The Thing Itself

AA Files and the Fates of Architectural Theory

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The Thing Itself

AA Files and the Fates of Architectural Theory

*I shall never rest until I know that all my ideas are
derived not from hearsay or tradition but from
a real living contact with the things themselves*

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe,
Italian Journey, 1816

Thomas Weaver

Contents

Introduction

Charles Laughton as Quasimodo the hunchback
The Hunchback of Notre-dame, 1939,
directed by William Dieterle

1. This translation is a synthesis of the three principal English versions of Hugo's text, by Isabel Florence Hapgood, from 1888 (accessible online at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2610/2610-h/2610-h.htm#link2HCH0023), by John Sturrock, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (London: Penguin, 1978), and more recently by Alban Krailsheimer, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

2. Ibid. Sturrock and Krailsheimer agree on the translation of this last formulation; while Hapgood's version offers a slightly more antiquated, 'It is upon this word that this book is founded.'

3. See Robert Beekes, 'Ananke', *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

4. The revelation that Frollo is the author of the inscription immediately explains the fact that it is no longer visible – a detail Hugo casually drops into his introduction: 'Since then, the wall has either been distempered or scraped (I forget which) and the inscription has gone', Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, translated by John Sturrock, op cit, p 25.

5. Ibid, pp 187–88.

6. See Narciso Menocal, 'Frank Lloyd Wright as the Anti-Victor Hugo', in Craig Zabel and Susan Scott Munshower, *American Public Architecture: European Roots and Native Expressions*, Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University, vol 5 (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1989), pp 139–50, especially p 142. As Menocal also writes, the commentators who ascribe Hugo's gothicism most closely to Robelin include the late-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literary critics Maurice Dreyfous, Edmond Biré and Léon Séché.

7. John Sturrock, ibid, p 19.

8. The original text is published in *Revue des deux mondes*, tome 5, 1832, pp 607–22. A translation by Max Eskin is accessible online at: http://maxeskin.com/blog/2015/06/30/war-on-the-demolishers. For further reading on Hugo's enduring relationship with architecture see, especially, Jean Mallion, *Victor Hugo et l'art architectural* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), C W Thompson, *Victor Hugo and the Graphic Arts, 1820–33* (Geneva: Droz, 1970), Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), and also Maarten Delbecke, 'A Book Accessible to All', *AA Files* 69 (2014), pp 118–22.

‘A few years ago', Victor Hugo writes, 'while visiting, or rather rummaging about, Notre-Dame, the author of this book found in a dark recess of one of the cathedral's towers the following word engraved on the wall: ΑΝΆΓΚΗ. These Greek capitals – black with age, cut into the stone, with certain characteristics of gothic calligraphy somehow stamped on their form and attitude as if to reveal that it was a medieval hand that had written them, and above all with a dismal sense of inevitability conveyed by them – made a deep impression on the author.'[1] And so begins the first lines of perhaps Hugo's most famous work, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, a romantic horror story written over the course of an intense, five-month-long *charrette* in the mid-nineteenth century, yet whose narrative is located squarely in the late fifteenth century, and which recounts the plight of Esmeralda the gypsy, Quasimodo the hunchback and Claude Frollo the villainous archdeacon. But more resonantly, as its title suggests, *Notre-Dame de Paris* is also the story of a building. The book was originally published in 1831, although what has come to be regarded as the definitive, expanded edition came out a year later. Common to both versions, though, is Hugo's introductory note, which sells itself as a kind of preface, and one whose tone quickly shifts from third- to first-person, and with it, from a certain dry instruction to something more unabashedly personal, even if the reader ultimately discovers that this prelude is not a digression parallel to the main narrative, but *is* the main narrative – a point made explicit by the last line of Hugo's introduction, 'This book was written about that word.'[2]
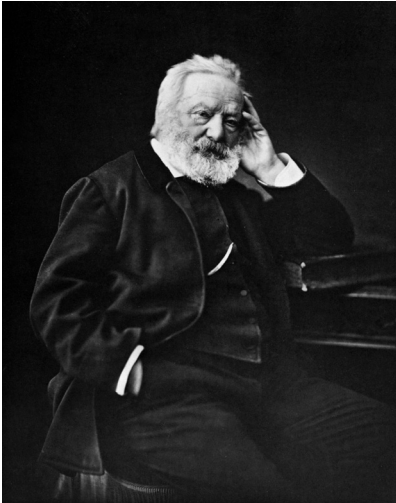
ΑΝΆΓΚΗ, or rather *Ananke* (from the Greek άνάγκη, meaning force, constraint or necessity), refers to one of the primordial Greek deities and the personification of circumstance. Marking the beginning of the cosmos, alongside her father and consort, Chronos (the personification of time), Ananke is considered the mother of all destiny, itself personified as the Fates, which in turn gives us perhaps the best English translation of the word, 'fatality'.[3] For the uninitiated, however, even a cursory etymological description such as this was denied readers of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, for somewhat at odds with the apparent didacticism of Hugo's preamble, none of this information is revealed in his opening address. The novel, in this way, establishes a cliff-hanger at the end of the very first page: what does this word mean, or even what fatality might it divine?

Such drama is only heightened by the fact that it takes a second edition of the novel, released the following year, and more than half that particular book to unfold, before the reader meets the same word again, first as a chapter header (Book Seven, Chapter Four) and then within the narrative itself, when Dom Claude Frollo is described carving the word into a wall in the cathedral's tower, guided by a pair of compasses (thus effectively collapsing what was initially set up as a historical detail into the realms of the fictive and fantastical).[4]

The fate that Frollo appears to have inscribed with this apparently obscure graffito, and Hugo seems to have held as defining mantra to the entire novel, is revealed in the famous passage in which an evangelising Frollo delivers a sermon not about faith but about architecture, and in the process offers up a formulation now more famous than any Greek deity:

> *The archdeacon contemplated the gigantic cathedral for a time in silence, then he sighed and stretched out his right hand towards the printed book lying open on his table and his left towards Notre-Dame, and looked sadly from the book to the church: 'Alas', he said, 'this will kill that' … 'small things overcome great ones! A tooth triumphs over a body. The Nile rat kills the crocodile, the swordfish kills the whale, the book will kill the building'.*[5]

Victor Hugo, photographed by Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachon), *c* 1870

9. From the caption text of the Charles Meryon Notre-Dame etchings at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and accessible online at: https://vmfaeducation.tumblr.com/post/154210435676/notre-dame-cathedral-begun-1163-one-of-the.

10. One of Viollet-le-Duc's most iconic additions, as part of this restoration, was the cathedral's lead-covered oak spire or *flèche* (a more contemporary detail deliberately left out of Meyron's more medievalist etchings). This spire crumbled in the devastating fire on 15 April 2019.

11. Victor Hugo, 'Note Added to the Definitive Edition of 1832', *Notre-Dame de Paris*, op cit, p 27. As much as Hugo's 'War on the Demolishers!' harangues various unfortunate town councillors and municipalities for their failure to protect gothic and medieval architecture (in particular the councillors of Laon, in north-east France, for knocking down a famous old tower in their ancient city), a broader target is a more contemporary architecture of neo-classicism, which he deems inappropriate for northern Europe. In this sense, his pamphlet, and the embellished *Notre-Dame de Paris* which emerged from it, represent a French version of A W N Pugin's equally polemical *Contrasts, Or a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day* (London: Charles Dolman, 1836), published just four years later, and which rails against very much the same thing.

This passage appears in the middle of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, but in many ways it represents its true end – a *denouement* supported by its adjacency to an additional authorial excursus also titled 'This Will Kill That' (a kind of afterword placed in the centre of the book, and which, together with a new, supplementary note at the beginning, demarcated this second, 1832, edition as 'definitive'). It is here that Hugo, preaching as himself, in harmony with his stand-in, Claude Frollo, finally reveals his hand, expounding on the idea that until Johannes Gutenberg's advent of the printing press in the 1440s, buildings had been the books of humanity – that it was through the solidity of stone, rather than the fragility of paper, that thoughts, ideas and memories were committed. And so for the fifteenth-century Frollo, when the book took over the task of recording these things, it emptied building of meaning and of its culturally relevant responsibility; since when, architecture was dead.

For the nineteenth-century Hugo, although operating within the ruins of this transposition, the tension between the world of the book and that of the building remains, not least because of the more immediate cause of architectural conservation (in many ways, Hugo's prompt for embarking on *Notre-Dame de Paris* in the first place). This was a subject dear to Hugo's heart, and one he had written about on several occasions, largely influenced by his friend, Charles Devieur (later Robelin), inspector of works on the restoration of the cathedral at Rheims, and later on the cathedrals of Tours, Besançon and Nevers, and a close confidant of many artists, poets and writers, including Eugène Delacroix, Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve and Honoré de Balzac. Robelin and Hugo undertook a number of trips together, visiting various gothic buildings, and assorted nineteenth-century critics have speculated that in 'This Will Kill That' Hugo is merely ventriloquising the outrage vented by Robelin during these visits.[6]
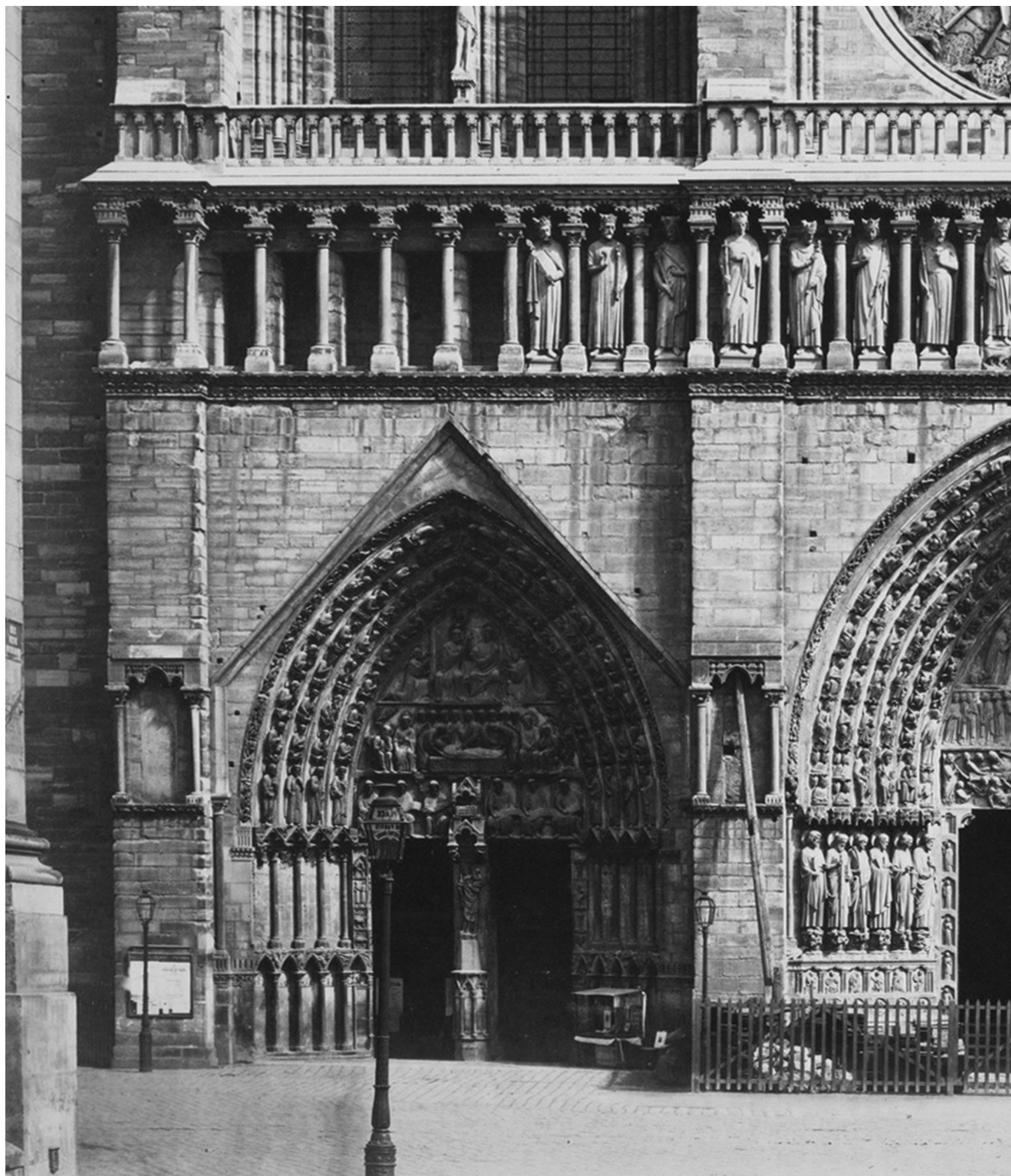
The fervour of Hugo's own architectural rhetoric was tested just a few months before he completed the second amendment to *Notre-Dame de Paris*, publishing a polemical paper in the *Revue des deux mondes* titled 'Guerre aux Démolisseurs' ('War on the Demolishers!') – 'one of Hugo's most rollicking performances'[7] – which lambasted the French church, state and other institutions for their neglect of the country's gothic architectural heritage, and which Hugo hoped would garner support for the protection of these monuments.[8] One such supporter was the artist Charles Meryon, who produced a series of atmospheric etchings of the cathedral in the mid-nineteenth century – images that 'dazzled me. His plates live, sparkle and think', according to an appreciative Hugo[9] – and which alongside the success of *Notre-Dame de Paris* did indeed prompt the cathedral's renovation, which began in 1844, supervised by the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc.[10] In both temporal frames, therefore (that is, the contemporary world of Hugo and the medieval France of Frollo), the 'this' under threat of termination remained the cathedral, while the 'that' of the book, or other products of the press like the etching, were somehow simultaneously both assassin and saviour.
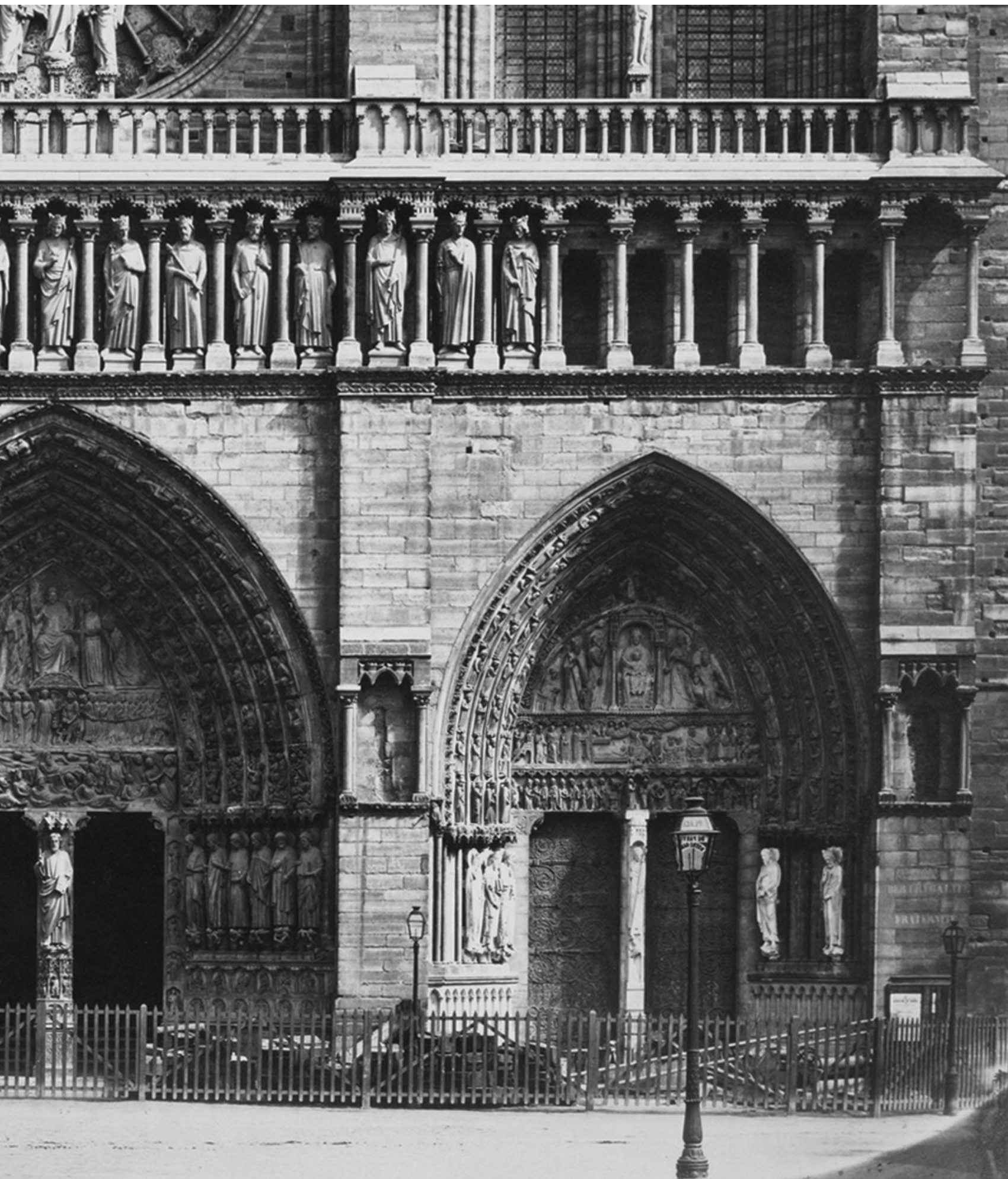
Notre-Dame de Paris in this sense represents two moments, two authors, two books in one, or even one disguised within another – a slightly cartoonish historical novel masquerading a contemporary and highly polemical essay on the relationship between words and buildings. But here at least Hugo is open about the deceit, writing in his supplementary note in 1832 about two classes of reader: those 'who have sought only the drama, the story', and those other readers 'who have not found it a waste of time to study the aesthetic and philosophical ideas hidden within the book'.[11] The separation between the two can even be advertised by the English title of the book – either *Notre-Dame de Paris* (leaving the original French intact) or *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (its initial English title, and the way the book continues to be more popularly remembered); or as Hugo's translator, John Sturrock, characterises it, a 'switch of attention from the cathedral to its weird inhabitant', which was 'understandable

Charles Meryon, *The Stryge*, *c* 1853

Previous: Louis-Auguste Bisson, with Auguste-Rosalie Bisson, *Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris* (detail of west front), *c* 1853

12. John Sturrock, op cit, p 11.
13. Jules Michelet, 'Victor Hugo', *History of France*, translated by G H Smith (New York, NY: Appleton & Co, 1882).
14. John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, 1885 (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2012), p 35. Between 1833 and 1839 there were at least four English translations of Hugo's novel, but the date Ruskin offers suggests he read the first of these. The only detailed discussion on the relationship between Victor Hugo and John Ruskin is by J B Bullen, 'The Tradition of Renaissance Historiography', in Michael Wheeler and Nigel Whiteley (eds), *The Lamp of Memory: Ruskin, Tradition and Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992). Another obvious source of correspondence is their drawings. Ruskin, of course, enjoys a certain renown as an artist as much as a writer, but Hugo was also a highly competent artist, with more than 3,000 drawings – mostly rather Turneresque or even Ruskinesque seascapes – surviving him. See the Hammer Museum, UCLA, exhibition catalogue, Cynthia Burlingham and Allegra Pesenti (eds), *Stones to Stains: The Drawings of Victor Hugo* (Munich: Prestel, 2018).
15. John Ruskin, letter to Frederick James Furnivall (1855), quoted by Marcel Proust, *On Reading Ruskin*, translated and edited by Jean Autret, William Burford and Phillip Wolfe (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), p 66, nt 10, and also by J B Bullen, ibid, p 59.
16. J B Bullen, ibid, p 60.
17. John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 1851–53 (Project Gutenberg: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/30754), vol I, section XXIII, p 63.

but unfortunate, since it also meant a switch of attention from the book's strengths to its weaknesses, from its ideas to its plot'.[12]

One of the novel's more enlightened readers, manifestly drawn to these ideas rather than to its story, was the great nineteenth-century French historian Jules Michelet, whose *Histoire de France* (*History of France*, 1855) makes reference to Hugo as a kind of metaphorical architect, as someone able to have seen in words a counterweight to masonry and for having built, 'alongside the old cathedral, a cathedral as solid as the foundations of the other, as tall as its towers'.[13] But of course, within this second class of reader, subscribing to the same analogy, have also been all those architects, critics and commentators whose ruminations on the enduring, if endlessly paradoxical, relationship between architecture and language, buildings and books, uses and interpretations, even between histories and theories, feel somehow honour-bound to begin with Victor Hugo's elliptical architectural treatise, or – to be more precise – simply to its anthemic formulation on the tragedy of one construct prompting the demise of the other.

Among the very first of these architectural readers was the English critic John Ruskin, who in his autobiography, *Praeterita* (1885), notes that he read the novel in 'about 1834', just two years after the publication of the definitive edition – an acknowledgment that very rarely seems to feature in surveys of the novel's architectural appropriation.[14] Perhaps the main reason for this omission is that Ruskin absolutely hated the book – an unabashed loathing first highlighted by Marcel Proust, whose 1910 French translation of Ruskin's *The Bible of Amiens* (1885) includes a footnote to *Notre-Dame de Paris* and a letter Ruskin wrote in 1855 to his friend, the philologist Frederick James Furnivall, in which the English critic vents that 'I believe it to be simply the most disgusting book ever written by man' … and 'caused more brutality and evil than any other French writing with which I am acquainted'. Moreover, the very personal sense of 'harm' Ruskin felt the novel inflicted, suggested to him that it occupied simultaneously 'the summit of the whole cretinous school' in France … and 'the dregs of French literature'.[15] But as the literary critic J B Bullen concedes, Ruskin's 'squeals of protest derive as much from proximity as distance', for in so many ways he and Hugo (through their respective works, *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *The Stones of Venice*, published 20 years later) seemed to have maintained parallel projects.[16] Both books were at heart romantic eulogies to not just architecture as the fundamental measure of civilisation, but in particular gothic architecture (exemplified by the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris for Hugo, and by the Ducale Palace in Venice for Ruskin, 'the central building of the world').[17] Both books also offered paeans to the grotesque (personified in the figure of the hunchback, or petrified in the irregularity of the Venetian facades), and juxtaposed the love they felt for the ugliness of the gothic against their mocking disdain for the supposed beauty of the classical. Ultimately, however, there is a rhetorical alliance, for both authors use architecture as a prompt to convey a wider history of European culture, framed always by their shared commitment to a sense of moral responsibility.

In many ways more surprising than Ruskin's disguised allegiance is the identity of the first architect to openly cite 'This Will Kill That' and to celebrate Hugo's book as an architectural rather than literary work: Frank Lloyd Wright. In a lecture titled 'The Art and Craft of the Machine', his first major public architectural pronouncement, delivered at the very outset of the twentieth century at a meeting of the Arts and Crafts Society at Hull House in Chicago in 1901, Wright argued that 'down to the time of Gutenberg, architecture is the principal writing – the universal writing of humanity', but once printing arrived, Wright suggested, 'human thought discovers a mode of perpetuating itself, not only more resisting than architecture, but still more simple and easy. Architecture is dethroned. Gutenberg's letters of lead are about to supersede Orpheus's letters of stone. The book is about to kill the edifice.'[18]

18. Frank Lloyd Wright, 'The Art and Craft of the Machine', 1901, cited by architecture critic Paul Goldberger in his own centenary lecture at Hull House Museum, 2001, accessible online at: http://www.paulgoldberger.com/lectures/frank-lloyd-wright-at-hull-house-on-the-art-and-craft-of-the-machine. Wright's original lecture was delivered on 6 March 1901 (even if Bruce Pfeiffer, editor of Wright's collected works, claims that it was actually first delivered as early as 1894) and then subsequently re-presented at various venues, including at Princeton University in 1930. There seems to be no information on how Wright came to be reading Hugo, or more generally on his relationship with literature, but for further insight into Wright's debt to Hugo see Neil Levine, 'The Book and the Building: Hugo's Theory of Architecture and Labrouste's Bibliothèque St Geneviève', in Robin Middleton (ed), *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp 139–73, especially footnotes 15–24.

19. Or as Neil Levine describes it, 'Wright fiddled with Hugo's language and turned a prediction of irrevocable doom into an affirmation of resurrection, which would have indeed been ahead of its time', Neil Levine, ibid, p 141. Narciso Menocal (op cit, p 141), suggests that Wright may well have been introduced to the writings of Hugo, and to *Notre-Dame de Paris* in particular, through the teachings of the US Francophile architect, Richard Morris Hunt (designer of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty and the entrance facade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art), who also maintained an influence over Wright's '*Lieber Meister*', Louis Sullivan, as David Van Zanten has shown in 'Sullivan to 1890', in Wim de Wit (ed), *Louis Sullivan: The Function of Ornament* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 1986), pp 13–55.

20. Frank Lloyd Wright, *A Testament* (New York: Bramhall House, 1957), p 17.

21. This is to contradict Geoffrey Scott's contention in *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914) that 'the Renaissance produced no theory of architecture. It produced treatises on architecture: Fra Giocondo, Alberti, Palladio, Serlio and many others, not only built, but wrote.' Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1914), p 37.

22. Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones: A Study of American Architecture and Civilisation*, 1924 (New York, NY: Dover, 1955), p 41–42.

23. Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966 (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), p 131.

24. Among these scholars would be the work of Hélène Lipstadt and Barry Bergdoll, and more recently Maarten Delbecke.

Here, of course, Wright is brazenly appropriating Hugo's theorem as his own, rewriting the same formulation, albeit in decidedly less elegant prose, and – as his title suggests – even inverting Hugo's argument to suggest that the mechanics and technology of the press and resulting book, rather than the handcraft of the building, are the real object of salvation.[19] Elsewhere, however, Wright was more fulsome in his debt to Hugo, quoting 'This Will Kill That' in almost all of his subsequent books, and in 1957 even going so far as to describe *Notre-Dame de Paris* as 'the most illuminating essay on architecture yet written'.[20]

No doubt prompted by Wright, in the 1920s the historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford also returned to Hugo's formulation, but suggested that 'the real misdemeanour of the printing press was not that it took literary values away from architecture, but that it caused architecture to derive its value from literature'. In an echo to more contemporary architectural debates, by literature, he really meant the architectural treatise (or rather, architectural theory)[21] – an assassin far more dangerous than the printing press – because before the arrival of theory, Mumford maintained, medieval architecture lived in a 'happy spirit', but with the sudden appearance of classical treatises by Serlio, Vignola and Palladio in the sixteenth century, architecture 'became a mere matter of grammatical accuracy and pronunciation', since when it was dead.[22]

Agent to the kind of literature Mumford was demonising was Frances Yates, Renaissance scholar and investigator of rhetorical models inherited from antiquity. It therefore followed that in her pioneering study, *The Art of Memory* (1966), 'This Will Kill That' is again used as a kind of allegory to navigate between two opposing conditions, but this time not between architecture and literature but between remembering and forgetting. As Yates writes, 'The parable which Hugo develops out of the comparison of the building, crowded with images, with the arrival in his library of a printed book might be applied to the effect on the invisible cathedrals of memory of the past of the spread of printing. The printed book will make such huge built up memories, crowded with images, unnecessary. It will do away with habits of immemorial antiquity whereby a "thing" is immediately invested with an image and stored in the places of memory.'[23]

However, still the very best architectural exploration of the uses (and abuses) of Hugo's text is a historical rather than polemical account by the scholar Neil Levine. First documented in his doctoral thesis, and then later in his 1977 essay, 'The Book and the Building', Levine traces all of architecture's early twentieth-century allusions to the novel (although, significantly, he fails to acknowledge Ruskin, Proust and other scholarly references, like that of Yates). Levine also places the writing of *Notre-Dame de Paris* within its more immediate Parisian context, and particularly through the parallel work being carried out at the same time by the architect Henri Labrouste, first on his restoration of the Greek temples at Paestum, and then more resonantly on the design of his Bibliothèque St Geneviève in Paris (the library, of course, being the most appropriate architectural typology through which to navigate the parallel worlds of the building and the book). This work, in turn, has induced further references to Hugo, with a subsequent generation of scholars, each just as learned as the other, all seemingly eager to express their gratitude to Levine by sermonising on 'This Will Kill That' as a kind of prompt or call sign to additional analysis on the architecture of the nineteenth century.[24]

More recently still, another wave of research has again returned to *Notre-Dame de Paris*, or at least to what the novel projects as an architectural extermination, but not as a prelude to a literary relationship, or to a survey of the buildings of the nineteenth century, but now more resolutely to an examination of the published architectural output of the twentieth century. Indeed, this notion that the only architectural production worth scrutinising is that which is made not out of bricks and mortar but paper and ink – that is, architecture as media (to use its preferred nomenclature) – has over the last 20 years been the single most

25. Beatriz Colomina's eulogy to media appears in *Privacy and Publicity* (1994) – *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p 14 – a book that essentially canonised this shift of attention, even if one can date her interest to architectural media two decades earlier, when as a doctoral student at ETSA in Barcelona she founded and edited the journal *El Carrer de la Ciutat* for 12 issues between 1977 and 1980. Her influence has only been further extended by the 'Media and Modernity' programme she initiated at Princeton University, alongside the art historian Hal Foster, and which has nurtured a new generation of architectural scholars to pursue 'mediated' subjects of their own, typically analysing architectural ideas, movements and interpretations not through buildings but through magazines, books, exhibitions and films. Somewhat surprisingly, for all its ubiquity, a history of what one might call architecture's 'mediated turn' has yet to be written. Perhaps the closest thing is a journal text by Colomina's partner, the historian Mark Wigley – 'Network Fever', *Grey Room*, no 4 (summer 2001), pp 82–122 – in which Wigley locates the origin of this turn in a meeting, in July 1963, between Marshall McLuhan and Richard Buckminster Fuller, on board *New Hellas*, a ship belonging to the Greek architect and planner Constantinos Doxiadis.

26. Among the multitude of references and allusions to Hugo's 'this will kill that' in more recent architectural research, perhaps the best of them would be Mari Hvattum and Anne Hultzsch (eds), *The Printed and the Built: Architecture, Print Culture and Public Debate in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) and André Tavares, 'Epilogue: Hugo's Prophecy', *The Anatomy of the Architectural Book* (Zurich: Lars Müller/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2016).

27. Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Architectural Theory, vol I: An Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870* (Oxford: Wiley/Blackwell, 2005), quote p XXI; and Harry Francis Mallgrave and David Goodman, *An Introduction to Architectural Theory: 1968 to the Present* (Oxford: Wiley/Blackwell, 2011); K Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p X; Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory, from Vitruvius to the Present*, translated by Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander and Antony Wood (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), p 13.

dominant strand of architectural historiography, advocated best by the historian Beatriz Colomina and her contention that 'modern architecture only becomes modern with its engagement with the media'.[25]

It is perhaps no accident, then, that such a reconfiguration invokes a return to Hugo, whose prophecy is today endlessly teased, for of course the object deserving of preservation now is not the cathedral but the printing press. References to this switch of allegiance have been so frequent in more recent architectural thinking as to occupy the realm of cliché.[26] And yet, still, it is a cliché that if investigated in more detail, tracing the famous formulation back to the more overlooked Ananke inscription, can place *Notre-Dame de Paris* within a canon, for in some ways Hugo's novel (like its graffito, both fictional and factual) offers perhaps the most accessible, the most compelling account of architectural discourse.

In this sense, Frank Lloyd Wright is quite right, and Hugo's book really should be at the top of any architectural reading list, just as Lewis Mumford is quite wrong, because *Notre-Dame de Paris* is not a piece of medieval scare-mongering about the looming approach of classical theory, but is *itself* a modern architectural theory, and certainly a more accessible version of theoretical architectural speculation than any of those more recent anthologies made available to us – like Hanno-Walter Kruft's *A History of Architectural Theory* (1994), K Michael Hays' *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (1998) and Harry Francis Mallgrave's *Architectural Theory* (2005), all of which represent large, physically imposing volumes, and all, equally, somehow attempt to explain architectural theory by aggregating it, offering slavishly thorough transcriptions of every apparently significant self-analytical architectural utterance, from Vitruvius through to Koolhaas.

But at the same time, the prefaces to these volumes all somehow fail in offering a convincing definition as to precisely what might qualify these writings as architectural theory. For instance, like Mallgrave's assertion that 'architectural theory, for all is occasional abstraction, is nothing less than the history of our ideas regarding our constructed physical surroundings'; or Hays' even more opaque contention (in hindsight, clearly indebted to Colomina) that 'first and foremost, architecture theory is a practice of mediation. In its strongest form mediation is the production of relationships between formal analyses of a work of architecture and its social ground or context, but in such a way as to show the work of architecture as having some autonomous force with which it could also be seen as negating, distorting, repressing, compensating for, and even producing, as well as reproducing, that context'. Kruft's own definition is perhaps the best of them, classifying his subject as 'the history of thought on architecture as recorded in written form', but even this misses not just the lyricism of Hugo but the neatness of his own equivalent preface – that architectural ideas become consummated into theories not just by their written form, but ideally by inscribing this writing into the materiality of the building itself (ie, a word written about a building, and a building into which words are carved).[27]

Such an assimilation – that a theory of architecture is simply the exploration of words on, or ideally physically within, architecture – and the intellectual touchstone provided by Hugo's novel, still seems useful to those contemplating both the wider existence of architecture and its greater depth (the same 'deep impression' felt by Hugo), but is especially valuable to anyone charged with the actual production of architectural writing; that is, by its authors and editors. And it is from the perspective of the architectural editor, and through the product of an architectural periodical (its own kind of cathedral of words, in Michelet's sense), that these ideas will be investigated in greater detail, tracing the liveliness and morbidity of architectural production, and even the liveliness and morbidity of the architectural editor.

AA Files covers, issues 57, 62 and 69

These tracings will in turn focus on specific subsets of architectural publishing. The first will investigate the form of the *journal* – an essentially early nineteenth-century invention – and in particular will examine the strain of architectural journals, periodicals and magazines that were produced through the Architectural Association (AA) in London since its inception in 1847 (which makes it a contemporary of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, even if this architectural book champions medievalism, while this architectural association has long been celebrated as the promoter of modernity or of a kind of prophetic futurism). The AA is offered as a way in to this discussion because unique among architectural institutions (and certainly among schools of architecture) it inscribed the mandate to produce a journal into the terms of its founding charter – that is, the AA could not exist as an association, institutionally, intellectually and legally, unless it produced a regular, serial journal (or rather, the identity of the association was inseparable from the identity of its publication), which establishes an interesting rejoinder to Hugo, in that book and building are therefore not rivalrous or oppositional, but signify the same thing. In the process, both book and building can be read equally as inscription, theory or even as media.

But the AA also provides an entrance into this debate because the last iteration of its 150-year succession of journals, *AA Files* (established in 1981), was a journal I edited, and to a certain extent reinvented, between 2007–18. The 21 issues I published over this period (represented in more concentrated form by four of the last five issues, *AA Files* 71–74) is anthologised as an accompanying volume, and in many ways corresponds to the demonstration of ideas articulated in the thesis, as much as it also offers a supplementary body of research, both in form and content. And yet the relationship between the two should not be read as cause and effect. This is not a project-based doctorate in the sense that the formulation of the project (ie, the production of the journal) does not determine the structure of the thesis' narrative, not least because the thesis was written *after* the issues of the journal had all been published. Nor is it a retroactive account of its making and reception. Nevertheless, much of the research and the polemics and histories it offers invoke ideas that predate my editorship, and so rather than one emerging out of the other, both volumes should be understood as backdropping and foregrounding the other.

Within the rhetorical and actual frame of the journal, the thesis then proceeds to explore what it takes as the three fundamental components of an architectural publication, each analysed through original research that looks to uncover previously overlooked precedents while subverting others: its *text* (investigated through both a survey and a polemic about architecture's longstanding but often rather ambiguous, even tortured relationship with writing); its *images* (which similarly offers case studies as a way to both confirm and challenge certain assumptions about architecture and its iconography); and lastly, how it deals with the subject – that is, the *architect* – whose identity is essential to so much architectural publication, even if actual biographies have been strangely and consistently absent.

In the thesis, this trio of editorial components is essentially discussed historically, through an unabashedly canoic set of precedents, as well as through a more implied or tacit argument for the better use of words, images and the architectural subject. A more overt application of this same argument can be found in the accompanying anthology of issues from *AA Files*. Here, in terms of writing, one can read multiple and varied examples of architectural essays, and (hopefully in light of the insights articulated in this thesis) where one can also better understand the processes by which an architectural editor manipulates a given text to promote certain writerly qualities (for instance, in its engaging titles, good opening and closing lines, and an attentiveness to flow, cadence and seamless transition). Similarly, in terms of images, the journal offer a model onto which more disparate or associative ideas are applied and find physical form

28. By the 'writerliness' of architecture's phenomenological tradition I am thinking of that prototypical strain of criticism which emerged in the late 1960s within the parallel academic cultures of the architecture school at the University of Cambridge and more especially Essex University's MA and PhD programmes in architectural history (established by Joseph Rykwert and Dalibor Vesley in 1968; both of whom also had teaching roles at Cambridge), together with the writing of the Norwegian historian Christian Norberg-Schulz (notably his 1979 book, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*). Perhaps the most celebrated exponents of this model of phenomenological writing are the Mexican scholar Alberto Pérez-Gómez and the US academic David Leatherbarrow (both of whom completed PhDs at Essex), in particular their respective books *Polyphilo, or, The Dark Forest Revisited: An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) and *The Roots of Architectural Invention: Site, Enclosure, Materials* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993), alongside the Finnish architect Juhanni Pallasmaa, and his own book *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Oxford: John Wiley, 2005). More recently, this tradition has to a certain extent evolved through the emergence of a new generation of architectural historians who tend to define their academicism less through an allegiance to phenomenology than through evocations towards architecture's greater literacy, narrative or more commonly towards the practice of so-called 'site-writing' (fuelled, like phenomenology, by what it takes as the power of personal experience, but filtered more explicitly through other academic disciplines, notably psychoanalytic theory, literary theory, film and gender studies). See, in particular, the work of Klaske Havik at TU Delft, and her book, *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2014) and edited journal, *Writingplace, Journal for Architecture and Literature*, vol 1: *Literary Methods in Architectural Education* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2018), and Jane Rendell at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, and the edited anthologies she has published, including *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City* (London: Routledge, 1995) and *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), and equivalent anthologies edited by Jonathan Charley, *The Routledge Companion on Architecture, Literature and the City* (London: Routledge, 2018); David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Katja Grillner, *Architecture and Authorship* (London: Black Dog, 2007); and Angeliki Sioli, *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience* (London: Routledge, 2018). On the earlier phenomenological tradition, see, in particular, the research by Joseph Bedford, including 'Being Underground: Dalibor Vesely, Phenomenology and Architectural

– not least, a committment to the separation of words and pictures (intellectually, if not always physcially), as well as to the symbolic or frontispiece-like value of good images, or to the image not merely as illustration but as an original, archival artefact, or even to the possibilities within a publication for an image to achive a certain architectural 1:1-scale and impact. Lastly, the anthology of issues of *AA Files* also all contain instances of biography (all through conversation), which present a succession of architect–subjects in ways they have very rarely appeared before, speaking about their ideas not through a catalogue of their projects but largely through the peculiarities of their lives.

In taking the thesis text and anthologised issues together, one of the underlying ambitions of this study – through the arguments it makes and the prose style in which it articulates these arguments – is to both advocate and demonstrate a greater literariness to architectural discourse. By literature, it means arguing for the fruitfulness of architecture's relationship not just to writers and their novelistic works, but to the measures by which we adjudge some writing better than others, or even simply to the ambition to produce prose that is enjoyable to read. It does not take 'literariness' as an invitation to engage in its own form of creative writing, to recast architectural scholarship as lyricism, the phenomenology of personal experience or to what today might be classified as 'site-writing'.[28] Rather, this invocation to the literary is to appreciate architecture within its widest cultural, intellectual and historical sphere, as much as it also establishes a standard (simultaneously both high and low in the diversity of audience it attracts) for the better communication of architectural words.

Moreover, the manner in which this thesis articulates its own ideas and allusions is offered up as a demonstration of the very same call – that is, of a greater attentiveness to the quality of architectural writing – and in particular to a faith in that specific form of writing represented by the model of the essay. The essay, as this thesis will show, is a form of writing that emerged in the late-sixteenth century and which evolved very much in often adversarial opposition to more established models adopted by the academy (the survey, the paper, the dissertation). Except for what this thesis will highlight as a number of key architectural advocates, this separation between essayism and academicism still exists today. And yet in spite of the longevity of this rivalry, one of the more ambitious aspects of this study is to effect a kind of synthesis – to write both essayistically and academically – and to show that a document as resolutely, almost dogmatically academic as a doctoral dissertation can demonstrate all of the required levels of scholarship and erudition (and the mandate to inform) while at the same time still adhering to the key tenets of the essay (and the mandate to entertain).

Such a recasting also necessarily invokes a kind of wilful deference to the theatricality engendered by more self-consciously literary works, and the realisation that one appreciates literature not just for its ideas, nor the quality of its writing, but for its characterisations and more immediately for its drama. In some sense, then, this thesis aspires to a similar kind of performance, and a conviction not just in the idea that architectural discourse could present itself through its own equivalent dramaturgy, but more generally that works of nonfiction can be dramatic (a reversal perhaps appropriately advertised once again by Victor Hugo, who in a fan letter to Jules Michelet in 1860 wrote that his monumental *Histoire de France* – which the novelist read 'without drawing a breath' – offered further proof that 'all your books are *acts*').[29]

Of course, the importance of the stage as a universal or even primal architectural platform is already a well-established part of its history, not least through Sebastiano Serlio's emblematic depiction of the sixteenth-century stage-set as the best possible frame for an architectural projection, and for the archetypes of its narrative (the 'comic', the 'tragic' and the 'satiric') as a support structure that can underpin architecture's own typologies.[30] But this legacy has

RKO Radio Pictures,
The Hunchback of Notre-dame, 1939,
directed by William Dieterle

Education during the Cold War', in Ákos Moravánszky and Torsten Lange (eds), *Re-Framing Identities: Architecture's Turn to History, 1970–1990* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2017), pp 89–104, and his Princeton University PhD, 'Building the Lifeworld: Dalibor Vesely and the Essex School of Architectural Theory', 2017.

29. The entirety of Victor Hugo's letter to Jules Michelet is reproduced in Roland Barthes' own homily to Michelet – Roland Barthes, *Michelet*, 1954, translated by Richard Howard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p 213: 'All your books are acts. As a historian, as a philosopher, as a poet, you win battles. Progress and Thought will count you among their heroes. And what a painter you are! You bring that reign to life before you decapitate it. I must end this letter, but it is to return to your book; I am not leaving you. Dear great thinker, I embrace you.'

30. Serlio's three famous stage sets (the comic, the tragic and the satiric) appear in the section dedicated to 'perspective' in the second book (1545) of his *I sette libri dell'architettura* (*Seven Books of Architecture*). See Sebastiano Serlio, *The Five Books of Architecture* (New York, NY: Dover Press, 1983), based on a reprint of the first, 1611, English edition of the first five books.

31. This, of course, is a nod to that other famous architectural beginning, and the formulation offered by Nikolaus Pevsner in the opening lines of his *An Outline of European Architecture*, 1943 (London: Penguin, 1990), p 15: 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.'

32. Victor Hugo, *Toilers of the Sea*, translated by James Hogarth (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2002), p 5.

only ever been visual – one references Serlio's theatricality through his images, and his three celebrated single-point perspectives – whereas what this thesis looks to produce is not the scenography for an architectural drama but its words, its script or screenplay. And like any screenplay, having established its principal frame (the *journal*), the drama unfolds through three parts or acts (the *text*, the *image* and the *architect*), through the presentation of a set of types and archetypes (that is, it values the secondary source of an existing model, over and above the elucidation of some wholly new, primary source), and through a rolling cast of characters – some heroic, others more obviously villainous – who populate and repopulate the performance.

But in parallel, the thesis also hopes to promote not simply a disciplinary intermarriage – that architecture becomes more interesting, still, when read through literature, theatre or any other cultural discourse – but through a fundamental faith it maintains in the richness of architecture's own objects – in its books and journals, for sure, but also in its buildings (cast either as cathedrals or as bicycle sheds),[31] its inscriptions and words, its drawings and images, and in its actual architects. Just like Hugo's novel, in every instance in its narrative, these objects (or rather, these 'things') offer the starting-point to any discussion or provocation, rather than registering only as the token physical exemplar onto which some seemingly larger ideology belatedly applies itself. Ideas, this thesis maintains, emerge out of objects, rather than the more typical scholarly model which sees the objecthood of the case-study as merely a useful vehicle to communicate some pre-existing idea. In the process, one of the tacit objects of the thesis – again, as with *Notre-Dame de Paris* – is the rhetoric, or better still, the theorisation of architectural communication, which, it argues, is made more engaging, more relevant, precisely through this inversion.

Furthermore, the contention here is that this could repair a fissure that has emerged over the last half century, between not just the practice of architecture and its theorisation, but between an appreciation of the materiality of architecture or a conception of the discipline only as a constellation of more ethereal ideas, by presenting these moments as synchronous. In turn, the hope is that this might ultimately reimagine the fate of architecture and words less as an adversarial relationship predicated on either existence or death, of this killing that, but one where each envelops and nurtures the other.

Bookend to this idea might even be yet another piece of writing by Victor Hugo, *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (*Toilers of the Sea*, 1866), and yet another (wholly self-analytical) architectural authorial preamble, which once again cites the enigmatic Ananke, but this time recast not as annihilation but as affection.

> *The mysterious difficulty of life springs from the necessity to believe (hence the temple); the necessity to create (hence the city); and the necessity to live (hence the plough and the ship). A triple* ananke *therefore weighs upon us: the* ananke *of dogmas, the* ananke *of laws and the* ananke *of things. In* Notre-Dame de Paris *the author denounced the first; in* Les Misérables *he pointed out the second; in this book* [Toilers of the Sea] *he indicates the third. But within these three fatalities in which man is enveloped is mingled the interior fatality, that supreme* ananke*, the human heart.*
> —Victor Hugo, *Toilers of the Sea*, 1866 [32]

Part One
The Journal

Cedric Price, *Archi-Mags*, 1975,
stills from TVAA, AA Video Archive

1. Honoré de Balzac, *The Quest of the Absolute*, 1834, translated by Ellen Marriage (Sawtry: Dedalus, 1989), p 2.

2. Ibid, p 1.

3. In his famous novel *Life: A User's Manual* (1978), the French writer Georges Perec further exaggerates this model by not only placing all of the characters in his story within the various apartments of a fictitious nineteenth-century Parisian apartment block, but describes one character, the painter Serge Valène, as engaging in his own project to construct a vast sectional elevation of the block, with each separate painting made up of a detailed depiction of its occupant and interior. Another interesting case study here is Roland Barthes, who in his posthumously published notes for a lecture course at the Collège de France in 1977 – ie, exactly contemporaneous with Perec – speculates on the rhetorical metaphor of the house or room, which was partly inspired by his reading of the 1976 French translation of Joseph Rykwert's *On Adam's House in Paradise* (1972). Barthes aptly summarises what he takes as the core idea of Rykwert: 'Why this thesis is interesting: hut (house), not as a functional determination (providing shelter in bad weather), but a symbolic operation.' See Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces – Notes for a Lecture Course and Seminar at the Collège de France (1976–77)*, translated by Kate Briggs (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), quote p 49. Of course, neither Barthes nor indeed Balzac were the originators of this rhetorical device, for in many ways the same technique can be traced all the way back to antiquity, and in particular to the rhetorician and educator Quintilian (35–100AD) who advocated a mnemonic system that 'placed' ideas in a given talk along a clearly delineated spatial sequence within a familiar house or building – a technique detailed best in Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966 (London: The Bodley Head, 2014). See also, Mary Carruthers, 'The Architectural Mnemonic', *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp 89–98.

4. In his history of the first 100 years of the AA – *Architectural Association: 1847–1947* (London: Pleiades Books Ltd, 1947 – John Summerson adopts a different literary guide to introduce his subject: 'A perfect introduction to the history of our association was supplied by Charles Dickens, when he created Seth Pecksniff, and described the relations of that celebrated master to Tom Pinch, his draughtsman, and John Westlock and Martin Chuzzlewit, his articled pupils. *Martin Chuzzlewit* was published in 1843 and there, in broad caricature, is the three-corned situation out of which this association grew.' *Architectural Association: 1847–1947*, p 1. More generally, Summerson's book offers the only published account of the founding years of the AA.

5. See Paul Waterhouse, 'Kerr, Robert', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

T he historiography of more recent architectural discourse, as we now know, tells us, or to a certain extent impels us, to begin with *Notre-dame de Paris*, the definitive book as building. But of course, not all narratives need to be framed through the loftiness of the cathedral, if only because architecture's more lowly typologies are often able to offer structures that are just as rich and just as engaging. In such circumstances, the typically rather limited section of the architect's library dedicated to the great works of literature might be expanded to seek out other novelistic or allegorical prompts, even if these do not extend too far from Victor Hugo's particular moment or milieu. 'The events of human life', once wrote Honoré de Balzac, 'be they public or private, are so intimately bound up with architecture that with a certain amount of observation we can reconstruct nations or individuals in the full reality of their behaviour from the remnants of their public monuments or the examination of their domestic remains.'[1] True to his word, the novel in which this declaration appears – *La Recherche de l'absolu* (*The Quest of the Absolute*), written in Paris in the summer of 1834, less than two years after the publication of Hugo's preferred edition of *Notre-dame de Paris* – begins with a description of a specific house in a specific street in a specific town:

> There is in Douai, in the rue de Paris, a house that may be singled out from all others in the city; for in every respect, in its outward appearance, in its interior arrangement and in every detail, it is a perfect example of an old Flemish building, and preserves all the characteristics of a quaint style of domestic architecture thoroughly in keeping with the patriarchal manners of the good folk of the Low Countries.[2]

Balzac goes on to present this house not just as an inanimate protagonist in his evolving family saga, but more effectively as a rhetorical structure that both physically and metaphorically locates all of the ideas he wants to convey through the envelope of its built form, in the process establishing a model for any kind of narrative, be it literary or analytical.[3]

There is in London, at 36 Bedford Square, a house identical to those immediately around it, but which nevertheless can be singled out both from its neighbours and from the city at large, for this house contains a club, which in turn contains a school, and which somehow preserves all of the assorted styles of architecture that it promotes, thoroughly in keeping with the patriarchal, at times maniacal, manners of its various directors. This particular house, club and school is the Architectural Association (AA), founded in 1847 – six years after the establishment of the UK's first school of architecture, the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, located just a few minutes' walk north along Gower Street – by the young architectural apprentices Robert Kerr (then aged 23) and Charles Gray (even younger, at just 18 years old).[4] It was initially set up as a platform through which Kerr and Gray and like-minded colleagues could regularly meet and simply discuss assorted architectural ideas outside the rather restrictive bounds of the only architectural forum available to them, the articled professional office.[5] It seems important to highlight, then, that the AA, from its very beginning, is both a theory – a form of architectural discourse quite explicit in its separation from those exchanges determined by the pragmatism of architectural practice – and a kind of magazine – 'a periodical', defines the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'containing a variety of articles and illustrations often on a particular subject or aimed at a particular readership'. Following a merger with the Association of Architectural Draughtsmen (ie, image-makers *not* builders,

6. John Summerson, op cit, p 5.
7. H Spenden Steel writes that 'Lyon's Inn became a disreputable institution that perished of public contempt long before it came to the hammer and the pick. By the time it was dissolved in 1863 it was inhabited only by the lowest lawyers and those struck off the rolls, and when surveyed it was found that it was run by only two ancients, neither of whom had any idea what their duties were, and the Inn had not dined for over a century.' See H Spenden Steel, 'Origin and History of English Inns of Chancery', *The Virginia Law Register*, vol 13, no 8, 1907, pp 590–91 (accessible online via JSTOR at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/i245963).
8. On the history of the Architectural Association School of Architecture, see John Summerson, *Architectural Association: 1847–1947*, op cit; James Gowan (ed), *A Continuing Experiment: Learning and Teaching at the Architectural Association* (London: Architectural Press, 1975); Andrew Higgott, 'A Tradition of Experiment: The History of the AA School', *Archinect*, 2005, accessible online at: https://archinect.com/forum/thread/17899/andrew-higgott-a-tradition-of-experiment-the-history-of-the-aa-school, part of a wider online discussion on the pedagogic model offered by the AA School over the last decades, with further contributions by Alan Balfour, Nasrine Seraji, Peter Cook and Zaha Hadid.
9. Nikolaus Pevsner (ed), *Hertfordshire: The Buildings of England* (London: Penguin, 1958), p 278. See also Edward Jones and Christopher Woodward, 'Bedford Square', *A Guide to the Architecture of London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983).
10. See Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner (eds), *London 4 North: The Buildings of England* (London: Penguin, 1994), p 325. Atkinson later made his name as architect of a number of art deco cinemas in various England cities, and for the equally art deco interior he designed for Ellis & Clark's Daily Express Building, London (1931–32).
11. Details of the AA's financial structure are described by John Summerson, op cit. For further information on Bedford Estates, see F H W Sheppard (ed), *The Survey of London: vol 36, Bedford Estate, Covent Garden and the Seven Acres in Long Acre* (London: English Heritage, 1970).

which, again, in hindsight seems interesting), the first formal meeting took place in Lyon's Inn, one of the Chancery inns of court in London's Inner Temple – or as John Summerson describes it, 'a shabby eighteenth-century box of a place'[6] – and a venue that maintained a certain notoriety for housing only the very worst kind of lawyers.[7] After the enforced closure of Lyon's Inn in 1863, the AA spent the next half century located in various Soho and Bloomsbury addresses across London, including a spell sharing premises with the fledgling Royal Institute of British Architects, before a teaching arm was introduced to its more established activities and the AA School was formally created in 1890. And it was both as a club and as an independent (that is, private) school that the AA moved into a house in Bedford Square in 1917, where it has remained ever since.[8]

This particular house, like the others facing the square, was built in around 1775 as a speculative development for Francis Russell, the fifth Duke of Bedford, and attributed to the architect Thomas Leverton (who lived, and eventually died, in a house of his own design on the south-east corner of the square). All of the houses in the same development are four-storey structures, with ornamental features in Coade stone and with yellow stock brick facades that may have originally been painted black. The inner spaces of each house feature high-ceilinged rooms with elegantly ornamented Georgian details. Describing another Leverton building at Woodhall Park, Nikolaus Pevsner wrote that his interiors 'have a style, decidedly their own, different from Adam or Chambers or Holland', their character coming out most clearly in the central staircase hallway, 'profusely but very delicately decorated with plaster *à la antique*'.[9]

And it was at number 36, inside this rather refined, genteel piece of eighteenth-century English capitalism, that the AA engaged in a process of remodelling supervised by the architect and school principal Robert Atkinson.[10] Following Atkinson's designs, a large kitchen was constructed in the basement of the property, providing lunch to its members (which after 1890 automatically included all of its students and teaching staff), while the ground floor was reconfigured to house a reception area, dining room, lecture hall and exhibition space, with reproduction plaster moulding added to match the original. A few years later the upper floors were also remodelled, with a library established in the grand first-floor *piano nobile*, and adjacent panelled rooms, including a bar and other chandeliered spaces, affording more club-like rooms for both formal discussion or more impromptu fireside conversation. The top two floors of the property were also adapted to provide additional offices and members' spaces, which from the front offered fine views down to the square below, and from the back surveyed a rear terrace, workshop yard and studio spaces located in a converted four-storey nineteenth-century block formerly occupied by the terrace's mews.

The relative luxury of this interior and of the club–school as a whole was never financed by direct patronage, nor by any singular form of endowment, but was enabled partly by a number of debentures paid by various architectural offices and construction firms, and also by a relatively modest rental agreement struck with the then twelfth Duke of Bedford, Hastings Russell, who, like the ancestral lineage of Russell dukes who both preceded and succeeded him, was eager to preserve certain tax advantages that were afforded to his family's property empire, Bedford Estates, in return for maintaining the educational, intellectual and cultural character of Bloomsbury.[11] More immediately, the largesse of the AA was supported by a not insignificant fee required by its membership, open to anyone with an interest in architecture (and which soon numbered over 1,000 members), and by the manifestly larger still fees required to actually study at the AA. As late as 1953, the ambitious and well-heeled young Anglo-Italian architect, Richard Rogers, wrote in a letter to his childhood friend Michael Branch, 'I am going to try and get into the AA School of Architecture, but it is the stiffest architecture place in England to enter and the fees are

Le Corbusier, descending the main
staircase at 36 Bedford Sqaure en route to
presenting his evening lecture, 1953
AA Archives

colossal. Poor dad.'[12] Yet, even if the financial burdens placed upon fathers of AA students could be offset by local authority education grants (available to the brightest British students, at least until this additional arm of support was cut off in the early 1970s), the AA remained a school and an affiliation fundamentally defined by the wealth of its members.

This wealth, allied to the founding idea of an association predicated on collective conversation, also lent the AA an interesting political diagram, in which the fundamental power of the institution resided not with any single, overseeing figure of authority, but with the students. Of course, there were always certain notional hierarchies, topped by a president and a school principal, but the reality was that such figures had little cultural or indeed pedagogic capital, and seemingly even less status or respect. Presidency was an elected, unpaid role, for a short period of office and only really demanded the chairing of monthly meetings of the AA Council; while the school principal was also elected through a participatory democracy that gave each student and member a vote, and who over much of the twentieth century included a cast of architects who, although representing many of England's more successful, if not especially glamorous, practitioners, were largely unengaged with the education on offer.[13] And so rather than dictate teaching models, which were instead always the preserve of the actual teachers, the main task of the AA Principal was to administer the running of the building.

At times, even this limited authority was questioned – as John Miller, who entered the AA as a first-year student in 1950, recalls, 'Robert Furneaux Jordan was then the school principal, but a Mr Bromley was the man who really ran the place, like a kind of quarter-master sergeant, issuing us with our basic kit of T-square, slide rule and a copy of Banister Fletcher'.[14] Rather than the head of school, Miller also attests to the more powerful influence of his teachers, especially the first-year master Leonard Manasseh and the Bauhaus *émigré* Arthur Korn, but at the same time he suggests that the real pedagogic culture of the AA had long been auto-didactic, almost Montessorian, with individual learning fuelled largely by an engagement with student peers: 'But quite honestly, after the first year we mostly taught ourselves, reading books our classmates recommended or visiting buildings together – much of this stuff was seeded by Colin Glennie, who knew all there was to know about modernism, and Sam Stevens, who knew everything about everything'.[15] The AA, then, almost from its inception, was polyvalent, financially autonomous, self-informing, ritualistic and sustaining of its own captive audience, or to borrow an analogy from publishing, it was a highly successful magazine but one that to all intents and purposes operated without an editor.

Despite the novelty of this arrangement, the model developed by the Architectural Association proved to be hugely influential, and over more than a century its stately domestic section – both house *and* home – accommodated various dinners, balls, parties, theatrical performances and other assorted rituals, as much as it provided an immediate backdrop to most of the major movements in English and, to a certain extent, world architectural culture. Such a significant venue also saw the AA play host to numerous passing architectural celebrities, with the often highly mannered nature of their photographic capture and the shifting styles of their evening attire somehow offering a parallel iconography to the AA's evolving history – from Frank Lloyd Wright posing outside the front entrance of the school in his signature wide-brimmed porkpie hat, or Alvar Aalto, in a double-breasted pin-striped suit, delivering a lecture behind a microphone stand like the avuncular leader of a big band jazz orchestra, or Le Corbusier casually descending the main staircase in black tie and even blacker Corb spectacles, to a bow-tied Peter Eisenman sitting down for a candle-lit lecture dinner with Charles Jencks and a cake shaped liked Michael Graves' Humana Building, and a tuxedoed Zaha Hadid slicing her own Peak Club piece of

12. Richard Rogers, letter to Michael Branch, September 1953, in Bryan Appleyard, *Richard Rogers: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1986), p 56.
13. The changing cast of AA school principals included the architects Howard Robertson in the 1920s, E A A Rowse in the 1930s and Raymond Gordon Brown in the 1940s. See lecture given by AA Archivist Edward Bottoms, The Twentieth-Century Society, 13 February 2010, accessible online at: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/VIDEO/lecture.php?ID=1168.
14. John Miller, in conversation with the author, April 2015, subsequently published as 'John Miller, in Conversation with Mark Swenarton and Thomas Weaver', *AA Files* 70 (summer 2015), pp 124–37 (quote p 127).
15. Ibid, p 128.

Alvar Aalto, delivering his AA lecture, 1950, AA Archives

architectural confection – all the while buttressing the AA in promoting what it saw as the very best and most original thinking about architecture.[16]

Significantly, from its very first days in the mid nineteenth century, this promotion also took the form of journals, books and various publications. The mandate to produce these things is even written into the AA's founding charter from 1847 – that in order to be considered both an association and school (and later an educational charity), it legally *has* to publish journals and books.[17] So, no journal, no school (an important *entente cordiale* between the book and the building, just 15 years after the publication of Victor Hugo's *Notre-dame de Paris*). In more material terms, the journal was also the only physical return on a membership otherwise defined by its more ethereal advantages (one joined the AA in order to know more, and more deeply, about architecture; and it was only in the latter part of the twentieth century that graduation after five years with an AA Diploma merited a physical piece of paper and degree certificate). Instead of an embossed scroll, the journal therefore became the AA's only physical badge, a register of its allegiance, a totem.

But in contrast to the dignified and well-established architecture of its house, the very first published outputs of the AA, although satisfying the terms of its charter, as if like a kind of receipt, were generally underwhelming – loose-leaf anthologies of club notices, documenting the comings and goings of its various members, in addition to the posting of weekly events and various petty bureaucracies. But in 1887, with the AA financially and culturally more sure of itself, it launched its first official journal, *AA Notes*, which significantly appeared in advance of a teaching component being added to the list of the AA's institutional responsibilities – so at its heart, the AA does not gravitate around a school, but around a journal, which it uses to symbolically and constitutionally define itself. The importance of this diagram was reflected in the attention lavished on *AA Notes*, a far more considered and handsome undertaking than the earlier newsletters, with the luxuriousness of its hardcover binding, illustrations and marbled endpapers being juxtaposed against a somewhat disingenuously modest and matter-of-fact title. Emblem to the seriousness with which the AA approached this project, it even commissioned its own frontispiece, which seemed to play off Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen's famous (and famously mannered) engraving of the primitive hut in the second edition of Marc-Antoine (Abbé) Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1755), but this time enshrouding its central Dianic figure not in the standard dressing of the classical picturesque (twisted arboreal forms, broken columns and pediments, chubby cherubic bottoms and an emergent architecture), but in an image of late-nineteenth-century didacticism (with the woodland goddess now depicted patiently instructing the cherubs not in architecture through building, but architecture through reading, with each of them balancing large tomes – presumably the same *AA Notes* – on their kneecaps). The frontispiece completes this scene with a garlanding ribbon and a new AA motto (again, distinctly arts-and-crafts in character), 'Design with beauty, build in truth'.[18]

There is here, then, a radical reordering of architecture's priorities – of thinking not making, of theory not practice, of images more than plans, of self-direction rather than imposed models of learning, and of the book, or more precisely the journal, as the *de facto* architectural object, over and above any significance attributed to the building. Yet in another sense *AA Notes* is wholeheartedly architectural in character, if only because of its concentration on form (its format, binding and the physicality of its container) over the value it ascribed to its content (in editorial terms, the substance of its articles; in architectural terms, the occupation of a building's spaces). And so even if the journal was impeccably bound and produced, the articles inside did not speak to the grandeur of architecture's more literary theoretical traditions, or exploit the possibilities afforded by the cultures of conversation and exchange in the AA's

16. A comprehensive photographic record of the school, from the late nineteenth century onwards, and featuring numerous noteworthy architectural figures, is accessible through the AA's Photo Library and AA Archive.
17. The AA's founding charter and still existing articles are accessible online at: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/MEMBERSHIP/ABOUTMEMBERSHIP/introduction.php, and through the AA's head of membership, Alex Lorente.
18. Copies of the entire run of *AA Notes* (1887–1905) and of the issues from each of the subsequent house journals that succeeded it are available in both the AA Library and AA Archive.

Above and opposite: cover and frontispiece of
the first issue of AA *Notes*, 1887

Overleaf: inside spread, AA *Notes*, 1904
AA Library

1887-8.
VOLUMES I. & II.

