and the Italians. Modern Britain was held to define civilisation, a view not common in earlier times, and one that reflected the greater self-confidence and wealth of the British in this period. This was a fusion of Protestantism, economic growth, international success and the Whig myth, a fusion that was particularly successful from mid-century. The Whig myth was more successful and lasting in creating standards by which Britain appeared superior to foreign countries than in sustaining a coherent and united viewpoint on domestic politics. British self-regard and condescension towards foreign countries, not least Italy, was not dependent on contemporary foreign praise for Britain,³⁷ although, in so far as British commentators and tourists were aware of it, it could not but have contributed.

As well as in images and metaphors of decline and decadence, it was also possible to present Italy as picturesque and sublime. This theme drew on the representation of the Italian landscape by the influential Neapolitan painter Salvator Rosa (1615–73), particularly what commentators such as Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), who visited Italy in 1750–2, saw as his depiction of it as wild and savage. The response by tourists and painters to dramatic natural sights, especially the drama of rocky coastlines, was affected by such art, although the depiction of the Campagna by Claude Lorraine did not prevent tourists from noting the flat, ill-cultivated reality. Yet, like mountains, volcanoes, waterfalls and the remains of Classical civilisation, this representation seemed divorced from contemporary Italian



35. *Caprice with Ruins of the Roman Forum*, by Claude Lorraine, c. 1634. Claude Lorraine (1600–82) helped to set the visual image of Italy, particularly with the juxtaposition of luminosity and ruins in order to create an effect at once dramatic and poetic. The impact of the light in this picture is accentuated by the use of shadow, which also has the effect of making present-day human activity appear far less important than the grandeur of the past represented by the illuminated ruins.

society: indeed Rosa both subordinated figures to landscape and peopled his countryside scenes with bandits and other marginals. This served as a further comment on Italian civilisation and led to a tradition of depicting *banditti* in landscapes.³⁸

Modern Italy could be rushed through as Classical and natural sights were ticked off. George, Viscount Villiers's account of Rimini, which he visited *en route* from Bologna to Loreto and Rome in December 1755, authenticating what the locals could not be relied upon to get correct, made this explicit:

As I entered the town I passed over the marble bridge built by Augustus and Tiberius. It is plain but elegant and well preserved. In the town they showed me what they called the Suggestum, from which Caesar is supposed to have harangued his army, but it seems

rather like the pedestal of a pillar. The remains of the amphitheatre, if ever it was one, are not worth looking at. The front of the Church of St. Francis built by the Malatesta, whose tombs are on the outside, appears grand at first sight, but, on examining it, the faults in the taste and architecture are very obvious. The gate of the town through which you go out is a triumphal arch built by Augustus and a very noble one indeed . . . As this arch and the bridge are the only things worth seeing at Rimini, there is no occasion to stop, but only to get out of the chaise on coming in and going out of the town.

Similarly, 'there is no occasion to stop at all at Spoleto, for one may see everything by getting out of the chaise for the temple before one enters the town and for the aqueduct just on going out of it'.³⁹

Thus Italy in this period was increasingly seen as a country slipping into the past, one whose present inhabitants were of limited consequence. The tourist experience became one in which awe and interest was focused upon Italy past, and not upon developments in contemporary Italy. Edward Gibbon stressed this appeal: 'the footsteps of heroes, the relics, not of superstition, but of empire, are devoutly visited by a new race of pilgrims from the remote, and once savage, countries of the North'.⁴⁰ In its lack of interest in contemporary developments, this tourism prefigured the obsession with sand, sea and sun in later tourism to the Mediterranean. The net result was the same. As more tourists travelled to Italy, they knew and cared less about its current culture and society and, instead, saw the Italians as foreign to their concerns. This led to contempt, indifference or neglect; and, particularly, to a widespread ignorance about the country they were visiting. In addition, in so far as the 'authentic' cultural experience of travel was represented, as it increasingly was in the nineteenth century, as being in the secret precincts off the 'beaten track', where it could be discovered only by the sensitive, true traveller and not by the vulgar tourist,⁴¹ this authenticity, like the democratising and institutionalising tourism that developed in the nineteenth century,⁴² rested on an appreciation of historical Italy and of Italy as history. Venice was to have an especially powerful and aesthetic appeal,⁴³ but it was seen and presented as a city of past splendours, a rich spectre of past glory.

The extent to which the developing eighteenth-century perception so far discussed was linked with modern clichés about Italy is unclear. The nineteenth-century *Risorgimento* perhaps reawakened interest in Italy as a 'proper' country among British politicians and intellectuals, with the theme of the nation striving for freedom and, to an extent, breaking the claims of the past. Not only did George, 6th Lord Byron (1788–1824) obviously enjoy living in Italy, but, with his links with the Carbonari, he had strong sympathies with Italy's aspirations towards political freedom, such as they were, and he might easily have died in Italy instead of as part of the modern crusade for Greek freedom. William Wordsworth was greatly influenced by 'the *idea*' of Italy, a fusion of Classical civilisation and landscape and

hopes of modern regeneration, and engaged with Italian poets, moralists and historians.⁴⁴ However, Italy's reputation in Britain may have suffered in the early nineteenth century from being the place of refuge chosen by dangerous radicals with dubious lifestyles such as Byron and the free-living radical poet Percy Shelley (1792–1822), who lived there from 1818. In turn, Byron absolutely loathed most of the English travellers he met in Italy, except for other bohemians such as Lady Blessington.

Yet, later in the nineteenth century, the cause of Italy became more popular, not least because revolution no longer seemed a serious prospect in Britain. Writers such as the Brownings and, especially, historians such as Trevelyan were very interested in Italy—present, while Charles Dickens, a keen supporter of the *Risorgimento*, devoted much space in the journals he edited to Continental topics.⁴⁵ The local newspaper in William Bell Scott's painting *The Nineteenth Century, Iron and Coal*, finished in 1861, carries an advertisement for a 'Grand Panorama!!! Garibaldi in Italy. Struggles for Freedom . . .', a show which ran in Newcastle that March.⁴⁶ The manner in which Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82), who had played a crucial role in Italian unification by driving the Bourbons from Sicily and Naples in 1860, was applauded by working-class crowds when he visited England in 1864 testified to the way in which Victorians of all social classes were able to relate many of the events taking place on the Continent to their own struggles and aspirations.

Yet such enthusiasm proved short-lived: once united, Italy ceased to arouse sympathetic interest, and, even during the *Risorgimento*, there had been an important element of condescension. A lack of interest in modern Italy was very apparent at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, for example in E.M. Forster's novel *A Room with a View* (1908). The reconceptualisation of Italy into a less impressive society, if not a land of the past, that was such a powerful feature of its imaginative treatment by eighteenth-century British travellers, has remained potent and dominant ever since. Apart from the republicanism of Garibaldi and the *Risorgimento*, and, to an extent, the *apparent* 'order and backbone' that the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini produced and that aroused contemporary interest in the 1920s and 1930s, Italy has since been regarded in such a fashion, as less civilised or developed. Although postwar Italian achievements in design, fashion, film and food enhanced Italy's status substantially, this approach can be readily seen in current attitudes, although it is less overt than in the past. Nevertheless, modern discussion of Italian politics and crime, and the sizeable publishing industry based on guides, travel books and reminiscences of Italy, both manifest this tendency to see Italy as in some way less developed than other major western countries.

THE PARTHENON

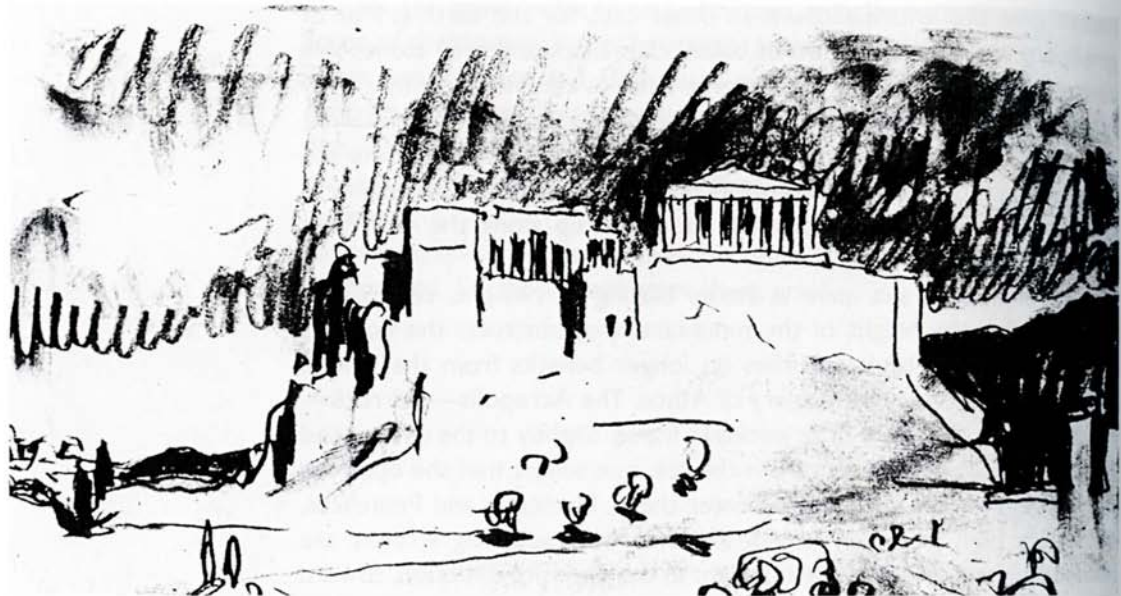
I shall give this entire account another cast, for the earth is free of greenery and appears to be of baked clay. Black and gray stones will teeter-totter terrifyingly on immense reaches confined only by craggy rocks or restrained by the rugged mountain slopes. Their harsh forms, softened by neither sea nor time, will penetrate numerous inlets and erode their edges at the outermost bounds of vast red expanses, harsh and barren. Such is the spectacle at each step along the way from Eleusis to Athens.

The everpresent sea, pale at noon, blazing at twilight, serves as a measure for the height of the mountains that obstructs the horizon. The compressed landscape thus no longer benefits from the infinite space that softened the imagery of Athos. The Acropolis—this rock—rises alone in the heart of an enclosed frame. Slightly to the left beyond Piraeus, where vapors rise from the sea, one senses that the open sea is just beyond and that flotillas enter there. Hymettus and Pentelicus, two very high mountain ranges, like two wide adjoining screens, are located behind us, orienting our sight in the opposite direction, toward the estuary of stone and sand, the Piraeus. The Acropolis, whose flat summit bears the temples, captivates our attention, like a pearl in its shell. One collects the shell only for its pearl. The temples are the cause of this landscape.

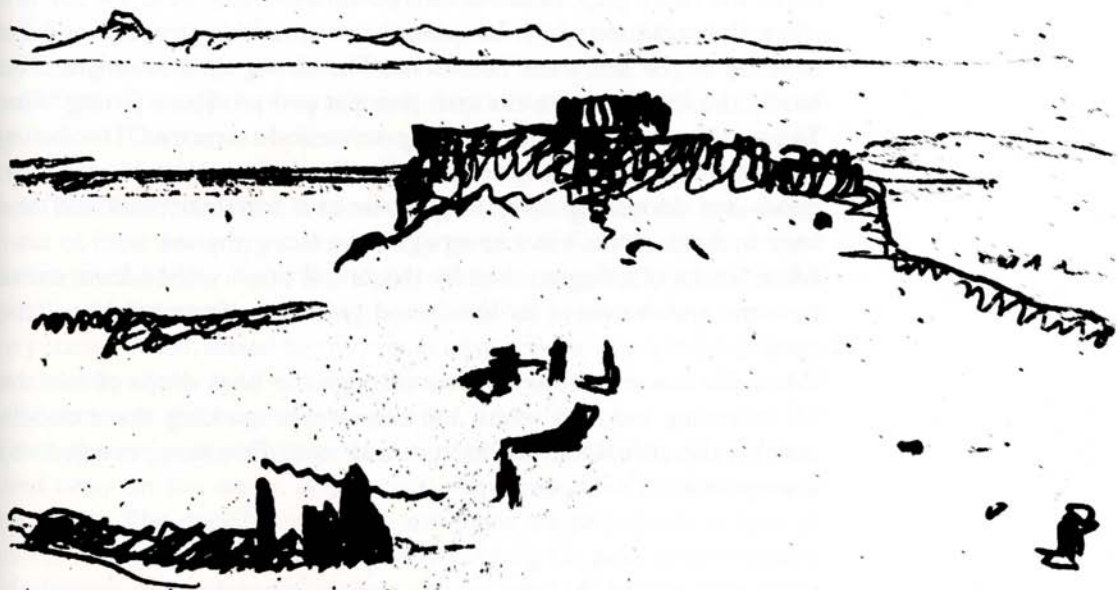
What light!

At noon I saw the mountains shimmering just like hot air over a basin of molten lead.

A shady spot stands out like a hole. Here one sees no half-shadows at all. The uniformly red landscape is reflected by the temples. Their marbles have the luster of new bronze against the azure sky. Close-up, they really seem as reddish brown as terra-cotta. Never in my life



Temples on the Acropolis
(courtesy Jean Petit)



*The Parthenon, "a sovereign cube facing the sea"
(courtesy FLC)*

have I experienced the subtleties of such monochromy. The body, the mind, the heart gasp, suddenly overpowered.

Here, the rectitude of the temples, their impeccable structure and the brutality of the site were confirmed. The strong spirit triumphs. Too lucidly the herald blows a brazen trumpet and proffers a jarring blast. The entablature of a cruel rigidity crushes and terrorizes. The feeling of a superhuman fatality seizes you. The Parthenon, a terrible machine, grinds and dominates; seen from as far as a four-hour walk and one hour by boat, alone it is a sovereign cube facing the sea.

After weeks of being crushed by this brutal site, I wished for a storm to come and drown in its floods and swirls the biting bronze of the temple.

When the storm did come, I saw through the large drops of rain the hill becoming suddenly white and the temple sparkling like a diadem against the ink-black Hymettus and the Pentilicus ravaged by downpours!

It has been a hot day. The awning, which is stretched out over the ship's prow where we were sitting, imprisoned the air. We struck up an acquaintance with two Russian mathematicians, women with manish figures, strong features, and big eyes. They like to talk. Hours pass without reading or scribbling. Evening must be approaching because the chef can be seen bringing in dishes of dainty fried octopus—the octopus from Mycenae. We get up and sit on the ropes. We slip down a steel ladder into the kitchen to get some water, which we have to pump by hand, and also to draw an excellent Sicilian wine from a cask. Our gallant cook is from Syracuse; we declare to him:
—*Diavolo, il vino e buono!*

That's about all we know in Italian, but the man is pleased. On the way up, we brush past bulls tied between decks.

In Salonika the day before yesterday, at midnight, by a beautiful moonlight, eight hundred of them were loaded on board. Eight hundred bulls from Thessaly. As they arrived, they were shoved in between the stockades. The joints of the crane grated; the powerful hook dropped rapidly down to their heads. Quick, a running noose around the horns, brief command, the hook is taken up again carrying away that enormous mass of meat hung by its horns. A large arc was inscribed; the mechanism released the chain; like a pot, the bull arrived at the end of the hold and fell on its back, rolling its bewildered eyes. It hardly had time to recover when, seized by the ring in its muzzle, it was firmly fastened. In the lair of the hold a hanging lantern barely illuminated the sharp silhouettes of the two bold cowherds.

Once the sky completed its metamorphosis, the last burst of green died away on the water. A star finds some receptive facet of a wave to reflect. The deck has emptied, and there are only three or four of us remaining. With Auguste regularly tamping his pipe, it's a moment of pleasure. A tenderness prevails; the memory of the East that I love so revolves in my mind, intermingled with those golden skies seen in the icons. My eyes are riveted on the same horizon, always similar. All is at rest. There is still a last brief meeting of the ship's officers, followed by the monotonous pace of the lookout high up on the bridge. Through the windows of the bridge, we can glimpse the rudder turned by the effort of two men: the only throbbing heart at this hour when everything else is asleep.

All my nights at sea I spent under the stars, wrapped in a multicolored rug from Rumania purchased at the monastery of Prodromos on Mount Athos. What sweeter litany can there be than that of the bow waves

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All my nights at sea I spent under the stars, wrapped in a multicolored rug from Rumania purchased at the monastery of Prodromos on Mount Athos. What sweeter litany can there be than that of the bow waves

slapping against a hull vibrating with the ship's engines. Noises of movements to and fro disturb the silence of this night. Before daybreak we shall enter between the shores. With a silent patience, the big boat has steamed without respite for the last two days. The land of Euboea is on the starboard side, a long dark ridge. We converse, Auguste and I, in low voices, and we feel a true excitement to think that by this evening we shall have seen the immortal marbles.

For a long time the prow has pivoted on the hinge of the rudder; land surrounds us everywhere except behind us, where the sea threads its way into it. Here is Attica, and there is the Peloponnesus. Here is a white lighthouse and, very near, a harbor; here are unusually jagged hills, little resembling those of Broussa or the ones behind Scutari. The sea is deserted; at this moment of dawn there are none of the countless longboats laden with carpous, tomatoes, and vegetables, which, as in Constantinople, are heading toward the city with the clumsy haste of big beetles. This brown land seems a desert. Very far away in the center of the harbor, at the bosom of some hills forming an arch, a strange rock stands out, flat at the top and secured on its right by a yellow cube. The Parthenon and the Acropolis! But we cannot believe it; we don't give it a thought. We are bewildered; the ship does not enter the harbor but continues on its course.

The symbolic rock disappears, hidden by a promontory. The sea is extremely narrow; we pass around an island. Oh, damn! Ten, twenty ships are anchored there, each flying a yellow flag! The flag of cholera, that of the Kavas; from the Black Sea to Tuzla on the Marmara. That flag we know indeed! The propeller suddenly becomes silent. The anchors drop. We stop. The yellow flag is hoisted. Stupefaction! A great stir, general restlessness. The captain is nervous, becomes violent, shouts, insults:

—The longboats are in the water. Passengers for Athens, come on, get moving!

Chaos. Bundles and boxes, men and women, come clattering down the ladder. Such cries, such insults, such shouting, and in every language. On a small pier toward which the oarsmen steer us is a gentleman with a white cap, servile with the rich, brutal and rude with the poor: a functionary, a penpusher! Wire fences separate the barracks. The quarantine!

A stinking quarantine on a desolate island about the size of a public square. A stupid quarantine, administrated against all the laws of common sense; a hotbed for cholera, this quarantine. Here, the functionaries, over there, the thieves, the dishonest; a disgrace to the Greek government that established it. For four days they held us there, to sleep with strangers, vermin, and earwigs under a burning sky without a single tree to lessen the hardship upon this devil's island. A restaurant—what a pompous title—a swindling place, where those who run it, a deputy, so they say, allow a liter of water to be sold for forty centimes and force you to eat garbage at scandalous prices. Ah, how do the poor manage—those for whom a drachma is a fortune?^a

That was on the Island of St. George, in the Bay of Salamis, facing Eleusis. O time, annihilate this vile epoch! This was our first acquaintance with you, epic places, degraded by so-called descendants. Our complaints recorded in the travelers' log book of the island were unanimous. But no, a blind and narrow patriotism scribbled alongside childish and dithyrambic praises signed Papapoulos, Danapoulos, Ni-

a. The drachma was worth one franc. As reference: at the time (in 1911) after five months of travel from Prague to Athens, I spent 800 francs which included my camera supplies.

kolesteos, Phytanopoulos, among others. This was enough to ensure immunity to the administrators of this infamy and, who knows, maybe an honorary recompense.

Fever shook my heart. We had arrived at Athens at eleven in the morning, but I made up a thousand excuses not to climb "up there" right away. Finally, I explained to my good friend Auguste that I would not go up with him. That anxiety gripped me, that I was in a state of extreme excitement, and would he "please" leave me alone. I drank coffee all afternoon absorbed in reading the voluminous five-week-old mail picked up at the post office. Then I walked the streets waiting for the sun to go down, wishing to finish the day "up there" so that, once I came down again, I could only go to sleep.

To see the Acropolis is a dream one treasures^b without even dreaming to realize it. I don't really know why this hill harbors the essence of artistic thought. I can appreciate the perfection of these temples and realize that nowhere else are they so extraordinary; and a long time ago I accepted the fact that this place should be like a repository of a sacred standard, the basis for all measurement in art. Why this architecture and no other? I can well accept that according to logic, everything here is resolved in accordance with an unsurpassable formula, but why is it that the taste—or rather the heart that guides people and dictates their beliefs despite their tendency to ignore it at times—why is it still drawn to the Acropolis, to the foot of the temples? This is in my case an inexplicable problem.¹ For how much have I been

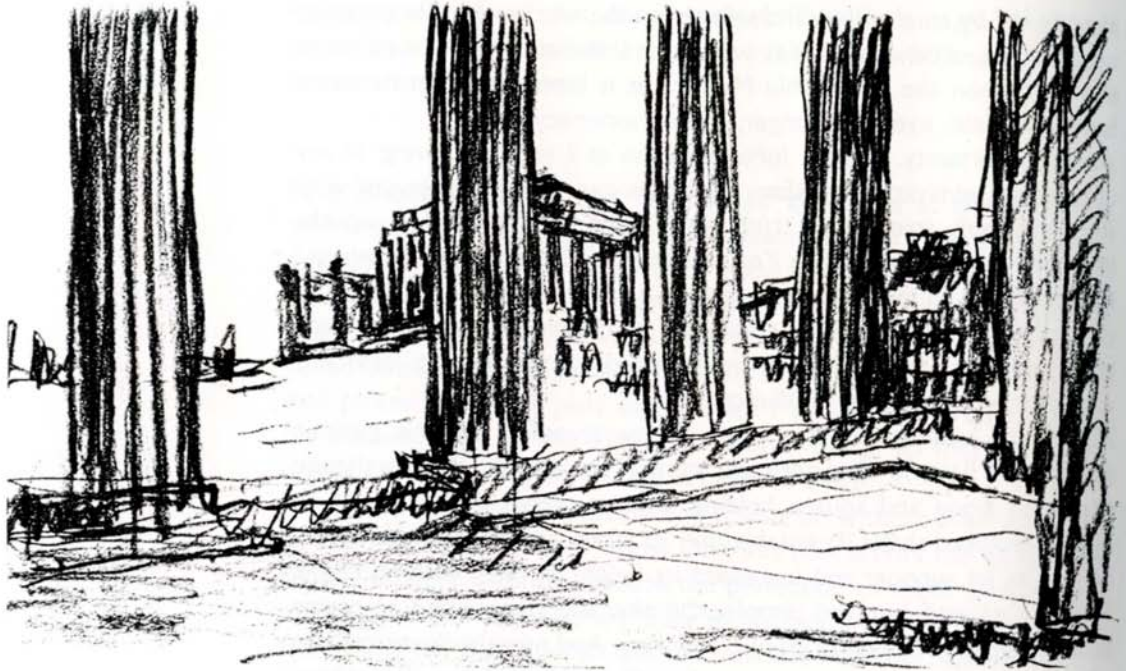
b. We are in 1911.

already led by an absolute enthusiasm for the works of other peoples, other times, other places! Yet why must I, like so many others, name the Parthenon the undeniable Master,² as it looms up from its stone base, and yield, even with anger, to its supremacy?

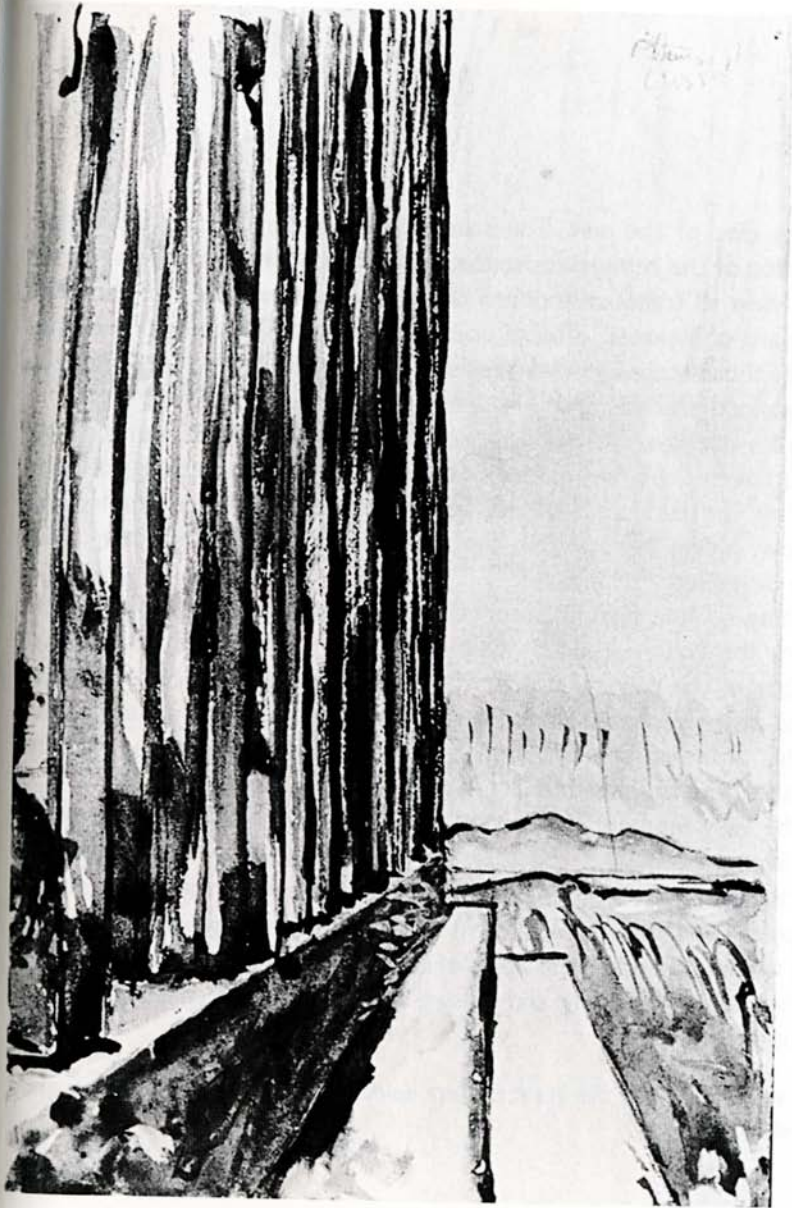
And this certainty, already foreseen even as I was bestowing all my unreserved admiration on Islam, was to be expressed this evening with the formidable strength of trumpets blasting from a hundred mouths like the noise of a waterfall. Yet recalling that Stamboul, from which I had expected so much, had not yielded up its secret until after twenty days of longing and working at it, I had within me, as I passed through the Propylaea, the deliberate skepticism of someone who inevitably expects the most bitter disillusion.

