

THE CENTRE OF THE CITY OF GLASGOW
 IS SEEN AS BEING WITHIN THE 'BOX'
 OF THE MOTORWAY AND THE HIGH
 STREET: AN AREA SOUTH OF THE
 CLYDE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO FORM
 ITS SOUTHERN FRINGE SO THAT THE
 CLYDE IS SHOWN TO BE INCLUDED IN
 THE CENTRE.

THE FRINGE AREA OF CITY WHERE URBAN QUALITY HAS BECOME ERODED TO
 BE PLANTED DENSELY WITH CORN AND BIRCH AS IT RETURNED TO THE WILD.

THE ORDER OF THE GRID TO BE MAINTAINED
 OR WHERE VACANT LOTS ARE SECURED TO
 DESTROY THE QUALITY OF PLACE.

THE NEW BUILDINGS AND THE OLD
 HAVE TO BE ORDERED INTO SOME KIND
 OF ORDER. ABOUT ALL THIS AREA HAS
 BECOME A PLACE WITHIN THE CITY.

THE ROMAN SCALE AND SENSE OF ORDER
 OF THE NEW PATTERNS COMMERCIAL
 CENTRE TO BE ENHANCED
 INFILL SHOULD MATCH THE SCALE
 AND THE SENSE OF URBAN PRIDE.
 WHETHER THE INFILL IS A BUILDING
 OR A HARD SURFACE OPEN SPACE
 OF URBAN CHARACTER
 FROM TRAFFIC NOISE

ARE THE QUALITY OF PLACE
 PLACE TO BE PLANTED AS DENIED BY
 BY BIRCH AND CORN



the CITY CENTRE

Part 1:

Many communities – particularly in the northern half of the country – hear in bitter astonishment the political-economic suggestion that industry should about face and return to city centres; centres gutted according to plan of their heritage of practical and handsome warehouses, institutes, railway stations, exchanges; solid buildings that once enhanced the fabric of their city, given to these cities by Victorian citizen patrons, whose industry made the money necessary to build such quality.

Since 1947 state directives have encouraged the local, politically-inspired destruction of much built urban fabric, including great areas of Georgian housing. This destruction has killed the idea of the city as a consistent, civilised place; and, has greatly contributed to the loss of whatever urban nerve the British ever had. The cost to the nation of this particular facet of state-direction has been four-fold:

- destruction of quality of place we cannot afford to replace;
- blight, with its spin-off of vandalism and despondency;
- the cost of delay (comprising the hidden administrative costs both state and private, plus the inflationary increase in the costs of borrowing, building, employing, in ratio to the period of the delay);
- loss of built quality due to a high proportion of the bravest proposals being obstructed, and expenditure having to be cut on what did get built.

The total cost to the country, if ever accounted, may easily be a major contributant to our economic situation: there is no other significant difference with any other European country's administration of building controls apart from our planning bureaucracy.

Therefore it would seem pertinent to begin the question as to the future nature of city centres by recognising the work of Dr Alice Coleman.¹

The inner response to Dr Coleman's *Land Use Planning: Success or Failure* can best be likened to that of a dedicated participant at a revivalist meeting . . . Yeah! Yeah! O Lord! . . . It is now one third of a century since certain architects sinned in strapping their fellow professionals to the planning juggernaut.

Many of the points made on the failures of *Land Use Planning* have been struggled with over a whole professional career; to try to continue to be hopefully creative in spite of planning/aesthetic control has been heart-breaking; yet an architect has no recourse but to try to carry on: only those skills that Dr Coleman possesses can examine and prove that so much has indeed been

full of HOLES

below:
Panoramic view of Leeds 1858
(courtesy the Mansell Collection, London)



needlessly negative and measurably damaging to quality of place.

There seem to be three possibilities for change: continuing financial stringencies may make imperative the invention of a way of measuring administrative productivity related to the betterment of the quality of life.