DESIGN WITH BEAUTY BUILD IN TRUTH

NOTES

Vol. I.

Vol. II.
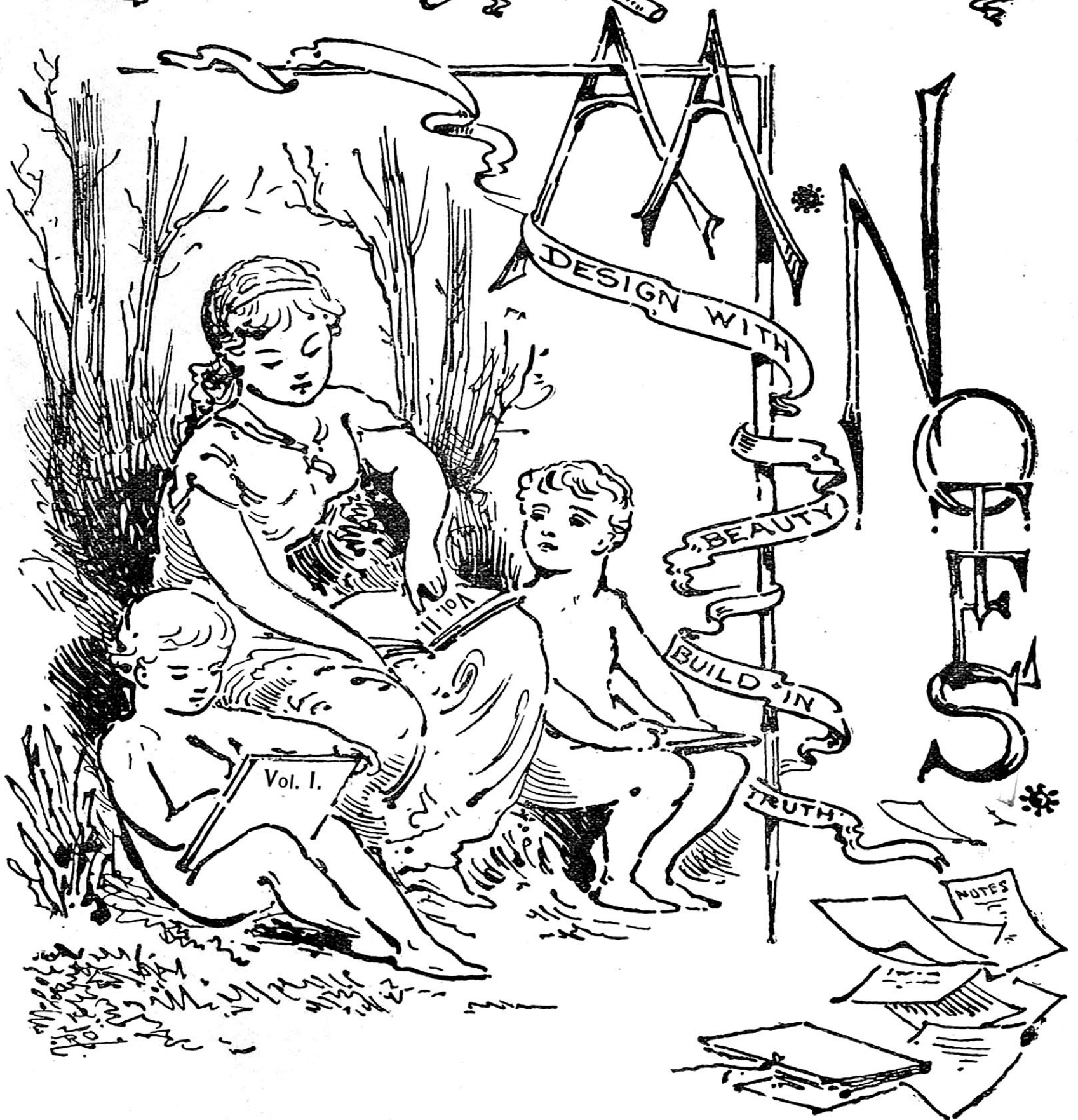
THE ANNUAL DINNER—*continued.*]

evening's sport, gave one of his clever ventriloquial sketches. Altogether it was a memorable occasion, and well fitted to inaugurate the opening of the Association's new home in Tufton Street.

R. DOUGLAS WELLS.

SUMMER VISIT.

MOOR PARK, RICKMANSWORTH.

THE first summer visit was made on the 14th ult. to the seat of Lord Ebury, and the occasion was favoured by most glorious weather. On arriving at the park gates the members were met by the agent to the estate (Mr. Couchman), who devoted the whole afternoon to showing them all there was to be seen. Before entering the park we inspected a picturesque lodge, with an octagonal room decorated at the angles with palm trees carved in wood, the branches going up into the coved ceiling, probably erected in the 18th century. On entering the park we walked through a magnificent avenue of elms to the mansion. The old house, inhabited by Cardinal Wolsey, has been pulled down, only the moat now remaining to indicate its former position. The present mansion was erected about 1673 by James Fitzroy, and previous to its acquisition by Benjamin Hesketh Styles (who bought the estate from the Duchess of Monmouth in 1720), it was a red brick building. The stone casing was designed by the architect Leoni, who added the Corinthian portico, with its massive columns fifty feet in height. The house is entered through an unpretentious doorway, and the entrance hall, with its marble floor and dado, aroused some admiration in the visitors. The hall reaches to the roof, and the flat ceiling is painted to represent a dome. The scheme of decoration, though meretricious, is certainly clever. The paintings on the walls representing classical subjects are by a Venetian artist named Amiconi. A gallery runs round the hall, which has marble doorways leading to the various apartments grouped round it. The plan of the house recalls many erected about this period. The plan of Marlborough House, designed by Wren, is somewhat similar, though the date is rather later (1709). The saloon is in the same position, viz., facing the entrance door. There are practically no corridors in the house, as it was only in houses of later date that the corridor-plan was introduced. This adoption of the Italian or Palladian planning was without doubt introduced into England by Inigo Jones. On the left of the hall is the dining-room, with a fairly good painted ceiling, then a smaller room, leading into the saloon, elaborately decorated by Sir James Thornhill. The cost of these internal decorations is said to have

been £150,000. On the walls are representations of the four seasons. We were much struck with the figure of Bacchus (though doubts as to his sex were expressed by some members), the ceiling shows Aurora driving in her golden chariot, and a middle-aged man carrying off a young woman, who appears to be in danger of being run over. The paintings are said to be after the paintings by Guido (some distance after!) in the Ruspigliosi Palace at Rome. The artist could not get his money, and brought an action for £3,500. We then came to the White Room, and a magnificent drawing-room, in which some of the connoisseurs of the party discovered valuable china. Proceeding through some of the private rooms we regained the hall, where Cardinal Wolsey's handsome saddle was inspected with interest. How times have changed! We can imagine the Cardinal riding in state with a lordly retinue through the avenue of Moor Park, but will coming generations find interest in a twentieth century Archbishop of Canterbury's saddle, if he possess one?

The exterior of the mansion was the subject of much criticism. The order is Corinthian, and the building is three stories high, with rusticated ground floor and elongated windows; the first floor windows are well proportioned, but those of the attic are rather squat in appearance. The entablature is strictly " correct," and the arms of the Grosvenor family are seen in the pediment. There were formerly two wings, but these were pulled down together with the chapel.

Then we strolled through the gardens on to a fine terrace walk planted with yews, and ascended to a Classic Temple (so called) in the Ionic style, where we were very glad to rest on a venerable bench of 18th century design.

A walk through the greenhouses and kitchen garden, where the famous Moor Park apricots are grown, ended a most enjoyable afternoon, for which our hearty thanks are due to the noble owner.

W. HILTON NASH.

GENERAL MEETINGS.

" CRAFTSMANSHIP."

IT was unfortunate that the evening (April 22nd) should have turned out wet when Mr. Gilbert read his paper on " Craftsmanship." No doubt the inclemency of the weather accounted partly for the thin attendance, but it must be admitted that probably architectural students have been somewhat over-dosed of late with the subject, and it has begun to show unmistakable signs of palling, as might have been expected.
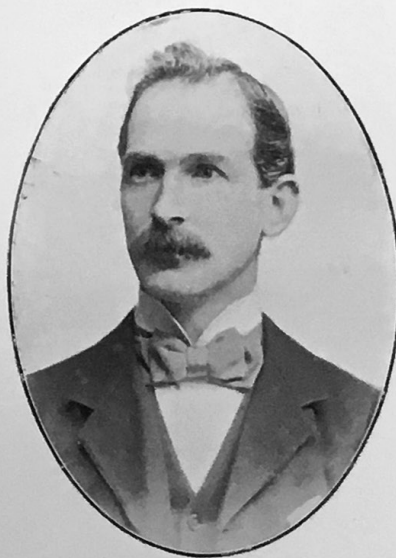
(Photo by Lyddell Sawyer.)

PRESIDENT, SESSION 1904-1905.

(Photo by A. Langton, Belgravia.)

(Photo by Lowden, Dundee.)

VICE-PRESIDENTS, SESSION 1904-1905.
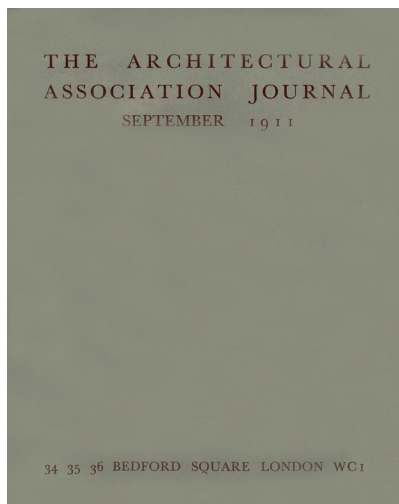
AA *Journal*, September 1911
AA Library

members' rooms, but remained resolutely bureaucratic: lists of new members, the shifting constellations of its various committees and dry reviews of buildings and events. Even the editorial which welcomes readers to the first issue appears to advertise the whole endeavour not in terms of the richness of an architectural culture it would be promoting, but the tortured institutional bureaucracy which deemed it necessary: 'The origin of *AA Notes* was in this wise: in the scheme for increasing the scope of the Architectural Association by raising the subscription, one of the means proposed to be adopted was the publication of a journal. This was, however, abandoned before the vote was taken at the special business meeting. But although the idea was not carried out for a time, there was a strong feeling in a certain section of the working members of the association that there was an urgent need for something of the sort, and some six months ago a meeting of those who were anxious to start a paper devoted to the exchange of ideas amongst the members of the association was held; and a petition was prepared and presented to the general committee, praying them to approve the suggestion. As this petition evidently expressed the wishes of the most earnest workers in the association, the committee appointed a special sub-committee to consider the question, and they then reported in favour of the general proposal.'[19]

> *Anyone who buys and keeps architectural magazines, has them bound and finds a home for them on his bookshelves, will know only too well that they are among the vainest and most uncomfortable residents on those small-scale cities of words and images that are our libraries. Literary magazines are nearly always the same size and are drably attired. By contrast, art and architectural magazines sport the latest fashions; they are particularly fond of colour and images and simply have to keep on changing. Not content with changing subject-matter and typography, they often change size, their 'format': the magazine is rigorously slimmed down or turned, with joyful abandon, into a large-format periodical. Or, instead of changing appearance, they change editor. Or they change both.*[20]

This is the Italian architect, and editor, Paolo Portoghesi writing in *Domus* in 1983 in a little-known text about 'The Real Life of Architectural Magazines', possibly the best account of architecture's enduring relationship with its journals and magazines ever written. And in affirmation of Portoghesi's very appealing characterisation, over the ensuing decades the AA did indeed maintain the expanding urbanity of its bookshelves through both the vanity of its publications and their own graphic reinvention. Yet at the same time there remained the unresolved irony of an institution founded on conversation appearing to have trouble finding its own, published voice. One can see this in the *AA Journal*, which first appeared in 1905, successor to *AA Notes* as official journal of record and a distributed conduit between the inner world of the school, its students and teachers, and the wider world of the AA's membership. Somewhat predictably, its release prompted a slight change of format, a more contemporary, though still serif typography, and even a logo (displacing the previous frontispiece), distinctly arts and crafts in character, which depicted two architectural figures framed, or even held captive, within the letters A and A, whose ligatures appear to have extruded out of their T-squares. Inside, however, the articles and reviews continued to remain more loyal to the truthful aspect of the AA's twin mantra than to its parallel call for beauty, for the tenor of all content was still fundamentally pragmatic (the involvement of assorted members on recently completed buildings) and technocratic (yet more details of the shifting promotions and governances of the association's various committees – as late as 1950 the journal saw fit to introduce the November issue with a 'Balance Sheet of Accounts for the year 1949 Presented for the Adoption of a Ordinary General Meeting').

19. Herbert D Appleton, editorial, *AA Notes*, vol 1, no 1, April 1887, p 1.
20. Paolo Portoghesi, 'The Real Life of Architectural Magazines', *Domus* 635 (January 1983), pp 2–11, quote p 3.

ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

VOL. XXV.

JANUARY—DECEMBER, 1910.

G, June 1924, edited by Hans Richter
and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Wendingen, 1921, cover by El Lissitzky, edited by Hendrik Wijdeveld

But to a certain extent this was merely a reflection of every other architectural journal – a medium by then barely a century old – which from its origins first in France and then in England in the early decades of the nineteenth century responded to the dual needs of an emergent industrial society to promote its professional trades, and an emergent bourgeoisie to feel opinionated.[21] Perhaps the best demonstration of these forces was *The Builder* in England, *Deutsche Bauzeitung* in Germany and its most monumental realisation, the *Revue générale de l'architecture* in France, founded in 1839 and edited for almost 50 years by César Daly, and which communicated both trade and opinion through a set of progressively more detailed, and utterly compelling, steel-plate architectural engravings.

Despite the advantage of nearly half a century, the degree of attention the AA could lavish upon its own lithography and published image-making could not match that of Daly's dedicated army of printmakers at the *Revue*. As a result, the content of the *AA Journal* remained photographic reproductions of recently completed buildings, alongside still rather stilted review texts and club notices. Here, then, again we see the AA remaining somewhat paralysed by the fact that it could reinvent the structure and organisation of architectural discourse, but not its communication.

Hindsight suggests that the way out of this dilemma would have been for the AA to have embraced the ferment of literary and visual rethinking then advocated by a nascent modernism, and a willingness to act as a running mate to that condensed lineage of avant-garde art and architectural magazines that can be traced as far back as *Das Andere* (The Other), which was launched in 1903 by the 33-year old Viennese architect Adolf Loos, who anointed himself its editor and sole contributor.[22] Such a lineage would then extend into all those other mono-maniacal architectural publishing enterprises, each speaking to its own specific sect or movement, that have now come to be seen as benchmarks in the development of the entire modern architectural discipline: *De Stijl*, the Dutch neo-plasticist magazine first published in Delft in 1917 by Theo van Doesburg; its rival Dutch expressionist journal, *Wendingen* (Upheaval), edited by architect Hendrik Wijdeveld and launched in Amsterdam in 1918; *L'esprit nouveau*, the *revue* of the art and architectural purist movement, established in Paris in 1920 by Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant; *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, published simultaneously in Russian, German and French, and founded in Berlin in 1922 by the architect El Lissitzky and the writer Ilya Ehrenburg as the mouthpiece of constructivism and suprematism; and *G*, also published in Berlin in 1923 as a synthesis of constructivist and dadaist allegiances, edited by the artist Hans Richter, later joined by the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

A later, revisionist account of the AA maintains that it has consistently, almost preternaturally, operated within this high-modernist tradition, and that its culture has always somehow been both canonic and avant-garde.[23] And yet its published output would suggest otherwise, and which, if compared to any of these modernist exemplars, reads (through both text and image) as if the AA were steadfastly holding on to its mid-nineteenth-century origins in stubborn rejection of more provocative twentieth-century models from abroad.
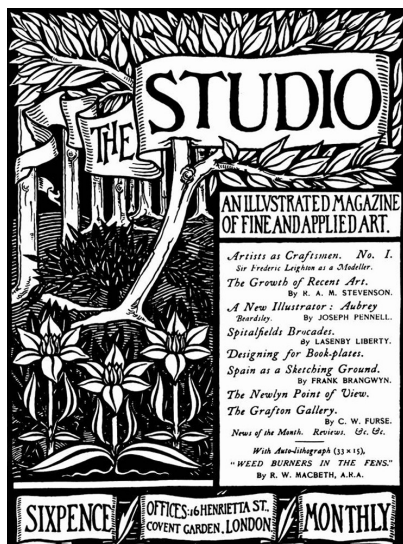
But perhaps more surprising than its failure to align with any of the various branches of a continental modernism was the AA's inability to identify the radical possibilities – especially in terms of publications – afforded by another kind of modernism closer to home. In 1884 (three years *before* the AA's first journal, *AA Notes*), the English Century Guild of Artists launched *The Hobby Horse*, the first-ever periodical committed solely to the visual arts, and which featured extensive articles on art, design, architecture and various social issues (heavily influenced by the writings of Walter Pater and John Ruskin – a frequent visitor to the AA in those years – and which included contributions by writers as diverse as C F A Voysey and Oscar Wilde). These texts were then integrated into a strong visual identity made up of commissioned artwork, photographs,

21. The balance between professionalism and opinion (and of a survey of the history of the architectural journal as a whole) is very effectively presented by Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw in 'Magazine Architecture', *OASE* 100, 'Karel Martens and the Architecture of the Journal', 2018, pp 83–142. For a more detailed review of early nineteenth-century publications, especially in France, and their cultures of debate, see Hélène Lipstadt, 'Early Architectural Periodicals', in Robin Middleton (ed), *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp 51–65.

22. A facsimile anthology of *Das Andere*, presenting the only two issues to be published, was released in 2016, with an accompany essay by Beatriz Colomina; Adolf Loos, *Das Andere: Ein Blatt zur Einführung abendländischer Kultur in Österreich/The Other: A Journal for the Introduction of Western Culture in Austria* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2016).

23. Such accounts typically emanate from the AA itself, largely in the form of its annual *AA Prospectus*, which for the last ten years, especially, has presented the school through what it frequently terms its 'reimagining', 'rethinking' or 'remaking' of architecture. This same urge to be considered radical and in some sense pioneering continues to this day, as demonstrated by the opening lines of the current *AA Prospectus* by the school director Eva Franch i Gilbert: 'More than a school, throughout its history the AA has been the referent – when not the origin – for the production of new and relevant forms of enquiry, discourse and radical practice in architecture schools, cultural institutions and offices worldwide.' See *AA Prospectus 2018–19*, accessible online at: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/APPLY/PROSPECTUS/prospectus.php.

24. For a detailed history and appreciation of *The Hobby Horse*, see Julie Codell, '*The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, 1884–94', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol 16, no 2 (summer 1983), pp 43–53.

25. See Paolo Portoghesi, op cit, and Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (eds), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, vol I: Britain and Ireland, 1880–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw offer a nice coda (via Marshall McLuhan's 1970 *Counterblast*) to the style of *Blast*'s writing as in some way a consequence of its printer's drinking habits: 'Wyndham Lewis had found it impossible to get it by any London printer whatsoever. He finally found an alcoholic ex-printer who agreed to set it up exactly as Lewis required in return for large supplies of liquor. Nearly the entire magazine is set up in heavy headline type. Headlines are icons, not literature', Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw, op cit, p 110, ft 35.

26. See Andrew Higgott, 'A Tradition of Experiment', op cit.

27. In a short editorial in the first issue of *Arena* the new title is discussed. 'No doubt questions may be asked as to why this particular title has been selected. The principal reasons may be noted as follows: 1. It has a sound architectural "ring"; 2. It implies that debate, controversy and, when necessary, battle will take place within its pages; 3. It begins and ends with an A – hence AA; 4. It seemed a good choice, and well in the tradition of previous publications like *Focus* and *Plan*', *Arena*, June 1965, p 2.

lithographs and woodcuts.[24] This same, more holistic model of both text and image, individual identity and collective responsibility, pragmatic description and more writerly opinion, subsequently informed the very successful and long-running *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, which was launched in London in 1893 and ran all the way through to 1964, as well as *Ver Sacrum*, the official journal of the Vienna Succession, established in 1898, with contributions from Otto Wagner and the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and lastly, back in England, and the culmination of this strain of (proto) modernist publishing, *Blast* magazine, the short-lived 1914 mouthpiece of the vorticist movement, largely written by the novelist and painter Wyndham Lewis.[25]

What seems to have defined both the success and importance of each of these endeavours is that their editorial models were indebted more to literature than they were to art (unlike those of the later, more celebrated continental modernist architectural magazines, which were always extruded from their respective art movements: neo-plasticism, expressionism, purism, constructivism, suprematism, dadaism, etc), and which as a result allowed their still powerful visual sensibilities to appear seamlessly alongside highly erudite and engaging textual commentaries. One would think that such an ambition would have fit perfectly into the culture of the AA, an association fundamentally defined by its marriage of images and words. It could even have followed still more closely the model of *The Studio* and used the symbolic typology of its equally definitive enclosure as its masthead, so that instead of *AA Journal* or *AA Notes* its journal of record could have been titled *The House* or *The Club*. In reality, however, even if the idea of a school and association predicated on the synthesis of a Georgian townhouse and a modern publishing house was radical, its actual publications were anything but – a resistance reflected in the fact that the AA was a very delayed adopter of modernism, either English or European. As late as 1926 its principal Howard Robertson (who, ironically, would go on to work as a consultant to Le Corbusier, Wallace Harrison and Oscar Niemeyer on the defiantly modernist United Nations Headquarters in New York) instigated a beaux-arts system, which was only overthrown by a student-led revolt in 1938.[26]

However, once freed from the shackles of neo-classicism, as much as it would soon be empowered by the desperate need to rebuild and to a certain extent redesign English cities, it was in the postwar decades that the AA really took off, and whose teachers and graduates in this period reads like a *Who's Who* of architectural influence: John Summerson, Jane Drew, Minnette de Silva, Denys Lasdun, Neave Brown, Kenneth Frampton, Patrick Hodgkinson, Alan Colquhoun, Denise Scott Brown, Robin Middleton, James Gowan, Peter Smithson, Geoffrey Bawa, Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, Frei Otto, Cedric Price – a cast of characters in some way even more adept at architectural media than they were with architectural form.
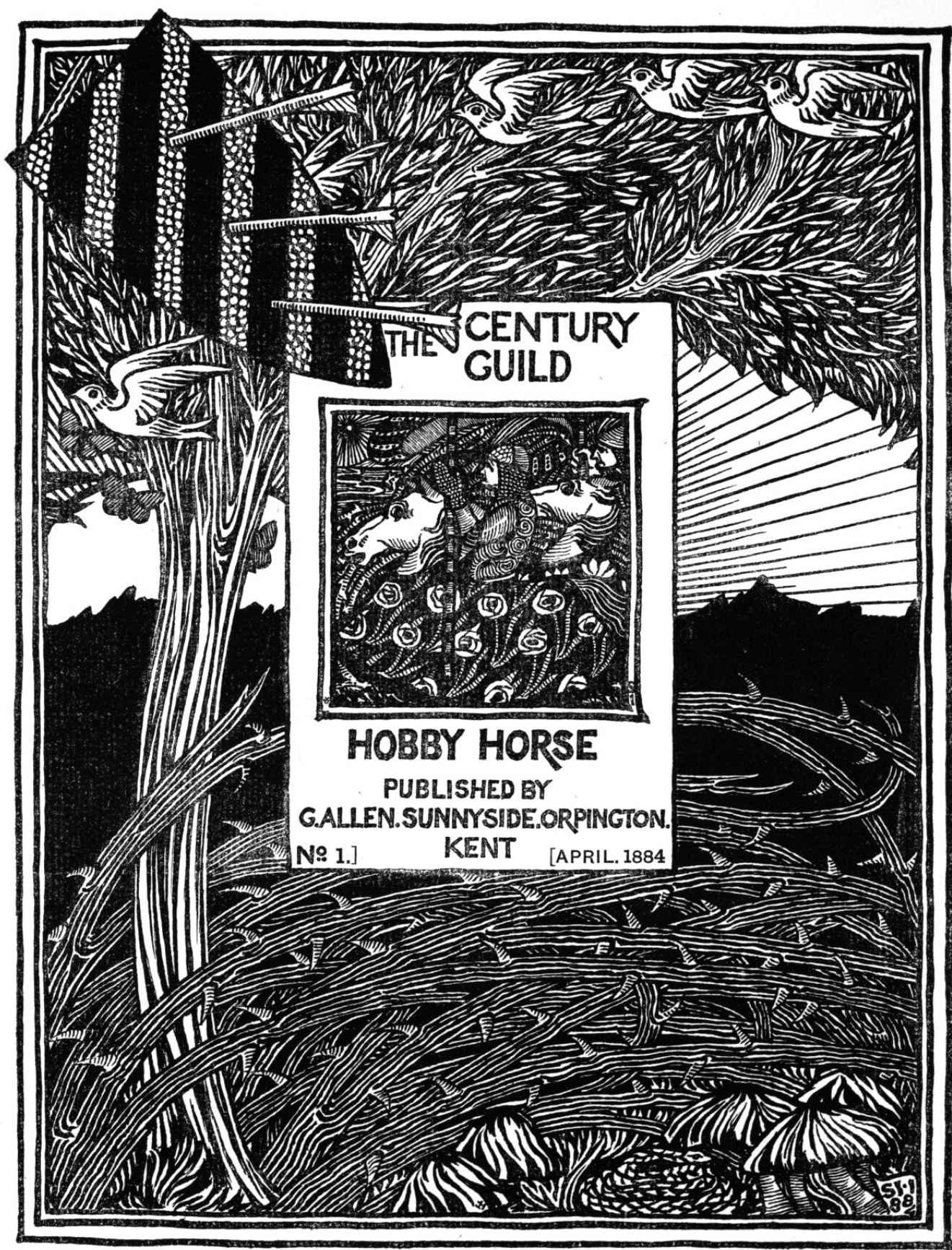
As a quieter backdrop to this increasingly cacophonous cult of architectural celebrity (both through practice as well as more discursive historical and theoretical roles), the *AA Journal* somehow remained, still periodically dropping through the letterboxes of AA members, largely unnoticed, in different forms but still the same essential guise, all the way through to 1965. That year the journal was rebranded and redesigned again, and relaunched as *Arena* (a new, nebulously modern conception of space, for a new nebulously modern magazine), even if it remained funded and produced by the AA through an editorial group attached to the office of the school principal, and continued to carry the responsibility of representing the AA to the wider association.[27]

If the AA's belated embrace of modernism explains the intellectual shortfall of its publications in the pre-war period, the same defence cannot be used for the still underwhelming *AA Journal* and *Arena* in the post-war period, because the culture of the institution by then is excitedly, wholeheartedly modern. Ironically, the very same figures who were driving the school in this period

THE CENTURY GUILD

HOBBY HORSE

PUBLISHED BY
G.ALLEN.SUNNYSIDE.ORPINGTON.
KENT

Nº 1.]   [APRIL. 1884

Above: *Hobby Horse*, no 1, April 1884
Opposite: *The Studio*, no 1, April 1893
Blast, July 1915

arena

28. For a detailed biographical portrait of J M Richards, see J Mordaunt Crook, 'Sir James Richards, 1907–1992: A Bibliographic Tribute', *Architectural History*, vol 42, 1999, pp 354–74. For a good contextual understanding of *The Architectural Review* under Richards' editorship (and later Monica Pidgeon's equivalent work at *Architectural Design*), see Andrew Higgott, 'The Mission of Modernism' and 'The Opposite of Architecture', *Mediating Modernism: Architectural Cultures in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp 33–55 and pp 118–52.

29. Reyner Banham had criticised contemporary Italian design, and in particular the Torre de Velasca, then recently completed in Milan by Rogers and his firm BBPR, as anachronistically historicist in an article titled 'Neo-liberty', published in the April 1959 issue of *The Architectural Review*. Rogers' response was titled 'The Evolution of Architecture: A Reply to the Keeper of the Frigidaire' (a teasing reference to Banham's blind faith in technology) and published in *Casabella-continuità* in June 1959. Rogers' allusion to Ruskin appears at the very end of his text: 'To conclude, I would like to invite Mr Banham, whom I believe knows English better than Italian, to make a direct reading of Ruskin (*The Poetry of Architecture*), who was a great Englishman, without bothering with the lame interpretation of Marinetti, who was a Fascist "revolutionary" who died with the felucca of academia on his head: "We shall consider the architecture of nations as it is influenced by their feelings and manners, as it is connected with the scenery in which it is found, and with the skies under which it was erected".' For an excellent profile of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, including his editorial work and the Banham debate, see Roberta Marcaccio, 'The Hero of Doubt', *AA Files* 75 (winter 2017), pp 59–70.

30. A useful comparison of *The Architectural Review* and *Architectural Design* in this period, including their respective circulation figures, can be found in Steve Parnell, '*AR*'s and *AD*'s Post-war Editorial Policies and the Making of Modern Architecture in Britain', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol 17, no 5, 2012, accessible online at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13602365.2012.724858. For Frampton and Middleton's more personal recollection of their time working on the magazine, see Kenneth Frampton, '*Homage* à Monica Pidgeon: An *AD* Memoir' and Robin Middleton, 'Working for Monica', *AA Files* 60 (summer 2010), pp 22–27.

– notably, the students Peter Cook and Francis Duffy, and the young tutors Alvin Boyarsky, Royston Landau and Robert Maxwell – all sat on the editorial board. And yet, even if *Arena* magazine in this period did feature profiles of Team X, Archigram and Alison and Peter Smithson, and more self-consciously iconoclastic texts by authors like Sam Stevens, Joseph Rykwert and Charles Jencks, it did so still within the bureaucratic frame of member events, self-titled commentaries and 'notes on the discipline', as if the journal could never quite separate its agenda or content from the institutional infrastructure of the AA itself.

But perhaps one reason why the AA's own publications were not more free-spirited and better reflecting the dynamism of its students and faculty was simply because these people were already very well served by other existing journals, many of whose most significant editors had first trained as architects at the AA (and so the AA *was* in fact dictating the nature of architectural discourse, if not through its own publications).

Principal among these was *The Architectural Review*, which had been established in the very late nineteenth century, but which really came to the fore in the years just prior and after the Second World War under the continuing editorship of the former AA student J M Richards (who edited the magazine for more than 30 years, from 1937–71).[28] For Richards, architecture was not something defined only by the limits of its profession, nor by its shifting palette of styles (even if he was wholly committed to modernism), but was the keystone to a much larger social contract – architecture, argued Richards, served the people. It therefore followed that his magazine appealed to the widest possible audience, and presented the architect not only as an ennobled builder but as a kind of public intellectual. Such an assignation was clearly part of the *zeitgeist*, because the same expanded responsibilities and wide-ranging set of influences characterised other magazines at the time, not least Ernesto Nathan Rogers' editorship of *Casabella-continuità* (1953–65), which drew upon a far more engrained Italianate tradition of the architect as thinker and writer (and which in a famous spat even gave him licence to shame the English critic Reyner Banham for not having adequately studied the works of John Ruskin).[29] But the measure of Richards' success is that he managed to reverse 500 years of inferiority and finally induce an equally erudite English architectural voice. This drew upon *The Architectural Review*'s earlier patronage of writers like D H Lawrence, Evelyn Waugh and John Betjeman, as much as it played to the literary ambitions of an emerging generation of architects and critics (among them, Ian Nairn and Colin Rowe), and helped propel *The Architectural Review* into the cultivated mainstream of informed public debate.

Interestingly, at the same time another section of the English public were also subscribing to another architectural journal, in almost exactly the same numbers, but whereas *The Architectural Review* disregarded the vagaries of style, *Architectural Design* was deliriously, unashamedly stylish.[30] It was edited for much of the post-war period by the Chilean-born Monica Pidgeon, but its best years were in the 1960s and early 1970s, coinciding with the assistant editorship (or in *Architectural Design*'s terms, 'technical editorship') of former AA students Kenneth Frampton (1962–64) and Robin Middleton (1964–72). And what Frampton and Middleton provided more than anything else was an open communications channel to the AA – partly precipitated by proximity: the *Architectural Design* offices were located at 30 Bloomsbury Way, just a five-minute walk from the AA at 36 Bedford Square – which saw so much of its editorial content in this period, heavily biased in favour of a kind of technology-infused futurism, being determined by AA staff and students, including the work of Peter Smithson, the Archigram group, Cedric Price, Frei Otto, and later extensive profiles of the pedagogical and even editorial structures on which the AA was being run. And so even if the *AA Journal* and then *Arena* were the nominal house publications, the real AA journal of record in this period was *Architectural Design*.

31. Student publications have in fact appeared throughout the AA's history, especially in the pre-war period – notably *Tufton Street Tatler* (1905–09), *Harlequinade* (1923–26) and *Focus* (1938–39), the most interesting of them, if only because of its explicitly modernist content, largely indebted to the Bauhaus, and was published in the immediate wake of the AA's student-led abandonment of its beaux-arts teaching programmes in favour of a modernist agenda – but never with the self-celebration of the publications of the 1960s. Carlo Menon has recently completed a Bartlett PhD on the topic, '"Little" Architectural Magazines of the early Twenty-first Century: Critical Discourse and Collective Practice, In and Out of Academia', 2018; and as they do with each major moment in the history of the architecture magazine, Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw (op cit, p 93) offer a good synoptic survey of the little magazine, including a useful definition of sorts by Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn Ulrich: 'Coming into use during the First World War, "little" did not refer to the size of the magazines, nor to their literary contents, not to the fact that they did not usually pay for contributions. What the word designated above everything else was a limited group of intelligent readers: to be such a reader one had to understand the aims of the particular schools of literature that the magazine represented, had to be interested in learning about dadaism, vorticism, expressionism and surrealism. In a sense, therefore, the word "little" is vague and even unfairly derogatory.' Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn Ulrich (eds), *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), p 3.

32. See Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture Without Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); or for something a little more nuanced, Paul Davies, 'The Archigram Group', in Paul Davies and Torsten Schmiedeknecht (eds), *An Architect's Guide to Fame* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2005), pp 19–30.

33. The best surveys of the panoply of AA-led 'little' magazines are AA Archivist, Edward Bottoms' very effective account of all the AA student publications, 'The Purple Patch to Sexymachinery: 100 Years of AA Student Journals', *AArchitecture* 1, 2007, accessible online at: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/AASCHOOL/LIBRARY/Purple_Patch.pdf, and Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley (eds), *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X to 197X* (Barcelona: Actar, 2010), which features extended histories of all of its case studies, alongside multiple others from other schools and institutions in the 1960s and 1970s.

34. *Clip, Stamp, Fold*, ibid, case study #15, *Symbols*, written by Irene Sunwoo.

35. The story of Robin Evans' intellectual development, including an account of his student writings, is told very adeptly by Joseph Bedford in 'In Front of Lives That Leave Behind', *AA Files* 70 (summer 2015), pp 3–18.

No doubt spurred on by this sudden attention afforded to AA teachers, and the ability of the printed page to forge a successful architectural identity, from the 1960s onwards a succession of AA student-led initiatives – subsequently historicised as part of a wider culture of the 'little magazine' – increasingly saw the production of their own rival publications.[31] Foremost among these was *Archigram* – like *De Stijl*, a magazine that became an architectural collective, and also like the other heroic modernist publications, a magazine whose voice (advocating a kind of pop neo-futurism, consumerism and technology) spoke fundamentally through its images and its art-manifesto rhetoric.[32] Even though only one of its six members was an actual AA student (Peter Cook), or that the entire run of the magazine comprised just nine issues over 13 years (1961–74), or even that its central message about the possibilities afforded by architectural media over and above the unchanging traditions of building was essentially a retelling of the same arts-and-crafts founding credo of the AA (in this sense, the famous spaceman on the cover of *Archigram* 4 was merely an update on the Diana in the forest frontispiece in *AA Notes* 1), nevertheless *Archigram* prompted a surge of other ersatz, and short-lived, magazines, setting the course for so much youthful architectural practice, even education, in the years since, all once again highlighting how in the AA's terms the publication had replaced the building as somehow the whole point of architecture.[33]

Specific AA student magazines appearing in *Archigram*'s wake included *ACC* (1964), set up to act as a collective thread (or Action Communication Centre) between the UK's various schools of architecture; *Symbols* (1965), which promoted a vaguely semiotic approach to architectural discourse (criticised at the time in a review in the *AA Journal* as 'having no coherent point of view');[34] *Signs of the Times, or Rather More Signs than Symbols* (1966), as its title makes clear, a critique of *Symbols*, and featuring much of the early writing of the then AA student Robin Evans;[35] *Clip-Kit* (1966), a medium-is-the-message publication edited by Peter Murray about kit-of-parts assembly, through which a set of articles on loose-leaf A4 pages, often featuring Cedric Price, were to be collected and ultimately bound; *ARse* (Architects for a Really Socialist Environment, 1969), a polemical political review; and *Ghost Dance Times* (1974–75), a weekly broadsheet edited and largely written by Martin Pawley that was easily the most significant of these various publications, and which despite its self-avowedly 'satirical' tone, featured consistently rather informed commentary and criticism on the AA and English architectural scene.

In an effort to keep pace with this flurry of magazines, whose swagger, if not audience, threatened to overshadow the school and association's more longstanding journal of record, and whose successes or at least recognition was in many ways reducible to the identity of its various creators, in 1969 the AA did what it had never done before and appointed an external editor – hiring Dennis Sharp, a former AA student who was then teaching architectural history at Manchester University, to oversee its various publications, and especially its journal.[36] Sharp proceeded to quickly abide by a stereotype of modern editorship and affected a redesign. This ultimately saw the abandonment of *Arena*, and the launch in its place of *The Architectural Association Quarterly*, or, rather, *AAQ* for short.[37] But where Sharp departed from AA convention was that his new format (smaller in size, exactly matching – consciously or not – that of *Archigram* magazine) was finally complemented with some new content, abandoning nearly a century of uninspiring club notices and building reviews with a series of themed issues featuring highly topical, informed and well-written articles – or as Sharp would put it, 'a sort of architectural *Time* magazine'.[38] The propriety *AAQ* lent to the AA was ultimately even used to quash the increasingly confident student publications, and especially *Ghost Dance Times*, whose final issue on 20 June 1975 mockingly reported the school principal's conviction that 'we need something more
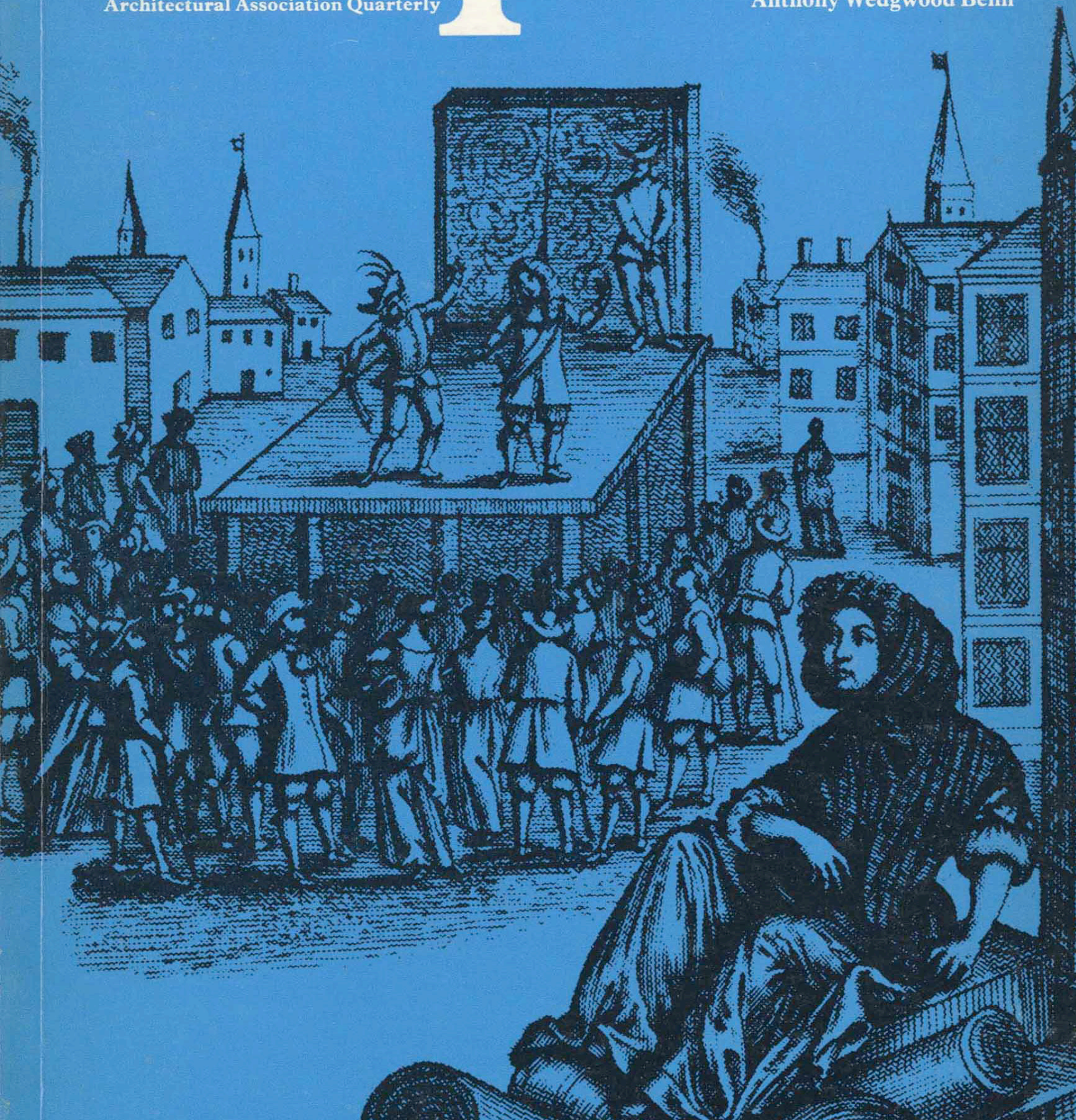
aaq

Architectural Association Quarterly

responsible and altogether less intelligible to convince the luncheon-voucher crazed bureaucrats who nowadays rule us all that the AA is an institution worthy of continued and unstinting support'.[39]

In the same spirit of seriousness, and paralleling *AAQ* in the 1970s, was another kind of AA magazine, but this time not produced by the students, nor actually designed or published at all, but spoken. In 1973 the South African-born historian, librarian and editor Robin Middleton was appointed to direct the school's history programme, renamed 'General Studies'.[40] Such a rebranding may have been partly prompted by Middleton's former role as technical editor on the determinedly contemporary and explicitly technocratic *Architectural Design*. But instead Middleton used this job as a chance to change tack, and in wilful contradiction to the programme's name, and in a nod to the founding principles of the AA, the most popular component of the course became a highly specific series of assuredly historical lectures, which quickly developed a culture and dedicated audience of their own. These also gave the AA something it had never really previously endorsed, namely scholarship, and the talks Middleton arranged included a rolling cast of architectural academics whose work would go on to define architectural historiography in the ensuing decades. Perhaps the apogee of these was a week of events in May 1978 dedicated to the beaux arts, and which in hindsight can be seen to have suggested an intriguing kind of closure, with Neil Levine and Hélène Lipstadt lecturing on the book and the building, on Victor Hugo's legacy, on words, printing presses, journals and architecture in the front room of a school and club established on the basis of these very same associations 130 years earlier.[41]

As redolent as these ideas were, however, the 1970s marked a moment of crisis for the AA, when all forms of state support were cut off by Margaret Thatcher, then a reforming minister of education in Edward Heath's Tory government. Fearing bankruptcy, the AA explored the possibility of an alliance with Imperial College, London, which was eventually abandoned in 1971, largely on the basis of a counter model proposed by the AA's new 'chairman', the Canadian Alvin Boyarsky. Rather than normalising the school through a university merger, Boyarsky argued that the AA had to retain its independence, which in turn would allow it to market an explicitly experimental, avant-garde architectural education, advertised by a kind of menu of diverse teachers and styles, and pitched to new, wholeheartedly international audience of students, whose inflated fees would keep the school afloat. Agent to this pluralism, internationalism and avant-gardism would again be the architectural publication, yet no longer appearing as a rather discrete periodical, but as the platform for a form of communication produced *en masse*, and whose every release would be accompanied by a huge amount of fanfare and self-justification.

> *I think the fabrication of books in a way was his first architectural love. I will always remember the way he held them gently and with deep reverence for something sacred and immortal. He knew books survived. He knew they were records of civilisation. He knew they had the uncanny ability to resurface and renew. He knew they were testaments of man, of woman and of institutions. And he knew they gave off pleasure and gave off magic. Alvin always surprised us by his next publication.[42]*

Illustrative of the affection Boyarsky held for both the publication and the powers associated with its production is a famous portrait from 1983 in which he presents himself not as a figure of pedagogical or professorial authority, but of editorial control. And so we see him in this photograph (taken by the photographer Barry Lewis, but clearly choreographed by Boyarsky himself), sitting at his desk as if he were an editor, with three telephones, and in-try and an out-tray and a desk strewn with editorial papers. Consistent with the associations of this

36. See Joseph Rykwert, 'Dennis Sharp Obituary', *The Guardian*, 21 June 2010, accessible online at: https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/jun/21/dennis-sharp-obituary.

37. As Dennis Sharp has later described it, the decision to reinvent the journal was not wholly down to editorial exuberance, but because of the increased commercialisation of *Arena*, prompted by a downturn in the AA's fortunes, which saw the journal briefly rebranded as *Arena/Interbuild* and running largely technocratic 'paid content'. Preferring instead an independent, scholarly journal, Sharp insisted on a change, which the AA eventually supported, and which saw the release of *AAQ*. See Irene Sunwoo's 'Interview with Dennis Sharp, Architectural Association Quarterly Editor, 1969–82', *Clip, Stamp, Fold*, op cit, pp 454–56.

38. Ibid, p 455.

39. This school principal – or rather chairman – was actually Alvin Boyarsky. See Martin Pawley, *Ghost Dance Times*, no 26, 20 June 1980; and *Clip, Stamp, Fold*, op cit, case study # 105, *Ghost Dance Times* no 26, written by Irene Sunwoo.

40. The best published biographical portrait of Robin Middleton can be found in the conversation he conducted with Peter Carl, 'Robin Middleton in Conversation with Peter Carl', *AA Files* 65 (winter 2012), pp 98–110.

41. The papers delivered in this conference, including others by Joseph Rykwert, Barry Bergdoll and Middleton himself, would later be published in 1982 as *The Beaux Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, op cit.

42. John Hejduk, 'A Sense of Spirit', *AA Files* 20 (winter 1990), p 4, published as a kind of *in memoriam* after Boyarsky's death in 1990.
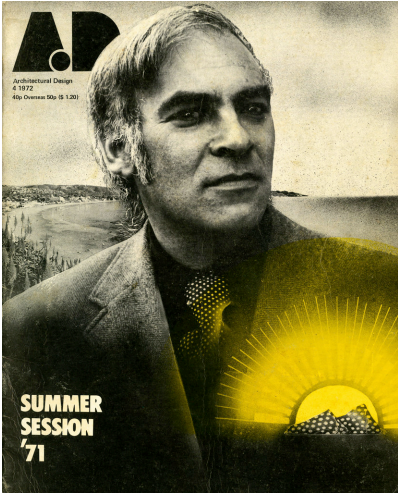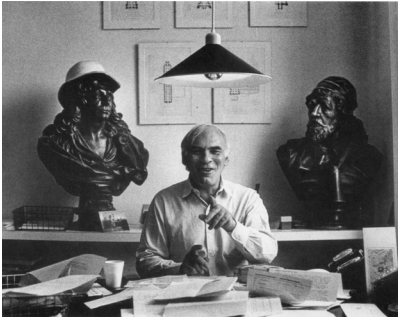
Above: Alvin Boyarasky in his AA office, 1983
Photograph Barry Lewis
Below: *Architectural Design*, no 4, 1972
AA Archive/Library

43. Henderson Downing published a full transcript of the 6 March 1975 TVAA recording of 'Architectural Magazines' in *AA Files* 55 (summer 2007), pp 58–59.

44. For the best of the research on Boyarsky, see David Dunster, 'Boyarsky and the AA: Some Thoughts on the London Scene of the 1960s and 1970s', in Paul Davies and Torsten Schmiedeknecht (eds), *An Architect's Guide to Fame* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2005), pp 33–47; Andrew Higgott, 'Searching for the Subject: Alvin Boyarsky and the Architectural Association School', *Mediating Modernism*, op cit, pp 153–87; Igor Marjanovic, 'Alvin Boyarsky's Delicatessen', in Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Mark Dorrian and Murray Fraser (eds), *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp 190–99; Igor Marjanovic, 'Alvin Boyarsky's Chicago', *AA Files* 60 (summer 2010), pp 45–52; Igor Marjanovic, *Drawing Ambience: Alvin Boyarsky and the Architectural Association* (St Louis, MO: Mildred Lane Kemper Museum, 2015); Irene Sunwoo, 'The Static Age', *AA Files* 61 (winter 2010), pp 118–129; and Irene Sunwoo, 'Between the "Well-Laid Table" and the "Marketplace": Alvin Boyarsky's Experiments in Architectural Pedagogy', PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2013.

image, Boyarsky ran the AA as if it were an editorial project, recasting so many of the previously rather humdrum components of a school noticeboard into exciting opportunities for editorship and design.

For instance, upon his arrival, just like any other school, Boyarsky inherited a ritual that saw an unapologetically ordinary Xeroxed sheet of A4 paper pinned up across the school alerting students to the week's assorted classes and room bookings. This was immediately abandoned and in its place Boyarsky reimagined the same document as a magazine, a weekly *Event's List*, which turned the announcement of a class or seminar into a headlined article, and which was printed on a shifting palette or coloured paper stocks, with an issue number in its top right-hand corner which was generated by a weekly student design competition. Of course, this document was also not produced in a small print-run, internal only to the corridors of the school, but exploited the AA's increasingly global audience to reproduce this *Event's List* in the thousands, and distribute it to the wider association of its members.

The same dismantlement of older pedagogical models in favour of a new, more explicitly mediated affiliation, even went beyond Boyarsky's endorsement of books and journals, and extended into all aspects of the school's cultural and didactic production. Perhaps the most radical of these was his launching of the school's own television station, TVAA, whose first show, appropriately enough, was a monthly programme hosted by Cedric Price in which he reviewed the latest instalments of the only essential object of architectural culture, the architectural magazine ('I use magazines very greedily', Price says, introducing the first episode – an appetite presumably matched by his audience).[43]

The story, or to a large extent mythology, of Alvin Boyarsky has become a desperately familiar one in recent architectural discourse, with an apparent industry of both academic texts and personal reminiscences continuing to attest to his significance.[44] Like architect John Hejduk's homily (*opposite*) to the love Boyarsky felt for the book, much of this writing allegorises both Boyarsky's personality and importance not through the building he occupied in Bedford Square for more than two decades, but through the book and the journal, his favourite medium being sold to us as fundamentally inseparable from his message. And so Boyarsky's faith in variety, and the myriad of courses he introduced, is presented not through curricula but through the annual published anthology of AA work, *Projects Review*; or Boyarsky's mischief is typically discussed through the 1989 AA book *Sigurd Lewerentz*, which he had bound in sandpaper so as to force booksellers and librarians to shelve it not with its spine facing outwards (because this would mean its surface would ruin any adjacent book) but its cover; or ultimately Boyarsky's influence is advertised by the 1972 cover of *Architectural Design*, which features his portrait alongside an illustration of a brightly setting sun, each outshining the other in terms of their radiance.

However, this abundance of material has also introduced a number of misrepresentations, not least that the work produced in this period was the high-point of the AA's architectural culture, when a rival case can just as easily be made for the greater importance of its immediate post-war decades; or that Boyarsky's tenure at the school represents the origin of the alliance of architecture and media, when in reality this was the very idea on which the AA had been founded more than a century earlier. And yet eclipsed by these assumed legacies are in fact certain defining aspects of modern architectural education that do seem reducible to Boyarsky. For example, the idea that the value and vitality of an educational programme is now determined by a kind of self-propagandising cult of production and by quantity, or that the courses architectural schools offer are now universally structured not through a set of seemingly irrevocable principles, but through the marketplace of choice; or ultimately that the older AA model that always enshrined the collective and the synchronicity between building and book, had to be usurped by an idolatrous parallelism between building and

occupant – or as former AA student and teacher, Fred Scott, put it, casting Boyarsky as heir to Fischer von Erlach's *Colossus of Mount Athos* (as a man who somehow morphs into his own milieu), 'never has a head of the school inhabited the Bedford Square premises as intensely as the present incumbent. To paraphrase a fellow Canadian [Marshall McLuhan], the buildings seem at times to be an extension of his central nervous system, and at other times he of theirs'.[45]

Intellectual radical or free-marketeer, patron or propagandist, 'snake charmer' or 'school bully',[46] it was nevertheless Boyarsky who reconfigured the AA's house journal one final time. In 1981 he ousted Dennis Sharp, together with his journal *AAQ*, not, as one might think, for occupying the role that Boyarsky deemed his own (why should there be two AA editors?), but for seemingly becoming too independent of the already independent AA – not just in terms of the way its content did not seem to reflect the excellence of the General Studies programme, nor the work coming out of the school's design studios, but more immediately for the way its academic and often very ideological articles sat rather uncomfortably next to advertisements for 'lift contractors and plasterboard manufacturers' (tokens of the most banal form of architectural publishing, far removed from how the new AA hoped to project itself).[47] Sharp was understandably upset at this decision, even if he ironically managed to confirm its validity by continuing to independently publish *AAQ*, supported by the same kind of advertising, for a further two years.[48] In its place Boyarsky initiated a new journal, *AA Files*, a new larger format and even a new editor, Mary Wall. But in reality, Boyarsky remained in charge of both the school and the journal, and it would be his name that would sit next to an opening page text that described the new *AA Files* titled 'Introduction', but which really should have been labelled for what it was, 'Editorial': '*AA Files* is motivated by a desire to portray the spirit and ambience of the place: the preoccupations of staff and students, the passing parade of participants drawn from all parts of the world, the propositions and images produced, the formally spoken word.'[49]

This 'formally spoken word' is almost emblematically advertised in the first line from the first essay in the first-ever issue: 'You probably know Sidney Smith's definition of paradise: "eating *paté de foie gras* to the sound of trumpets". I think my definition of hell would be lecturing to the sound of bagpipes.'[50] This is how the historian J Mordaunt Crook began his lecture, and subsequent essay, on London's clubland. Despite the fact that Crook associated talking in public with some kind of underworld perdition, this opening would suggest that he lectured like an angel. Moreover, the seamless transition between oratory and essay, between the immediacy of the experience of the AA lecture hall and the posterity of an architectural publication, also established a standard thoroughly in-keeping with the idea the AA liked to maintain – of the architect and academic as raconteur – and which in many ways sits squarely at the heart of the allegiance this club and school sought to promote.

Over the ensuing three decades and more than 50 issues, just as successive directors of the AA had to manage the weight of expectation in succeeding the charismatic Boyarsky, so too had *AA Files* editors to deal with school directors who, like Boyarsky, fancied themselves as editors. The journal backdropped three school directors post Boyarsky – Alan Balfour, Mohsen Mostafavi and Brett Steele – and four *AA Files* editors – Mary Wall (1981–99), Mark Rappolt (2000–03), David Terrien (2004–06) and myself (2007–18) – all of whom worked through relationships at turns supportive and confrontational, and whose editorial direction of the journal alternated, either basing content on material produced only from inside the AA, or promoting authors and topics from anywhere but the AA. For example, the content of Wall's first issues of *AA Files* matched exactly the guests invited into the school to present lectures or exhibit their work – the bi-annual table of contents and the school's termly poster of events were in this sense the same document. In contrast, her successor, Rappolt, shifted the

45. Fred Scott, *Prospectus*, AA School of Architecture, 1981, p 4.
46. A 'mesmerising combination of snake charmer and school bully' – a portrait of Boyarsky articulated by David Dunster, op cit, p 42.
47. The characterisation 'lift contractors and plasterboard manufacturers' comes from Andrew Higgott in his response to an essay by Igor Marjanovic ('Lines and Words on Display: Alvin Boyarsky as a Collector, Curator and Publisher', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, August 2010), letters column, *Architectural Research Quarterly*, September 2010, p 189.
48. As late as 2005 Sharp remained critical of Boyarsky's decision: 'Alvin Boyarsky decided to go in another direction and I disagreed with him… It was a nasty period, a stupid, very, very silly thing to do just at the moment the journal was redesigned and considerable income was generated for the outside publisher by advertisements. They lost a great magazine, regardless of whether I was editing it or not.' Irene Sunwoo, 'Interview with Dennis Sharp', op cit, p 455.
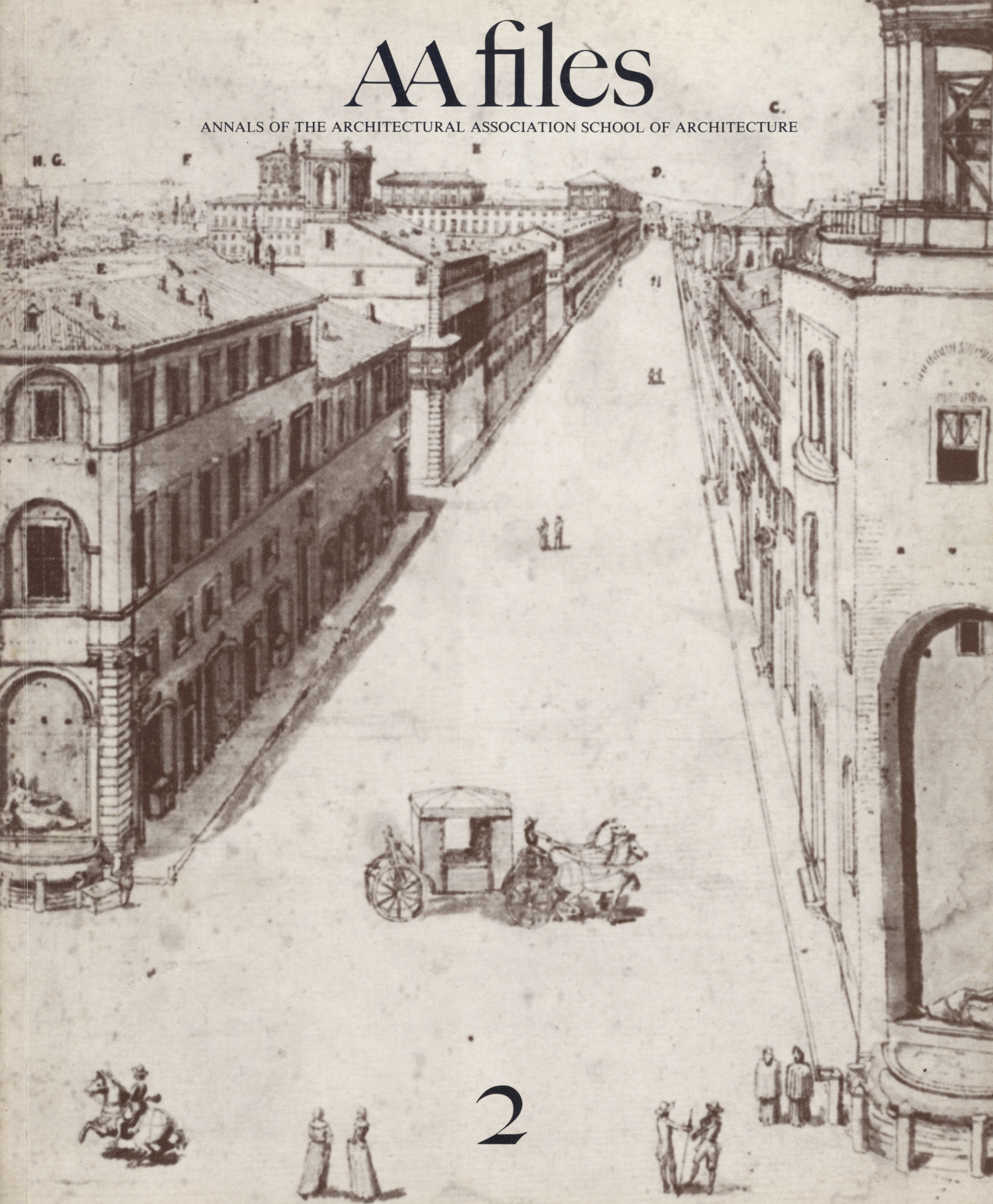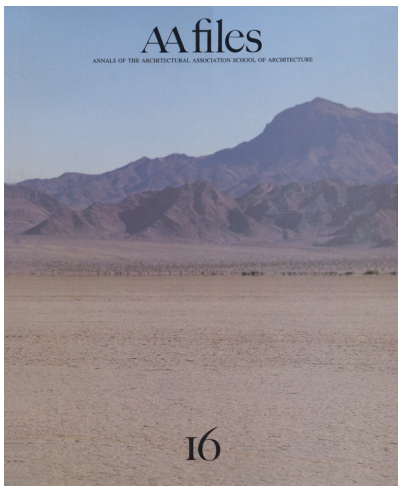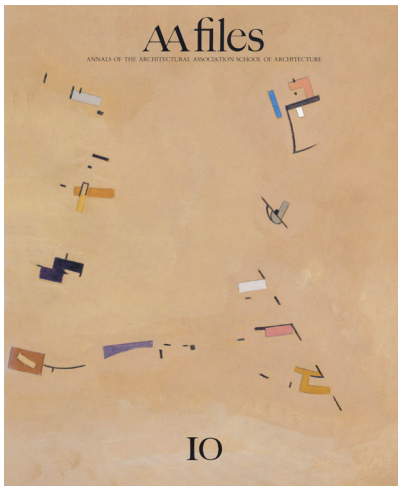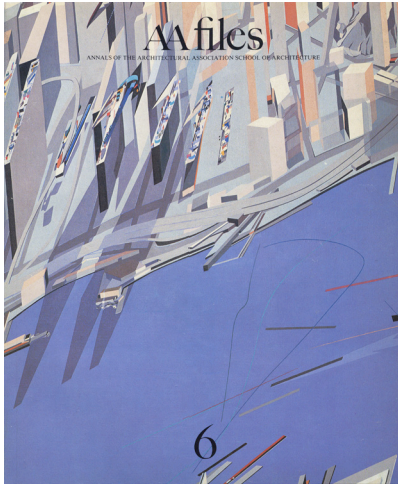49. Alvin Boyarsky, 'Introduction', *AA Files* 2 (summer 1982), p 3.
50. J Mordaunt Crook, 'The Architecture of Clubland', *AA Files* 1 (winter 1981), p 9.
51. Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, op cit, pp 182–83.

AA files

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AA Files 6, 10, 16, 1984–87

character of the journal away from architecture and towards art, and away from those people physically engaged with the AA (not least its members, students and teachers) to a more international cast of critics and practitioners. Rappolt's successor, Terrien, under pressure from the new director, Steele, returned the focus to the work of AA students and staff; while my own issues again alternated this model, and reacted against the perceived paucity of work produced inside the AA – an over-emphasis on both the individuality of artistic expression and on the latest currents of digital technology – and instead promoted a wilfully more eclectic array of architectural content and a greater emphasis on architectural history derived from authors largely unconnected with the school.

For each of these editors, the difficulty, as ever, was not just the editorial ambitions of the directors, but the fact that the AA remained both a school (an open academic institution) and an association (a closed members' club), although this characterisation could itself be inverted (the school continued to be private and accessible only to those who could pay its fees, whereas the club, for a relatively modest subscription, was open to anyone). The journal, then, maintained the competing agenda that defined it – to try and promote the introverted world of the association while simultaneously trying to engage and celebrate, more expansively, the wider subject of architecture (even if this too could easily be subverted – what the association considered as architectural culture was often more accommodating than the particular stylistic, technical or methodological allegiances propagated by the school).

The mandate to deal with the complexities and contradictions of this diagram was in turn compounded by the fact that by the early years of the twenty-first century the pervasiveness of academic research on architectural publications seemed to be suggesting that the history of the architectural journal, or more expansively architectural media, was the only vehicle for presenting a history of architecture. In these circumstances, actually editing a journal therefore meant not simply taking on the responsibility of delivering content, but somehow making a grander self-speculating statement about the meaning, or rather theory, of the entire architectural discipline.