As by the violence of a combat, I was stupefied by this gigantic apparition. Beyond the peristyle of the sacred hill, the Parthenon appeared alone and square holding high up above the thrust of its bronze-colored shafts its entablature, its stone brow. The steps below served as its support and increased its height by their twenty risers. Nothing existed but the temple, the sky, and the surface of paving stones damaged by centuries of plundering. And no other external sign of life was evident here, except, far off in the distance, Pentelicus, creditor of these stones, bearing in its side a marble wound, and Hymettus, colored the most opulent purple.

Having climbed steps that were too high, not cut to human scale, I entered the temple on the axis, between the fourth and the fifth fluted shafts. And turning back all at once from this spot once reserved for the gods and the priest, I took in at a glance the entire blazing sea and the already obscure mountains of the Peloponnesus, soon to be bitten



*The Parthenon seen from
the Propylaea (courtesy
FLC)*



*The stylobate of the
Parthenon (courtesy FLC).
One of thirteen watercolors
exhibited under the title
"Langage de Pierre" in
Munich, (1911), Neuchâtel
(1912), Zurich (1913),
and Paris (at the Salon d'
Automne, 1913)*

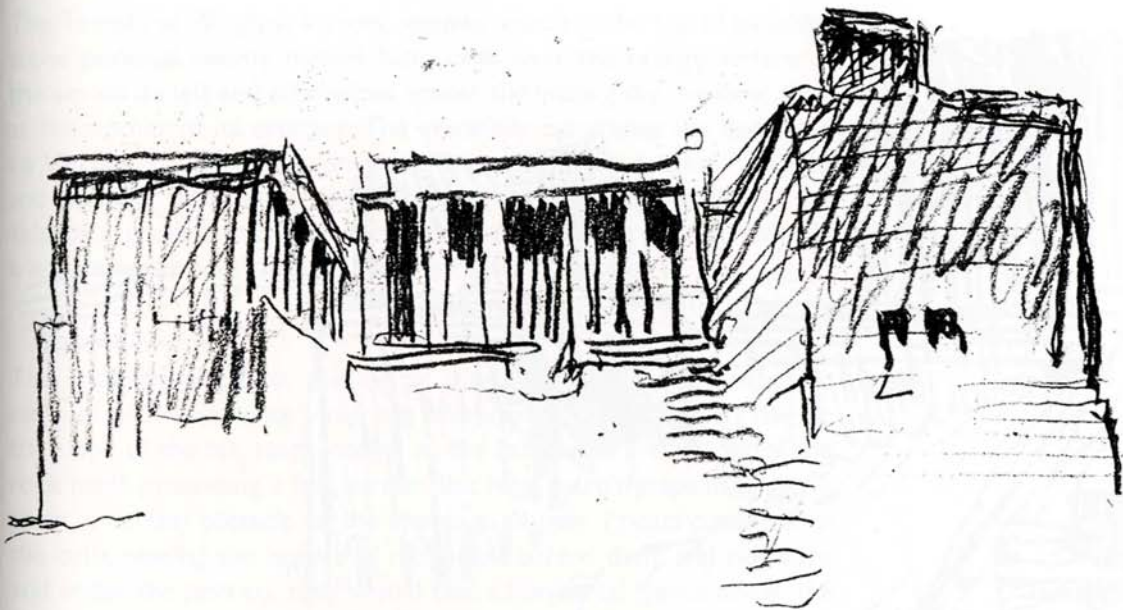
by the disc of the sun. The steep slope of the hill and the higher elevation of the temple above the stone slabs of the Propylaea conceal from view all traces of modern life, and all of a sudden, two thousand years are obliterated, a harsh poetry seizes you. Dropping down onto one of those steps of time, head sunk in the hollow of your hand, you are stunned and shaken.

With its last rays the setting sun will strike this front of metopes and smooth architrave, and passing between the columns, crossing the open door at the back part of the portico, it would have awakened the shadow, hiding deep within the roofless cella, had it not long since been dispersed.

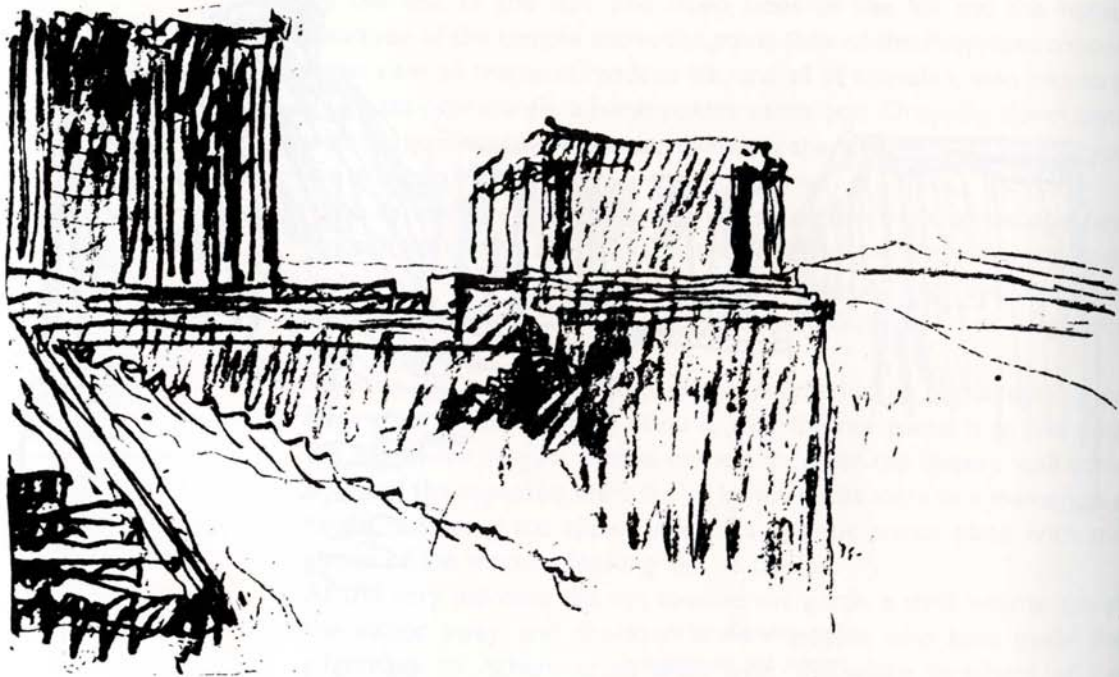
Standing on the highest step of the north side of the temple, right where the columns end, I observe that the horizontal is in line with the bay of the Aegina. Above my left shoulder the illusory wall composed of the repeated sharp fluting of the shafts soars to a tremendous height, assuming the appearance of a gigantic armor plate with the guttae of the mutules looking like its rivets.

At the very moment the sun touches the earth, a shrill whistle drives the visitor away, and the four or five^c people who have made the pilgrimage to Athens cross again over the white threshold of the Propylaea and pass through the three portals. Pausing before the stairwell and impressed by this abyss of darkness, they hunch their shoulders as they sense, sparkling and elusive above the sea, a spectral past, an ineluctable presence.

c. It was the year of the great cholera epidemic in the East, and no foreigner dared to go there.



The outer side of the Propylaea, the monumental entrance of the Acropolis (courtesy FLC)

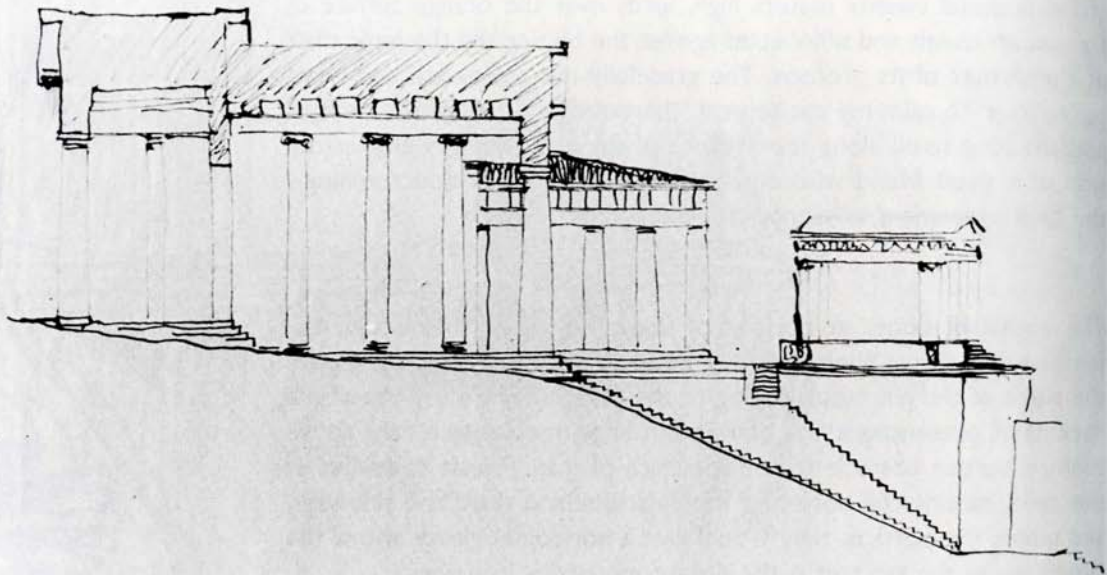


*The Temple of Athena
Nike (Wingless Victory)
"keeping watch at the
top of an ashlar stone
pedestal twenty meters
high" (courtesy FLC)*

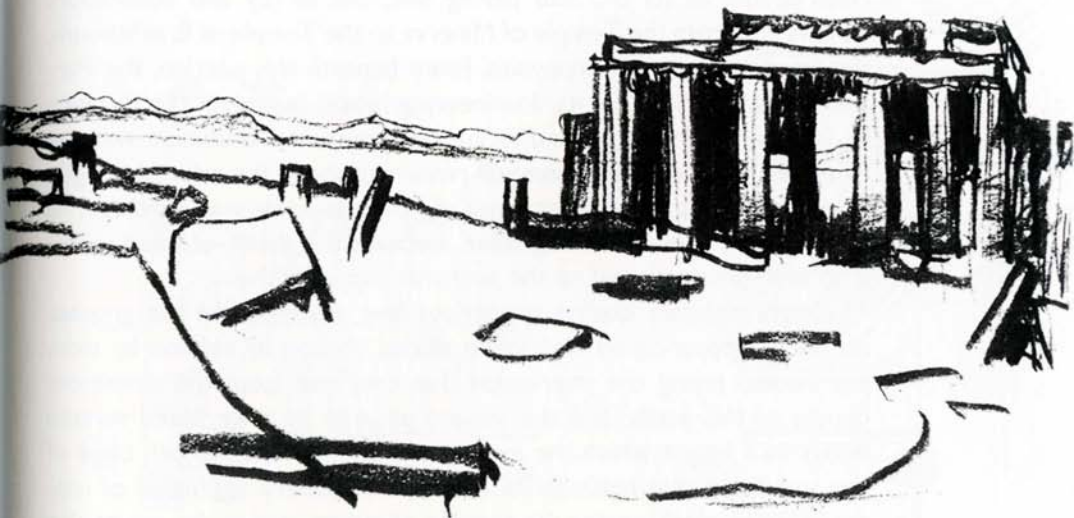
The Temple of Wingless Victory, keeping watch at the top of an ashlar stone pedestal twenty meters high, lords over the orange surface of the sea on its left and silhouettes against the blazing sky the ionic shaft at the corner of its pronaos. The gracefully cut stones are dedicated to Victory. To calm my excitement, there remains a delightful twilight and the long stroll along the avenues of the clear and gay city, at the side of a good friend who on this first evening will respect willingly the tacit agreement of silence and encroaching peace.

The enclosing slopes at the top of the hill bind, by their steps, the temples and thrust their diversely spaced columns to the sky. Down the slope of the hill, steps leading to the Parthenon are cut out of the rock itself, presenting a first barrier. But huge marble steps hang above them, a certain obstacle to the approach of man. Priests came out of the cella, sensing the bosom of mountains behind them and sideways, and under the portico, they would cast a horizontal glance above the Propylaea at the sea and at the distant mountains it washes.

In the middle of the estuary at the bottom of which stands a temple, the sun charts its course until dusk, and in the sultry heat of the evening its disc touches the ground on the very axis of the temple. The crown of stone that marks the bounds of the plateau has that ability to dispel any inkling of life. Bewildered, the active mind grasps and plunges into a past that should not be reconstructed. But it would also be beautiful if, outside reality—these temples, this sea, these mountains, all this stone and water—could become for one hour only the heroic vision of a creative mind. What a thing!



The flight of stairs cut into the slope of the hill leading to the Propylaea and Parthenon (courtesy FLC)



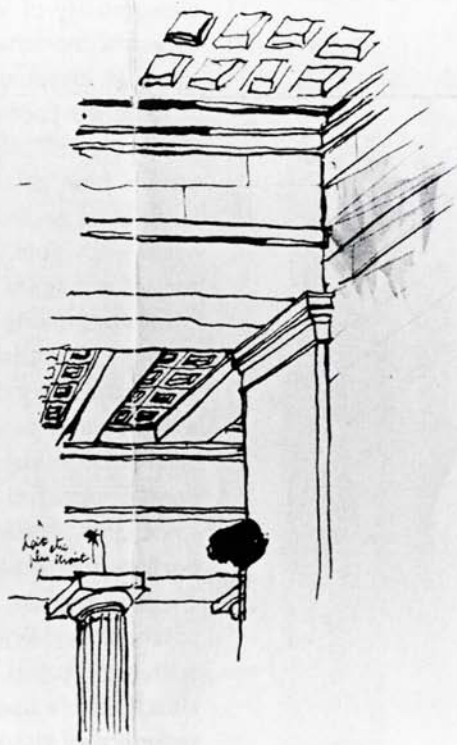
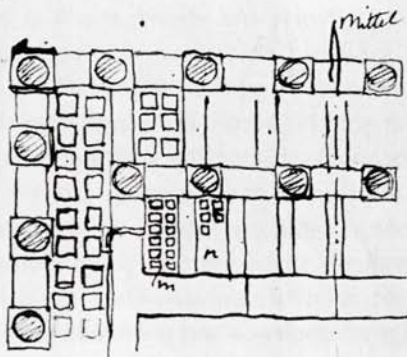
*The inner side of the
Propylaea seen from the
Parthenon (courtesy FLC)*

Physically, the impression is that of a most profound inspiration that expands your chest. It is like an ecstasy that pushes you onto the bare rock devoid of its old slab paving and, out of joy and admiration, throws you from the Temple of Minerva to the Temple of Erechtheum, and from there to the Propylaea. From beneath this portico, the Parthenon can be seen on its domineering block, casting in the distance its horizontal architrave and facing this concerted landscape with its front like a shield. The friezes still remaining above the cella show agile horsemen racing. I see them with my myopic eyes, way up there, as clearly as if I were touching them, because the depth of their reliefs is so well proportioned to the wall that supports them.

The eight columns obey a unanimous law, soaring from the ground, not at all appearing to have been placed section by section by man, but instead giving the impression that they rise from the innermost depths of the earth; and the violent upsurge of their fluted surface brings to a height which the eye cannot estimate the smooth band of the architrave that rests on its abacus. The austere aggregate of metopes and triglyphs under the riveting of guttae carries the eye to the left corner of the temple, up to the farthest column of the opposite side, enabling the beholder to seize at a glance a single block, a gigantic prism of marble cut from bottom to top with the rectitude of clear mathematics and the precision that a machinist brings to his labor. Yet the western pediment with its peak projecting in the middle of the space—in harmony with the mountains, the sea, and the sky—strengthens the facade and its unmovable orientation.

I had thought it possible to compare this marble to new bronze, hoping that, in addition to the color so described, this word would suggest the pronounced luster of this substantial mass fixed in place with the

Parthénon.



non-coïncidence des colonnes
d'angle avec celle de la seconde
encadrement

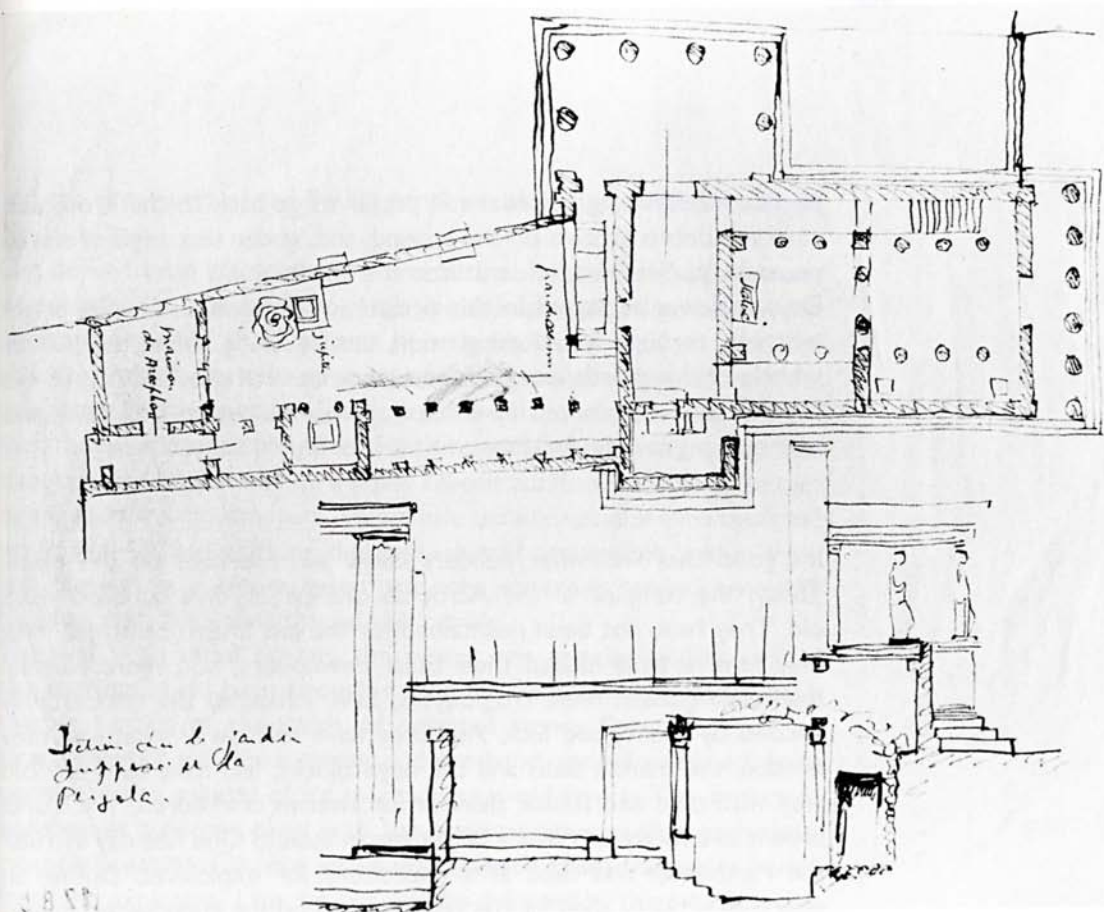
Les plafonnets ne s'occupent
en rien de la situation des
colonnes. Le caissonnage ne peut
se présenter que.

Par conséquent répose une argumentation
d'importance.

Details of the Parthenon's
ceiling and columns (cour-
tesy FLC)

inexorability of an oracle. In the face of the unexplainable intensity of this ruin, increasingly an abyss separates the soul which feels from the mind which measures.

A hundred paces away, welcomed by this unconquerable titan, smiles the lively temple with four faces—the Temple of the Erechtheum—atop a base of smooth walls with animated, fleshy marble blossoms. Ionic is its order—Persepolitan, its architraves. They say it was once inlaid with gold, precious stones, ivory, and ebony; the Asia of sanctuaries by some bewitching spell had cast these steely glances into confusion, taking advantage of the fact that the temple had once dared to smile. But thank God, time got the better of it, and from the hill I salute the reconquered monochrome. Facing the Parthenon which has already been described, one must point out the posture of six draped women who support the stone entablature where, for the first time, dentils appeared in Attica. Strangely stern and thoughtful women who smile and appear stiff, and yet seem to quiver—they stand here as perhaps the most concrete sign of opulence and prominence. Thus this cheerful temple with four faces presents a different portion to each patch of sky. Friezes with water lilies and acanthus leaves, combined with a palm leaf, a supernatural element, decorate it. Plug holes, still clearly visible upon the band of the architrave, indicate where a famous sequence of victories in the postures of dancers once adorned it. These marbles chiseled with high reliefs lie in some museum, but I don't remember which one. As for the north facade, which overhangs the enormous cliff of the hill bound off here by vertical walls of Piraeus stone interspersed with the drums of ancient columns, I don't know of a term that could express the ingenuous elegy of this tetrastyle



Plan and section of the Erechtheum showing the caryatid porch (courtesy FLC)

portico.³ But having rested, I still prefer to go back to the Propylaea, amid the debris strewn on the ground, and, under that aegis of stones recently reassembled, to scrutinize the Parthenon.

Days and weeks passed in this dream and nightmare, from a bright morning, through intoxicating noon, until evening, when the sudden whistle of the guards would tear us away from all this, and cast us out beyond the wall pierced by three huge portals which, as I have said, overlook a growing darkness.

It's good that we other builders know and meditate on this place. Today, the temples of the Acropolis are twenty-five hundred years old. They have not been maintained for the last fifteen centuries. Not only have storms loosed their usual downpours, but, more harmful than earthquakes, men, troglodytes, have inhabited the hill certainly amazed by their good luck. And they have torn away whatever they needed, the marble slabs and the huge blocks, and have built any old way with mud and rubble shanties for swarms of children. The Turks used it as a fortress. What a target for an assault! One fine day in 1687 the Parthenon was used as a depository for explosives. During an attack an artillery shell hit the roof and ignited the gunpowder. Everything blew up.

The Parthenon has remained, torn apart but not jostled, and here it is: if you look for the joints between the twenty sections of drums comprising the fluted columns, you won't find them, even by running a fingernail over these areas, which can only be differentiated by the slight irregularities in the patina that each marble has collected over time;⁴ your nail feels nothing. Properly speaking, the joint doesn't exist,

and the sinewy rib of the fluting continues as though cut from a single stone!

Get down flat on your stomach in front of a shaft of the Propylaea and examine its foundation. First of all, you are upon paved ground whose horizontality is as absolute as a hypothesis. Made of huge slabs, the alabaster mass is set also upon an artificial ground, a deep foundation, or, better, a daring hoist. The base of the shaft, carved with twenty-four flutes, is as untarnished as the admiration you derive from it. The slab, chiseled all around like a bowl, reveals a difference in level of two or maybe three millimeters. This subtle detail executed two thousand years ago—a halo marking the base—is still perceptible, and as fresh and flawless as if the sculptor had only yesterday carried away the hammer and chisel that shaped this marble.

The wall with three portals, the center one opening widest so that the chariots could pass through during the Panathenaic festivals, has a marble surface of thousands of quarried stones fitted together so exactly that it induces a caress, and the hand, spread wide, wants to penetrate the mirage of its thousand-year-old layers. The surface as polished as a mirror plays with the contrasting veins that each quarrystone presents. Oh, but let us not examine these fragments hurled from the explosion! Like me, you will be defeated by this incomparable art and overwhelmed by shame. . . thinking about what we do, we others in the twentieth century.