A second possibility is that fear may bring change. The 're-appraisal', 'research', and extensions of the official role into other professional fields – job-holding through make-work – is resented.

And, perhaps the most fruitful path to real reform would be to invite Dr Coleman to direct a sample of an alternative way of proceeding. If after some time this alternative way was demonstrably better, other areas could choose to emulate the successful working model.

The common sense approach

Common sense is basically two-thirds of Dr Coleman's message: the courage to apply common sense; to admit that something happens to human nature in bureaucratic employment; the nerve to dismantle those parts of the

planning machinery that have not done what they said they were doing, and those that the community can no longer afford.² In the cold light of realism, what can fill the voids in old cities? How can we restore urban nerve?

The attitude to inherited fabric

The fabric of towns and cities is the backdrop to the history of each family, each individual. We have to learn to indicate new respect for the texture and meaning of inherited, yet seemingly ordinary, built fabric.

The early buildings still extant in city centre are the reminders of the first strivings in that place for a sense of an urban order. These early buildings and city furniture bear the marks of the successive communities as they worked to raise the standards of an urban culture.

The architect/urbanist's history of the urban fabric

The history that the architect/urbanist should write describing the development of the industrial environment is of a different nature to that in the conventional school text-book. Ours can rightly be a history of hope, and of

aspirations achieved; for it would be about the creators of prosperity, the makers and the doers, the patrons of the industrial buildings; the majority of whom would be acting in good faith.

This architect/urbanists' history would see the industrial row house when first built of fresh brick, with a neat slate roof, as offering true-angled rooms for furniture bought, and the growth of the industrial city in increments of row houses as a remarkable achievement in provision and organisation. The architect can only feel cheered by such an outlay of individual and collective energy, yet conventional histories manage to twist this tale to imply, and induce, a sense of injury. These conventional histories have, since the mid-1920s poisoned the minds of people in this country: dissatisfaction with housing may not have grown out of neglected, 'tied', industrial housing (abetted by two wars) so much as the school book.

The architect/urbanist cannot assume that all patronage

of building before the time of the welfare state was both uncreative and ill-meant. The opinions of the Georgian innovators of industry who witnessed this hard-surfaced urbanism beginning, and their judgement at the time of their taking innovative responsibility is what architects need to listen to. The atmosphere of hope which saw much energy willingly expended, did seem to rub off the wealth creators on to the populace generally and lasted at least until about 1916.

Cities: where city centres have up to now been located

A definition of city might be that it is the embodiment of the urban sense, and has represented in many cultures that focal place in a region where is offered the widest range of choice of things to observe, buy, partake in . . . from the highest level of a culture to the lowest, some of it local, some imported.

Therefore the city whose centre has been gutted, disassociates its citizens; the centre ceases to be a com-



p.6 upper:

LNWR Manchester: London Road Station c1842;
from *Views of the LNWR* artist A B Tait
(courtesy Museum of British Transport, London)

p.6 lower:

LNWR Manchester: Victoria Station c1842; from
Views of the LNWR
(courtesy Museum of British Transport, London)

below:

Beaten earth, paved routes, water channel, compound walls:
near Daisen-in, Kyoto



prehensible, regenerative place. If disuse has entrained poor transport facilities and uncivilised use; citizens lose their urban nerve.

What quality of fabric supports urban nerve?

A city is a pitch of ordering that is recognisably urban and of no other status of place.

The archaeologist recognises by the cultural pitch of the ordering that the ruins on a site are not those of a town, but a city.

A city is thus recognisable, however composed, whether of little pieces of the accretion of history, or a mixture of big buildings and spaces, or built complexes whose interstices are packed with houses: not because it is grand (Paris), not that it is classical (Priene), not that it is homogeneous (Pekin).

Each place has its appropriate sense of scale of urban order. This order in times of urban sensitivity resides in every object added to the city. When the new addition ceases to contain the germ of the old scale as well as being the future's seed, we witness the death of the sense of city.