Such a theory, in my own issues of *AA Files*, was in many ways reducible to ideas associated with architectural education, and in particular to negating a kind of polarisation between design thinking and more discursive thinking that had come to define not just the AA but so many other schools of architecture. As Andrew Higgott writes, characterising this shift, by the early 1990s 'the important visitors to the AA were more likely to be artists or philosophers or other experts in their particular fields rather than successful practising architects. Architecture was imagined as a field of forces, making clear that the idea of architecture as object was not enough'.[51] Accordingly, the school in this period appeared to promote a new kind of architectural hero – not the practitioner (not the celebrity offered by Lasdun, Rogers, Scott Brown, Gowan or Smithson), not even the architect, but a newer, still more aspirational form of creative individual promoted by the artist (Damian Hirst), musician (Brian Eno) or philosopher (Slavoj Zizek).

The disinterest and, to a certain extent, suspicion of the older architectural object (the building and the architects themselves) which first emerged in the early 1990s, had by the early 2000s precipitated a pronounced divide in the way the twin facets of an architectural education typically published themselves: architectural design continued to be presented as the realm of art, whose consummation and manifestation was no longer located on the street but through the repeating rituals of the world's various biennales (that is, the site of art had become the site of architecture); while architectural history and criticism somehow aspired only to the status of philosophy, and whose most significant practitioners and publications of the last two decades seemed to have taken a peculiar pride in devolving out of architectural discussion a responsibility towards its baser objects, not least its buildings, drawings, books and architects.[52]

The ambition behind my remaking of *AA Files* was to challenge these associations, and to present architecture not through its subjugation to other 'forces', but as a force in itself, and one that has consistently shown itself to be perfectly capable of accommodating both object and idea. This would mean that design could be discussed not through the purity of its artful essence, but the impurity of an architecture that has always necessarily dealt with social responsibility, the weight of history, personal idiosyncrasies, even disappointment. And this would also mean that the parallel strains of architectural speculation could follow Leon Battista Alberti's defining distinction between theory and practice, and recognise that any form of architectural production not in the form of building is by definition a theory – that is, it could recover architectural theory from the philosophising theorist.[53]

The educational focus of this polemic is only further amplified by the way the contemporary school of architecture – to a certain extent following Boyarsky, and later the historian Beatriz Colomina – now not only places the production of architectural media at the centre of its activities, but has itself become a mediated product, a form of magazine (branded, designed, almost packaged, often themed, identifiable through the personality of its director/editor and sold to a particular audience). And so in the same spirit of exchange, if the school now stakes a claim to be a perfect kind of journal, why should the journal not recast itself as a perfect kind of school (pluralistic, didactic, discerning, or, ironically to borrow a mantra from perhaps the defining media institution, the BBC, aspire to 'inform, educate and entertain')?[54]

At the same time, despite the precarious pleasures suggested by cross-fertilisation, and despite, too, the ubiquity of not just architectural publications but the endless speculations on architectural publications, there still seemed to be an opportunity in actually editing an architectural journal – not least, because of the chance this would afford to somehow finally put an end to that apparent (but never discussed) history of failure that has defined so many of the AA's publications, and its almost pathological inability to communicate. Such a correction could even offer a kind of historical transposition and learn from the AA's mistake of missing the model put forward by *The Hobby Horse*, *The Studio* or *Ver Sacrum*, and redevelop *AA Files* as an essentially holistic architectural journal that seamlessly integrates the power of text, image and voice through the literariness of its discursive forms – the lucidity of its design and image-making, the 'formally written word' (as Boyarsky would have it) and the equally appealing informally spoken word. Moreover, this language would not be a closed, self-informing one, not just rhetoric or the private dialect of a club, but a language addressed to the universality of architecture through its most appealing and universal of things, its buildings. Ultimately, then, it was not about radicalism or reinvention, not about any of those tropes with which architecture typically likes to sell itself, but an ambition to produce a journal for the Architectural Association that could be appreciated simply for its quality.
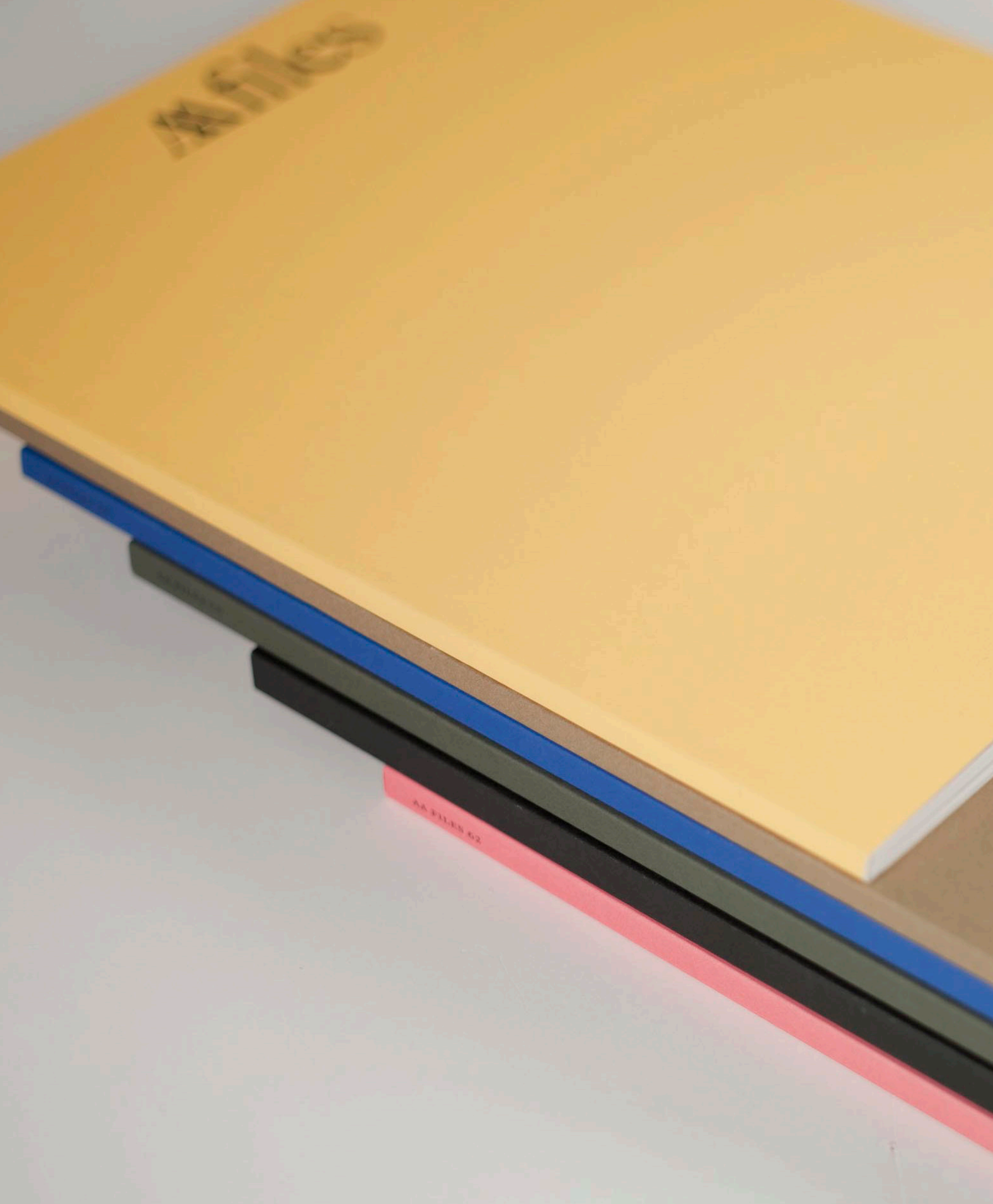
We are probably confronted with the prospect of having to adapt a quite obsolete instrument, such as the architectural magazine, to a world that has changed in terms of communicational structures and its semiotic relations. With the video magazine on the doorstep, printed magazines will have to learn to compete with the new media. However, the only way of successfully tackling the problem is, perhaps, to go back to producing quality magazines, those periodicals in which 'body' and 'clothing' are incomparably blended... Since we have continued to walk on the brink of the abyss for a good century, and this is, perhaps, a state of affairs with which modern man is familiar, why should we not go back and look in the mirror to make ourselves more presentable, at least to ourselves?[55]

52. The apogee of this philosophising tendency can be found in a series of American architectural history and theory journals published from the mid 1990s on: *Assemblage*, *Log* and especially *Grey Room*, successor to *Assemblage* as the MIT Press-backed architectural journal and now the house magazine of the self-styled 'Aggregate' collective of architectural historians and theorists.

53. 'Before I go any farther, I should explain exactly whom I mean by an architect; for it is no carpenter that I would have you compare to the greatest exponents of other disciplines: the carpenter is but an instrument in the hands of the architect. Him I consider the architect, who by sure and wonderful reason and method, knows both how to devise through his own mind and energy, and to realise by construction, whatever can be most beautifully fitted out for the noble needs of man, by the movement of weights and the joining and massing of bodies. To do this he must have an understanding and knowledge of all the highest and most noble disciplines. This then is the architect.' See Leon Battista Alberti, *The Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p 3.

54. This is the still defining trifecta of the BBC's mission statement, first articulated in the 1920s by its inaugural director general, John Reith.

55. Paolo Portoghesi, op cit, p 13.

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On Losing and Being Lost Again

Adam Phillips

A total of close to 90 million people were either killed or displaced in Europe between the years 1939 and 1948.
Mark Mazower,
The Dark Continent

We have to be as subtle as our memories. That's all.
Mary Butts,
Armed With Madness

A passage written in 1939 by Walter Benjamin, in preparation for his study of Baudelaire titled *Central Park*, states, 'The labyrinth is the habitat of the dawdler. The path followed by someone reluctant to reach his goal easily becomes labyrinthine. A drive, in the stages leading to its satisfaction, acts likewise. But so, too, does a humanity (a class) which does not want to know where its destiny is taking it.'[1] The labyrinth, traditionally, indeed mythically, something built to get lost in – in which the lost object is the exit, in which every destination depends upon the way out – is, as Benjamin suggests, the habitat, the environment created by the person who seeks to frustrate themselves. The way Benjamin pictures this is that the dawdler, like the drive itself, understands a reluctance to, as he says, reach a goal. Getting lost is what you do – it is what the dawdler does when he is in no way lost; when he knows exactly where he is going and how to get there. Getting lost and the creation of the labyrinth is the work done when there is an object of desire. You get lost because you are not lost. So at first we can say; we are lost when there is no object of desire, and we make ourselves lost when there is an object of desire. We get lost. It is something we get.

Of course, by comparing a dawdler with a drive Benjamin brings psychoanalysis into the picture, by association as it were. In Freud's work the incest taboo is the name he gives to the fact that the child always knows where he is going, and has to do something about it. There is a sense in which, in Freud's account – and I will come back to this – the child is never lost because the child always knows where he wants to be and should be (they are the same). He can get lost on the way, but he knows where he is going. The Oedipus complex structures the child's desire – the directions in which he is drawn, the spaces he prefers such that he can lose the object of desire but cannot, in the ordinary course of things, lose his desire for it. The parents are loved and hated but they are always wanted. There is no place like home, not even home itself, because, at least to begin with, and always, there are no people like one's parents; or no people about whom one has the same feelings as one does about one's parents (and siblings).

Everyone, let's say, has a thing about their mothers. And a thing about their fathers. Because of the incest taboo the child knows where it is going but mustn't get there; and the adult doesn't know where he is going and must get there. So the so-called resolution of the Oedipus complex, in so far as such a thing is possible – the relinquishing, the abjuring of one's desire for the parents, without the defeat or the betrayal of one's own desire – involves the freedom to be lost rather than the need to make oneself lost. Because the child knows what he wants, he has to get lost; because the adult doesn't know what he wants, he is lost. Because the making of labyrinths is second-nature, it is very difficult not to make them. Somebody dawdling in a labyrinth is a perfect image, as though this person has forgotten what he is doing there; as though for him, at least, this is no longer a labyrinth but a pleasant place to be walking. The means have become an end in themselves. It's not that travelling is hopefully better than arriving, but that travelling is there to protect you from the possibility of arrival. And psychoanalysis is effectively a dictionary of all the ways in which we travel to keep arrival at bay; of which getting lost is some kind of emblem. Benjamin's dawdler, in this sense, is like Lacan's obsessional neurotic:

> *What in its various advances and many byways the behaviour of the obsessional reveals and signifies is that he regulates his behaviour so as to avoid what he often sees quite clearly as the goal and end of his desire. The motivation of this avoidance is often extraordinarily radical, since the pleasure principle is presented to us as possessing a mode of operation which is precisely to avoid excess, too much pleasure.*[2]

For the obsessional, Lacan writes, 'the object with relation to which the fundamental experience, the experience of pleasure, is organised, is an object which literally gives too much pleasure'.[3] There are two things here we should note, one obvious, one less so. The obvious point is that the individual 'organises' himself 'fundamentally' around the experience of pleasure and the object who provides it, or with whom such pleasure is possible. In other words space, time and direction are organised around this object of desire; we are, in a simple sense, orientated by this object of desire; we might imagine it as a tropism, an affinity, a magnetic attraction and repulsion. This object of desire is like the obstacle we can't get round; we may be at a loss to hold its attention, or sustain its desire, we may actually lose it, but it is always where we want to go, even in our avoidance of it. Finding an object of desire is like being discovered; like being exposed. But once there is an object of desire the individual is no longer lost, in this one sense; like the dawdler, or the obsessional they know where they want to go even if they then devote their lives to not going there. The only problem the desiring individual has is how to get there.

And yet, of course (and this is the second point) once there is an object of desire there is a fantasy of catastrophe. Lacan says that for the obsessional the catastrophe is an excess of pleasure, for the hysteric an excess of frustration. In other words, once there is an object of desire there is an omniscient fantasy about the consequences of pursuing that object of desire. Those people Lacan calls obsessionals and hysterics live as if they know exactly what is going to happen if they achieve their goal – that is to say, the future will replicate the past. Experience of the past becomes certainty about the future. The omniscient, needless to say, never feel lost; or rather, the omniscient part of ourselves always knows what is happening and what is going to happen. The omniscient part of ourselves always knows where we are. Whether or not Lacan is right in his classification – and of course the rhetorical authority of his own categories is one form omniscience takes – it does seem to me to be useful, when talking about losing and getting lost, to talk about excess. That getting lost is an attempt to regulate some kind of excess, probably a different kind of excess for each person, but somewhere ranged along the pleasure/pain continuum.

By way of some opening propositions, then, children can, of course, get lost, but they always know where they want to be. Because there is an incest taboo they have to realise something very difficult – that they know where they want to go, but they must not go there; they have to discover and invent the experience of getting lost. Adults, because there is no place like home, are lost. Adulthood is about exchanging and knowing the difference between getting lost and being lost; between the artefact you must make and the experience you are powerless to avoid. While children get lost, adults have the possibility of being lost, and spend as much time as they can imagining getting lost so as to protect themselves from the experience of actually being lost. There is only one mother and father, but there are an unknowable number of objects of desire outside the family (we may grow up in a xenophobic nation state, but we grow up into a multiculture of other people). Getting lost, I want to suggest, is our best defence against being lost, partly because it makes us feel that we have,

as it were, taken the problem into our own hands, having turned, as psychoanalysts say, passive into active. We may idealise getting lost as a great adventure; we may create habitations that get us lost, or that, like labyrinths, become spaces in which we can lose ourselves. But to put it as simply as possible, we get lost when we are lost in a way we can't bear. We are lost both when there is no object of desire, and we get lost when there is one. So being lost involves acknowledging the inevitable frustration of there being no-one (or nothing) around that one wants, and perceiving that as a traumatic reality. Getting lost, then, might involve working out, as far as one can, what kind of excess not being lost supposedly involves. One gets lost when there is the excess of an object of desire in the vicinity; one is lost in the absence of this promising excess. So to go a bit further, we need to ask what maps are for, maps that by definition are not the ground; and that means, among other things, that they are not excessive in the way the ground is. If they were, the map would be the ground.

here is a poem by the Czech poet and immunologist Miroslav Holub titled, 'Brief Reflection on Maps', from his 1982 collection, *On The Contrary* (see over). Perhaps the most obviously puzzling thing about this wonderfully lucid parabolic poem are the first words and the last, the beginning of the journey and the end – the poem begins with a name, Albert Szent-Gyorgi, and ends with the word 'Goodbye'. Albert Szent-Gyorgi, for those of you who don't know – and who therefore begin the poem a bit lost – won the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine in 1937. If you Google him you discover the life of a remarkable man who made significant contributions to research into cancer, muscle physiology, cell respiration and vitamin C. He was also, in a way more evidently pertinent to the poem, actively anti-Nazi in Hungary, his country of origin, during the Second World War, having fought in the First World War (he received the Silver Medal for Valour and was discharged after being wounded in action in 1917). He subsequently emigrated to America. So the sense in which, as the poem says, 'Albert Szent-Gyorg… knew a thing or two about maps/ By which life moves somewhere or other' conflates the maps made of the inside of the body in its struggle for survival and the maps required in wartime. Sentences and diagrams about the inner workings of the body are like maps; and yet, the poem tells us, when these men got lost what they needed was a map, possibly any map, a map of anywhere. The map that got them back in the Alps was a map of the Pyrenees; maps can work, at least if we are desperate enough, just by being maps. They were 'lost' and awaited 'their end' until they found *a* map; not *the* map. What does this success story tell us maps are? Clearly we

couldn't trust someone who said to us all you need for this journey is a map, any map, or indeed a doctor who believed that you could treat a heart condition by learning about the liver. One thing the poem tells us is that what these desperate lost men needed was a map; and, to extend this for my purposes, we might say, in that predicament a map was the object of desire, and that by the same token, as it were, an object of desire is a map. It gives you direction without your necessarily noticing what or who it is. They didn't need the map of where they were – the real map – to get back; they just needed one that gave them a sense of direction. As long as you have a map, any map, you are no longer lost; as long as you have a certain kind of object of desire, you are no longer lost. We need a person to long for, an object of longing, because it orientates the excess, the complexity of our hearts and minds. If we were to reverse the ostensive meaning of the poem we might say, that being lost makes people unusually inventive in the use of their objects. These men could turn a map of the Pyrenees into a map of the Alps. Being lost, we might say, made them so unrealistic that they survived – their frustration, their desperation made them magicians, or perhaps alchemists.

Writing the last line and the last word of a poem about people being lost, the single word 'goodbye' makes the word itself enigmatic. What, for example, does the word goodbye have to do with maps, in this brief reflection on maps? There are, as there are supposed to be, several possibilities; but the one I want to entertain here is one that the structure of the poem suggests: this poem about getting lost, finding the wrong map, and being found leads up to a goodbye. There is, we see, no commentary, no reflection on the stark truth that is discovered by the lieutenant – he 'asked to see that remarkable map in order to/Study it. It wasn't a map of the Alps but the Pyrenees/Goodbye.' Goodbye, as if to say, this speaks for itself; or, goodbye to reality or empirical reality. The lieutenant thought he had said goodbye to his men, and then discovered that because they could say goodbye to reality they were saved. An object of desire is a map, not the ground. And being lost is a state of excessive desire, desire so strong that it can distort reality in the service of psychical survival. If there is no object of desire around then one has to be invented. The remarkable map has to be used as something that it is – a map – but recreated into something that it isn't – a map of the Alps.

In this poem we assume that the men were not dawdling, they were not unconsciously getting lost, they were really lost. But in this instance the men are more like the child I described earlier, the one who knows where he wants to go. Even if all objects of desire, all aims and directions, even survival itself, are tainted with the forbidden and are therefore in some way to be avoided, we take it that these men were doing the opposite – they were so keen to get back they

turned a map of the Pyrenees into a map of the Alps. If getting lost is an avoidance of the object of desire, being lost may be the precondition for finding the object of desire, for getting to the pitch of frustration in which you make what you need. And clearly, though not coyly, Holub's 'Brief Reflection on Maps' is also a Brief Reflection on Writing Poems as well as a Brief Reflection on Being Lost. The map will work only if we don't read it too closely, if we don't see what it really is. Being lost can make us usefully deluded, inventively careless, happily inattentive. So the poem makes us wonder what the experience of being lost is like, such that it can make us successfully use a map of the Pyrenees as a map of the Alps. These are the falsifications that survival can require of us. The object of desire is a map we use according to our needs. It gives us a sense of direction at the cost of a sense of reality. Maps, according to the poem, give us a sense of direction by not telling us where we are. If they had seen that it was a map of the Pyrenees they would have been truly lost. You never know which goodbye will be the last one.

n Holub's Brief Reflection the map, the 'remarkable map', helps the soldiers once they are lost, but further reflection on maps reminds us that they are there to prevent us from getting lost; we use them to prepare for the getting lost that might occur. They tell us by showing us where we want to go, or rather we use the map either to find out how to get where we want to go, or to find out where we may go. Like Holub's desperate men we are 'reassured' by them, if not insured, supposedly, against getting lost. Freud, for whom, interestingly, maps were not the thing – there are only seven references to maps in his work – used one as an analogy, once again connected to war and to the dangers of desire, of locating the object of desire. In 'The New Introductory Lectures' of 1933 he writes about how anxiety, as he puts it, 'makes repression'. The question as always for Freud is of how the individual pursues his satisfaction without too much harm, without excessive loss.

The ego notices that the satisfaction of an emerging instinctual demand would conjure up one of the well-remembered situations of danger. This instinctual cathexis must therefore be somehow suppressed, stopped, made powerless. We know that the ego succeeds in this task if it is strong and has drawn the instinctual impulse concerned into its organisation. But what happens in the case of repression is that the instinctual impulse still belongs to the id and that the ego feels weak. The ego thereupon helps itself with a technique which is at bottom identical with normal thinking. Thinking is an experimental action carried out with small amounts of energy, in the same way that a general shifts small figures about on a map before setting his large body of troops in motion.[4]

A Garden of Earthly Delights

Mathew Holmes

This is the English aristocrat Edward James (1907–1984) nailing down the essence of his folly-strewn garden at Xilitla, in northeastern Mexico, in a television documentary made in the late 1970s. The tower he is talking about is formed of two immense concrete columns shaped much like an orchid's reproductive organs, with two sets of concrete stairs coiled precariously around them, like skewed vertebrae. At a height of around 20m the stairs twist away from the columns and collide with each other in mid-air to create an Escher-style viewing platform. This vertigo-inducing machine is called the 'Stairway to Heaven', reflecting its dual aspect: it transports you into the soaring rainforest canopy, but at the same time it has no handrail, so if you lose your footing you're in for a breakneck fall.

Other structures at Las Pozas ('The Pools') pose different challenges. There's a 'cinema' with no screening room, a 'library' with no books, doors that don't open, buttresses that hold nothing up. The concept of utility is noticeably absent. So, too, is the concept of shelter. Take the 'House with Three Storeys that could be Five', for instance, which was notionally a place for visiting friends to stay. It has grand fireplaces and a dramatic staircase that give it a quite palatial feel: you could almost be in a stately home – except there are no walls in the upper storeys, just the minimum of supporting columns, and the floor slabs have circular holes cut in them. If James had ever got around to finishing the place, it would have had a round birdcage elevator that ascended through the floors, allowing its occupants to eyeball an assortment of wild animals: or vice-versa, because this was going to be a zoo in reverse, with the animals roaming freely and the humans behind bars.[2] 'I'd always wanted a place to conserve wildlife, every conceivable animal,' James said, 'I'd be like Noah and the Ark if I could'.

Aladdin's Palace, Noah's Ark … if you were playing a game of free association here, you might want to add Alice in Wonderland into the mix. The sheer oddness of the structures works together with the wild beauty of the natural setting – with its primordial trees, trailing lianas and carpets of moss richer than the richest green velvets[3] – to provoke an emotional response: a sense of excitement, but also of confusion, like you're a child again, let loose in a place where no one has told you the rules.

Las Pozas is often described as the work of someone unleashed from traditional means of expression. But to some extent it can also be seen as the transplanting, into a subtropical setting, of elements of the English garden tradition.[4] The English garden was a stage for playing out fantasies of a pastoral or mythic or just plain megalomaniac character. If you were wealthy enough, you could recreate the Golden Age of Antiquity in your own backyard. A Wiltshire meadow cut through by a stream could be transformed, with a little imagination, and the use of massive earth-moving machines, into the Elysian Fields and the River Styx. Hollow out a rockface, and you could have Dido's Cave.

If I asked my heart and conscience the incentive behind building a tower, I'd have to admit it was just pure megalomania. I think the Aladdin pantomime had something to do with it, because Aladdin's palace had towers and cupolas rather like this. And then the shapes are taken from the shapes of the forest. They're sort of instinctively flower shapes and leaf shapes, above all, which are inspired by everything around here, but of course nothing is finished, so some of them look very odd.[1]

For inspiration in creating this mood of altered reality James's eighteenth-century precursors looked to the paintings of Claude or Poussin, depicting a polished, perfected nature – idealised versions of the Italian landscape, with all the rough edges smoothed out (as god himself would surely have arranged, if only he'd allowed a day or two more for the creation). Las Pozas channels a different kind of baroque. 'An effect reminiscent of Magritte' is what James told a friend he was striving for in a scheme that (perhaps thankfully) was never realised: a replica of an equestrian statue by Verrocchio, blown up to many times its original size, and made to teeter over one of the rainforest cascades.[5]

James was wealthy enough to indulge any kind of whim. He had inherited a vast estate at West Dean, Sussex, from his father, and a second fortune following the premature demise of his Uncle Frank, who was crushed by an elephant. Right from the start he used this wealth to pursue his interest in the arts. At Oxford University his circle included Evelyn Waugh and John Betjeman. He published Betjeman's first book of poetry, and wrote and published some poems of his own – though another Oxford contemporary, W H Auden, was snarky about his efforts, dismissing him as a dilettante. While still in his 20s he financed three productions by George Balanchine's first company, Les Ballets 1933, admittedly with the ulterior motive of getting the attention of his disastrously ill-matched wife, an Austrian dancer called Tilly Losch. Among these productions was 'The Seven Deadly Sins': music by Kurt Weill, libretto by Bertolt Brecht, sung by Lotte Lenya and starring of course Tilly Losch.

From ballet James moved on to painting. He became a key patron of the early surrealists, taking to their out-of-kilter world like a duck to water. One of Magritte's most famous works, *Not to be Reproduced*, shows us James looking into a mirror. According to his friend, Lady Diana Menuhin, it's a 'pitch-perfect portrait: Edward looking at the back of Edward's head, not knowing what he was himself'.

Dalí's *Myth of Narcissus* was also painted for Edward James and was in many ways about him.[6] James bought all of Dalí's output in 1938, and that same year the two of them 'remodelled' Monkton House – a building his father had commissioned from Edwin Lutyens – aided and abetted by Kit Nicholson (Ben Nicholson's architect–brother) and a youthful Hugh Casson.[7] 'If I have a criticism to make of Lutyens, it's that he rather went in for being cottagey', James said. So to get away from that 'cottagey' look new pieces of furniture were designed for the interior: a huge canopied bed based on Nelson's funeral hearse for James's bedroom and a pair of Mae West lips sofas for the living room. James also wanted to have the living room walls flop in and out like the insides of a dog's stomach, but in the end had to settle for a static covering of Chesterfield-buttoned velvet instead. On the exterior, the brick facade was enlivened with purple and green, plaster aprons were placed under the windows, like sheets

Opposite: René Magritte, *Not to be Reproduced*, 1937
© Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

Alexander Brodsky
in conversation with
Thomas Weaver

The Russian artist and architect Alexander Brodsky lives in exactly the kind of space you would hope he would occupy – an apartment that used to be his father's studio in the attic of a pre-war tenement building close to the centre of Moscow. You enter by climbing the stairs that spiral around a central lift, and when you think you have reached the top you climb higher still, through a diminutive door that once only accessed a service hatch for the lift mechanism. This entrance opens out into a labyrinthine apartment packed full of bookcases, paintings, drawings and a large, seemingly immovable, etching press. Here Brodsky – known as Sasha to his friends – lives with his wife, Masha, and their daughter, also called Masha. His son, now studying art in New York, is another Sasha. Somehow appropriately, as you peer out over Moscow through windows just under the eaves of the building, you feel a bit like Noah in his ark, overseeing these pairs of Sashas and Mashas, while creaking and slightly swaying as if on the top of Mount Ararat.

Brodsky first made his name in the 1980s with a striking set of architectural etchings, produced in collaboration with his great friend Ilya Utkin. Over the last 30 years it is difficult to think of a more influential, more compelling set of architectural drawings, for Brodsky and Utkin not only reinvested Soviet design with all of the intelligence, history and humour it had lost over the previous half century, but they did so with images that were as original as they were engaging. These drawings would be exhibited all over the world, and their success led to a period when Brodsky lived and worked in the US. Back in his beloved Moscow since 2000, he has continued to work across the boundaries of art and architecture, completing a number of pavilions, interiors and galleries, while also exhibiting drawings and large relief models in his now signature unfired clay.

In person, there is something slightly elfin about Brodsky. He is small and smiling, and speaks softly and carefully in fluent English with a lilting Russian accent. He also has an incredible kind of magnetism – you feel yourself drawn to him, just as others in his studio so clearly are – fuelled by a strange combination of both ordinariness and otherworldliness. Brodsky must feel this too, for when we drove across Moscow to his apartment he noted that 'I always find it incredible that I can make this machine move'. In a wonderful portrait of his father, the younger Sasha Brodsky also captures the same qualities. Here Brodsky is depicted at his dining table, which he shares with his loyal dog, staring intently ahead, and in front of them is placed a simple wooden chopping board. In the ceiling above shines a light, illuminating the table, but also producing a kind of halo around his father's long face. Saint Brodsky at home with his dog.—*Thomas Weaver*

Sasha Brodsky, portrait of
Alexander Brodsky and his dog, 2014
Photograph Yuri Palmin
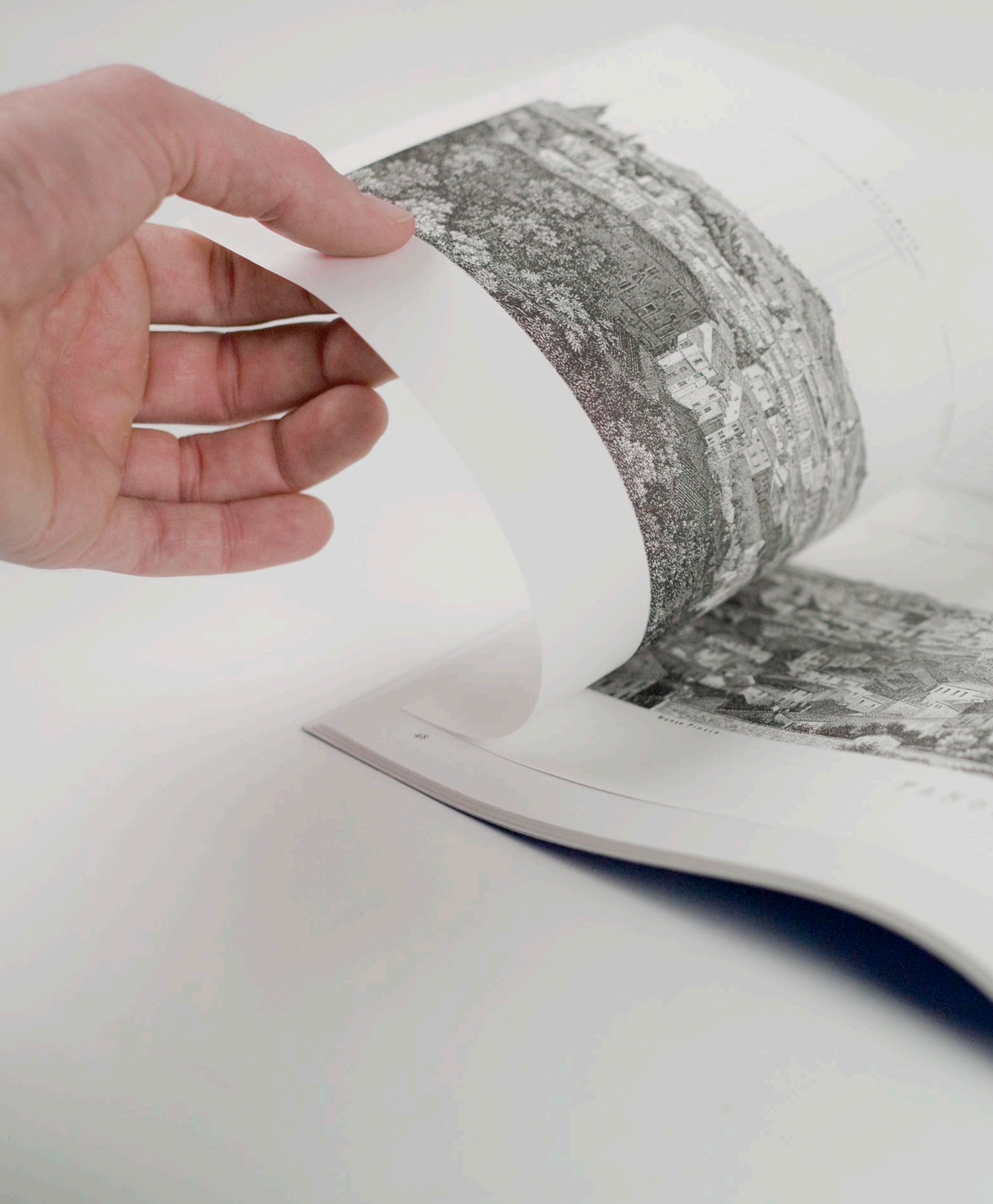© Sasha Brodsky / courtesy Alexander Brodsky

Monte Pincio

Part Two
The Text

Le Corbusier, French identity card
'Profession: Hommes de lettres', *c* 1930
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

Quotations in my works are like robbers by the roadside who make an armed attack and relieve an idler of his convictions.
—Walter Benjamin, *Schriften I*, 1928[1]

1. Quoted by Hannah Arendt in her introduction to the anthology of Walter Benjamin's writings, *Illuminations*, 1955, translated by Harry Zohn, 1968 (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969), p 38.

2. A gelatin print of the photograph – *Truman Capote, New Orleans*, 1947 – sits in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The specific plant in the photograph can be identified as *Colocasia esculenta* or wild taro, better known to residents of Louisiana as elephant ear.

3. Truman Capote, 'That's not writing. That's just typing', from Truman Capote, interviewed by Pati Hill, 'The Art of Fiction No 17', *The Paris Review*, spring–summer 1957.

4. *Vers une architecture* was first published in French in 1923, anthologising a number of essays, all but one of which had first been published in 1920–21 in the magazine Le Corbusier founded and edited with Amédée Ozenfant, *L'Esprit nouveau*. The first, and to a certain extent still definitive, English edition was translated by Frederick Etchells and published in 1927. In 2007 the Getty Institute published a new edition, translated by John Goodman, whose version introduced an updated English title. In *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 1960 (London: Butterworth, 1988), p 246, Banham writes that *Vers une architecture* maintains an influence 'beyond that of any other architectural work published in this century to date'. The origin of his testimony to *Vers une architecture*'s literariness is harder to locate, and appears to be a 'blurb' testimonial produced only for the English editions of the book produced from 1989 onwards by Butterworth (who also published Banham's *Theory and Design*). Architectural debts of gratitude to mathematics, geometry, philosophy, music etc, appear to emerge at the same time as the discipline itself, with so many of Renaissance treatises alluding to the benefits of architecture's wider embrace of subjects historically beyond its more technical or pragmatic realms. Of course, throughout its history, there have been many very adept architect writers, beginning with Leon Battista Alberti, but very few of either them or their critics and promoters have traditionally saw fit to present their work as emerging out of a literary set of influences or ambitions. In fact, it is as late as the 1970s and 1980s that architecture's then avant-garde – and figures like Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi and John Hejduk – were more explicit about the literary (as well as artistic and cinematic) resonances of their work, not least because at that stage in their careers these allusions, alongside their drawings, were what constituted their work (before Tschumi and Koolhaas, in particular, began building). And yet, Banham's homily to the literariness of Le Corbusier was written in 1989, late enough to have considered – and rejected – the claims of this avant-garde to architecture's literary canon.

enri Cartier-Bresson, the great French photographer, once took a picture of Truman Capote, the great American writer, in a patio garden in New Orleans' French Quarter. Framed by huge, almost other-worldly leaves, Capote is shown perched on the edge of an ornate cast-iron bench, wilfully, almost self-sacrificially, allowing himself to be enveloped, even ingested, into the verdancy of the plants around him.[2] Capote is one of those strange figures whose more recent photographs, taken in the 1980s, towards the end of his life, make him look like someone from the nineteenth century (often captured in a panama hat, bow tie and braces), while in photographs of him as a young man (Cartier-Bresson's portrait was actually taken in 1947, when Capote was just 23) he appears incredibly contemporary, casually dressed in crumpled T-shirt and jeans. Ten years after this picture was taken Capote was asked his opinion on another up-and-coming American writer, Jack Kerouac, who had just published *On the Road*, the definitive novel of the Beat movement, and a style of writing defined by its hipster prose and syncopated, jazz-influenced rhythms. Capote's own writing operated according to a completely different set of registers – highly controlled, almost mannered, with very precise use of punctuation and slightly affected sense of style. As a result, Capote had little time for Kerouac, and cursorily dismissed *On the Road* as 'not writing but typing' – that is, text that had not been considered or crafted, but was just mechanically, unemotively attached to the page.[3]

Even if one might actually admire *On the Road*, perhaps more so than Capote's own works, like *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1958) or *In Cold Blood* (1965), the distinction Capote makes is a useful one, applicable to all sorts of different genres of writing, but especially when one considers it in relation to architecture – a subject that has historically presented good and bad measures of its own craft through cross-fertilisations with every imaginable discipline (through art, geometry, mathematics, music, philosophy, politics, etc), but *not* through literature. The lone exception appears to be the briefest of endorsements by perhaps the best post-war architectural critic, the English historian and writer, Reyner Banham. In arguably his least celebrated architectural homily, Banham anoints Le Corbusier's famous modernist manifesto *Vers une architecture* (translated variously as *Towards a New Architecture*, or later simply *Toward an Architecture*) as 'the only piece of architectural writing that will be classed among the ''essential literature of the twentieth century''.'[4]

Despite the fact that for a number of years this testimonial was printed on the back cover of all English editions of the book, it remains somewhat overlooked. No professor of architecture seemingly ever begins a lecture on the text by prefacing their remarks, 'As Reyner Banham once noted…', and no architectural student appears to place this quote as an epigraph to their own ruminations on the architect. Perhaps the reason for its obscurity is the standard by which Banham is appraising Le Corbusier – *Vers une architecture* is not being invited into an architectural or art historical vanguard, nor an intellectual, philosophical or technological pantheon, but a literary canon. This book is being promoted as great literature.

There seems to be something interesting in this association, not least because among all the glorious and vainglorious platitudes that have traditionally been bestowed upon an architectural work (that it is 'most important', that it
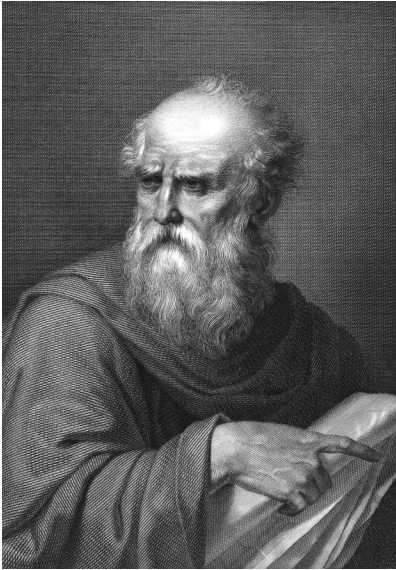
Marcus Vitruvius Polio,
engraving by Vincenzo Raggio, *c* 1830

Previous: Henri Cartier Bresson,
Truman Capote, New Orleans, 1947
MoMA, New York

Overleaf: opening spread,
Marcus Vitruvius Polio, *De architectura*,
Fra Giovanni Giocondo edition, 1511

is the 'most harmonious', or the 'most original'), the idea that an architect can write beautifully (that they are 'most literary') has never been among them. The cynical onlooker would point out that this omission simply reflects the fact that one of architecture's enduring paradoxes is that for a discipline long presented to us as a language, and whose books and journals decorate 'those small-scale cities of words and images that are our libraries',[5] very few architects have exhibited any kind of ability to write. Of course, a counter claim might contradict this and highlight any number of architecture's prose stylists, covering the full spectrum of its history, from Leon Battista Alberti to Adolf Loos to Rem Koolhaas, but nevertheless, the overwhelming mass or, for want of a better word, vernacular of architectural communication is arguably still defined by the scarcity of its writing and the over-abundance of its typing.

Proof of such failings could defer to precedent and highlight the first-ever written architectural composition, in the first-ever architectural publication, by the first-ever architect – the opening two sentences of Book I of Vitruvius' *De architectura* (*The Ten Books on Architecture*), written in the first century BC, but rediscovered in the fifteenth century, and celebrated ever since as architecture's defining document – an architectural equivalent to the Book of Genesis in *The King James Bible*, and its own, memorable opening line, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' And so, empowered with the responsibility of first-ness, this is Vitruvius' own overture to the discipline of architecture:

> *While your divine intelligence and will, Imperator Caesar, were engaged in acquiring the right to command the world, and while your fellow citizens, when all their enemies had been laid low by your invincible valour, were glorying in your triumph and victory – while all foreign nations were in subjection awaiting your beck and call, and the Roman people and senate, released from their alarm, were beginning to be guided by your most noble conceptions and policies, I hardly dared, in view of your serious employment, to publish my writings and long considered ideas on architecture, for fear of subjecting myself to your displeasure by an unseasonable interruption. But when I saw that you were giving your attention not only to the welfare of society in general and to the establishment of public order, but also to the providing of public buildings intended for utilitarian purposes, so that not only should the State have been enriched with provinces by your means, but that the greatness of its power might likewise be attended with distinguished authority in its public buildings, I thought that I ought to take the first opportunity to lay before you my writings on this theme.*[6]

It does not seem unduly unfair to suggest that these two, hugely long, opening sentences are not among literature's finest, nor, to be more critical, are they are even frankly passable by the generally low literary standards architecture would go on to set for itself. Any *confidant*, editor, teacher or indeed emperor at the time might have suggested to Marcus Vitruvius Pollio that a brand new discipline demanded a tone that was not toadying or self-modest, but confident, harmonic, celebratory. Or simply that the writing could be better. 'Vitruvius is an important writer', concedes Ingrid Rowland, in her translator's preface to a 1999 version of *De architectura*, 'quite possibly a highly innovative writer, and certainly among the most influential writers the world has produced, but he is not, perhaps, a very *good* writer'.[7] Despite the brutal honesty of Rowland's assessment, and despite, too, the fact that she supports her claim by calling as witness Leon Battista Alberti, who lamented the way *De architectura* was such a pastiche of corrupted Latin and Greek that it would have been better if Vitruvius had never written it at all, very few historians have commented on this intellectual short-fall, and instead architecture has always venerated Vitruvius for the techniques and forms promised by his book, while ignoring the more obvious and immediate form of the book itself – by its words. Of course, there is a huge amount of

5. Paolo Portoghesi, 'The Real Life of Architectural Magazines', *Domus* 635 (January 1983), p 3.
6. Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio), book I, preface, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Morris Hicky Morgan (New York, NY: Dover, 1960), p 3.
7. Ingrid D Rowland, translator's preface, in Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio), *Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Ingrid D Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p XIII.
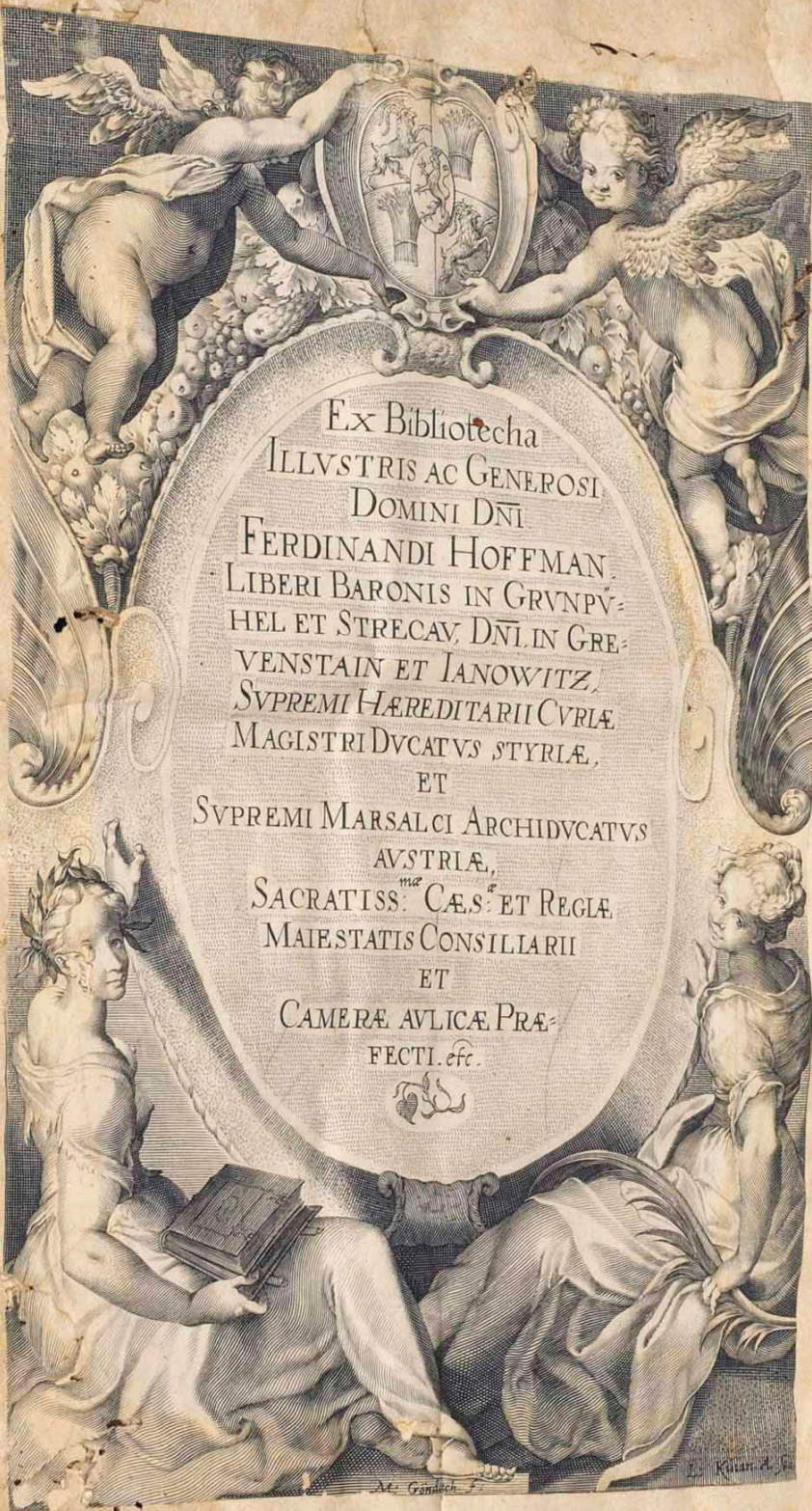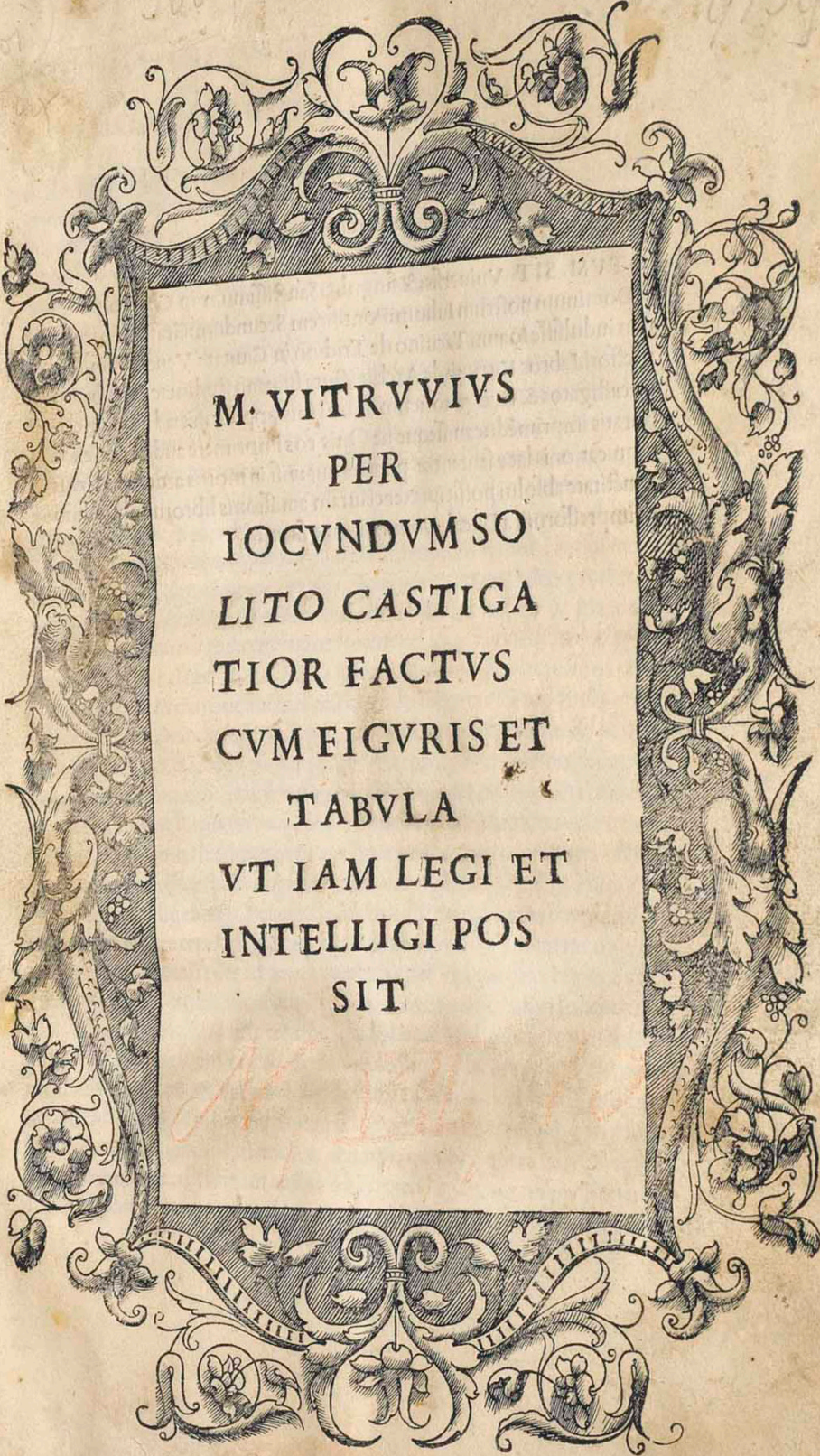
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FECTI. etc.

M. Gröndech

Kilian A.

M· VITRVVIVS PER IOCVNDVM SOLITO CASTIGATIOR FACTVS CVM FIGVRIS ET TABVLA VT IAM LEGI ET INTELLIGI POSSIT

Frank Lloyd Wright, self-portrait, *c* 1900

scholarly material on Vitruvius' prose, but the focus of so much of this work is either on the form of the treatise, and Vitruvius' adaptation of pre-existing military, technical or political rulebooks (see, for example, the scholarship by Rowland, Mario Carpo, Indra Kagis McEwen, Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols and Pierre Gros), or the extent to which his writing can be understood within a broader history of rhetoric (for example, the parallel work carried out by Françoise Choay and Caroline van Eck).[8] What is missing is a sustained investigation of *De architectura* as literature, or more simply as writing. This oversight is striking, especially because *De architectura* survived from antiquity unillustrated, *only* as words, and that it was as late as 1511 that Fra Giovanni Giocondo produced a new edition with woodcuts punctuating its text, meaning the book could at last be digested through its images. Before then, the only way of comprehending *De architectura* was to read it.

But more striking, still, is the fact that there *was* actually one person who felt embarrassed and thoroughly unsatisfied by the quality of the writing – striking because that one person was Vitruvius himself. Just a few short sections after his introduction, Vitruvius writes another two, very long sentences that explains his prose. And it is here, in this first-ever architectural book, that he comes to a stunning conclusion: that the reason his writing is so terrible is precisely because he is an architect:

> *Since, therefore, the possession of such talents due to natural capacity is not vouchsafed at random to entire nations, but only to a few great men; since, moreover, the function of the architect requires a training in all the departments of learning; and finally since reason, on account of the wide extent of the subject, concedes that the architect may possess not the highest nor even a necessarily moderate knowledge of the subjects of study, I request, Caesar, both of you and those who may read the said books, that if anything is set forth with too little regard for grammatical rule it may be pardoned. For it is not as a very great philosopher, nor as an eloquent rhetorician, nor as a grammarian trained in the principles of his art that I have striven to write this book, but as an architect who has had only a dip into those studies.*[9]

Again, for something quite so primal, it is astonishing that this *mea culpa* is not more known, or even more anthemic. As a kind invisible coda or footnote to every subsequent published architectural sentence, it could have excused 2,000 years of what some might deem casuistry with the acknowledgment that all of architecture's published claims were merely amateurish forays into a discussion, and should in no way be taken as definitive. In the process, it could have given architects' texts the single thing they have consistently lacked, namely humility. But instead, of course, the ensuing millennia has been characterised by no such self-doubt, and, rather, a resounding confidence that has seen architects extend a faith in their own ability to design anything or borrow from anything into a wilful appropriation of more literary writerly models and a belief that they can write anything.

For instance, this is how Frank Lloyd Wright chose to begin his long-awaited autobiography and the authoritative setting out of his architectural ideas:

> *A light blanket of snow fresh-fallen over sloping fields, gleaming in the morning sun. Clusters of pod-topped weeds woven of bronze here and there sprinkling the spotless expanse of white. Dark sprays of slender metallic straight lines, tipped with quivering dots. Pattern to the eye of the sun, as the sun spread delicate network of more pattern in blue shadows on the white beneath.*
>   *'Come, my boy', said Uncle John to his sister Anna's nine-year old. 'Come now, and I will show you how to go!'*[10]

8. See Ingrid D Rowland, 'The Fra Gicondo Vitruvius at 500', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, September 2011, pp 285–89; Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing: Originality, Writing, Typography and Printed Images in the History of Architectural Theory*, 1998, translated by Sarah Benson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Indra Kagis McEwen, *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Marden Fitzpatrick Nichols, *Author and Audience in Vitruvius' De architectura* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Pierre Gros, *Vitruve et la tradition des traités d'architecture: Fabrica et ratiocinatio* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2006); Françoise Choay, *The Rule and the Model: On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism*, 1980 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

9. Vitruvius, book I, chapter II, point XVII, ibid, p 13. I am very grateful to Mario Carpo for highlighting Vitruvius' *apologia* to me.

10. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*, 1932, but expanded and enlarged in 1943 (Petaluma, CA: Pomegranate, 2005), 'prelude', p 3.
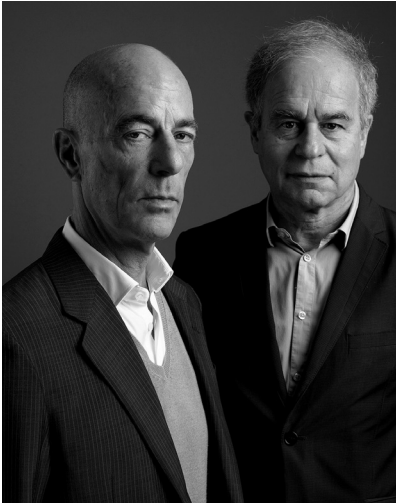
Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, 2011
Photograph Marco Grob

11. See Thomas S Hines ('a paean'),
'Photography, Architecture and the
Coming to Oneself: Edmund Teske and
Frank Lloyd Wright', in Charles Salas
and Michael Roth (eds), *Looking for Los
Angeles: Film, Photography and the
Urban Landscape* (Los Angeles, CA:
Getty, 2006), p 225; John Roche ('a
beautiful eclogue'), 'Democratic Space:
The Ecstatic Geography of Walt
Whitman and Frank Lloyd Wright',
Walt Whitman Quarterly Review 6
(summer 1998), pp 16–32, quote p 25;
Charles Riley ('an ascetic drama'), *The
Saints of Modern Art: The Ascetic Ideal in
Contemporary Painting, Sculpture,
Architecture, Music, Dance, Literature
and Philosophy* (Lebanon, NH:
University Press of New England, 1998),
p 165.
12. Frank Lloyd Wright's 'great poet' line is
from one of his four 'London lectures'
at the RIBA in 1939, published in Frank
Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture:
The Architecture of Democracy*, 1939
(London: Lund Humphries, 2017), and
quoted by Vincent Scully in *Frank Lloyd
Wright* (New York, NY: George Braziller,
1960), p 11.
13. Jacques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron,
'Passionate Infidelity', 1990, in Gerhard
Mack (ed), *Herzog & de Meuron 1989–91,
The Complete Works*, vol 2 (Basel:
Birkhäuser, 2005), p 182.
14. Alone among the huge section of the
architectural library devoted to Le
Corbusier, the one book that
investigates his evolution as a writer is
M Christine Boyer, *Le Corbusier, Homme
de Lettres* (New York, NY: Princeton
Architectural Press, 2010).
15. Le Corbusier's line that 'the house is a
machine for living in' appears in the
'Argument: Airplanes' section of
Towards a New Architecture, 1923,
translated by Frederick Etchells, 1927
(London: Butterworth, 1989), p 4.
Alessandra Ponte has speculated on
the mis-interpretation of Le
Corbusier's house as machine
formulation in 'François Dallegret in
Conversation with Alessandra Ponte',
in Alessandra Ponte, Laurent Stalder
and Thomas Weaver (eds), *GOD & Co:
François Dallegret Beyond the Bubble*
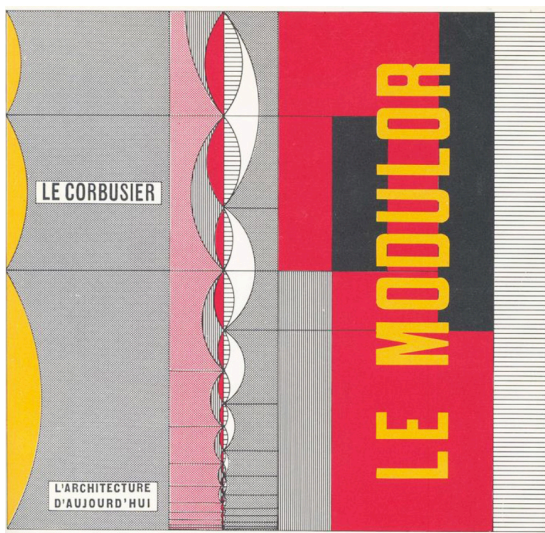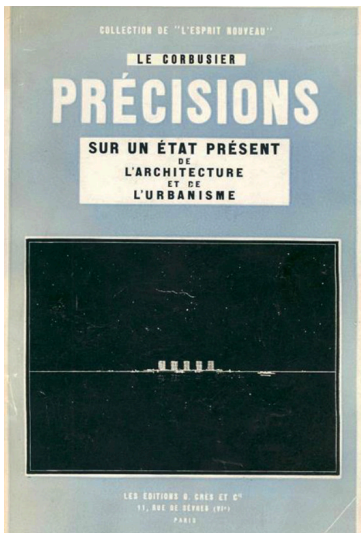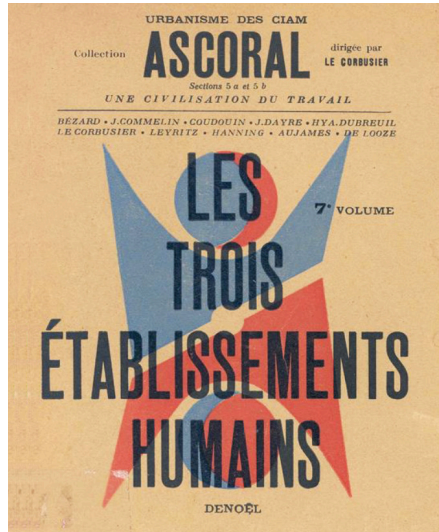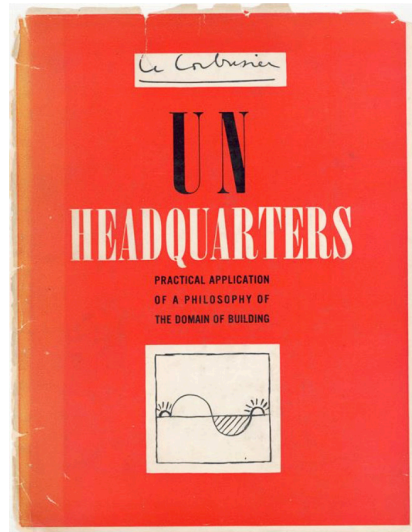(London: Architectural Association,
2011), np.

Assorted critics have variously described this passage as 'a paean to line, light and colour in nature', or as 'a beautiful eclogue of early winter, of a localised and humanised landscape', or simply as 'an ascetic drama' – all allegorising Wright's writing for the promises it makes for his architecture.[11] In the same spirit, the celebrated critic Vincent Scully even went so far as to quote Wright's self-serving comment that 'every great architect is – necessarily – a great poet', as a way of distinguishing the 'prose' of most contemporary architecture, from the sonorous magnificence of Wright's 'poetry'.[12] And yet even if Wright's buildings are uniformly wonderful, his writing is manifestly not, and that his obvious debt to the American transcendentalist poet Walt Whitman is one thing (forever casting his literary efforts as updates on Whitman's 1855 poem, 'Song of Myself'), but parodying him quite so brazenly, and badly, is something else altogether.

In more recent decades, architects have tended to resist precedent and the opportunity to ape Wright in ventriloquising their own poetic heroes, and instead they typically adopt a writerly persona that seeks only to convey the depths of their own personal expression (as if architecture no longer revels in the possibilities afforded to it as a kind of magpie profession, wilfully borrowing from assorted other practices and disciplines, but now feels more assured of the value of its own voice). But even if the resulting prose is no longer quite so purple, it still manages to induce embarrassment more readily than it does enthusiasm. For instance, this is Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, writing in the opening lines of their 1990 text 'Passionate Infidelity':

> *What is the architecture we seek, the architecture we move towards? The architecture that drives us, pushes us forward, that wants to be discovered, to be brought out from the seclusion of our architectural consciousness, or rather subconsciousness? The architecture that pushes us towards the light, like an insect, and when there, fulfils its inescapable fate? The architecture we think, draw, imagine, describe, the architecture we photograph and capture on video, the one we define as correct, more correct, or at least more important than other, older or contemporary architectures – without us it does not exist, and without it we do not exist.*[13]

It was not difficult to find these quotations. Open any book, by any architect, in any architectural library and it is possible to find versions of the same kinds of passages. And after reading these and other quotations it seems important to state an apparently obvious fact: that by and large architects are, have always been and presumably will remain absolutely hopeless writers. From the first to the last their literary efforts offer nothing but either obsequiousness (as in the case of Vitruvius); a kind of sentimental, lunatic lyricism (as with Frank Lloyd Wright); or more typically, almost by default, sheer unadulterated narcissism (as with Herzog and de Meuron).

