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Migration, Emancipation and Architecture

You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer over the earth. Gen. 4. 12.

A prominent, even unavoidable feature of modernity is that of human mobility, daily in the news due to refugee movements, but also notable in other ways such as the movement of experts such as engineers and computer specialists from India to the USA, worker migration from Turkey to Germany, permanent resettlement, diasporas and nomadic communities of all kinds, and of course tourism. These social phenomena are certainly recognizable in the modern city and celebrated by Saskia Sassen, the prominent human geographer in the US, but the rise of the most important migration of all, colonialism and its many derivations, are constitutive of much that we now recognise as normative in the many legacies that we are heir to.

Modern architecture in the twentieth century was marked by fortuitous shifts of personalities and beliefs, unconsciously shaped by the convulsions of European extremist politics and war.¹ Since pre-modern architecture celebrated permanence and political order above all, this investigation will characterise some clear markers of modernity in the clash of identity and search for the new, most poignant for the exile and the avant-garde, who have also capitalised on new media and forms of expression by force of situation and nostalgia, the example of James Joyce being perhaps the most egregious. But the understanding of modern design for Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco del Co and in their *History of Modern Architecture* was

¹ Not so consciously in the case of Dada, the first questioning of the avant-garde by another avant-garde.

based on a fable,² and we do well to attempt to understand modernity using wider spheres of consciousness, in this instance migration, for the reasons already stated. The historic role of migration in terms of art must be recognised before we examine modernity in due course.

Antiquity

Hailed later as the first world empire, the Persians blended the iconography and tectonics of much of their rivals to express the irenic intentions of the King of Kings in the palaces of Persepolis. Their successors, the Hellenistic followers of Alexander exported classical forms to India, where an eighteenth-century English painter, William Hodges, recognised an instance of such iconic migration, and based a theory of universal architecture on this and other worldwide observations. (Fig. 1) The Romans adopted much of the Greek built achievement to ensure their superiority – Vitruvius’ presentation of architecture ignored signal developments in concrete vaulting to dwell on the minutiae of Greek practice. Yet such empires were stable partly due to their link to cosmological order, a stability that was oppressive to those who were forced to support it unwillingly.

In his magisterial volumes *Order and History*, Eric Voegelin developed the concept of emancipation, first marked out by Moses and the children of Israel’s exodus from Egypt, as an important cultural form, intrinsic to the understanding of Western civilisation. Voegelin applied the concept in various ways, such as the awareness of *metaxy*, for Plato ‘a meditative experience of divine order which stands, actually and perhaps forever, in tension with the established disorder of the life-world.’³ The recognition of both Plato and Aristotle of a single transcendental entity or ‘unmoved mover’ set the scene for the reception of Christianity, which emphasised the salvific

² Trans. from the Italian by Robert Erick Wolf, (New York: Henry Abrams, 1976), p. 9.

³ David J. Levy, *The Measure of Man, Incursions in Philosophical and Political Anthropology*, (St. Albans: Claridge Press, 1993), p. 34.

power of Christ in immediate terms for all humanity ‘in this valley of tears’, immediate in terms of social and personal behaviour and the Second Coming.

Western Europe

Western Europe was then to experience a series of invasions that destroyed the political power of Rome. The classical sense of stability provided by long occupation of the land and the enduring links of tribe and family to ancient cities and shrines was to be disrupted again and again in the European heartlands, as wave after wave of barbarians pillaged or settled. However the endurance of some communities in marginal territories such as Romania and Ireland provided a pole of alterity in contrast to the vagaries of civilisation in great urban centres, still being built during the eighteenth century.

The rise of humanism in the 15th century crystallised a number of forces and urges in two new forms of decisive import. Humanism means the extension of human nature to the limit, as Pico della Mirandola put it, ‘We can become what we will’, in 1486.⁴ Such a desire seemed to bring forth fruit in two directions that mark the character of what we now know as modernity. The first was the application of mathematical method to the visible world, first adumbrated in linear perspective. This geometrical procedure always produced a result, a precursor of seventeenth century mathematical physics yet to come. The second was world navigation, prompted by the piety of both Prince Henry the Navigator and Columbus,⁵ but effected by naval and cartographical aids drawn from different sources. These inchoate advances came together in the Western domination of the globe where perspectival techniques helped to position

⁴ N. J. Rennger, *Retreat from the Modern: Humanistic Postmodernism and the Flight from Modern Culture*, (London: Bowerdean Publishing Co., 1996), p. 14.