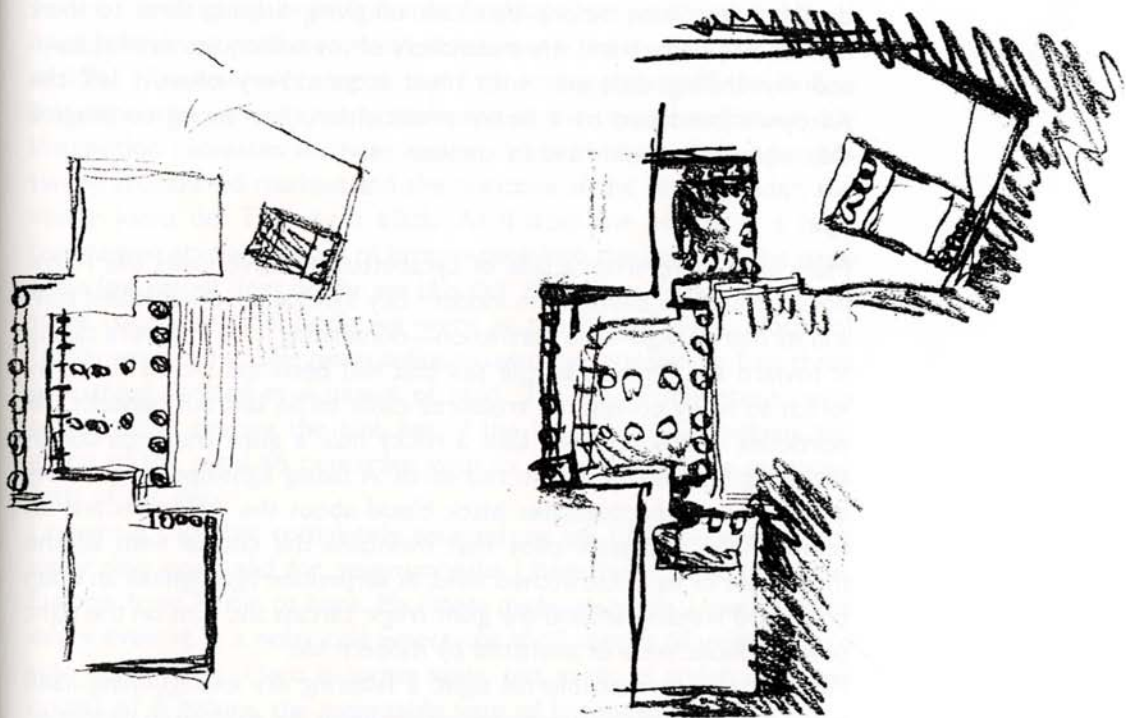
To the left of the Parthenon entire columns are lying thrown down to the ground, like a man who receives gunpowder right in the face. Their drums are spread out like the links of a broken chain. If one has not seen them, one cannot imagine what these columns are like, and one does not grant them the grandeur that Ictinos vested in them.

Their diameter exceeds the heights of a man, the colossal scale used for an acropolis in a deserted landscape beyond any scale common to man. Incidentally, it is inconceivable that this scale would be also the one used by certain runts in our central Europe, the bastards of Vignola! Under the uniform architrave, an eloquently plastic mass that transfers the entire load of the entablature to the shaft, the barely curved echinus of the capitals is connected by three annulets whose total dimension is reduced to the size of a thumb. Each of these annulets (you see on the ground that overthrown capital) has dimensions measured in millimeters in relation to the fillets and flutings, which the slightest alteration would utterly destroy. Thus, having perceived these unprecedented truths among the ruins (useful evidence), it is a beautiful thing to examine them under the shadow of the cornices^d and to verify their indispensable function.

Painstaking hours spent in the revealing light of the Acropolis. Perilous hours, provoking heartrending doubt in the strength of our strength, in the art of our art. It is obvious that an overwhelming Hellenism is precisely what is being described here, and the names of Ictinos, Callicrates, and Phidias are associated with the annulets of the echinus as they are with the supreme mathematics of the temple.⁵

Those who, while practicing the art of architecture, find themselves at a moment in their career somewhat empty-headed, their confidence

d. More than twenty meters high. (At the beginning of the first journey to the East, I wasn't yet accustomed to taking exact measurement of objects that attracted my attention. In any case an awareness of dimensions struck me soon after. From that time came what I called "the man with upraised arms," the key to all architecture.)



*Plan of the Propylaea with
Temple of Athena Nike
(Wingless Victory) in the
upper right (courtesy FLC)*

depleted by doubt before that task of giving a living form to inert matter, will understand the melancholy of my soliloquies amid ruins—and my chilling dialogues with silent stones. Very often, I left the Acropolis burdened by a heavy premonition, not daring to imagine that one day I would have to create.

Many an evening from a side of Lycabettus that overlooks the Acropolis, I could see beyond the modern city lighting up, the disabled hull⁶ and its marble vigil—the Parthenon—dominating it, as if it were taking it toward the Piraeus, to the sea that had been the sacred route by which so many conquered treasures came to be laid out beneath the porticoes of the temples. Like a rocky hull, a giant tragic carcass in the dying light above all this red earth. A fading light upon the aridity of the red earth coagulates black blood about the Acropolis and its temple—the impassive pilot that maintains the course with all the movement of its outstretched sides. A serpentine light ignites an open boulevard winding around the giant tragic carcass and runs on the right toward public squares animated by modern life.

Here is truly a most infernal sight: a faltering sky extinguishing itself in the sea. The Peloponnesian mountains await the shadow to disappear, and as the night is clinging to all that is steadfast, the entire landscape suspends itself to the horizontal line of the sea. The dark knot that binds the sky to the darkened earth is that black pilot of marble. Its columns, springing out of the shadow, carry the obscure front, but flashes of light spurt out between them like the flames that would leap out of the portholes of a blazing ship.

Today, I crossed again an immense landscape covered with rubble. I must have drunk much too much resin wine^e to hold at bay the cholera of 1911 that was sweeping all the East. In the torpor of the land, a bay came into view, formerly dedicated to the mysteries: Eleusis! My imagination recreates to these ancient relics the eternal dialogue between architruved marbles and the horizons of the sea. Outsider, the visitor looks on. The sky is black. As if from the hollow of a huge overturned crucible, floods of bronze pour into the gulfs and the bays, and a few islands float on the sea like slag. A small train took me across some cultivated land. Soon we were at the top of a hill. Flocks of clouds weigh down like heavy balloons over the semicircular bay; three pine trees twisted in a desert of sand. The far-off mountains, with jagged edges tearing the pink fan of the last rays, were helping the green of the night to penetrate with its bitter vapors the quivering mass of the sky.

I caught a chill that completely sobered me up. I had been alone for many days now, and for seven months I have been traveling across Europe, from Berlin to here. My illness made me weak. I would spend every evening in a noisy café where the shrill sounds of violins would tear at my heart. Here it comes again, this music of stylish cafés and houses of ill-repute, the ineluctable signs of European progress.⁷

Again today I imbibed too much resin wine. In the streets I saw dead bodies being carried away, faces exposed, green and covered with flies; and black robed Orthodox priests.⁸

e. Resin wine in the East is an ancestor of absinthe, a drink prohibited in France since the day the First World War was declared.

Every hour it grows more deadly up there. The first shock was the strongest. Admiration, adoration, and then annihilation. But it disappears and escapes me; I slip in front of the columns and the cruel entablature; I don't like going there any more. When I see it from afar it is like a corpse. The feeling of compassion is over. It is a prophetic art from which one cannot escape. As insentient as an immense and unalterable truth.

But when I come upon a drawing of Stamboul in my sketch book, it warms my heart!

Today, my message is more dignified. Flipping through thousands of photographs arranged in folders at the Archeological Institute, I saw a picture of the three pyramids. The magnitude of the wind that shapes dunes has swept from my mind the anguish of the Oedipus. The extreme commotion of these many weeks is dissipating: I have easy things, known architectures, and I dream of a spot in Italy, of a Carthusian monastery.⁹

My mind is made up; I shall not tackle a new culture. The gesture of the pyramids is too large, and I'm too weary. The next stop will be the Cape of Calabria, and not Cyprus. I shall see neither the Mosque of Omar nor the pyramids.

And yet I write with eyes that have seen the Acropolis, and I will leave with joy.

Oh!

Light!

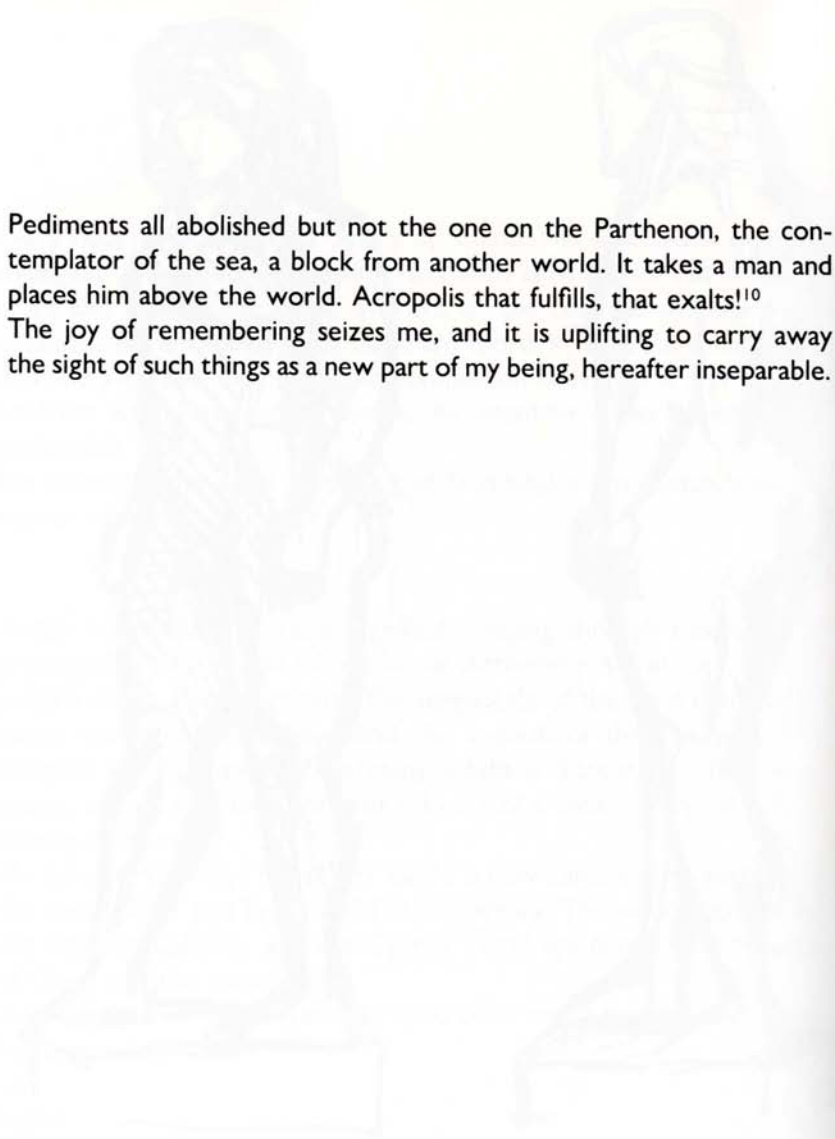
Marbles!

Monochromy!



*Cleobis and Biton, early
sixth century B.C., sketched
at the Museum of Delphi
in 1911 (courtesy FLC)*

Pediments all abolished but not the one on the Parthenon, the contemplator of the sea, a block from another world. It takes a man and places him above the world. Acropolis that fulfills, that exalts!¹⁰
The joy of remembering seizes me, and it is uplifting to carry away the sight of such things as a new part of my being, hereafter inseparable.



NORTH VERSUS SOUTH

Introduction

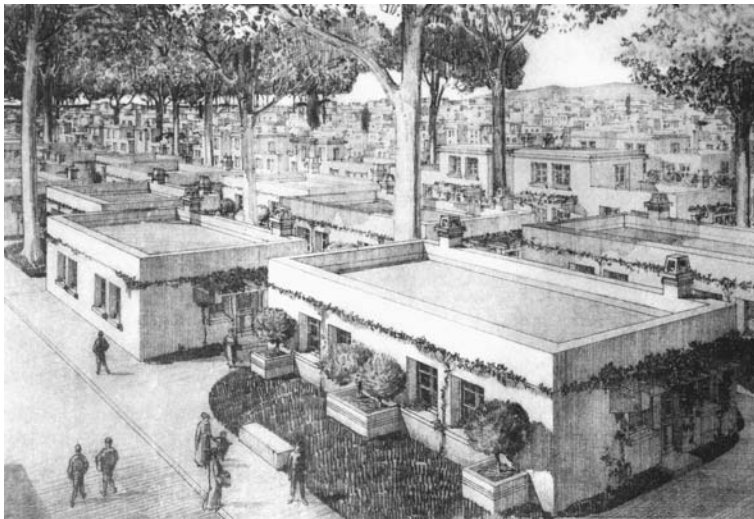
Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino

Technically, modern architecture is in part the result of the contribution of Northern countries. But spiritually, it is the style of Mediterranean architecture that influences the new architecture. Modern architecture is a return to the pure and traditional forms of the Mediterranean. It is the victory of the Latin sea!¹

The complex relationship between Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean, a “meeting place” in the words of Fernand Braudel, of diverse cultural, economic, and social realities, is the common theme of the essays in this collection.² A fountainhead of classical and vernacular traditions, the Mediterranean basin not only inspired native artists and architects of this southern region to delve into its visual, spatial, and material history for creative renewal, it also attracted individuals from northern countries who traveled to its shores in pursuit of education and recreational escape. As Barry Bergdoll outlines in the Foreword, this North–South relationship that brought northern artists, architects, and intellectuals to the “land where the lemon trees bloom” (as Wolfgang von Goethe described it) in search of classical proportions and new experiences began to change with the radical social and economic paradigm shifts that came with urbanization and industrialization of the northern countries. A growing belief that cultural and material progress was dependent

¹ Josep Lluís Sert, “Raíces Mediterráneas de la arquitectura moderna,” *AC 18* (1935), pp. 31–33. Republished in Antonio Pízza (ed.), *J. L. Sert and Mediterranean Culture*, Barcelona, Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, 1997, pp. 217–219.

² Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, London, Collins, 1972–73, p. 231.



o.1 (Far left) Curzio Malaparte (with Adalberto Libera). Rooftop terrace of Casa Malaparte, with painting installation by Petra Liebl-Osborne, *Fixierte Orte* [Fixes Sites], 1994–99.

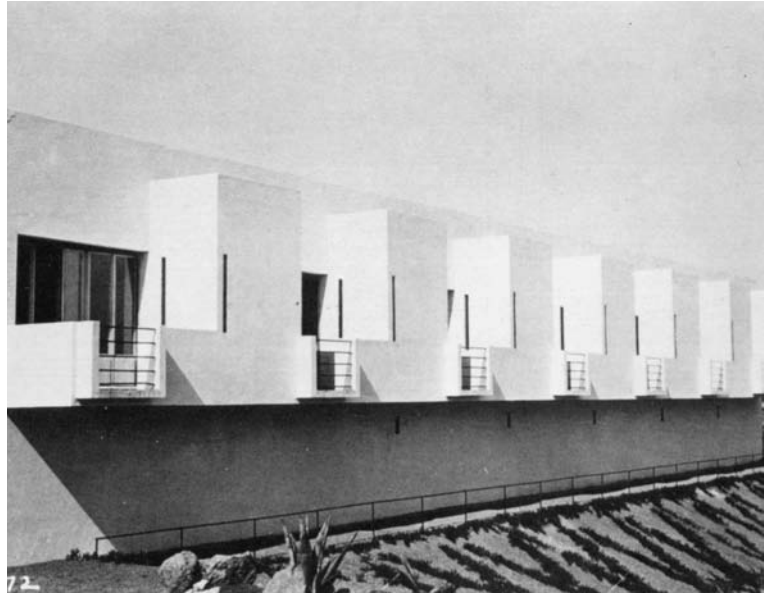
Source: Photo Petra Liebl-Osborne, Munich-Miami.

o.2 (Left) Tony Garnier. Residential quarter, perspective drawing, *Une cité industrielle*, 1918.

Source: Tony Garnier, *Une cité industrielle: étude pour la construction des villes*, Paris, 1918.

0.3 André Lurçat. Hotel Nord-Sud (Hotel North-South), Calvi, 1931.

Source: Fonds André Lurçat, Institut Français d'Architecture.



on technology began to upset the balance between humanist inquiry and science that had traditionally played an important role in art of architecture from the Renaissance onward.

Many of the critics and commentators from the North who wrote about the rise of modernism and its expression as the New Architecture (*Neues Bauen*) defined it as a movement based upon a break with academic culture and historicist design prevalent in the nineteenth century. Ethnographers and geographers who drew public attention to vernacular architecture and shared vernacular traditions among agrarian cultures during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries furthered the ideologically driven pursuit of national identity. Their activity played a leading role in the transformation of architectural practice at precisely the moment when industrialization began to radically alter relationships between countryside and city.

The German architect and writer Hermann Muthesius distinguished between "Style-Architecture" and "Building-Art" as early as 1902.³ Muthesius's study, *Das englische Haus* (1904–05), made the new spirit explicit.⁴ Describing the English house and its functionalist design inspired by farmhouses and other English vernacular elements, he wrote:

In England too vernacular architecture had been disregarded and scorned, just as Gothic churches had been dismissed during the period of Italian domination. But the inherent artistic charm of these buildings was now recognised and with it the qualities they had to offer as prototypes for the smaller modern house. They possessed everything that had been sought and desired: simplicity of feeling, structural suitability, natural forms instead of adaptations from the architecture of the past, rational and practical design, rooms of agreeable shape, colour and the harmonious effect that had in former times resulted spontaneously from an organic development based on local conditions.⁵

³ Hermann Muthesius, *Style-Architecture and Building-Art: Transformations of Architecture in the Nineteenth Century and its Present Condition*, Santa Monica, CA, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994.

⁴ Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, Dennis Sharp (ed.), New York, Rizzoli, 1987. Originally published in three volumes as Hermann Muthesius, *Das englische Haus: Entwicklung, Bedingungen, Anlage, Aufbau, Einrichtung und Innenraum*, Berlin, E. Wasmuth, 1904–05.

⁵ Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, pp. 15–16.

Renewed interest in the vernacular and its role in undermining the dichotomy between “cultivated” and “spontaneous” art forms originated in England during the nineteenth century. The first Industrial Revolution had a traumatic impact on the development and quality of life of cities and on the conditions of workers’ housing, thus engaging architects, social scientists and artists in attempting a return to the sources. In England, and later in France, the medieval Gothic vernacular and the structural principles of Gothic construction became the sources of inspiration for a new architecture that defined itself in opposition to the neo-Palladian (Italian and Mediterranean) principles that dominated much of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth centuries. John Ruskin and William Morris were the proponents of the Arts and Craft Movement and the spiritual fathers of the Garden City, two deeply interconnected movements that relied upon the vernacular as catalyst and which were to spread across Europe and the United States in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The German–English axis initiated by Muthesius resurfaced in the program of the Staatliches Bauhaus, which opened in Weimar in 1919. It relied on two apparently contradictory tendencies: that of the pre-World War I Deutscher Werkbund (with Muthesius as one of its founders) and the “organic” Expressionist medievalism epitomized by Bruno Taut, Erich Mendelsohn, and Hans Poelzig. Both approaches were partially in thrall to the concept of vernacular. Within the Werkbund, Muthesius hinted early at the idea of standardized machine-made production, whereas Gropius’s medievalism akin to the Arts and Crafts was unequivocally suggested in the program for the Bauhaus: “Architects, sculptors, painters, we all must return to the crafts!”⁶ During the tenure of Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at the helm of the Bauhaus in Dessau, the postwar craft-oriented approach gave way to machine-oriented design practices and to the agenda of industrialization understood as the necessary form of modern-day vernacular.

Nikolaus Pevsner’s influential *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, published in 1936, acknowledged and emphasized the contribution of vernacular traditions of the English countryside to the reformist program of William Morris’s Arts and Crafts Movement and, ultimately, the development of the modern movement.⁷ Yet, as Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf point out in their introduction to *Vernacular Modernism*, if traditional scholars such as Pevsner and others “helped wipe away the aesthetic ‘clutter’ of historicist revival styles of the nineteenth century, and thus prepared the ground for modern functionalism . . . [t]hey reduced the role of the vernacular in modernism to a purely transitory one, which ceased to be relevant as soon as high modernism developed.”⁸ As a result, such interpretations overlooked both socio-political context and a “sense of place” in favor of a purely formal interpretation that led to the schematic tendencies of modern abstraction. *Mechanization Takes Command* (to use the title of Sigfried Giedion’s book of 1948) became the mantra of modernist architects who believed in combining anonymity and industrialization to erase artistic individuality in order to promote a collective identity. At that time, the resolutely anti-classical stance and overwhelming influence of Pevsner and Giedion, both northern-based historians and critics, interrupted and potentially inverted the pluri-secular exchange between North and South that flourished from the Renaissance until the beginning of the twentieth century in the form of the Grand Tour.⁹ Only grudgingly did Sigfried Giedion make a small concession to the classical tradition:

Tony Garnier felt an attraction to the classical, as the modeling of his buildings shows. He broke through this attachment, however, in many

⁶ Walter Gropius, “Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar,” in Ulrich Conrads (ed.), *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 49–53.

⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius*, London, Faber & Faber, 1936.

⁸ Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf (eds.), *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2005, pp. 13–14.

⁹ Guido Beltrami (ed.), *Palladio nel Nord Europa: Libri, Viaggiatori, Architetti*, Milan, Skira, 1999. Also see Fabio Mangone, *Viaggi a sud: gli architetti nordici e l’Italia, 1850–1925*, Napoli, Electa Napoli, 2002.

³⁰ Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture – The Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 693.

³¹ Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 1999; Maria Luisa Scalvini and Maria Grazia Sandri, *L'immagine storiografica dell'architettura contemporanea da Platzen a Giedion*, Rome, Officina, 1984.

³² Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf (eds.), pp. 1–23.

³³ See Jean-Louis Cohen, *André Lurçat: 1894–1970: Autocritique d'un moderne*, Liège, Mardaga, 1995, pp. 110–120.

³⁴ Gio Ponti, "Esempi da fuori per le case della Riviera – una interessante costruzione mediterranea a Calvi in Corsica," in *Domus*, November 1932, pp. 654–655.

³⁵ The Hungarian émigré architect Marcel Breuer also employed rubble stone walls as his trademark in many of his postwar domestic designs in America. See Barry Bergdoll, "Encountering America: Marcel Breuer and the Discourses of the Vernacular from Budapest to Boston," in Alexander von Vegesack and Mathias Remmele (eds.), *Marcel Breuer: Design and Architecture*, Weil am Rhein, Vitra Design Stiftung, 2003, pp. 260–307.

³⁶ Bruno Reichlin, "Cette belle pierre de Provence' La Villa De Mandrot," in *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, Marseilles, Parenthèses, 1987, pp. 131–136. On Corbusier and the vernacular see Gérard Monnier, "L'architecture vernaculaire, Le Corbusier et les autres," in *La Méditerranée de Le Corbusier*, Aix-en-Provence, Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1991, pp. 139–155.

details of his Cité Industrielle. Its houses, with its terraces and the gardens on their flat roofs are a sound combination of modern construction and the old tradition of the Mediterranean culture.³⁰

With the exception of Bruno Zevi's *Storia dell'architettura moderna* (1950), until well into the 1960s, most major surveys of modern architecture were written by German, British, Swiss or American scholars who showed little if any interest in the Mediterranean basin as a locus of modern architecture.³¹ Even though they recognized the value of Northern vernaculars, they ignored those of the South and made little if any reference to the experiences of Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos, both of whom studied the vernaculars of the Mediterranean basin.³² Likewise they ignored the leaders of the rising trend of "Mediterranean modernism" such as Josep Lluís Sert, Adalberto Libera, Giuseppe Terragni, and Dimitris Pikionis. One of the primary reasons for suspicion of a Mediterranean modernism is that it often flourished in countries that were under right-wing dictatorships, which outside observers tended to condemn, even if the architects were engaged in designing social housing, as they often were. Moreover, Mediterranean vernacular buildings were often based upon a tectonics of stereotomic solid walls that echoed the sculptural qualities of reinforced concrete whereas Northern vernaculars were associated with the framed systems of construction that could be extrapolated to concrete and steel.

Mediterranean modernism was eclipsed not only in Pevsner's *Pioneers*, which barely acknowledged Le Corbusier, but in other influential narratives of the 1930s as well. Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock's 1932 exhibition and supporting publication *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* is a case in point. Although the authors published André Lurçat's evocatively named Hotel Nord-Sud completed in 1931 in Calvi on the island of Corsica, they failed to acknowledge the architect's explicit engagement with a Mediterranean vernacular tradition characterized by smooth whitewashed surfaces, unadorned, simple volumes and flat roofs.³³ Contrast this attitude with the "Southern" commentator, Italian architect and designer Gio Ponti, who was quick to notice the "perfect Mediterranean character" of Lurçat's hotel.³⁴ In Ponti's estimation, engaging context and culture was not at odds with the "straightforward modern style" of the work. Likewise, built on the French shores of the Mediterranean only three years after Villa Savoye, Le Corbusier's Mandrot villa of 1931 challenged militant critics who sought to undermine the complexity of Le Corbusier's modernity by reducing it to his "Five Points." In place of the pilotis that lifted the Villa Savoye above the ground, the villa at Le Pradet was anchored to its site by rubble stone walls typical of the Mediterranean region, serving as a reminder of the role that nature and the vernacular could play in an organic modernism.³⁵ In lieu of the Villa Savoye's smooth surfaces and ribbon windows, the Mandrot villa introduced the "primitive" texture of the Provençal *genius loci*.³⁶ Following the example of Le Corbusier, Adalberto Libera and Curzio Malaparte would rely on the expertise of stonemasons to design the modernist masterpiece in Capri, the Villa Malaparte, completed between 1938 and 1942 (plates 1, 2 and 3). Even though Johnson and Hitchcock included the Mandrot villa in their publication, their omission about the Mediterranean-ness of these buildings is not surprising in light of the fact that they were not really interested in recognizing the regional or national iterations of modernity, because it did not reinforce their curatorial argument that modern architecture constituted an international style. What they failed to acknowledge is how the shared heritage of the vernacular helped Mediterranean modernists identify with a collective ethos without necessarily forgoing national or pan-regional identities.



**0.4 Le Corbusier. Villa
Mandrot in Le Pradet,
France, 1931.**

Source: Henry-Russell
Hitchcock and Philip Johnson,
The International Style,
New York, 1966.