Of course, the great exception to this tradition is Le Corbusier, famously narcissistic, but as Banham suggests, his writing alone offers architecture's most compelling form of literature. Indeed, Banham's verdict seems as valid now as when he first wrote it, perhaps more so even, for it is now possible to follow Le Corbusier's own lead and the fact that his Fre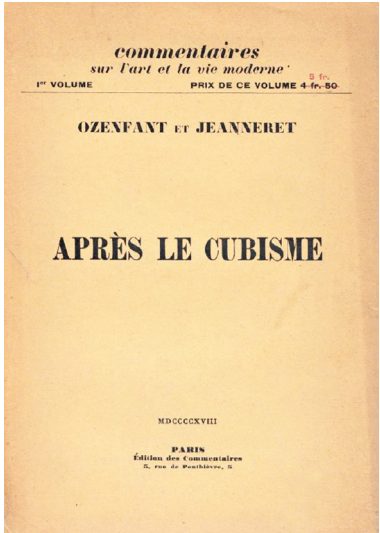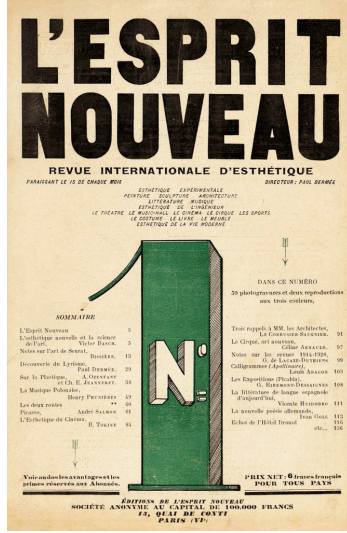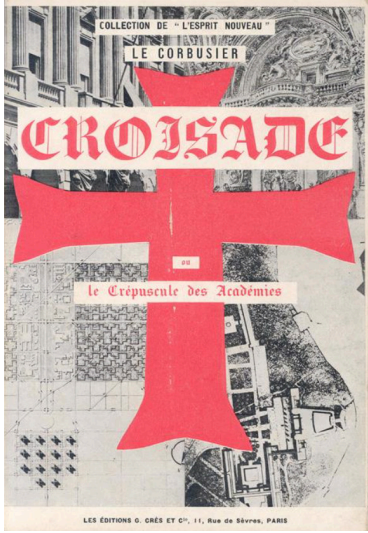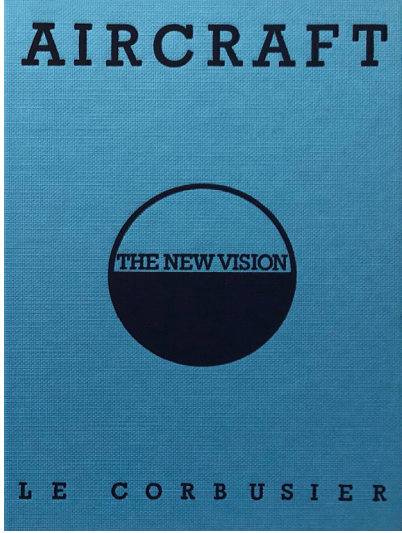nch identity card lists his profession not as 'architect' but as '*homme de lettres*', and assess his works more through literature than design.[14] Such a reappraisal might even take his famous statement that 'the house is a machine for living in' not as his advocacy of architecture as a kind of mechanism, but as a literary nod to the surrealist *machine à réaction poétique*, and the idea that the house (and therefore architecture) is essentially a poetic machine (an *objet à réaction poétique*) for producing great words.[15] The strength of this argument can also be conveyed by its mass, for Le Corbusier wrote to the same standard and with the same level of attentiveness in not just one or two famous works, but in hundreds of books, articles and journals, resulting in a body of published work more numerous than his buildings.

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Le Corbusier, *Le Voyage d'Orient*, 1965

Previous: assorted publications authored by Le Corbusier
Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris

Le Corbusier, if it needs to be repeated, is far more productive as a writer than he is as a builder. And so it follows that Le Corbusier alone holds the flame for architecture's literary ambitions.

The apparent strength of this conclusion, however, has been challenged by the scholar Beatriz Colomina, whose 2010 text on the architect, 'Vers une architecture médiatique' begins with a bold piece of iconoclasm:

> *Le Corbusier published 79 books, authored 511 articles, edited 55 journals, and produced the script for 13 documentary films and 20 radio broadcasts. But he* couldn't *write. His first attempt to publish the texts written in the form of a travel journal during his 'Voyage to the Orient' in 1911 had to be edited by his mother before they were sent to* La Feuille d'Avis*, a newspaper in his home town of La Chaux-de-Fonds, which published them as a series while he was still travelling.*[16]

More radically, still, Colomina then shows how Le Corbusier himself – seemingly never one to experience any moment of self-doubt – was in reality continually embarrassed by the quality of his writing, and as late as 1965, the year he died, he wrote this dedication to his brother Albert, at the front of his *Le Voyage d'Orient*, when it was finally published.

> *Surely you know how I wish this piece that I am dedicating to you were better! But I have nothing else. You know only too well how much these lines – written for an audience who really didn't want them – have tarnished the joy and disturbed the serenity with which everything there filled me… The other day they told me about the conviction with which you defended my French during your stay here this summer – my very poor, sad, incompetent French.*[17]

This casual revelation, buried deep within an oeuvre otherwise thoroughly exposed, seems to challenge a number of the key ideas on which architecture operates. Principal among these is the fact that architecture has always been sold as a language, and even if architects have typically engaged with this language metaphorically, through their built works and the 'grammar' of their designs, they have also always practised it literally, through their published work, especially in the modern period, when – like Le Corbusier – architects now often write more than they build. But in light of not just the enduring catalogue of questionable architectural writing, but Le Corbusier's death-bed confession of his own lapidary ineptitude, the question now arises as to who the more literary strain of architecture should revere if the first-ever architect was a self-confessed bad writer; if the greatest American architect was forever lost within the floridity of his prose; if arguably the best contemporary architects of the last two decades write shamelessly only through their own silhouettes; and if even Le Corbusier, historically architecture's literary saviour, was actually getting his mother to assist him with all of his texts, because his own prose, by his own admission, was very poor, very sad and incompetent.

More recently, the same problem (of a marked lack of 'writer–architects') has been compounded by the currents of architectural academicism, and by a position perhaps best summed up by the historian and critic Mark Wigley, a figure whose professorial and deanly titles have allowed him to exert a powerful influence over multiple generations of architectural students and academics, and a writer wholly familiar with architecture's extended historiography, and yet who in a public conversation at the AA School of Architecture in 2011 somewhat casually announced that: 'I don't write about architects today because I think they write. I would rather read an architect than read a critic on the architect's work. I have never read anyone who writes about Koolhaas' work that's interesting.'[18] So, the situation architecture now faces is two millennia of largely substandard writing by practising architects, and yet despite all of the evidence

16. Beatriz Colomina, 'Vers une architecture médiatique' in Arthur Rüegg (ed), *Le Corbusier: The Art of Architecture* (Weil am Rhein: Vitra Design Museum, 2007), pp 247–73, quote p 248.
17. Le Corbusier, 'To my brother, the musician Albert Jeanneret', dedication to *Journey to the East*, 1966, translated by Ivan Zaknic (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p 4.
18. Mark Wigley, 'In Conversation with Brett Steele', AA School of Architecture, 13 January 2011. See also Gevork Hartoonian, 'An Interview with Mark Wigley', *Architectural Theory Review*, vol 7, 2002, pp 89–102.

to the contrary, architectural critics and academics still maintain that we should continue not to write about architecture because architects themselves do this better than anyone else.

For any architectural editor, the idea that architects *cannot* write about architecture, and that critics *will not* write about architecture presents a fundamental problem, for what should an architectural journal be if not the most compelling constellation of architectural objects (its buildings, drawings, books, ideas and lives), and the best possible writing. The ambition, then – certainly in terms of this thesis, and the published journal on which it draws – is surely to put these two things together, to produce engaging thoughts and texts about architecture, and to break with the tradition of architectural writing that is too dull, too vain, too lyrical, too obtuse.

In reality, an ambition quite so simple seems to struggle to find bedfellows from within architecture's more contemporary editorial models, but other practitioners in other disciplines have voiced precisely the same frustration, and precisely the same ambition. For instance, in the preface to his book *Promises, Promises*, the psychoanalyst and essayist Adam Phillips writes that 'psychoanalysis does not need any more abstruse or sentimental abstractions – any new paradigms or radical revisions – it just needs more good sentences'.[19] If one were to substitute one subject for another, this, then, could very easily serve as the single banner under which architecture could be edited.

But in order to do so, it seems important, first, to be clear about what exactly is a good sentence, and how one should be able to distinguish a good one from a bad one. Perhaps one way of, if not resolving this, then at least clarifying it, is to initiate a kind of parlour game, in which exponents of both good and bad writing are made explicit. And if literariness is the goal, the best place to begin might be with literature, and a condensed survey of those opening lines traditionally celebrated as among literature's finest. Such a list would necessarily highlight the famous introduction to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), one of the greatest sentences of all time: 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' Or, under the same rubric, other exemplars might include Leo Tolstoy's beginning to *Anna Karenin* (1877), 'All happy families are alike, but an unhappy family is unhappy in its own way'; Marcel Proust's perfectly apt introduction to *Swann's Way* (1913), 'For a long time, I went to bed early'; or the sentence with which J D Salinger begins *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), 'If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that *David Copperfield* kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.'

But if we now adapt the rules of the game and extend this same opening-line constraint not to novels but to historical and critical writings about architecture, one would discover that an otherwise unremarkable book in terms of its lyricism contains a wonderful opening – Nikolaus Pevsner's first sentences to his *An Outline of European Architecture* (1945): 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.' However, in continuing through architecture's historical canon it quickly becomes apparent that the great works of architectural historiography – the books all academics have on their shelves, and all students have on their reading lists – might actually be a bit lacking. For example, this is the beginning to Gottfried Semper's *On Architectural Styles* (1869): 'As early as 1852 I published under the title *The Four Elements of Architecture* a short treatise on the origin and historical development of certain inherited and universally valid types that architecture uses to express itself in a generally intelligible symbolism.' Or this

19. Adam Phillips, *Promises, Promises* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000), p XVI. In an interview with Paul Holdengräber in *The Paris Review* Phillips explains what he means by this line: 'When I started … I had assumed that anybody who would be interested in psychoanalysis would be interested in many other things as well, but a lot of psychoanalysts in Britain were very anti-intellectual. I assumed that Freud was one writer among many, whereas he was regarded by the establishment in British psychoanalysis as offering a kind of supreme fiction about contemporary life. So one of the dismaying things was reading contemporary psychoanalysis, which was so poor. There were some notable exceptions, for instance Wilfred Bion and Donald Winnicott and Marion Milner. They were writers. Freud, to me, originally was a writer. I read psychoanalysis as poetry, so I don't have to worry about whether it is true or even useful, but only whether it is haunting or moving or intriguing or amusing – whether it is something I can't help but be interested in.' Adam Phillips, 'The Art of Non-Fiction No 7', *The Paris Review* 208 (spring 2014).
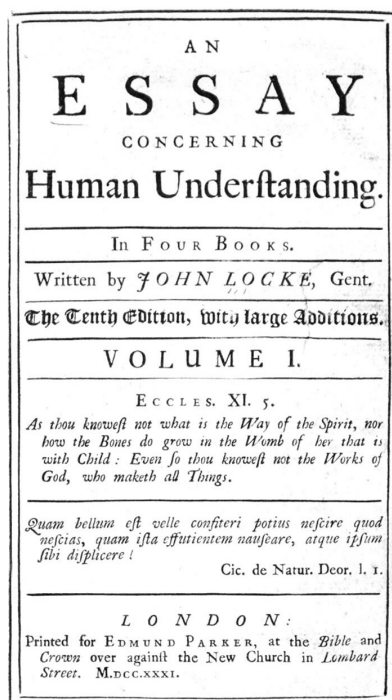
John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690

is how Heinrich Wölfflin begins *Renaissance and Baroque* (1888): 'It has become customary to use the term "baroque'' to describe the style into which the Renaissance resolved itself, or as is more commonly expressed, into which the Renaissance degenerated.' Or, continuing chronologically, this is the opening sentence to Henry-Russell Hitchcock's and Philip Johnson's *The International Style* (1932): 'Since the middle of the eighteenth century there have been recurrent attempts to achieve and to impose a controlling style in architecture such as existed in the earlier epochs of the past.' Or Rudolf Wittkower's astonishingly contrived opening passage to *Carlo Rainaldi & the Architecture of the High Baroque in Rome* (1937): 'There are three reasons why Carlo Rainaldi's architecture ought to command a more lasting interest than his actual talent might justify: *1)* his works and projects are connected with the most important architectural enterprises in Rome during the seventeenth century; *2)* in his process of working we can observe the modification of his own principles of design through the influence of his greater contemporaries; *3)* those principles of design which are distinctly his own can be defined as a carrying over of mannerist architecture into the high baroque.' Or, finally, the introductory sentence written by Sigfried Giedion in *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941): 'With no clear perception of the relation in which it stands to the past, or of the route by which it must advance into the future, the life of any period will be lived on an aimless, day-to-day basis.'

In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) the philosopher John Locke addressed what he termed the 'abuse of words', and challenged both those who 'by an unpardonable negligence … familiarly use words with which the propriety of language has affixed to very important ideas without any distinct meaning at all', and those who adopted 'an affected obscurity', either by using old words in new and unusual ways, or introducing new and ambiguous terms, often without defining them and in contexts that make their meaning unclear. As Marjorie Garber continues, in her book *Academic Instincts* (2001), it was to the first of these abuses that Locke applied the term 'jargon': 'Wisdom, glory, grace, etc, are words frequent enough in every man's mouth', writes Locke, 'but if a great many of those who use them should be asked what they mean by them, they would be at a stand, and not know what to answer… This insignificancy in their words, when they come to reason either their tenets or interest, manifestly fills their discourse with abundance of empty unintelligible noise and jargon, especially in moral matters.'[20] This noise unquestionably backdrops so much architectural writing, both past and present, but a survey of architectural historiography shows itself to be more intent on introducing itself through tedium rather than jargon, and the 'aimless day-to-day basis' that Giedion describes can indeed be seen to characterise so many of these overly banal, self-serving architectural introductions.

Somewhat surprisingly, to the list of uninspiring architectural authors one can even add Reyner Banham, a critic rightly fêted for the quality of his writing, but whose first work – certainly in terms of its beginning – is less exemplary. In 1952 Banham began a doctorate at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London under the supervision of Nikolaus Pevsner. He completed it six years later, in 1958, and then published it two further years later in 1960 as *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*. This is the opening sentence to its first chapter: 'While a series of revolutionary gestures around 1910, largely connected with the cubist and futurist movements, were the main point of departure for the development of modern architecture, there were also a number of particular predisposing causes that helped to guide the mainstream of development into the channels through which if flowed in the 1920s.'[21] It is a spectacularly uninspiring opening sentence. But under the terms dictated by tradition, and enforced by Banham's *émigré* German supervisor Pevsner, it is a perfectly acceptable sentence, and it is acceptable precisely because it describes the object of Banham's investigations as if he were a scientist, unencumbered by any thought of embellishing his words, and simply matter-of-factly presenting the basic structure of his

20. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, edited by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York, NY: Dover, 1959), pp 123–24, quoted in Marjorie Garber, 'The Paradox of Jargon', *Academic Instincts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p 134.
21. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 1960 (London: Butterworth, 1988), p 14.
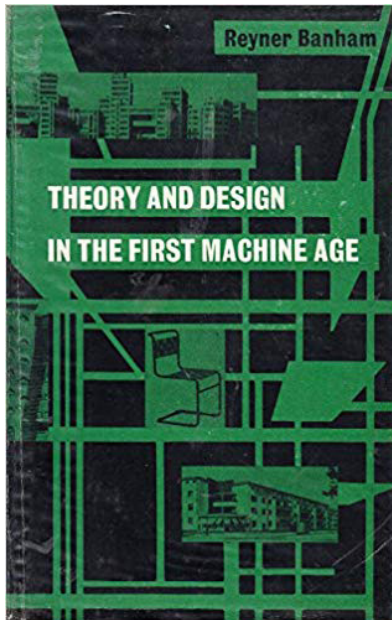
Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 1960

experiment. But if one were to skip forward 316 pages through *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, missing out almost the entirety of the book, one would find a concluding passage that is markedly different in tone: 'The architect who proposes to run with technology knows now that he will be in fast company, and that, in order to keep up, he may have to emulate the futurists and discard his whole cultural load, including the professional garments by which he is recognised as an architect. If, on the other hand, he decides not to do this, he may find that a technological culture has decided to go on without him.'[22] Here, immediately, one can see that the prose is totally different. This is not Banham the earnest and rather dull research student, but an utterly adorable Banham the writer, mixing allusion and idea in what is perhaps the single best closing passage of any architectural book. Historians always talk about *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* as an architectural history, and Banham's introduction of the futurists into an otherwise established canon. But this is to miss the point, for when one reads the book's opening and closing sentences one can see it for what it really is – a perfect demonstration of the difference between typing and writing, and a means through which Banham teaches himself how to write.

And in learning how to write Banham was also, perhaps unwittingly, moving architectural communication from one established lineage of figures into a totally other tradition. The more engrained model, characteristic of the opening of *Theory and Design*, is that prevailing cast of largely German scholars who fundamentally established the way the disciplines of art and architectural history were written. Such a dynasty would necessarily begin with Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), considered the 'father of art history', and would then extend, chronologically, through Gottfried Semper (1803–1879), Franz Theodor Kugler (1808–1858), Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897), Konrad Fiedler (1841–1895), Alois Riegl (1858–1905), Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968), Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), Rudolf Wittkower (1901–1971) and Nikolaus Pevsner (1902–1983). In many cases, each of these figures taught their successor, with the last man on this list, Pevsner, supervising Banham's doctorate, and so Banham is very much not just part of this tradition but its consort and heir.

Even though all of these scholars represent quite distinct personages they can still be perceived as a collective, if only because of their singular and immeasurable contribution to the discipline of art and architectural history, surveying and in some senses defining all the major movements and all the various ways of considering the visual arts. And, again, even if there are clear differences in their approach to writing, their various books all reflect the seriousness of their mission in the seriousness of their words, communicating their thoughts in prose that is often somewhat dry and formulaic, and always privileging history as a repository of immutable data rather than taking any opportunity to tell an engaging story, to be playful with the ideas they were polemicising or simply to write a beautiful sentence.

The alternative tradition, demonstrated by Banham's final sentences in *Theory and Design*, is represented by an entirely different set of figures, still regarded with some suspicion inside the university, because most of them were not scholars but writers and journalists, trades with which academics have traditionally maintained a certain suspicion. Again, in chronological order this cast would include: Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), Francis Bacon (1561–1626), Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), Charles Lamb (1775–1834), William Hazlitt (1778–1830), Thomas de Quincy (1785–1859), John Ruskin (1819–1900), Walter Pater (1839–1894), G K Chesterton (1874–1936), Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and Aldous Huxley (1894–1963). These people represent an alternative tradition not just because they sat outside the academy, but mainly because of the form of writing they all endorsed, writing criticism not as manifestos, nor treatises, surveys or papers, but only and ever essays.

22. Ibid, p 330.
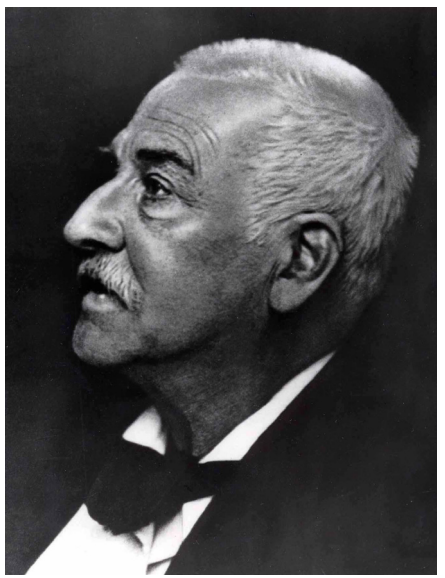
Top row (left to right): Joachim Winckelmann, Gottfried Semper, Franz Theodor Kugler, Jacob Burckhardt
Middle row: Konrad Fiedler, August Schmarsow, Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin
Bottom row: Sigfried Giedion, Erwin Panofsky, Rudolf Wittkower, Nikolaus Pevsner
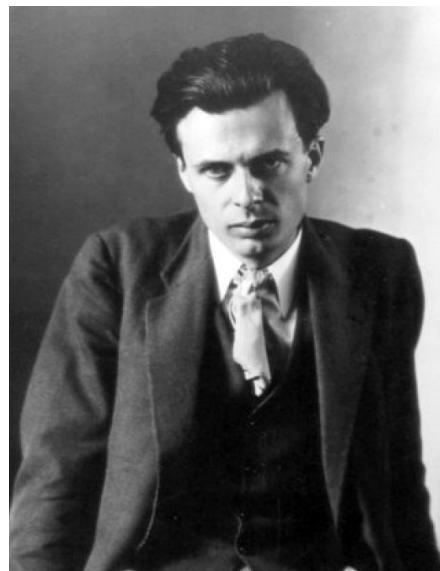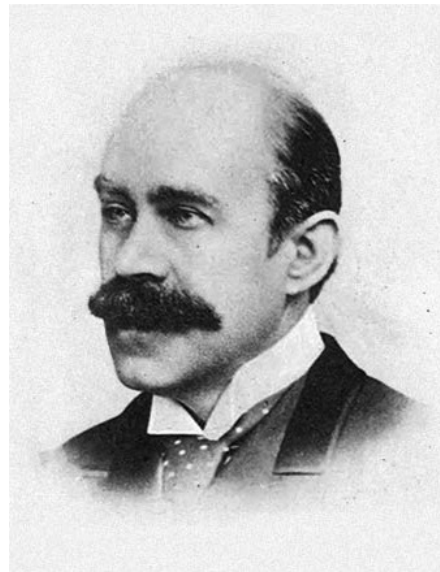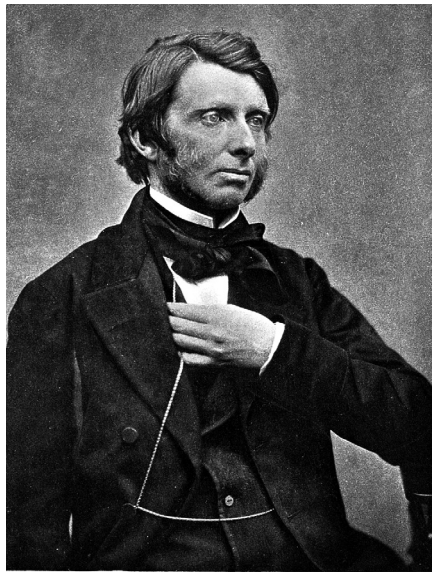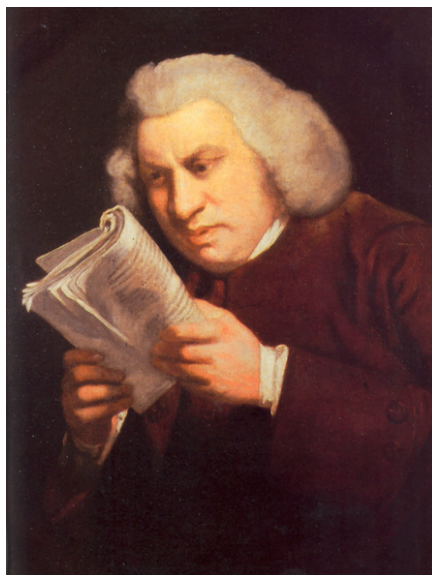
Top row (left to right): Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson, Charles Lamb
Middle row: William Hazlitt, Thomas de Quincy, John Ruskin, Walter Pater
Bottom row: G K Chesterton, Virginia Woolf, Walter Benjamin, Aldous Huxley

Theodor Adorno, self-portrait, 1963

23. Samuel Johnson, 1755, from the entry 'essay' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*; Aldous Huxley, preface, *Collected Essays* (London: Harper Brothers, 1958), p 2. There is a small, but growing body of recent literature on the essay form, but perhaps its best survey, or certainly the one with the most compelling bibliography, is provided by Brian Dillon, *Essayism* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017).

24. Theodor Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 1958, translated by Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, no 32 (spring–summer 1984), pp 151–71.

25. The typical brevity of an essay, however, does not sit so easily with these three writers: Simmel's *Philosophie des Geldes* (*The Philosophy of Money*, 1900) is over 700 pages long; Kassner's *Physiognomik* (*Physiognomy*, 1932) is a multi-volume work of roughly the same length; and Benjamin's *Passagen-werk* (*Arcades Project*, 1927–40) – even if comprising a vast number of fragmentary writings – was published by Harvard University's Belknap Press in 1999 in a single volume of 1,074 pages.

26. Ibid, pp 152, 165.

First pioneered by the French Renaissance writer Montaigne in the late sixteenth century, the essay was invented as a way to test complicated ideas in a literary form that was simple and clear – something reflected in its etymology, for the word derives from the French *essayer*, meaning to try or to attempt. And so in contrast to the assuredness and confidence of the historical tome, an essay revels in its self-doubt, or at least in an essay what structures the narrative is the meditative questioning of a set of ideas rather than a treatise or survey history which provides only declarative answers. Furthermore, an essay is relatively short, stripped to the exposition of a single idea; is never broken down into sub-sections or chapters; it has a title that typically provides some sense of reference, or at least humour; and it rarely features any footnotes. If the academic paper essentially emerged through the realm of science – as the positivistic exposition of an idea or of the 'facts' of its history – an essay, in contrast, is resolutely from the realm of art, and as a consequence it also has ambitions towards a certain lyricism, for essays are mellifluous and free-flowing, selling their ideas as much through the compelling choice of words as through what is actually being said. Ultimately, though, the only true and seemingly consistent rule of essay writing is a commitment not to observe any rules – an inbuilt sense of impudence that characterises most definitions of the essay, from Samuel Johnson's assertion that it is 'a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular and orderly composition', to Aldous Huxley's still more mischievous contention that 'the essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything'.[23]

One of the peculiarities of the essay is that for a form quite so attractively loose, so many of its advocates (and, equally, so many others, who historicise it without ever actually employing it), seem intent on reining it in through some kind of extended definition. Foremost among these is perhaps the most sombre of ruminations on the essay, 'Der Essay als Form' ('The Essay as Form', 1958) by the German critic and sociologist Theodor Adorno ('form', from the 1920s onwards, being one of the more ubiquitous of keywords in Germany's modern architectural and intellectual lexicon), which, in spite of its seriousness, reads not just as a plea for a more compelling, more nuanced way of committing words to paper, but as an attack on a still very contemporary pedagogic condition.[24]

'The academic guild', Adorno writes in the beginning of his text, 'only has patience for philosophy that dresses itself up with the nobility of the universal, the everlasting and the primal'. As a result, he argues, universities and professors not only ignore the smaller-scale value of what he terms the 'cultural artefact', but that they stubbornly present their ideas in texts characterised by the supposed objectivity of their labours. For Adorno, the solution lay in the embrace of an alternative intellectual tradition, refuting academicism and instead championing German Enlightenment thinking that extended all the way back to the seventeenth century and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, through to his more immediate late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century contemporaries, Georg Simmel, Rudolf Kassner and Walter Benjamin.

What linked these thinkers and critics was not only the way they thought, but more importantly the way they wrote – specifically, that they all presented their ideas not through grandiose tomes and treatises but through more idiosyncratic, even artful, essays.[25] 'The essay', Adorno writes, in the spirit of Huxley, 'is both more open and more closed than traditional thought would like'; 'resists the idea of a masterpiece, an idea which itself reflects the idea of creation and totality'; and that 'instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically', he adds, in the most evocative part of his text, 'the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done. The essay mirrors what is loved and hated instead of presenting the intellect, on the model of a boundless work ethic, as *creatio ex nihilo*.'[26]

György Lukács, *c* 1960

Despite the resonance and expressiveness of this last passage, in particular, there remains something strangely un-essayistic about Adorno's essay. This derives partly from the fact that although, like any respectable essay writer, he champions a model from beyond the university, bemoaning the 'academic guild' and academicism in general, he does so not as an outsider but as an insider – unlike the writers he quotes admiringly, like Simmel (who applied for various academic chairs during his life, but never secured one), Kassner (an independent and fundamentally peripatetic writer) and Benjamin (the most solipsistic of all writers, and who withdrew his application to teach in Frankfurt for fear of rejection), Adorno's intellectual identity is inseparable from the professorship he maintained at Frankfurt University and his long-running directorship of its Institute for Social Research. Of course, academicism does not necessarily disqualify essayism, but for Adorno the responsibility and propriety conferred upon the university and the collective nature of academic debate somehow informed the way he wrote. His prose is not freewheeling, singular and confident, as any good essay should be, but somewhat anxious, laboured, conciliatory – evidenced best by the fact that such a short text actually took him four long years to write, finally publishing in 1958 what he had first started in 1954.[27]

This drawn-out gestation also seems to reflect the way Adorno appears both overburdened by precedent – in particular by the long shadow cast by Benjamin, who Adorno graciously (and accurately) anoints 'the unsurpassed master' of the essay form, albeit in contradiction to his earlier idea that an essay 'resists the idea of a masterpiece'[28] – and overly conscious of a need to enter an existing debate. And in fact, Adorno's text was in many ways a sequel to an earlier discussion by György Lukács, whose own 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay' was published in 1910 as the introduction to his book, *Soul and Form*. Lukács' text is even more duplicitous than Adorno's, for it is in reality neither an essay nor an introduction, but a letter to his friend, the Hungarian artist and critic Leo Popper, in which he alludes to the essay not only as the perfect form but as its own independent art form, even if later in the same text Lukács seems more exasperated by the essay, and is rather sneering about the 'proud hopes' of the essayist, which 'lead him to believe that he has come close to the ultimate'.[29]

Perhaps a better flag for the essay is the very short, irreverent commentary published in 1975 by the critic and translator Michael Hamburger, who collapses his title into the start of his narrative: 'An Essay on the Essay. Even that isn't quite right: an essay really ought not to be on anything, to deal with anything, to define anything.'[30] And so, from the outset, Hamburger immediately deflates Huxley's more opportunistic definition, just as he promptly goes on to dismantle other defining characteristics of the essay, including those by Adorno: 'an essay is not a form, has no form; it is a game that creates its own rules'.[31] Instead, and in reassuring testimony to the importance of the opening line, Hamburger argues that 'the whole spirit of essay-writing is contained in the first sentence of the first great collection of English essays – Francis Bacon's of 1597: "What is truth, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." A jesting Pilate who asks questions but doesn't wait for answers is the archetypal personification of the essay, of essay-writing and essayists.'[32] Hamburger concludes, in the same insolent spirit, by pouring water on the combustible flames of Adorno's optimism, suggesting that the essay is a device that is *not* about to catch fire but has in fact been permanently extinguished – 'since the time of G K Chesterton and Virginia Woolf, the essay has been a dead genre'.[33] But this end is perhaps the only unoriginal thing about Hamburger's text, for just as Virginia Woolf herself wrote on 'The Decay of Essay Writing' (1905), and others, including Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt, have questioned its continuing existence, it seems that all essayists can be classified as such, not only through their compulsion to define the essay, but how at one point or another they all feel the need to pronounce the form, if not dead, then fast approaching morbidity.[34]

27. This extended writing period is revealed in a discrete footnote by Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will in the 1984 *New German Critique* English translation of the text: 'Adorno's "Der Essay als Form" was originally written between 1954 and 1958, and first published as the lead essay of his *Noten zur Literatur I* in 1958', ibid, p 151.
28. Ibid, p 160.
29. György Lukács, 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay', 1910, *Soul and Form*, translated by Anna Bostock (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp 16–34, quote p 25.
30. Michael Hamburger, 'An Essay on the Essay', in *Art as Second Nature: Occasional Pieces* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1975), pp 3–5, quote p 3.
31. Ibid, p 3.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid, p 4.
34. Virginia Woolf, 'The Decay of Essay Writing', 1905, accessible online at: https://commonreader.wustl.edu/c/essay-month-modern-essay.

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35. Michael Sorkin, *Exquisite Corpse: Writings on Buildings* (London: Verso, 1991), p 2. See also Sanford Kwinter, *Far from Equilibrium: Essays on Technology and Design* (Barcelona: Actar, 2007).

36. The book as actually written is Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*, 1972 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

37. See James Graham, 'The Critic as Producer: An Essay on Essays On Architecture', *The Avery Review*, no 1 (September 2014), accessible online at: http://averyreview.com/issues/1/the-critic-as-producer. Graham's text offers an excellent account of architecture's relationship to the essay form, especially in terms of its formation, even if he fails Hamburger's test, featuring not one but two 'ons' in his title, and also in the fact that despite his suggestion that there are 'endless' examples of architectural essays, he restricts his analysis only to Laugier, with a cursory, almost bibliographic, mention to essayistic 'touchstones of modernism' by the architects Louis Sullivan, Camillo Sitte and Adolf Loos.

38. Ibid.

39. The established historical view was first developed and is best articulated by Hélène Lipstadt, 'Early Architectural Periodicals', in Robin Middleton (ed), *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp 51–65, especially p 57: 'The endless exchanges and polemics in the nineteenth-century architectural press … are skirmishes in a war of definition that can be called the "dialectic of distinction".' See also Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw, 'Magazine Architecture', *OASE* 100, 'Karel Martens and the Architecture of the Journal', 2018, pp 83–142, especially p 88: 'The first architectural periodicals appeared in the early nineteenth century together with the emergence of industrial society and the bourgeoisie's need to be opinionated'.

In architectural writing the prognosis is less ambivalent. The essay is definitely dead, and has been for quite some time. For a brief moment in the 1990s there was Sanford Kwinter and Robert Somol, delivering short and punchy texts in New York's *ANY* magazine, and before them, Michael Sorkin, as architectural critic for *The Village Voice*, got closer still to the impudent standards of a good essayist, publishing numerous funny little vitriolic blasts against American architecture ('that architecture at the end of the twentieth century should be dominated by apostles of "classicism", however ersatz, can only be the symptom of an institution in deep distress, a vile zit on the schnozz of culture'),[35] but today, the best thinkers and writers about architecture seemingly never write essays, only books.

And yet even if extinct, for a discipline quiet so entangled with its own history, very little attention seems to have been paid to the fact that architecture's self-awareness, and to a certain extent reinvention in the eighteenth century, begins with an essay, Marc-Antoine (Abbé) Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1753). But of course, here, the myopia is explained by the fact that the book's images – and especially its famous frontispiece – so bamboozled its architectural audience that they seemed to completely disregard the title and form of the book's prose – an *essay* on architecture. Just imagine if things had been different and a discipline were to discover its emblem in essayistic words with the same fervour with which it has obsessed over Laugier's neoclassical pictures, an entire profession could have been reconfigured, schools and teaching structures transformed, a literary tradition reoriented, or perhaps just Joseph Rykwert would have written not a history but an extended essay on Adam's house in paradise.[36]

But even if one ignores such conjecture, architecture's inattentiveness to Laugier's writing represents yet another failure, for it dispossesses its theory of the importance of what James Graham has described as 'the strength of its commitments, the vivid rhetoric of its arguments and an emphasis on shaping popular opinion rather than conferring legitimacy through received wisdom'.[37] In this sense, missing the essayistic aspect of the *Essai* meant missing the opportunity to 'replace connoisseurship in architecture with a new rubric of making judgments – principles, yes, but derived argumentatively and not through established tradition'.[38] Such a failure also corrects the accepted historical line on architectural 'opinion' – articulated by Hélène Lipstadt and later by Veronique Patteeuw and Carlo Menon in terms of their work on the first architectural magazines, that it began in the nineteenth century through the emergence of the professional journal – with the counter claim that its origin can instead be traced to the eighteenth century and the discursive, iconoclastic essay.[39]

Rather than Abbé Laugier, the essays that do seem to feature in architecture's accounts of itself typically concentrate on a tight constellation of writings by practising architects, all written in the early years of modernism – Camillo Sitte, 'City Planning According to Artistic Principles' (1889); Louis Sullivan, 'The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered' (1896); and especially Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime' (1913) – but in each case (as with so much of architects' own writings), the strength of their message has eclipsed their medium, or rather, one only reads the medium as a kind of architectural manifesto.

For a far more significant moment, however, at least in terms of architectural theory rather than its practice, synthesising not just the quality of idea but its formal expression, one needs to look instead to those post-war years immediately around the publication of Adorno's 'Essay as Form' when the very best writing on architecture was by a collective of English historians whose key works were only ever anthologies of essays. Despite their shared nationality and mode of writing, what is additionally distinctive about these thinkers is that each of them present a different facet of the good essayist.

John Summerson, 1984
Photograph Stephen Hyde

Colin Rowe, 1992
Photograph Valerie Bennett

40. John Summerson, 'Heavenly
     Mansions: An Interpretation of Gothic',
     *Heavenly Mansions and other Essays on
     Architecture*, 1949 (New York, NY:
     Norton, 1963), p 1.
41. Gavin Stamp (uncredited), 'Sir John
     Summerson, 1904–1992: A Florilegium',
     AA Files 26 (winter 1993), pp 61– 70,
     quote p 61.
42. Colin Rowe, 'Henry-Russell Hitchcock',
     1988, *As I Was Saying: Recollections and
     Miscellaneous Essays*, three vols, edited
     by Alexander Caragonne (Cambridge,
     MA: MIT Press, 1996), vol I, p 11.

For the first of them, John Summerson (1904–1992), it was in the clarity and accessibility of his prose, and the identification of all those 'cultural artefacts' whose loss Adorno had mourned. Moreover, it is the sheer ease of the way he engaged with architecture, moving effortlessly between scales, between anecdote and allegory, between detail and argument, and always set up with the most engaging of openings, like this one, from the title essay to his collection *Heavenly Mansions* (1949): 'There is a kind of play common to nearly every child; it is to get under a piece of furniture or some extemporised shelter of his own and to exclaim that he is in his "house".'[40] In a 'florilegium' published after his death, Gavin Stamp wrote that Summerson 'understood something precise by the architectural essay: a lucid, civilised argument bringing eye and brain together, adapted in language and tone to the mood of his subject and untrammelled by an excessive parade of scholarship'.[41] This unwillingness to advertise his academicism is perhaps attributable to the fact that he learnt how to write as a journalist, working as an architectural critic in the 1930s for *The Builder* and the *Architect & Building News*, and later as more of a cultural critic for Cyril Connolly's literary magazine *Horizon*. And yet one could argue that the best of Summerson's essayistic prose (anthologised in *Heavenly Mansions*, and a later volume, *The Unromantic Castle*, in 1990) only really emerged in the 1940s after he supplemented his principal job curating the Sir John Soane's Museum with lecturing responsibilities at the AA School of Architecture. Such a role not only helped Summerson present architectural history through its connectedness to contemporary practice, but infused the way he wrote with an easy, almost priestly, didacticism, delivering every lecture and corresponding essay as compelling sermons on architectural detail, character and influence.

Summerson's most immediate successor, chronologically, if not intellectually, was Colin Rowe (1920–1999), who was also an expert proponent of the essay form, but unlike Summerson, Rowe's literary persona is almost wholly academic, with the various phases of his life and work being reducible to the universities in which he studied and taught (Liverpool and the Warburg in the 1940s; Austin, Texas in the mid 1950s; Cambridge in the late 1950s and early 1960s; and lastly Cornell from the mid 1960s through to the 1990s). Rowe's most famous essay – 'The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa' – was published in *The Architectural Review* when he was only 27 years old, but the quality of his writing only started to shine a decade or so later, just as his essayism becomes indistinguishable from his oratory – Rowe, at his very best, writes as he speaks (*As I Was Saying* being the perfectly apposite title of his three-volume collected works). One could speculate that the confidence Rowe maintained as a speaker – and with it, a writer – was fuelled by his alcoholism, which, perhaps predictably, sees the second half of a typical Rowe performance become less coherent than the first, but whether induced by Vermouth or simply by his own erudition, Rowe's most engaging writing (as he displays in his opening passage to an essay on the historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock) brilliantly melds academicism with a certain indiscretion and innuendo.

> *Said Philip Johnson one day: 'Oh, if only Russell had the gift of clarity and if only Nikolaus had an eye.' Said Sybil Moholy-Nagy, slightly later: 'Well, if Pevsner is the telephone book of architecture, then surely Hitchcock must be the Yellow Pages.' Wrote Bernard Berenson in August 1955: 'Hitchcock, whom I recall as a rather rotund and unattractive young man, appeared yesterday, transformed into a breezy, middle-aged, full but not loud voiced, Viking-type of American. It is the type I fall for regardless of attainments and achievements because I find them life-enhancing'.*[42]

Just one year younger than Rowe was Alan Colquhoun (1921–2012), who, like Rowe, spent the entirety of his working life in the university, and yet – in
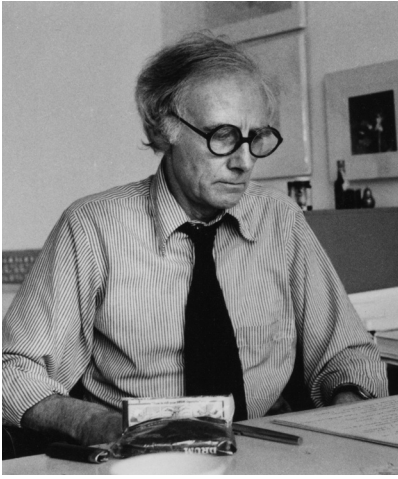
Alan Colquhoun, 1982

Reyner Banham, 1963
© RIBA Photo Library

43. Alan Colquhoun, 'The Modern Movement in Architecture', 1962, in *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change*, 1981 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/ Oppositions Books, 1985), pp 21–25, quote p 25.

44. Alan Colquhoun, 'From *Bricolage* to Myth, or How to Put Humpty-Dumpty Together Again', 1978, *Essays in Architectural Criticism*, ibid, p 169.

45. Reyner Banham, 'Ornament and Crime: The Decisive Contribution of Adolf Loos', 1958, *A Critic Writes*, edited and selected by Mary Banham, Paul Barker, Sutherland Lyle and Cedric Price (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p 16. Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', 1908, in Ulrich Conrads (ed), *Programmes and Manifestos of Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), p 19.

46. See *Reyner Banham Loves Los Angeles*, a film produced and broadcast by the BBC in 1972, hosted and narrated by Banham, which details his newfound admiration for Californian architecture, released in tandem with his book, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (London: Penguin, 1971). The film is accessible online at: https:// vimeo.com/22488225.

contradiction to the professorial norm – his written output consistently eschewed wordy surveys or laboriously compiled tomes in favour of short, often highly polemical essays (for many years, the illuminating – but slim – paperback, *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change*, published in 1981, was the only physical register of his writing). Quite distinct from Summerson's dry witticisms, and certainly from Rowe's more outlandish comedic flourishes, Colquhoun presented his essayistic self through the seriousness of his academic mission – a responsibility that sometimes lent his prose a kind of censoriousness (albeit one often elegantly articulated, as in his essay, 'The Modern Movement in Architecture', 1962, a critical review of Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*: 'One wonders by what criterion Dr Banham judges a masterpiece and by what casuistry he would be able to demonstrate that a building was simultaneously a masterpiece and a failure.'[43]). But even if denying any opportunity for levity, Colquhoun remained wholeheartedly essayistic, if only because the precision of his judgment was still consistently balanced by a recognition that a text had to hold a reader's attention through its prose as much as its ideas. This conviction is ably demonstrated by the succinct opening to his essay, 'From *Bricolage* to Myth, or How to Put Humpty-Dumpty Together Again' (1978), which even if prompted by an attempt to define 'criticism', could just as easily be used to elucidate his understanding of the essay or of his scholarship more generally: 'Criticism occupies the no-man's-land between enthusiasm and doubt, between poetic sympathy and analysis.'[44]

A further year younger than Colquhoun was Reyner Banham (1922–1988) himself, who, even more so than Summerson, was essentially a journalist who found patronage inside the university. Importantly – given the critic he would become as much as the wide-ranging, very catholic view of architecture he would advocate – this writing was not channelled only through trade or professional journals, but through regional and national newspapers, as well as generalist, cultural or political periodicals like *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Listener*, *New Statesman* and *New Society*. But like Summerson, Banham's sense of self-discovery as a writer (illustrated best in the passages at the very end of *Theory and Design*) coincided with the moment he learnt to synthesise a scholarly tradition with an ambition to communicate to a more diverse, mass market – ie, when he could infuse the learning and confidence he had built up at the Courtauld under the tutelage of the wholly academic Anthony Blunt, Sigfried Giedion and Nikolaus Pevsner, with his own ear for different yet compelling localisms (be they East Anglian, East End or Californian), or nose for a good story. Having successfully negotiated this marriage of different writerly identities, Banham absolutely detonated as an essayist. And to read any of the hundreds of short texts he published from the late 1950s onwards is to appreciate a critic fully in command of both his populism and expertise. It is also illuminating to note the way Banham begins his 1957 essay, 'Ornament and Crime' ('Everyone knows that modern architecture is undecorated') with the more gnomic beginning by Loos, whose famous essay of the same title Banham is celebrating ('The human embryo in the womb passes through all the evolutionary stages of the animal kingdom').[45]

The last of this collective was Robin Evans (1944–1993), more than 20 years Banham's junior, but whose premature death meant the 1990s oversaw the almost total extinction of the architectural essayist. Evans was much more of an outlier than any of his predecessors, certainly socially, having grown up in far humbler surroundings in comparison to the elevated English middle-classness of Summerson, Rowe and Colquhoun, if not Banham. Unlike these other figures, Evans' prose is also in no way reducible to a certain attraction to the stage and desire to perform (behind the lectern, on the radio, or – in Banham's case – on film).[46] Indeed, Evans' intellectual persona developed out of an apparently contrasting desire to hide away. As Joseph Bedford has written, 'at Harvard [Evans] famously wore the same dark tatty coat and T-shirt, as if to mark his

Robin Evans, 1972
Courtesy Janet Evans

47. Joseph Bedford, 'In Front of Lives That Leave Nothing Behind', *AA Files* 70 (summer 2015), pp 3–18, quote p 16.

48. Robin Evans, 'Figures, Doors and Passages', 1978, *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), p 56.

49. Alan Colquhoun, letter to Jacques Gubler, 15 June 2011, from the private archive of Jacques Gubler, subsequently reproduced in 'Alan Colquhoun, in Conversation with Pierre Chabard', *AA Files* 67 (summer 2013), p 140. Gubler himself alluded to this letter, as well as speculating on the intellectual formation of Colquhoun, in a presentation at a symposium, 'In Celebration of Alan Colquhoun and his Writings', AA School of Architecture, 21 October 2011, accessible online at: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/VIDEO/lecture.php?ID=1621. I am very grateful to Jacques Gubler for making this letter available to me.

50. (In a mirror to Alan Colquhoun's footnotes), see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 1962, translated by Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), especially chapter 7, 'The Public Sphere in the World of Letters in Relation to the Public Sphere in the Political Realm', pp 51–56; and Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, 1985, translated by Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), especially chapter 1, '*Memoria et Prudentia*: Patrician Mentalities and *res aedificatoria*, pp 1–14. The same idea, and the creation of a synthetic, educated populace, is in effect also the core idea behind the BBC (whose programmes would educate its viewing public, just as this public would in turn demand that the intelligentsia of the media remained accessible), certainly in terms of the way it was articulated by its first, and still symbolic, director general, John Reith.

distance from the posturing of East Coast academia, and at the Polytechnic of Central London he was known as "whispering Bob", so that even as he was speaking about projection students would have to lean in closer just to hear what he said'.[47] But the essayist as self-effacing misanthrope is as valid a quality as the essayist as showman, perhaps more so even, and as Bedford alludes, Evans' desire to shed new light on architecture's relationship to drawing, in particular, whilst simultaneously occupying the shadows himself, lends his writing a very interesting tension. So does the characteristic way Evans looked always to infuse the currents of his own reading (especially the writings of the French philosopher and sociologist Michel Foucault) into architecture's historical canon – an ambition that inflects Evans' essays with a commitment to write as he thought, being quite explicit and open to the fact that he was figuring things out as he went along, and which finds expression in his most famous sentence (and candidate for perhaps the single best opening line of any architectural essay): 'Ordinary things contain the deepest mysteries'.[48]

Sermoniser, raconteur, scholar, populist, autodidact – this, then, is a quintet of historians who have collectively defined not only the way we think about architecture, but the form through which these thoughts appear to us. And yet, despite the enduring resonances of their legacy, each of them was strangely bashful about their contribution, or at least about the unifying form in which they all presented their work. So, whereas Adorno proselytised on the essay towards the end of his life, and with similar fanfare, Lukács lauded its possibilities at the outset of his career, none of these five English architectural historians – so fluent on all subjects – have ever published anything on their allegiance to the essay. Perhaps to do so would have been undignified, or simply to state the obvious, but it also reveals the ongoing disconnect between the world of literature and the world of architecture. Among all of them, when it comes to the essay, the only tiny fragment of self-analysis can be found in the correspondences of Alan Colquhoun, who on 15 June 2011, just a year before his death aged 91, wrote to his friend and fellow architectural historian Jacques Gubler a handwritten letter (but in many ways it should really be called a lecture) headlined 'Some Thoughts on the Essay'. To read it is to finally be able to peer behind the curtain and see the inner-workings of a methodology.

'Dear Jacques', Colquhoun writes, 'The essay is not merely a quirky Anglo-Saxon genre, puzzling to all continental Europe. It is an important agent of the Enlightenment … which emerged in the early eighteenth century, part of the evolution of communication, combining ''learned'' ideas with popular expression, helping the creation of a political public realm'. Here, Colquhoun's academicism cannot resist a kind of footnote, and he adds a parenthesis to this idea with a nod to Jürgen Habermas' book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). He then continues, 'But also – more remotely – the essay can be seen as a small part of the history of rhetoric, dating from the Renaissance, which moved knowledge (both reason and understanding) from the hands of specialists to the hands of "all educated people".' Another parenthesis to Manfredo Tafuri's *Venice in the Renaissance* (1985) then appears, before Colquhoun's affectionate sign-off, 'Love Alan'.[49]

The heart of the essay's appeal, then, resides in its ability to communicate across two, seemingly distinct registers – the learned, but necessarily closed world of the academy, and the populist, but less informed world of the public, and which as a consequence offers the possibility to transform both realms (educating the populace, as much as it popularises scholarship). In the process, the essay helps gives the writer the single thing they depend upon – namely, an audience (cast, optimistically, and perhaps also romantically by both Habermas and Tafuri as an 'all educated people').[50] More particularly, it also enables the architectural writer to operate like the architectural practitioner – creating something that both shapes and is shaped by the public.

London   15-06-11

Dear Jacques,

Some thoughts on the 'Essay'.

The Essay is not merely a quirky Anglo-
Saxon genre, puzzling to all continental
Europe.   It is an important agent of the
Enlightenment (French, Scottish, English)
which emerged in the early 18th c. —
part of the evolution of communication.
Combining "learned" ideas with popular
expression, helping the creation of
a political public realm (Habermas,
structured
The Transformation of the public sphere.

    But also — more remotely — the essay
                a small
can be seen as part of the history of
Rhetoric, dating from the Renaissance,
also moved knowledge (both Reason and
Understanding) from the hands of specialists
to the hands of "all educated people".
(Tafuri, Venice in the Renaissance.).

            Love. Alan.

What is especially interesting here is that even if these five English architectural essayists were all somewhat reticent about declaring their affinity for the essay form, they were far more forthcoming in celebrating the synthetic working model (both educated *and* public) that the essay afforded, seeing their work as operating not just within the currents of architectural discourse, but the faster waters of architectural practice. For example, Summerson's writings and AA lectures (just like Robin Evans' 30 years later) found their most loyal adherents not among the school's historians, but its designers, one of whom – Denise Scott Brown – exported his ideas on mannerism wholesale into the nascent architectural postmodernism she would develop in the US with her husband Robert Venturi.[51] Similarly, Colin Rowe's academic work was punctuated with numerous collaborations with architects, from Louis Kahn to Peter Eisenman, and who advertised the relevance of his historical tutorials to contemporary practice by communicating his ideas not on a blackboard or in the margins of a student paper but on the *de facto* surface of architectural design – rolls of yellow tracing paper that he always kept on his desk.[52] Alan Colquhoun's more practical affinity for architecture even went so far as to maintaining a professional office with John Miller, with whom he collaborated for more than three decades while simultaneously teaching at Princeton University, while Reyner Banham was of course a key member of that group of artists, writers and architects who defined their relevance not through the separations of their various skills (writing, designing, building, image-making), but through their collective 'independence', and whose later collaborations, especially the Environmental Bubble with François Dallegret, would even see him become his own architectural project.[53]

More recent art and architectural writing, however, has moved away from the essayistic model, and with it from the essay's ability to dissolve the dichotomies of theory and practice, the high and the low, seriousness and playfulness. What we have seen instead is precisely *not* the collapse of one mode of communication into another, *not* a self-conscious literariness or attentiveness to the lucid or indeed sonorous possibilities of good writing, and certainly *not* to the ambition of being both informed and accessible. Rather, the paradigm of the last few decades appears to have been for scholarly writing in art and architecture to unapologetically remove itself from any such synthesis, to speak about its own very precise discipline through the elucidation of its own very particular voice, and whose most fitting anthem is perhaps the editorial published in the very first issue of the still highly influential American art journal *October*.

> October *is planned as a quarterly journal that will be more than interdisciplinary: one that articulates with maximum critical directness the structural and social interrelationships of artistic practice in this country.* October *will publish critical texts by scholars and critics whose work has influenced contemporary practice.* October *wishes to address those readers who, like many writers and artists, feel that the present format of the major art reviews is producing a form of pictorial journalism which deflects and compromises critical effort.* October*'s structure and policy are predicated upon a dominant concern: the renewal and strengthening of critical discourse.*[54]

Written in 1976 by the journal's founders, the art historians Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, former contributors to *Artforum*, this call-to-arms is in fact really quite unabashed in its disregard for the rules most literary writers and essayists set for themselves, not least the desire to avoid all forms of repetition. Instead, here the text is deliberately repetitive, which in turn would suggest that the model they are following is one not borne from literature but from the mantras of religious catechism or dogma – '*October* is planned …'; '*October* will publish …'; '*October* wishes …'; '*October*'s structure …'. Of course, each successive sentence also carries another repetition, and the use of the adjective 'critical',

51. See the autobiographic lecture written by Denise Scott Brown and Thomas Weaver, *From Soane to the Strip*, Soane Medal Lecture 2018 (London: Sir John Soane's Museum, 2018), p 25.

52. 'His chosen medium for instruction was yellow tracing paper'. See Anthony Vidler in perhaps the single best account of Rowe's particular style of pedagogy, 'Two or Three Things I Know About Him', *ANY* 7/8, 'Form Work: Colin Rowe', September 1994, pp 44–47, quote p 46. On Rowe's collaboration with Louis Kahn in particular, see Braden Engel, 'The Badger of Muck and Brass', *AA Files* 62 (summer 2011), pp 95–103.

53. Banham's 'independent' collective is of course the Independent Group, alongside Eduardo Paolozzi, Alison and Peter Smithson, Richard Hamilton and Nigel Henderson. See Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and Mass Culture in Britain, 1945–59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). On Banham's collaboration with the Environmental Bubble, see *GOD & Co: François Dallegret Beyond the Bubble*, op cit.

54. Editorial (Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson), *October*, no 1, vol 1, 1976.

which appends itself to every endeavour – that is, texts, efforts and discourse should now all be considered to have value only if they are 'critical'. And indeed, over the ensuing decades this suffix came to attach itself to seemingly every major academic art and architectural initiative, even if it has never been made clear as to exactly what 'critical' actually means. And so a plain history of architecture was apparently no longer acceptable, instead that study had to be *A Critical History*; just as the same trick was repeated when a movement was launched to reassess the value of local architectural cultures and was named not simply regionalism but critical regionalism.[55] But now, more than 40 years later, what was first advertised by *October* as a new form of communication has become commonplace, as architecture's published form is celebrated today as a 'Critical Spatial Practice', as the tautologous 'Critiques: Critical Studies in Architecture', or even as the hyperbolic *Supercritical*.[56]

Perhaps anticipating this monotheism, the source of this now ubiquitous academic vernacular was savagely attacked by the writer Janet Malcolm. Seemingly resisting the appropriation of her own professional assignation 'critic' into the nebulous adjective 'critical', as much as she was lambasting opaque and unnecessarily inelegant writing, Malcolm's broadside against *October*, and explicitly the prose of its founding editors, appeared in an essay published in *The New Yorker* in 1986.

> *Rosalind Krauss's personality – she is quick, sharp, cross, tense, bracingly derisive, fearlessly uncharitable – makes one's own 'niceness' seem somehow dreary and anachronistic. She infuses fresh life and meaning into the old phrase about not suffering fools gladly. Similarly, her writing has a hard-edged, dense opacity; it gives no quarter, it is utterly indifferent to the reader's contemptible little cries for help. (Another art critic, Carter Ratcliff, told me, 'I remember one of the writers at* Artforum *in the old days – I think it was Annette Michelson – saying, with a kind of pride, that* Artforum *was the only American journal that seemed to be translated from the German'.)* [57]

In hindsight, Malcolm (1934–) can be seen to have been a successor to a more engrained tradition of American non-fiction writers and critics who in many ways represent the last great high-point in discourses in and around the visual arts, if only because of the way they all effectively straddled the realms of both popular debate and scholarly research. Like her predecessors and contemporaries – the literary critics Mary McCarthy (1912–1989), Elizabeth Hardwick (1916–2007), Lillian Ross (1918–2017) and Joan Didion (1934–); the film critics Pauline Kael (1919–2001) and Renata Adler (1937–); the architectural critic Ada-Louise Huxtable (1921–2013); and the polymathic critic of just about anything, Susan Sontag (1933–2004) – Malcolm wrote only in the essay form, only according to the parameters of the nouns 'critic' and 'criticism' rather than the adjectival 'critical', and seemingly only in the most engaging, enlightening of prose. Moreover, this collective offers an interesting rejoinder to all of those other lineages of writers and writing in finally introducing women into an otherwise wholly male canon.

For the architectural editor, then, and especially the English architectural editor, the essay therefore promises the best possible platform for the form of its texts, and not just because it was the medium through which the best generation of architectural writing and criticism expressed itself. Rather, it seems appropriate also because of its easy ability to combine the ambitions of the two standout English architectural magazines – as we have seen, the older patrician editorial model of J M Richards at *The Architectural Review*, in that the essay appeals to the idea of the public intellectual and an elevated world of ideas, and also the more contemporary affinities of its great rival, Monica Pidgeon's *Architectural Design*, which shared the essay's commitment to dissemination through populism

55. See Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980); Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a History of Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in Hal Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1983.

56. 'Critical Spatial Practice', a series of books established in 2011, edited by Nikolaus Hirsch and Marcus Miessen and published by Sternberg Press; 'Critiques: Critical Studies in Architecture', a series of books established in 2007 and edited by Jane Rendell and published by Routledge; and *Supercritical*, the title of a published conversation between Rem Koolhaas and Peter Eisenman produced by the Architectural Association in 2006.

57. Janet Malcolm, 'A Girl of the Zeitgeist' – a profile of the *Artforum* editor Ingrid Sischy – *The New Yorker*, 20 October 1986, pp 49–53, reprinted and expanded in Janet Malcolm, *Forty-One False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2013), pp 199–274.

58. Alison and Peter Smithson, *Team 10 Primer* (London: Studio Vista, 1968), p 32.

Top row (left to right): Janet Malcolm, Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Hardwick
Middle row: Lillian Ross, Joan Didion, Pauline Kael
Bottom row: Renata Adler, Ada-Louise Huxtable, Susan Sontag

~~Beginners~~ What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

My friend ~~Herb~~ Mel ~~McGinnis, a cardiologist,~~ was talking. Mel McGinnis is a cardiologist, and sometimes that gives him the right. The four of us were sitting around his kitchen table drinking gin. ~~It was Saturday afternoon.~~ Sunlight filled the kitchen from the big window behind the sink. There were ~~Herb~~ Mel and ~~I~~ me and his second wife, Teresa — Terri, we called her — and my wife, Laura. We lived in Albuquerque, then. ~~but~~ But we were all from somewhere else. There was an ice bucket on the table. The gin and the tonic water kept going around, and we somehow got on the subject of love. ~~Herb~~ Mel thought real love was nothing less than spiritual love. He said ~~When he was young~~ he'd spent five years in a seminary before quitting to go to medical school. ~~He'd left the Church at the same time, but he~~ He said he still looked back on ~~to~~ those years in the seminary as the most important in his life.

Terri said the man she lived with before she lived with ~~Herb~~ Mel loved her so much he tried to kill her. ~~Herb laughed after she said this. He made a face. Terri looked at him.~~ Then Terri ~~she~~ said, 'He beat me up one night~~, the last night we lived together~~. He dragged me around the living room by my ankles. He kept saying, ~~all the while saying,~~ "I love you.~~, don't you see?~~ I love you, you bitch." He went on dragging me around the living room. My ~~, my~~ head kept knocking on things.' Terri ~~She~~ looked around the table ~~at us and then looked at her hands on her glass~~. 'What do you do with love like that?' ~~she said.~~ She was a bone-thin woman with a pretty face, dark eyes, and brown hair that hung down her back. She liked necklaces made of turquoise, and long pendant earrings. ~~She was fifteen years younger than Herb, had suffered periods of anorexia, and during the late sixties, before she'd gone to nursing school, had been a dropout, a "street person" as she put it. Herb sometimes called her, affectionately, his hippie.~~

'My God, don't be silly. That's not love, and you know it,' ~~Herb~~ Mel said. 'I don't know what you'd call it, ~~— madness is what I'd call it —~~ but I sure know you wouldn't call it ~~it's sure as hell not~~ love.'

'Say what you want to, but I know it was ~~he loved me~~,' Terri said. ~~I know he did.~~ It may sound crazy to you, but it's true just the same. People are different, ~~Herb~~ Mel. Sure, sometimes he may have acted crazy. Okay. But he loved me. In his own way, maybe, but he loved me. There was ~~was~~ love there, ~~Herb~~ Mel. Don't say there wasn't ~~deny me that~~.'

~~Herb~~ Mel let out his breath. He held his glass and turned to Laura and me. 'The man ~~He~~ threatened to kill me, ~~me too.~~' Mel said. He finished his drink and reached for the gin bottle. 'Terri's a romantic. Terri's of the "Kick-me-so-I'll-know-you-love-me" school. Terri, hon, don't look that way.' Mel ~~He~~ reached across the table and touched Terri's ~~her~~ cheek with his fingers. He grinned at her.

'Now he wants to make up,' Terri said. ~~"After he tries to dump on me." She wasn't smiling.~~

'Make up what?' ~~Herb~~ Mel said. 'What is there to make up? I know what I know. That's ~~, and that's~~ all.'

~~"What would you call it then?" Terri said.~~ 'How'd we get started on this subject anyway?' Terri said. She raised her glass and drank from it. '~~Herb~~ Mel always has love on his mind,' she said. 'Don't you, honey?' She smiled ~~now~~, and I thought that was the last of it.

'I just wouldn't call ~~Carl's~~ Ed's behaviour love. That's ~~, that's~~ all I'm saying, honey,' ~~Herb~~ Mel said. 'What about you guys?' ~~he~~ Mel said to Laura and me. 'Does that sound like love to you?'

~~I shrugged.~~ 'I'm the wrong person to ask~~.~~,' I said. 'I didn't even know the man. I've only heard his name mentioned in passing. ~~Carl.~~ I wouldn't know. You'd have to know all the particulars. ~~Not in my book it isn't, but who's to say? There're lots of different ways of behaving and showing affection. That way doesn't happen to be mine.~~ But I think what you're saying~~, Herb,~~ is that love is an absolute.~~?~~'
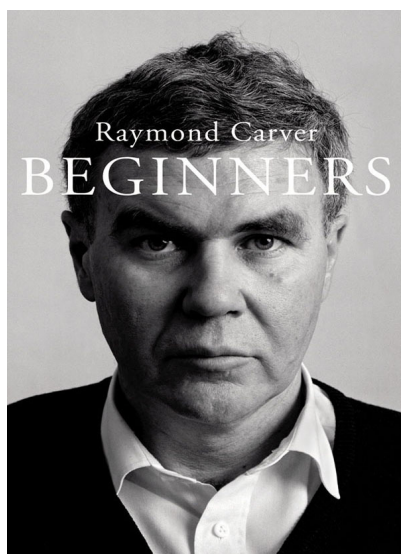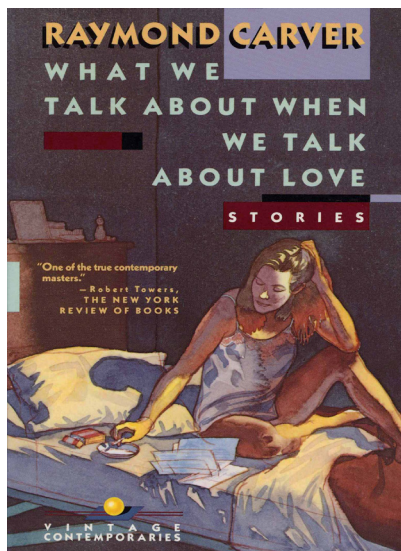
Raymond Carver, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, 1981 (*above*) and *Beginners*, 2009 (*below*)

59. This characterisation of the English essayist can be clearly identified in that strain of writers that extends from Virginia Woolf and W H Auden all the way through to critics like Christopher Hitchens, Jonathan Meades, Zadie Smith and Geoff Dyer. Of course, the same sensibility is not restricted by nationality, for a parallel lineage of American satirists and essayists – featuring figures like Dorothy Parker and Alexander Woollcott – who backdrop the critcs of the 1960s and 1970s, offers another incredibly appealing collective of writers, all of whom had the ability to amuse just as easily as inform.