⁵ Henry was Grand Master of the Order of Christ, Portuguese heir of the Templars, and the Genoese sailor-merchant’s piety has been widely attested.

gunpowder fortifications, plantations and ports in every clime. We are all aware of the consequences of such colonisation and exploitation in contemporary globalisation.

In its recovery of classical culture, humanism also spawned a revolt against Gothic architecture by way of experimentation promoted by learning as much as by building. Under such conditions it is not surprising that a period of research lasted until Mannerism, giving rise to the Baroque, an inclusive formulation of current traditions, including the Gothic, and high culture. The transmission of Baroque did not depend on pattern books as did the Renaissance, but on the movement of personalities. The translation of Queen Christina of Sweden to Paris and Rome in search of an arcane science of sciences was perhaps unique, and it turned her into the greatest connoisseur of the age. King Louis XIV called Bernini to Paris at the same time as the Duke of Savoy called Guarini to Turin, in the shared desire of promoting their princely renown. Later Fischer von Erlach's years in Rome were rewarded by the call to Vienna and Western architects helped build St Petersburg for Peter the Great on a Baltic marsh.

Modernism

The eventual triumph of neoclassicism by the end of the 18th century was based on the sensibility of the museum and the study, when Francesco Militizia penned his attacks on Guarini from his Roman armchair, never having visited the objects of his disdain in Guarini's Turin, for instance. Earlier in Paris, J. F. Blondel taught history as part of his course – one of the first to do so - but avoided Italy, as he had never visited it, while his student, William Chambers, was able to expound an advanced exoticism due to his travels. Chambers published the principles of Chinese garden design and in Kew Gardens he provided a Mosque, a Pagoda and a Babylonian folly in terms of a proto-

Romantic *Weltanschauung*, only later emulated in nineteenth-century World Expositions and twentieth-century World Fairs.

To this rising exoticism there was a counter-move launched by Capability Brown. This famous landscapist banished all the temples and statuary of Alexander Pope and William Kent for a 'minimalist' landscape in which John Dixon Hunt finds the apotheosis and the crisis of the style:

'People stopped seeing the *art* of landscape and saw what they imagined (if they thought about it at all) to be simply *nature*. Brown's rival, William Chambers (1726-1796), considered Brown's landscape art differed little from "the common fields".⁶

Such an empty landscape was a prophetic omen for the future. Industrialisation, which was agricultural as much as to do with manufacturing, eventually denuded the countryside of parts of Europe, especially England, leading to the paradox of the Nazi demand for *Lebensraum* in the East. The Romantic celebration of folk authenticity heightened the tension between marginal and urban societies, though today we are all bound in so many ways to the imperatives of modernity and the ubiquity of development so that traditional society is at risk of disappearing altogether. Such a demise would represent the loss of a rich source of humane sensibilities and activities over much of our universal culture, riches that such societies have supplied for so long.

Indeed such was the success of industrial society that modern architects saw themselves as its servants. Driven by perspectival solutions on paper, the modernists' propositions for new urban form created as many problems as they solved, leading to much confusion and heart searching among the more sensitive practitioners and observers. What is now realised is that the concept of realised spaces, modelled on

⁶John Dixon Hunt, 'Landscape as Art', *Collier's Encyclopedia*, (New York: P. F. Collier Inc., 1993), Vol. 14, , p. 293F.

principles of decorum and consonant with noble and shared values so typical of Mediaeval, Renaissance and Baroque practice, cannot be repeated due to the restructuring of space in modern urbanism. Since the seventies David Harvey and Manuel Castells have pointed out that ‘the spatial form of society is closely linked to the overall mechanisms of its development . . . urban environments represent symbolic and spatial manifestations of broader social forces.’⁷ What has been really happening is that rampant ‘migration’, over decades rather than in centuries, of commercial and allied forces across the accustomed urban landscape, where only the strongest holds sway – namely industrialised capital, which generates most of the processes and demands, and then governments who have usually set minimal rules and have generously provide the infrastructure such as highways and major transport. All else is optional or ill considered – a prominent example being London Docklands where such tensions are obvious and have no immediate remedy. The placing of Brasilia in the wilderness is a reversal of norms, but justified by complete faith in perspectivist solutions following le Corbusier. (Fig. 3)