More than any other modernist interested in the Mediterranean classical and vernacular environment, Le Corbusier's complex positioning posed serious challenges to the Anglo-German axis. Le Corbusier's epistemological shift from an arts and crafts exordium in La Chaux-de-Fonds and his machine-oriented modernism of the mid-1920s (Plan Voisin, 1925) to a southern version where the vernacular was substituted for the discursive role performed by the machine was also a direct response to a series of events, both personal and global, that put Le Corbusier's original position into crisis: the Great Depression and the critique of industrial capitalism in the 1930s, the rise of German right-wing parties and the ascent of National Socialism, which made northern-based modernist arguments dangerously ambiguous, and finally the intellectual consequences of his loss at the Palais des Nations competition in Geneva. The impact of these events coincided with Le Corbusier's first encounter with Josep Lluís Sert in Barcelona and the subsequent journey aboard the ship *Patris II* from Marseilles to Athens as part of the fourth CIAM meeting at which German architects were noticeably absent. Sert's writings regarding the vernacular and modernity made this global positioning of the Mediterranean clear:

Every country has a timeless architecture which is generally termed vernacular, not in the sense as understood in architecture schools, which means regional, but rather vernacular of the lowest class, classified according to the economic means at their disposal. (. . .) The pure functionalism of the "machine à habiter" is dead. (. . .) Architects and theorists, above all Germanic, carried functionalist experiments to absurd extremes.³⁷

Le Corbusier's famous letter to the mayor of Algiers, published in *The Radiant City*, summarized the international and political context of his perspective in the 1930s:

³⁷ Josep Lluís Sert, "Arquitectura sense 'estil' i sense 'arquitecte,'" *D'Ací i d'Allà* 179, December 1934.

¹⁸ Cited in Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," in *Oppositions* 19–20, Winter/Spring 1980, pp. 55–85; idem, "Le Corbusier – L'appel de la Méditerranée," in Jacques Lucan (ed.), *Le Corbusier: une Encyclopédie*, Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou/CCL, 1987, pp. 26–31. The periodical *Plans* campaigned for a new European order. The old continent was to be divided into three vertical north–south sections: West = Latin federation; Center = Mittel Europa/Germans; East = Russians and Slavs.

¹⁹ On the debate over function see Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings – A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2000, pp. 174–195.

²⁰ Wolfgang Voigt, *Atlantropa – Weltbauen am Mittelmeer: ein Architektentraum der Moderne*, Hamburg, Dölling und Galitz, 1998.

The economy of the world is upset; it is dominated by the incoherence of arbitrary and harmful groups. New groupings, and regroupings, new units of importance must come into being which will give the world an arrangement that is less arbitrary and less dangerous. The Mediterranean will form the link of one of these groupings, whose creation is imminent. Races, tongues, a culture reaching back a thousand years – truly a whole. An impartial research group has already, this year, through the organ *Prélude*, shown the principle of one of these new units. It is summed up in four letters, laid out like the cardinal points: Paris, Barcelona, Rome, Algiers.¹⁸

Within these new geographical coordinates the Northern axis between Berlin and London was marginalized, as was the important role of function in modernism typically associated with Nordic modernism.¹⁹ Interestingly, it is around the end of the 1920s that Herman Sorgel's technical-architectural utopia – Atlantropa – of lowering the level of the Mediterranean Sea came to the fore. In 1932, Erich Mendelsohn, one of the German architects involved in the project along with Peter Behrens and Hans Poelzig, argued in a speech in Zürich that in order to establish a peaceful coexistence between the nations a supranational New Deal had to be established, which was able to combine the European nations to "productive technical world tasks." Atlantropa, the huge hydro-electrical project to connect Europe and Africa would have created a North–South Super-Continent as dominant a power as America and Asia.²⁰

Post-World War II historiography – the book and its structure

Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean aims to bring to light the creative debt that twentieth-century modernist architecture owes to extant vernacular traditions of the Mediterranean region. By exploring the impact of the vernacular buildings of stonemasons and craftspeople on the rise and diffusion of modernism, the twelve essays in this collection take a novel look at the moment when professionally trained architects began to project modern values onto anonymous building traditions that had flourished for millennia among the pre-industrial cultures of the Mediterranean basin. During the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, architects in the North and the South deeply engaged elements of the context – climate, geography, materials, and culture – in the search for solutions to contemporary problems of housing and urban planning.

Although a number of the architects featured in this collection have been the subject of in-depth analysis, there has been no overview of the overlaps between the strategies of protagonists practicing throughout different countries of the Mediterranean and their potential interaction. *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* is the first book to study the work of these architects as part of the collective phenomenon of what we have defined as "Mediterranean modernism" – modern architecture that responds to program with cues derived from vernacular buildings so as to infuse spatial and material concerns with context and culture.

The first group of essays, titled "South," discusses architects who lived and worked in Mediterranean countries; it examines how they and their designs addressed and negotiated complex politics of identity as a constituent of a multilateral vision of modernity against the prevailing "machine age" discourse that informed canonical modernism at the time. The second group of essays, titled "North," maps the contributions of architects from non-Mediterranean countries who traveled and occasionally practiced in Mediterranean countries.

What distinguishes the two groups is the different ways in which each negotiated issues of cultural identity and professional demands. If the first group of essays discusses architects who engaged with traditions that were familiar insofar as they were part of their own national or pan-regional cultures (i.e., the Mediterranean Sea), the second group of architects were “outsiders” who appropriated a tradition that, although foreign, resonated within them. This Mediterranean modernism debate involved the architects Sedad Eldem, Erich Mendelsohn, Bernard Rudofsky, Bruno Taut and Aldo van Eyck, as well as Sert, Aldo Rossi and several others. Whatever the point of view, national or transnational, insider or outsider, these different psychological and cultural perspectives weighed on personal experiences of discovery and appropriation of vernacular traditions.

The continuity in the approaches of Mediterranean modernist architects who reassessed the importance of the vernacular during the interwar years and pursued their interests after World War II is particularly significant for the historiography of twentieth-century architecture and urbanism. Although the exploitation of classicism in the volatile relationship between nationalism and architecture has been closely studied, the pan-regional, transnational “progressive” phenomenon of Mediterranean modernism has been neglected in most monographic studies of individual architects as well as comprehensive surveys of twentieth-century architecture and urbanism. A number of individuals tried to react to this status quo. For example, the Italian architect Luigi Figini, a founding member of the Italian Gruppo Sette, wrote an essay on the architecture of Ibiza (1950) in which he complained that Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*, attributed far too much importance to the machine-age and abstraction as the primary source of modern architecture. Figini vindicated the equally important contribution of the whitewashed walls of Mediterranean vernacular buildings to the development of modern architecture.²¹ The fact that he did not praise Italian but Spanish and Mediterranean vernacular architecture is indicative of the pan-regionalist approach to a phenomenon that many critics overlooked. Significantly, Figini was a long-time member of the Italian delegation to the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM), and in that capacity was able to witness the tensions over the definition of modern architecture and urbanism that surfaced among its northern and southern members during the 1930s and continued to exist well into the 1950s.²²

A “tipping point,” to use Malcolm Blackwell’s metaphor, was the Italo-Swiss Rationalist architect and critic Alberto Sartoris’s *Encyclopédie de l’architecture nouvelle* (1948–57). His three-volume overview, in which climate and geography were the framework for presenting the development of the New Architecture, distinguished between the “Mediterranean climate and order” (vol. 1), that of the Northern countries (vol. 2), and that of the Americas (vol. 3) (plate 19):

The inevitable differences that are indeed justified, between city and countryside, mountains and plains, the North and the South, never fade, even in architecture whose style has crossed all boundaries and consequently penetrates everywhere.²³

Hubert De Cronin Hastings, who also wrote under the name Ivor de Wolfe, contributed to the growing awareness of the Mediterranean and “vernacular modernism” during the critical years of post-World War II reconstruction. This was made possible thanks to his development of the concept of “townscape,” which Gordon Cullen popularized in his book *Townscape* of 1961 interpreting Hastings’s ideas through his talent as an inspired draughtsman. Two years

²¹ Luigi Figini, “Architettura naturale a Ibiza,” *Comunità* 8, May–June 1950, pp. 40–43.

²² Eric Mumford, *Defining Urban Design – CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline, 1937–69*, New Haven, CT, London, Yale University Press, 2009; see also, Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2000.

²³ Alberto Sartoris, *Encyclopédie de l’Architecture Nouvelle*. Vol. 1, *Ordre et climat méditerranéens*, Milan, Ulrico Hoepli, 1948; Vol. 2., *Ordre et climat nordiques*, 1957; Vol. 3, *Ordre et climat américains*, 1954. The quote is taken from Vol. 2, p. 4 (our translation).

LETTER TO A MAYOR:

TO MONSIEUR BRUNEL,
MAYOR OF ALGIERS.

“Paris, December, 1933

“With a firmness and broad-mindedness which have earned you as much admiration as envy, you govern a city of great destiny.

“The economy of the world is upset; it is dominated by the incoherence of arbitrary and harmful groups. New groupings, and regroupings, new units of importance must come into being which will give the world an arrangement that is less arbitrary and less dangerous. The Mediterranean will form the link of one of these groupings, whose creation is imminent. Races, tongues, a culture reaching back a thousand years – truly a whole. An impartial research group has already, this year, through the organ *Prélude*, shown the principle of one of these new units. It is summed up in four letters, laid out like the cardinal points:

P
B R
A

Paris, Barcelona, Rome, Algiers. A unit extending from north to south along a meridian, running the entire gamut of climates, from the English Channel to Equatorial Africa, embracing every need – and every resource.

“Algiers ceases to be a colonial city; Algiers becomes the head of the African continent, a capital city. This means that a great task awaits her, but a magnificent future too. This means that the hour of city planning should strike in Algiers.

o.5 Le Corbusier. Cardinal Points, 1933.

Source: Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse* (The Radiant City), Paris, 1933.

later, in 1963, Hastings/de Wolfe published *Italian Townscape*, a study of Italian medieval cities observed through the prism of the picturesque. Hastings did not advocate imitation of vernacular towns and building types but rather their use as models of collective form for contemporary reconstruction and urban design. A similar interest developed in Italy with Ernesto Rogers's discussion on “continuity” and Giancarlo De Carlo's concept of the “hill town reconsidered,” with the city of Urbino as his paradigm. In De Wolfe's *Italian Townscape*, North and South meet to some extent through a modern reinterpretation of Uvedale Price's original foray into the question of the picturesque.²⁴

A significant impetus to changing perceptions in non-Mediterranean countries after World War II about the constructive role that vernacular buildings of the South could play in shaping postwar modernism was Bernard Rudofsky's 1964 exhibition and publication *Architecture Without Architects* at the Museum of Modern Art and Myron Goldfinger's 1969 book *Villages in the Sun: Mediterranean Community Architecture*, both of which stressed how Mediterranean vernacular builders prefigured industrially produced housing while still engaging with context and culture. The issue of “repetition without monotony,” implying type and serial production in the studies of Goldfinger and Rudofsky, was key to designers whose identity was heavily invested in Mediterranean modernism.

Recent overviews of world architecture have taken up where authors like Sartoris left off to explore how geography shaped twentieth-century architecture and urbanism.²⁵ A number of publications have increasingly become more explicit about the interplay of architecture, modernity, and

²⁴ See M. Christine Boyer, “An Encounter with History: the Post-war Debate between the English Journals of *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Design* (1945–1960),” pp. 136–163, accessed on the Internet at: www.team1online.org/research/papers/delft2/boyer.pdf.

²⁵ Kenneth Frampton (ed.), *World Architecture 1900–2000: A Critical Mosaic*, Vienna, New York, Springer, 1999–2000, and in particular, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (ed.), *Mediterranean Basin*, vol. 4.

geopolitics.²⁶ Yet, for the most part, these studies stand as isolated instances. While surveys of twentieth-century architecture tend to address nationalism, they rarely deal with the transnational phenomenon of Mediterranean modernism that existed within, rather than in opposition to, modernism. *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean* sets out to redress this gap in the literature and to contribute to the “many voices” of a multilateral and multifaceted modernity.²⁷

It is precisely this multiplicity, and the tensions that this approach generates, that the subtitle of the book suggests. Dialogues about the vernacular and contested identities were instrumental in shaping Mediterranean modernism. They were at the centre of debates between critics and historians who disagreed about the role that nationalism and regionalism should play in the emergence of an international, even universal, language of modernism that could unite rather than divide. Building upon what architectural and cultural historians such as Jean-Louis Cohen, Benedetto Gravagnuolo, Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, Wojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, and Jan Birksted have already accomplished, this book explores the fascination modern architects and urban planners had with Mediterranean traditions.²⁸ The authors’ contributions take into account a number of different methodological perspectives. Some frame their research with the help of theories of translation, while others opt to use architectural type as a basis for analysis. Others explore the impact of literary debates on architectural and artistic culture. What all of the essays share in common is their investigation of the impact of the natural and built environment of the

²⁶ See for instance Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago, IL, Chicago University Press, 2004, and Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*, New Haven, CT, London, Yale University Press, 2009.

²⁷ On Fernand Braudel’s notion of “many voices” see Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings – The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*, Durham, NC, London, Duke University Press, 2008, pp. 1–22.

²⁸ See for instance Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca: Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures*, New York, Monacelli Press, 2002; Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Le Corbusier e l’antico: Viaggi nel mediterraneo*, Napoli, Electa Napoli, 1997; Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, *Die Architektur, die Tradition und der Ort – Regionalismen in der europäischen Stadt*, Stuttgart, München, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000; Wojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski and Anne Dymond (eds.), *Modern Art and the Idea of the Mediterranean*, Toronto, Buffalo, The University of Toronto Press, 2007; Jan. K. Birksted, *Modernism and the Mediterranean: The Maeght Foundation*, Aldershot, Burlington, Ashgate, 2004.



o.6 Herman Sörgel. “New Geography for the Middle Section of the Mediterranean. Italy connected with Sicily and filling up of the Adriatic. Railroad connection from Middle Europe to Capetown.” Collage, c. 1931.

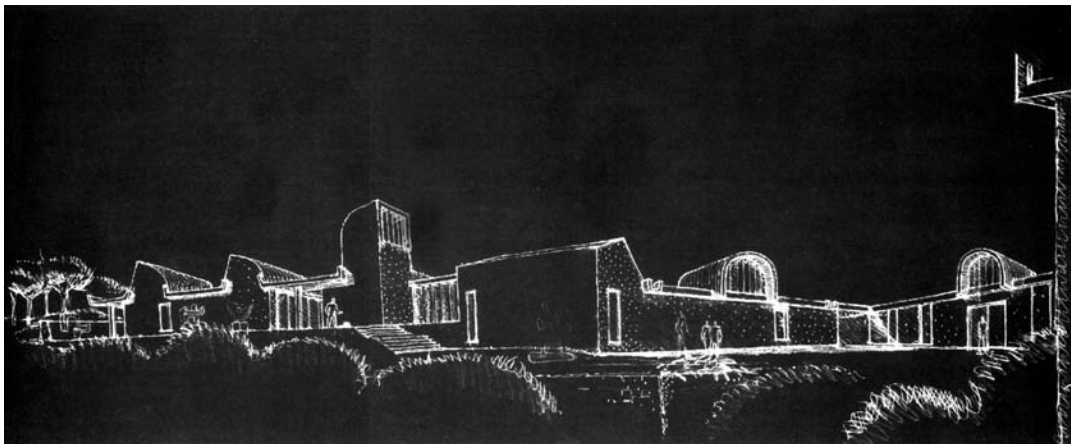
Source: From Herman Sörgel, *Verirrungen und Merkwürdigkeiten im Bauen und Wohnen*, Leipzig, 1929.

Mediterranean basin upon the interwar (1920–1940) and postwar (1945–1970s) experiences of architects working in a number of different countries.

Not all the architects who participated in this broad phenomenon have been included in this collection of essays nor have we endeavored to address the phenomenon as it resurfaced in other parts of the world. Opportunities for further studies in Europe, in Africa, the United States and Latin America abound. In the 1960s Yona Friedman collaged one of his urban megastructures on top of a photograph of a vernacular village published in Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architects* (see illustration 12.7). Hassan Fathy, a major advocate of the

0.7 José Luis Fernández del Amo (I.N.C.). Houses in Vegaviana, Cáceres, c.1956.

Source: *Fernández Del Amo: Arquitecturas 1942–1982*, Madrid, 1983. Photo Joaquín del Palacio "Kindel."



0.8 José Luis Sert. Perspective, Fondation Maeght, St-Paul-de-Vence, France, 1958.

Source: The Josep Lluis Sert Collection, Francis Loeb Library Special Collections, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University.



o.9 Alvaro Siza. Housing quarter, Quinta da Malagueira, Évora, Portugal, from 1977.

Source: *El Croquis*, 68–69.

Photo Luis Ferreira Alves.

use of vernacular traditions in the modern Egyptian town of New Gourná completed in 1948, collaborated with Constantinos Doxiadis, who fueled his creative practice by way of lifelong interest in Mediterranean vernacular. The domestic architecture of Irving Gill in California during the 1910s and 1920s paralleled some of the concerns of Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos in Austria. Likewise, it would be difficult not to see how Mediterranean modernism – through the influence of Italian Rationalism and the analogies between the Mare Nostrum and the Atlantic coast of South America – helped shape the Brazilian architectures of Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. During those same years Louis I. Kahn traveled to southern Europe and produced a series of masterful sketches of Capri, Positano and the Amalfi coast (plate 4). Vincent Scully has explained the importance of Kahn’s drawings:

Kahn broke the hold of the International Style on modern architecture and opened the way for the revival of the vernacular and classical traditions of architecture which has been going on during the past generation and was initiated by Robert Venturi, along with Charles Moore and Aldo Rossi, each indebted to Kahn in fundamental ways.²⁹

In 1966, not long after Kahn completed his Richards Medical Centre (1961) which echoed the medieval towers he had studied in Tuscany, Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* and Aldo Rossi’s *L’architettura della città* were published on both sides of the Atlantic. Produced under the patronage of the American Academy and published with the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Robert Venturi’s “gentle manifesto” became, in Scully’s analysis, the indispensable complement – and contradictor – of Le Corbusier’s *Toward an Architecture* (1923):

The older book demanded a noble purism in architecture, in single buildings and in the city as a whole; the new book welcomes the contradictions and complexities of urban experience at all scales.³⁰

²⁹ Vincent Scully, Introduction to Jan Hochstim, *The Paintings and Sketches of Louis I. Kahn*, New York, Rizzoli, 1993, p. 16.

³⁰ Vincent Scully, Introduction to Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, 1966, pp. 11–12.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Peter Eisenman, "The Houses of Memory: The Texts of Analogy," preface to Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 1982, p. 4.

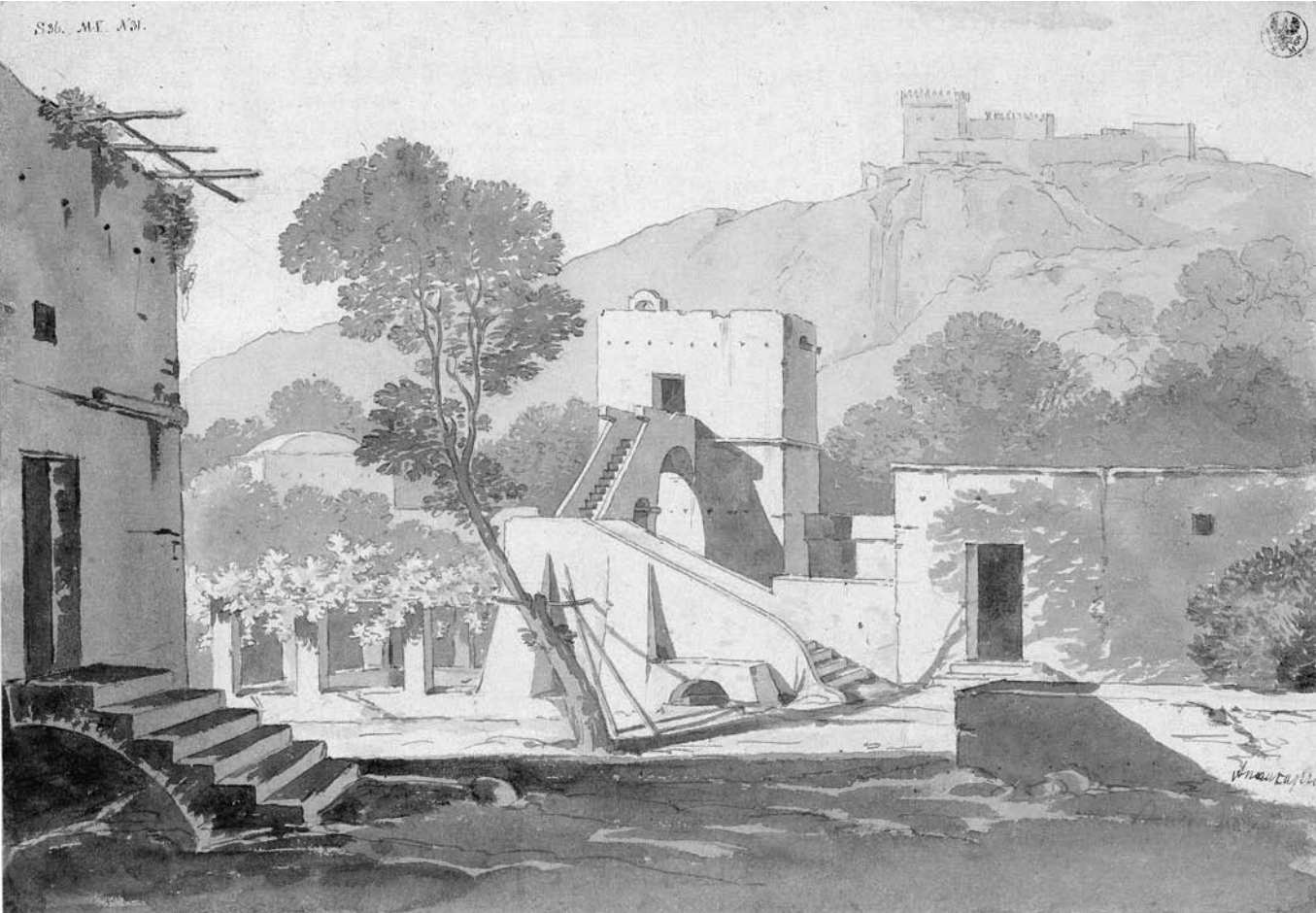
³³ Rafael Moneo, *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects*, Cambridge, MA, The MIT Press, 2004, pp. 102–143. For a firsthand account, see Aldo Rossi, *Architettura Padana*, Modena, Edizioni Panini, 1984, pp. 11–14. Also see Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

For Scully, Venturi's inspiration did not come from Le Corbusier's Greek temple, but from its opposite, "the urban facades of Italy, with their endless adjustments to the counter-requirements of inside and outside and their inflection with all the business of everyday life."³¹ In Rossi, Peter Eisenman saw "an attempt to build a different kind of castle from that of the moderns. It is an elaborate scaffold erected for and by someone who can no longer climb its steps to die a hero's death." Rossi proposed "an *other* architecture, an *other* architect, and most importantly, an *other* process for their understanding."³² Critical to Rossi's theories were the typological studies of the urban vernacular of Rome and Venice initiated by his teacher Salvatore Muratori, as well the thesis of Maurice Halbwachs on "Collective Memory." Rossi's interest in extant vernacular architectures has been discussed in Rafael Moneo's overview of contemporary theoretical anxieties and design strategies: the Spanish architect stresses Rossi's "nostalgia of the rational construction of vernacular architecture" in relation to a 1973 project in Borgo Ticino influenced by indigenous lake dwellings. Moneo goes on to discuss Rossi's interest in the "anonymous architecture" that led him to embrace urban spaces, ranging from a courtyard in Seville to houses on the Po River delta.³³ Rossi's cabanas also reflect his interest in the vernacular (plate 22).

We hope this book, as incomplete as it may be, will open up new avenues of future research. ■

Part I
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FROM SCHINKEL TO LE CORBUSIER

The Myth of the Mediterranean in Modern Architecture

Benedetto Gravagnuolo

When we say Mediterranean we mean above all the solar stupor that generates the panic-stricken myth and the metaphysical immobility.¹

It is with these words pregnant with esoteric suggestions that Massimo Bontempelli attempted an acrobatic definition of the “myth of the Mediterranean” – a myth that exercised a notable magnetic force on the artistic, literary, and architectonic debate in Italy, Spain, and France in the first decades of the 1900s.² Carlo Belli, a witness and actor of the period, wrote:

The theme of “Mediterranean-ness” and “Greek-ness” was our navigational star. We discovered early that a bath in the Mediterranean would have restored to us many values drowned under gothic superimpositions and academic fantasies. There is a rich exchange of letters between Pollini, Figini, Terragni and myself on this subject. There are my articles in various journals, especially polemical with Piacentini, Calza Bini, Mariani and others embedded in Roman fascism . . . We studied the houses of Capri: how they were constructed, why they were made that way. We discovered their traditional authenticity, and we understood that their perfect rationality coincided with the optimum of aesthetic values. We discovered that only in the ambit of geometry could one actuate the perfect *gemütlich* of dwelling.³

Without a doubt, *mediterraneità* – not to be confused with *romanità* to which it was often polemically counterpoised – represented an explicit font of inspiration from which a small circle of initiates, mostly French and Italian, drew. Yet, before entering into an evaluation of the merit of this ideology – and analyzing the verbal and visible alchemies of the “disquieting muses” – it may be useful to pose a few basic questions.⁴ Does there exist a “Mediterranean culture of living”? And, if it exists, in what measure is it recognizable as a historical phenomenon? And lastly, is it possible to reassert it in terms of a collective design ethos? It is not easy to respond to these questions, but it is worth reducing the discourse to its schematic essence.