60. Gordon Lish, line edit of Raymond Carver's short story, 'Beginners'. See Simon Armitage's excellent account of the relationship between Lish and Carver, 'Rough Crossings: The Cuttings of Raymond Carver', *The New Yorker*, 24 December 2007, accessible online at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/rough-crossings.

61. See Raymond Carver, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1981), and Raymond Carver, *Beginners* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009).

(perhaps best summed up by one of Pidgeon's favourite contributors, Alison Smithson, and her famous mantra, 'Mies is great, but Corb communicates').[58] Or more simply, that it can articulate its ideas both through its scholarly erudition as well as its public polemic, through its seriousness just as easily as its playfulness.

At the same time, there seems to be something fundamentally architectural about the essay – an affiliation never before articulated – not least that its values are also architecture's (that it has a form, as Adorno maintained, or that its advocates speak in terms of its proportion, scale, detail, flexibility, modernity, beauty), thus offering the perfect medium around which to reaffirm the value of architecture as a language, or the notion that to be a good architect is to necessarily be a good reader. Moreover, although pioneered first in France, the majority of its early adherents were English, whose literary ambitions seemed to match exactly those of the essay's, aspiring always to be both clever and funny.[59] And so it therefore follows that if one were tasked with representing, in published form, the culture of an Architectural Association emanating from a resolutely English house, then the essay is the model to endorse, just as the defining characteristics of the conversations inside a club, inside such a house – like any good club – are also aspirationally clever and funny, or even that the essay's appropriateness to the AA could ultimately find affirmation in its etymology, for what could be a better form for an institution whose history has always been punctuated by various communication breakdowns than a type of writing rooted in its ability 'to try', and by association 'fail'.

But even if the essay is the most appropriate of writing forms, the most architectural, the most loyal to the best kinds of architectural writing, the most relevant for an English club and school, any publication would still suffer through the sparsity of its exponents, for very few architects, and even fewer architectural scholars, write essays. Faced with this shortfall, the only solution is to transform the abundant papers, surveys, histories, profiles, polemics and manifestos, and *engineer* them into essays. Responsibility for this transformation lies with the editor, who has to balance the sometimes enjoyable and rather social duty of finding content, with the often more agonised, isolated task of preparing this content for publication. In architecture, editorial role models tend to occupy the first of these duties – as represented by Richards and Pidgeon, or indeed by that avuncular triumvirate of great post-war Italian architectural editors, Gio Ponti (founding editor of *Domus*), Ernesto Nathan Rogers (editor of *Casabella-continuità*) and Paolo Portoghesi (editor of *Controspazio*) – as opposed to those architectural editors who actually edit, like Mary Wall (*AA Files*), Julia Bloomfield (*Oppositions*) and Cynthia Davidson (*ANY* and *Log*). The undemonstrative way this latter trio went about their business (and in Davidson's case, continues to operate) means that a more graphic account of text editing and the transformation of writing might have to be found elsewhere.

For many editors this elsewhere is occupied by Gordon Lish, who was a literary editor with the publisher Alfred Knopf in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, and in this role he edited a great deal of contemporary American fiction, including much of the work of the novelists Richard Ford, Don Delillo and especially Raymond Carver. Lish has become a kind of hero figure to editors, largely because of the extent of his editing – he was no copy editor, simply correcting the spelling and grammar of his writers, but an editor who radically transformed the texts in front of him. Notorious among all of the texts Lish worked on is his edit of Carver's short story 'Beginners' (1980), which Lish first takes it upon himself to retitle 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Love' and then proceeds to change huge amounts of the original manuscript. He even changes the names of Carver's characters – Herb becomes Mel – and ruthlessly, but incredibly effectively, trims and cuts the text into what readers would soon celebrate as Carver's characteristically spare and minimal prose.[60]

Lish became famous – pulled out from relative anonymity – because after Carver's death his widow, the poet Tess Gallagher, published Carver's preferred manuscript, with its original title, *Beginners* (2009). And after reading this unedited version the overriding consensus was that Lish's version was manifestly better.[61] In the process, this episode not only made Lish's name, but became a kind of cautionary tale, a bedtime story that editor fathers tell their editor children, of the dangers of what happens when you forsake editing.

It also becomes a model for any other kind of editing, especially in architecture, and with it the promotion not just of writing over typing, but a commitment to the idea that the effective transformation of a piece of text need not only be restricted to the realm of creative writing, of novelists and their editors, but can just as easily operate within the realm of scholarly writing. In the spirit of Lish, the components of such a transformation would look first at the title, and an attempt to balance the matter-of-factness of most academic titles (if not their preponderance for elongated subtitles), with a desire to introduce a certain evocation, reference, succinctness or humour. Equally, opening lines would be given close attention, not just to reverse an overriding tradition, but more immediately to encourage the reader to keep reading. In the same spirit, those aspects of a text that a less adept writer ignores – namely, the spaces between paragraphs, or rather the transitions from one idea to another – may even demand a kind of reverse-Lish, and the *addition* of content rather than its removal, in an effort to, again, maintain a sense of flow and keep the tone as sonorous and mellifluous as possible. Elsewhere, the jargons endemic to certain strains of academic writing, and in particular the fashion for the 'ity' words – disciplinarity, materiality, performativity and worst of all criticality – would be exorcised entirely, just as other less objectionable repetitions of word or sentence structure would be corrected, and conclusions heightened to magnify what the critic Frank Kermode would call 'the sense of an ending'.[62] The goal all along is to bring out the ideas in a text, even introduce new ideas, while essentially engineering it into something that reads beautifully and, like any good essay, help it be defined by both its erudition and its fast pace. These are the values writing should bring to the fore. And as agent to these values, the editor is therefore not simply there to fix the typos, but to transform a text, to make it memorable.

But in the end, perhaps what really makes a piece of writing memorable is ultimately not its reducibility to a certain form – not the measure of its 'essay-ness' – but to something architecture has always maintained a rather nervous relationship with – its style. In *Vers une architecture* Le Corbusier famously wrote that 'architecture has nothing to do with the various styles', and that the 'historical fashions of Louis xiv, xv, xvi or gothic are to architecture what a feather is on a woman's head, it is sometimes pretty, though not always, and never anything more.'[63] Even if one were to set aside the tired old clichés of Le Corbusier's argument, or indeed the fact that his mother may have written all his best lines for him, he remains architecture's greatest ever writer, and yet when it comes to style his myopia may have got the better of him. For style is not nearly as fleeting as Le Corbusier imagines, but something everlasting – certainly in his own writing, which long ago outgrew the particularities of what he was trying to say, but which remains as engaging now as when he was first writing because of the style with which he said it. The feather, therefore, is fundamental.

62. For the best critique of the academic mania for 'ity' words, see R E Somol's lecture, 'Less Ity, More Ism', Rice University, Houston, 19 April 2010, accessible online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Bd4MQ6w5SQ. See also Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

63. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 1923, translated by Frederick Etchells (London: Butterworth, 1989), p 25. Rem Koolhaas attests to the enduring strength of Le Corbusier's view by parroting the Swiss architect's contention that 'the styles are a lie' in the glossary to his magnum opus, *s,m,l,xl*, with 'style' somewhat unceremoniously parked in this glossary between 'stupid' and 'suicide'. See oma, Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *s,m,l,xl* (New York, ny: Monacelli Press, 1995), p 1,188.
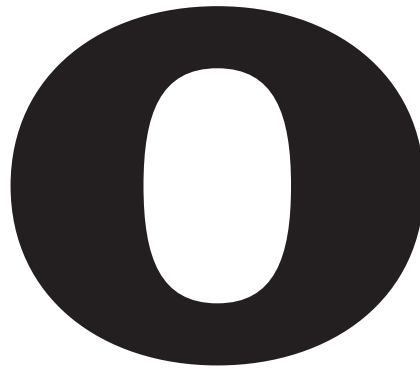
Part Three
The Image

Antonello da Messina, *St Jerome in his Study*, 1475
National Gallery, London

1. Jean-Louis Pascal, 'Au lecteur', *L'Architecte*, no 1, 15 January 1906, pp 1–2. Hélène Lipstadt remains the scholar who more than any other has pulled César Daly out into the mainstream of architectural discussion. Her two main published accounts on his work are 'Early Architectural Periodicals', in Robin Middleton (ed), *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), pp 51–65, and 'The Building and the Book in César Daly's *Revue générale de l'architecture*', in Beatriz Colomina and Joan Ockman (eds), *Architectureproduction* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), pp 24–55 ('readers of images' quote, p 28), but she also published a more concise account as 'César Daly: Revolutionary Architect?', *Architectural Design*, December 1978, pp 18–29, all of which develops material she submitted in her 1980 PhD dissertation at Paris' École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. The following year, in 1981, the scholar Ann Lorenz Van Zanten also submitted a PhD dissertation to Harvard University also on César Daly and the *Revue*, and Van Zanten actually published a journal article on his work even earlier – Ann Lorenz Van Zanten, 'Form and Society: César Daly and the *Revue générale de l'architecture*', *Oppositions*, no 8 (1977), pp 136–45 – and yet in focussing much more on Daly's images (as opposed to Van Zanten, who concentrated on his theories), Lipstadt's scholarship remains the benchmark for any ongoing discussion of his work and significance. And prompted by Lipstadt, subsequent scholars of nineteenth-century architectural publications have continued to look at Pascal's text, among them Marc Saboya, *Presse et architecture au XIXe siècle: César Daly et la revue générale de l'architecture et des travaux publics* (Paris: Picard, 1991), and more recently, Hélène Jannière, 'Distilled Avant-Garde Echoes: Word and Image in Architectural Periodicals of the 1920s and 1930s', *Architectural Histories* 4(1), 21, 2016, pp 1–21, accessible online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.211.
2. See Tom Stammers, 'The Bric-a-Brac of the Old Regime: Collecting and Cultural History in Post-Revolutionary France', *French History*, September 2008, pp 295–315, and Stephen Kippur, *Jules Michelet: A Study of Mind and Sensibility* (Buffalo, NY: State University of New York Press, 1980). Michelet's actual desk is now on permanent display in the French Archives Nationales (Hôtel de Soubise branch), although sadly no Bastille stone survived its transplantation into the archive. I am very grateful to Richard Taws from the history of art department at UCL for this reference.
3. Hélène Lipstadt, 'The Building and the Book', ibid, p 26.

O n the first page of the first issue of the French architectural magazine *L'Architecte*, its founder and editor, Jean-Louis Pascal, announced its arrival with an introductory note to the reader. Published on 15 January 1906, this '*au lecteur*' represented a kind of stocktaking, a survey or state of the art of French architecture and architectural publications in the preceding nineteenth century, as much as it also looked forward to the continuing evolution of the discipline and its dissemination in the twentieth century. And yet, more than the overview afforded by the hinge of this historical moment, Pascal's editorial is noteworthy for an apparently throwaway observation that now, more than a century later, has become so entrenched in terms of the way we understand architecture's approach to its representation, books and journals as to become sacrosanct. 'In every age', Pascal mused, 'architects have gone through publications like children, and often this summary inspection has been enough for them' – or, to put it another way (as articulated by the scholar Hélène Lipstadt), 'architects are, and probably always have been, primarily readers of images'.[1]

Although Pascal's remark seems to suggest a certain playful resignation, its communication was actually highly authoritative, for not only was *L'Architecte* the official architectural magazine of the French state, founded as the mouthpiece of the Société des Architectes Diplômés par le Gouvernement, but Pascal himself was a figure of real influence, having been appointed editor-in-chief of the journal not at the outset of his career (as is the case with so many architect–editors) but closer to its conclusion, for Pascal was nearly 70 years old when he took up this position. In the decades prior he had won the 1866 Grand Prix de Rome, and he would later be awarded the Gold Medal from both the Royal Institute of British Architects and the American Institute of Architects, while for almost 50 years in between he served as professorial *patron d'atelier* at the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, directing the education of multiple generations of French and international architects. Moreover, this academicism and editorship, alongside his long-running professional office, lent him an obvious expertise in the worlds of both publishing and building, further reinforced by two important architectural commissions: succeeding Henri Labrouste in 1875 as architect of the Bibliothèque St Geneviève, the definitive meeting place of architecture and books (for which he designed the Salon Voltaire, the Oval Room, the periodicals room and the grand staircase) and also being entrusted to design the tomb at Père Lachaise cemetery for the French historian Jules Michelet, the first man to really celebrate Victor Hugo's novel, *Notre-dame de Paris*, as an architectural edifice, and someone so enamoured by what he took to be the lucidity and communicative power of buildings that he kept a fragment of masonry from the Bastille on his desk as totem and inspiration while he wrote his epic *Histoire de la Révolution française* (*The History of the French Revolution*, 1847).[2]

Such a resumé would suggest that Pascal's remark was in reality not throwaway at all but instead deeply considered and serious. It was also a comment not made in the spirit of some general anthropology of architects, or an equally general iconography, but was highly specific, for the actual images he was contemplating (or in his own terms, 'reading'), were those reproduced in the *Revue générale de l'architecture*, an earlier French publication, founded in 1839 and edited over the entirety of its 49-year run by the architect César Daly. As Lipstadt writes, 'the *Revue* was the first architectural periodical in which print, plate and page composition, head-pieces and the decorated title page (designed by Henri Labrouste) were all formulated and laid out as features of a unified graphic and typographic composition'.[3] However, in contradiction to this

STATUE DE GUTENBERG,
PAR M. DAVID, D'ANGERS,
inaugurée à Strasbourg, le 24 juin 1840.

Engraving of a statue designed by David
d'Angers honouring Johannes Gutenberg
Revue générale de l'architecture, 1839

Overleaf: text and image page spreads from
the *Revue générale de l'architecture*

4. The statue was completed in
    Strasbourg in 1840 and features
    – beneath the figure of Gutenberg
    – four bas-reliefs, also designed by
    d'Angers, around its square plinth,
    each referencing significant moments
    in the culture of printing in Europe (a
    canon of great writers including
    Erasmus, Chaucer, Milton, Rousseau
    and Kant), America (Benjamin
    Franklin signing The Declaration of
    Independence), Asia (Chinese citizens
    reading Confucius) and Africa (William
    Wilberforce bringing freedom, and
    books, to the slaves).
5. César Daly, *Revue générale de
    l'architecture*, vol 2 (1841), column 7,
    translation by Hélène Lipstadt, ibid, p
    29, ft 9.
6. César Daly, *L'architecture privée au XIXe
    siècle, sous Napoleon III* (Paris: Morel et
    Cie, 1864), vol I, p 15; see Hélène
    Lipstadt, Marc Saboya and Hélène
    Jannière, op cit.
7. César Daly, *Revue générale de
    l'architecture*, vol 6 (1845), columns 3–4.

apparent unity, the *Revue* became so successful, and ultimately so memorable, for its separation, in particular, for the way each annual volume of the magazine was structured as a first part that was broken down into four sections (*histoire*, *théorie*, *pratique* and *mélange*), and which – but for a few decorative woodblock section dividers – consisted entirely of text, and a second part that in contrast offered only images of various contemporary projects, featuring the modern technique of steel-plate engraving and the occasional and still more modern coloured chromolithograph.

On the last pages of the very first volume of the *Revue*, Daly even went so far as to use these plates to offer a kind of visual joke at Victor Hugo's expense, choosing to demarcate the end of what he hoped would be the beginning of a new, mediated model of architectural communication with a design by the sculptor David d'Angers for a statue in Strasbourg commemorating its most famous citizen, Johannes Gutenberg. Both this image and the resulting statue depict the bearded Gutenberg standing next to his great invention, holding a piece of paper he has presumably just printed on which is inscribed '*Et tu lumière fut*' (from the third verse of the Book of Genesis, translated in English as 'Let there be light').[4] And so rather than a cathedral celebrated in the pages of a novel published just a few years earlier, Daly aligned his own equivalent publication with a homage to its rival, the printing press. Moreover, in separating the products of this press (its typography from its illustrations), the *Revue* in effect offered its readers an additional test of loyalty – consume the magazine through words or through images, or rather, that in the care it lavished on one over the other it made the choice for them. Given this bias, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the preference of its rapidly expanding audience of architects was immediate – as Daly writes in the second volume of the *Revue*, 'several subscribers have expressed the desire to see written descriptions replaced by drawings, almost always the most powerful means of making the disposition of a detail or the effect of a total design'.[5]

Over the ensuing decades, Daly responded to this preference by progressively reducing the number of pages allocated to text and hugely increasing the number of illustrative plates. The lure of these plates is easy to understand for each one was meticulously produced by what Daly proudly termed an 'army' of engravers (typically working over a number of years with the co-operation of the atelier of the specific architect whose building was being reviewed), and conveyed a technical presentation of the entire building in a clear – and to some, even beautiful – style. For instance, the volumes from 1852 and 1853 in which the Bibliothèque St Geneviève is discussed feature engraved site plans, assorted floor plans, structural plans, elevations (both whole and in detail), cross- and long-sections, detailed sections and plans of various key elements (for example, the main entrance), decorative details in both plan and elevation (such as mouldings, cornices and embossed elements), larger-scale engravings of various fixtures, fittings and singular furnished elements (for example, light fittings, staircases and balustrades), and even a perspective view showing the entire edifice within the context of its street – all impeccably engraved by hand and mechanically printed.

A number of scholars have subsequently highlighted Daly's comment that these engravings 'speak to the eyes through the drawing', and that this mid-nineteenth-century moment represents the source of the modern architect's predilection for the communicative power of image over text.[6] But given far less attention has been the nature of this communication, and in particular the idea that these images were 'speaking' to their viewers as a complete *set*. Daly himself actually alludes to this idea when he writes in one of his (ironically, often rather wordy) editorials about the ambition of presenting an '*effet d'ensemble*', or complete view of the building.[7] Such an entirety was of course only possible through multiple drawings, utilising the full array of architecture's representational techniques

mœurs latines. Les croyances religieuses de ces deux peuples ne présentent pas de différences notables; aussi leurs monuments offrent-ils beaucoup des mêmes caractères. Il convient seulement de remarquer que les Romains ajoutèrent aux traditions de leurs prédécesseurs l'invention des voûtes et les constructions circulaires, c'est-à-dire les arènes, les théâtres, les naumachies (1).

La révélation chrétienne, réalisée politiquement dans le moyen-âge par le catholicisme, a également donné lieu à la création d'un type particulier d'architecture, dont l'ogive ou arc en tiers-point forme le trait essentiel, et qui atteignit l'apogée de sa gloire au XIIIe siècle, c'est-à-dire lorsque l'église fut parvenue au sommet de sa puissance. C'est en effet dans le XIIIe siècle que les papes, souverains élus, représentants de l'unité spirituelle, s'établirent tout-puissants sur un chaos d'empires, de royautés, de seigneuries et de républiques, basés sur le privilége de la force ou de la naissance. C'est encore dans le même temps que furent fondés les ordres religieux les plus célèbres, et que parurent les troubadours et les trouvères les plus illustres. Les tentatives épiques les plus remarquables, telles que le chant de Roncevaux, les légendes de Gautier de Loincy, les romans de Brut, de Rou et du Renard, datent également de cette époque.

Les monuments les plus célèbres de l'art chrétien, ceux qui peuvent être considérés comme prototypes, sont les cathédrales de Cologne, de Chartres, de Reims, d'Amiens, de Beauvais, la Sainte-Chapelle, Saint-Denis, la façade de Notre-Dame de Paris; les églises de Salisbury, d'York, de Durham, de Burgos et de Tolède.

C'est à Byzance que les artistes chrétiens empruntèrent dans l'origine leurs premiers modèles. Le goût néo-grec du Bas-Empire, plus ou moins modifié, et qui est désigné, selon le temps et les lieux, par les noms de style byzantin, roman, lombard, normand, etc., fut adopté dans les églises d'Orient et introduit plus tard dans celles d'Occident, où il se maintint jusqu'au XIIIe siècle.

Ce qui précède peut également s'appliquer aux monuments arabes. Les artistes de cette nation empruntèrent en effet aux Byzantins le goût de leurs premières constructions; ils s'élevèrent ensuite progressivement jusqu'à la création d'une école tout à fait nouvelle, ou qui, du moins, ne présente que des rapports très-éloignés avec les monuments du Bas-Empire et du catholicisme en général. Parvenu au point culminant de sa gloire, le style arabe ne tarda pas à décliner, et finit même par se perdre complétement sous l'influence barbare du génie turc.

M. le baron Taylor, qui joint à de profondes études archéologiques un goût si éclairé pour les beaux-arts, et qui, l'un des premiers, a compris combien il importait à la gloire de la France de veiller avec soin à la conservation des monuments historiques, ces parchemins des nations; M. le baron Taylor, disons-nous, a conçu le projet de solliciter l'appui du gouvernement pour former une collection dans laquelle seraient réunis les modèles propres à donner une idée de l'histoire de l'architecture, depuis les constructions troglodytes des peuples primitifs et les allées couvertes des Celtes, jusqu'aux chefs-d'œuvre de la

(1) Il convient d'ajouter aussi qu'ils inventèrent les arcs de triomphe, genre de monument essentiellement caractéristique de ce peuple guerrier. (N. du D.)

Renaissance. Dans ce musée seraient recueillis les types en miniature des temples et des monuments les plus célèbres de l'Inde, de l'Egypte, de la Grèce, et de l'Empire romain. Là se trouveraient aussi des modèles correspondant aux diverses phases de l'art arabe, comme aussi des églises byzantines, romanes, gothiques et de la Renaissance, c'est-à-dire appartenant aux principaux groupes de l'architecture chrétienne. Des spécimens propres à donner une idée de la révolution opérée dans les arts en Italie par Brunelleschi et Michel-Ange, et à caractériser le goût architectural qui domina en France sous François Ier, Henri IV, Louis XIII et jusqu'au règne de Louis XV, qu'un caprice de la mode a depuis peu remis en honneur, seraient également conservés dans ces galeries. Le nombre de modèles dont cette collection devrait se composer ne serait pas, à beaucoup près, aussi élevé qu'on pourrait le croire de prime-abord; et les avantages qu'il est permis d'espérer d'un pareil musée ne sauraient être révoqués en doute. Bornons-nous à dire qu'il faciliterait l'étude de l'archéologie envisagée d'un point de vue très-élevé, qu'il contribuerait puissamment à la conservation des monuments historiques en propageant le goût de ce genre d'étude, et qu'il donnerait une idée générale, mais exacte, du développement des beaux-arts.

Nous formons des vœux bien sincères pour que cette belle pensée soit prochainement réalisée.

TOURNAL.

THÉORIE.

DES PONTS SUSPENDUS.

PREMIÈRE SECTION.

CLASSIFICATION ET HISTOIRE DES PONTS EN GÉNÉRAL.

CHAPITRE Ier.

ART. 1. — *Généralités.* — Dans les premiers âges du monde, quand une végétation puissante et féconde couvrait la terre de forêts vierges, des arbres tombés de vétusté, ou déracinés par l'action des eaux ou la violence des vents, et jetés accidentellement en travers des torrents; des rochers détachés par les dernières grandes commotions plutoniques et suspendus au-dessus des précipices, formèrent les premiers ponts qui servirent aux hommes primitifs, et que leur intelligence, jeune et grossière encore, imita dans l'enfance des constructions, pour les faire servir à l'usage des premières peuplades.

Mais peu à peu les populations se multiplièrent, les exigences s'accrurent par les relations; alors, pressés par le besoin, les hommes, aidés par l'expérience et guidés par la science, arrivèrent, mais progressivement et par degrés très-lents, à établir avec solidité et d'une manière rationnelle ces immenses constructions qui franchissent aujourd'hui les rivières, les fleuves et même les vallées.

Au commencement de ce siècle, l'Europe et une grande partie de l'Asie comptaient un grand nombre de ponts; mais aucun d'eux ne révélait encore le pont en cordes ou en chaînes au-

quel on attribue exclusivement le nom de *pont suspendu*, et dont les habitants des deux Indes se servaient depuis un temps immémorial.

Ce fut probablement encore la nature qui éleva, au milieu des riches déserts de l'Asie et de l'Amérique, ces premiers *ponts suspendus*, qui dirigèrent plus tard les industrieux habitants de ces contrées dans la construction de leurs ponts-hamacs, dont plusieurs existaient en Amérique avant l'arrivée des Européens.

Des lianes placées sur les rives opposées d'un torrent et dirigées par des branches d'arbres, se sont réunies et ont servi de guides et de soutiens à des tiges plus jeunes, qui, en croissant, ont bientôt formé un filet dont le temps a serré les mailles et assujetti les extrémités aux rochers et aux arbres. L'homme alors a pu y passer sans pâlir. Mais la nature, qui a bien voulu donner un exemple à l'homme, ne s'est pas engagée à établir des communications partout où celui-ci en aurait besoin; il a donc été obligé d'en construire lui-même, en prenant pour modèle ce que la nature avait créé. Enhardi par ses premiers succès, il a bientôt tenté de franchir des distances plus grandes; il a réuni plusieurs lianes, qu'il a débarrassées d'un poids inutile, en ne conservant que les parties filamenteuses, et il a formé ainsi des câbles qui ont remplacé les plantes de la nature. Les feuilles, les herbes et les tiges transversales, ont été remplacées à leur tour par des branches d'arbres et des bambous posés perpendiculairement à la direction des câbles et assujettis à ceux-ci. Enfin, quelques herbes nattées ont complété le plancher de ces ponts, qui étaient amarrés à des arbres ou à des rochers, suivant les localités.

ART. 2. — *Ce que l'on appelle ordinairement ponts suspendus.* — L'on appelle vulgairement *ponts suspendus* tous ceux dont le plancher est fixé au moyen de chaînes ou de câbles. Cependant, nous pensons que cette dénomination est impropre dans ce sens, que ce mot de *pont suspendu* entraîne avec lui l'idée d'un pont dont le plancher est entièrement suspendu. Cette définition ne saurait s'appliquer exactement aux ponts représentés figures 11 et 12, (*Voyez Pl.* 1), où les supports placés sur les courbes et qui soutiennent le tablier du pont, ont à résister à l'écrasement. Pour être conséquent, nous pensons qu'il convient d'établir les définitions des différentes espèces de ponts d'après les genres d'efforts que leurs planchers exercent sur les matériaux qui les supportent.

Des modes de résistance des matériaux. — Les matériaux que l'on peut employer dans les constructions peuvent résister de trois manières différentes et bien distinctes :

1° A un effort dirigé perpendiculairement à leur longueur (*Fig.* 1), et qui tend à en produire la rupture transversale.—*Résistance par* RIGIDITÉ.

2° A un effort dirigé dans le sens de leur longueur et qui tend à en produire l'écrasement (*Fig.* 2).—*Résistance à la* COMPRESSION.

3° A un effort dirigé dans le sens de leur longueur et qui tend à en produire la dilatation (*Fig.* 3).—*Résistance à l'*EXTENSION.

De la composition et de la classification des ponts. — Un pont quelconque se composant toujours d'un plancher supporté par un appareil que nous nommerons *système suspenseur général,* nous distinguerons les ponts entre eux d'après le genre d'effort auquel seront soumis les éléments qui composent le *système suspenseur général.*

Le *système suspenseur général* se compose de deux parties, dépendantes l'une de l'autre, mais bien distinctes :

1° De la partie rigide ou flexible qui reporte le poids du plancher sur les rives et à laquelle tiennent les tiges ou supports qui reçoivent le plancher (*Voy. a, b, c, Fig.* 6 et 8) : nous la désignerons sous le nom de *suspenseur principal;*

2° De la partie compressible ou extensible qui complète le système suspenseur général et qui reporte le poids du plancher sur le *suspenseur principal* 1, 2, 3, *etc.* (*Fig.* 6 et 8) : nous nommerons celle-ci *suspenseur accessoire.*

Ainsi, dans les figures 6 et 8, le système *suspenseur principal* se compose de l'arc solide *a, b, c,* ou de la chaîne *a, b, c,* et le *système suspenseur accessoire* se compose des moises pendantes (*Fig.* 6) 1, 2, 3, etc., ou des tiges 1, 2, 3, etc. (*Fig.* 8) (1).

Maintenant, établissons la classification des diverses espèces de ponts, d'après les différentes combinaisons du *système suspenseur principal* et du *système suspenseur accessoire.* Voici le tableau de cette classification :

1^{re} CLASSE. — PONTS RIGIDES.............	1° *A système suspenseur principal rigide résistant à la rupture transversale, et à système suspenseur accessoire nul.* (*Voy. Fig.* 4) (2).
2e CLASSE. — PONTS COMPRESSIBLES (3).........	1° *A système suspenseur principal résistant à la compression, et à système suspenseur accessoire nul.* (*Voy. Fig.* 5.)
	2° *A système suspenseur principal résistant à la compression, et à système suspenseur accessoire compressible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 6.)
3e CLASSE. — PONTS EXTENSIBLES...............	1° *A système suspenseur principal extensible, et à système suspenseur accessoire nul.* (*Voy. Fig.* 7.)
	2° *A système suspenseur principal extensible, et à système suspenseur accessoire extensible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 8.)
4e CLASSE.—PONTS MIXTES.	1° *A système suspenseur principal rigide, et à système suspenseur accessoire compressible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 9.)
	2° *A système suspenseur principal rigide, et à système suspenseur accessoire extensible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 10.)
	3° *A système suspenseur principal extensible, et à système suspenseur accessoire compressible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 11 et 12.)
	4° *A système suspenseur principal compressible, et à système suspenseur accessoire extensible.* (*Voy. Fig.* 13 et 14.)

(1) Rigoureusement parlant, les matériaux ne résistent que de deux manières tout à fait différentes et bien distinctes :

1° Par compression ;

2° Par extension.

La rigidité n'est qu'une modification ou plutôt une combinaison des deux efforts précédents. Ainsi, dans les pièces qui travaillent par rigidité, les fibres supérieures tendent à s'accourcir et les fibres inférieures tendent à s'allonger ; il n'y a que les fibres comprises dans ce que l'on appelle *le plan d'axe neutre* (celui autour duquel se fait le mouvement) qui n'éprouvent aucune modification. Il suit de là que dans les *Fig.* 11, 12, 13 et 14, le suspenseur général peut être considéré comme une seule pièce, une armature rigide. Cependant, dans la classification que nous nous proposons d'établir, nous considérons trois sortes de résistance : 1° la *Rigidité;* 2° la *Compressibilité;* 3° enfin, l'*Extensibilité;* et cela parce que nous pensons qu'il vaut mieux considérer la nature des efforts des éléments simples et homogènes, que le genre de résistance de l'ensemble du système, qui, se composant presque toujours d'éléments hétérogènes, nécessite des calculs particuliers pour chaque partie.

(2) On comprend que les piliers intermédiaires qu'on élèverait pour abréger la longueur des portées, ne sauraient changer en rien le genre d'effort que le plancher exerce sur son suspenseur général.

(3) Cette expression n'est pas parfaitement correcte, nous le savons, mais attendu la nécessité de parler fréquemment de cette espèce de pont, il serait trop long de dire, pont à système suspenseur général compressible. La même raison existe pour justifier quelques autres expressions qui semblent hasardées.

Fig. 3. Élévation principale.
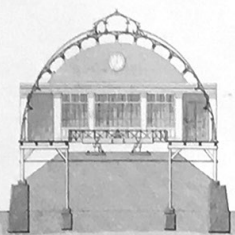
Fig. 4. Coupe suivant X.Y.

Élévation longitudinale de la Rem...

GARE D'ARRIVÉE ET DE DÉPART DE PARIS.

Chemin de Fer de Paris à Versailles
(Rive gauche)

Fig. 2. Plan du Rez de Chaussée.
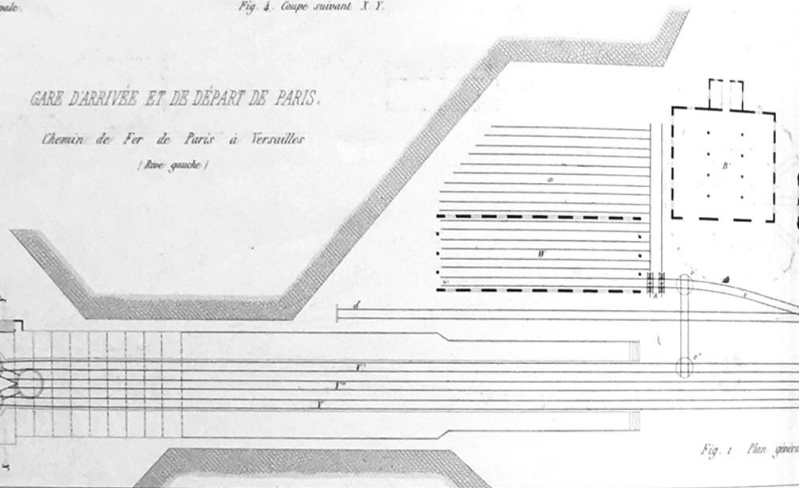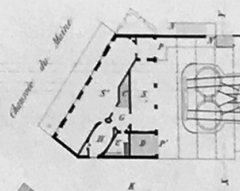
Fig. 1. Plan général

Élévation de T.
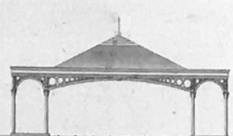
Fig. 9. Élévation de la Charpente et de la couverture des Voies.

Élévation de S.
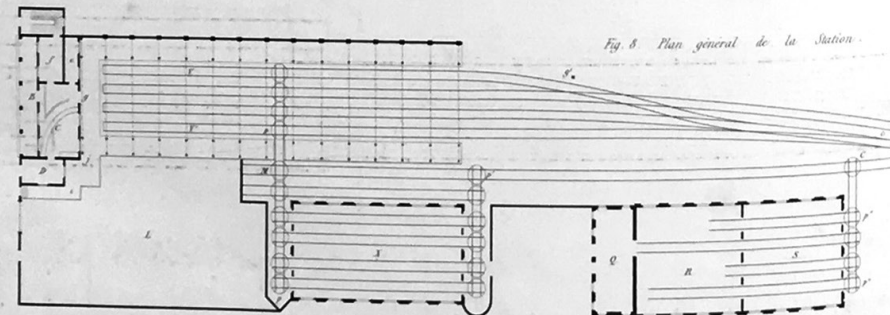
Fig. 8. Plan général de la Station.

GARE DE LONDRES.
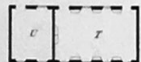
Chemin de Fer
de Londres à Southampton.

GARES ET STATIONS DES CHEMINS DE FER

Pl. 20

Elévation de l'Atelier des Forges B.

Fig 5. Elévation de N.

Coupe suivant un Diamètre de N.

Détails de a.β.

de la Station

Coupe suivant X.Y.

Elévation principale sur Westland Row.

Fig 7. Coupe longitudinale.

Fig 6. Plan général de la Station.

GARE DE DUBLIN.

Chemin de Fer de Dublin à Kingstown.

Coupe suivant X.Y.

Coupe suivant X.Y.

DE FRANCE D'ANGLETERRE ET DE BELGIQUE.

PLAN DU REZ-DE-CHAUSSÉE.

PLANS DE MASSE ET DES ABORDS

PLAN DU PREMIER ÉTAGE.

Salle d'Etude et de Lecture.

Above and opposite: engavings from the 1852 issue of the
Revue générale de l'architecture showing plans, sections and
details of the Bibliothèque St Geneviève

Fig. 3.
Clé et milieu des grands arcs.

Echelle de .... 1 Mètre.
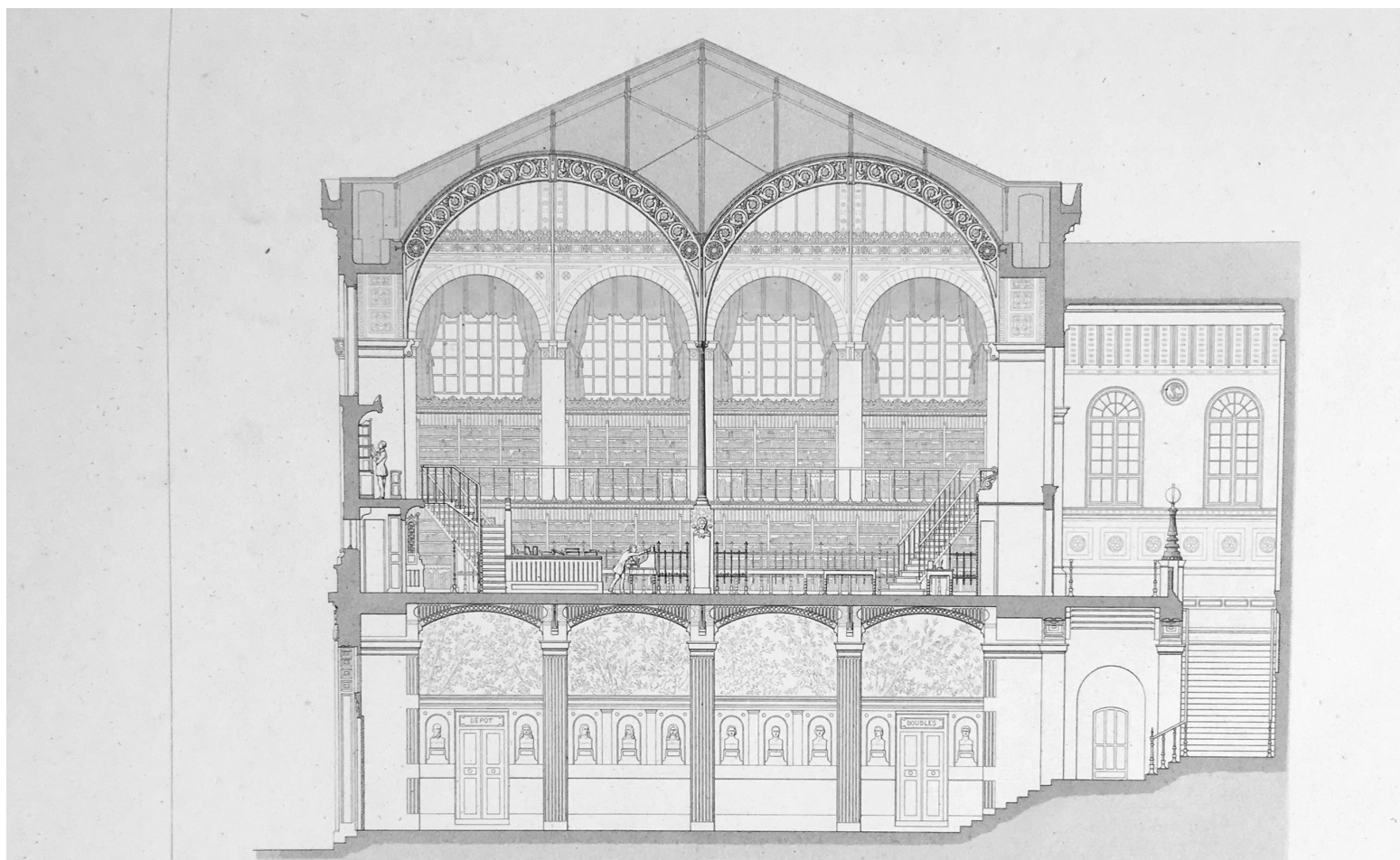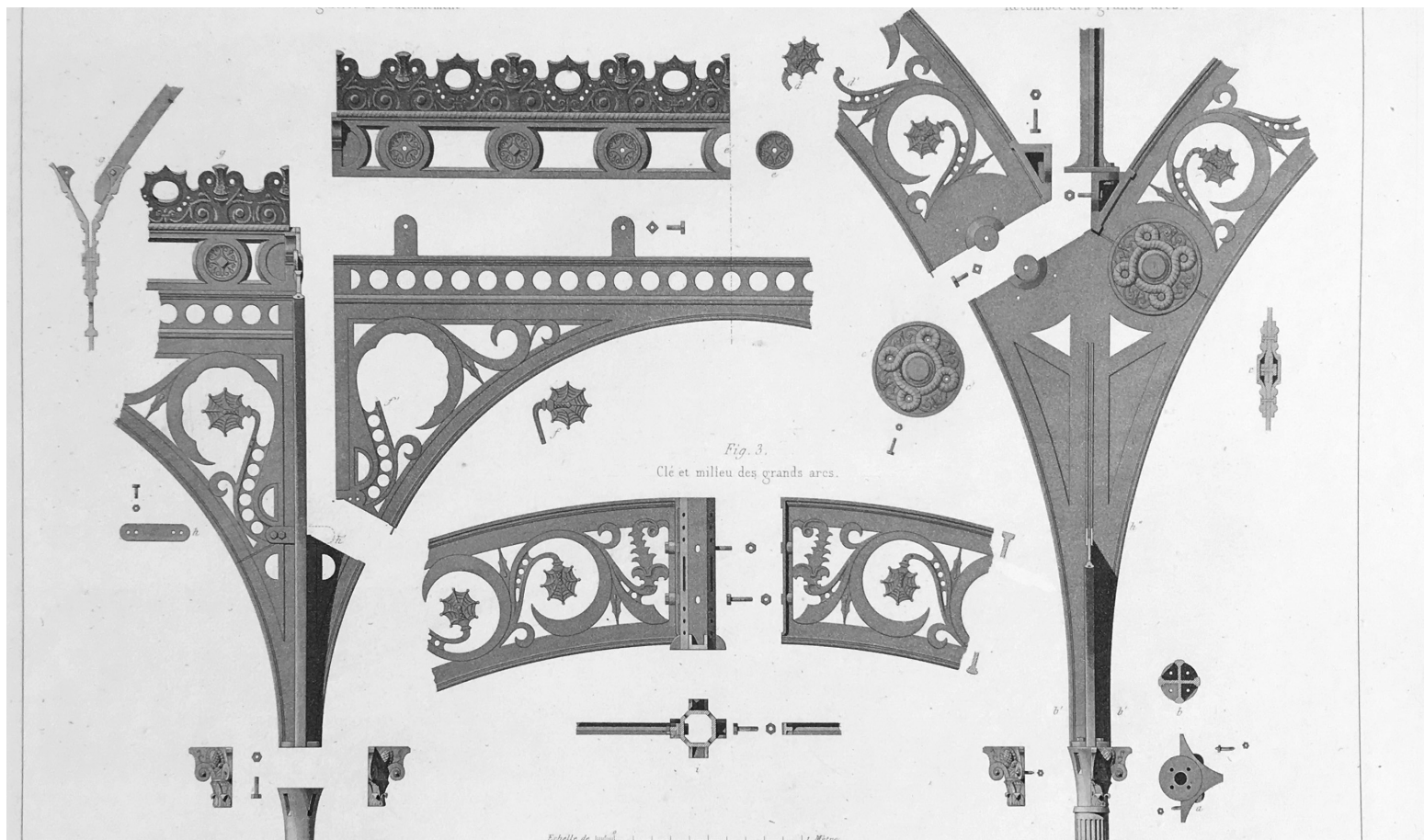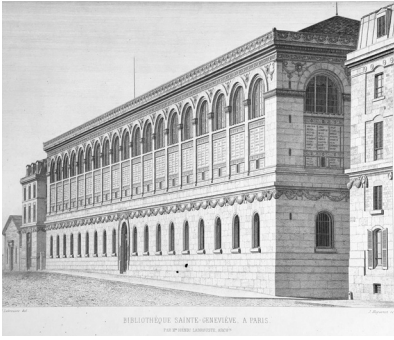
Street-view perspective,
Bibliothèque St Geneviève
Revue générale de l'architecture, 1853

Opposite: perspectival view of the
Monument de l'anfranchissement de
l'escaut, *Revue générale de l'architecture*, 1887

8. See J Mordant Crook, *The British Museum* (London: Penguin, 1972), p 114.
9. Carlo Menon and Veronique Patteeuw, 'Magazine Architecture', *OASE* 100, 'Karel Martens and the Architecture of the Journal', 2018, pp 83–142, reference pp 89–90.
10. The historian Antoine Picon ascribes such an ambition and an undermining of the grandeur of theory to what he detects as a Fourierist tendency in both César Daly and his magazine (or as he puts it, the *Revue* maintains '*un léger parfum fouriériste*' – or slight whiff of Fourierism) in its promotion of collective endeavour and of a collective project, and of its simultaneous undermining of the idea – a la a treatise – of some all-informing theorem or dogma. See Antoine Picon, 'César Daly, Fourierist Architect', in '*Fourier* (1772–1837), Fourierism and Fourierists', conference 'Arc and Senans', Besançon, 21–25 October 1993, and Antoine Picon, *Saint-simon and the Architecture of Utopia*, 2002 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009).
11. César Daly, *L'architecture privée au XIXe siècle*, op cit, translation by Hélène Lipstadt, op cit, p 31, ft 12.

– site plan, floor plan, elevation and section; that is, parts which aggregate together to form a whole. What was rarely shown (except in the case of prominent public structures, like the Bibliothèque St Geneviève) were more pictorial views of the building – an omission that is interesting because in privileging a collection of explicitly technical images, Daly was codifying a new, wholly visual language that was designed for a professional class of architects rather than for the public at large. Furthermore, in relying on different architectural drawing techniques – and especially on the X-ray advantages of the section – the implication was that this visual language could convey a more thorough, a deeper, even truer comprehension of the architecture than that gleaned through a single, perspectival view. The assumption, then, was that the architect – like a composer 'reading' an equally abstract musical score and in the process 'hearing' the whole overture – could read the coded lines of these images and from them distil a complete mental picture of the building being proposed. This in turn suggests that Daly was perhaps being too limited in his description of the plates, for his images were just as easily cerebral as optical, speaking to the brain as much as the eye.

To certain architects, however, the accessibility of this language – albeit one codified in a notational system of *pochéd* plans and sections – represented a kind of betrayal. For instance, Robert Smirke, the neoclassical architect of London's British Museum and Carlton Club, argued with typical hauteur that architectural composition was a subject only to be discussed privately between client and architect, and that it was 'utterly unintelligible to the vulgar or common people'.[8] Others were far happier, not least the growing list of subscribers, and the students at the Paris École des Beaux-Arts, who in 1865, seduced by the power of its images, requested copies of the *Revue* from the school's library more than any other book or journal.[9] In a sense, part of this popularity was the way Daly managed to successfully skirt between both the restrictions of this visual language and its accessibility, between professional elitism and populist egalitarianism. In more bombastic moments he even used the same tension to suggest that his magazine had superseded, and to some extent reinvented, architectural theory, now no longer carried by the wordy treatise, but more successfully expressed through the illustrative architectural plate.[10] Architects, he argued, wanted to be informed about recent advances 'through a form that is at once the most practical and the most expeditious – through the drawing', and that compared to the treatise his illustrated magazine was 'simultaneously less, but for some, more than that: it is a collection of specimens containing the most advanced and perfect examples of our domestic architecture. Instead of precepts and advice on the resolution of problems, it offers the very solutions as they were thought up by our most experienced architects.'[11]

For all of the radicalism implicit in statements like this, Daly's challenge to the theorisation of architecture through its image-making has gone largely unnoticed. Instead, he has become victim of his own success, as the aesthetic pleasures afforded by his steel-plate engravings have somehow rendered mute or eclipsed the deeper, semantic, resonances of these images. But also eclipsed has been the way Daly himself appeared to undermine, even sabotage his own legacy and the defining character of his plates as a language of notational parts, for if one were to survey issues of his magazine from the late 1880s, four decades *after* its founding, one would notice how the *Revue* – by then, very much the product of a Daly dynasty, with César's sons Marcel and André headlined in the publisher's colophon as fellow directors and contributors – featured still more lavishly engraved plates that were manifestly *not* dominated by technical plans, sections and elevations, but by pictorial renderings. Many of these are so convinced of their own singular, graphic strength (ie, that no other views are required, in apparent contradiction to the visual strategies on which the original *Revue* had been founded) that they occupy an entire double-page spread. In the volume for

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Above and opposite: perspectival views of the internal courtyard and main staircase, Hotel Raphael
Revue générale de l'architecture, 1887

12. For a good account of the way the plates of the *Revue* appear to anticipate or even compete with the emergence of photography (even by its appropriation – for instance, the perspectival view of the Bibliothèque St Geneviève which was reproduced in the *Revue* is actually a tracing of a photograph) see Neil Levine, 'The Template of Photography in Nineteenth-Century Architectural Representation', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, September 2012, pp 306–31. In his famous essay, 'Unpacking my Library' (1931), Walter Benjamin also alludes to the democratising aspect of the nineteenth-century engraving. At one point in the text he writes with a certain nostalgia about an edition of Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin* that he had the good fortune to pick up at an auction in 1915: 'the steel engravings of this book were designed by the foremost French graphic artist and executed by the foremost engravers' … 'lithography enabled graphic art to illustrate everyday life, and it began to keep pace with printing' … 'only a few decades after its invention, lithography was surpassed by photography'. Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking my Library: A Talk About Book Collecting', in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969), pp 59–68, quote pp 64–65.
13. Jean-Louis Pascal, op cit, p 1.

1887, for instance, there is a view of Belgian architect Jean-Jacques Winders' Monument de l'affranchissement de l'escaut. No details are provided, no section or plan, just a highly representational perspective of the monument complete with the surrounding city, shadows across the *pavé* and even fluffy clouds in the sky. Similarly, in the same volume, another piece of contemporary architecture under review – the Hotel Raphael on avenue Kléber in Paris – is presented through two large double-page views, one exterior, from its courtyard, and one interior, featuring its main staircase. In both cases, the vulgate of Smirke's 'common people' would have absolutely no problem 'reading' these drawings because they speak in a photo-realistic graphic language that mimics the world around them – not just volumetric, perspectival space, but the everyday realities of light and shadow, furnished interiors and perhaps most obviously by its users (two top-hatted gentlemen are depicted surveying the courtyard, and an elegant woman is shown descending the stair).[12] In this way, the *effet d'ensemble* was no longer deduced through a highly technical, professional and abstract set of composite images, but through the literalism of a single representational picture.

After the closure of the *Revue générale de l'architecture* in 1888, French architectural publishing continued to feature images like this – that is, pictorial views rather than technical drawings. But of course, in reality the images could never ultimately compare to the standards set by the *Revue*, for not only had the expansion of architectural publishing in the late nineteenth century hugely accelerated the turnover of issues, with annual reviews replaced by monthlies and even weeklies, but that advances in photography and printing technologies saw the devolution of the finesse and detail of hand-crafted engravings in favour of photographic reproductions. Moreover, the same technologies also now enabled these images to be integrated into the texts of these magazines, rather than separated as an illustrated set of plates, meaning there was no longer a kind of effective fundamentalism between text and image, or even those moments when each aspired to communicate through the realm of the other.

It was essentially this transition that Pascal was bemoaning in his *L'Architecte* editorial: 'The memory of the care with which the engraved plates of the *Revue* and its rival publications … reproduced in those far-off times the forms, details, profiles and *relevés* that enthralled the architects of the period enables us to point out how this sort of reproduction has given way to hastily produced publications, geared to rapidly changing news, and using efficient and inexpensive processes in direct proportion to the desired result.'[13] And importantly, it was also the new kind of impatient architectural reader of these new kind of magazines (rather than architects *per se*) that Pascal was caricaturising, for the pictorial view – quite distinct from the technical set of drawings – infantilised both the reader and the image. And so the moral of the story of César Daly's beautiful engravings and Jean-Louis Pascal's seemingly casual snub is in fact *not* that architects read only like children, but that as editors (and architects) we need to recover the adulthood of architectural images that speak through their autonomy and abstraction, their refinement and expertise, and also through their theory.

Even if such a conclusion has not been articulated before, accounts detailing the appearance of the *Revue générale de l'architecture*, and in particular its famous plates, remain familiar to histories of architectural publications largely because it represents an apparently originary moment – if not the first architectural journal, then certainly the first to establish a coherent graphic identity – from which an extended history of architectural publications typically follows.[14] But in a sense the *Revue* is actually not the beginning of a type of image-making but the end, because the self-defeating pictorialism of the issues it produced in the late 1880s represents a point of collapse or terminus. And so if architectural scholars writing about this period only ever seem to look forward, tracking the illustrative model of the *Revue*, as if it were uniform and

unchanging, through architectural publications like *L'Architecte* and *L'Architecture vivante* in France, *The Builder* and *The Architectural Review* in England and *Deutsche Bauzeitung* in Germany, then an alternative methodology might be to look backwards, and see if precedents to the lucidity of its visual plates and to the relationship between images of architecture and theories of architecture could be found elsewhere. Such an approach would soon find a literary and graphic monument whose exclusion from sustained architectural attention is deeply puzzling, and perhaps only explained by the suggestion that it might in fact be too obvious, because if there is a paragon to the power of separation between text and image, of parts and wholes, of expertise and populism, of coded and literal languages, then surely the famous *Encyclopédie* by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert is it.

The story of the creation of the *Encyclopédie* is a familiar one, but in essence its appearance developed out of an initial project to provide a French translation of Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopedia*, which had been published in London in 1728 in two, almost wholly unillustrated volumes, and whose aspirations towards a kind of intellectual absolutism were somewhat at odds with not just the errors that crept into most of its entries but in the open-endedness of its remit; something reflected in the almost ludicrous fullness of its full title: *Cyclopedia, or a Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Containing the Definitions of the Terms, and Accounts of the Things Signify'd Thereby, in the Several Arts, both Liberal and Mechanical, and the Several Sciences, Human and Divine: the Figures, Kinds, Properties, Productions, Preparations and Uses, of Things Natural and Artificial; the Rise, Progress and State of Things Ecclesiastical, Civil, Military and Commercial: with the Several Systems, Sects, Opinions, etc; among Philosophers, Divines, Mathematicians, Physicians, Antiquaries, Criticks, etc: the Whole Intended as a Course of Ancient and Modern Learning*.

In 1745 the commission to produce a French version of this work was originally given to two translators, the Englishman John Mills and the German Gottfried Sellius, but after a series of disagreements, a fistfight and legal trial with the publisher, André Le Breton, it passed first to the mathematician Jean Paul de Gua de Malves and then ultimately, in 1747, to Malves' sub-editors, the philosopher, art critic and writer Denis Diderot and the physicist and mathematician Jean le Rond d'Alembert.[15] Under their direction the task at hand soon became one of not simply translation but the production of a unique and wholly original work, and even if d'Alembert would abandon his role in 1758, Diderot continued, and by 1772 the *Encyclopédie* was finally complete – keystone of the entire Enlightenment, and a work that comprised 28 volumes, 17 of which featured over 70,000 entries of text, and a further 11 volumes containing more than 3,000 illustrative plates.[16]

Accounts of any encyclopedic project, and certainly this definitive *Encyclopédie*, are often unable to resist the urge to describe it through a kind of parallel encyclopedism – of numbers, usually, and of a mass of data that somehow conveys the sheer scale of its undertaking. Of course, it is very easy to do this with Diderot and d'Alembert's celebrated work (citing figures for the years it took to complete, the legions of its contributors or *encyclopédistes*, the size of its printing presses), but what is interesting is that in his own accounts of the project, Diderot himself never appeared to lose sight of the singularity of his mission, nor the ease with which he could reduce the whole endeavour down to an informing idea or ambition. Perhaps the most famous of these was his remark that the purpose of the *Encyclopédie* was to 'change the way people think', which appears, with perfect kind of felicity, in his own written contribution to the *Encyclopédie*'s entry on 'Encyclopédie'.[17] And yet elsewhere, the ambition can equally be read as an attempt to change the way people see, not least in a short descriptive text or '*Prospectus*' that Diderot published as early as 1750 as part of his publisher's strategy to promote and sell the imminent work.

14. Hélène Jannière's 'Distilled Avant-Garde Echoes', op cit, offers a good survey of this kind, and interestingly her analysis of the largely French architectural publishing scene argues (in spite of Jean-Louis Pascal) that successive journals published in the wake of the *Revue* – including *L'Architecte*, *L'Architecture vivante* and *L'Encyclopédie de l'architecture* – continued to employ the model of the separate, illustrative plate until well into the 1920s. See, especially, pp 12–13.

15. For a very accessible account of the history of the *Encyclopédie* see Philipp Blom, *Enlightening the World: Encyclopédie, the Book that Changed the Course of History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); for an excellent scholarly account of the formation of its plates see John R Pannabecker, 'Representing Mechanical Arts in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*', *Technology and Culture*, January 1998, pp 33–73; and for an informed 'reading' of both text and image in the *Encyclopédie* see Raymond Birn, 'Words and Pictures: Diderot's Vision and Publishers' Perceptions of Popular and Learned Culture in the *Encyclopédie*', in Marc Bertrand (ed), *Popular Traditions and Learned Culture in France from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1985), pp 73–92.

16. In 1775 the Parisian publisher Charles-Joseph Panckoucke obtained the rights to the *Encyclopédie* and reissued the whole work between 1776–80 as a 35-volume set – expanding on the original 28 volumes with five new volumes of supplementary material and a two-volume index. This edition still represents the definitive *Encyclopédie*, even if the additional five volumes of entries were not authored or overseen by Diderot. The most accessible English translation of the work is accessible online through a collaborative project hosted by the University of Michigan. See https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did.

17. Denis Diderot, 'Encyclopédie', accessible online, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/did2222.0000.004/--encyclopedia?rgn=main;view=fulltext;q1=encyclopedia.

Maurice-Quentin de La Tour,
Marquise de Pompadour, 1748–55
Musée du Louvre, Paris

18. Denis Diderot's '*Prospectus*' was first published in 1750 and then republished as part of the '*discours prèliminaire*' introducing the *Encyclopédie*, vol I (Paris: André Le Breton, 1751), pp XXXIV–XLV; translation from the 1969 New York, NY: Readex Microprint Corporation edition, p XL, and quoted by John R Pannabecker, op cit, p 33.

19. Theodor Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 1958, translated by Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, no 32 (spring–summer 1984), pp 151–71, epigraph p 151. Goethe's original line, in German, reads '*bestimmt, Erleuchtetes zu sehen, nicht das Licht*'. An English version of *Pandora* can be found in Cyrus Hamlin and Frank Ryder (eds), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Verse, Plays and Epic*, translated by Michael Hamburger (New York, NY: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp 217–47, 'illuminated' quote lines pp 954–57.

20. See John R Pannabecker, op cit, p 69.

21. The painting is in the collection of the Louvre in Paris, is undated, but is assumed to have been produced in *c* 1750, during the period in which the artist François Boucher also carried out a number of other portraits of the marquise (including the famous painting of her in a voluminous green dress, book in hand) and even one sculpture. Madame de Pompadour's own engravings – estimated to comprise 52 separate studies – typically copied other works supplied by Boucher, and were published in a dedicated book, *Suite d'Estampes Gravées par Madame la Marquise de Pompadour d'Apres les Pierres Gravées de Guay, Graveur du Roy*. See Perrin Stein, *Artists and Amateurs: Etching in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

A single art about which one would want to represent everything and say everything would furnish volumes of discourse [texts] and plates [images]. One would never finish if one proposed to render in figures all the states through which a piece of iron passes before being transformed into a needle. That the discourse follow the process of the artist to the last detail, fine. As for the figures, we have restricted them to the important movements of the worker and only the moments of operation that are very easy to depict and very difficult to explain. We have limited ourselves to the essential circumstances, to those of which the representation, when it is well done, leads necessarily to the knowledge of those that one does not see.[18]

What seems striking about this description, written still 25 years before the completion of the work he is summarising, is the precision with which Diderot articulates a fundamentally editorial agenda, navigating effortlessly between the competing attractions of a desire to invoke any possible subject or discourse ('to represent everything and say everything'), with a parallel acknowledgment of the importance of constraint and discretion (to 'restrict' and to 'limit ourselves'). At the same time, he recognises that to edit is to essentially operate through only two things: through text and through image. And yet each is understood as not absolute and unchanging but perfectly adaptable, capable even of communicating through the other, which in terms of images, in particular, produces the most elegant mandate for their use: that you use an image only when an idea is 'very easy to depict and very difficult to explain' – that is, an image does what a text cannot. This seems to anticipate not only Jean-Louis Pascal's appraisal of the *Revue générale de l'architecture* more than a century later, but also all of those characteristically nineteenth-century tensions between professionalism and populism, or in Diderot's terms, between difficulty and ease. It even ends with a *denouement* less ambivalent and yet even more paradoxical than Pascal's appeal to the readability of pictures – that the image facilitates an understanding of that which 'one does not see'.

Of course, this thing that one can understand from images but not necessarily see is knowledge, the fundamental goal of the Enlightenment, and a word that itself plays to the same kind of ironies and paradoxes, for this enlightenment is not visual but intellectual, a quality perhaps best captured not from the Book of Genesis and Gutenberg's 'Let there be light', but from a line from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's unfinished drama, *Pandora* (1810) – 'destined to see the illuminated, not the light' – which Theodor Adorno uses as an epigraph to his 'The Essay as Form'.[19] And yet in the *Encyclopédie*, illumination is still carried by images, perhaps even more so than by the text, because it is the images that fundamentally distinguishes the *Encyclopédie* from its progenitor, the unillustrated *Cyclopedia*. Like César Daly at the *Revue*, Diderot also allowed the images to progressively take over, anticipating only 600 when he first wrote his *Prospectus*, but soon following demand, as earlier volumes were published, to incrementally increase their number to 1,000, and then 2,000, and finally over 3,000 plates which themselves contained many more separate illustrations.[20] And it was also the images that ensured its survival, for the entire project was ultimately saved from the French church and state – both of whom, at various points in its gestation, called for its premature end – by the intervention of Madame de Pompadour, mistress to Louis XV and amateur engraver, whose fondness for the plates of the *Encyclopédie* saw her employ her influence inside the French court to protect the independence of the project, and who, with the same kind of careful plotting, chose to be depicted – in a portrait by Maurice-Quentin de La Tour – both foregrounded and backdropped by its volumes, together with loose-leaf engravings of its plates, as if both were protecting the other.[21]

The plates themselves also backdrop so much subsequent architectural representation, echoing – or better still, projecting – the same *effet d'ensemble* to

Opposite and overleaf: assorted plates from the *Encyclopédie* devoted to the paper-making industry, each illustrated by Louis-Jacques Goussier

which Daly aspired. And so, especially in those illustrated entries of the *Encyclopédie* dedicated to various trades and industries (for example, glass-making, masonry, textiles, fashion, paper and printing) each plate presents a kind of vignette or tableau image on top, strongly marked off from the rest of the image by an inner frame, and below which are reproduced more technical or notational images, also bordered by their own perimeter. In the upper image the trade is typically reduced to a space, an architectural interior – usually a workshop or some other space of production – and is hatched, shaded, peopled with its occupants and generally filled up to convey a complete representational scene (easily deciphered by any onlooking amateur), while in the lower image this completionism is deduced rather than depicted, with components, tools, fragments, elements – often drawn in section or plan – floating against a background deliberately left blank (appealing to a more obvious sense of professionalism or expertise). Each illustration, or the connection between the two, has no form of annotation or legend whatsoever, and so the responsibility for their comprehension and interpretation is carried only by the lines of their engravings.

Such a structure seems to effectively summarise 40 years of the *Revue*, for here we have not image being subservient to text, but the autonomy of image doing all of its own communication, as much as this is also not abstraction giving way to pictorialism, but the two happily co-existing, with each somehow acknowledging the necessity of the other. So the part is seen alongside the whole, and space is understood alongside its creation, maintenance or use.[22] Or as Diderot himself writes in his entry to describe a machine used to make stockings: 'We may regard it as a single and unique reasoning of which the work's fabrication is the conclusion; therefore there reigns among its parts so great a dependence that were we to remove even a single one, or to alter the form of those regarded as least important, we should destroy the entire mechanism.'[23]

Moreover, these plates articulate an appealing and very prescient view of architecture, especially those vignettes designed by Diderot's favourite illustrator, Louis-Jacques Goussier, who was responsible for more than 900 of the *Encyclopédie*'s illustrations, many of which were subsequently prepared for the page by the engraver Robert Bénard. Goussier was a collaborator deeply committed to a kind of matter-of-fact positivism and to a faith in France's nascent industries as their own perfect mechanism, which impelled him to strip out any unnecessary embellishment or inconsequential detail. The best demonstration of this commitment is evidenced in that section of the *Encyclopédie* devoted to the printing and paper-making industries (a section that is also interesting because it is the only part of the *Encyclopédie* in which all three components of its representation – the article, the plate description and the plate itself – were provided by a single author, Goussier).[24] In text form such an approach produced writing that is as mechanical as the thing he is describing, exacting but somewhat impersonal, heavy on detail and systemisation but light on style or nuance. But in image form – especially the tableau scenes – the same commitment produces depictions of interiors that are highly aestheticised and hugely compelling. And so the contemporary architectural reader, especially, is enticed by any number of orthogonal rooms enhanced by the absence of cornices, skirtings or plaster moulding, and by structural columns free of decorative capitals; whose large windows, divided by simple gridded fenestration, fill the interiors with natural light; and whose occupants sit at large, equally unadorned tables, in some kind of desirably contemporary enactment of the synthesis of living and working.