Ordering is transmitted by the way everything to do with place is handled: by making a surface to be walked on, of materials that elevate the citizen in his walking to the state of civilised being; the size of the units of paving, their finish, the way they are laid, the appropriateness of the pattern, the style of the ordering – compressed earth can be recognisably urban, and its kerbs and upkeep speaks about whether it is in Paris, Peking, Shiraz or Cairo.

The sum of all the urban decisions as to furnishing and surfacing signal to the passer-by, citizen or stranger, the current sense of urbanity: how the parent community wishes to behave towards itself, how it sees itself. One of the roles of the urbanist is to give the sense of worth to people and to places by indicating possible sweet use.

In the immediate post-Second World War years, architectural students were still set the one day sketch design in Beaux Arts terms:

the Piazza del Popolo – twin sites posing the problem of duality, of equal weight of meaning without loss of individual content;

the Fontana dei Trevi – the problem of termination; of

the built civic gesture; the useful function raised to an urban art form; the focal point in a maze of streets; a recess in which to stand aside in the city; a location that imparts nobility or pleasantness to the act of waiting or passing the time;

the quadriga – the problem of capping, of profile, of movement suggested but not such as to overwhelm; of sufficient civic gesture seen against the sky.

All these are problems that seemed wholly dead but are nevertheless suppositions that tuned the sensibilities of connection, and transmitted the need for carrying on an urban theme – of taking the strands of the built fabric, the existing order, the developing urban scale, and knitting in the new.

Above all, the traditional lesson taught the skill of finding the use that would make the connection appropriate to the present time while maintaining and tuning the urban scale to accept the incursion: such as the road pushed through (Paris by Haussmann or Birmingham by

engineer). As it seemed in the new, the appropriateness of the act of urban addition regenerated and revitalised the existing city.

The nature of the appropriate intervention

There are a number of attitudes with which the problem can be approached; also a number of indications as to the locations where an urbanist could begin to demonstrate the changed nature of the supportable city of the immediate future.

The nature of future sites must be different from sites which we have been accustomed to: future building must be towards the continuation and extension of the existing quality of place – or a conscious contra-quality, equally coherent.

Placement as creator of quality

Part of the destruction of quality of place for the ordinary citizen has been the confrontation of one function of the city with another of socially meaningless status despite planning: often a brute force interjection from outside the community, not through some efforts internal to the group and so comprehensible to them. Some rationalisation as to placement, some clear order signalling the ascendancy of the welfare state, was part of the promise of planning legislation in exchange for loss of certain freedoms of action. The need now is for a sensible interdependence of use, reasonable overlap of urban support systems and services, sequential use; easy communication through common sense adjacency would enhance the quality of use of places. This changed nature of the sites that are now required should be clearly communicated by citizens' groups and their architects to those who undertake the purchase of land on behalf of the collective.

Quality-effective sites need to be sought: sites offering the opportunity to a new building to act creatively within a district to the most effect for its betterment: in many cases in existing communities, this means the retention, restoration, renewal, or restitution of the quality of that specific place. The change of emphasis from sites of a wholesale character to those of an integral character, should form the majority of the acquisitions in the immediate future.

Acceptance of reality

The acceptance of reality has to be by the citizens of the place as well as by those external to it (the whole community, the politicians, central government administrators); and perhaps architects/urbanists could begin to offer to us evidence of new urban forms, appropriate to our islands of the mind.