The *mare nostrum* or Mediterranean has represented for centuries a privileged cradle of commercial exchange, bellicose conflicts, and cultural transmissions. On its shores ancient historical civilizations flowered – including Egyptian, Cretan-Mycenaean, Phoenician, and Greek – and on its waters the first empires were founded – Carthaginian, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic. Many affinities of climate, traditions, topography, and even ethnic traits are visible along the coastlines of countries facing the Mediterranean. Among the various anthropological manifestations, the one that best registers and preserves the

¹ Massimo Bontempelli, *Introduzioni e discorsi*, Milano, Bompiani, 1945, p. 171. Bontempelli was the founder and the director of two periodicals: *900*, in collaboration with Curzio Malaparte (1926–29) and *Quadrante*, in collaboration with Pier Maria Bardi (1933–36). In these periodicals and his numerous books, he established the theoretical basis of “magical realism.” In so doing, he became a pole of reference for the “classical” and “metaphysical” cultural movements.

² For a more extensive bibliography, see Carlo Enrico Rava, *Nove anni di architettura vissuta, 1926–1935*, Roma, Cremonese, 1935, and, in particular, the essay titled “Architettura ‘europea,’ ‘mediterranea,’ ‘corporativa,’ o semplicemente italiana,” pp. 139–150. Also see Carlo Belli, “Lettera a Silvia Danesi,” in Silvia Danesi and Luciano Patetta (eds.), *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il Fascismo*, Venezia, Biennale di Venezia, 1976, pp. 21–28; Benedetto Gravagnuolo, “Colloquio con Luigi Cosenza,” in *Modo 60*, June–July 1983.

³ Carlo Belli, “Lettera a Silvia Danesi,” p. 25.

⁴ See Manfredo Tafuri, “Les ‘muses inquiétantes’ ou le destin d’une génération de ‘maîtres,’” in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 181, 1975.

1.1 (Far left) Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Farmhouse in Capri, 1804.

Source: © Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz/ Art Resource, Inv. SM 5.31. Photo J. P. Anders.

⁵ See Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, Armand Collin, 1949. In English, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, London, Fontana/Collins, 1972.

⁶ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée, l'espace et l'histoire*, Paris, 1977, p.7 [Editor's translation]. In the chapter "Novecentismo e opzione classica" of his monograph on *José Luis Sert*, 1901–1983, Milano, Electa, 2000, Rovira discusses Braudel's research and book as an attempt to counteract the simplistic and propagandistic mythification of the Mediterranean. He also sees the timing as important, at the moment of the post-World War II political and physical reconstruction.

⁷ Massimo Bontempelli, "Realismo magico," in *900*, July 1928; also in Luciano Patetta (ed.), *L'architettura in Italia, 1919–1943. Le polemiche*, Milano, Clup, 1972, p. 90.

signs of a transnational civilization is architecture. Not the cultured or high architecture but rather the vernacular architecture, an expression of constructive, repetitive, and choral techniques sustained by a collective culture of living that settled over the course of centuries.

However, once the legitimacy of the "civilization of the Mediterranean" has been recognized as a subject of historical analysis – particularly in the pioneering work of Fernand Braudel – it remains to be asked whether and up until what point does such a civilization demonstrate unifying features?⁵ For it is clear that – despite both the presence of a cradle of communal exchange and the permanence of techniques and forms tied to a *longue durée* – the towns and buildings along the Mediterranean coasts have not only developed in relation to different local specificities but also have incurred in time many transformations that cannot be underestimated. Braudel asked the question:

What is the Mediterranean? It is one thousand things at the same time. Not one landscape but innumerable landscapes. Not a sea, but a succession of seas. Not a civilization, but civilizations amassed on top of one another. To travel within the Mediterranean is to encounter the Roman world in Lebanon, prehistory in Sardinia, the Greek cities in Sicily, the Arab presence in Spain, Turkish Islam in Yugoslavia. It is to plunge deeply into the centuries, down to the megalithic constructions of Malta or the pyramids of Egypt. It is to meet very old things, still alive, that rub elbows with ultra-modern ones: beside Venice, falsely motionless, the heavy industrial agglomeration of Mestre; beside the boat of the fisherman, which is still that of Ulysses, the dragger devastating the sea-bed, or the huge supertankers. It is at the same time to immerse oneself in the archaism of insular worlds and to marvel in front of the extreme youth of very old cities, open to all the winds of culture and profit, and which, since centuries, watch over and devour the sea.⁶

This plurality of cultures, languages, and ethnicities – woven into tight and complex knots – can then be disentangled in a historical setting. But in the field of design, *mediterraneità* can only be re-proposed – or, at least, it has always been re-proposed that way – through a mytho-poetic transfiguration and an acknowledged invention. Massimo Bontempelli clarified this mechanism in his typical Machiavellian mysticism:

It is necessary to invent. The ancient Greeks invented beautiful myths and fables that humanity has used for several centuries. Then Christianity invented other myths. Today we are at the threshold of a third epoch of civil humanity. And we must learn the art of inventing new myths and new fables.⁷

The deceit that the Mediterranean myth dispenses is, in fact, the transhistorical representation of the past as present. It insinuates the elegant assumption of the *eternal*, beyond the cyclical mutation of the seasons, beyond the perennial alternating of day and night, and the infinite forms across which time shows itself, almost as if the art of each epoch were measured with a unique theme: the desire for harmony. And it is exactly as *myth*, as a desire for simple and harmonious construction, as a simulacrum of absences of decorum and pure Euclidean volumes, as symbolic expression of the arithmetic canons of "divine proportion," as a shade of Apollonian beauty and as an echo of sirens transmitted on the waves of the sea, that the concept of *mediterraneità* can and must be evaluated beyond its objective verifiability.

In European culture this myth has exercised an extraordinary evocative force on some of the theories of “rational” architecture, beginning with the eighteenth-century rediscovery of the *goût grec*.⁸ It is often said that it was the discovery of a statue of Hercules by the Austrian prince d’Elboeuf in the year 1711 at Herculaneum that the enthusiastic re-evaluation of the “noble simplicity and calm greatness” of the classical ancient civilization of the Mediterranean began.⁹ Besides, we know that Anton Raphael Mengs, who jokingly passed off a false representation of *Giove e Ganimede* (Jupiter and Ganymede) as a Herculaneum original, was responsible for one of Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s most passionate pages on the sublime and sensual beauty of ancient art.¹⁰ Anecdotes aside, it is certain that, from the early 1700s, the best part of Europe turned its historic gaze to the south.

The voyage to Italy became one of the obligatory stops in the cultural formation of young French, English, and German people. Montesquieu went as far south as Naples in 1729.¹¹ Twenty years later de Vandières arrived and established the rules of the grand tour.¹² They were followed by the architect Soufflot, the future author of the Pantheon of Paris, the draftsman Cochin, and later the abbot of Saint-Non – who would engrave his romantic transfiguration in the *Voyage pittoresque* – and many others, including the “sublime marquis” de Sade.¹³ Around the Academy of France in Rome, a genuine group of artists gathered – including Louis-Joseph Le Lorrain, Joseph-Marie Vien, and others. They established tight relations with Giovanni Battista Piranesi, whose incisions of the ruins that survived the shipwreck of the classical world were largely known in Parisian intellectual circles.¹⁴ Moreover, it should be remembered that in the formation of that movement of taste, so-called “revolutionary” but codified afterwards in the revisionist Empire style, the thirty-four plates engraved by Piranesi and dedicated to the minute representation of objects of daily life in Pompeii and in Herculaneum played a primary role. The companion volume of *Antiquités d’Ercolanum*, of 1780, richly illustrated with graphic reproductions of antique house furnishings in the style of David, was equally influential.¹⁵

On the other side of the channel, the same mystic infatuation with the ancient culture of the south was crucial in the formation of the English neoclassical architects: in particular, the brothers Adam, with Robert coming to Italy in 1764, and George Dance the Younger following ten years later.¹⁶ There again, it is above all in the *intérieur* of the private homes that the echo of a faraway nostalgia resonated. One thinks of the house of Sir John Soane, built on Lincoln’s Inn Fields in London (1792–1824). It provides exemplary proof of the importation to northern Europe of typological, compositional, and decorative norms of the Latin *domus* – with sunlight raining from above in a vestibule reminiscent of the ancient *impluvium*, the Pompeian frescoes of the dining room, and the great gallery on three floors crowded with heroes, gods, and every sort of marble findings from the great classical ruins.¹⁷

How can we forget the Neapolitan salon of Sir William Hamilton where Lady Emma, in the presence of illustrious guests from every part of Europe, displayed herself in seductive *tableaux vivants* inspired by the Herculaneum paintings? Wolfgang Goethe was among the many who went there, and with his enthusiastic graphic and verbal descriptions of his voyage to Italy, exported to Germany the Mediterranean cult of Apollonian serenity. In a letter from Rome to his friend Humboldt, Goethe confessed that the desire to contemplate the solar quiet of the Italian countryside had become for him a “malady from which I could recover only with admiration.”¹⁸ It is the same “incurable” illness

⁸ See Joseph Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival: Neo-classical Attitudes in British Architecture, 1760–1870*, London, J. Murray, 1972; Dora Wiebenson, *Sources of Greek Revival Architecture*, London, A. Zwemmer, 1969.

⁹ See *Civiltà del '700 a Napoli, 1734–1799*, Firenze, Centro Di, 1979; Mario Praz, *On Neoclassicism*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1969; Cesare De Seta, *Architettura, ambiente e società a Napoli nel '700*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981; *Pompèi. Travaux et envois des architectes français au XIX siècle*, Paris, Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1981; *The Age of Neoclassicism*, London, Arts Council, 1972.

¹⁰ See Johann J. Winckelmann, *Lettere italiane*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1961, and Cesare De Seta, op. cit.; Peter H. Werner, *Pompeji und die Wanddekoration der Goethezeit*, München, Fink, 1970; Massimiliano Pavan, *Antichità classica e pensiero moderno*, Firenze, La nuova Italia, 1977.

¹¹ Charles de Montesquieu, *Viaggio in Italia*, Bari, Laterza, 1971. See Cesare De Seta, *L’Italia del Grand Tour da Montaigne a Goethe*, Napoli, Electa, 1992; Andrew Wilton, *The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Tate Gallery, 1996.

¹² Daniel Rabreau, “Autour du Voyage d’Italie (1750). Soufflot, Cochin et M. de Marigny réformateurs de l’architecture théâtrale française,” in *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio*, 17, 1975.

¹³ Jean Claude Richard (Abbé) de Saint-Non, *Voyage pittoresque ou Description des royaumes de Naples et de Sicile*, Paris, 1781–86, reprint Napoli, Electa Napoli, 1995.

¹⁴ See J. G. Legrand, *Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de J. B. Piranesi*, Paris, 1799, and Georges Brunel, op. cit.

¹⁵ Piranesi, *Incisioni, rami, legature, architettura*, Venezia, Pozza, 1978; Mario Praz, “Le antichità di Ercolano,” in *Civiltà del '700 a Napoli*, op. cit., vol. 1.

¹⁶ See David Irwin, *English Neoclassical Art: Studies in Inspiration and Taste*, London, Faber and Faber, 1966; Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967; Georges Teyssot, *Città e utopia nell’illuminismo inglese: George Dance il giovane*, Roma, Officina Edizioni, 1974.

¹⁷ See Margaret Richardson and Mary Anne Stevens (eds.), *John Soane Architect – Master of Space and Light*, London, Royal Academy of Arts, 1999; Georges Teyssot, “John Soane et la naissance du style,” *Archives d’architecture moderne*, 21, 1981.

¹⁸ See Annalisa Porzio and Marina Causa Picone (eds.), *Goethe e i suoi interlocutori*, Napoli, Macchiaroli, 1983.

¹⁹ See Oswald Zoeggeler, "L'immersione nel passato classico: il viaggio in Italia nella formazione artistica degli architetti tedeschi," in Augusto Romano Burelli (ed.), *Le epifanie di Proteo: la saga nordica del classicismo in Schinkel e Semper*, Fossalta di Piave, Venezia, Rebellato, 1983, pp. 25–44.

²⁰ On Schinkel's works, see in particular, Paul Ortwin Rave, *Schinkels Lebenswerk*, Berlin, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1941–62; Nikolaus Pevsner, "Schinkel," in *RIBA Journal* LIX, January 1952; Michael Snodin, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: An Universal Man*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991; Barry Bergdoll, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: An Architecture for Prussia*, New York, Rizzoli, 1994; Emmanuele Fidone (ed.), *From the Italian Vernacular Villa to Schinkel to the Modern House*, Siracusa, Biblioteca del Cenide, 2003.

²¹ See Felice Fanuele, "Il trapianto di un tipo architettonico: il padiglione napoletano di Charlottenburg," in Augusto Romano Burelli, pp. 65–78.

²² See Gottfried Riemann, "Karl Friedrich Schinkel. La vita e le opere," in Luigi Semerani (ed.), *1781–1841: Schinkel, l'architetto del principe*, Venezia, Albrizzi Editore, 1982, pp. 35–37; Italo Prozzillo, "Schinkel in Italia," in *Civiltà del Mediterraneo*, 1, January–June 1992.

that would compel the painters Koch and Carstens to never abandon Rome and that would lead many young German architects to elect Italy to the promised land of Art.¹⁹

For Karl Friedrich Schinkel (who made his grand tour from 1803 to 1805 as well as for Gottfried Semper (who arrived thirty years later) the voyage to Italy was above all a voyage into the classical.²⁰ Yet Schinkel did not limit himself to drawing and reinventing the ruins of Roman magnificence. His gaze also stopped on the anonymous Mediterranean vernacular of the south, investigating its logic and its constructive systems. In 1823, when he received from Friedrich III the task of redesigning an existing pavilion in the royal park of Charlottenburg, he carried out a virtual "transplant" of a Neapolitan architectonic typology, importing into the cold Berlin climate its balconies, louvers, flat roofs, white plaster walls, and overall cubic massing.²¹ Even more emblematic of Schinkel's fascination for the simplicity of the minor rural buildings were his drawings of the farmhouses of the Roman countryside or the island of Capri. His sketches showed a minute attention to the constructive details, the relationship with the countryside, and the compositional game of pure Euclidean volumes.²² It is thus Schinkel who rigorously occasioned the first European re-evaluation of the most ancient, authentic, and elementary Mediterranean culture of vernacular building, distinct in many aspects from the more academic and monumental culture of Roman grandeur (plate 7).



1.2 Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Charlottenburg Pavilion in Berlin, 1824.

Source: Photo Jean-François Lejeune.

However, it is important to clarify that the relation initiated by Schinkel was deeply idealized, imaginative, and mytho-poetic, impregnated by a romantic culture that had already wrapped in its cloak the writings of Goethe, Schiller, or Hölderlin, as well as the timeless landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich. In Schinkel's projects, the classical and Gothic worlds, the solar muses from the Olympian Mediterranean and the lunar fates of the forests of the Nibelungen, as well as the reason of Eupalinos and the soul of Faust, coexist eclectically. It is an evocative architecture, complex, polyphonic, constantly tuned to the sublime, much like the music of Richard Wagner (plate 7).

In contrast, the studies of Gottfried Semper were marked by an analytic detachment and a rigorous and severe historical selectivity. For his generation, Greco-Roman antiquity was no longer an object of ecstasy but rather of philological and scientifically founded research. Semper explored the excavations of Pompeii and the Sicilian valleys to find confirmation for his thesis on the importance of polychrome coverings in the dwellings and temples of Magna Grecia. He put forth his polemic theory in his essay *Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architektur und Plastik bei den Alten* (1834) and then in his fundamental text *Der Stil in den technischen und tectonischen Künsten* (1860).²³ In this later volume, Semper developed a "theory for architectonic invention," which moved away from a logical-philosophical standpoint of a positivist nature. The basic principles were the investigation of the evolution of the architectonic typologies (*Typenlehre*), as well as those needs and reasons of use that determine such evolution. From here, he derived the centrality of the problem of "technique," "competence," and "know-how" (*Können*).²⁴

In 1896 Joseph Hoffmann returned in Schinkel's and Semper's footsteps, pursuing an itinerary analogous to that completed two years earlier by his friend and teacher, Joseph Maria Olbrich.²⁵ Two years earlier, Olbrich had sent a letter to his young friend in Vienna, in which he extolled the lessons of the "old ruins." Hoffmann's beautiful watercolor drawing of the Forum of Pompeii (plate 5), which "transfigured" the two columns framing the scene in pure white cylinders on red bases silhouetted against the blue of the sky, is testimony of his emotional voyage into antiquity. However, more than the archeology and the classical monuments – obligatory stops on the grand tour – it is, above all, the anonymous Mediterranean architecture of the islands and the southern coast that attracted, like Schinkel, the attention of the young Viennese architect. Hoffmann did not limit himself to an attentive analysis of the compositional interplay of the pure volumes (which he fixed in around two hundred drawings), but published upon his return a significant piece on the architecture of the island of Capri in the pages of *Der Architekt*.²⁶ There is one drawing in particular that is symptomatic of the design process that leads from the analysis to the project: it is a sketch of a terraced house in Pozzuoli which has in the lower left corner the rough drawing of a villa of his invention. This "bath in the Mediterranean" – to use Hoffmann's language – may possibly have spawned the process of architectonic simplification that would reach its apex in the pure stereometry of the Purkersdorf Sanatorium in Vienna (1903–08). Conventionally read as "the anticipation of rationalism" this work revealed many features that recall the graphic elaboration of the voyage to Italy. An indirect confirmation of the decisive role played by the *Italienische Reise* in the formation of Hoffmann comes from the brief but dense article that Adolf Loos dedicated to his contemporary on the pages of *Dekorative Kunst* in 1898:

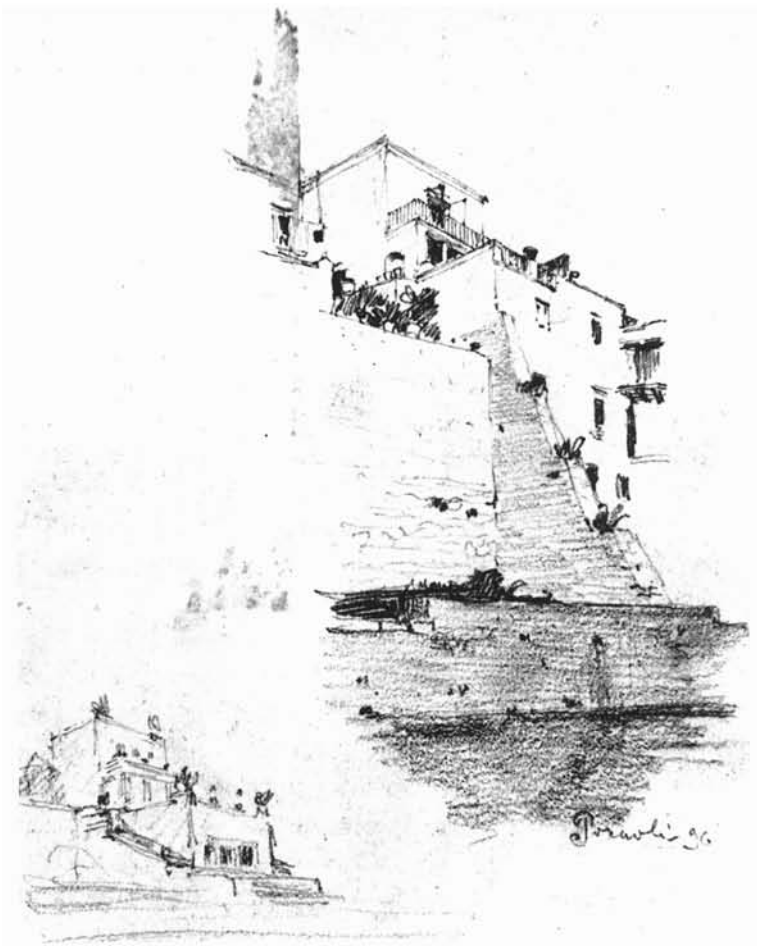
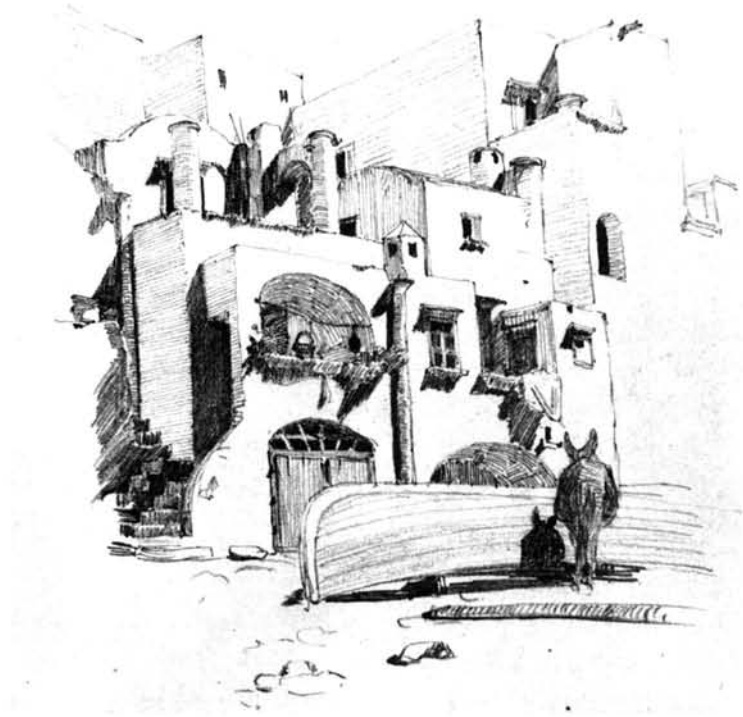
It is difficult for me to write about Josef Hoffmann. I am in stark opposition to that tendency that is represented, not only in Vienna, by the young

²³ Gottfried Semper, *Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architektur und Plastik bei den Alten*, Altona, Hammerich, 1834, and *Der Stil in den technischen und tectonischen Künsten*, Frankfurt, 1860. In English translation, Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and other Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; Harry Francis Mallgrave and Michael Robinson (eds.), *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts, or Practical Aesthetics*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2004.

²⁴ See Benedetto Gravagnuolo, "Gottfried Semper, architetto e teorico," in Benedetto Gravagnuolo (ed.), *Architettura Arte e Scienza: Scritti scelti di Gottfried Semper, 1834–1869*, Napoli, Clean, 1987.

²⁵ See Giovanni Fanelli and Ezio Godoli, *La Vienna di Hoffmann, architetto della qualità*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1981, pp. 32ff.; Eduard Sekler, *Joseph Hoffmann. The Architectural Work*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985; Giuliano Gresleri (ed.), *Joseph Hoffmann*, New York, Rizzoli, 1981.

²⁶ Joseph Hoffmann, "Architektonisches von der Insel Capri," in *Der Architekt* III, 13, 1897.



1.3 *Top*: Josef Hoffmann.
House in Capri,
preliminary drawing for
Der Architekt, 1898.
Bottom: House in
Pozzuoli and sketch for a
villa inspired by it
(*bottom left*).

Source: Eduard Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work*, Princeton, 1985.

artists. For me tradition is everything; the free work of fantasy comes only second in line. But in this case we are dealing with an artist who, from the space of his exuberant imagination, brought to life ancient traditions.²⁷

Loos had already, and polemically, moved away from the free “imagination” so dear to Art Nouveau, in two articles significantly published in July of 1898 in *Ver Sacrum*, the mouthpiece of the Viennese Secession.²⁸ However, the few elective affinities (unconfessed but unequivocal) that he shared with Hoffmann can be found in their common admiration for the simple and anonymous architecture of the South. Here again, the common source was Schinkel, recognized in the various writings by Loos as his chosen mentor.