The affection one feels for these spaces would suggest that the images in the *Encyclopédie* share their appeal equally among not just the eye and the brain but also the heart, and that these volumes – typically celebrated as a manifesto to a new, enlightened rationalism – might also be construed as a kind of *machine à émouvoir*.[25] Yet there are even other emotional registers induced by these engravings, if only in the way the images continue something of an almost postmodern

22. For a good art historical and theoretical interpretation of the plates of the *Encyclopédie* see John Bender and Michael Marrinan, 'Diagram', in *The Culture of Diagram* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp 19–52.

23. Denis Diderot, quoted by Roland Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopedia*', 1964, *New Critical Essays*, translated by Richard Howard (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp 23–39, quote p 33.

24. Denis Diderot paid homage to Goussier by basing his character, La Gousse, on the engraver, from his novel *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* (*Jacques the Fatalist*), written in 1780 and published posthumously in 1796. For further information on not just Louis-Jacques Gossier but the variances and idiosyncrasies of a number of the *Encyclopédie*'s illustrators see Stephen Werner, *Blueprint: A Study of Diderot and the Encyclopedic Plates* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1993) and John R Pannabecker, op cit, pp 42–50.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

o   1   2   3   4   5   6 *Pieds.*
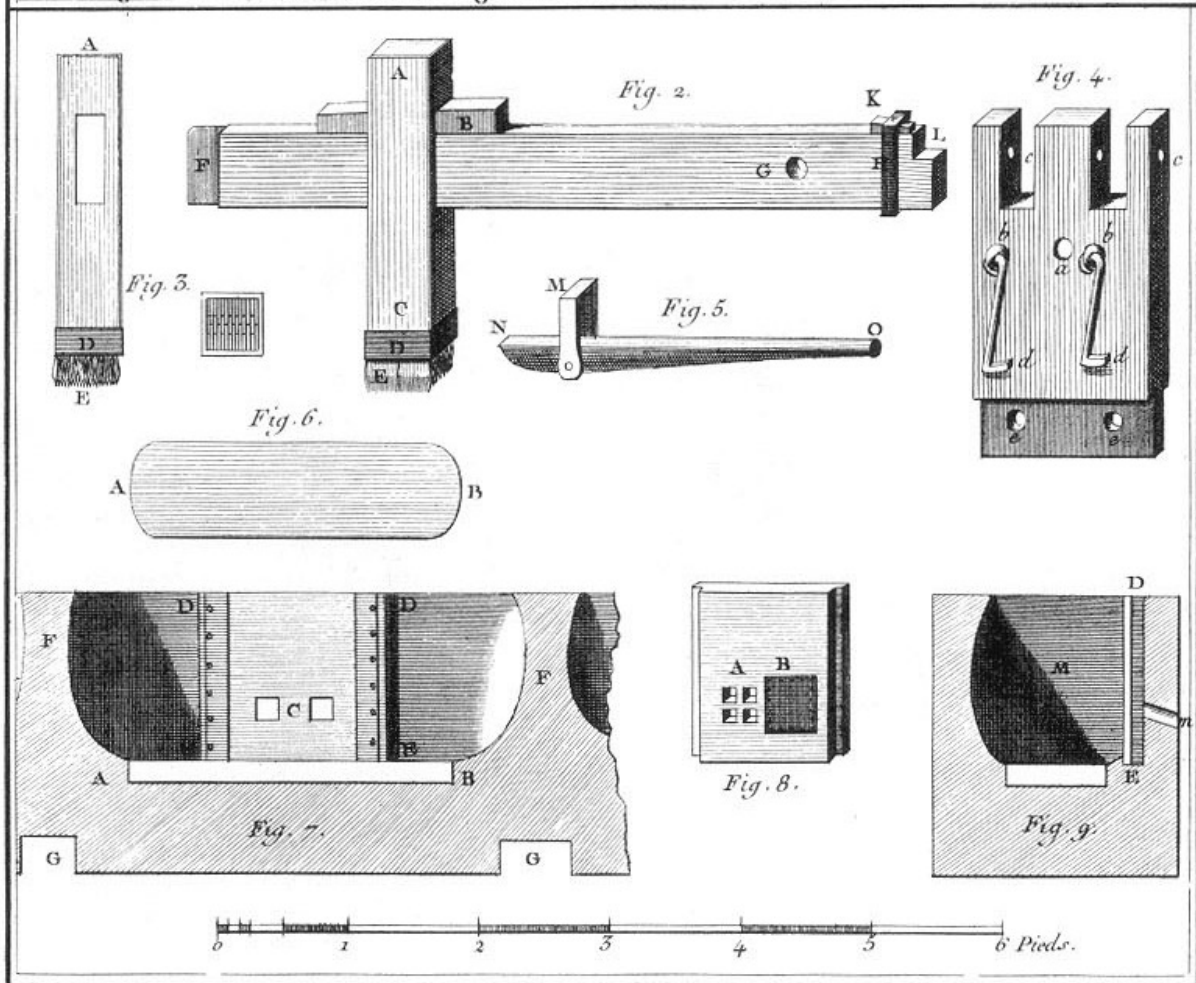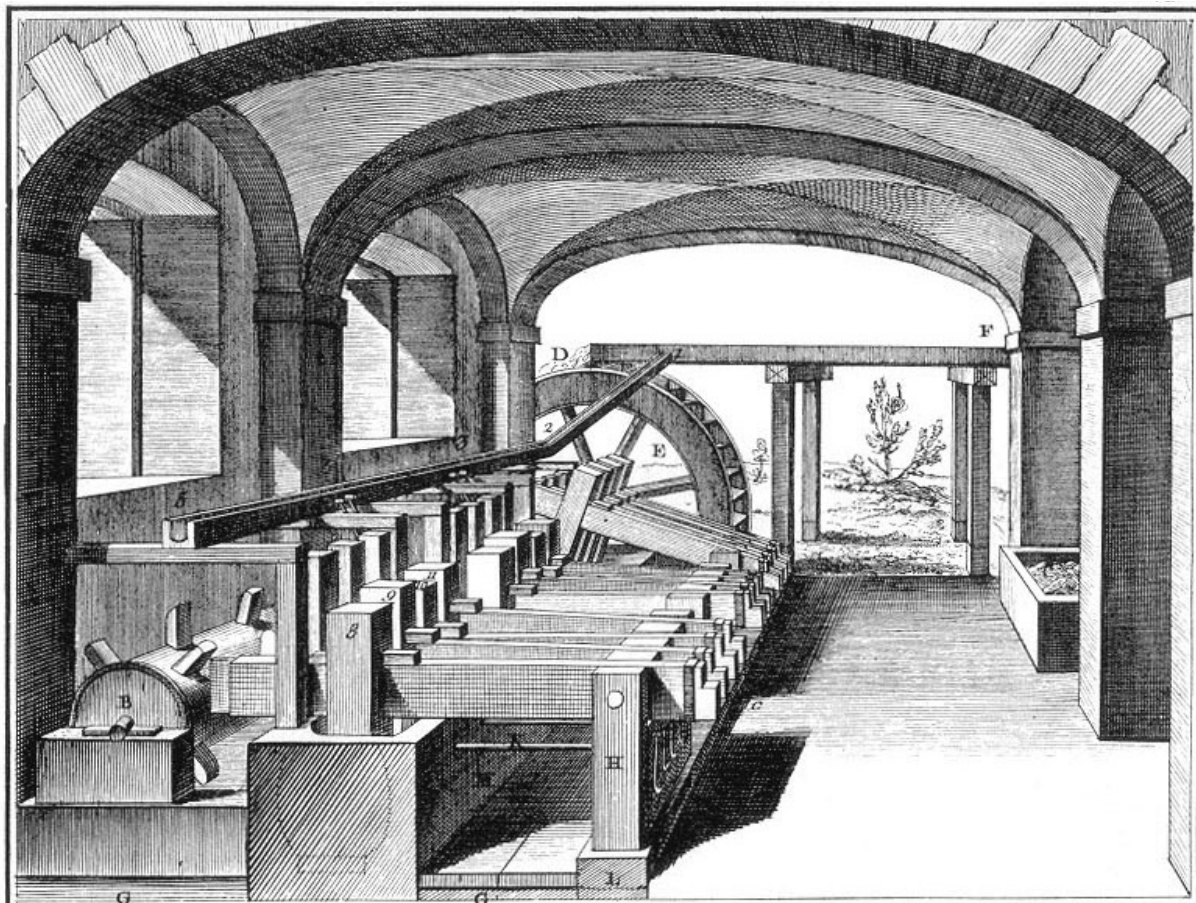
Goussier del.

Benard fecit.

Papetterie, Moulin 'a Maillets.

Papetterie, Dérompoir.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 1.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 7.

Goussier del.   Benard fecit.

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Pieds.
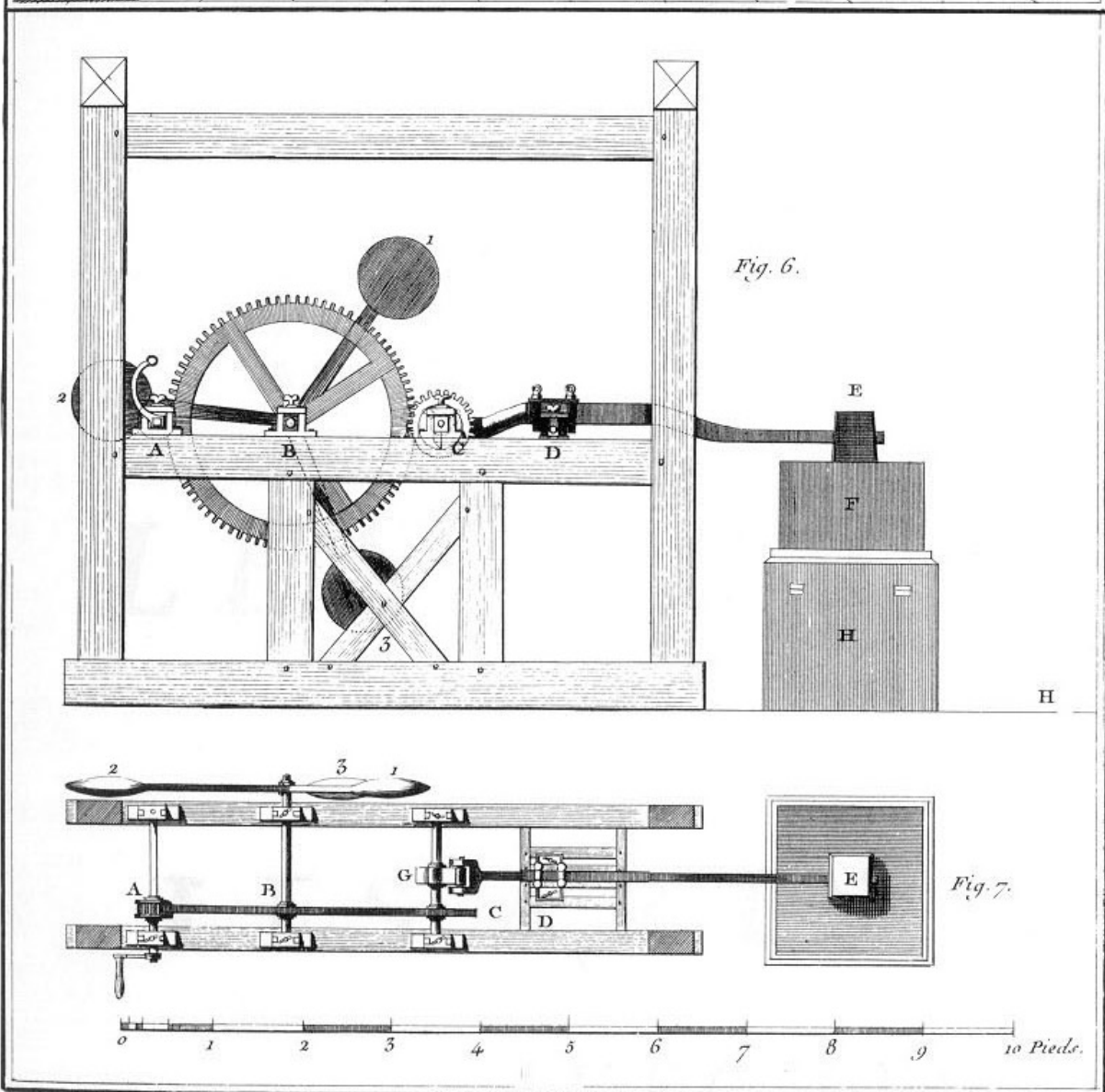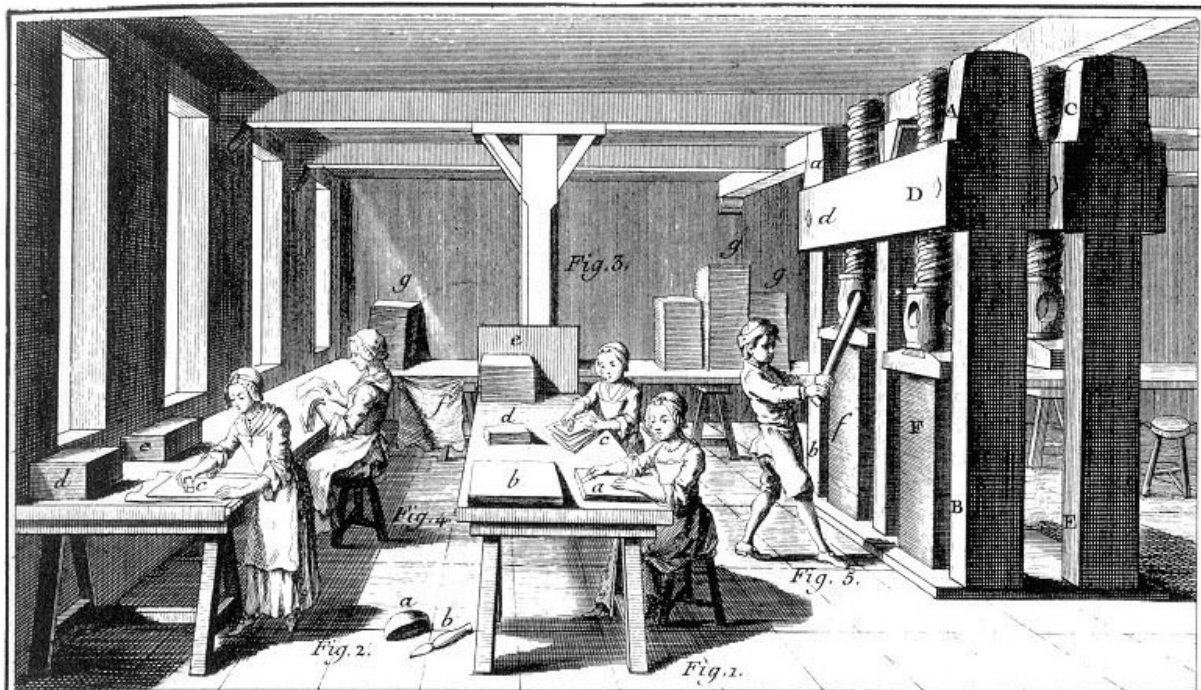
Papetterie, La Salle.

25. This French phrase – literally translated as 'a machine for moving' (as in, being emotionally moved) – is used by Colin Rowe in his famous essay, 'Dominican Monastery of La Tourette, Eveux-sur Arbresle, Lyon' (1961): 'The casual visitor to La Tourette has climbed a hill, penetrated an archway and arrived in a gravelled courtyard to find himself in what certainly appears to be no more than the picturesque hiatus between two entirely discrete buildings; to be a merely incidental space. To his left is a mansarded pavilion. It carries a clock with blue Sevres figures. To his right is a kitchen garden of uncertain extent. But these, of which he is dimly aware, are the very subsidiary components of the scene. For right ahead, obsessively prominent and unsupported by any shred of conventional artifice, there is a *machine à émouvoir* which he has come to inspect.' From Colin Rowe, 'La Tourette', *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp 185–201, quote p 187. Rowe may well have come across the phrase in his readings of Amédée Ozenfant, who wrote in his *Mémoires* (1968) that 'J'avais baptisé l'oeuvre d'art une "machine à émouvoir", slogan que Le Corbusier transforma pour l'architecture en "machine en habiter" et Valéry nomma le livre "machine à lire". See William Braham, *Modern Architecture/Modern Colour: Amédée Ozenfant and the Genealogy of Colour in Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Ashgate, 2002), ft 26.
26. The same style of humour is even more apparent in Diderot's plays and novels, notably *La neveau de Rameau* (*Rameau's Nephew*, 1763) and *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* (*Jacques the Fatalist*, 1778), both of which employ rhetorically rather complex literary devices more typical of works two centuries later. For instance, the main character is *Rameau's Nephew* is referenced only as '*Moi*' ('Me') and whose engagements with the eponymous Rameau, referenced in the novel as '*Lui*' ('Him'), structure the narrative. In *Jacques the Fatalist* a similarly self-reflexive, allegorical premise is even punctuated by moments when the 'Reader' interrupts the story and demands more clarification and detail. A subsequent kind of joke, seemingly thoroughly in keeping with Diderot's sense of the absurd, saw the publication of *La neveau de Rameau* occur first in German, in 1805, in translation by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Immediately afterwards, the original French manuscript disappeared, and so all subsequent translations of the book, including the French, have in fact been based on Goethe's German edition. And so the original *Rameau's Nephew* is really *Rameaus Neffe* (1805). See Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew* and *D'Alembert's Dream*, translated and with an introduction by Leonard Tanock (London: Penguin, 1966) and Denis Diderot, *Jacques the Fatalist*, translated and with an introduction by David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
27. The original epigraph is in Latin: 'Da veniam scriptis, quorum non gloria

joke that seems to run consistently throughout the work.[26] This is evidenced most obviously by the complexities and contradictions of its particular, paradoxical brand of enlightenment ('When is a light not a light? When it's enlightened'), or in those sections that advertise a particular expertise – and so Diderot appears to be laughing to himself when he embeds the most revelatory textual aspect of the *Encyclopédie* in the entry 'Encyclopédie', just as he repeats the same joke by locating the most powerful meditation on the idea of the image among those plates (ie, those images) that depict the business of image-making. But perhaps the cleverest joke of all is in that section dedicated to explaining the cultures and logistics of hunting deer, boar and wolf. Here, 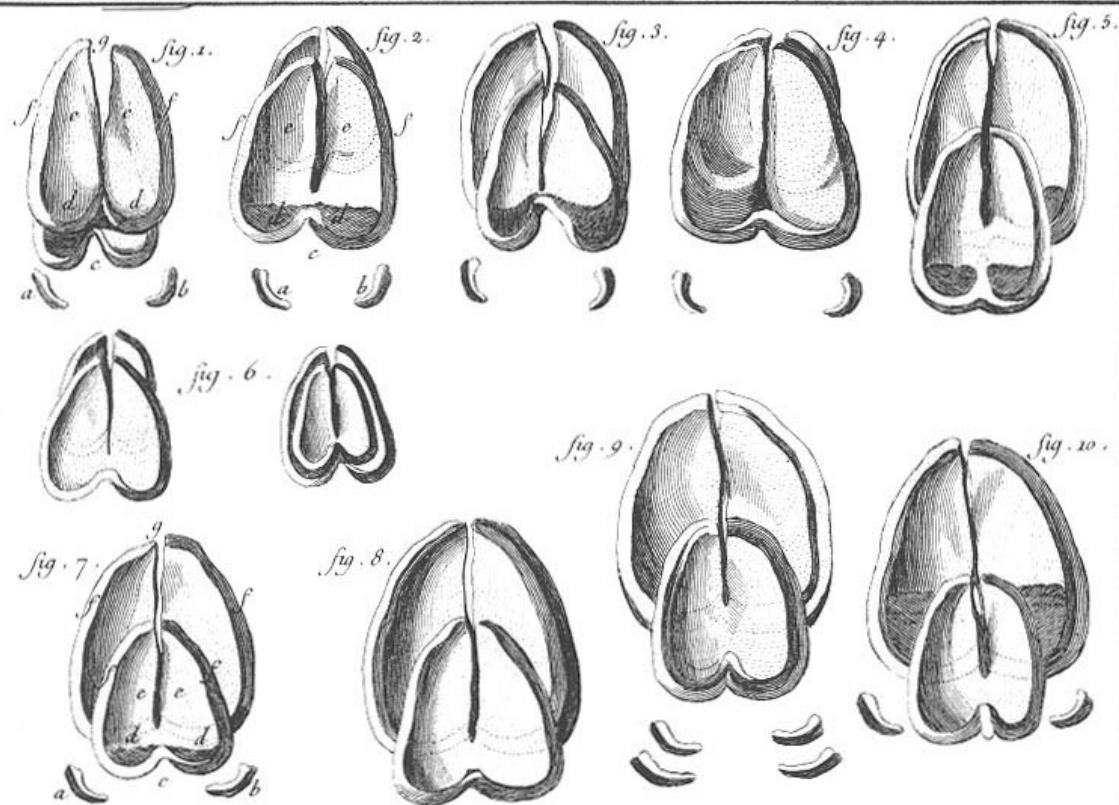Diderot and d'Alembert provide five plates, laid out according to the typical subdivided model, with a pictorial scene (resolutely not in the style of Goussier, because the lines here are not sharp and precise but much more impressionistic) above an abstract taxonomy of elements that includes various antlers, hoof and paw patterns and even different types of animal excrement. But below these abstract types is then introduced a third layer, and one that appears to toy and tease specifically with the idea of notation, because this layer is only notes – or to be precise, a musical score corresponding to the different coded blasts from the huntsman's bugle. In this way, the most abstract of all images can in fact induce the most immediate of experiences, as this constellation of encyclopedic images proves itself capable of knowing everything, seeing everything, desiring everything and even sensing everything.

The effortless ability of such a plate to communicate different registers (at once pedagogical, pictorial, notational, architectural, aspirational, theoretical, comical and emotional) might suggest that this plate, '*Chasse, Venerie, la Chasse par Force*', could easily be read as emblematic of the entire *Encyclopédie*; a single drawing that summaries the whole, and an image that is representative of the combined learning of 17 volumes of text. Or perhaps such a responsibility should instead be bestowed upon the 'Genealogical Distribution of the Arts and Sciences' – an elaborate folded plate inserted into a four-volume supplement to the original 28 volumes, published in Paris in 1780, and which, once carefully unfolded, revealed an enormous verdant tree, with each branch bearing the fruit of a different division of knowledge (beneath an inscription from Ovid's *Tristia*: 'Grant indulgence to my writings, for their purpose has not been my renown but my advantage, and to do homage to others').[27]

Even if no known tree had ever borne fruit quite like this, the image was developed in collaboration with the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Robinet (and was designed by Chrétien Frederic Guillaume Roth and once again engraved by Robert Bénard) as the literal embodiment of an idea Diderot first articulated in his *Prospectus* in 1750 – that in order of achieving the goal of representing everything and saying everything, the authors of the *Encyclopédie* had to 'imagine a genealogical tree of all the sciences and all the arts', an especially arduous task which they could not have successfully performed without the model offered by that 'extraordinary genius' Francis Bacon. 'It is from his faculties [or more particularly, from the subdivision of knowledge Bacon offers in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605)] that we have derived our knowledge: history came to us from memory; philosophy from reason; and poetry from imagination.'[28] But a year later, having had time to consider his arboreal motif a little longer, Diderot abandoned the idea 'because it appeared to be more clever than solid'[29] (which is itself an interesting comment on the supposed symbolic innocence and immutability of the tree, for the idea that some trees are just too clever for their own good still seems incredibly irreverent and radical) – an invalidation that the designers of the bountiful insert in the 1780 *Encyclopédie* seem to have either ignored or strategically forgotten.

Complicated by Diderot's rather un-Diderotian faith in solidity over intelligence, the invitation to represent the complete *Encyclopédie* was ultimately offered to none of its wonderful plates nor to its magnificent unfolded tree, but

Encyclopédie plate 'Chasse, Venerie, la Chasse par Force'

'Genealogical Distribution of the Arts and Sciences', folded plate inserted into the 1780 edition of the *Encyclopédie*
Designed by Chrétien Frederic Guillaume in collaboration with Jean-Baptiste Robinet

Overleaf: Charles-Nicolas Cochin, frontispiece to the 1772 edition of the *Encyclopédie*

nobis causa, sed utilitas officiumque fuit', and comes from Ovid's *Tristia*. English translation by Arthur Leslie Wheeler, *Ovid Tristia Ex Ponto*, 1924 (Cambridge, MA: Arkose Press/Harvard University, 2015), book III, line 420.

28. Denis Diderot's *'Prospectus'*, op cit. A description of the tree is provided by Robert Morrissey (ed), ARTFL *Encyclopédie* (Chicago, IL; University of Chicago, 1982), accessible online at https://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/content/arbre-généalogique. Diderot's acknowledgment to Bacon is quoted in a rather idiosyncratic and unheralded but still highly informative text on the frontispiece to the *Encyclopédie*, Georges May, 'Observations on an Allegory: The Frontispiece of the *Encyclopédie*', *Diderot Studies*, vol 16 (1973), pp 159–74, quote p 165.

29. Denis Diderot, reprint of the *Prospectus* in the first 1751 volume of the *Encyclopédie*; quote, Georges May, ibid, p 166.

30. Stephen J Gendzier, *Denis Diderot's The Encyclopedia: Selections* (London: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), p VIII.

31. For a detailed biographical portrait of Charles-Nicolas Cochin see Carter E Foster, 'Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger', *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol 90, no 381 (summer 1994), pp 1–28. As Georges May describes, Diderot first met Cochin in around 1762, writing in his *Salon de 1763*: 'Cochin is a gentleman, with a sense of humour. He is a charming supper companion and is careless with his talent.' Ibid, p 163.

32. Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1765*: 'The piece is very cleverly composed. We see at the top Truth between Reason and Imagination. Reason tries to lift her veil; Imagination prepares to adorn her. Below this group, a crowd of speculative philosophers; lower, a number of artists. The philosophers have their eyes fastened on Truth; a proud Metaphysics tries to divine her presence rather than see her. Theology turns her back and waits for light from on high.' See Georges May, ibid, p 167. Another reading of the engraving argues that Diderot saw in the image not simply the Fates, but 'pure masonic allegory'. This case is made in a 1939 essay by the historian Louis-Philippe May, and is substantiated only by the fact that the central figure in the drawing is occupied by a deity who holds in her hand the familiar masonic symbols of a ruler, a square and a compass. And yet as May also concedes, such symbols were also shared by architecture, the 'royal art of freemasons'. See Louis-Philippe May, 'Note sur les origines maçonniques de l'*Encyclopédie*', *Revue de synthèse*, XVII (1939), p 185.

33. Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *French Eighteenth-Century Painters*, 1875, translated by Robin Ironside (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), quoted by Georges May, *op cit*, p 174. May also comes to the same, rather derogatory conclusion in his 1973 essay on the frontispiece, even if such a critique also prompts him to write a somewhat self-deprecatory but nevertheless very endearing summation that touches upon his own lack of art historical expertise: 'Indeed

to a separate frontispiece – in many ways the very worst image out of the 3,000 or so that it contained – a decision that arguably signifies the only failure of the entire project. The image was created in 1764 by the artist Charles-Nicolas Cochin, engraved by Benoît-Louis Prévost in 1772, and promptly sent out to subscribers of the *Encyclopédie*, along with the final two volumes of engraved plates, together with a printed explanation:

> *Beneath a temple of ionic architecture, Sanctuary of Truth, we see Truth wrapped in a veil, radiant with a light that parts the clouds and disperses them. On the right of Truth, Reason and Philosophy are engaged, the one in lifting the veil from Truth, the other in pulling it away. At her feet, kneeling Theology receives her light from on high. Following the line of figures, we see grouped on the same side Memory and Ancient and Modern History; History is writing the annals, and Time serves as a support for her. Grouped below are Geometry, Astronomy and Physics. The figures below this group show Optics, Botany, Chemistry and Agriculture. At the bottom are several Arts and Professions that originate from the Sciences. On the left of Truth we see Imagination, who is preparing to adorn and crown Truth. Beneath Imagination, the artist has places the different genres of Poetry: Epic, Dramatic, Satyric and Pastoral. Next come the other arts of imitation: Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.*[30]

Cochin, like Diderot, enjoyed the patronage of Madame de Pompadour, with his baroque engravings often used to celebrate the births, deaths and marriages of Louis XV's inner circle (whom he deferentially cast as the various gods, goddesses and *putti* of ancient mythology).[31] He adopted the same questionable taste and rather heavy-handed baroque style for the *Encyclopédie*, framing his frontispiece as a celestial cloud and allegorising its search for truth, reason and imagination through a trio of Fates, all of whose eyes look skyward towards some higher power, just like those of the other realms of knowledge below them, each similarly anthropomorphised as semi-naked deities. Even if Diderot was delighted with the engraving (gleefully writing a review of the piece in one of his *Salons* – his first published forays into art criticism – which translated all of its various symbolism),[32] the image seems desperately at odds with all the other image-making in the *Encyclopédie*, and more generally with the spirit of its enlightenment. This, of course, was advertised *not* through a communion with figures of celestial or regal authority, or indeed through any form of allegory, but through its humanism – and in particular through the pictorialism of its collective scenes and the abstraction of its notational parts. It was also communicated through a determined lack of written communication – the images of the *Encyclopédie* articulate their ideas only through their art, unencumbered by any form of secondary captioning or explanation, because as the plates prove, such interpretation is redundant, as a good image 'speaks' for itself. Compare this with the frontispiece, whose failures – beyond those aesthetic clichés of its platform of clouds, radiant sunbeams emanating from the heavens and nubile divinities – are reducible to the fact that it is completely meaningless without an incredibly wordy explanation.

No doubt impelled by the same contradictions and failures, other commentators have been even more damning, not least Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, the famous nineteenth-century writers, critics and arbiters of taste, who discuss Cochin's engraving in their review of the art and artists of the previous century (*L'Art au XVIIIe siècle*, 1882), before concluding that the work can only really be understood in terms of bad poetry, a kind of idiotic game of charades or any other form of – what they term – 'childish amusement'.[33] Here, then, we come back again to Jean-Louis Pascal, and to bad images being inferior because they are comprehensible only to children; whereas in all of its images bar its lamentable frontispiece, the *Encyclopédie* shows that good images can be read by more

the practise of translating ideas into plastic forms according to a determined code strikes many of us today as based on an absurdly exaggerated notion of the intellectual solidity of artists and writers. Even though it still appears advisable for the student of a given discipline to look beyond the conventional boundaries surrounding it, it is therefore equally advisable for the practitioner to remember that there are substantial differences between the various forms of expression, and that amateurship is not without its dangers. Mindful of this maxim, the author of the present essay, experiencing some uneasiness at having trespassed onto the field of art criticism, feels understandably eager to bring this foray to a quick termination.' Georges May, op cit, p 174.

34. 'Frontispiece', definition and etymology supplied by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

35. Joscelyn Godwin, chapter 2, 'Frontispieces', in *Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World: His Life, Work and the Search for Universal Knowledge* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2009), p 23.

36. Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbrown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Titlepage in England, 1550–1660* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p 9. Corbett and Lightbrown's study remains the definitive work on the frontispiece (it is also the reference for Samuel Pepys' fascination for the form, p 2), but there are a handful of other essays, chapters and studies of the frontispiece that (in chronological order) include A W Pollard, *Last Word on the History of the Title-page with Notes on Some Colophons and Twenty-seven Facsimiles of Title-Pages* (London: J C Nimmo, 1891); Alfred Forbes Johnson, *A Catalogue of Italian Engraved Title-Pages in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936); Georges May, op cit; Hans Böker and Peter Daly (eds), *The Emblem and Architecture: Studies in Applied Emblematics from the Sixteenth Century to the Eighteenth Century* (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1999); Margaret Smith, *The Title-Page: Its Early Development 1460–1510* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000); Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London: Routledge, 2000); Stephen Orgel, 'Textual Icons: Reading Early Modern Illustrations', and Nonna Crook and Neil Rhodes, 'The Daughters of Memory: Thomas Heywood's *Gunaikeion* and the Female Computer', in Neil Rhodes and Jonathan Sawday (eds), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London: Routledge, 2000); Joscelyn Godwin, op cit. The complete opening of Pindar's sixth Olympian ode reads: 'On golden pillars raising the fair-walled porch of our abode, we shall build, as it were, a splendid hall; even so, o'er our work's beginning we needs must set a front that shines afar. Now, if any one were a victor at Olympia, and were minister unto the prophetic altar of Zeus in Pisa,

mature readers, whose enlightenment is not dependent on any ray of light descending from its upper margins.

And yet as bad as this particular image remains, its form is still very interesting, and in many ways the most appropriate of image types for any publication, and certainly for the *Encyclopédie*, whose singular ambition (as articulated by Diderot) could very easily be repeated to also define that of the frontispiece: 'a single art about which one would want to represent everything and say everything'. A frontispiece, in this sense, is a rather unusual kind of image because it is not garrulous or social; it does not rely or encourage the adjacency of other images. In fact, a frontispiece is thoroughly solipsistic – it actually prefers to carry all of the responsibility of visually representing a book by itself. Of course, a more precise dictionary definition reveals a shared terrain between the world of publishing and the world of building, because its etymology (from the Latin *frontispicium*, or *frons* meaning 'front' and *specere* 'to look') has since the sixteenth century applied itself equally to 'the principal, often decorated, face of a building' and 'an illustration facing the title page of a book'.[34] A frontispiece, then, is not just the best, even the most natural kind of architectural image, but the *only* image required by a publication, especially if that publication deals with architecture.

More pragmatically, as Joscelyn Godwin writes in her study of the decorative titles of the seventeenth-century German polymath Athanasius Kircher (and in a further echo to Pascal), 'a frontispiece is a symbolic engraving that appears on the verso (or left-hand) page of a given book, while facing it on the right is the title page, set in type alone except for the printer's own insignia. There are variations, such as putting both frontispiece and title on the recto (or right-hand) page, but the commonest usage is to address eye and mind in a single spread: the image on the left, the words on the right. Together they give the reader an epitome of the work to come.'[35]

For something quite so responsible, however, so essential and also so ceremonial, there has been really very little sustained investigation into the frontispiece – a relative invisibility that is surprising, if only because of the accessibility of the type. And so even if the celebrated diarist Samuel Pepys was enthralled by frontispieces, carefully removing his favourite models from their respective books and mounting them as their own singular taxonomy, very few authors have engaged in the same thing, surveying or even simply collecting the best of its exemplars. Of course, there is a huge amount of more general literature on emblems and symbols and suggestive allegories, especially through their use in architectural imagery (which extends as far back as the mid seventeenth century and Filippo Picinelli's encyclopedia of emblems, *Mondo simbolico*), but in terms of the frontispiece there is essentially only one dedicated book, Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbrown's *The Comely Frontispiece* (1979), which takes its title from an epigram of verse in John Guillim's popular *A Display of Heraldrie* (1610) –

> *The noble Pindare doth compare somewhere*
> *Writing with Building, and instructs us there*
> *That every great and goodly Edifice*
> *Doth aske to have a comely Frontispiece*

– which itself references the lyric poet Pindar's sixth Olympian ode, whose opening equates writing to building, comparing the power of great poetry to a magnificent arched porch.[36] This, of course, complicates the apparently easy dichotomy preached by Victor Hugo, because through its frontispiece, the book actually *becomes* a building (and so it is not death that he should be fearing, but appropriation).

Much of Corbett and Lightbrown's study (like almost all others that have followed in its wake) sees its duty to the frontispiece as one largely of decryption, a somewhat limited mandate that means the majority of its prose is taken up
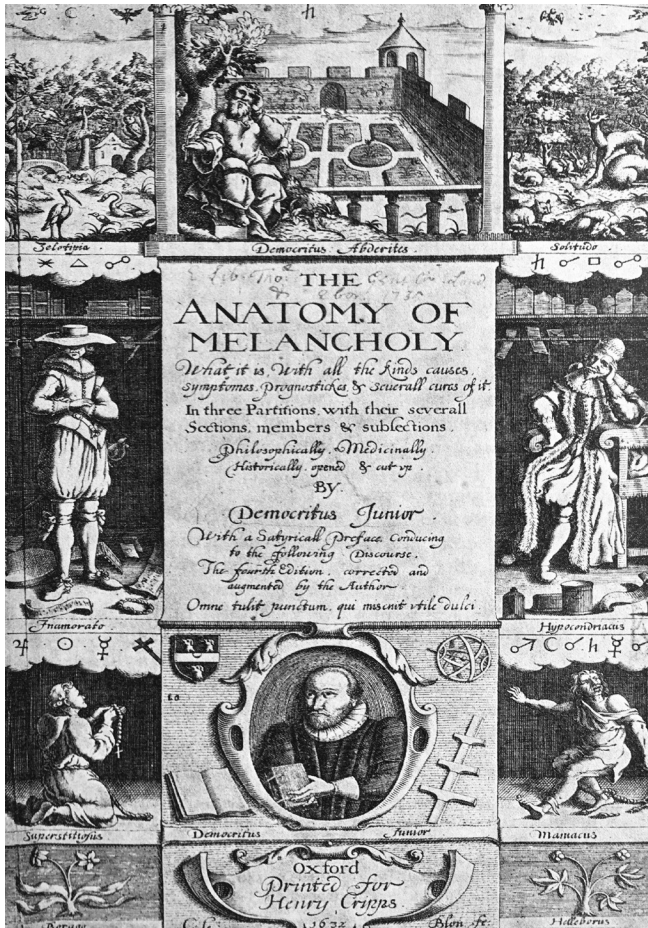
Clockwise, from top left: frontispieces to Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1638; Athanasius Kircher, *Arca Noë*, 1675; James I, *Workes*, 1616; Filippo Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 1635

Abraham Bosse, frontispiece
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1668

with meticulously decoding any number of figures, symbols and assorted emblems, as if the frontispiece is not so much an image as a detective story just waiting to be solved. And yet implicit within this duty is a still earlier variant on that same nineteenth-century idea that good images are not seen but read or unravelled – an idea that, with a certain kind of irony, can be seen to be hiding in plain sight, because in one of the earliest English frontispieces, the title-page to John Dee's *General and Rare Memorials* (1577), the author decorates its first page around the Latin inscription '*Plura latent quam patent*' ('More things are hidden than are revealed'), which could easily be taken as a kind of anthem to both the frontispiece and the good image.

Elsewhere in Corbett and Lightbrown's book, however, they do supply more useful art historical details, among them a historical frame – that the frontispiece emerged first in the late fifteenth century, found its highpoint in the seventeenth century, after which its use became far less widespread. They also delineate four essential types of frontispiece: the title-page divided into geometrical compartments (exemplified by the opening image in the theologian Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1638); the title-page composed of a single overall design (like Athanasius Kircher's frontispiece to his own *Arca Noë*, 1675, or indeed like Charles-Nicolas Cochin's seraphic cloudscape in the *Encyclopédie*, 1772); the title-page whose most dominant image is a cartouche (for example, the self-portrait set inside an ornate frame that Filippo Picinelli used for his own *Mondo simbolico*, 1635); and lastly the architectural title-page (easily the most popular type, and which includes the somewhat staid neoclassical frame in John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie*, 1610, and the more exuberant alcove depicted in James I's *Workes*, 1616). Like any kind of architectural order there are also composites, synthesising different types, which would include perhaps the most famous frontispiece of all – Abraham Bosse's engraving for the Latin version of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1668), the upper half of which depicts a scenographic image dominated by a giant clutching a sword in one hand and a crosier in the other, whose divergent, symbolic associations are pursued in more itemised detail in a grid of elements below.[37] Of course, such a division between the pictorial and the elemental mimics exactly that of the engraved plates in the *Encyclopédie*, which would seem to confirm what we suspected all along – that the work is in fact not represented best by a single image at its front, but by its 11 volumes of images and by 3,000 consecutive frontispieces in a row.

But if the *Encyclopédie* is unwittingly guardian to the greatest density of frontispieces, the greatest architectural exemplars of this definitively architectural type of image can be found, appropriately enough, in any number of Renaissance architectural treatises. In his own treatise, *I sette libri dell'architettura* (*The Seven Books of Architecture*, 1537), the Italian architect Sebastiano Serlio writes that 'the recess may be used by the learned workman for diverse things, and may be altered according to the accident that shall happen: it will also serve for a painter to beautify an altar (as men at this day do in Italy); it may also serve as a triumphal arch, if you take away the basement in the middle. Likewise, you may beautify a gate withal, leaving out the wings on the sides; sometimes for setting forth a window, a niche, a tabernacle or such like things.'[38] Among these 'things' was its use to both introduce and symbolically represent the book itself, because the first image in these first architectural publications was always a classical arch or recess. Pioneer of this model is the frontispiece to Gianbattista Caporali's Italian edition of Vitruvius' *De architettura* (1536), swiftly followed by other similarly styled openings to Serlio's own *Terzo Libro* (1540), Vasari's design for the Bartoli edition of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (1550), Labacco's *Libro appartenente a l'architettura* (1558), Vignola's *Regola delli cinque ordini d'architettura* (1562), Palladio's *Quattro Libri* (1570) and Scamozzi's *L'Idea dell'Architettura Universale* (1615) – essentialist works of architectural thinking that have historically been analysed to the point where any vagary of nuanced

and were a fellow-founder of famous Syracuse, what strains of praise would such a man fail to win, by finding fellow citizens who are ungrudging in delightful song?' From *The Odes of Pindar*, translated by John Sandys (London: William Heinemann, 1915), p 55.

37. For an excellent reading of the *Leviathan*, and especially its frontispiece, see Simon Schama, chapter 3, 'Looking for Leviathan', in his *A History of Britain: The British Wars, 1603–1776* (London: BBC Books, 2003), pp 141–200, which was originally produced as a series of BBC television documentaries, and which as a result includes a parallel set of DVDs and a highly visual and filmic account of Schama analysing the image.

38. Sebastiano Serlio, *Seven Books of Architecture* (London: Robert Peake, 1611), book IV, folio 24.

REGINA VIRTVS

I QVATTRO LIBRI
DELL'ARCHITETTVRA
Di Andrea Palladio.

Ne' quali, dopo un breue trattato de' cinque
ordini, & di quelli auertimenti, che sono
piu necessarij nel fabricare;
SI TRATTA DELLE CASE PRIVATE,
delle Vie, de i Ponti, delle Piazze, de i Xisti, et de' Tempij.
CON PRIVILEGI.

IN VENETIA,
Appresso Dominico de'
Franceschi.
1570.

Frontispiece, Andrea Palladio, *Quattro Libri*, 1570

Frontispiece, Sebastiano Serlio, *Terzo Libro*, 1540

39. The best and to a certain extent only dedicated academic work on the Renaissance architectural frontispiece is by the Australian scholar Desley Luscombe, whose 2004 PhD dissertation for the University of New South Wales, 'Inscribing the Architect: The Depiction of the Attributes of the Architect in Frontispieces to Sixteenth-Century Italian Architectural Treatises', focused on its various incarnations. She has also published two shorter pieces on the topic: Desley Luscombe and Jeffrey Mueller, 'Architecture and the Narrative Dimension of Two Alberti Frontispieces of the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Christy Anderson (ed), *The Built Surface, vol 1: Architecture and the Pictorial Arts from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp 180–202; and Desley Luscombe, 'The Architect and the Representation of Architecture: Sebastiano Serlio's Frontispiece to *Il terzo libro*', *Architectural Theory Review*, no 10, issue 2, 2005, pp 34–53. I am very appreciative of Desley's advice on the writing of this chapter. Other academic studies that include discussions on the Renaissance architectural frontispiece include: James Ackerman, *The Reinvention of Architectural Drawing 1250–1550: The Annual Soane Lecture* (London: The Sir John Soane's Museum, 1998); Margaret D'Evelyn, 'Word and Image in Architectural Treatises of the Italian Renaissance', PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1994; and Alina Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament and Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

40. Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism: A Study in the History of Taste* (Boston, MA: Houhgton Mifflin Co, 1914), p 37.

41. Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbrown, op cit, p 5.

42. The English frontispiece was produced by the engraver Samuel Wale, later one of the original members of the Society of Artists of Great Britain and the first professor of perspective at the Royal Academy. See Marc-Antoine Laugier, *An Essay on Architecture; in which its true principles are explained and invariable rules proposed for directing the judgment and forming the taste of the gentleman and the architect, with regard to the different kinds of buildings, the embellishment of cities and the planning of gardens* (London: Osborne and Shipton, 1755).

43. Arthur Hind, *A History of Engraving and Etching: From the Fifteenth Century to the Year 1914*, 1923 (London: Dover Press, 2003), p 215.

differentiation is thoroughly exposed, and yet not, it seems, through the common denominator that unites them: their frontispieces.[39]

In the introduction to the second chapter ('The Romantic Fallacy') of his *The Architecture of Humanism* (1914), Geoffrey Scott writes that 'The Renaissance produced no theory of architecture. It produced treatises on architecture: Fra Giocondo, Alberti, Palladio, Serlio and many others not only built but wrote. But the style they built in was too alive to admit of analysis, too popular to require defence. They give us rules, but not principles. They had no need of theory, for they addressed themselves to taste. Periods of vigorous production, absorbed in the practical and the particular, do not encourage universal thought.'[40] And yet the frontispiece challenges this assertion, for it seeks to communicate not through rules but through interpretations – that is, through theory – symbolically representing the ideas conveyed in the book as a whole. A frontispiece in this sense is the most writerly, literate and articulate kind of image. Or rather, the most visual kind of sentence. It is therefore no accident that it became a favourite trope among these neoclassical treatises on architecture, which typically aspired to be as lucid in image as in word, and which (given the endemic failures of their actual prose) in many ways offer the best pieces of writing, the best sentences, in all of these books. Moreover, as Corbett and Lightbrown argue, these architectural frontispieces are manifestly 'not architectural drawings: rather, they are fanciful, even fantastic *essays* on architectural themes'.[41] Through its frontispieces, then, the architectural image has been allowed to take on the properties of the best kind of architectural word.

Symbolic of this surrogacy is yet another frontispiece, and perhaps the most famous architectural image of all – the primitive hut, from the second, 1755, edition of Marc-Antoine (Abbé) Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture*, which for more two centuries has been offered up as the first and defining architectural image. But in some ways more interesting is the less well-known frontispiece to the English translation of the same book, which was also published in 1755, and which shows a far sturdier, rather more advanced primitive hut. It also abandons the Latin whimsy of naked cherubs and ruinous bits of classical architecture as if the English, perhaps rightly, can only comprehend architecture in terms of the hard graft of construction.[42]

And yet, of course, it is the French version that has long succeeded in giving an identity to both architecture and to its commitment to theory, even if this success masks other failures. Foremost among these is the anonymity of its author, Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, who was a member of that large, itinerant class of illustrators and engravers whose lives always appeared to navigate precariously between the decadence of the royal court and the impoverishment and destitution of their living conditions. Eisen is credited as the man behind the image of the primitive hut, but in terms of art or architectural historical exposure, an authorial caption seems to be the extent of his acknowledgment. When he is mentioned more fully (which is very rarely), the nature of the eighteenth-century illustrator's life (always working through mimicry or allusion to some other more masterful artist), means that he is described only through his subservience to another figure – for instance, like the single line he gets in Arthur Hind's 500-page survey, *A History of Engraving and Etching: From the Fifteenth Century to the Year 1914* (1923): 'Charles Eisen's plates prove him an impertinent [François] Boucher, dallying, like so many of the French illustrators of the time, on the borderline of delicacy, but a graceful artist nevertheless'.[43]

For someone responsible for so ubiquitous an image, the degree to which Eisen is consistently ignored is actually rather startling. He is even missing entirely from the most famous architectural study of the primitive hut, Joseph Rykwert's *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History* (1972) – an absence that Rykwert rather casually excuses in his first

Frontispieces to the French (*above*) and English (*below*) editions of Marc-Antoine (Abbé) Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture*, 1755

chapter with the claim that 'it is a notion which I wish to stalk, and not a thing', as if authorship or indeed a life is the preserve only of the latter and not the former.[44] In fact, there has only ever been one dedicated profile of Eisen's work, a little known and decidedly antiquated study – Vera Salomons, *Charles Eisen, Eighteenth Century French Book Illustrator and Engraver* (1914) – published in the early twentieth century, written in the late nineteenth and adopting a prose style closer to the eighteenth century: 'The story of Charles Eisen's life', writes Salomons, 'is the sad tale of a man who had the opportunities for doing great things and did not take them, nay, who rejected Fortune's offer.'[45] The fortune here were the skills passed down to Eisen from his father François, also an engraver of some standing, and the even greater advantage of finding himself, for a brief period, as drawing teacher to Madame de Pompadour. The misfortune, Salomons again recounts, was the very grave error he made, after being invited to design a costume for Louis XV, of attending the same function in an identical costume he made for himself, and which, perhaps predictably, effected his immediate strong-armed removal from the royal court. While the more wilful rejection of 'Fortune's offer' can only be ascribed to Eisen's character: 'Charles Eisen's unfortunate habits, living a disgraceful life, squandering all of his means on selfish pleasures and on extravagant and licentious behaviour, were his bitterest enemies, they even caused his death at the age of 58, when other men possess full vigour'.[46] But perhaps the greatest failings were not personal but artistic, and that, for all of the attention lavished on his primitive hut, the image remains a rather saccharine piece of eighteenth-century kitsch; or in Diderot's terms, yet another tree 'more clever than solid'. But perhaps part of the responsibility for its overly laboured, almost rococo style lies with Charles-Nicolas Cochin, just five years Eisen's senior, and a close friend and inspiration during both his student days in Paris and the period in which they enjoyed the patronage of Madame de Pompadour. If only Eisen had instead come under the more 'enlightened' influence of Diderot's loyal illustrator Louis-Jacques Goussier, just two years Eisen's junior and another member of his Parisian circle, and the primitive hut – and with it, architectural theory – might have had a more appropriate emblem, and looked a lot less primitive.

But whether cast as advanced or antiquated, vulgar or refined, illuminated or enshrouded, as a success or a failure, the frontispiece of Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* remains true to its etymology, for in synthesising 'front' and 'to look' this is indeed an architectural facade through which we see both a thing and a notion, thus undermining Rykwert's commitment to their separation, just as their simultaneity also conveys an encyclopedism, an everythingness or – in Scott's terms – a 'universal kind of thought' that is the very definition of theory. The image, in this sense, carries all the theory one might need. And yet, such willingness remains somehow unappreciated, for the frontispiece continues to be read only as an encrypted emblem that needs to decoded. Or worse, it becomes the prompt for a kind of tautologous theory of theory. For example, according to French literary critic Gérard Genette, the frontispiece should be grouped alongside title pages, epigraphs, colophons, dedications, prefaces, publisher's logos and intertitles as liminal devices or 'paratexts' through which one can construct a new form of literary theory. Genette published this work in 1987 as *Seuils*, a nod to his earlier publisher, Éditions du Seuil, and a word whose translation ('threshold') captured the architectural appeal of his subject: 'the paratext is neither on the interior nor on the exterior: it is both … more than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or, a word Jorge Luis Borges used apropos a preface, a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back' – an allusion he returned to more playfully at the end of his book's introduction, admonishing himself for not getting on with it, 'no more dawdling on the threshold of the threshold'.[47]

44. Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*, 1972 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p 14.
45. Vera Salomons, *Charles Eisen, Eighteenth Century French Book Illustrator and Engraver: An Annotated Bibliography of the Best Known Books Illustrated by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, 1720–1778, with Descriptions of the Plates and an Index, Preceded by a Sketch of his Life and Art*, 1914 (Amsterdam: G W Hissink & Co, 1972), p 18.
46. Ibid, pp 17–21.
47. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, translated by Jane E Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p 15. The earlier passage ('neither on the interior nor on the exterior') is quoted by Richard Macksey in his foreword to the English edition, ibid, p XVII.

However, the real problem occurred when his book was translated into English, not as one might have expected as *Thresholds*, but as *Paratexts* (1997), the idiom used to represent the whole, and a word that continues to be adopted to describe, or better still, to theorise, the images at the front of books.[48] And it is a problem also because this succession devolves out of the ensuing theory all of the architecture – the essential notion of frontage and representation, or of entering or occupying the realms of image and text, object and idea. And so instead of the neat symbiosis of the frontispiece (an arch that is both actual and rhetorical), one encounters instead a paratext – something that by definition is no longer up front but alongside (*para* meaning 'beside' or 'next to'). In the process, this parallelism also plays to the very worst aspects of contemporary theory, because the paratext suggests that a choice can now be made between one object over another (the object of theory over the object of architecture), rather than an older frontispiece model which allowed both to co-exist – one passes through one in order to get to the other.

A far more compelling theoretical speculation on the image can be found in an essay by the leader of that group of French critics around which Genette circulated: Roland Barthes' 'The Plates of the *Encyclopédie'* (1964), which both celebrates and investigates the plates as if they were a frontispiece – that is, as if they were representative of the whole. Unlike Genette's text, which preaches parallelism and a commitment to *either/or*, one of the interesting paradoxes of Barthes' investigation is that even if he recognises the structural separation of image and text in Diderot and d'Alembert's plates, he also acknowledges the importance of homogeneity, and for the ability of each to operate through the properties of the other (that is, he appeals to the notion of *both*). As Barthes writes, 'it is the *Encyclopédie*'s wager (in its plates) to be both a didactic work, based consequently on a severe demand for objectivity (for "reality"), and a poetic work in which the real is constantly overcome by *some other thing* (the *other* is the sign of all mysteries)'.[49]

For Barthes (like Pascal or even Serlio before him), the other for the image is essentially the text, or as he writes more anthemically in his autobiography, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), 'the image always has the last word'.[50] Moreover, Barthes appreciates what so many self-anointed theorists who have succeeded him have not, and that pure image or pure text still relies on the necessity of the object, and which – alongside César Daly's plea for a journal to be 'simultaneously less, but for some, more than' a treatise, and Denis Diderot's faith in a 'single art which represents everything and says everything' – completes a trilogy of editorial instructions for the use of images, each just as essential as the other:

> Our literature has taken a long time to discover the object… Long before literature, the Encyclopédie*, particularly in its plates, practices what we might call a certain philosophy of the object, ie, it reflects on its being, producing at once an inventory and a definition; technological purpose no doubt compelled the description of objects. But by separating image from text, the* Encyclopédie *committed itself to an autonomous iconography of the object, whose power we enjoy today since we no longer look at these illustrations with mere information in mind.*[51]

In light of more recent architectural publishing, this plea seems so essential because an opposing tradition appears to have been in effect – that it has taken a relatively short period of time to *forget* the object, and that in so much theoretical architectural speculation now, whether illustrated or not, it is very difficult to find the physicality of the architecture, with authors typically following Genette's parallel path of concept and ideology, or aping Rykwert in somehow allowing a concentration on notions to eclipse the necessity of the thing. Such a situation

48. See, for example, William H Sherman, 'On the Threshold: Architecture, Paratext and Early Modern Print Culture', in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N Lindquist and Eleanor F Shevlin (eds), *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L Eisenstein* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp 67–81; Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (eds), *Renaissance Paratexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Laura Jansen (ed), *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Text, Readers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Helen Smith, 'Paratexts', in Mari Hvattum and Anne Hultzsch (eds), *The Printed and the Built: Architecture, Print Culture and Public Debate in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp 251–57.
49. Roland Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopédie*', op cit, p 37. Italics in the original.
50. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, 1975, translated by Richard Howard (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1977), p 69.
51. Roland Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopédie*', op cit, p 23.

Antonello da Messina, *St Jerome in his Study*, 1475, National Gallery, London

52. Roland Barthes, 'The Plates of the *Encyclopédie*', op cit, p 28.

53. This essay was originally written in 1990 in a booklet titled 'St Jerome: The Desert, the Study' – whose front cover featured a reproduction of Rembrandt's painting *St Jerome Beside a Pollard Willow* (1648) and rear cover Antonello da Messina's *St Jerome in his Study* (1675) – and produced for distribution from the TECTA stand at the Milan Triennale, April 1991. The text itself was based on a lecture delivered by Alison Smithson in Barcelona in 1985 and in Stockholm in 1986, and was later posthumously published in Dirk van den Heuvel and Max Risselada (eds), *Alison and Peter Smithson: From the House of the Future to the House of Today* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2004), pp 224–29.

54. See Jonathan Hill, 'Jerome-ing', in 'Ambiguous Objects: Modernism, Brutalism and the Politics of the Picturesque', in Mark Swenarton, Igea Troiani and Helena Webster, *The Politics of Making* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp 190–91.

might call for another Jean-Louis Pascal-like admonishment, more than a century after the original, and which ironically might appeal to a greater infantilism, if only because the impulse to casually flick through images could actually help architectural discourse recover the perceptiveness of its eye and the erudition of its voice. Among these images could even be a new frontispiece, and which like any good frontispiece could simultaneously carry both notion and thing.

But what could this frontispiece be? In the spirit of this history in reverse, the solution might be to find representation not in some contemporary single architectural form or amalgam, but to continue to go backwards. In the process one might consider an early twentieth-century photograph of Roland Barthes' beloved Eiffel Tower; or a nineteenth-century steel-plate engraved cross-section of the Bibliothèque St Geneviève in the *Revue générale de l'architecture*; or the simultaneous vignette and detail of Louis-Jacques Goussier's eighteenth-century paper factory in the *Encyclopédie*; or further back still, one might potentially even nominate Athanasius Kircher's seventeenth-century image of everything, and his hugely compelling perspectival cutaway of the inside of Noah's Ark; or any of those inviting arches and portals from the sixteenth-century architectural treatise. But ultimately, after dismissing these possibilities, an even better image can be found in room 62 of the National Gallery in London, in that section of the galleries dedicated to the art of the Late Middle Ages. Here, alongside the anonymous *Wilton Diptych* and other works by Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca is Antonello da Messina's painting, *St Jerome in his Study* (1475), which might just convey all the associations that are required.

The first-century theologian St Jerome was famous for two things: for translating the Hebrew bible into Latin (a volume more typically referred to as the *Vulgate* – that is, the 'common', because it communicated in the established language of the Roman Catholic church, and remained the definitive biblical text until as late as 1979), and for the allegorical story of him taming a lion by taking a thorn out of its paw. As a result, in paintings of St Jerome – and there are lots of them – he is always depicted surrounded by books, lost in translation, and also with a very friendly and grateful lion nearby. The painting in this sense is structured around a literary project and around the importance of affection (for books, for communication and accessibility, and for lions).

It is also an image that offers such an appealing visual advert for architecture – both in terms of the medievalism of its vaulted church and colonnade and the unabashed modernity of the plywood-like construction of St Jerome's study, an interior architecture floating within an enveloping exterior architecture – and for the way space can be best occupied (pre-empting Barthes' comments on the plates of the *Encyclopédie* in presenting an interior that is both 'intensely human' and suggestive of 'a world without fear').[52] Other architects have already spotted this appropriateness, not least Alison Smithson, who frequently used images of St Jerome in her lectures, and who elaborated on their appeal in the essay 'Saint Jerome, The Desert … the Study' (1990) in which she argued that the three settings for St Jerome's painterly depiction (the desert, the study and the cave) represent the three most desirable states of inhabitation (in harmony with nature, with work and with the self).[53] Her loyalty to the image even saw her introduce a new word into architecture's lexicon, describing the life she lived with her husband Peter at their Upper Lawn Pavilion as simply 'Jerome-ing' around.[54]

But what has never been highlighted is that Antonello's painting can also be used to offer a very appealing demonstration of writing (the image's 'other', in Barthes' term). In his book, *Espèces d'espaces* (*Species of Spaces*, 1974) the French novelist Georges Perec writes about *St Jerome in his Study*, but with the constraint that he could only write through description – that is, he writes in the form usually bestowed upon the image, which in turns allows for a further role-reversal, meaning that if texts now see their mandate as describing, the image in contrast can revel in a reciprocal ability to analyse, interpret or theorise.

Albrecht Dürer, *St Jerome in his Study*, 1514
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg as St Jerome in his Study*, 1525
Hessiches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

Antonio da Fabriano,
St Jerome in his Study, 1451
Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Previous: Hendrik van Steenwijk,
St Jerome on his Study, 1630
Courtesy Sotheby's

Stephan Lochner,
St Jerome in his Study, 1435
North Carolina Museum of Art

The whole space is organised around the piece of furniture (and the whole of the piece of furniture is organised around the book). The glacial architecture of the church (the bareness of the tiling, the hostility of the piers) has been cancelled out. Its perspectives and its vertical lines have ceased to delimit the site simply of an ineffable faith; they are there solely to lend scale to the piece of furniture, to enable it to be inscribed. *Surrounded by the uninhabitable, the study defines a domesticated space inhabited with serenity by cats, books and men.*[55]

Prompted by Perec, then, as much as by his countrymen Barthes, Diderot, Goussier and Daly, Antonello's *St Jerome* could be used as a touchstone for an approach to images that carefully and yet effectively navigates between those divisions that we now appreciate as defining their use. For instance, in the graphic elucidation of that realm that maintains the strength of separating image from text – the pictorial from the wordy – while at the same time being sensitive to those moments when a greater integration or synthesis is required; or to recognising when images can be allowed to revel in their immediacy (or as Jean-Louis Pascal would have it, in their childishness), as opposed to those other occasions when an image has the potential to speak more resonantly to the brain more than the eye and to a more associative or cerebral set of registers; or the competing tensions of whether an image is best employed as a singular whole or as a serial array of parts, and its corollary dichotomies, between the representational (ie, the perspectival or sometimes even the cartoonish) and the abstract (the plan); the literal and the allegorical; the amateur (or the building) and the professional (or the architecture); or even between the rarefied or canonic and the common or vulgar.

But at the same time, aspirational editors could feel liberated by the fact that although this is such a compelling model of image-making, it is not the only one, just as there are in fact lots of versions of paintings of St Jerome in his study on which to draw upon, all them unified only by their architecture, their occupant, their books and suggestive objects and by their lions. These could include various works in various disparate styles, from the Late Middle Ages to the early baroque, by painters like Stefan Lochner, Antonio da Fabriano, Vincenzo Catena, Hendrik van Steenwijk, Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach the Elder, all of them frontispieces to an architecture of books and buildings – the two-dimensional world of the page, and the three-dimensional world of the room – just as they all also assuage any fears Victor Hugo might have had in their mutual embrace and protection of the other.

Patron to this could be yet another St Jerome – *Saints Jerome and John the Baptist* (1428)[56] – an even earlier version, this time painted by the Florentine artist Masaccio, who dispenses with St Jerome's study altogether, and instead depicts the saint, alongside John the Baptist, proudly carrying the two things that define him – the book in his right hand, and the building in his left – and whose harmonious co-existence the friendly lion seems to be looking up towards approvingly.