Tourism

Parallel with this Gaderene rush to mangle our ‘created environment’, we have the other major migration of modernity, international tourism, the industry of pleasure-seeking migration. For many countries this is their biggest earner, and tourism is partly fuelled by art history and anthropological interests, not just clubbing and the beach. We can see this clearly in France, long the most popular venue for tourists, where Paris between the twenties and the sixties was the centre of world art and high fashion, and of a life style poised between Bohemianism and connoisseurship. (Fig. 2) The dirt and

⁷ Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, Third Edition, (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1997), pp. 478-479.

waste of tourism, generated by the careless, never mind the wear and tear, vandalism and theft, threaten the otherwise serene atmosphere of papal Rome, Angkor Vat and Bali, and any disruption to world political order can have a direct impact on air travel and economies that last for years. Tourism is an exercise in both the ephemeral and the durable as much as in the management of crowds and individuals in various scenarios, the most modern being the museum. This is the building type that unites the structured space of the modern city with that of the tourist, the engaged native and the consumer. First as the princely *Schatzkammer*, or room of curiosities, then as the manifestation of state wisdom and enlightenment (the Louvre and all national galleries), the museum has now capitalised on the mobility of urban populations and tourism to entice them first to blockbuster art shows in the sixties, and now to vast new extensions designed as signature buildings, the example of Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao being copied everywhere. Such a structured space unconsciously combines the commercial practice of the vitrine and the *passage* or arcade so that now there is a complete crossover between select retailing and the museum exhibition. No building type other than the museum/shopping mall represents the collective consumerism of icons/brands in such an interchangeable way.

Reverse Colonisation

The experience of colonisation, long the implement of expansion of all great powers, is now being experienced in reverse in Europe and in North America. While great Western economies today, according to Saskia Sassen, 'emphasise the centrality of highly educated labor (*sic*) and highly specified services' in an advanced urban scenario, she also points out that such 'master images . . . are partial to the point of distortion'. She has argued (and my own experience supports it) that there are

certain factors in post-industrial society that demand the need for low-wage workers and that the informalisation of the workforce presents opportunities for such low-wage workers, especially if they have close communities due to immigration. Such immigration is in fact colonisation in reverse, since most of these immigrants come from the ex-colonial territories as well as from other exploited areas and ex-industrial key-points, within the home nation. (Fig. 4)

Inseparable from the impact of colonialism is the phenomenon of migration linked to development. International migration is produced by population growth and the search for economic betterment due to enhanced educational opportunities and easier communications and transportation. This feature of emigrant nations becoming immigrant or receiving countries, which turns out to have many pluses – the promotion of economic growth and structural changes, the exploitation of natural resources, and the fostering of social development, with new cultures and lifestyles adding to the quality of life. Of course there are pitfalls – various costs and problems such as language training, racial discrimination and the under-utilisation of immigrant skills. So sustainable development and international migration – reverse colonisation – are closely related, since while improving the economy, immigrants adopt the lifestyle of their new country and increase its environmental burden. This scenario of rapid change of migration and development, taken both demographically and economically, must be accepted as a major aspect of politics and of common concern in the early decades of the new millennium, and hence we can now more readily accept the concept of physical and urban colonisation as parallel features of vitality and great benefit, to think about and to plan for. ‘When human beings stop wandering they will cease to ascend in the scale of being’, Alfred North Whitehead said in 1925.

Urban Man

Another feature of modernity is the nature of urban man himself in the developed world. In a paper given in Rio in 1998, I have outlined this question in some detail⁸ and it is consonant with the warning of Marshall McLuhan and others about the rise of the New Tribalism, where the dominant forces of cultural communication become increasingly auditory and iconic instead of literary and serial intellectual forces, which have dominated the West since the Gutenberg Revolution. It should be the purpose of any strategy of urban investigation to make conscious the deepening changes in the profile of society and its multifarious manifestations which we can weakly discern as 'pluralism' but which can be more aptly put as postcivilised society, since the classical attributes of mass society have almost gone. The industrial parallel to this will be the eventual triumph of mass customerisation in production systems, already advancing in many spheres of industry. How will our future urbanism respond?