Loos completed his first voyage to Italy in January of 1906, traveling to Massa Carrara in search of marble for his Kärtner Bar in Vienna.²⁹ In 1910, the manifesto-essay *Architektur* made explicit his ties with the territories of classicism:

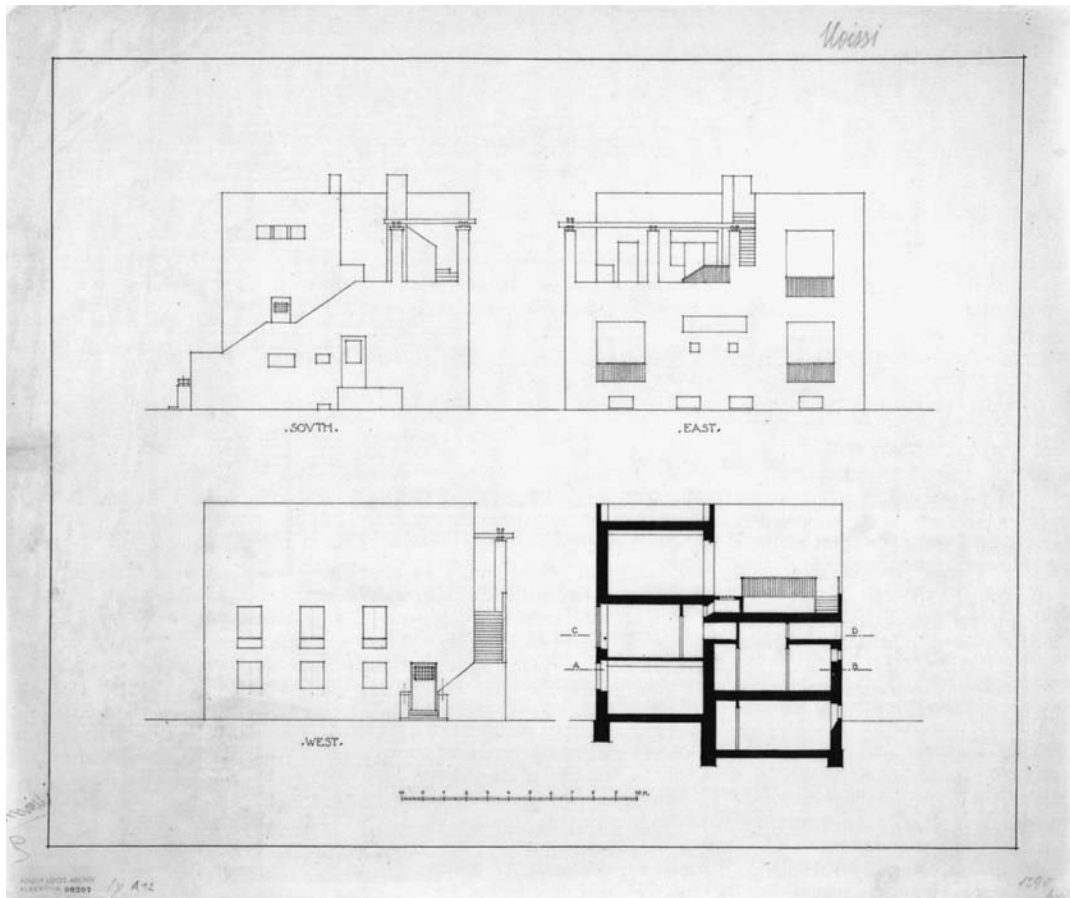
From the moment that mankind has understood the grandeur of classical antiquity, a sole thought unites the great architects among themselves. They think: like I build, the Ancients would have built as well.³⁰

²⁷ Adolf Loos, “Ein wiener Architekt,” in *Dekorative Kunst* 12, 227, September 1898.

²⁸ Adolf Loos, “Unsere jungen Architekten” and “Die potemkinsche Stadt,” in *Ver Sacrum* 7, July 1898.

²⁹ “Here I am, happy, in Massa Carrara, under a mass of marble of Carrara. Everything is Carrara here. Even the posts to which the vines are attached are from Carrara marble” (from a postcard, dated January 17, 1906, within the Loos-Archiv in the Albertina, Vienna).

³⁰ In English in Adolf Loos, *Spoken in the Void: Collected Essays, 1897–1900*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1982. For more on the theme of *classicità* in the works of Loos, see Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos*, New York, Rizzoli, 1988.



1.4 Adolf Loos. Elevations and section, Project for a Villa for Alexander Moissi, Lido di Venezia, 1923.

Source: © Albertina, Architektur Sammlung, Vienna, ALA 207.

³¹ Among his other trips, Loos's sojourn in Venice in April 1923 along with Karl Kraus and Peter Altenberg was particularly important. A little later, his wife Bessie and the poet Georg Trakl joined him. See Hans Joachim Malberg, *Winderhall des Herzens*, Munich, 1961, p. 116.

³² Cristina Nuzzi (ed.), *Arnold Böcklin e la cultura artistica in Toscana*, Roma, De Luca, 1980.

³³ Sepp Kern, "Adolf von Hildebrand," *Grove Dictionary of Art On Line*, Internet resource.

The same year he returned to Italy, staying in Naples upon his return from the Greek island of Skyros, where he had gone to choose the stone block for the cladding of his Goldman and Salatsch store on the Michaelerplatz in Vienna. Subsequently, his "Italian voyages" became more frequent, until the last one, taken in 1930 as a guest of his student and friend Giuseppe De Finetti.³¹

Beyond the biographical data, the sequel of these experiences can be traced in Loos's projects on the Mediterranean shores: the Villa Verdier at Le Lavandou near Toulon (1923), the nucleus of the "twenty Villas with terraces" on the Côte d'Azur (1923), the Villa Moissi on the Lido of Venice (1923), and the Villa Fleischner in Haifa, Israel (1931). Among these, the work most emblematic of the dialectic tradition versus innovation that distinguishes the entire parabola of Loos's architecture is the unrealized project for the Venetian home of the actor Alexander Moissi. At first sight, the model appears to reveal an almost "vernacular" declination of the Mediterranean culture of building, with its unequivocal open staircase leading to a terrace covered by a pergola placed on simple pilasters with square bases, and around which the rooms of the house rotate, similar to an ancient *impluvium*. Yet, a more detailed examination reveals that the line incisions in the compact white walls precisely follow a sophisticated regulating pattern founded on the "golden rectangle." The design of the façades is in fact not casual: it is the nature of the place that dictates the rules of the game. The light and the sea are the primary elements of composition. The terrace is dislocated in the southeastern corner, in front of the lagoon, in order to take in the rising sun. To the south, where the rays are warmer, the openings have minimal dimensions. They are wider on the eastern and western sides in order to follow the solar cycle until sunset. Small apertures, placed high on the northern side, guarantee a perfect and natural ventilation. But the most suggestive innovation is in the interior, where the complex articulation of the *Raumplan* is illuminated by a radiant light, which penetrates from an oblique aperture placed at the floor level of the terrace-solarium. Like a leitmotiv, the theme of "the terrace with pergola" dominates, in fact, Loos's entire work, from his first building – the Villa Karma on Lake Geneva in Switzerland (1904–06), inspired by Schinkel's villa built for Wilhelm von Humboldt at Tegel (1820–24) in the surroundings of Berlin – to one of his last works, Villa Fleischner on the Israeli coast. For Loos as for Schinkel, the geraniums and the white volumes did not have climatic or regional limits, but rather represented the "modern" epiphany of the eternal present of the classical.

At this stage, and before we enter into the Corbusian labyrinth, it is worth tracing the Ariadnean thread of a line of pictorial elaboration with noteworthy historical importance – one nourished by the so-called "aesthetic circle" of Florence, formed by nineteenth-century German artists and art theoreticians of the stature of Hans von Marées, Adolf von Hildebrand, Theodor Heyse, or Konrad Fiedler.³² The theoretical connection that bound them was a common reflection on the immutable laws of art, beyond changeable manifestations over the centuries. Central to sculptor von Hildebrand's thinking was the concept of form, which starts from reality but simplifies it. Like Fiedler he assumed that chaos preceded form, which explains his rejection of Impressionism as "apparent chaos."³³ Accordingly, the group demonstrated an ostensible alienation from the movements of the first avant-garde. Instead, they kept an eye on a historical, immobile space that was in ceaseless movement, like the waves of the Mediterranean that Böcklin observed for hours and hours while sitting on a parapet of Castel dell'Ovo in Naples, not to paint but only to understand the laws and the meaning of it.

Architecture was a topos of their collaboration in Italy. In 1873, Hans von Marées was commissioned by the German zoologist Anton Dohrn to decorate the newly established Zoological Station in Naples (plate 8). Marées collaborated on the project with Hildebrand, who designed and painted the trompe l'oeils of the architectural decoration, while Marées himself contributed five large scenes, showing the life of the fishermen in the Bay of Naples, groups of male and female figures in the orange groves of Sorrento, and the self-portrait of the artist with his friends Dohrn and Hildebrand seated beneath a trellis (*Scena di pesca*). Such scenes were intended by Marées to serve as exemplary images of human life conducted in a world of perfect economic, social, and emotional relations. One year later von Hildebrand was able to buy and install his studio and family in the former monastery of San Francesco di Paola near Florence, where von Marées worked as well until 1875. Here, the deceiving song of the sirens, which promises a happy homecoming to a past without crises, still seems to resonate in the rooms. The photos as *tableaux vivants* of the artist's daughters who pose for their father, covered by a few white cloths and some acanthus leaves, against a background of a neoclassical fireplace, recount it to us – even better than the bas-relief of Dionysus, which closes the quiet perspective sequence from the entrance.³⁴

In 1883 Max Klinger was commissioned to decorate the Villa Albers in Steglitz-Berlin. There, his admiration for the Impressionists and the work of Arnold Böcklin (whom he met in 1887) is especially clear. On the walls of the villa, he realized his ideas of *Raumkunst*, derived from Pompeian mural art and iconically inspired by Böcklin's mythological scenes. In 1894 Böcklin himself acquired the Villa Bellagio in San Domenico near Fiesole, where he also carried out wall decorations in the Pompeian style. Likewise, when he enrolled, in 1907, at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich, the young De Chirico (who departed from Greece one year earlier) became fascinated by the uncanny narratives of Klinger's prints, such as *The Glove Cycle* that anticipated Surrealism in its combination of reality and dream, while reflecting the contemporary beginnings of psychoanalysis. De Chirico's early work, however, owed most to the mythological and symbolic paintings of Böcklin.

And so it is that the works of von Hildebrand, von Marées, and Böcklin are tied together by a thin thread of poetic evocation, to those following shortly by Max Klinger. And with the last rings of this visual chain – Giorgio de Chirico and Alberto Savinio – we reach our time.

Magical Realisms

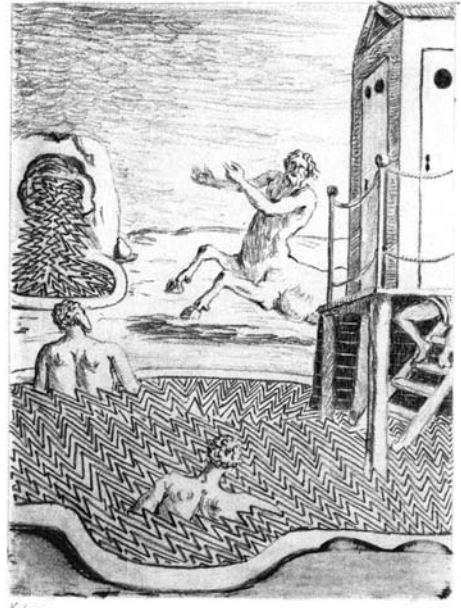
In the Italian and French cultures of the 1930s – or rather in a small refined and elite part of it – we discover again, distilled and mixed together, suggestions of both a pictorial thread and an architectonic seam to the Mediterranean. Directed by Jolanda and Mario Pelegatti from 1933 to 1936 and from 1939 to 1943, the *Rivista bimestrale d'arte, letteratura e musica* was specifically dedicated to "Mediterranean Art," as were numerous pages of the magazine *Colonna*, directed and published in Milan by Alberto Savinio in 1933–34.³⁵ Likewise, among others, Gio Ponti wrote many articles, including a pamphlet of 1941 titled "Architettura mediterranea."³⁶ The seeds of this Mediterranean flowering had been sown in the first years of the 1920s by the magazine *Valori Plastici*. Thanks to the mediation of its main instigator and extraordinary ambassador of Italian art to Paris, Gino Severini, the magazine, from the very first issue, featured interventions of Jean Cocteau, Paul Dermée, André Breton, and Louis Aragon, in addition to an essay by Carlo Carrà on Pablo Picasso.³⁷

³⁴ See Christian Lenz, "Hans von Marées," Elizabeth Clegg, "Arnold Böcklin," *Grove Dictionary of Art On Line*, Internet resource. Christiane Groeber, *The Naples Zoological Station at the Time of Anton Dohrn*, Naples, The Station, 1975.

³⁵ The *Rivista bimestrale* was published under a new cover between 1939 and 1943. Only five issues of the periodical *Colonna*, *Periodico di civiltà italiana* were published between 1933 and 1934. The main collaborators were Carlo Carrà, Libero De Libero, Gino Levi Montalcini, Leonardo Sinigaglia, and others. In issue no. 1 of 1934, one can find a reproduction of the Pompeian painting *Ulysses and Penelope*, with a significant declaration of "affinità" by Alberto Savinio, painter and writer of great talent, and brother of Giorgio de Chirico.

³⁶ Gio Ponti, "Architettura mediterranea," *Stile* 7, July 1941, p. 1.

³⁷ *Valori Plastici: Rassegna d'arte* was one of the most influential periodicals of the early 1920s. It was published monthly from 1918 to 1922. Collaborators included Theo van Doesburg, Giorgio de Chirico, Filippo De Pisis, Alberto Savinio, Ardengo Soffici, and others. See the catalogue of the XIII Quadriennale di Roma, *Valori Plastici*, Roma, Skira, 1999. Among the many bonds that linked the Spanish artist and his oeuvre to the historical culture of the *mare nostrum*, the visit which Picasso made, with Sergej Djaghilev, to Naples and Pompeii is said to have arguably played a significant role in the pictorial rethinking that led him to a return to classical figuration. See *Picasso e il Mediterraneo*, Roma, Villa Medici, 1983.



1.5 Giorgio de Chirico.
***Mythologie*, 1934.**
 These two drawings
 are part of a series
 of ten lithographs
 accompanied by a text
 of Jean Cocteau.

Source: Giorgio de Chirico and Jean Cocteau, *Mythologie*, 1934, Paris, Editions des Quatre Chemins, author's collection.

In his own way, Gino Severini made himself the interpreter of the new course with the pamphlet *Du Cubisme au Classicisme*, published by Povolozky in Paris in 1921.³⁸ Here is not the place to analyze the theoretical themes generated from this important text. Its words cross in Pindaric flight the blue skies of aspiration to harmony, skipping the conventional rails of chronology without ever hiding the sources. On the contrary, the author enumerates them with infantile enthusiasm for discovery – from Plato to Leon Battista Alberti, Luca Pacioli, Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer to Jules-Henry Poincaré and Henri-Louis Bergson. It is also important to remember that those reflections on the “aesthetics of the number and of the compass” were translated into pictorial forms in Severini’s *Affreschi con maschere*, a cycle of frescoes realized in 1921–22 for Sir George Sitwell in the medieval castle of Montegufoni near Florence. Painted in accordance with mathematical calculations of harmonic rapports, these scenes from the *Commedia dell’arte* – “between the human and the abstract, between the real thing and the invented one” – transformed those simple rooms into *camere sonore* (sound chambers) – to use Savinio’s words.³⁹

In any case it is undeniable that Severini’s little volume exercised a major influence on the Parisian intellectual culture of the time and, in particular, on Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier. As Severini himself recalled, an initial encounter with the “Dioscuri of Purism” took place in 1921 through the mediation of their mutual friend, Paul Dermée:

We talked a lot about the relationships of harmony, geometry, and mathematics applied in general to the arts. And hearing that I had given a book to Povlozky on this subject, they seemed afflicted. They wanted me to take it back to publish it in *L’Esprit nouveau*, but I refused absolutely.⁴⁰

³⁸ Gino Severini, *Du Cubisme au Classicisme*, Paris, 1921, republished in Piero Pacini (ed.), *Gino Severini: Dal cubismo al classicismo e altri saggi sulla divina proporzione e sul numero d’oro*, Firenze, Marchi and Bertolli, 1972.

³⁹ Alberto Savinio, *Scatola Sonora*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977. See also Carlo Cresti, “Geometria per Montegufoni,” in Renato Barilli (ed.), *Gino Severini*, Firenze, Electa Firenze, 1983.

⁴⁰ Gino Severini, *Tutta la vita di un pittore*, Milano, Garzanti, 1983, p. 278.

A relationship of reciprocal esteem – which gave way to the collaboration of the Tuscan artist in the pages of *L'Esprit nouveau* – degenerated later into open confrontation. Le Corbusier and Ozenfant accused Severini of surrendering to a “damaging mystical spirit” and of having excessive faith “in the ecstasy of virtues of the golden section.”⁴² Paradoxically, from that moment on, the same magazine dedicated much attention to the *tracés régulateurs* and the arithmetic canons of harmony – whether in painting or in architecture. Severini had anticipated the thematic that Matila C. Ghyka stirred up later in his *Esthétique des proportions dans la nature et dans les arts* (1927) and then in the more fortunate volume *Le nombre d'or* (1931), introduced by Paul Valéry. Of particular interest is the third chapter of *Le nombre d'or*, titled “Le canon géométrique dans l'art méditerranéen.”⁴² It is also noteworthy that Ghyka did not mention Severini's volume in the ample bibliography, which stretched from ancient time to the modern age. Neither does he name it in the generous acknowledgments that range from *Eupalinos ou l'Architecte* and *L'Âme et la Danse* by Valéry to *Vers une architecture* by Le Corbusier.⁴³

In its turn, Valéry's language was a beacon of orientation for the dangerous course of thought across the Mediterranean. From his early essay *Introduction à la méthode de Léonard de Vinci* (1894), Valéry discovered an esoteric fascination with mathematics that would lead him to submit the irrational to the metric and phonetic rules of the “difficult poetic game.”⁴⁴ Then came the masterpieces *La jeune Parque* (1917), *Album de vers anciens* (1920), and

⁴² On this theme, read the correspondence between Ozenfant, Le Corbusier, and Severini, conserved in the Severini Archives and published in *L'Esprit Nouveau* 17, 1922.

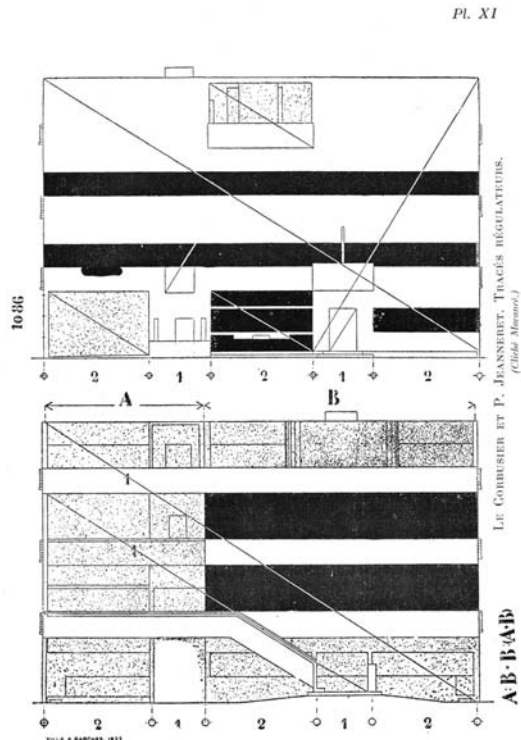
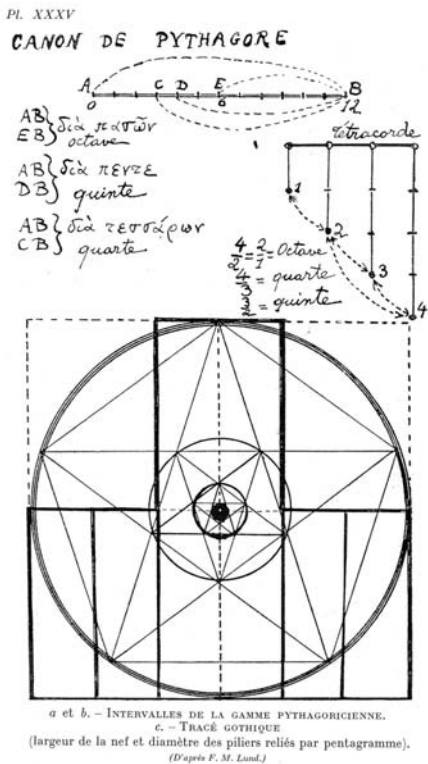
⁴³ M. C. Ghyka, *Esthétique des proportions dans la nature et dans les arts*, Paris, Gallimard, 1927, and *Le nombre d'or; rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale*, Paris, Gallimard, 1931.

⁴³ See Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos ou l'Architecte*, Paris, Gallimard, 1921, and idem *L'Âme et la Danse*, Paris, Gallimard, 1921. In English, *Eupalinos or the Architect*, London, Oxford University Press, 1932.

⁴⁴ Paul Valéry, *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci*, London, Rodker, 1929.

1.6 Left: Matila C. Ghyka. Pythagorean intervals. Right: Le Corbusier. Regulating lines of Villa Garches, 1927.

Source: Matila C. Ghyka, *Le nombre d'or; rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale*, Paris, 1931.



⁴⁵ Paul Valéry, *Cahiers: Notebooks*, vol. 2, Brian Stimpson (ed.), New York, P. Lang, 2000.

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Schriften*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955. Italian translation, "Avanguardia e rivoluzione", Torino, 1973, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Italian translation, "Avanguardia e rivoluzione", Torino, 1973, p. 42.

⁴⁸ See "Erik Satie," in *Enciclopedia della musica*, Milano, Rizzoli Ricordi, 1974, p. 510.

⁴⁹ Alberto Savinio, *Nuova Enciclopedia*, Milano, Adelphi, 1977, p. 375.

⁵⁰ Fausto Melotti, *Sculture astratte*, Milano, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, 1967.

⁵¹ Massimo Bontempelli, *Introduzione e discorsi*, p. 171.

⁵² Giorgio de Chirico, "Estetica metafisica," in *Valori Plastici*, April-May 1919; also in Massimo Carrà, *Metafisica*, Milano, Mazzotta, 1968, p. 150. English translation, *Metaphysical Art*, New York, Praeger, 1971.

⁵³ See Cesare De Seta, *La cultura architettonica in Italia tra le due guerre*, Bari, Laterza, 1972, and *L'architettura del Novecento*, Torino, UTET, 1981; Giorgio Ciucci, "Il dibattito sull'architettura e la città fasciste," in *Storia dell'arte italiana: Il Novecento*, Torino, 1982; Richard Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1991.

⁵⁴ See Luigi Ferrario, D. Pastore, and Stefano Casciani (eds.), *Giuseppe Terragni. La Casa del Fascio*, Roma, Istituto MIDES, 1982, pp. 68ff.; Vittorio Savi (ed.), *Luigi Figini e Gino Pollini: architetti*, Milano, Electa, 1980, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Carlo Belli, "Dopo la polemica," *Quadrante* 3, no. 35, October 1936; Luigi Figini, "Novocomum," *Natura* 1, 1930.

Le Cimetière marin (1922). "Art" – wrote Valéry – "is a language that has music on one side and algebra on the other."⁴⁵ Walter Benjamin echoed him when he affirmed, in his splendid essay dedicated to the French poet:

The sea and mathematics: they appear in one of the most beautiful things that [Valéry] wrote, in the episode of Socrates who tells Fedro what he found on the seashore, with a chain of fascinating ideas. It is an uncertain object – ivory or marble or even a bone of an animal – that the surf tossed on the shore and that appears almost as a head with the features of Apollo. And Socrates wonders if it is a work of the waves or of the artist. He reflects, 'How much time does the ocean need before among millions of forms chance will produce another like this, how much time would the artist need?' And he can well say that an artist is worth a thousand centuries or one hundred thousand or even many more than that. This becomes a particular criterion for gauging works of art.⁴⁶

And Benjamin continued:

If we wanted to surprise the author of this grandiose work, *Eupalinos, or the Architect*, for his sixtieth birthday, giving him as a gift an *ex libris*, it would represent a potent compass with one leg planted at the bottom of the ocean and the other stretched far on the horizon.⁴⁷

It is not – it cannot be – happenstance that at the threshold of the 1920s different minds met in a common reflection on the meaning of "order," in the search for "rules," and on the magic of the "number." There is a kind of historical determination in this return to the "soul," to the eurythmics of an Apollonian dance after the inebriation of the Dionysian orgy. In 1918, the musician Erik Satie, friend of Picasso and of Djaghilev, wrote a "symphonic drama for five sopranos and orchestra" – with the significant title, *Socrates* – attuned to the "total renunciation of every subjective connotation in favor of an absolute and almost ascetic formal rigor." For Satie, it was a mark of "that intellectual objectivism which would characterize, later on, the neoclassicism of Stravinsky and of the musicians who would move in his orbit."⁴⁸

Even with the few allusions made up to this point, it is not difficult to intuit the substantial "elective affinity" and reciprocal osmosis between French investigations and the contemporary artistic and literary elaborations of the Italian circle of intellectuals gathered around the magazines *Valori Plastici*, *La Raccolta*, *La Ronda*, and other minor publications. The voyage in search of a poetic dimension that is chemically "pure" led almost naturally to the mythical shores of the ancient Hellas, chosen as a symbol of the West's infancy.