55. Georges Perec, 'Space: St Jerome in his Study', from Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, 1974, translated by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1997), pp 86–87, quote p 87. Italics in the original.
56. This painting was originally part of a double-sided triptych in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, completed by Masaccio's student Masolino after his teacher's premature death aged just 27, and now also sits within the collection of the National Gallery, London.
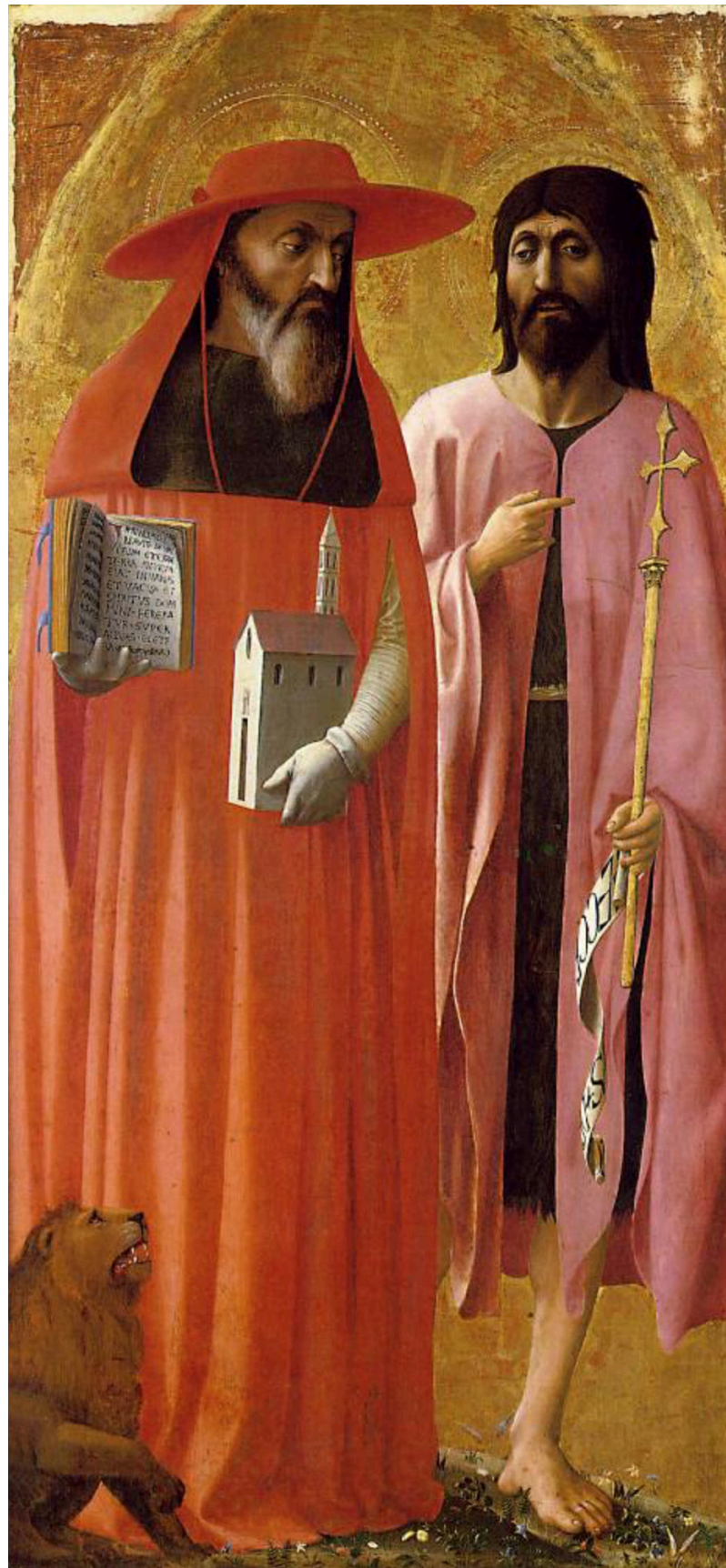
Masaccio, *Saints Jerome and John the Baptist*, 1428,
altarpiece, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome
National Gallery, London

Part Four
The Architect
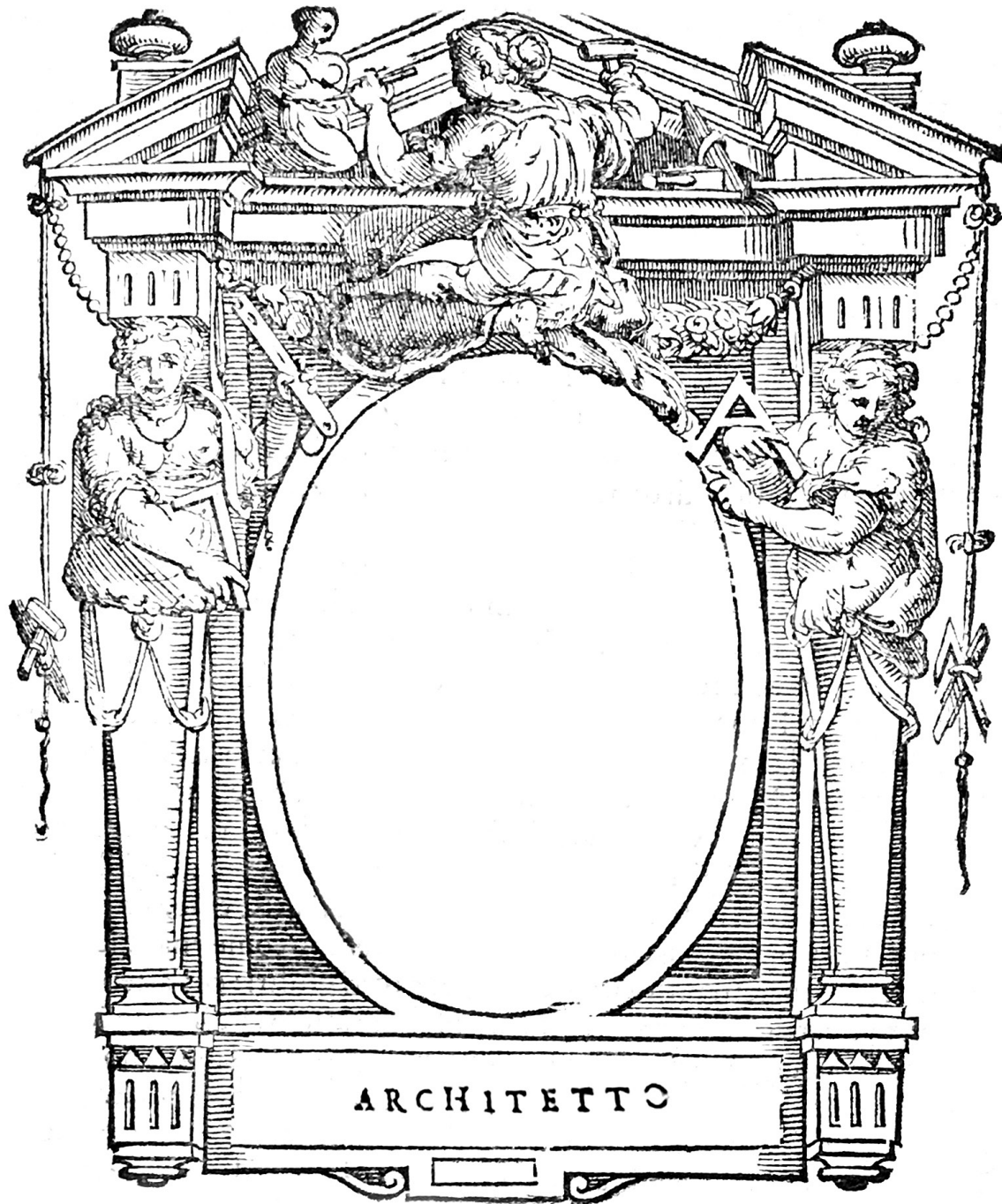
An adapted 'Architetto' blank panel from the second, expanded edition of
Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*, 1568

Despite certain endemic failures and fatalisms, the history of the relationship between architecture and its books, texts and images, as we have seen in part two, is of architects tending to write and publish as much as they build. As a result, the book and the journal has become an architectural object (or in the architect's preferred nomenclature, a *project*) just as valid and just as vital as any building. Indeed, if you were to pile up all of the evidences of this often somewhat desperate desire to publish into one vast, soaring but incredibly precarious stack – from all of the various editions of *De architectura* at the very bottom, to the double volumes of *The Autopoiesis of Architecture* at the very top (that is, from the sublime to the ridiculous), and everything else in between – you would find yourself confronted by a tower of Babel-like proportions.[1] If you then undertook the equally biblical task of reading all of these works you would by the end find yourself equipped with the skills necessary to make a Roman catapult *à la* Vitruvius, and bake an apple cake with calvados cream using architect John Pawson's (actually surprisingly good) book of recipes.[2] Of course, in between catapult and cake you would know the details of every single architectural project, every unjustly failed competition entry and every built success. You would also be in command of two millennia of architectural history, every shifting style and movement, every vision of the future, every essential touchstone of the past, as well as every vernacular, every medievalism, every gothicism, every classicism, every modernism. And you would be able to quote every rule and principle, every spurious theorem, every bombastic, visionary prophecy, every 'a house is a machine for living in' and every 'Manhattan is the twentieth century's Rosetta Stone', because the overwhelming majority of this tower of books takes the form of either a monograph or a manifesto.[3] Nevertheless, even if limited to the vehicles through which architects consider the world, having devoured such a tower you could argue that you now know *everything*.[4]

Somewhat peculiarly, however, after such an exhaustive reading assignment, you would still not have any really significant insight into the lives of these architects, for one of architecture's enduring oddities is that the entirety of its bibliography features very little biography. This realisation is cloaked by the fact that to survey a large architectural library (either vertically, like such a tower, or more realistically horizontally, across a series of bookshelves) is to be confronted by the spines of various books all identified only by a name – not merely that of the architect–author, but also that of the architect–subject. Yet in spite of this abundance of appellations, upon opening these volumes it soon becomes obvious that in architecture a name is not a passport to the understanding of a life, but rather is key only to the presentation of a body of work or ideas, since most architects of the last 2,000 years have been confidently telling us about everything except themselves.

This omission is difficult to explain, not least because the first-ever architectural book – the treatise or better still rulebook that is the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Polio's *De architectura* (*The Ten Books on Architecture*) – emerged in 30BC, just a decade after the first-ever dedicated biography – the Roman biographer Cornelius Nepos' *Excellentium Imperatorum Vitae* (*Lives of the Most Excellent Generals*), written in 44BC. As types born out of the same historical moment, both books begin with dedications to the same reader, Imperator Caesar Augustus, and both in effect follow the same structure, promoting a series of exemplary models through which one can better understand or even operate within a given profession. Nepos' study is in fact his only surviving work, but is reputed to have been just one volume within a much larger anthology,

1. Vitruvius, *De architectura* (30–15BC); Patrik Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture: A New Framework for Architecture*, vol I (2010), *A New Agenda for Architecture*, vol II (2012) – the first could be construed, superficially, as a techical manual for the construction of building defensive fortifications, but which on closer reading elucidated a theory and practice for the entire discipline of architecture; while the second inverted this paradigm, becuase it superficially celebrated its relevance as a manual for the complete reinvention of architectural form, but after further inspection proved itself to be an opaque, overlong and very limited homily to a style on non-orthogonal or so-called 'parametric' architecture.

2. John Pawson and Annie Bell, *Living and Eating* (London: Clarkson and Potter, 2001).

3. Le Corbusier, 'a house is a machine for living in', from *Towards a New Architecture*, 1923, translated by Frederick Etchells (London: Butterworth, 1989), p 4; Rem Koolhaas, 'Manhattan is the twentieth century's Rosetta Stone', from *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, 1978 (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1994), p 9.

4. This introductory paragraph adopts a structure and analogy previously used in Thomas Weaver, foreword, to Thomas Daniell, *An Anatomy of Influence* (London: Architectural Association, 2018), pp 6–7.

Frontispiece, Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori,scultori, ed architettori*, 1550

Overleaf: Raphael, *School of Athens*, 1509–11 Apostolic Palace, Vatican City

5. For scholarly accounts of not just Cornelius Nepos but the biographic tradition in antiquity see John Clarke (ed), *Cornelii Nepotis Vitæ excellentium imperatorum: cum versione Anglicâ … or, Cornelius Nepos' Lives of the Excellent Commanders, with an English Translation as Literal as Possible* (London: A Bettesworth & C Hitch, 1734); Arthur W Roberts, *Selected Lives of Cornelius Nepos* (Toronto: George N Morang & Co, 1901); Tomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Rex Stem, *The Political Biographies of Cornelius Nepos* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

6. This fact is revealed by Ingrid D Rowland and Noah Charney in *The Collector of Lives: Giorgio Vasari and the Invention of Art* (New York, NY: Norton & Co, 2017), perhaps the best historical account of Vasari's *Lives.* See especially the chapter 'Renaissance Reading', pp 238–48. A catalogue of all 116 books in Leonardo's library is accessible online at: http://picus.unica.it/documenti/ LdV_biblioteche_dei_filosofi.pdf.

7. Raphael's fresco is located in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican.

Viris Illustribus (*Famous Men*), profiling distinguished figures from assorted professional guises (generals, orators, poets, historians and philosophers). Among these may even have been a volume dedicated to engineers and architects, like Vitruvius' immediate predecessors, the first-century-BC architects Cyrus, Cocceius Auctus and Hermodorus of Salamis, which raises the tantalising, if hypothetical, prospect of the founding block of any architectural library being not an exposition of types and techniques, but of lives.[5]

In the absence of such a book, whether real or imagined, and in the absence, too, of an architectural equivalent to antiquity's successive biographical monuments – notably Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, or more commonly *Parallel Lives* (second century AD) – architecture's bibliography has to wait over 1,500 years, and the next great surge in publishing that backdropped the Italian *quattrocento*, before it could again advertise what the discipline took to be its essential objects and ideas. And it is here, sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with all of those necessary Renaissance treatises by Alberti, Serlio, Vignola and Palladio, that we find the first and, to a large extent, *only* sustained investigation into architectural biography, Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori* (*Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 1550), whose more familiar, abbreviated title explains its focus: *Lives*.

Art and architecture's literary landscape before the arrival of the *Lives* is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that Leonardo da Vinci (a generation older than Vasari) owned just 116 books – a library that at the time was considered really quite substantial.[6] Although larger than most of the collections of his contemporaries, the makeup of its titles would have reflected their own, comprising a significant number of mathematical treatises, alongside the two benchmarks of philosophy – Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* – as well as a smattering of ancient Greek classics, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Aesop's *Fables*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Pliny's *Natural History* (all in translation, because most artists and architects of the *quattrocento* and *cinquecento* were fluent only in the Italian, or rather Tuscan, vernacular), poetry by Ariosto, Petrarch and Dante Alighieri, several editions of the Bible and other theological works by Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, and the only main work of biography, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.

Vasari's significance was essentially to elevate the artists and architects around him into this intellectual pantheon – an older ideal made visual by Raphael's famous fresco, *The School of Athens*, completed in 1511, the year of Vasari's birth, which aggregates all of the greatest thinkers from antiquity (with assorted figures, including Pythagoras, Socrates, Euclid, Archimedes and Ptolemy, depicted standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Plato and Aristotle in the centre of the image) into one paradigmatic collective or faculty.[7] At the same time, Vasari's value was not just to promote the equivalency of Italy's (or more precisely Florence's) own vanguard of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century figures, but to do so around accounts of their lives as the best means to appreciate their works. More famously, the *Lives* championed the idea of rebirth, in the wake of what Vasari took to be the ruination of art following the destruction of ancient Rome, even if the novelty of the form and content of this particular *rinascita* suggests that this was not so much a mimetic or derivative work of retrieval, recovery, renaissance or any other *re*, but an *ur*, standalone or sui generic work of the utmost originality.

The essence of this originality was how the *Lives* broke with the tradition of perceiving artists, architects and sculptors as indistinguishable from other manual workers, and instead presented the very best of them as among the highest members of society – as men-of-letters rather than as just crafts-men. In the process Vasari collapsed the distinction between the high world of the *litterati* (those familiar with Greek and especially Latin) and the lower, populist world of the *illitterati* (those who only knew the vernacular), with the idea that we

8. Giorgio Vasari, 'Preface to the Whole Work', *The Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, translated by Gaston du C de Vere, complete version of the ten-volume 1912 MacMillan & Co edition, produced by the University of Adelaide, accessible online at: https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/v/vasari/giorgio/lives/index.html. In the same preface he embellishes on this dual responsibility, writing of his hope that 'the example of so many able men and all the various details of all kinds collected by my labours in this book will be no little help to practising artists as well as pleasing all those who follow and delight in the arts'. Ibid.

9. The original Pindar line reads: 'Now, stay thine oar, and swiftly let the anchor slip from the prow to grapple with the ground, and guard thy ship against the rocky reef. For the blossom of these hymns of praise flitteth, like a bee, from theme to theme.' From Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*, translated by John Sandys (London: William Heinemann, 1915), Pythian Ode, 10:54.

10. Robert Walter Carden, *The Life of Giorgio Vasari: A Study of the Later Renaissance in Italy* (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1910), p VII. Vasari's most distinguished artistic works were his large frescos representing the history of Florence and the Medici in the city's Palazzo Vecchio, and another set of frescos in the Vatican's Sala Regia for Pope Pius V, while as an architect, in addition to the Palazzo dei Cavalieri in Pisa, he is best known for two Florentine works: the tomb he designed for Michelangelo in Santa Croce, and his remodelling of the city's Uffizi palace.

11. Ibid, pp X, 351.

12. Ibid, p 351.

13. The best of these scholarly studies would include (in addition to Rowland and Charney, and Carden, op cit) George Bull's excellent introduction and commentary in the Penguin edition of the *Lives* – Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, two vols, translated and with an introduction by George Bull (London: Penguin, 1987) – and Andrew Ladis, *Victims and Villains in Vasari's Lives* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

14. The full Beckett line reads: 'There's my life, why not, it is one, if you like, if you must, I don't say no, this evening. There has to be one, it seems, once there is speech, no need of a story, a story is not compulsory, only a life, that's the mistake I made, one of the mistakes, to have wanted a story for myself, whereas life alone is enough.' Samuel Beckett, 'Texts for Nothing', 1955, in Samuel Beckett, *Complete Short Prose, 1929–89* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1995), text 4, p 116; 'Euphonious', from George Bull, introduction, vol I, ibid, p 16. The oral history of the *Lives* involved interviews and conversations with many of the artists around him, a multitude of local informants, and with Vasari's schoolfriend Vincenzo Borghini who, like Vasari, maintained both an attraction and an amazing ability to recall any good story.

should value an artist only by the quality of their work, and not the language through which it has been communicated. Moreover, his anthology was able to merge together multiple, seemingly irrevocable approaches or characteristics, aspiring towards both the practical and the theoretical, the absolute and the anecdotal, the heroic and the everyday, or, as Vasari writes in his preface to the *Lives*, satisfying the dual ambitions of *gioveranno* (instruction) and *diletteranno* (delight).[8] Such an ability to synthesise multiple different forces would see Vasari align himself to the self-description of the ancient Greek poet Pindar, who said that like a bee, he gathered honey from many flowers or, to borrow another simile, that he worked always like an architect, joining multiple elements together into a coherent and appealing whole.[9]

Vasari's actual architecture (for he was practising architect and painter, as well as a biographer) was frankly less accomplished. Even his first biographer, Robert Carden, felt compelled to introduce his biography with the admission that: 'It may be urged by those who are acquainted with the works executed by Giorgio Vasari, both in architecture and in painting, that they are not such as to merit the serious labour involved by an extended biography: and with this view I am in entire agreement.'[10] Warming to his theme, Carden continues:

> *Whatever grandeur his architecture may possess is due to the magnificent scale on which his ducal patron was accustomed to build, rather than to any intrinsic merit on the part of the designer – the Palazzo dei Cavalieri at Pisa being the one exception. His paintings are so inferior that it would be a waste of time to emphasise their demerits… Vasari rendered himself immortal, but not by his skill as an architect and painter. He considered himself to be a consummate artist; he believed himself a worthy successor of Michelangelo and Raphael, and that the popes and princes he served would gain additional lustre from the works he did for them. He was to live among the immortals, he knew that; yet his mistook the source of his immortality.*[11]

Of course, the real source of this immortality was Vasari's literary rather than architectural efforts, without which, Carden notes, 'many a painter and architect would have sunk into oblivion'.[12] But the value of these *Lives*, like the life of its author, also needs to be qualified, for as seemingly every Vasarian scholar points out, Vasari was alarmingly imprecise in his language, and that even if he does introduce into a nascent art historical lexicon the principles of *disegno* (both the ideal and the reality of a drawing or design), *natura* (nature), *grazia* (grace), *decoro* (decorum), *judizio* (judgement) and *maniera* (style or manner), his grasp of theory and philosophy was confused. He also had a tendency to moralise, he maintained an almost complete disinterest in politics (something made more stark given the profoundly political nature of sixteenth-century Florence and its artistic patronage), and he consistently displayed various historiographic shortcomings, being careless with dates, faulty in his attributions and generally muddled in his descriptions of various works, both in their detail and whole.[13]

Yet, for all this, the *Lives* remains utterly indispensable and completely beguiling, principally for Vasari's conviction that we can better understand art and architecture if we understand the lives of the people who created it – lives that cover not just the three defining heroes for each of his three historic sections (Giotto in the fourteenth century, Brunelleschi in the fifteenth and Michelangelo in the sixteenth), but, following the expanded 1568 edition, more than 200 additional artists, sculptors and architects. But even more novel is the way Vasari helps his readers develop this understanding. The Irish playwright Samuel Beckett once wrote that there is 'no need of a story, a story is not compulsory, only a life', but Vasari shows that you can have *both*, filling so many pages of his anthology (in writing his translator George Bull describes as 'euphonious') with hugely engaging pieces of gossip, anecdote and narrative,

Illustrated cartouche of Giorgio Vasari's own portrait, and (*overleaf*) a page spread of the blank panel for Antonio da Correggio from the second edition of *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori,scultori, ed architettori*, 1568

15. Ingrid Rowland and Noah Charney offer this trifecta at the conclusion of their book on Vasari, using the first two of its questions to define art historicism and criticism up until the modern period, and the last of them (is it interesting?), as characteristic of artistic production and analysis post Marcel Duchamp. See Rowland and Charney, op cit, p 355.
16. George Bull, op cit, p 11.
17. There is actually an architectural equivalent to Vasari's *Lives* – Francesco Milizia's *Le Vite de' più celebri architetti d'ogni nazione e d'ogni tempo, precedute da un Saggio sopra l'architettura* (*The Lives of Celebrated Architects, Ancient and Modern: With Historical and Critical Observations on their Works*), published in Rome in 1768, but to a certain extent this both repeats biographical information already gleaned by Vasari, and also initiates a switch of focus from the idiosyncrasies of a life to the details of a project; an important, even prescient shift, highlighted by his subtitle.
18. George Bull offers a good analysis of these terms and their place within modern scholarship in 'Vasari and the Renaissance', George Bull, op cit, pp 18–20.
19. This edition is commonly referred to as the 'Giuntina', in acknowledgment of its Florentine publisher, the famous Giunti family press, established in 1497: Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori scritte da m Giorgio Vasari pittore et architteto aretino, di nuouo dal medesimo riuiste et ampliate con i ritratti loro et con l'aggiunta delle Vite de' viui, & de' morti dall'anno 1550 insino al 1567* [*The lives of the most excellent painters, sculptors, and architects, written by Mr Giorgio Vasari, painter and architect of Arezzo, reviewed and expanded by the same with their portraits and the addition of the lives of the alive and dead artists between 1550 and 1567*] (Florence: Giunti, 1568).

largely gleaned through oral history.[14] The way that any reader gravitates towards and then recounts these tales means that in remembering a great story, they are also remembering a great artist. And so even today we think about Giotto, say, through the story of him mischievously painting a perfectly lifelike fly on the nose of a portrait his master, Cimabue, had been preparing, and taking great delight in Cimabue's attempts to shoo it away when he regained his place in front of the canvas; or we recognise Brunelleschi's daring through the account of him securing the commission to design the dome on Florence's cathedral by casually demonstrating to his patrons that he could balance an egg, vertically, on a slab of marble; or we appreciate Leonardo's precociousness through the single angelic figure he was asked to contribute to his teacher, Andrea del Verrocchio's *Baptism of Christ* (1475), whose brilliance prompted Verrocchio to immediately abandon his brushes and give up painting forever; or we recognise Michelangelo's guile through an account of his responce to a comment by Florence's republican leader, Piero Soderini, that the nose of his *David* was perhaps too big, by the way he obediently climbed his ladder and pretended to chip away at the marble, cunningly allowing some dust to drop from his hand as he did so, which delighted Soderini into congratulating himself on the manifest improvements he had effected.

In the *Lives*, then, the idea of artistic genius assumes its modern form, as does the delineation of certain artistic movements and the articulation of a chain of influence from master to pupil. But there is also a kind of artistic genius in the way Vasari chooses to present this heroism, establishing a link between biography and artistic creation, and a way of recounting ideas, personalities and great works through the deeply pleasurable stories of a life – a methodology that not only made his own name, but succeeded in reaching that heady realm to which all Renaissance artists ultimately aspired, using biography to successfully answer the three essential questions Aristotle poses in his *Poetics*: Is it good? Is it beautiful? Is it interesting?[15]

These successes were clearly not lost on Vasari, who spent the years following the publication of the *Lives* in a 'glow of self-satisfaction and public recognition'.[16] In 1568, in his preface to the second, expanded edition, he also boasted about the huge number of copies of his book that had been printed, and how not a single one of them remained unsold on booksellers' shelves. The work was a bestseller, and would remain in print ever since, testimony to the fact that it continues to provide the definitive biographic portrait of so many artists and architects. And yet at the same time its success also obliterated its repetition. Of course, there were various loyal imitators – for example, Giovanni Bellori's *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (*The Lives of Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 1672), which updated the sixteenth-century *Lives* to the seventeenth century, as well as the 'Dutch Vasari', Karel van Mander's *Het Schilderboeck* (*The Painting Book*, 1604); the 'German Vasari', Joachim von Sandrart's *Deutsche Akademie* (1675); the 'French Vasari', Roger de Piles' *L'Abrégé de la vie des peintres* (*The Art of Painting and the Lives of the Painters*, 1699); and the 'Spanish Vasari', Antonio Palomino's *El parnaso español pintoresco y laureado* (*An Account of the Lives and Works of the Most Eminent Spanish Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* 1724), all of which merely identified an equivalent canon within their own national domains – but somehow in architecture, especially, the biographical and storied model Vasari initiated has remained stillborn,[17] while his ostensibly less compelling lexicon of terms (*disegno*, *natura*, *grazia*, *decoro*, *judizio* and *maniera*) has become the established frame for all architectural interpretation.[18] In architecture, then, Vasari's legacy is not *Lives* but *Theories*.

Unwittingly, the second edition of Vasari's anthology provided visual evidence of both this absence and this accession.[19] As part of the book's expansion and embellishment, Vasari proposed the insertion of decorative illustrative frames to introduce 144 of the various lives, with each frame centred around an

ANTONIO DACORREGGIO
PITTORE.

Vita d'Antonio da Correggio Pittore

IO non voglio vícire del medeſimo paeſe, doue la gran madre natura per non eſſere tenuta partiale, dette al mondo, di rariſſimi huomini della ſorte, che haueua gia molti, & molti anni adornata la Toſcana infra è quali fu di eccellente, & belliſſimo ingegno dotato Antonio da correggio pittore ſingulariſſimo. Ilquale atteſe alla maniera moderna tanto perfettamente, che in pochi anni dotato dalla natura, & eſercitato dall'arte diuenne raro, & marauiglioſo artefice. Fu molto d'animo timido, & con incommodità di ſe ſteſſo in continue fatiche eſercitò l'arte, per la famiglia, che lo aggrauaua: & ancora che è fuſſe tirato da vna bontà naturale, ſi affliggeua niente di manco piu del douere, nel portare i peſi di quelle paſſioni, che ordinariamente opprimono gli huomini

huomini. Era nell'arte molto maninconico, & suggetto alle fatiche di quella, & grandissimo ritrouatore, diqualsi voglia difficultà delle cose: come ne fanno fede nel Duomo di parma vna moltitudine grandissima di figure, lauorate in fresco, & ben finite, che sono locate nella tribuna grande di detta chiesa: nellequali scorta le vedute al di sotto in su cō stupendiss. marauiglia. Et egli fu il primo, che in Lōbardia cominciasse cose della maniera moderna. pche si giudica, che se l'ingegno di Ant. fosse vscito di Lōbardia, e stato a Roma, auerebbe fatto miracoli, e dato delle fatiche a molti, che nel suo tēpo furon tenuti grandi. Cōciosia che essendo tali le cose sue senza hauer' egli visto de le cose antiche o de le buone moderne: necessariaméte ne seguita, che se le hauesse vedute harebbe infinitamente migliorato l'opere sue:e crescendo di bene in meglio sarebbe venuto al sommo de' gradi . Tengasi pur per certo che nessuno meglio di lui toccò colori; ne con maggior vaghezza, o con piu rilieuo alcun artefice dipinse meglio di lui, tanta era la morbidezza delle carni ch'egli faceua, e la grazia con che e' finiua i suoi lauori. Egli fece ancora in detto luogo due quadri grandi lauorati a olio, ne i quali fra gli altri, in vno si vede vn Christo morto, che fu lodatissimo . Et in s. Giouanni in quella cità fece vna tribuna in fresco, nellaquale figurò vna N. Donna, che ascende in Cielo, fra moltitudine di Angeli, & altri Santi intorno : laquale pare impossibile, ch'egli potesse non esprimere con la mano, ma imaginare con la fantasia, per i belli andari de' panni, & delle arie, che e' diede a qnelle figure delle quali ne sono nel nostro libro alcune dissegnate di lapis rosso di sua mano con certi fregi di putti bellissimi, & altri fregi fatti in quella opera per ornamento con diuerse fantnsia di sacrifitij alla anticha, & nel vero se Antonio non hauesse codotte l'opere sue, a quella perfettione.che le si veggono, i disegni suoi (se bene hanno in loro vna buona maniera, & vaghezza, e pratica di maestro) non gli harebbano arechato fra gli artefici quel nome, che hanno l'eccellentissime opere sue. E quest'arte tanto dificile, & ha tanti capi: che vno artefice bene spesso non li puo tutti fare perfetamente perche molti sono, che hanno disegnato diuinamente, et nel colorire, hanno hauuto qualche imperfettione, altri hanno colorito marauigliosamente, & non hanno disegnato alla metà, questo nascie tutto dal giuditio, & da vna praticha, che si piglia da giouane chi nel disegno, e chi sopra i colori. Ma perche tutto s'impara, per condurre l' opere perfette nella fine: il quale, è il colorire, con disegno tutto quel che si fa: per questo il Coreggio merita gran lode hauendo conseguito il fine della perfetione nel opere, che egli, a olio, e a fresco colorì, come nella medesima città nella chiesa de frati de Zocholi di s. Frācesco, che vi dipinse vna Nuntiata in fresco tanto bene che accadendo per aconcime di quel luogho, rouinarla: fecionoque frati ricignere il muro atorno con legnami armati di ferramenti, & tagliandolo a poco a poco la saluorono, & in vn altro loco piu sicuro fu murata da loro nel medesimo conuento . Dipīse ancora sopra vna porta di quella città vna N.Donna, che ha il figliuolo in braccio, che stupenda cosa a vedere il vago colorito in fresco di questa opera: doue ne ha riportato da forestieri viandanti, che non hanno visto altro di suo lode, e honore infinito . In s. Antonio ancora di quella città dipinse vna tauola, nellaqual è vna N. Dōna, & s. Maria Madalena, & appresso vi è vn

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20. Letter from Vincenzo Borghini to Giorgio Vasari, 14 July 1564. The letter was originally published in a German edition of Vasari's letters – Karl Frey, *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasari, 1563–74* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1930), letter 168 – and subsequently translated and referenced by Giovanni Mazzaferro as part of his extensive investigation into the blank panels: Giovanni Mazzaferro, 'Hand-drawn Portraits in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives: New Discoveries*', November 2016, accessible online at: http://letteraturaartistica.blogspot.com/2016/11/giorgio-vasari31.html. Borghini himself is an interesting figure, as both a Benedictine cleric and a connected and influential art advisor. Between 1552 and his death in 1580 he was prior of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, while also serving (from 1563) as the inaugural 'lieutenant' of Cosimo de' Medici's Accademia delle Arti del Disegno.

21. This word has more recently entered an academic lexicon – in particular though the work of Max Saunders and his book *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) – in reference to those biographies written by authors who have employed more wilfully fictive narrative devices rather than relying only on slavish research.

22. There is a nice description of this edition, and its blank cantos, in Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1873, in Harold Bloom (ed), *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp 17–63. Vasari had seen the original manuscript of this edition in the Vatican library, and he writes about it critically in his entry to Sandro Botticelli in the *Lives*, suggesting that the artist was wasting his talents on printed illustrations rather than on standalone works of art.

23. Inigo Jones' annotated copy of the *Lives* is in the collection of Worcester College, Oxford. Jones' tendency to doodle on and decorate his books is examined by A W Johnson in *Three Volumes Annotated by Inigo Jones: Vasari's* Lives *(1568), Plutarch's* Moralia *(1614), Plato's* Republic *(1554)* (Åbo: Akademis Förlag, 1997); Christy Anderson, 'Conversations with the Dead', in *Inigo Jones and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp 88–113; and by André Tavares, *The Anatomy of the Architectural Book* (Zurich: Lars Müller/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2016), which illustrates his embellished 1612 edition of Palladio's *Quattro libri* (p 116); but as Giovanni Mazzaferro argues (op cit), Jones' drawing of Correggio was most likely the result of the architect copying a portrait of the artist from a later (third, 1647) edition of the *Lives*, which filled in all of the missing blank panels.

24. See Vitruvius (Marcus Vitruvius Pollio), *Ten Books on Architecture: The Corsini Incunabulum with the Annotations and Autograph Drawings of Giovanni Battista da Sangallo*, edited by Ingrid D Rowland (Rome: Elefante/Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2003), and André Tavares, ibid, pp 110–15.

oval panel featuring a portrait of the artist in question. He presented draft sketches of these likenesses to his loyal friend and collaborator, the influential Florentine cleric Vincenzo Borghini, who, even if supportive of the idea, took issue with one of the portraits (as he describes in a letter to Vasari in 1564):

> *I am of the view that the face you have put to Niccola Pisano does not fit with him at all, but corresponds to somebody closer to our times; the same is also true for the way he is dressed. Now, I do not really like it, and I would like to keep it empty in future – that is, to have the ornament but without a face, since, maybe, if a suitable portrait is ever found, a reader will be able to add it by himself. In sum, if you begin to put one which is evidently not fitting, you ruin the credibility of all others.*[20]

In the resulting volume, the title page for Pisano does feature a portrait, but it is unclear whether this had been amended in light of Borghini's criticism or whether Vasari simply ignored his advice. Elsewhere, the 'credibility' Borghini feared being ruined could have frankly prompted the erasure of any number of other faces, for so many of them had been produced in the same spirit as the lives themselves (ie, the result of gossip, anecdote and a large degree of 'biografiction'),[21] but in the end, Vasari did take up his friend's recommendation and published the second edition of the *Lives* with eight blank portraits – corresponding to the lives of Pietro Cavallini, Giovanni da Ponte, Berna Sanese, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Taddeo Bartoli, Antonio da Correggio, Pietro Torrigiano and Marco Calavrese – little totems to ignorance and portents of a future artistic conceptualism (the idea of which may well have come from Sandro Botticelli's illustrated 1481 edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which created an image for every canto, but only in silverpoint outline, with the rest of the image left blank for the enthusiastic reader to fill- or colour-in themselves).[22] And just as Borghini had foreseen, a number of readers did indeed fill-in the blank panels with their own drawings of the invisible artists (vernacular or idiomatic elements within a work increasingly presented as canonic and classical), among them the English architect Inigo Jones, who updated his copy of the 1568 edition of the *Lives* with an ink portrait of Antonio Correggio.[23]

But in many ways these pages remain more alluring left blank, which says something of the mischief and intelligence of Borghini, even if the resonances of blankness was not entirely alien to Vasari either, for in 1550, the year he first published the *Lives*, he produced a frontispiece for an illustrated reprint of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*, whose centre offers only a vacant cartouche. Architectural scholars have often fixated on these moments of absence in a manner that has become something of a recurring trope, repeatedly musing on various blanknesses wherever they can find them, and certainly in antiquarian models, like Giovanni Sulpicio da Veroli's edition of *De architectura* (1486), which deliberately inserted empty blocks into its typography so that architect readers could illustrate Vitruvius' ideas themselves (the most famous of which – so much so that it was given its own name, the *Corsini incunabulum* – was produced by Giovanni Battista da Sangallo, younger brother of the more celebrated Antonio, *c* 1530).[24] There are also equivalences in other Renaissance architectural models, not least in a number of buildings, like the blank panel flanked by Corinthian pilasters in Andrea Palladio's Casa Cogollo (1572), or an equivalent vacant centre in the main facade of mannerist artist and architect Federico Zuccari's casino in Florence (1578), both of which have long invited a huge amount of architectural speculation as to what they might signify. Significantly, such speculation was not reserved only for the sixteenth-century, for modernism even has its own celebrated exemplar, notably the somewhat mysterious large, framed blank square that dominates the entrance facade of Le Corbusier's Villa Schwob (1916), and which like its Renaissance forebears has become a kind of screen onto which assorted

25. On the blankness at the heart of the Veroli edition of *De architectura* see André Tavares, op cit, especially pp 109–11; on Colin Rowe's reading of blankness see his essay 'Mannerism and Modern Architecture', in Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), pp 29–57, quote p 31; and for a good, more general reading of blank screens in assorted architectural examples see Daniel Naegele, 'Seeing What is Not There Yet: Le Corbusier and the Architectural Space of Photographs', 2016, accessible online at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/arch_conf/90. On blanks in art see Wolfgang Kemp, 'Death at Work: A Case Study on Constitutive Blanks in Nineteenth-Century Painting', in *Representations* X, spring 1985, pp 102–23, and Alfred Neumeyer, *Der Blick aus dem Bilde* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1964).

26. John Summerson, *Inigo Jones* (London: Pelican, 1966); Kerry Downes, *Sir John Vanbrugh: A Biography* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987); Lisa Jardine, *On a Grander Scale: The Outstanding Career of Sir Christopher Wren* (London: Harper Collins, 2002).

27. Although more of a catalogue of works than a biography, there are still biographic elements in Corrine Bélier and Barry Bergdoll, *Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2013); Gillian Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Kurt W Forster, *Schinkel* (Zurich: Birkhäuser, 2018).

28. Georges Poisson, *Eugène Viollet-le-Duc* (Paris: Picard, 2014); Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Penguin, 2007).

29. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life of our Time* (London: Faber, 1994); James Macaulay, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh: A Biography* (New York, NY: W W Norton & Co, 2010); Richard Hollis, *Henri van der Velde: The Artist as Designer: From Art Nouveau to Modernism* (London: Occasional Papers, 2019); Michèle Goslar, *Victor Horta, 1861–1947: L'homme, L'architecte, L'art nouveau* (Paris: Mercatorfonds, 2012).

30. There is a biographical study of Adolf Loos, by the Austrian scholars Burkhardt Rukschcio and Roland Schachel – *Adolf Loos: Leben und Werk* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1987) – but this is largely supplementary to its larger focus on his projects. Those canonic modernist architects who have been the subject of published biographies would include: Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Early Years* (1984); *The Decisive Years* (1987); *The Mature Years* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1991); Franz Schulze, *Mies van der Rohe: A Critical Biography* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1985); Nicholas Fox Weber, *Le Corbusier: A Life* (New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 2009); Fiona MacCarthy, *Walter Gropius: Visionary Founder of the Bauhaus* (London: Faber, 2019).

commentators have projected various ideas, both Corbusian and their own. Perhaps foremost among those scholars drawn to these voids was the historian Colin Rowe, who maintained a self-declared 'minor obsession' with 'unrelieved, blank white surfaces', declaring them 'both disturbance and delight … for it imbues the facade with all of the polemical qualities of a manifesto'.[25] And yet in historiographic terms this is precisely the problem, for blankness is always taken as an opportunity to speculate on possible theorems (that is, on manifestos) rather than on possible lives (that is, on biography), which in Borghini's rather clairvoyant terms means we get all of the ornament but none of the faces.

In this sense, just as *The School of Athens* offers an anticipatory emblem to the ambition and successes of the *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, the blank panel offers a counter emblem to its failures, for the book remains a model for a way of writing about architecture's various histories that so few subsequent authors have been willing to adopt. And so even if a certain national pride has induced a Dutch, German, French and Spanish Vasari, the 'architectural Vasari' – and with it, an anthology of the Renaissance's most distinguished architectural lives – remains missing. Also missing on the architect's bookcase, next to those translated editions of Vitruvius' *Ten Books*, Alberti's *Ten Books*, Serlio's *Seven Books* and Palladio's *Four Books*, are parallel studies that offer dedicated biographical portraits of these architects.

In surveying subsequent historical moments, one might also wonder about the non-existence of those architectural biographies that are deemed essential to any number of successive movements and styles – the books that explain the lives that explain the meaning and dynamics of the baroque, the neoclassicist, mannerist, rationalist, secessionist, modernist or even post-modernist – or the similarly absent companion volumes dedicated to that ever-growing constellation of figures who for the last two centuries have operated within an architecture of historiography and criticism, or even pedagogy.

Of course, there are exceptions. An Italianate fifteenth- and sixteenth-century tradition continues to abdicate all authority to Vasari (which means there is still a very large Brunelleschi-shaped gap in its bibliography), but there are biographic studies of that next great flurry of architectural thinking and building and the English seventeenth-century architects, notably Inigo Jones, John Vanbrugh and Christopher Wren.[26] In the same way, Jacques-François Blondel, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, Claude Nicolas Ledoux, Jean-Jacques Lequeu and Étienne-Louis Boullée and the rational and visionary French neoclassical architects of the eighteenth century are generally underrepresented, but one can find a handful of biographic analyses of their nineteenth-century heirs, Henri Labrouste, John Soane and Karl Friedrich Schinkel, despite the fact that it took until 2018 for the last of these to appear.[27] Gothic revival architects of the same period are afforded much more attention (perhaps because gothicism celebrates the idiosyncrasies of individual will, over classicism's deference to an anonymous set of universal principles), and so there have been important biographic profiles of Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, John Ruskin and August Welby Pugin,[28] just as the expressiveness of the arts and crafts and art nouveau has also invited a number of expressive biographies of the lives more than the work of their subjects, among them on William Morris, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Henri van der Velde and Victor Horta.[29] While in the modern period, for all of the celebrity and hagiography with which architectural practice has been increasingly presented, there remains a relative lack of serious biography. But even if sustained investigations into the lives of figures like Peter Behrens, Marcel Breuer, Adolf Loos, Eero Saarinen, Kenzo Tange, Bruno Taut and Giuseppe Terragni may still be missing (to say nothing of critics and historians like Gottfried Semper, Alois Riegl, Sigfried Giedion and Reyner Banham), there *are* dedicated profiles of Alvar Aalto, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and most recently Walter Gropius.[30] Nevertheless, in scholarly, if not bibliographic
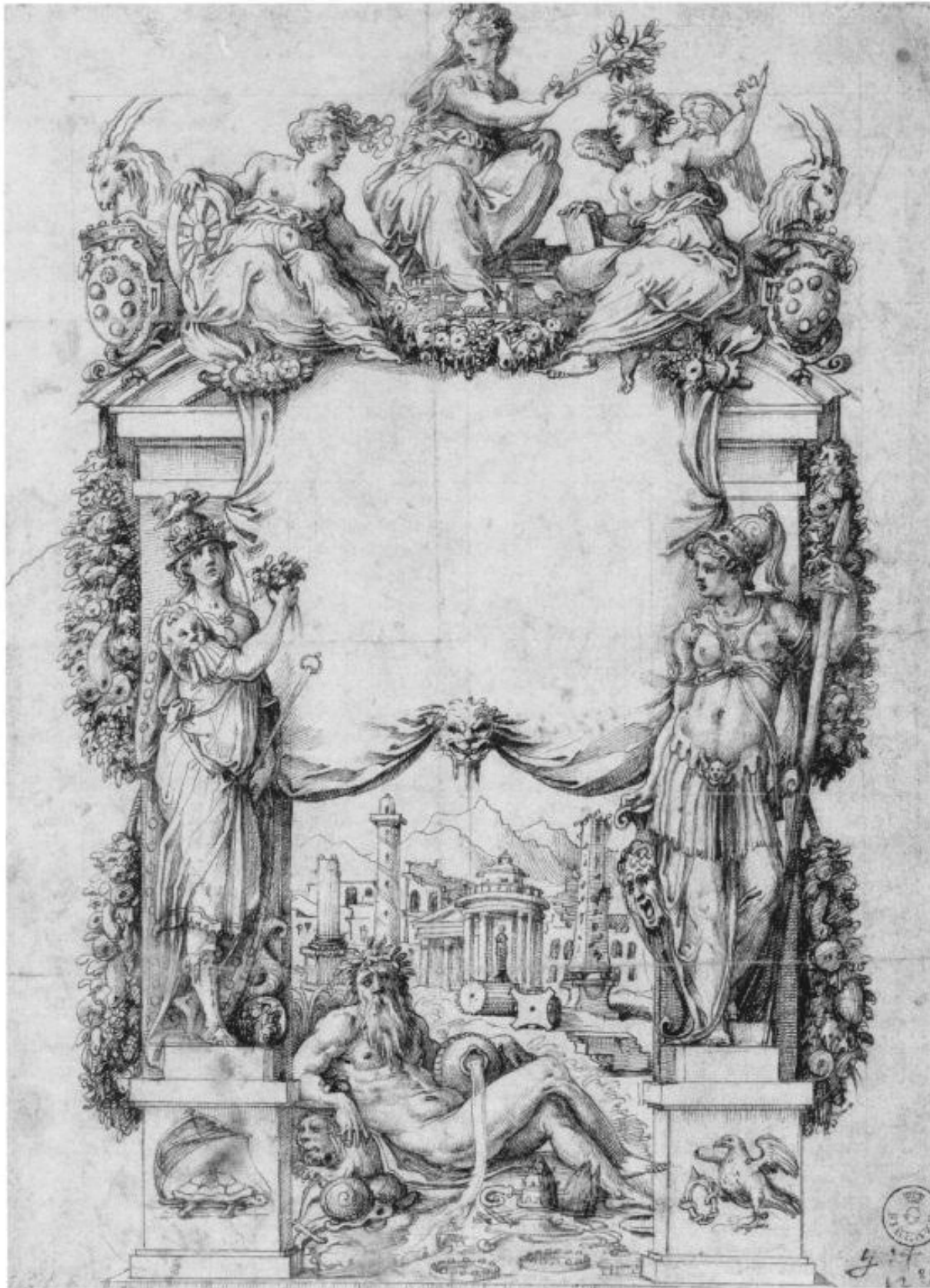
Giorgio Vasari, design for a frontispiece for Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, 1550
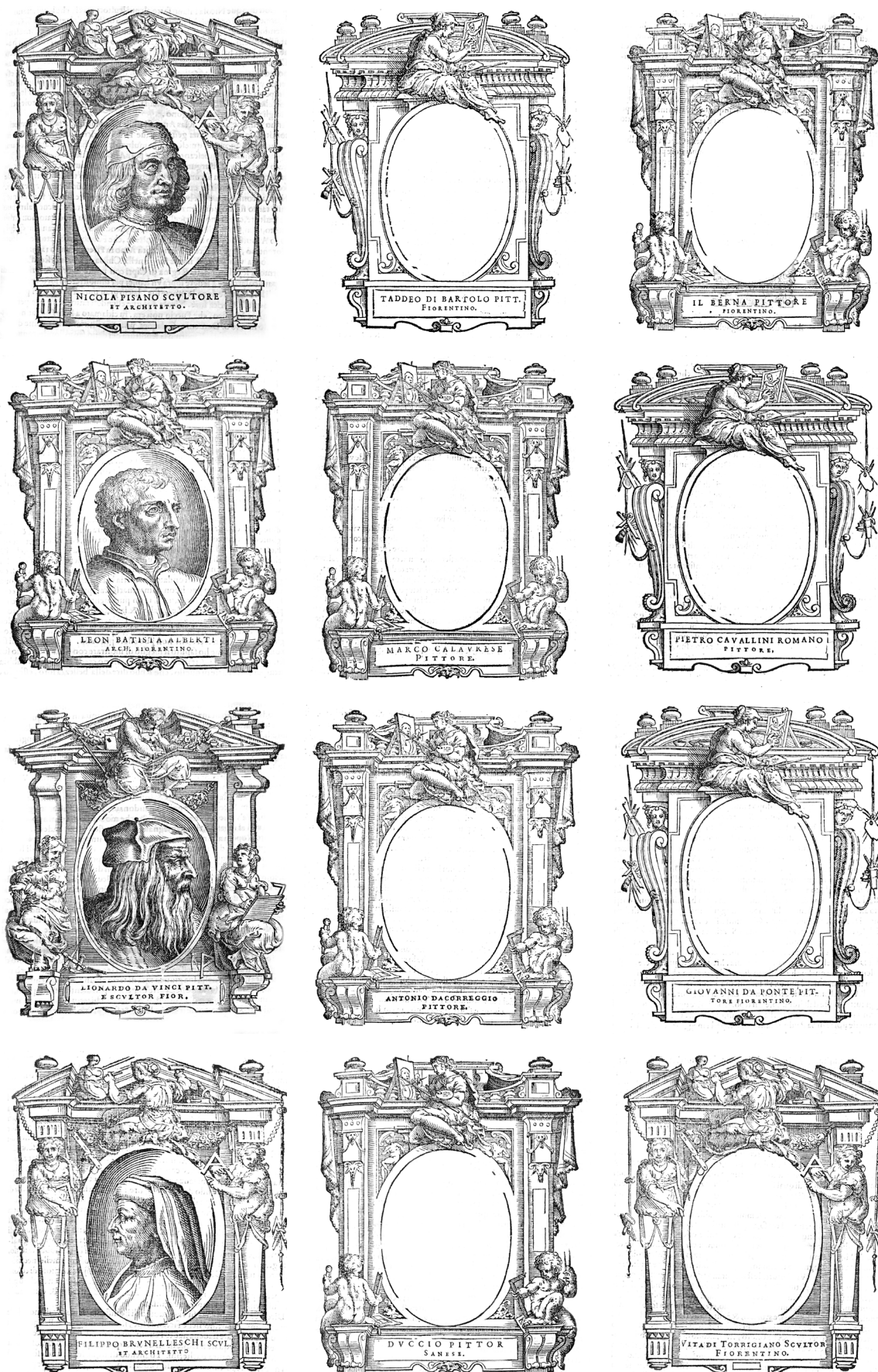
The eight blank panels from the second editon of *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, ed architettori*, 1568, bordered by four illustrated panels, corresponding to the lives of Nicola Pisano, Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci and Filippo Brunelleschi

Above: Andrea Palladio, Casa Cogollo, Vincenza, 1559
Opposite: Le Corbusier, Villa Schwob, La Chaux-de-Fonds, 1916
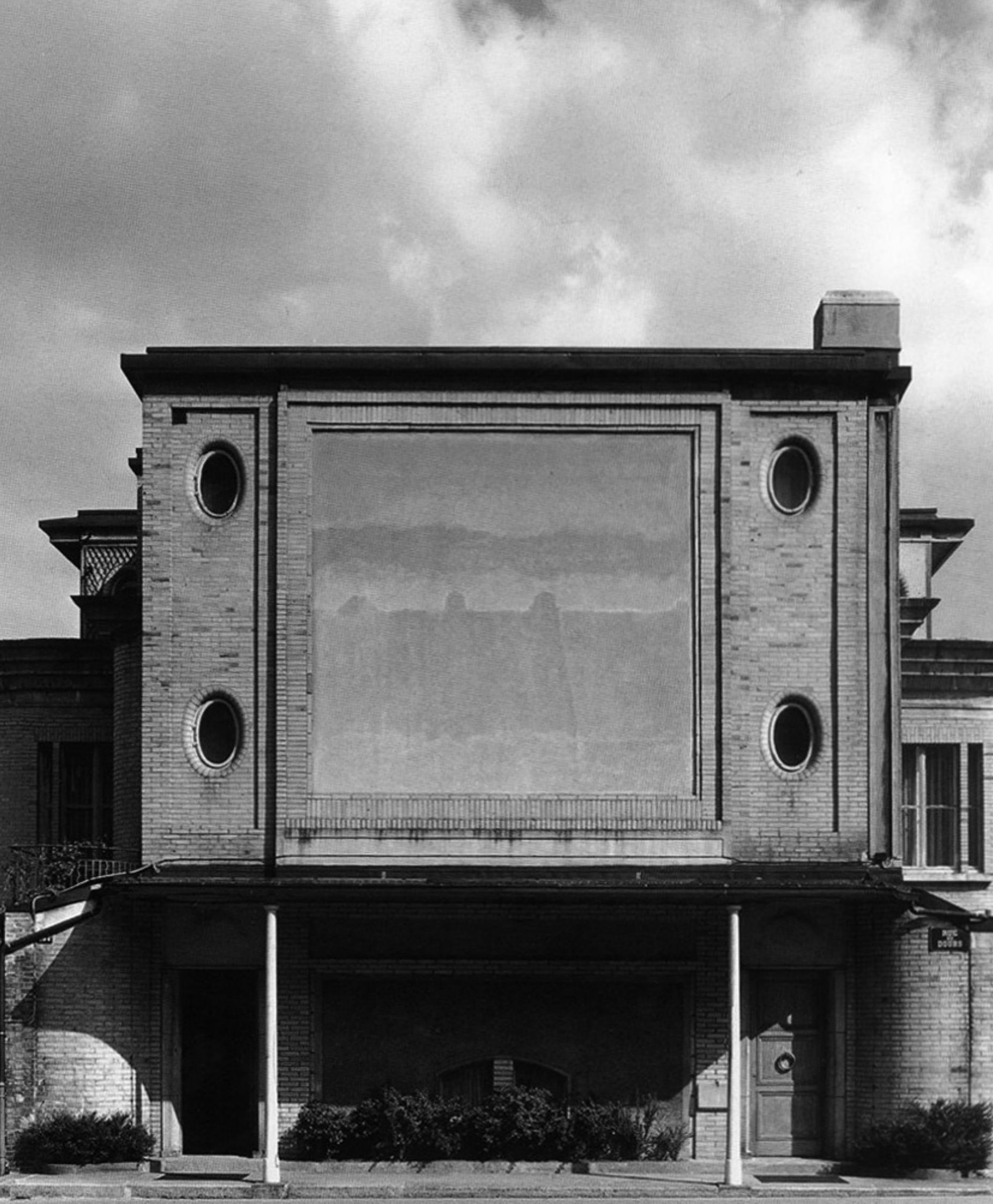
31. Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (London: Penguin, 1952); Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New* York (New York, NY: Random House, 1974); and Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (London: Penguin, 1991). Further examples of the same type might include Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1953); Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); and Hugo Young, *One of Us: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher* (London: Pan Books, 1989).

32. Philip Guedalla, 'Sayings of the Week', *The Observer*, 3 March 1929; the quotation is drawn from an address on literary biography given by Guedella the previous week.

33. Bentley named the irregular four-line form of this quote after himself, a 'clerihew', and published a collected anthology of them in Edmund Clerihew Bentley, *Biography for Beginners: Being a Collection of Miscellaneous Examples for the use of Upper Forms* (London: T Werner Laurie, 1905).

34. 'He had bought a large map represent-ing the sea, Without the least vestige of land: And the crew were much pleased when they found it to be
A map they could all understand.
    "What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators, Tropics, Zones and Meridian Lines?" So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply
"They are merely conventional signs!
    "Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!
But we've got our brave Captain to thank:
(So the crew would protest) "that he's bought us the best –
A perfect and absolute blank!"'
    Lewis Carroll, 'Fit the First: The Bellman's Speech', Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in Eight Fits)*, 1876, in *Jabberwocky and Other Nonsense: Collected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2012), pp 235–59, quote p 238. For a short account on the making of Holiday's chart see Doug Howick, 'A Perfect an Absolute Mystery', *Knight Letter: The Lewis Carroll Society of North America*, winter 2011, pp 5–13.

35. Louis Sullivan, *An Autobiography of an Idea* (Chicago, IL: American Institute of Architects Press, 1924); Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Longmans, Green & Co, 1932).

36. Frank Lloyd Wright, quote printed on the dust jacket of the 1957 printing of the second (1943) edition of *An Autobiography*, quoted by Donald Johnson, *Frank Lloyd Wright Versus America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p 28.

37. On Louis Sullivan's *An Autobiography of an Idea* see Robert Twombley, *Louis Sullivan: His Life and Work* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially chapter 1, 'The Hub of his Universe, 1856–72', quote ('thoroughly neglected') p 1, and David Van Zanten, *Sullivan's City: The Meaning of Ornament for Louis Sullivan* (New York, NY: W W Norton, 2000), especially pp 1–9; on Frank Lloyd Wright's *An Autobiography* see Donald Johnson, op cit, pp 28–38.
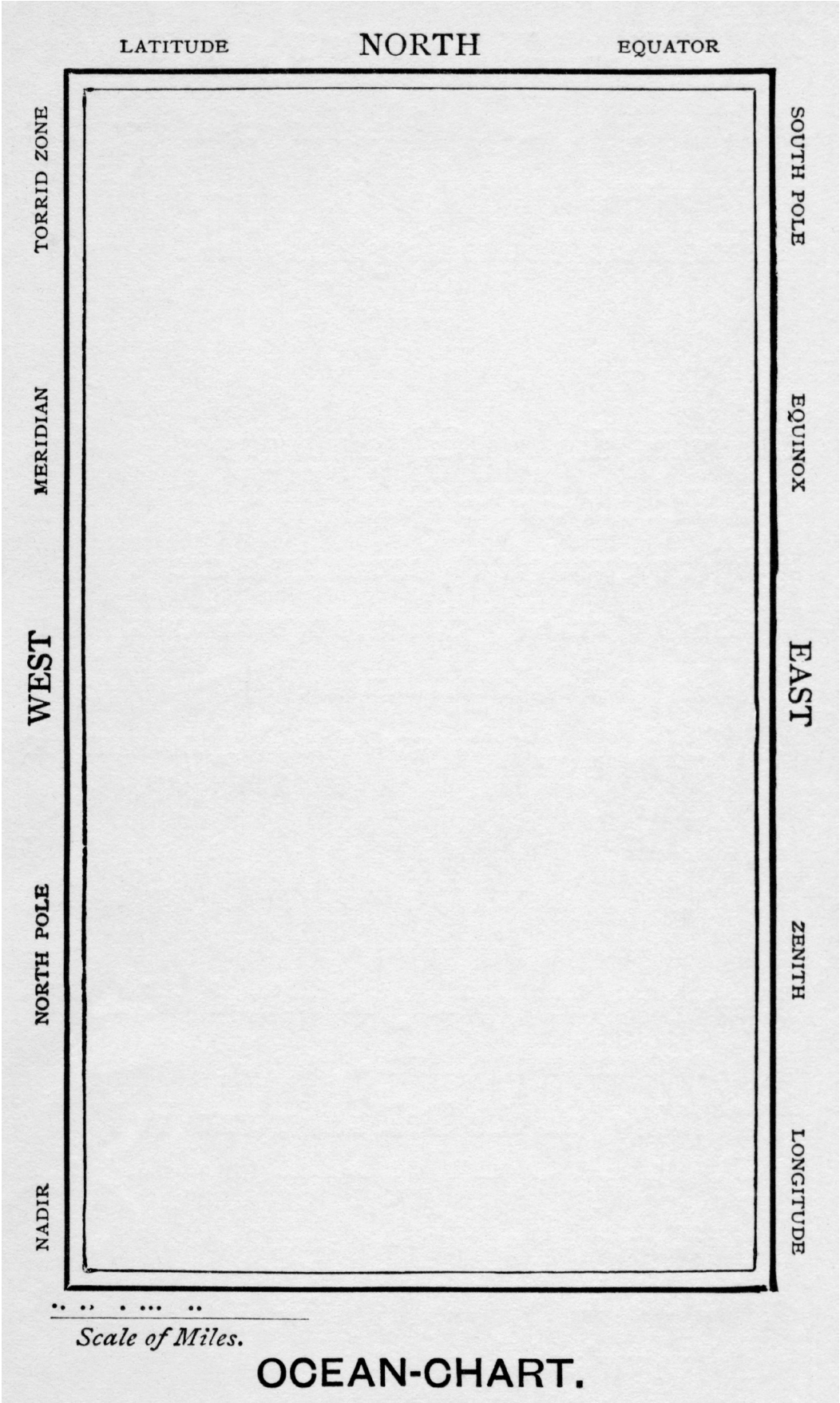
terms, so few of these existing biographies are treated as *the* definitive text, not just on the life of their subject, but on the wider moment and milieu in which they operated (in ways that notable biographies in other disciplines so clearly do – for instance, Alan Bullock's *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, 1952; Robert Caro's, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, 1974; and Adrian Desmond and James Moore's *Darwin*, 1991).[31]

In architecture, then, biography is somehow both there and yet not there; which might even invite another blank totem. In 1929 the writer Philip Guedalla offered a kind of cartography of biography with his witticism that 'biography is a very definite region bounded on the north by history, on the south by fiction, on the east by obituary and on the west by tedium'.[32] The precision of such a chart appeared to contradict the contention by his contemporary, the humourist Edmund Clerihew Bentley, that
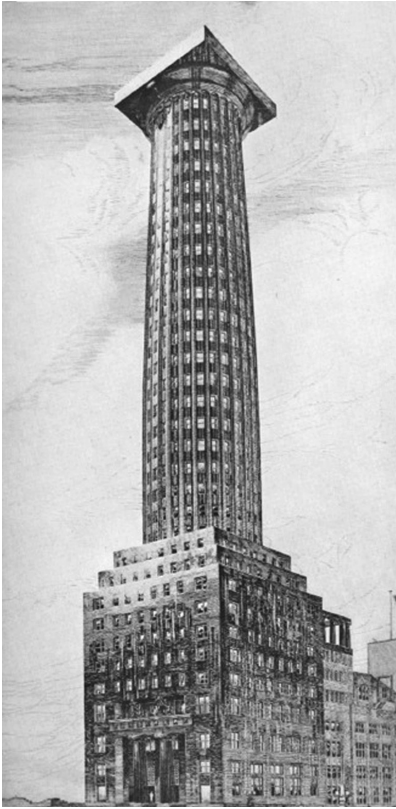
> *The Art of Biography*
> *Is different from Geography*
> *Geography is about Maps*
> *But biography is about Chaps*[33]

but in other ways it confirmed an earlier piece of nonsense. In 1876 the English writer Lewis Carroll wrote his famous poem, *The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in Eight Fits)*, which narrates the story of a hunting party, led by the 'Bellman', to catch and kill the mythical snark. Its publication was illustrated by Carroll's friend Henry Holiday, who – in an echo to Borghini's recommendations to Vasari – resolved not to show the huntsmen's prey, but to instead convey the signifi-cance of its possible presence through its wilful absence. This was perhaps best represented by his 'Bellman's Map', an ocean chart complete with the four points of the compass, meridians, poles, zeniths, latitudes, longitudes, equators and equinoxes (that is, the ornament of a theoretical frame), but absent of everything else (that is, a location, or indeed a face), and which in this wider context could be construed as emblem not just to a nonsensical creature, but to the ambiguous existence of that creature called biography.[34]

Architecture's own snark (or a nonsense rendered actual) might be consid-ered to be its two most celebrated autobiographies, produced within eight years of each other, first by Louis Sullivan (*An Autobiography of an Idea*, 1924), and then by his one-time apprentice Frank Lloyd Wright (*An Autobiography*, 1932).[35] Just as the careers of the two architects were closely entwined, with any apparently minor stylistic move by one prompting a response from the other, so too were their autobiographies, with Sullivan's decision to write largely about his childhood, often in the third person, and in a self-indulgently literary style, mirrored in the approach adopted by Wright. But whereas Sullivan never acknowledged the gushing hyperbole of his writing, nor its many fabrications, at least Wright admitted to the fact that 'having nothing to build at a very bad time in my life I did put a good deal of myself, too much probably, in *An Autobiography*'.[36] And yet somehow, the apparently soulful transcendentalism of his prose, allied to his often rather salacious accounts of his marital failures, generated a large audience (unlike Sullivan's book, which was 'thoroughly neglected by the general public'). However, this was no doubt inflated by the fact that *Reader's Digest* produced a serialised version in 1937, and later the US Information Service sent out copies of Wright's autobiography to every city, state and public library, as well as every national library worldwide, deeming it one of '350 essential books about the United States of America'.[37] As a result, the historian Donald Johnson estimates that between 1932 (and the first edi-tion) and 1970 (after the release of eight more US editions as well as French and Italian translations), Wright's *An Autobiography* had sold close to 34,000 copies,[38] a huge number for an architectural book, but one still dwarfed by Ayn

LATITUDE   NORTH   EQUATOR

TORRID ZONE

MERIDIAN

WEST

NORTH POLE

NADIR

SOUTH POLE

EQUINOX

EAST

ZENITH

LONGITUDE

Scale of Miles.