This is where the concept of colonisation comes in with its fullest vigour and relevance. Since contemporary urban centres have long absorbed the natural perimeters that confronted them, the need or desire for continual expansion must be curtailed. This will become inevitable due to the vigilance of NGOs on every side, now becoming more relevant and determined than any political party, the normative force of past political change. In a democratic society such forces must be welcomed, as they may occupy the almost empty seats of the rank-and-file members of the liberal and socialist traditions as in the past. And the consequent conclusion must be

⁸ 'A Global Home for the Civil Savage: Nature or Constructed Landscape in a Postcivilised Modernity', *Constructing New Worlds, Proceeding of the 1998 ACSA International Conference, 23-27 May, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, Washington DC*, pp. 233-238.

proposed in a full democratic spirit, that of a new colonisation itself – the redevelopment of existing urban entities through radical use of ownership changes and revaluations. Rarely, due to the complexity of legal and other obstacles, has such a policy been properly examined, while with respect to road building it is an acceptable tool. But can we allow the deformed preferences to individuals and corporate ownership to skew the common polity of our greatest and certainly most adaptable resource, the city itself? In the nineteenth century both American and German historians were aware of the loss of sovereignty of the city⁹ – do we have the consciousness and the capacity to restore it, in the interests of democratic and sustainable goals for the post-industrial society of the immediate future?

Too long has urban planning been in thrall to corporatist and industrial forces so long dominant in our political order that we rarely examine their status with respect to urban or city/corporate power itself.¹⁰ The interests of ‘postcivil’ migrants in search of new perspectives of order, otherness and well-being, in a decentered yet increasingly iconic age must fashion the disciplines of creating urban spaces and other provisions to secure the vitality and the variety that the city has, above all man’s creations, come to symbolise more than any other. I propose that the creation of the strategies, based on the insights laid out above, will lead to such disciplines of spatial and other provision that we so sorely lack today.

⁹ ‘Beyond Logistics: Architectural Creativity as *Technê* and Rhetoric in the European Tradition’. *Wolkenkuckucksheim - Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, International Journal of Architectural Theory*, Summer, 1999. Cf.: <http://www.theo.tu-cottbus.de/wolke/eng/Subjects/subject.html>

¹⁰ McQuillan, ‘Beyond Logistics’.

Politics Today

Earlier I pointed out the significance of humanism to Western culture, but humanism is only part of that culture.¹¹ If we find that humanism is not so central, ‘then the need for salvation is correspondingly less and the role of Modernism much more ambiguous.’¹² If humanism arose out of a sense of crisis in European culture (the crisis in the Late Middle Ages) and is now in the Postmodern phase, i.e. in a state of dissolution, we are now in a retreat from modernism itself, the greatest child of humanism. Heidegger had already rejected 500 years of European (humanist) philosophy, though he knew it very well, having taught Leibniz and Second Scholastic. For most, such thorough anti-humanism is not an option, but there is no reason why we cannot find ‘real presences’ – George Steiner’s term with an illustrious precedent – in our own and in non-European cultures, so that the imagined ‘universality’ of humanism might be widened and even deepened for a global audience. As for salvation this has long been an act of personal faith cut off from cultural forms before and since the French Revolution. This gulf is most apparent in modern politics, and is an unmentionable dimension of architecture today. Here the study of European and African migration might have something to teach us.

Beyond the lack of continuity of democracy from ancient Greece until the Enlightenment, a problem ignored or misunderstood by liberal theorists, there is the ulterior question of what politics should be about. These questions have been addressed by the Danish political philosopher David Gress, and he has identified part of the answer in the nature of Germanic kingship, the result of migration replacing

¹¹ Rennger, *Retreat*, p. 80.

¹² Rennger, *Retreat*, p. 85.

Roman order in the West.¹³ Gress has pointed out that even the odd Enlightenment figure such as Montesquieu knew what was at stake. These were the two ideals of *fate* and *honour*, the management of which was the special responsibility of Germanic kingship. Fate has now been seemingly conquered by the elimination of chance in our technological society, while honour has long been a secondary quality, as have all virtues and invisible values, according to the Galilean metaphysics of the new science. In a post-humanist world where the solutions of modernity always seem to breed new problems, it is by taking care of fate and honour, both of which point to salvation or transcendent emancipation that we can grasp political objectives on a rewarding and creative level, since the orders of political reality and artistic truth lie so close together.

Conclusion

To conclude and in contrast with the condemnation uttered by Cain in the epitaph, the New Testament provides a fitting colophon to the search for permanency and truth:

By faith he that is called Abraham obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he abode in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in cottages, with Isaac and Jacob, dwelling in cottages, the co-heirs of the same promise. For he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews, 11, 8-10.

¹³ See his *From Plato to Nato: the Idea of the West and Its Opponents*, (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1998), *passim*.

N. B. Change in Figs. Placement.

Marked 2 = 3. Brasilia

Marked 3=2.Paris