"All of Greece is in the shape of a shell," observed Alberto Savinio. As an ancient theater with "its back to the West and the mouth introducing the scene of the East," Greece seems to gather the marine breezes and transmit the echo.⁴⁹ "We believe in the order of Greece," writes Fausto Melotti in his turn.⁵⁰ And Massimo Bontempelli suggests music as the language most suitable for arriving at the absolute harmony of the Apollonian, remembering a passage in which Nietzsche exalts the solar and the "Mediterranean" music of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, contrasting it to the "undone and corrupting" Wagnerian drama.⁵¹ De Chirico wrote in *Valori Plastici* (plate 9):

In the construction of the city, in the architectural forms of the houses, of the piazzas, of the gardens, of the public walkways, of the doorways, of the

train stations, etc. . . . are the primary fundamentals of a great metaphysical aesthetic. The Greeks had a certain scruple in such constructions, guided by their aesthetic-philosophic sense: the porticoes, the shaded promenades, the terraces were built like stages in front of the great spectacles of nature.⁵²

In the 1930s the studies of the golden section, the “cubic laws,” and other neo-Pythagorean canons on proportionality became the latent *trait d’union* between the Italian pictorial and architectonic experiments. A kind of “mystic halo” seems to wrap in a single cloak the abstract *archipittura* of Licini, the “musical” sculptures of Melotti, the “magical realism” of Carrà, the melancholic Italian piazzas of De Chirico, and the “rational” constructions of Terragni, Figini, Pollini, Sartoris, Banfi, Belgioioso, Peressutti, Rogers, Albini, Libera, Bottoni, Cosenza, Pagano, and Nizzoli.⁵³

Let us start with two “supreme” examples of this relation: the Mediterranean aura that insinuates itself in the harmonic lines regulating the perforations of the four walls of Terragni’s Casa del Fascio, and the unsurpassed, abstract game of geometrical planes, levels, floors, and bundles of sunlight in the patio of Figini and Pollini’s villa-studio for an artist (plate 16, figure 2.1).⁵⁴ In that spirit, Carlo Belli regarded the Casa del Fascio (1932–36) as the extreme point of arrival of the rational attitude, derived from “Greece, Mediterranean, Magna Grecia,” while Luigi Figini extolled the “Mediterranean,” “solar,” and “serene” character of an earlier work by Terragni in Como: the *Novocomum* of 1927–29.⁵⁵ In relation to their own villa-studio for an artist at the V Triennale di Milano of 1933, Figini and Pollini spoke unequivocally of the patio as a “Pompeian impluvium.”⁵⁶ Likewise, in the descriptive summary of the project, one reads that rhythm is determined by constant intervals – that is by the numbers.⁵⁷

In fact, it should be remembered that, in the Italian architectonic debate of the interwar period, the theme of *mediterraneità* was developed with explicit theoretical awareness. Following the seminal text of *Presentazione* at the second Exposition of the MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l’Architettura Razionale, 1931), the rationalist architects elected the “Mediterranean tendency” as a Trojan horse for the victory of modernity against the tinsel of equivocal historicist academic culture.⁵⁸ As it is noted, Carlo Enrico Rava, who in the first years had represented in a certain sense the theoretical soul of Gruppo 7, did not participate in this Second Exposition. But the divergences of opinion did not regard the concept of *mediterraneità* of which, on the contrary, Rava was the most obstinate observer.⁵⁹ Already in an essay of 1927, he had defended rational Italian architecture from the “accusation of imitation of foreigners,” underscoring how “the natural propensity towards a balance of planes and towards the relaxed symmetry of volumes, a quality of our race . . . profoundly distinguishes us from other nations.”⁶⁰ This very same essay argued for a return to the “complete relaxation of forms” and to the “happy creation, that is the heritage completely classical and ours,” in polemic contrast with various attempts to elect copies of Roman architecture as expressions of the “spirit of Imperial Italy.”⁶¹

The calls for the “Hellenic spirit” assumed, moreover, a desire for simplicity, harmony, and an equilibrium of Euclidean, archaic, and primordial volumes. In short, there was no lack in these assertions of chauvinistic motives, but these were not to be confused with the historicism of the Italian academic architects. One could argue that these positions were nothing but subtle differences within a common conservative culture, but on these differences played a battle of language that often assumed the violent tones of an ideological conflict,

⁵² Interestingly, the first reference to Le Corbusier in Italy was made by Marcello Piacentini in “Notiziario di arte moderna,” *Architettura e Arti decorative* 2, 1921. Yet, it was the architects of the Il Gruppo 7 (founded in Milan in October 1926) who literally exalted the Swiss maestro as “one of the most remarkable initiators of a rational architecture”: in English translation, Il Gruppo 7, “Architecture”; “Architecture (II): The Foreigners” in *Oppositions* 6, September 1976, 89–102. On the relationship with Le Corbusier, see the entry “Italie,” in *Le Corbusier: une encyclopédie*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987, pp. 206–209. Also see Michelangelo Sabatino’s essay in this book.

⁵³ Luigi Figini and Giorgio Pollini, “Villa-studio per un artista,” *Catalogo della V Triennale di Milano*, Milano, 1933, also in Vittorio Savi, p. 12.

⁵⁴ The MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l’Architettura Razionale) was founded in 1928. See Michele Cennamo (ed.), *Materiali per l’analisi dell’architettura moderna*, il MIAR, Napoli, Società editrice napoletana, 1977. The first exhibition was held in Rome in April 1928, with the support of the Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti. The second exhibition took place in the gallery of Pietro Maria Bardi in Via Veneto. It had a stronger polemical character, with a direct attack to the architecture of Armando Brasini, Gustavo Giovannoni, and Piacentini expressed in the famous photomontage “Tavolo degli orrori”. In the *Presentazione* to the second exhibition: “It is overall correct to recognize that this character of ‘latinità’ – which had allowed this architecture to be defined as Mediterranean – is becoming more and more accentuated”: see *Casabella* 40, April 1931.

⁵⁵ See Carlo Enrico Rava, *Novo anni di architettura vissuta*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Carlo Enrico Rava, “Dell’europismo in Architettura,” in *Rassegna Italiana*, December 1927, also in Luciano Patetta, *L’architettura in Italia*, p. 146.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 147–148.

⁶² Carlo Enrico Rava, "Premessa" in *Nove anni di architettura vissuta*, p. 7.

⁶³ Giorgio Ciucci, "Il dibattito sull'architettura e le città fasciste", p. 328.

⁶⁴ See Brian McLaren, *Architecture and Tourism in Italian Colonial Libya: An Ambivalent Modernism*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2006.

⁶⁵ "Un programma di Architettura," *Quadrante* 1, May 1933, also in Luciano Patetta, pp. 227–229. *Quadrante* was a monthly periodical directed by Massimo Bontempelli and Pietro Maria Bardi. Published from 1933 to 1936, it also saw the collaboration of Carrà, Giedion, Gropius, Léger, Le Corbusier, Lurçat, Mussolini, Melotti, Nervi, Pound, Sartoris, Severini, Terragni, and others.

⁶⁶ Alberto Sartoris, "Avvenire del funzionalismo," in *Quadrante* 1, May 1933.

and at times was more than verbal. According to his own declarations, the reasons that led Rava to dissociate himself from the Gruppo 7 and to adhere – along with his friend Sebastiano Larco – to RAMI (*Raggruppamento Architetti Moderni Italiani*), founded by the Sindacato degli Architetti in 1931) are to be sought in the critique leveled at the errors and the dangers of a rationalism too often reduced to a sterile dogma.⁶²

The divisiveness of this critique is obvious. Beyond verbal enunciations, it is Rava's own architectonic production that demonstrates how his poetic, originally based on an intransigent purism, evolved towards the "search for a modern colonial setting," elaborated on "an anti-Novecento base of Mediterranean rationalism and therefore essentially Italic." Interesting examples of this position can be seen in Rava's projects for the Church at Suani Ben-Adem (1930), Tripoli's Arch of Triumph (1931), or the Pavilion of Eritrea and Somalia (1933–34), all done in collaboration with Sebastiano Larco. These projects not only prefigured the "colonial architecture" exported from Italy into the North African countries and some Greek islands like Rhodes, but also represented – as Giorgio Ciucci recalls – an original architectonic research on the theme of *mediterraneità*.⁶³ This experiment became even more evident in the construction of the hotel at the archeological site of Leptis Magna near Tripoli (1933) and in the hotel in Mogadishu (1935).⁶⁴

Clearly, the Mediterranean theme was not the exclusive perquisite of this or that architecture, but rather the object of a collective reflection on the part of the rationalist movement. The "Programma di Architettura," published in the first issue of the magazine *Quadrante* of May 1933, articulated the following sixth theorem:

Clarification of the characteristics of the Italian rationalist tendency. Affirmation of classicism and of Mediterranean-ness – understood in the spirit and not in the forms and in the folklore – in contrast with Nordism, with Baroque-ism, or with the romantic arbitrariness of a part of the new European architecture.⁶⁵

Among the signatories we read the names of Bottoni, Figini, Pollini, Lingeri, the members of the BBPR group, and others. In the same issue of *Quadrante*, the Hellenic spirit was re-evoked by Alberto Sartoris in his essay "Avvenire del funzionalismo," in which he maintained that:

The Greeks employed in their architectonic and plastic modulations, based on the movement and on the stasis of dynamic rectangles, geometrical markings rigorously exact and in some sense identical to those that inform the compositions of the rationalist Europeans and the characteristic proportions revealed by the framework of their works. [...] These postulates on the new architecture also derive from antique notions that had, particularly in Mediterranean art, an imprint of imperative origin. These organic structures show up in the famous *golden number*, which was indispensable at that time for anyone wanting to create and establish in the work plastic forms that were consonant with the sensibility and spirit of the period. This kind of harmonious growth in space and dynamic succession in time have been transmitted down to us and today, more than ever, modernist architects have been won over by a plastic beauty, that cannot be a mirage, but is perhaps the eternal possibility of developing a work of art into absolute perfection, into a higher serenity, into something never thought of.⁶⁶

Concordant to these considerations, Alberto Sartoris, who had in 1925 re-evoked antiquity with his Theater Gualino in Turin, proposed in the pages of *La Casa Bella* his intent to pursue “beauty and solemnity” and – this should not be a surprise – classical art in his project for a house/studio for the painter Jean-Saladin van Berchen in Paris. He elaborated on this aim in the second version of the house for the winegrower Morand Pasteur in Saillon in Switzerland (1933), played out on the ample terraces and with evident neo-Hellenic, rational purism.⁶⁷

In the Footsteps of Janus: Le Corbusier’s Mediterranean Odyssey

Le Corbusier’s *Oeuvre complète* is a genuine encyclopedia – an *Encyclopédie*.⁶⁸ The scholarly angle of approach of the – often – contradictory adventure of his ideas is thus significant and determinant. As a result, it is not surprising that the theme of his relationship with the antique has been for a long time the most neglected. Not that Le Corbusier was ever parsimonious of explicit declarations. But the evidence was fogged for too long by the smokescreen of the banalizing interpretations of the modernist vulgate, raised to hide any interpretative attempt that would put into doubt the absolute coherence of his “progressive” way of thinking. Few understood the profound value and the inescapable complexity of a double-sided protective mask, a mask divided between the joyful crown of the solar rays and the dolorous spiral of the serpents, between Cartesian order and chaotic emotionality, between the faith in industrial progress and the melancholy in front of the collapse of the archaic civilizations, between Apollo and Dionysus, between the Moderns and the Ancients.⁶⁹

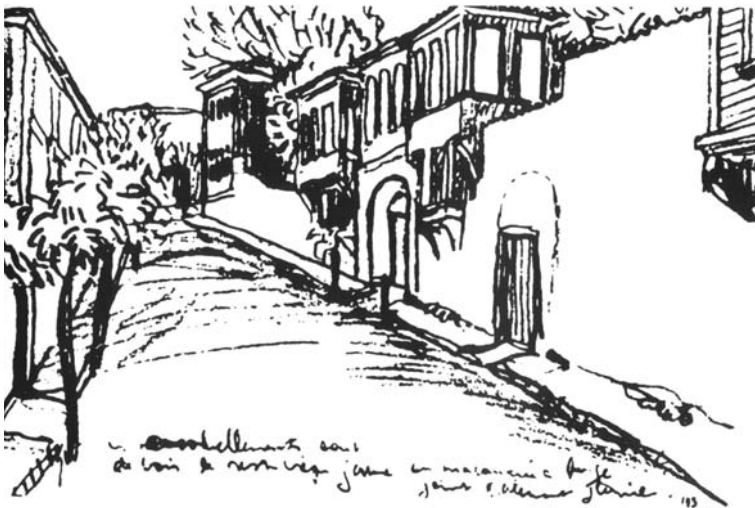
“From now on, I will speak only with the Ancients; the Ancients respond to those who know how to question them” – the young Charles-Edouard Jeanneret wrote emphatically to Charles L’Eplattenier in a letter of 1908.⁷⁰ The voyage to Italy, initiated between September and October of the preceding year along an itinerary established with his master at the Ecole d’Art de la Chaux-de-Fonds,

⁶⁷ See *La Casa Bella* 3, October 1930, pp. 78–80. On the works of Alberto Sartoris, see Jacques Gubler (ed.), *Alberto Sartoris*, Lausanne, Ecole polytechnique d’architecture, 1978; Alberto Cuomo, *Alberto Sartoris, L’architettura italiana tra tragedia e forma*, Roma, Edizioni Kappa, 1978; Alberto Sartoris, *Progetti e assonometrie di Alberto Sartoris*, Roma, Officina, 1982. On the Casa Morand-Pasteur, see Alberto Sartoris – *La Casa Morand-Pasteur*, Roma, Veutro, 1983, with an essay by Sartoris titled “Architettura rurale moderna.”

⁶⁸ Jacques Lucan (ed.), *Le Corbusier: une Encyclopédie*, Paris, Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1987. This section of the essay recapitulates the theme of my introduction to Benedetto Gravagnuolo (ed.), *Le Corbusier e l’Antico. Viaggi nel Mediterraneo*, Napoli, Electa Napoli, 1997. Also see Giuliano Gresleri’s contribution to the above mentioned *Encyclopédie*, “Antiquité,” pp. 40–45.

⁶⁹ The famous drawing of the solar mask dates from 1948.

⁷⁰ Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, “Letter à L’Eplattenier,” Vienna, 1908, Fonds Le Corbusier of the Library of La Chaux-de-Fonds. All translations by editor unless otherwise noted.



1.7 Le Corbusier. A Stamboul street scene, “tier upon tier of endless wooden houses submerged in greenery,” 1911.

Source: © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/FLC.

⁷¹ The voyage in Italy was part of the canonic tradition of the Ecole d'Art de La Chaux-de-Fonds. See Giuliano Gresleri, *Le Corbusier. Il viaggio in Toscana. 1907*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1987. Also see Harold Allen Brooks, *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1997; Paul V. Turner, "The Beginnings of Le Corbusier Education 1902–1907," in *The Art Bulletin* 2, 1971; and Stanislaus von Moos and Arthur Rüegg, *Le Corbusier Before Le Corbusier: Applied Arts-Architecture-Painting-Photography-1907/1922*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002.

⁷² The French version of John Ruskin's *Morning in Florence (Les matins en Florence)* and the *Voyage d'Italie* by Hippolyte Taine were the two "bed" books that Jeanneret packed with him to follow his Tuscan itineraries. See *Le Corbusier. Il viaggio in Toscana*, op. cit.

⁷³ The first edition of *Le voyage d'Orient*, Paris, Edition Forces, 1966, was prepared by Jean Petit. See the edition overseen by Giuliano Gresleri, *Voyage d'Orient: Carnets/Jeanneret Le Corbusier*, Milano, Electa, 1987. In English, see Giuliano Gresleri (ed.), *Les voyages d'Allemagne [Voyage d'Orient]: Carnets/Jeanneret Le Corbusier*, New York, Monacelli Press, 1995 and Ivan Zaknic (ed.), *Journey to the East*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2007.

⁷⁴ Le Corbusier, "Confession," in *The Decorative Art of Today*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1987, pp. 206–207; in French, *L'Art Décoratif d'Aujourd'hui*, Paris, Editions Cres, 1925, pp. 210–211.

⁷⁵ On the tradition of the voyage to Italy, see Cesare de Seta, *L'Italia del Grand Tour, da Montaigne a Goethe*.

⁷⁶ The itinerary along the visited houses can be followed with the pencil annotations he made in the Baedeker volume *L'Italie des Alpes à Naples*, Paris, 1909.

⁷⁷ On that theme, see *Pompéi. Travaux et envois des architectes français au XIXème siècle*, Paris-Rome, Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux Arts/Ecole française de Rome, 1981.

⁷⁸ See the pencil and watercolor drawing on hard paper, dated and signed *Pompéi 1911, Charles Edouard Jeanneret* in the Fondation Le Corbusier (no. 2859; folder *Language des pierres*, XII), also reprinted in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no. 15. A similar drawing can be found in the *Carnet no. 4 of Carnets de Voyage d'Orient*.

⁷⁹ See Antoine Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy, *Le Jupiter Olympien: ou l'Art de la Sculpture antique considéré sous un nouveau point de vue*, Paris, Editions De Bure Frère, 1815. In English, see *Essai sur la nature, le but et les moyens de l'imitation dans les beaux arts*, New York, Garland, 1979; Samir Younés (ed.), *The True, The Fictive and the Real: The Historical Dictionary of Architecture of Quatremère de Quincy*,

represented in his formation something far beyond the ritual "petit-grand tour."⁷² The attentive visit of the antique monuments, pushed as far as the tactile observation of the grain and color of the materials in the light of their natural setting, produced the effect of a cleansing bath that was to purify him from the late romantic scoria of Ruskin's teaching, even if the master continued to guide his footsteps along the "matins de Florence."⁷²

Even more determinant was the following *Voyage d'Orient*, launched from Berlin in May 1911 and that was to lead him to Naples in October of the same year after having visited the Balkans, Turkey, and Greece.⁷³

I embarked on a great journey, which was to be decisive, through the countryside and cities of countries still considered unspoilt. From Prague I went down the Danube, I saw the Serbian Balkans, then Rumania, then the Bulgarian Balkans, Adrianople, the Sea of Marmara, Istanbul (and Byzantium), Bursa in Asia.

Then Athos.

Then Greece.

Then the south of Italy and Pompeii.

Rome.

I saw the grand and eternal monuments, glories of the human spirit.

Above all, I succumbed to the irresistible attraction of the Mediterranean. And it was high time, after ten years' work (published in all the reviews) on German decorative art and architecture.

The Turkey of Adrianople, Byzantium, of Santa Sophia or Salonica, the Persia of Bursa, the Parthenon, Pompeii, then the Coliseum. Architecture was revealed to me.

Architecture is the magnificent play of forms under the light.⁷⁴

According to the letter of this autobiographical confession, the ruins, the only survivors of the wreckage of classical antiquity, played a decisive role in his fulgurating intuition of the "*jeu magnifique*." The scientific rigor of the nineteenth-century travelers gave way to an unequivocally emotional approach to archeology, quite distant from the romantic contemplation and esthetic of the ruins.⁷⁵ In Pompeii, the young Le Corbusier recorded in his *carnet* the variations in the composition and organization of the Italian *domus*.⁷⁶ His quick but incisive sketches reveal his fascination for the gardens and the pergolas, but also his attempt at confronting, in his own way, the technique of the *restauration*, which had characterized the *envois de Rome* at Villa Medici.⁷⁷ In this spirit, one of the most fascinating examples is the idealized completion of the colonnade of the Temple of Jupiter in Pompeii, which frames, from the elevated terrace of the temple, the urban scenario of the Forum and, in the background, the green silhouette of the Mount Lattari rhythmically cadenced by the intercolumniation (plate 10).⁷⁸ The ultimate end of such mental games was no longer an archeological dispute about polychromy or the philological precision of the *anastylosis*, but the discovery of the "eternal laws" of architecture.⁷⁹ Le Corbusier wrote in *Vers une architecture*:

One must go and see Pompeii, which is moving in its rectitude . . . Outside of Rome, where there was air, they built Hadrian's Villa. There you meditate on Roman grandeur. There they imposed order. It is the first grand ordonnance of the West . . . But careful, architecture is not just ordonnance. Ordonnance is one of the fundamental prerogatives of architecture. To walk about Hadrian's Villa and say to oneself that the

modern power of organization that is “Roman” has yet to do anything: what a torment for a man who feels himself party and accomplice to this confounding mess!

[. . .] Strength of intention and classification of elements, that is proof of a turn of mind: strategy, legislation. The architecture is responsive to these intentions, *it renders*. The light caresses the pure forms: *it renders*.⁸⁰

In the footsteps of Janus, the Mediterranean god with two faces, Le Corbusier constantly kept the dialectical relationship between the antique and the modern, between the echo of an ancestral harmony that derives from the remote classical past and the will to understand and to dominate the new force of the industrial universe. Paradoxically, Le Corbusier never ceased to repeat that it was the very anti-academic “re-reading” of the antique that revealed to him the foundational principles of modernity.

Furthermore, it would be easy to retrace the network of fine threads that linked the observation upon the ruins to the very conception of his projects. It is enough to think about the pergolas of the Casa Sallustio, photographed and drawn in October 1911 in Pompeii, then re-proposed (the year after), almost faithfully – as Gresleri noted – in the garden of the Jeanneret House in La Chaux-de-Fonds.⁸¹ Equally convincing is the analogy – signaled by Kurt Forster – between the composition of the Maison La Roche Jeanneret and the sketches for the *Casa del Poeta Tragica*, also in Pompeii.⁸² It is in the same way that the memory of the white volumes of rural architecture would return in the projects of the “purist” phase of the 1920s, giving even more credence to the individuation of a genealogical ascendancy of an esthetic abstracted from the “Mediterranean myth.” Yet, what matters most is the *visual* legacy of the travels, which remained engraved in the deepest of his memory and kept resurfacing, as a karstic river, throughout the entire adventure of his ideas.⁸³

Likewise, one must start from Le Corbusier’s expressed doubts, from his disquieting interrogation about what we call “progress,” to understand the authentic meaning of his “modernity” and the challenge launched by a David against the gigantic forces of the machinist civilization in order to submit them to a cultural project. In 1911 he wrote in Pompeii:

Why is our progress so ugly?

Why is it that those who still have a virgin blood like to take the worst from us? Does one have taste in art? Isn’t it dry Theory than to do more of it? Will one ever do Harmony again? [. . .] We have sanctuaries left to go and cry and doubt forever. There, one knows nothing of today, one lives in the old days; there the tragic comes close to exultant joy; one is completely shaken because the isolation is complete. . . . It is on the Acropolis, on the steps of the Parthenon, it is in Pompeii, along its streets.⁸⁴

His passion for the archaic civilizations never fell into a regressive nostalgia, or, worse, into the mimesis of the past that often ends in parody. Even more interesting was the conceptual distance that separated the “modern” vision of Le Corbusier from the visceral “anti-past” attitude of the most radical avant-garde. From the same Venice that Marinetti had earlier described, without periphrasis, as the “*cloaca massima del passatismo*” (great sewer of traditionalism), Le Corbusier extracted in the summer of 1923 an extraordinary lesson on the “visible,” or, as Stanislaus von Moos demonstrated, on the relationship between the perception of the architectural form and the hourly variation of the solar intensity.⁸⁵

London, A. Papadakis, 1999. Also see Jacques-Ignace Hittorff, *L’architecture polychrome chez les Grecs*, Paris, 1830; 1815 first edition.

⁸⁰ Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2007, pp. 198–200. Also see Giuliano Gresleri, “Il silenzio delle pietre, le parole dei numeri, la solitudine, il ‘deflagrante ricordo,’” in Benedetto Gravagnuolo (ed.), *Le Corbusier e l’Antico*, pp. 71–83.

⁸¹ Giuliano Gresleri, “Il poema orientale,” in *Le Corbusier. Il linguaggio delle pietre*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1988, p. 34.

⁸² Kurt W. Forster, “Antiquity and Modernity in the La Roche-Jeanneret Houses of 1923,” in *Oppositions* 15–16, 1973, pp. 131ff.

⁸³ See Mogens Krustrup, “Tutto è questione di perseveranza, di lavoro e di coraggio,” *Le Corbusier. Il Linguaggio delle pietre*, pp. 41ff.

⁸⁴ Le Corbusier, note dated from Pompeii on October 8, 1911, in Giuliano Gresleri, *Les Voyages d’Allemagne-Carnets/Voyage d’Orient-Carnets*, Carnets d’Orient no. 4, p. 137.

⁸⁵ See Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier. Album La Roche*, New York, Monacelli Press, 1997, pp. 24–40. Also see Stanislaus von Moos, “La leçon de Venise,” in *Le Corbusier e l’Antico*, pp. 84–97.

⁸⁶ The complete photographic corpus of the young Jeanneret during his 1911 journey was curated by Giuliano Gresleri in the exhibition at the Palazzo Reale di Napoli in 1996–97. See also, Leo Schubert, "Jeanneret, the City, and Photography," in *Le Corbusier Before Le Corbusier*, pp. 54–67.

⁸⁷ See the above-mentioned *Il Linguaggio delle pietre* (note 80).

⁸⁸ See Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*, Genève, Rousseau, 1970; *Le Corbusier pittore e scultore*, Milano, Mondadori, 1986; Heidi Weber (ed.), *Le Corbusier. The Artist. Works from Heidi Weber Collection*, Zürich, 1988.

⁸⁹ See Benedetto Gravagnuolo, "Viaggi nelle classicità: da Schinkel a Semper," in Carlo Cresti (ed.), *Gottfried Semper. Aggiunte e digressioni*, Firenze, Pontecorboli, 1995.

In fact, the juvenile "vibrations" of the *Voyage d'Orient* had already been fixed on the four hundred photographic plates made with his rudimentary camera Cupido 80, and in the drawings and writings of his *Carnets*, later re-elaborated upon his return to Switzerland.⁸⁶ In April of 1912, Charles-Edouard Jeanneret exhibited in Neuchâtel a series of watercolors, grouped under the title *Language des Pierres*, and partly re-presented the year after in the prestigious exhibition of the Salon d'Automne in Paris,⁸⁷ five years before he painted *La cheminée* (1918) in a celebrated episode of the purist period. It was the first exhibition where he declared his passion for painting – a never appeased passion that would develop during his entire life.⁸⁸ The osmosis between these two forms of "visible thinking" was so continuous along his career that Theodor Fontane's metaphor about Karl Friedrich Schinkel seems entirely appropriate to Le Corbusier's own career: "he painted as an architect, and he built as a painter."⁸⁹

This sensibility to color induced the young Jeanneret to put the constructions of architecture in close relationship with the chromatic context of their *locus*. As a result, the landscape, the intensity of light and the climatic temperature, along with the colors of the stones, the trees, the skies and other natural elements, became decisive corollaries of the beauty of architecture beyond the measurable proportions of the academic tradition. Yet it would be eminently reductive to interpret these works as simple analytical exercises about the relationship between architectonic *text* and landscape *context*. The pictorial research surged with a relative formal autonomy from the representative content, delivering in the figuration of the landscapes along the "road to Eleusis" genuine summits of absolute lyricism. Leaning even more toward new emotional horizons is the transfiguration of the hills of Pera and Istanbul into mauve or rotten-green blemishes that detach themselves from the backdrop of the Sea of Marmara. In the memory of the painter, the drawings of the things observed merge with the things imagined, and they acquire the taints of dreamy colors, fresh and "fauve": they vibrate from the blood red to the cobalt blue in the celebrated variations on the oblique views of the Parthenon (plate 12). The stones of architecture seem to speak the Homer-like language of the trees, within the metaphysical immobility of the "unspeakable space." Everything is improbable and, at the same time, deeply real, as a journey in time, replete with colored spectra and, further inside, with the darkest ink which frequently dominates the serene and blue scintillation of the Mediterranean waters.