OCEAN-CHART.

Henry Holiday, 'Bellman's Map', from Lewis Carroll,
The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in Eight Fits), 1876

Entry by Adolf Loos in the competition for a new tower for the *Chicago Tribune*, 1922

38. Donald Johnson, ibid, p 37.
39. For an excellent architectural analysis of *The Fountainhead*, including its debt to the lives of Sullivan and Wright, see Andrew Saint, 'The Architect as Hero and Genius', *The Image of the Architect* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), pp 1–18.
40. Peter Eisenman, 'Projects and Practice', lecture at SciArc, Los Angeles, California, 5 March 2012 (but also delivered in numerous other architecture schools in the same period), accessible online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1eYjROOUdg. For Eisenman, the first great architectural project is Vitruvius' *De architectura*, and the last great – or what he terms 'meta' – architectural project is Le Corbusier's Maison Dom-ino (1914). Looking to further clarify the distinction between project and practice, he argues that architects of projects support their ideas with their books, or more especially with their theories, treatises or manifestos, whereas architects of practice only build. Accordingly, for Eisenman, Palladio is a project architect, whereas Bernini is a practice architect; or more recently Aldo Rossi is aligned with the project, whereas James Stirling is closer to practice. By the same token, the assumption here is that Eisenman himself is an architect of the project, whereas his friend and contemporary, Michael Graves, could be construed as an architect of practice.

Rand's *The Fountainhead* (1943), a novel – published the same year as the release of the expanded second edition of Wright's book – about a fictive modern architect which rather heavy-handedly synthesised the autobiographies of Sullivan and Wright into one hyper-individualistic *Übermensch*, Howard Roark, and which to date has sold over six and a half million copies.[39]

Most architects, however, appear to have been immune to this populism, never seeming to have warmed to either the novel nor its subsequent film – a case, perhaps, of the vulgate made vulgar – and who appear neither to cherish copies of it on their bookshelves, nor quote from either it or the autobiographies on which it is based. Instead, the caricature genius and heroism of the fictive Howard Roark, and the semi-fictive Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, has apparently made architects only more resolute that they can better represent their real genius and real heroism not through the lives of the people who have produced it but through their work.

But it should be said that in strictly semantic terms this is not quite right, because in reality architects rarely talk about their work as 'work'. Instead, there is a word that has increasingly come to denote not just the labours of the architect but their identity, and which therefore represents a kind of alternative or successor to a 'life' – and that word is 'project'. Architects today produce projects. An architectural education is structured around a succession of projects. Architectural publications feature projects, which apparently structure all of its ideas. And we now judge architectural success by the number of projects and the quality of those projects. In the process, the term presents itself as both pervasive and flexible enough to allow us to assess architectural value, aesthetics, intellect, even character – a universal currency that easily passes the Aristotelian test formerly championed by the Vasarian life, finding within the project a repeatable answer to any questions concerning goodness, beauty and interest.

There was formerly an unspoken understanding that when an architect, critic or historian spoke about a project they were speaking about a design that was never actually built, which would suggest, in turn, that 'project' was a synonym for 'failure', because it implied the unsuccessful, the unrealisable, the unbuildable. The word, in this sense, attached itself to bad architects, to unlucky architects and to wilfully fantastical architects. In hindsight, one could anoint Étienne-Louis Boullée as perhaps the first great architect of the project, if only because there is apparently no other way to describe a late-eighteenth-century 150m-tall sphere encircled by three tiers of cypress trees to honour Isaac Newton. Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin is also a project, and certainly not a proposal, because it required the destruction of nearly the whole of Paris, just as Adolf Loos' *Chicago Tribune* tower entry only ever remained a project because it lost in the competition to build it. More recently, though, this distinction has disappeared, and the word is now used to describe both the built and the unbuilt (think, for instance, of the *grands projets* of President Mitterand's monumental building programme for Paris), theory as well as practice, as much as it classifies all other aspects of contemporary architectural production, regardless of whether it is drawn, written or taught, meaning architecture now has subsets of design projects, publication projects and pedagogic projects.

For all of its ubiquity, however, it is largely unexplored. Admittedly, in 2012 the American architect Peter Eisenman delivered a lecture on what he termed the distinction between 'project' and 'practice', but to a large extent this merely confirmed its pre-existing associations – 'for me', Eisenman states, 'an architectural project is one through which the architect defines the world, whereas practice is where the world defines the architect' (that is, practice is pragmatic, whereas project is idealistic) – just as Eisenman also uses it as an aspirational goal or moniker to an architecture defined more by the strength of its ideas, than by the physical, material strength of its built structure ('the most important thing in practice is that a building stands up; the most important thing in a project is that a

41. It is perhaps something of a cliché to highlight architectural keywords *not* included within Adrian Forty's 2000 study – Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000) – but the absence of the word 'project' does seem more glaring than others, if only because of its modernity (very much of a piece with the other words he does examine) and its ubiquity. See also Rory Stott, '150 Weird Words that Only Architects Use', *ArchDaily*, 19 October 2015, accessible online at: https://www.archdaily.com/775615/150-weird-words-that-only-architects-use.

42. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 1943, translated by Hazel E Barnes (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1992), especially Part One, Chapter Two, 'Bad Faith', pp 86–118.

43. Massimo Cacciari, 'Project', in *The Unpolitical: On the Radical Critique of Political Reason*, translated by Massimo Verdicchio (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2009), pp 122–45, quote p 122. I am very grateful to Marco Biraghi for highlighting this essay to me.

44. 'Project', from the Latin *projectum*, meaning 'something prominent', and the neuter past participle of *proicere*, meaning 'throw forth', from the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

45. I am grateful to the Italian architectural historian Francesco Zuddas for highlighting this to me.

46. In his *Storia dell'architettura moderna* (1975) Bruno Zevi argues that the architectural project had to support democratic ideals through operative criticism; Vittorio Gregotti touches upon his allegiance to the project in the first chapter of his *Il Territorio dell'Architettura* (1966) – 'It is, however, necessary to know that the whole experience, as history, tends toward becoming presence and signification at the moment of the project; that is, becoming action for the subject; and then anew, becoming historical experience', p 88; Paolo Portoghesi writes about history itself as a project in *Le inibizioni dell'architettura moderna* (1975); and Aldo Rossi speaks about the mandate of the architect to 'write projects, story, film, painting … a projection of reality' in his *A Scientific Autobiography* (1971), p 41. For a very brief survey of this Italian landscape of architectural thinkers, all unified by their projects, see Silvia Micheli and Léa-Catherine Szacka, 'Paolo Portoghesi and the Postmodern Project', in Ákos Moravánszky and Torsten Lange (eds), *Re-Framing Identities: Architecture's Turn to History, 1970–1990* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017), pp 179–90, especially pp 180–82.

47. Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis: Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture*, 2005, translated by Alta Price (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), especially pp 1–27.

building looks like it could stand up – ie, a project introduces not just the semiotic aspect into architecture but the metaphysical').[40] And yet, this call-to-arms aside, there continues to have been neither an extensive history of architecture's allegiance to the project, nor a short discursive essay. It also fails to attract inquisition within the realms of either the high world of academicism or the low world of populism – for instance, in *Words and Buildings* (2000) Adrian Forty writes at length about 'character', 'order', 'truth' and numerous other architectural keywords but not 'project', just as it is notable by its absence in those more common lexicons that set out to poke fun at the jargon of certain modern tribes and specialisations, and which in architecture includes '150 Weird Words that Only Architects Use', which highlights 'programme', 'context', 'typology', and the émigrés '*poché*', '*pilotis*' and '*parti*', but never once 'project'.[41]

In *Being and Nothingness* (1943) Jean-Paul Sartre writes about the project as both noun and verb, and describes the state of being 'in-the-project' as the ontological condition of human existence (the ultimate project, therefore, being the self),[42] but what seems to be the only extended meditation on the word is by the Italian philosopher Massimo Cacciari, whose essay '*Progetto*' ('Project', 1981) appears in his translated anthology, *The Unpolitical* (2009). 'The project', Cacciari writes, 'is understood as intrinsically productive: it elaborates models of production. Producing is included in the project whose meaning and purpose it illuminates. In the project, therefore, it is a question of a strategy on whose basis something must be produced, something must be brought out, to presence. The project foresees, so to speak, this future presence; it unfolds its character in advance. But in the project, precisely, one is not limited to "project" this presence; one has to show with what means and in what ways presence is producible. The tone of the project, therefore, is that of anticipation, or prediction and of concrete production.'[43] Cacciari concludes this introduction with the ever-so-slightly menacing recommendation that 'we should keep this point firmly in mind' (consistent with the overbearing didacticism of late-twentieth-century philosophical Marxism), promoting a forward-looking approach to his own text akin to the interpretation and etymology of his subject.[44]

But in many ways Cacciari's essay is more reflective than anticipatory, given that he wrote it while teaching courses on aesthetics in the architecture department at the University of Venice, where design studios – like those in all Italian schools – had long been empowered with the mandate to 'bring something out to presence', and which, perhaps naturally, then, were referred to as *progettazione*.[45] Cacciari's academic host also exposed him to the thinking of a number of architects and critics – among them the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, hugely influential for Eisenman's evolving sense of his own discipline, and author of *Progetto e utopia* (translated as *Architecture and Utopia*, 1973, as if 'architecture' and 'project' were synonyms), and the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan, author of the earlier *Progetto e destino* (Project and Destiny, 1965), as well as a wider constellation of architectural figures that included Bruno Zevi, Vittorio Gregotti, Paolo Portoghesi and Aldo Rossi, all of whom presented both their own endeavours and the history on which they were drawing as '*progetti*'.[46]

In arguably the clearest piece of writing on what is a peculiarly unclear moment and set of relationships, Marco Biraghi's *The Project of Crisis* (2013) offers a kind of post-mortem on Tafuri's historiography and in the process unwittingly helps unpick the Italian 'project'.[47] According to Biraghi, Italy's architectural tendency to present one's own work as a project developed less out of a 1960s and 1970s Marxist instinct to valorise the economics of production, than from an earlier, mid-century moment which presented history as a continuum (which seems to make a certain sense, given that architects are naturally drawn to any rubric that ensures both the relevance and permanence of their efforts). Or rather, a project was not interesting because it produces, but because it *pro*jects.

48. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', 1940, in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 1955, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1969), pp 253–64, quote p 261.

49. Leopold von Ranke, *Histories of the Romanic and Germanic Peoples from 1494 to 1514* (1824), quoted by Walter Benjamin, ibid, p 255: 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.' Benjamin's quip about the 'narcotic' is taken from Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p O°, 71. Interestingly, as Biraghi points out (op cit, p 1), the Rankean view was something that preoccupied the thinking of the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner, who quotes him somewhat ambivalently in the very last paragraph of his *An Outline of European Architecture*, 1943 (London: Penguin, 1990), p 485: 'It can indeed not be avoided that the historian turns advocate if he chooses to lead his history up to current events. Yet there is a great temptation to do so. History writing is a process of selection and of valuing. To avoid it be being done arbitrarily the historian must never forget Ranke's ambition to write of events "as they really were". This ambition, taken seriously enough, includes selection and valuation upon criteria of the age one deals with rather than one's own age. Should not a lifetime spent in adhering to these criteria equip a historian safely to cope with the case in which the age he deals with is also his own? It must be left to the reader of this book to decide whether the last few pages are a fair treatment of architectural problems and solutions "as they really are".' Further discussion on the model espoused by Leopold von Ranke and its place within architectural historicism can be found in Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), especially chapter eight, 'Modern Architecture and the Writing of Histories', pp 221–68.

50. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Use and Abuse of History for Life', 1874, in *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R J Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p 67.

51. Ibid, p 94.

52. More recently, the critic and theorist Boris Groys does invert this primacy of the project over the life. Writing about contemporary artistic practice in his short essay 'The Loneliness of the Project', Groys argues that: 'In the past two decades the art project – in lieu of the work of art – has without question moved centre stage in the art world's attention. Each art work may presuppose the formulation of a specific aim and a strategy designed to achieve this aim, but we are most often denied the criteria that would allow us to ascertain whether the project's aim

For Tafuri, the source of this idea was Walter Benjamin, who wrote in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940) that 'history is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now'.[48] Benjamin himself argued that the notion of history being unrestricted by the past and instead carrying a responsibility to inflect the present developed out of an opposition to established German historiography, in particular to the academic model championed by Leopold von Ranke (professor of history at the University of Berlin for more than half a century) and his oft-quoted mantra that history 'only wants to show what actually happened', which Benjamin witheringly describes as the 'strongest narcotic of the nineteenth-century'.[49] But as Birgahi shows, Tafuri's larger debt was to Friedrich Nietzsche, especially his essay, 'On the Use and Abuse of History for Life' (1874), which also rubbishes Ranke: 'a historical phenomenon, known clearly and completely and resolved into a phenomenon of knowledge is, for him who has perceived it, dead'.[50] In stark contrast, Nietzsche argued for a counter model through a professional assignation that must have subconsciously caught the attention of the architectural faculties in Venice, Milan and Rome: 'When the past speaks it always speaks as an oracle: only if you are an architect of the future and know the present will you understand it'[51] – that is, the problem with a life is that it ends; whereas a project, allied only to the present, can go on indefinitely and achieve immortality.[52]

However, it says something of the elusiveness of Tafuri that just as one begins to get a handle on his shifting epistemologies and intellectual allegiances he demolishes such confidence. In an interview, towards the end of his life, with the architectural editor Richard Ingersoll, Tafuri seemed to present an about-face, channelling another model entirely – Ralph Waldo Emerson's conviction that 'there is properly no history, only biography'[53] – by abruptly declaring: 'As for your concern for what should be the subject of criticism, let me propose that history is not about objects, but instead is about men, about human civilisation. What should interest the historian are the cycles of architectural activity and the problem of how a work of architecture fits in its own time. To do otherwise is to impose one's own way of seeing on architectural history.'[54] Of course, biography is not necessarily contradictory to either a Rankean or Nietzschean ideal (which is presumably why Nietzsche titled his essay as he did, presenting it through both its use and abuse), for a life can be historical just as it can be contemporary.

This elasticity is something that Vasari consistently recognised, promoting his *Lives* as both historical record and as imprint for contemporary practice. And even if Tafuri's late-developing (rhetorical if not demonstrable) recognition of biography might show him as heir to this distinctly Italianate tradition, he was also following in the wake of the same realisation by his contemporary Aldo Rossi. In 1966 Rossi had announced his arrival into Italian architectural discourse with the publication of *L'architettura della città* (*The Architecture of the City*), a kind of self-conscious recovery of the model presented by the Renaissance treatise and a manifesto for a better historical appreciation of the city through the archaeology of its fragments and monuments.[55] Fifteen years later, however, his follow-up adopted an alternative literary form, presenting the re-articulation and to a certain extent refinement of the same ideas this time through a life – his own, and the *Autobiografia scientifica* (*A Scientific Autobiography*, 1981).[56]

The cliché that envelops the critical reception of these books is that they are contradictory, and that the first is serious and the second is not, or like Benjamin Disraeli's recommendation to 'read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory',[57] that one constitutes only theories and the other everything but – a cliché perhaps most elegantly expressed by Rafael Moneo, who described the first book as 'a slave to knowledge', and the second 'a victim of sentiment'.[58] But Rossi's own writing and self-criticism defeats such separation, explicitly

has or has not been achieved, whether excessive time was required to complete the project, or even whether the target is intrinsically unattainable as such. Our attention has thereby shifted away from the production of a work (including a work of art) onto life in the art project – a life that is not primarily a productive process, that is not tailored to developing a product, that is not "result-oriented". Under these terms, art is no longer understood as the production of works of art but as documentation of life-in-the-project.' From Boris Groys, 'The Loneliness of the Project', in *Going Public* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), pp 70–83, quote p 78.

53. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'History', from *Essays: First Series*, 1841, published in Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (New York, NY: Library of America, 1983), and accessible online at: https://emersoncentral.com/texts/essays-first-series/history/#complete-essay.

54. Manfredo Tafuri, in Richard Ingersoll, 'There is no criticism, only history', interview with Manfredo Tafuri, translated by Richard Ingersoll, *Design Book Review*, no 9, spring 1986, pp 8–11, accessible online at: https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/07/17/there-is-no-criticism-only-history.

55. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 1966, translated by Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982). This book developed out of a series of lectures Rossi conducted the previous year at the Milan Politecnico.

56. Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, translated by Lawrence Venuti (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981). Rossi writes in his foreword that this book had emerged out of a series of notes he had assembled over the previous ten years and was inspired by both Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1320) and more explicitly by the German physicist Max Planck's own, posthumous, *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers* (1949).

57. Benjamin Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Romance* (1832). This was Disraeli's fourth and most autobiographical novel, published anonymously five years before he entered parliament, first as a back-bencher in 1837 and then later as prime minister (1868, and then again 1874–80).

58. Rafael Moneo, 'Aldo Rossi', *Theoretical Anxiety and Design Strategies in the Work of Eight Contemporary Architects* (Barcelona: Actar, 2004), pp 101–44, quote p 123, also quoted by Bruno Messina in his introduction, 'The Inner Gaze', to Antonio Monestiroli, *The World of Aldo Rossi* (Syracuse: Lettera Ventidue, 2018), p 8.

59. Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, op cit, p 84.

60. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, 1918 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). On Strachey's modernity, see the chapter 'Woolf, Bloomsbury, the 'New Biography' and the New Auto/Biografiction' in Max Saunders, *Self Impression*, op cit.

61. Ibid, preface, p 1.

62. Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

elucidating ideas and principles in the later book precisely through the things to which he feels most attached (among them, buildings, naturally, but also assorted tools, instruments, even coffee pots), which in itself radicalises theory by implying that it can also convey affection. In the process, Rossi not only confounds Tafuri's notion that 'history is not about objects, but instead is about men' by presenting the two together, but also suggests that architecture can be conceived as both a project *and* a life, as both finite and never-ending, or as he writes in the final sentence of his *Scientific Autobiography*: 'Thus, this book is perhaps simply the history of a project, and like every project, it must be conclusive in some way, even if only so that it can be repeated with slight variations or displacements, or assimilated into new projects, new places and new techniques – other forms of which we always catch a glimpse in a life.'[59]

In a sense, then, Rossi's book represents an attempt to articulate a different form of theory through a different form of biography – not just different in its personalisation (ie, in its *auto*biography), but in its non-chronological structure, in its brevity, whimsy, meditativeness or in its iconoclasm. This ambition might even see Rossi allied with seemingly the most unlikely of bedfellows, the English writer and critic Lytton Strachey, whose *Eminent Victorians* (1918) has long been regarded as the most modern form of biography.[60] The novelty of this book is attributable largely to its irreverence (something deliberately masked by its ironic title), for rather than celebrating the lives of its four protagonists – the Roman Catholic cardinal Henry Manning, the historian Thomas Arnold, the military general Charles Gordon and the social reformer Florence Nightingale – it instead mercilessly teases and lambasts them (or rather, just the first three; Florence Nightingale is actually consistently praised). Its modernity, therefore, was to release biography from hagiography, and from the model of the 'great man', espoused by the Victorian philosopher Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), which fuelled Strachey to break from nearly two millennia of biographic history by also allowing great women into the pantheon. But its modernity is also in its contemporaneity, which again sees Strachey chime perfectly with the Italian architects and historians of the 1960s and 1970s in his relationship to the past, or as he writes in the preface to his book: 'Human beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past. They have a value which is eternal and must be felt for its own sake'[61] – for *The Architecture of the City*, then, read *Eminent Victorians*, and for the monument, read the life.

But perhaps the most radical rethinking of biography – and with it, theory – is that it need not be written at all, but could in fact be spoken. In the process, accounts of either architecture's distant past or immediate present (to borrow Anthony Vidler's term)[62] need not ascribe to the literary templates of the treatise, monograph, manifesto or indeed even the biography, but could instead be cast only as oral history. To a certain extent, such an allegiance is already in place with Vasari, for the writing of the *Lives* developed largely out of transcription, and the first-hand encounters Vasari engineered with so many of his subjects, even if the voice that resonates out of its pages is uniformly Vasari's own. Given such transubstantiation, an alternative model that does preserve the patter, idioms, accents and tics of assorted speakers (that is, the vulgate or common language of a vernacular) is the collection of short biographies assembled a century later by the late-seventeenth-century English antiquarian and writer John Aubrey.

Aubrey titled his collection *Brief Lives*, which despite its self-declared brevity still comprised over 400 separate entries for various figures that included the courtier and explorer Walter Raleigh, the essayist Francis Bacon, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, the chemist Robert Boyle, the astronomer Edmund Halley and the playwrights Ben Johnson and William Shakespeare. Rather like the *Lives*, the work originally began under the aegis of another author and an opportunity to generate material for their own collection – for Vasari, this was Paolo Giovo, a

biographer and art collector under the patronage of Cardinal Farnese, while for Aubrey it was the Oxford scholar Anthony Wood, who was then hoping to prepare his own anthology of biographies. But in both cases a commitment to research transformed the scale of the undertaking and soon made the work reducible only to its researcher. For Aubrey, the *Brief Lives* was also not so brief, for the biographies took 13 years to assemble (beginning in 1680), and ended not in publication but in the delivery of a three-volume manuscript of notes to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in 1693. It was only later, in 1813, that these notes were anthologised and published, with the following two centuries seeing the release of ever-more complete and uncensored versions.[63]

A Victorian reader of *Brief Lives* described Aubrey as 'the Boswell of the first coffee-houses', placing his legacy both within the high world of literary biography and the more lowly world of London's then nascent café (and caffeine) culture.[64] It is a description that Aubrey would presumably have endorsed, for as much he strove for a very high level of accuracy (spurred by his loyalty – like Diderot, nearly a century later – to the empiricism of Francis Bacon's natural philosophy), like Vasari he also recognised the value of gossip, anecdote and the appeal of a good story. These pleasures prompted him to self-deprecatingly define his assembled biographies as *schediasmata*, or 'pieces written extempore, on the spur of the moment'.[65] Others, including his initial employer Anthony Wood, were less enchanted, and took such an approach as tacit acknowledgment of a kind of salacious casuistry, while even those charged with the book's publication in the nineteenth century allowed disproving editors to redact large swathes of text, often corresponding to the funniest or most outlandish stories. Aubrey himself, however, never wavered in his commitment to such content, for even if the anecdotes he quoted were deemed idle chatter or licentious scandal, he was never anything but meticulous in the way he captured and attributed this material, which in itself not only offers a still very modern recognition of the historical importance of hearsay, but anticipates another kind of biographer and Sigmund Freud's contention that 'in the realm of fiction we find the plurality of the lives we need'.[66]

Like Vasari (and Freud), the prevalence Aubrey gave to this kind of history and these kind of lives, whether actual or embellished, was to an extent also a consequence of his disinterest in politics and religious extremism ('Faugh! The cassock stinks!' he declared, no doubt encouraged by the iconoclasm of his friend Thomas Hobbes).[67] This emancipation from the ideologies of both church and state (rejecting the sword *and* the crosier, as symbolised in Hobbes' famous *Leviathan* frontispiece), meant that his biographies never gained access to the political revolution of seventeenth-century England, but instead Aubrey concentrated his efforts in occupying the parallel world of England's seventeenth-century intellectual revolution.[68] Of course, more immediately this meant occupying not the corridors of the court and parliament but assorted coffee-houses, taverns and the dining tables of his friends, and which in the process meant he could populate his biographies with the one thing so many of them still lack – their humanity. Indeed, as Kate Bennett – editor of the definitive edition of the *Brief Lives* – writes, the range of Aubrey's acquaintances is bewildering:

> *Some were of high birth, like the earls of Pembroke and the earl of Shaftesbury; and some were luminaries. He knew the philosophers John Locke and Thomas Hobbes (whom he met when he was eight and the philosopher was 43, and invited him home to meet his family). He knew the poets John Dryden, Samuel Butler, Andrew Marvell, William Davenant, Thomas Shadwell, Edmund Waller and John Milton. He was friends with the physicians William Harvey, who treated him, and Thomas Willis, whom he hoped would take the grand tour with him, and who bought one of his properties. He knew the artists William Dobson, William Faithorne, who drew him, and Wenceslaus Hollar, who made etchings*

63. Before 2018, the definitive version of the text was John Aubrey, *Brief Lives: Together with an Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*, edited by John Buchanan-Brown (London: Penguin, 2000), which was based largely on an 1898 version edited by Andrew Clark. But more recently Kate Bennett has edited an expanded version now recognised as the standard edition: John Aubrey, *Brief Lives, with an Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*, two vols, edited by Kate Bennett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

64. Quoted by Michael Hunter in his foreword to John Buchanan-Brown's edition of *Brief Lives*, ibid, p VII. Boswell, of course, refers to James Boswell's biography, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791), a milestone in the history of the genre. The fashion for drinking coffee in London began in 1652 when Pasqua Rosée, the Greek servant of a coffee-loving British Levant merchant, opened London's first coffeehouse against the stone wall of St Michael's churchyard off Cornhill in the City of London. See Matthew Green, 'The Lost World of the London Coffeehouse', *The Public Domain Review*, accessible online at: https://publicdomainreview.org/2013/08/07/the-lost-world-of-the-london-coffee-house.

65. Kate Bennett, 'General Introduction', from her Oxford edition of *Brief Lives*, op cit, p XXXII. A *schediasm* was an early modern English word meaning 'a sudden invention, or a work extempore'. See Alan Stewart, *The Oxford History of Life Writing, vol 2: Early Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp 233–34.

66. Sigmund Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death', 1915, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol XIV (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p 291.

67. Quoted by John Buchanan-Brown, introduction to his Penguin edition of *Brief Lives*, op cit, p XVII.

68. The tempestuous political landscape of seventeenth-century England was perhaps best captured by the English Civil War (1642–51), the Post-Reformation Test Oaths (1672, 1678) and the dissolution of parliament under Charles II (1681). The intellectual revolution was represented by so many of the figures Aubrey profiled, including Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and William Shakespeare.

69. Kate Bennett, op cit, p XXXIII.

70. This term is my own. In computational science there is a 'relational model', developed in 1969 by the English computer scientist Edgar Codd, and which analyses data through its 'relations', but no concept of 'relational history' exists. I am using it simply to propel the model of human relations – of one figure influencing or even just interacting with another – onto typically more autonomous, isolated models of understanding history.

71. Louis O Mink, 'History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension', *New Literary History* 1, 1970, pp 541–58, quote pp 557–58.

72. Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, 1951 (New York, NY: Vintage International, 1989). On the history of audio tape see Eric Daniel, C Denis Mee and Mark Clark (eds), *Magnetic Recording: The First Hundred Years* (London: Wiley, 1998).

73. Linda Sandino, 'Speaking Memory …', *AA Files* 61 (winter 2010), pp 116–17. See also Matthew Partington and Linda Sandino, *Oral History in the Visual Arts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), and Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998).

74. Linda Sandino, 'Speaking Memory …', ibid, p 116.

75. Archives of American Art Oral History Programme at the Smithsonian: https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/about-the-collections; Chicago Architects Oral History Project: http://digital-libraries.saic.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/caohp; Pidgeon Digital: https://www.pidgeondigital.com; Architects' Lives collection: https://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Architects-Lives. On architecture's relationship to oral history, see Naomi Stead, Janina Gosseye and Deborah van der Plaat (eds), *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019).

76. Ernst Gombrich, 'There really is no such thing as art. There are only artists' – opening lines from his *The Story of Art*, 1950 (London: Phaidon, 1992), p 3; Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, 1964 (London: Academy, 1973). One of the few architectural writers to have endorsed the value of lives over projects – or rather, lives as a way of better understanding projects – was the historian Esther McCoy, who in an oral history from 1987 recalled that her book '*Five California Architects* didn't get too high marks among historians because there was too much in it that was not the way architectural history was written. … I don't know really how to describe it except that it dealt more with their lives and my feeling that architecture came out of people, and those people came out of backgrounds and the things they saw when they were children, things they grew up with, and how these affected their own points of view – things that were not purely architectural.' Esther McCoy, in Susan Morgan (ed), *Piecing Together Los Angeles: An Esther McCoy Reader* (Valencia, CA: East of Borneo, 2012), p 15.

for him. But he also knew actors and financiers and those who had travelled to the Near East, North Africa and the American colonies. He knew soldiers and scholars and politicians, astrologers and newsletter writers. He knew mapmakers, watchmakers and dressmakers; he knew heraldic painters, instrument-makers and printers; he knew farmers, cheese-makers, plant collectors, goldsmiths and theatrical scene-painters; dancing-masters, monumental masons, satirical wits, country wives, surveyors, parsons, bishops and gravediggers. He made the acquaintance of the former landladies of learned men and the widows of portrait painters, poets and mathematicians. He knew schoolmasters, attorneys, bowling-alley proprietors with astrological interests, parsons with mathematical interests, country squires who studied insects and fellows of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges.[69]

Ultimately, however, it is not the quantity of figures that distinguishes Aubrey's *Brief Lives* but the quality of the resulting biographies – a quality that resides most immediately in its charm and humour (which like the Vasarian model, helps us remember the lives he is actually writing about), but also in its garrulousness, which essentially enables Aubrey to make connections, not just in terms of his descriptions and quotes from the multitude of figures physically around him at the dining table or in the bar, but historical connections that allows the reader to understand one figure through another. This in turn helps propel the singularity of biography into what one might term a much larger *relational* history.[70] Aubrey even went so far as to acknowledge the possibility of this second life for his *Brief Lives* by giving visual representation to these possible relations – rather like Vasari's absent panels – frequently decorating his manuscript with dot, dot, dot ellipses (…) as beacons of blankness to future scholarship and discussion; meaning that what initially sold itself as *Brief Lives* could later easily be construed as an *Extended Project*.

Both life and project are therefore indelibly linked through their mutual commitment to the verb ideally suited to represent them, through their *projection*. And for biography – or more especially autobiography – this again attests to the value of the voice, the thing that *pro*jects the best. Moreover, spoken lives naturally introduce into a historiographic canon a certain degree of narrative, because when one speaks of the past, including our own, we naturally tell stories. 'Stories are not lived but told', remarked the philosopher and historian Louis Mink. 'Life has no beginnings, middles or ends; there are meetings, but the start of an affair belongs to the story we tell ourselves later.'[71] Mink wrote these words in 1970, by then already in the mainstream of a moment that had first seen history reintroduced into a modern lexicon and then succeeded shortly afterwards by memory (a transition Rossi's *The Architecture of the City*, from 1966, also ably demonstrates). At the vanguard of this same movement were two totems introduced at exactly the same time, Vladimir Nabokov's memoir, *Speak Memory*, published between 1936 and 1951, whose title offered a flag to a new kind of historiography that was receptive to the value of biography, and, more pragmatically, to the invention of magnetic audio tape, developed in Germany also in 1936, and which, after the country's defeat in the Second World War, was universally adopted in 1951 as the standard, and very accessible, medium for all vocal recordings.[72]

As the oral historian Linda Sandino has convincingly shown, the tape recorder triggered the expansion of oral history as a discipline, most notably employed by Allan Nevins, who established the Columbia University Oral History Research Office as early as 1948, a model soon adopted elsewhere, especially in the UK, with social historians, in particular, using their recorders to uncover a 'history from below'.[73] Of course, the tape recorder also prompted the default fault of journalistic copy, the interview, a form of writing as easy to digest as it is to commission and enact, and whose structure seemed perfectly

Above and overleaf: Edmund Engelman, photographs of the couch and study of Sigmund Freud, Bergasse 19, Vienna, 1938 © Verlag Christian Brandstätter

in-keeping with twentieth-century consumer culture (both reinforcing and parodying the customer questionnaire), even if its origins, as Sandino argues, can just as easily be traced to the religious catechism: 'Who made the world?' 'God made the world.' 'Who made God?'[74]

These theological speculations on an absent but ever-present divinity also found an interesting modern equivalency in the visual arts, because encouraged by Nevins' work at Columbia, other oral historians soon discovered a kind of paradoxical attraction in artists and architects talking about their lives and work through the one medium that denied their seemingly fundamental visual character – their voice. This saw the establishment of the Archives of American Art Oral History Programme at the Smithsonian (1958) – initiated with interviews with the artists Charles Sheeler and Edward Hopper – which in turn later encouraged the setting up of the Chicago Architects Oral History Project (1983), and in England, the collection of audio architectural interviews conducted by the editor of *Architectural Design*, Monica Pidgeon, Pidgeon Digital (1979), and the Architects' Lives collection (1995) within the National Life Stories oral archive at the British Library (1987).[75]

But the value of these oral histories need not extend only as far as the subterranean archive, or the instinct to simply record for posterity the tremulous-voiced testimonies of an octogenarian artist or architect. Rather, in following an Italianate faith in the past to measure the present, one could even come to recognise that these voices might have something to say – not just because they offer the possibility of finally filling-in the biographical void in architecture's historiography, nor because their cadences preserve the legitimacy of both an idiomatic and classical allegiance to architecture as a language, but because listening to them, or indeed reading them through transcription, conveys a very compelling kind of architectural wording outside of the remit of practice – ie, an architectural theory. Such a theory would also play to an architect's almost preternatural strengths, because even if history shows architects to be consistently handicapped when it comes to writing, the oral archives demonstrate their almost uniform brilliance at speaking. And ironically, despite the literary forms through which they choose to present themselves, what they seem most brilliant at is speaking about not their work but their lives, which perhaps might allow the historian to paraphrase Ernst Gombrich in suggesting that 'there really is no such thing as architecture, there are only architects', and invert Bernard Rudofsky's mantra in presenting this oral history as 'architects without architecture'.[76]

Nevertheless, buildings, as well as the graphic rituals that lead to their realisation, might naturally still find their way into the conversation. In 1957 the architect Le Corbusier returned to the Bourlément hill in Ronchamp, close to France's Swiss border, and conducted a thorough inspection of the Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut, which he had completed on the same site two years earlier. Somewhat overcome by what he took as the building's poetic dimension, he suggested that it was imbued with a 'phenomenon of the unutterable', although he was still just about able to utter to himself: 'But where did I get all of that?'[77] Three years later, having had time to consider this question more fully, Le Corbusier wrote in *L'Atelier de la recherche patiente* (1960) that, 'When one travels and is a practitioner of visual things, architecture, painting or sculpture, one sees with one's eyes, and one draws in order to take inside, into one's own history, the things that one sees. Once things have been interiorised through the work of the pencil, they remain within for the rest of one's life; they are written there, inscribed.'[78] The presupposition here, as if it needs emphasising, is that the ultimate architectural interior is located within the life of the architect who created it, and that the surface on which one inscribes architectural speculation (that is, on which one theorises) is not the parchment, blank cartouche, book or even the cathedral wall, but the self.

77. Le Corbusier, *Ronchamp, les carnets de la recherche patiente*, notebook 2 (Zurich: Girsberger, 1957), quoted by Danièle Pauly, 'The Chapel of Ronchamp as an Example of Le Corbusier's Creative Process', translated by Stephen Sartarelli, in H Allen Brooks (ed), *Le Corbusier: The Garland Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp 127–42, quote p 128. I am very grateful to Adrian Forty for highlighting this quote to me.

78. Le Corbusier, *L'Atelier de la recherche patiente* (Paris: Vincent Fréal, 1960), p 37, quoted by Danièle Pauly, ibid, p 133.

79. Socrates apparently spoke these words in 399 BC at his trial for impiety, for which he was subsequently sentenced to death, and which were later recounted in Plato's *Apology*, 38a, 5–6, accessible online at: http://www.sjsu.edu/people/james.lindahl/courses/Phil70A/s3/apology.pdf. The term 'talking cure' was suggested first by Bertha Pappenheim, known in case studies by the alias Anna O, in reference to the treatment she was receiving in the 1880s by her Viennese physician and neuroscientist Josef Breuer (mentor at the same time to a young Sigmund Freud). See Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time*, 1988 (London: Papermac, 1989), pp 63–67.

80. See Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood', 1910; and 'The *Moses* of Michelangelo', 1914, both from Sigmund Freud, *The Pelican Freud Library*, vol 14, Art and Literature, translated by James Strachey (London: Pelican, 1985), pp 142–232 and 249–82. See also Ingrid Rowland and Noah Charney, op cit, p 349.

81. See William Runyan, *Life Histories and Psychobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

82. Freud's distinction between the Irish and the non-Irish is itself almost certainly also fabricated, and its only source seems to be an extended parenthesis in Anthony Burgess' preface to *Modern Irish Short Stories* (London: Viking Press, 1980). Freud's in fact spurious line about the imperviousness of the Irish to psychoanalysis is quoted by a character in Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006), which prompted a flurry of ultimately fruitless academic research for its origin, at least until the film's screenwriter, William Monahan, admitted to its embellishment based on Burgess' parenthesis. See Frank McNally, 'The Full Irish, Freud', *The Irish Times*, 7 February 2014, accessible online at: https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/the-full-irish-freud.

83. Adolf Loos, 'Heimatkunst', 1914, in Adolf Opel (ed), *Adolf Loos, Gesammelte Schriften* (Vienna: Lesethek Verlag, 2010), p 444, quoted and translated by Frederic J Schwartz, 'Architecture and Crime: Adolf Loos and the Culture of the "Case"', *The Art Bulletin*, September 2012, pp 437–57, quote p 439. See also Beatriz Colomina, 'Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos', *AA Files* 20 (winter 1990), pp 5–15. Of course, among many and various exceptions to an architecture of psychoanalysis one might cite, firstly, Ernst Freud, the architect and son of Sigmund, whose professional career would involve a number of commissions for psychoanalytic consultancy rooms in Berlin (see Volker Welter, *Ernst L Freud, Architect: The Case of the Modern Bourgeois Home* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2011); and, secondly, the New York architect Peter Eisenman, who has long maintained not one but two analysts (see Thomas Weaver, 'In Conversation with Peter Eisenman', *AA Files* 74 (spring 2017), pp 150–72).

84. Sigmund Freud's own domestic and professional interiors are perhaps best represented by a remarkable set of photographs taken by Edmund Engelman in 1938 – remarkable because they were taken quickly and under extremely covert conditions because of the recent *Anschluss* and the Nazi occupation of Vienna in March 1938. The images reveal the parallel domestic and professional arrangement of Freud's apartment at Berggasse 19, shortly before the Freud family's escape to London in May 1938. See Inge Scholz-Strasser (ed), *Sigmund Freud Wien IX Berggasse 19* (Vienna: Verlag Christian Brandstätter, 1993).

85. See Caterina Cardona and Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa (eds), *Antonello da Messina* (Milan: Skira, 2019), and Ingrid Rowland, 'A Painter not Human', *New York Review of Books*, 9 May 2019, pp 4–8.

But this in turn invites another question as to who might be able to access or even unlock this life, and with it these theories? The humble tape recorder provides one very useful key, but there was another modern invention designed specifically to access the autobiographies of this interior, and that, of course, was psychoanalysis. 'The unexamined life is not worth living', Socrates famously announced at his trial for impiety, but Freud's pioneering work – and more especially his invention of the talking cure – showed that this same life could at least be worth recounting.[79] And among all of the multiple and varied repercussions of this discovery was its profound effect on the writing of biography. Initially, the biographer here was Freud himself, and he tested the possibilities of his own discipline with biographic interpretations of the art of first Leonardo da Vinci and then later Michelangelo, both of which he was inspired to write after first reading Vasari.[80] It was not long, however, before the cultural and intellectual ferment of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna spurred not just other explicitly psychoanalytic speculations,[81] but a more general turn towards the dynamics of a life as a way to explain a body of work and ideas, and which inflected a wide spectrum of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, art, music and politics, but somehow not architecture.

In what turns out to be an apocryphal story, Freud is reputed to have once said that 'the Irish are one race for whom psychoanalysis is of no use whatsoever' (which has its origin in an aside he is said to have made to one of his patients, that in human psychology there are two kinds of people, the Irish and the non-Irish).[82] But the resistances of the architectural discipline to biography show that more than the Irish, it is architecture that has a greater claim to its imperviousness to psychoanalysis; or as Adolf Loos – the Viennese architect who remains the subject of no English biography – succinctly put it: 'we should build in a way … that shuts off the house from the outside world'.[83] Such a resistance could even go so far as to call into question the rights of the architect to a certain kind of architecture, because it might follow that in denying access to a life, and with it, to those spaces in which lives most comfortably project themselves, they are also denying their own occupancy of rooms featuring desks and couches – that is, interiors.[84] This in turn might further suggest that certain emblems of architecture, not least the self-reflexive *St Jerome in his Study*, are perhaps not so appropriate after all, because the saint in effect represents both analyst and analysand, a man seated in his interior, conveying the importance of a work through the allegories of a life. And yet, of course, the appeal of this image remains, and through it and the commitment of its artist, Antonello da Messina, to choose to paint *only* people (as both his subject and object),[85] one might respond to Le Corbusier's plaintive invitation to study not just his life but others before and since, which in the end might enable architecture to recover its theory, its interior and even itself.

Conclusion

Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein,
Goethe in the Roman Campagna, 1787
Städel Museum, Frankfurt

'**W**hat upsets people', wrote the Greek philosopher Epictetus, 'is not things themselves, but their theories about things' – an observation taken from the *Enchiridion*, a short anthology of Stoic advice compiled in the second-century by Epictetus' disciple Arrianus.[1] The same line is used as an epigraph – albeit one rendered largely unintelligible by the fact that it was inscribed not in English but in Ancient Greek – to the publication of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760), Laurence Sterne's great comic novel, which, like the *Enchiridion*, could be appreciated not just in novelistic or aphoristic terms, but as a manual of sorts to a kind of philosophy of happiness.[2] More immediately, the quote also offers a useful postscript to this thesis, aspirationally cast in the same guise, and a reminder that in architecture, perhaps more so than in other disciplines, the seemingly innocent ambition to promote both the historicism and materiality of its various objects still necessarily invokes that greater thing to which these objects might oppose, namely the metaphysics of their theorisation. 'Whoever battles with monsters', Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), 'had better see that it does not turn him into a monster. For if you gaze too long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.'[3]

The tacit argument in this thesis is that such an abyss is represented by that branch of thinking that sells itself as architectural theory – something for which it maintains not just a disinterest, but an instinctive, almost emotional sense of loathing. Accordingly, it rejects all of those traits which it takes as characteristic of architecture's more recent theoretical speculation, and a catalogue of what it deems as failures that might include illiteracy, insensitivity, myopia, a certain fundamentalism, lead-footedness, earnestness, even piety, a preponderance for philosophical ramblings, for a perpetual kind of one-upmanship and perhaps – more than anything else – for the fundamental joylessness of it all.[4] It also rejects those things that theory does, almost alchemically, when it comes into contact with architecture – a discipline appreciated not just for its richness but for its flexibility to deal with both object and idea, but one that suddenly becomes servile when read through theory, somehow reduced to the level of a functionary, relegated to an inconsequential backdrop, or worse, removed and devolved out of the stage altogether. And so, prompted by Victor Hugo, if one were compelled to ascribe a fatalism to architectural discourse, one might imagine such conjecture as transcending even Hugo's own worst-case scenario of 'this killing that', and read the ascendancy of architectural theory as a fate worse than death.

By theory, of course, this wilful reductivism is referring to that succession of philosophers whose works, but even more immediately whose names, flooded into the architectural academy in the wake of 1968, just as its Corinthian capitals and *Prix de Romes* were unceremoniously forced out – a collective of eminences, a new kind of *School of Athens*, who each took over the zeitgeist for six or seven years before the baton was passed to their successor. And so a genealogy of architectural theory means the theories of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Guy Debord, Gaston Bachelard, Gilles Deleuze, Henri Lefebvre, Bruno Latour and Giorgio Agamben. Or rather, to make an important distinction, architectural theory means all those self-annointed architectural theorists who quote these philosophers, claiming them as their own, and who boast of a deeper understanding of the discipline by musing on what they take as the architecture of their works (with architecture used only as an adjective), and who solemnly and ritualistically park their books on the surface of every seminar table, in the body

1. Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, in *Discourse and Selected Writings*, translated by Robert Dobbin (London: Penguin, 2008), pp 219–45.
2. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 1760, edited by Graham Petrie, with an introduction by Christopher Hicks (London: Penguin, 1985), p 31.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, 1886, translated by R J Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), aphorism 146, p 102.
4. A variant on this attack on contemporary architectural theory was first published by the author in 'The Death and Life of Theory', *Revista Materia Arquitectura*, no 16 (December 2017), pp 60–69.

of every sentence and in the detail of every footnote. In the process, all those other, formerly canonic lineages, and the names previously recognised as the very stuff of architecture – like Brunelleschi, Bramante and Borromini; Boullée, Schinkel, and Soane; Le Corbusier, Mies and Gropius – become merely the fodder of architectural discourse, and the prosaic thing onto which the seeming greater nobility of theory applies itself.

Instead of theory, both the matter and methodology of this thesis and the architectural journal through which it speculates is history – something which it takes as being much more sympathetic to the mechanisms of architecture, and (in harmony with the Italian *progetto*) is also something that does not necessarily have to be old and dusty, consigned to the past, but is just as adept at analysing the present, as well as polemicising, even projecting, the future – or as E H Carr put it in *What is History?* (1961), 'good historians have the future in their bones'.[5] Of course, the congruity of this thesis' relationship with history, and the central place its discourse affords to various well-established historical objects, is meant as another provocation, partly to a pragmatic understanding of architecture that describes itself only through the bricks and mortar of its materiality, but increasingly also to its seemingly symbiotic relationship with theory. Indeed, the conventional view of the last few years is as if architectural history is incapable of existing without architectural theory. This is reflected in academic architetcural rhetoric – in conferences and in publishing – with symposia and journals often juxtaposing 'history' papers against more explicitly 'theory' papers, with one bolstering or legitimising the other. But the relationship between the two is at its most stark in education, where courses and teaching positions in contemporary schools of architecture are now advertised as 'history and theory', the Siamese twins of that strain of architecture that exists beyond the realm of design. More recently, still, as Joan Ockman has noted, we have somehow lost the 'and' and the two are now separated only by a slash – history/theory – which we pronounce as if it were one kind of singular, all-knowing entity, 'historytheory'.[6] To write about architecture therefore means to adopt a kind of meta narrative that seamlessly intermingles historical and theoretical allusions, the balance of which modern editorship charges itself with policing.

Again, this thesis, and the larger constellation of issues of *AA Files* through which it speaks, rejects the even-handedness of this mandate, and has explicitly looked to avoid anything that sells itself only through the dogmas of its theoretical methodology. In *AA Files* no essay ever began, 'As Deleuze once said…', or 'In exploring what Mies means by form, it seems pertinent to first ask what Latour means by the network'. Instead what it much preferred, and what this thesis promotes, is writing reducible to the subject matter of its architectural object – to its journals, its texts, its images and its actual architects.

This commitment to architecture's seemingly baser 'things' also finds supportive eulogies in literature – for example, in William Carlos Williams' poem *Patterson*:

> *Say it, no ideas but in things –*
> *nothing but the blank faces of the houses*
> *and cylindrical trees*
> *bent, forked by preconception and accident-split,*
> *furrowed, creased, mottled, stained-secret*
> *– into the body of the light!*[7]

– just as it does, ironically, also in theory, and Roland Barthes' rather surprising comment at the end of *Mythologies* (1957) that 'I have tried to define things, not words'.[8] But perhaps its best anthem can be found in a line from the *Italian Journey* (1816) by the great German romantic writer and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and an assertion that helps suggest a title for the whole: 'I shall never rest until I know that all my ideas are derived not from hearsay or

5. E H Carr, *What is History?* 1961 (London: Pelican, 1964), p 108.

6. For more on the evolving relationship between architectural history and theory see Joan Ockman, 'Slashed', accessible online at www.e-flux.com/architecture/history-theory/159236/slashed, and her lecture, 'Architectural Education as the Research Topic', AA School of Architecture, 13 October 2017, also available online at www.aaschool.ac.uk.

7. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson: Book 1*, 1946–58, in *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2000), p 229.

8. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957, translated by Annette Lavers, 1972 (London: Paladin, 1973), p 117, ft 1.

9. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Italian Journey, 1786–88*, translated by W H Auden and Elizabeth Mayer, 1962 (London: Penguin, 1970), p 347. Irénée Scalbert highlights how this famous line, and especially its last expression, was rendered more expansive by W H Auden's classic translation. See Irénée Scalbert, 'A Real Living Contact with the Things Themselves: Landscape Painters and Architects, 1600–1850', first published in *AA Files* 50 (spring 2004), pp 20–35, and then later republished in the anthology of his essays (equally smitten with Goethe's quote), *A Real Living Contact with the Things Themselves* (Zurich: Park Books, 2018).

tradition but from my real living contact with the things themselves'.[9] The architectural journal, then, like the other objects it promotes within its pages, becomes the thing itself.

The immediacy of this reality, however, should not necessarily be the only frame of reference, for the ambition is actually twofold – to first identify these things, these objects, through a description of all the various aspects of their objecthood, and then to radiate out, evoking a wider set of ideas and associations. Such a process could even be seen to have its own equivalent literary guide and Gustave Flaubert's contention that the physicality of the object can in fact inspire two different modes of writing. 'In me', he wrote in a letter to his lover, Louise Colet, 'when it comes to literature, there are two quite distinct creatures: one who is very taken with being a loudmouth, with lyricism, with soaring like an eagle with all sonorities of phrase and loftinesses of idea; the other who digs and delves into the truth as far as he can, who loves to represent the little detail as powerfully as the other kind, who would like to make you feel almost materially the objects he describes.'[10] In Flaubert's formulation, then, one can find a model for the perfect architectural writer, the perfect kind of journal and the perfect architectural investigation – the poetic loudmouth and the diligent digger; or even that one is a consequence of the other: first dig, and then show off what you have discovered.

Such a model also promotes an opposing methodology to the standard academic way of architectural writing, which often *begins* with interpretation (or in Flaubert's terms 'loftiness') – which it misreads as theory – and then crudely applies this to a succession of unfortunate exemplars, before tautologically concluding with a reiteration of the introductory theorem.[11] In contrast, the argument here is that the advantage of rejecting this approach is not only to induce writing that has a little more humility to it (writing that hides under cover of the object before unravelling it through association, appreciation or critique), but because it also shows that architecture does not need the *appliqué* of philosophy, because multiple ideas and allusions are already embedded within it – that is, in architectonic terms, this thesis aspires towards its identification with the complexity of depth and volume, rather than the superficiality of surface and render.

More radically, in adopting such a model one soon discovers that among all of architecture's various objects is of course theory itself. It also goes almost without saying that this theory did not arrive in 1968, but was there from the very beginning, from the moment Vitruvius chose to define the discipline of architecture in *De architectura* through 'the explication of a set of general ideas or principles' – that is, by the dictionary definition of 'theory'.[12] To this originary moment we should then consider Leon Battista Alberti's almost theological separation between theory and practice in *De re aedificatoria* (*On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, 1452), and recognise the fundamental value of his recurring idea that any form of architectural production not in the form of building is by definition a theory (or rather that an endeavour can be deeemed architectural not simply by its method but by its reason).[13] This would suggest that every movement, style or treatise therefore becomes a demonstration of theory, just as any school, any pedagogy, any exhibition, any architectural undertaking that does not take place on a building site is fundamentally theoretical in character. Naturally, such a remit also covers writing, editing and publishing, or as the Italian architect and editor Vittorio Gregotti put it in 1983 (inverting Albert's paradigm, but still preaching a synthesis between thinking and making): 'I think that for an architect to edit a magazine, like teaching or participating in public debates, is a way of cultivating theoretical reflection, not as a separate activity, but as an indispensable part of design craft.'[14] Both this thesis, and the journal to which it is tied, is therefore a work of architectural theory and a place for architectural theory. To call it anything else would be heretical to the very discipline it represents.

10. Gustave Flaubert, letter to Louise Colet, 1846, from Geoffrey Wall (ed), *Gustave Flaubert, Selected Letters*, translated by Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin, 1997).

11. This approach might best be summed up by that oft-used mantra of scholarly or critical writing, 'say what you are going to say, say it, and then say it again'.

12. From the entry 'Theory' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

13. Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988); see in particular his prologue and the distinction he makes between a carpenter (merely an 'instrument') and an architect (who is in command of both 'reason and method'), p 3.

14. Vittorio Gregotti, 'The Necessity of Theory', *Casabella-continutà*, no 494 (1983), p 13.

This thesis is also a place for other theories and methodologies. The first is iconoclastic and the challenge it makes to traditional academic modes of communicating. Doctorates have long been rightly celebrated as advancing many things, but the pleasures of their reading has very rarely been among them. But this *Thing Itself* has attempted to jettison the typical agonies associated with reading PhDs, and by promoting the essay model, in both form and content, it hopes to have produced a narrative that entertains just as readily as it informs.

Another methodology is still more irreverent. This thesis begins with Victor Hugo, the image of his beloved cathedral and the reiteration of his famous mantra. But it also uses Hugo as running mate in terms of the speed with which it was written. Hugo had originally committed to start writing *Notre-dame de Paris* in July 1830. But the 1830 revolutions and the birth of his fifth child that same month delayed him. Over the same period his finances steadily worsened, and so – with the fee for its completion driving him onwards – Hugo resolved to start and then finish his novel in an even more compressed period of time, beginning on 1 September 1830 and then handing in a complete manuscript to his publisher on 15 January 1831.[15] With Hugo as guide and spur, the writing of this thesis was begun on 1 January 2019 and a first manuscript completed five months later – evidence, of sorts, that effective writing projects always depend on a certain momentum. But it also depended upon a much wider horizon of work and a huge body of research, built up over the previous ten years – research into architecture's relationship to words, images and its architects that has been tested in seminar rooms, lecture halls and in numerous publications, but also field research in terms of the day-to-day requirement to commission, edit, design and publish a serial journal of architecture.

Yet in multiple other ways, the theories and methodologies to which this thesis abides are much more deferential to established models. Among these is a somewhat concealed, but also manifestly still obvious, loyalty to a characteristically canonic set of exemplars onto which it tests out its ideas. To a certain extent this allegiance is disguised by its first object – the gothic cathedral – for in every other sense the selection of objects presented here is wholeheartedly classical: the classicism of Vitruvius, as much as the Renaissance and later baroque neo-classicists of Alberti, Vasari, Serlio and Laugier; or a classical literary tradition that invokes Hugo, Balzac, Flaubert and Goethe; or a classical art and architectural historiography, from Winckelmann all the way through to Sontag; or that decidedly classical lineage of figures who have come to define the modern project, including Hobbes, Diderot, Freud, Le Corbusier, Benjamin and Woolf. One defence for such a cast of characters might be in its riposte to the abandonment of canonic measures of value in the wake of not just 1968 but more recent changes to the way architecture is taught (which privileges contemporary interpretation over historical categorisation, and individual expression over collective responsibility). But a simpler, and maybe more convincing justification would be that the classicism of this canon helps re-establish the classical idea of architecture as language – a conceit which this thesis promotes at every opportunity. This is then used to establish an open invitation to the very best exponents of words and writing – to the novelistic, the poetic and the lyrical – and the conviction that an architectural work (following Reyner Banham's lone homily to the literariness of *Vers une architecture*) might be able to be judged not only in terms of its form or invention, but in the lucidity of its prose. In the process, one might reiterate a reading of Le Corbusier's 'a house is a machine for living in', not as yet another rehashing of the valorisation of architecture as technocratic mechanism (traceable all the way back to Vitruvius' book as a manual of machines), but as an artful and literary nod to the surrealist *machine à réaction poétique*, and the idea that the house (metonym for architecture itself) is essentially a poetic machine – so architecture's objects are also literature's, and so, too, the documentation and writing of architecture should aspire always to the literary.

15. For a detailed account of the actual writing of *Notre-dame de Paris*, see John Sturrock's introduction to his translated version of *Notre-dame de Paris* (London: Penguin, 1978), pp 8–11.

Both the hope and the ambition is that this literariness is inflected in this thesis, just as it unlocks an adversarial but also affectionate relationship with theory in the field of architecture; and in the reading it presents (consistently appealing to the high and the low, the material and the abstract, the canonic and the overseen) of the four principal components of an architecture of editorship – of the *journal*, not simply as consumable product but as a school, an association and a culture; of the *text*, or more precisely the sentence, as the single most important determinant of architectural value; of the *image*, not simply as illustration but as its own form of syntax and an autonomous architectural idea; and of the architectural *life*, whose narratives, peculiarities and embellishments might allow the discipline to not just reclaim some sense of its humanity, but offer a platform to better describe itself.

And yet, at the same time, such optimism needs also to be qualified by the parallel history of failure that runs throughout this research – evident, in different degrees, in each of its four components, almost as an incidental kind of reality-check to the sometimes heroic nature of their projection. In her own 'Notes on Failure' (1982), the American novelist Joyce Carol Oates writes that these deficiencies and disappointments might even be the single defining quality to any artistic endeavour:

> *The artist, perhaps more than most people, inhabits failure, degrees of failure and accommodation and compromise: but the terms of his failure are generally secret. It seems reasonable to believe that failure may be a truth, or at any rate a negotiable fact, while success is a temporary illusion of some intoxicating sort, a bubble soon to be pricked, a flower whose petals will quickly drop. If despair is – as I believe it to be – as absurd a state of the soul as euphoria, who can protest that it feels more substantial, more reliable, less out of scale with the human environment? When it was observed to T S Eliot that most critics are failed writers, Eliot replied: 'But so are most writers'.* [16]

However, even if read as essential to any artistic sense of self-justification, such failures might ultimately be construed not as some quirky rejoinder, some necessary piece of iconoclasm, but as something far more cataclysmic – in this case, an apocalyptic end to *both* the 'this' and the 'that', the building and the book. On 15 April 2019 a fire destroyed the entirety of the timber roof and spire of Notre-dame Cathedral. The blaze was rumoured to have sprung from a spark from a short-circuited electrical socket – confirmation, of sorts, of Hugo's prophecy that 'small things overcome great ones', even if the imagined inscription ΑΝΆΓΚΗ remains, because it was inscribed into stone (which survived the blaze) rather than wood (which did not). [17] This collapse of the world of fiction into that of reality was only further magnified in the days immediately after the fire when Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* soared to the top of France's bestseller lists – its rude health placed in obvious contrast to the smouldering ruin of the cathedral, finally offering a kind of ironic proof of the book having at last killed off the building. [18] While in London a year earlier, a temporary directorship of the Architectural Association chose to summarily dismiss the entirety of its publishing team, which in turn precipitated the immediate termination not just of its assorted books, nor even of the journal *AA Files*, but of the founding idea of the Architectural Association as first-and-foremost an editorial project, out of which a school and wider association subsequently grew. It was rumoured that the decision was sparked by a dramatic rise in rents of the association's Bedford Square properties, which the AA chose to protect at the expense of its mandate to edit and to publish – meaning that the building (or at least this particular building at 32 Bedford Square), had enacted a Frollo-like piece of vengeance, inverting the archdeacon's prophecy by finally killing off the book. [19]

But with both the building and the book which underpin this thesis now dead, the only thing that has somehow survived is Hugo's nineteenth-century

16. Joyce Carol Oates, 'Notes on Failure', *The Hudson Review*, vol 35, no 2 (summer 1982), pp 194–208, quote p 195.

17. Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, translated and with an introduction by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1978), pp 187–88. On the fire itself, see 'What We Know and Don't Know About the Notre-dame Fire', *The New York Times*, 15 April 2019, accessible online at https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/15/world/europe/notre-dame-fire-what-we-know.html.

18. See John Henley, 'Victor Hugo's Notre-dame Novel Tops Bestseller List After Fire', *The Guardian*, 17 April 2019, accessible online at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/17/the-hunchback-of-notre-dame-book-tops-bestseller-list-fire.

19. In July 2018 a new director, Eva Franch i Gilbert, assumed control of the Architectural Association, and promptly announced that *AA Files* would continue – a decision provoked not by any kind of altruism or public acknowledgment to correct the errors of the immediate past, but by the realisation that in not publishing a journal the AA would have been guilty of revoking the terms of its founding charter, which in turn would have threatened the school's charitable status and financial sustainability. Constricted by the terms of the redundancy provided to the previous editors and publishing team to only hire replacement editors already employed by the AA, in March 2019 Maria Sheherazade Giudici was announced as the new editor of *AA Files*.

formulation – the death of this at the hands of that still miraculously, but also maddeningly, forming a contemporary mantra to architecture's ongoing speculations. And yet despite a certain reassurance one might feel at the continuity of this historical precedent, or even at its apparent affirmation of Frank Lloyd Wright's faith in *Notre-Dame de Paris* as 'the most illuminating essay on architecture yet written', an account of architecture played out always through a narrative of mutually assured destruction seems fundamentally self-defeating, not least because it periodically robs us of the objects of our affection. One might even diagnose such traumas as a kind of pathology from which we should really try to free ourselves. Sigmund Freud, agent to precisely this kind of release, once wrote of the instinct to refuse objects, and the embrace of aggression, self-destruction and especially what he deemed the 'primitive' compulsion for repetition, as the defining characteristics of the death drive. In his essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), he named this condition Thanatos, after the Greek personification of death, and half-way through his text comes to the paradoxical and unnerving conclusion that 'the goal of all life is death'.[20] Some few paragraphs later, however, Freud challenges his own assertion ('But if we really think about, this cannot be true!' … not least because 'things take on a quite a different aspect in light of the sexual drives'),[21] and with it, offers up an alternative to Thanatos in the figure of Eros, promoter of an opposing set of instincts – creativity, harmony, reproduction, self-preservation and, perhaps most importantly, pleasure.

No doubt compelled by Freud's morality tale, just five years later, the English novelist Virginia Woolf wrote her own account of what she deemed a fundamental condition and came to the same conclusion. 'The triumph of the essay', she writes in 'The Modern Essay' (1925) – which could just as easily be transposed as the triumph of architecture – 'is the triumph of style', and 'the principle that controls it is simply that it should give pleasure; the desire which impels us when we take it from the shelf is simply to receive pleasure. Everything in an essay must be subdued to that end. It should lay us under a spell with its first word, and we should wake, refreshed with its last.'[22] Such an apparently essentialist realisation was also echoed by György Lukács, who went further still in arguing that the style of the best kind of writing might provide 'a conceptual reordering of life', and one that is distinct from 'the icy, final perfection of philosophy'.[23] This, in turn, might even take us all the way back to the beginning, and once again to Vitruvius, who is perhaps undeserving of all the teasing and opprobrium levelled at his prose, because of course even if his vocation denied him the ability to describe the objects to which he felt closest with an appropriate level of lyricism, he was still the first to elucidate the qualities by which we should judge an architectural work.[24] In *firmitas* (solidity), *utilitas* (utility) and *venustas* (delight), Vitruvius had it right, but just in the wrong order, because ultimately the history of architecture as it is expressed through the history of editing, writing and publishing – that is, architecture as Vitruvius first chose to communicate it – shows that in the end it becomes memorable, even essential, not through its necessity but principally through its ability to delight.

> *The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analysing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book –* La Gioconda*, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola – are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure.*
> —Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1873 [25]

20. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, translated by John Reddick (London: Penguin, 2003), p 78. See also Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time*, 1988 (London: Papermac, 1989), especially chapter eight, 'Aggressions', pp 361–416; and Adrian Stokes, 'A Game that Must be Lost' and 'On Resignation' in *A Game that Must be Lost: Collected Papers* (Cheadle: Carcanet Press, 1973).
21. Sigmund Freud, op cit, p 79.
22. Virginia Woolf, 'The Modern Essay', 1925, in *Selected Essays*, edited by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p 13–22, quote p 13. To a certain extent Leon Battista Alberti makes the same point, writing in *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* that 'architecture, if you think the matter over carefully, gives comfort and the greatest pleasure to mankind, to individual and community alike'. Alberti, op cit, p 3.
23. György Lukács, 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay', 1910, *Soul and Form*, translated by Anna Bostock (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp 16–34, quote pp 15–16.
24. Vitruvius defines this triad in Book III of *The Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Morris Hicky Morgan (New York, NY: Dover, 1960), pp 69–100. Peter Collins' excellent examination of this defining triad, 'Commodity, Firmness and Delight: The Ultimate Synthesis', tracing its development, reformulation and reordering in various Renaissance treatises (but significantly, only with the first two qualities – delight always remains third), is published in the Encyclopedia Britannica, and accessible online at https://www.britannica.com/topic/architecture/Commodity-firmness-and-delight-the-ultimate-synthesis.
25. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1873, in Harold Bloom (ed), *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp 17–63, quote p 18.

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