The journey faraway is by definition the movement of the self toward an *elsewhere*, toward another *locus* far from one's homeland and cultural traditions. The photographs, the drawings, the annotations, and sketches of the *Carnets* reveal the interest of the young Jeanneret, not only for the sacred precincts of architecture but also for the handcrafted objects, for the country vases, for the clothes, faces, and bodies of the peoples; in other words, for the anthropological culture in its largest sense. Suffice to allude to the drawings *View of the seraglio from the Bosphorus*, with its depiction of colored sails caught in the wind; or *Garden of an interior courtyard*, which shows rural artifacts in the surroundings of Kazanlak; or the photographs *Fountain of Istanbul, with woman, child and dog*, the *Tomb cippus with character seen from behind at Eyüp*, or *Cart pulled by ox* showing hieratic monks with their large black tunics, immobile in the silence of Mount Athos.

Before becoming notorious under the pseudonym of Le Corbusier, the young student interpreted, with "eyes that know how to see" the latent correlation

between the *culture de l'habiter* (culture of living) and the *culture du construire* (culture of building). This association surfaced with “magisterial simplicity” during the four months spent in the Orient – in the West, it was being lost under the Babel-like blanket of styles, packed one on top of the other or confused together in “dubious, horrendous and disgusting conglomerates.”⁹⁰ This notwithstanding, this aptitude to “know how to see” beyond architecture always remained the tenuous yet traceable thread that interconnects his “mental journeys” into the labyrinth of heterogeneous civilizations, even after his decision to abandon the camera for the pencil, more adept at forcing the mind to interpret the visible than the mechanical shutter. *Les femmes d'Alger*, sketched with all the sensual fascination of their “abundant curves” suggests one source of inspiration for the fluidity of the Plan Obus.⁹¹ Likewise, the great gestures at the regional scale for Montevideo, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro derived unequivocally from the “view from above” that he experienced from the aircrafts of Mermoz and Saint-Exupéry.⁹² As for the *hybris* of the Chandigarh Capitol, it cannot be understood without recalling Le Corbusier’s discussion of the rediscovery, amidst the faraway *terres d'Orient*, of “the fundamental human activities, linked to cosmic elements like the sun, the moon, the waters, the seeds, the fructification.”⁹³ That the Mediterranean represented a polar star in the design journey of Le Corbusier is thus undeniable. A further proof can be found in the autobiographical notes written in the *cabanon* during the month of July 1965, a couple of days before the fatal drowning in the waters of Cap-Martin:

Along those years I have become a man of everywhere. I have traveled across the continents. Yet, I have only one deep attachment: the Mediterranean. I am a Mediterranean, strongly . . . Mediterranean, Queen of form and light. Light and space. . . . My recreations, my roots, they must be found in the sea that I have never ceased to like. . . . The sea is movement, and endless horizon.⁹⁴

What thus is the legacy of these reiterated odysseys in the Mediterranean? The key of the enigma can very probably be found in the prologue, apparently out of context, that Le Corbusier pronounced in Athens on August 3, 1933, in front of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) members:

I have attempted to act and create a work of harmony and humanity. I have done it with the Acropolis deep inside me, in the stomach. My work has been honest, loyal, obstinate, sincere. It is the essential truth that made me a challenger, somebody who proposes something else . . . One has accused me of being a revolutionary . . . It is the Acropolis, which made me a rebel . . . The Greek spirit has remained the symbol of control: mathematical rigor and law of numbers bring us harmony . . . And now, to get it over with the Acropolis, in the name of harmony, we must in the whole world, without weakness and with a valiant soul, create harmony. The word truly expresses the *raison d'être* of the present times. In the name of the Acropolis, a strong harmony, triumphant, unailing, invulnerable.⁹⁵

Harmony and not symmetry: the word has a wide significance, irreducible to the banal academic exercises of bilateral and axial symmetry. The rediscovery of the *esprit grec* was to become an initiation voyage across the secrets of the numbers that explain the beauty of the visible forms. Major steps in this pilgrimage will be the neo-Pythagorean principles of the *tracés régulateurs*, the esoteric fascination for the golden section, and their extreme logical conclusion:

⁹⁰ Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'Orient*, English edition, p. 347.

⁹¹ This hypothesis was first suggested by Stanislaus von Moos in his essay “Les femmes d'Algers,” in *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, Marseille, Ed. Parenthèses, 1987, p. 195.

⁹² See Le Corbusier, *Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1991.

⁹³ Le Corbusier, *L'échelle humaine* (The Human Scale), speech at the VIII CIAM of Hoddesdon. See *CIAM 8: The Core*, CIAM, 1951.

⁹⁴ Le Corbusier, handwritten note transcribed in *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, p. 7.

⁹⁵ Le Corbusier, “Air, son, lumière,” (Air, Sound, Light), speech held on August 3, 1933, at CIAM IV, in *Technica Xeonika*, B IV no. 44–45–46, 1933. Also see Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism 1928–1960*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2000.

⁹⁶ Le Corbusier, *The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale, Universally Applicable to Architecture and Mechanics*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1968 [1954]. Also see the discussion about Severini, Ghyka, and Valéry in the section *Magical Realisms* of this essay.

⁹⁷ Le Corbusier, *Sur les quatre routes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1941.

⁹⁸ The drawing is from Auguste Choisy, *Histoire de l'architecture*, Paris, Gauthier-Villars, 1899, p. 415.

⁹⁹ Auguste Choisy, p. 419.

¹⁰⁰ Gino Pollini, "Il IV CIAM," in *Parametro*, no. 52, December 1976. On the congress, see *Texnika-Xeonika*, op. cit.; *Quadrante* 5, September 1933, and *Quadrante* 13, May 1934.

¹⁰¹ Gino Pollini, "Cronache del quarto Congresso Internazionale di Architettura Moderna e delle vicende relative alla sua organizzazione," in *Parametro* 52, December 1976, pp. 19–21.

the theory of the Modulor.⁹⁶ Yet, the extraordinary pages that Auguste Choisy dedicated to the Acropolis may very well have been the true catalyst for Le Corbusier's reassessment of the complex game of calibrated "asymmetries." Every architecture is rational and symmetrical, but their disposition on the ground, out of axis and in apparent autonomy, can be read in a "picturesque" manner as one proceeds along the emotional sequence of perspectival stations.⁹⁷ In 1922 he had borrowed Choisy's drawing of the Acropolis as the frontispiece of his "third advertisement to the architects."⁹⁸ The parallelism of thought between the architect and the historian can be read in Choisy's following lines:

And so behaves nature: the leaves of a plant are symmetrical, the tree is a balanced mass. Symmetry dominates its every part, but the whole merely follows the laws of harmony, of which the word *balance* translates both the image and the physical expression.⁹⁹

Voyages into Harmony

The Mediterranean echo found further international resonance in the CIAM congress of 1933, "taking place aboard a beautiful ship, the *Patris II*, on a cruise from Marseille to Athens."¹⁰⁰ Not to be underestimated is the symbolic value of this itinerary in *mare nostrum*, whose final destination was the mythical Athens. The voyage started on July 29 at the port of Marseille, wrapped that day in an exotic halo imprinted on the film shot on board by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Gino Pollini remembers:

The meetings took place on the decks, sheltered by the curtains, in a ventilated atmosphere, full of light and sun, on a calm sea. Gropius, Breuer, and almost the whole German group were absent . . . On the afternoon of August 1, we disembarked in Athens; the following day was dedicated to visiting the city. So we went up to the Acropolis – us, with emotion, as it was our first time – with Le Corbusier who recalled the twenty-one days he had passed up there many years ago. With this memory, he introduced the following day his discourse *Air, sound, and light* [. . .] The Temple to Athena Nike, the Parthenon, everything appeared regulated by laws not taken for granted . . . At Cape Sunio, in Delphi, in Epidauro, we were able in the following days to find an ulterior confirmation . . . Even in the islands, architecture appeared marked by valid rules, even if not always evident, deriving from typology and, among other things, the factors of climate and the ways in which single edifices were grouped and placed in relation to the site. The Mediterranean population appeared to have expressed in this way a rapport between their very poverty and an essentially rational action. The feeling of ancient tradition was certainly in their consciousness, but it could not blossom on the surface of the Congress' works. This would have been, aside from being out of the theme, irreconcilable with a general diffuse restraint of the time.¹⁰¹

From the direct testimony of a participant, we find confirmed the influence that an indiscrete fascination with the Hellenic myth exercised, even on this intransigent Congress, which sanctioned the principles of the "modern functional city." Yet that "diffuse restraint" would surrender a little afterwards to an undisclosed apology of ancient Mediterranean civilization. The animator of this infatuation was principally Le Corbusier, who was a collaborator in those years of *Plans*, an unequivocally "rightist" magazine (1930–33) and of *Prélude*, another French organ of "regionalist action" ambiguously placed along a "line

of demarcation between fascism and collectivism" (1933–35). And it is precisely from the cultural alliance between *Prélude* and the Italian magazine *Quadrante* that the idea was born for a "plan d'organisation européenne" among France, Italy, Spain, and Algeria on the basis of acknowledgment of climatic axes.¹⁰² When Le Corbusier was invited to give two lectures at the Roman *Circolo delle Arti e delle Lettere* in July 1934, he proclaimed, "Rome is the highest potential of Latin and Greco-Latin cultures, under the sky of a Mediterranean fatality." And he added, "Rome is still today, amidst the universal tumult, at the place that its authority conquered, an authority that is capable of claiming its message in the face of the whole world."¹⁰³

Yet, one cannot discard a possible premeditation in attempting to capture the benevolence of Mussolini, a personification of the mythified "authority," in order to obtain the commission to design Pontinia, the third new town in the reclamation program of the Pontine Marshes. In November of the same year Le Corbusier sent the Duce a dedicated copy of the second volume of the *Oeuvre complète*, and two years later he proposed a project of transformation of Addis Ababa into a large "garden city."

Edoardo Persico's disdain is more than understandable, when in an incisive essay from 1934 entitled "Punto a capo per l'architettura," he expressed a severe and sarcastic judgment against the equation *latinità = mediterraneità* – acted out opportunistically by the Italian rationalists in order to sanction the cachet of their own "tendency" of "art of the State" – and against the charming thought of *climats* and *cultures* brought up by Le Corbusier.¹⁰⁴ His scorn came undoubtedly from his distinctly "religious" and authentically anti-fascist point of view.

It would be mistaken, however, to keep evaluating an "aesthetic" formulation in "ethical" terms. At least as originally intended, *mediterraneità* was prevalently a poetic game, a literary metaphor, a neo-Pythagorean allegory of number and cosmic rhythm, a metaphysical desire to rediscover, through the proportional relationships of the golden section, the abstract and mathematical laws of beauty. It was a fantastic pretext for ungluing from the skies Icarus's wings and re-plunging them into the Homeric waters of Ulysses's peregrination.

It was not by chance that Le Corbusier dedicated some extraordinarily fascinating watercolors to the illustration of the *Iliad* in February of 1955 (plate 11). Recluse in the spiritual cave of the Cap-Martin *cabanon*, he applied sanguine colors to the eighteenth-century neoclassical designs of John Flaxman chosen by the publishing house Les Portiques to illustrate the pages of the *Iliad*.¹⁰⁵ The conflict between the pale serenity of Arcadia and the chromatic passion of tragedy is unequivocal. The vivifying breath of the fight between Eros and Thanatos, understood in the Homeric song, is re-evoked in unparallelled Dionysian inebriation. In these apparently minor drawings, Le Corbusier revealed symptomatically the most secret aspects of his psyche, perennially oscillating between extreme poles – a desire for harmony on the one hand and a phobia of silence on the other. If we ignore this intimate and perennial tension between order and chaos, sphere and labyrinth, classicism and avant-garde, we cannot understand the authentic sense of his poetics. "I think that if one recognizes some meaning in my work as an architect, it is to this secret labor that one should attribute a profound value" – these were the words suggested by Le Corbusier to accompany his famous drawing of 1948, which depicts the timeless mask of solar rays and knots of serpents.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² For a further discussion of the CIAM IV and, in particular, of the influence of José Luis Sert on Le Corbusier, see Antonio Pizzi, "The Mediterranean: Creation and Development of a Myth," in *J.L.L. Sert and Mediterranean Culture*, Barcelona, Col·legi d'arquitectes de Catalunya, 1977, pp. 12–45; and in the same work, Josep Rovira, "Arquitectura: El Mediterráneo es su cuna," pp. 46–79. Also see the monograph by Rovira, *José Luis Sert, 1901–1983*.

¹⁰³ Le Corbusier, "Urbanismo e architettura secondo Le Corbusier," in *Quadrante* 13, May 1934.

¹⁰⁴ Edoardo Persico, "Punto e a capo per l'architettura," in *Domus*, November 1934, also in Giulia Veronesi (ed.), *Edoardo Persico. Tutte le opere (1923–1935)*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1964. The essay can be considered as a fundamental bibliographical source on the theme of the *mediterraneità*.

¹⁰⁵ Those drawings remained unpublished for a long time; they were finally discovered and subtly interpreted by Danish scholar Mogens Krustup in an edition of 1986. See Mogens Krustup, *Le Corbusier, l'Iliade, Dessins*, Copenhagen, Krustup, 1986; also in Mogens Krustup, *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, pp. 200–209.

¹⁰⁶ See Bruno Salvatore Messina, *Le Corbusier. Eros e Logos*, Napoli, Clean, 1987.

¹⁰⁷ Gino Severini, *Ragionamenti sulle arti figurative*, Milano, Hoepli, 1936, p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ Waldemar George, *Profits et pertes de l'art contemporain*, Paris, Editions Chroniques du jour, 1933.

¹⁰⁹ Edoardo Persico, *Relazione per il concorso del Salone d'Onore*, Milano, 1935.

¹¹⁰ Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel, *Architettura rurale italiana*, Milano, Hoepli, 1936, p. 76.

Contemporary Mediterranean mythology does not lack an esoteric tension, pagan and mystical in its own way, which should not be confused with Christian spirituality. As Gino Severini clarified:

One can say that there exists a diabolical spirituality as well as a religious spirituality. The first can be directed towards magic, a sense of the hidden and the mysterious, the demonic, the sensual. For example, certain Greek hermaphroditic idols, certain idols and black masks, and numerous cases in the Italian Renaissance.¹⁰⁷

The predilection for the classical narcotic, for Apollonian ecstasy, for the abandonment to the sensual call of the Mediterranean's hermaphroditic idols is a piece of historical fact widespread in the culture of those years. It spread well beyond the French and Italian boundaries, where it had found fertile ground from which to draw nourishment. "The European spirit can find consciousness of its own apostolate only if it can recognize the legitimacy of its own Hellenic and Latin affiliation" – one reads in an essay by Waldemar George, which was promptly translated into Italian in 1933 by Ardengo Soffici.¹⁰⁸ And Persico, having overcome the contingent motivations of the polemic, would realize in the Salone d'Onore at the VI Triennale of Milan (in collaboration with Marcello Nizzoli and Giancarlo Palanti, and with the insertion of figurative sculpture by Lucio Fontana) an installation that "re-exalts, in a new aspect, the ancient principle of the 'colonnato' (colonnade)." In relation to the project, he added that "the classical taste of the composition is legitimate in its addressing of the rationalist movement for whom the aspiration for a new European renaissance has always been alive."¹⁰⁹

It should not be forgotten, however, that the International Exposition of Architecture of that same VI Triennale of 1936 was dominated by the exhibition *L'architettura rurale nel bacino del Mediterraneo* (Rural architecture in the cradle of the Mediterranean), curated by Guarniero Daniel and Giuseppe Pagano – the latter was Persico's significant road companion. The exhibition represented in a certain sense the synthesis of the studies on the "anonymous" constructions of vernacular architecture. One reads in the description of the exhibit,

It should not surprise us then if, from the study of the casual rural Mediterranean and particularly the Italian Mediterranean, some of the most intelligent architects from northern Europe . . . have discovered the emotional power of the poet/builder, substituting it to the craft of the conventional set designer. The flat roof, the pure blocks with a minimum of decorative objects and accidents, the horizontal window, the non-symmetrical composition, the expressive force of the flat wall, the influence of the surrounding countryside and above all the unprejudiced functional coherence and technique are evidently readable in these works of rural architecture. Functionality has always been the fundamental logic of architecture. Only the presumption of a society in love with appearances could forget this law that is both external and human at the same time. Today this law has been re-discovered and is now defended not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for the moral necessity of clarity and honesty.¹¹⁰

1.8 Luigi Cosenza. Top right: Patio of Villa Cernia, Capri, 1966–67. Bottom right: Patio of the Olivetti factory, Pozzuoli, 1951–54.

Source: *Luigi Cosenza. L'opera completa*, Naples, 1987.

Photo Mimmo Jodice.

The cultural priority characterized by "Mediterranean" architecture in confrontation with European Rationalism for the definition of a purist language had been alleged in the preceding year by Enrico Peressutti in the pages of *Quadrante* and even earlier by Gio Ponti in articles published in *Domus* and collected in 1933 in the brief volume *La casa all'italiana*.¹¹¹ Ponti would further



¹¹¹ "Architectures of white walls, rectangular or square, horizontal or vertical; architectures of voids and solids, of colors and forms, of geometries and proportions. . . an heritage that, discovered by Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies van der Rohe, was camouflaged as a novelty of Nordic origin, as an invention of the twentieth century." From Enrico Peressutti, "Architettura mediterranea," in *Quadrante* 21, January 1935; Gio Ponti. See Giò Ponti, *La casa all'italiana*, Milano, 1933, pp. 9–11; see reprint in Fulvio Irace, *La casa all'italiana*, Milano, Electa, 1988.

¹¹² Gio Ponti, *Architettura mediterranea*, Milano, 1941. See Lisa Licitra Ponti, *Gio Ponti: The Complete Work, 1923–1978*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1990.

¹¹³ On colonial architecture, see Riccardo Mariani, "Trasformazione del territorio e città di nuova fondazione," in *Gli Anni Trenta*, pp. 285–299. From the same author, see *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1976, which analyzes the theme of the "rural" ideology in new foundations. Also see Giuliano Gresleri, Pier Giorgio Massaretti, and Stefano Zagnoni (eds.), *Architettura italiana d'oltremare, 1870–1940*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1993.

¹¹⁴ On Luigi Cosenza's research on Mediterranean architecture, see Benedetto Gravagnuolo, "Colloquio con Luigi Cosenza," in *Modo* 60, Giugno-Luglio 1983. Also see Gianni Cosenza and Francesco Domenico Moccia (eds.), *Luigi Cosenza. L'opera completa*, Napoli, Electa, 1987. On Bernard Rudofsky see Andrea Bocco Guarneri's essay in this book and *Bernard Rudofsky: A Humane Designer*, Wien/New York, Springer, 2003.

¹¹⁵ See Cherubino Gambardella, *Casa sul Golfo: abitare la costa napoletana 1930–1945*, Napoli, Gambardella, 1993.

¹¹⁶ "I designed the landscape" responded Malaparte, as a rhetorical paradox, to Marshall Rommel during the visit to the villa, described in *La Pelle*, Roma/Milano, 1949. English translation: *The Skin*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1952.

¹¹⁷ "The day I started to build a house, I did not think that I would have designed a self-portrait." From Curzio Malaparte, "Ritratto di pietra" (Capri, 1940), first published in *Proceedings of the Conference First Soviet-Italian Symposium on Macromolecules in the Functioning Cells*, Capri, 1978, New York, Plenum Press, 1979. On Casa Malaparte see Marida Talamona, *Casa Malaparte*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1992; see also Gianni Pettena, *Casa Malaparte Capri*, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1999.

¹¹⁸ Manfredo Tafuri, "L'ascesi e il gioco. Il metaforico naviglio di Malaparte e Libera a Capri," in *Gran Bazar* 15, 1981, pp. 92–99.

experiment in the villa in Bordighera of 1938 with the operative and anti-picturesque reinterpretation of the canons of traditional construction, polemically writing in his essay *Architettura mediterranea* against the mimetic vulgarity and the false historicalness of the contemporary French productions in "style provençal."¹¹² If one considers that *Quadrante* of Bardi and Bontempelli, *Casabella* of Pagano, and *Domus* of Ponti were the most culturally established magazines in those years, one can understand the impact that the Mediterranean question had on the Italian architectonic debate, beyond such inevitable divergences of opinion or maybe because of them.

So many partisans of anti-north provincialism or exalted nationalism would eventually adhere to such lines of inquiry that they found their ideological outlet, after the Mussolini proclamation of May 9, 1936, on the conquest of the "Empire," in colonial building exported to Libya, Ethiopia, Somalia, and in other northeastern areas of Africa.¹¹³ More than unjust, it would be wrong, however, to express a liquidating judgment on the entire thematic without deepening the analysis and making the necessary distinctions between the different and often hurriedly conflated positions. One thinks, for instance, of the depth of the architectonic thought of Luigi Cosenza, who knew how to immerse himself in a profound analysis of the typological characteristics of the vernacular building of Capri, Ischia, Procida, and the Sorrentian and Amalfitan coast. He rediscovered the essentialness of that ancient simplicity, without drowning in the vulgar copy of local folkloric elements.¹¹⁴ Special mention must be made for the Villa Oro (1936–37, designed with Bernard Rudofsky) and, after the war, for the Villa Cernia in Anacapri (1966–67), where he transformed the theme of the Pompeian *impluvium* in a "modern" key.¹¹⁵ Likewise, in the Olivetti factory at Pozzuoli (1951–54), he used the "Pompeian" courtyard to great effect.

Yet, it is the house of the writer Curzio Malaparte built in Capri between 1937 and 1942 that is without a doubt one of the highest peaks of the constructive lyricism inspired by *mediterraneità*. Perhaps it is the exceptional natural scenery that transcends the inimitable perfection of the "metaphysical" game (plates 1, 3).¹¹⁶ Cave-like with its red mass floating between the gray of Cape Massullo and the blue of the sky, this "*ritratto di me stesso*" which the arch-Italian Malaparte wanted to construct, was not by chance the center of international critical attention.¹¹⁷ The thirty-three steps of the staircase, which widens toward the top as an inclined plane of Pythagorean ascendance, lead with mystical crescendo to the *solarium*, which is suspended without protection and dominated by a hermetic white veil petrified in windless Olympus. As Manfredo Tafuri noted,

[the] Greek absoluteness of the architecture of Libera [and Malaparte] becomes a *simulacrum* of a *ratio* that has become elliptical, which resolves perfectly in itself, which has severed every bridge with the world of utility and action [. . .] A timeless, archaic swimmer that oscillates between memories of Mediterranean building and games of abstraction, are paginated on its facades.¹¹⁸

Even in the interior of this home/refuge, allegories weave together in enigmatic reflections: beginning with the great room, with its floor that evokes the ancient Appian way, from which rise the false bases of Doric columns supporting singular wooden tables, and a fireplace that "perforates" the wall in front of the sculpture of Pericle Fazzini, allowing a view of the distant movement of the sea which mixes with the flames of fire. Finally, in the studio, with its floor designed by Alberto Savinio in the form of a lyre, the Roman bath with its tub carved into

the marble, and the room of the “favorite,” with tiles and traditional decorations that climb the walls in order to cover the fireplace corner.¹¹⁹

All of this complex and ambiguous fermentation of ideas found an inevitable end with the beginning of the war. After the conflict the new ideological winds of reconstruction definitively swept away the ashes of this esotericism. Only Giò Ponti and especially Alberto Sartoris would return to the theme in 1948 with *Ordre et climat méditerranéens*, the first volume of the *Encyclopédie de l'architecture nouvelle*.¹²⁰ But the attention of the theoretical debate was already focused elsewhere.

What remains today of that mythology? Apparently nothing! Even the postmodern tendencies that are decidedly inspired by the past are inclined to a spectacular, ironic, and self-publicizing use of stylistic elements borrowed from the roof of history, rather than to a search for the magical and rarefied atmospheres of the neo-Pythagorism of those years. It is nevertheless not to be excluded that the echo soaked in that ancient nostalgia could return to exercise its magnetic call, because the need for harmony seems to be a kind of ancestral instinct, stronger than its own functional needs. ■

¹¹⁹ On Libera, see Giulio Carlo Argan, *Adalberto Libera*, Roma, Editalia, 1975; Vieri Quilici, *Adalberto Libera. Architettura come ideale*, Roma, Oficina, 1981; *Adalberto Libera. Opera completa*, Milano, Electa, 1989.

¹²⁰ Alberto Sartoris, *Encyclopédie de l'architecture nouvelle. Ordre et climat méditerranéens*, vol. 1, Milano, Hoepli, 1948.



1.9 Curzio Malaparte.
Rooftop terrace of Casa
Malaparte, Capri.

Source: Photo Petra Lieb-Osborne, Munich-Miami.