In Britain, one part of the reality is the city full of holes, due to our taking too literally every planning notion since the garden city. Another reality: the missing patrons of independent mind and means, due to their deliberate elimination by our taking too literally the political doctrines current in the nineteenth century. High streets are in places dying of under-patronage, and from the emptying of the buildings due to over-use of the channel as a traffic artery, compounded by the demolition of a supportive hinterland. Gaping holes in the fabric and slashes cut by new roads have followed, after a policy, for reasons of public health, of the removal of interstitial

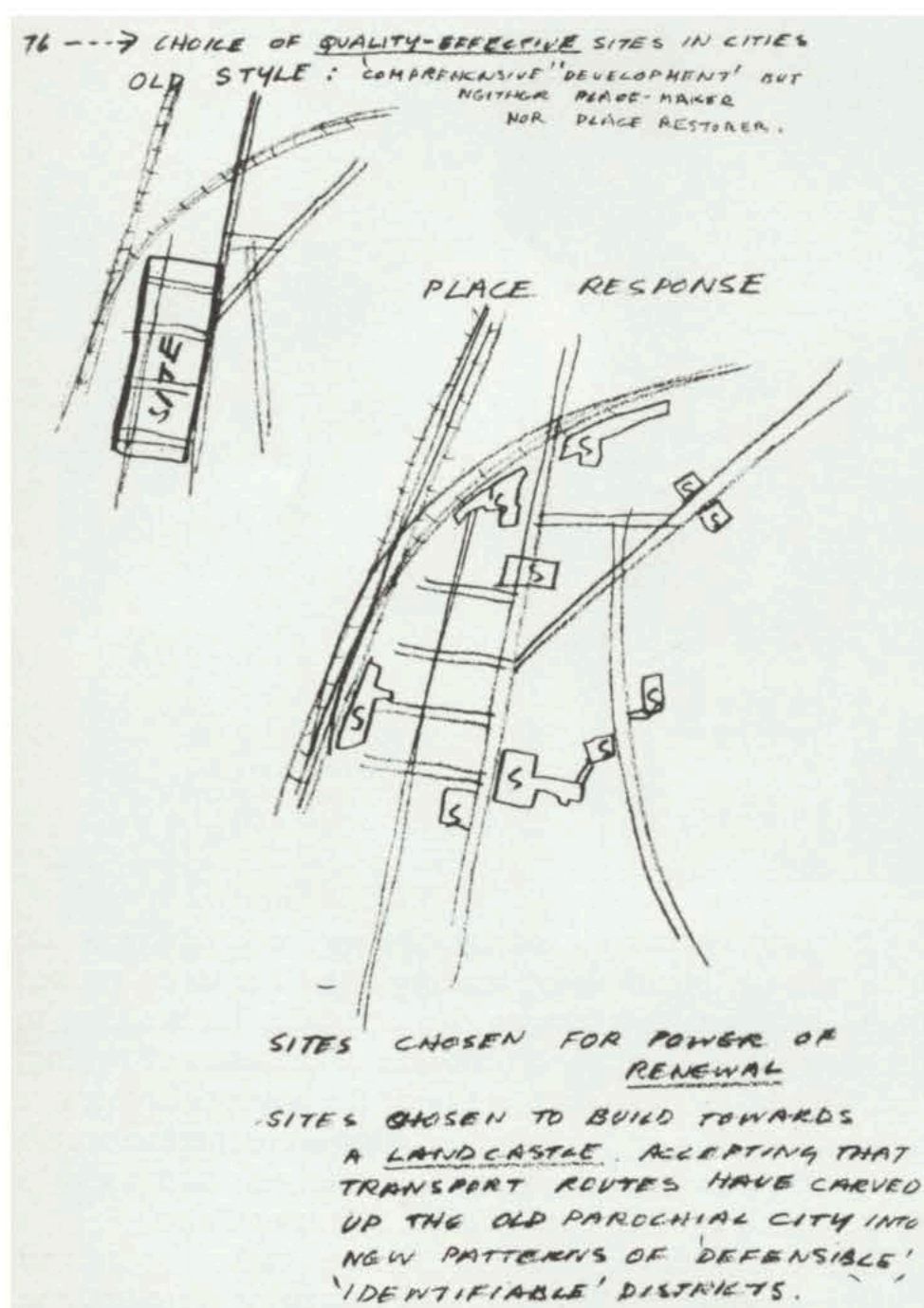
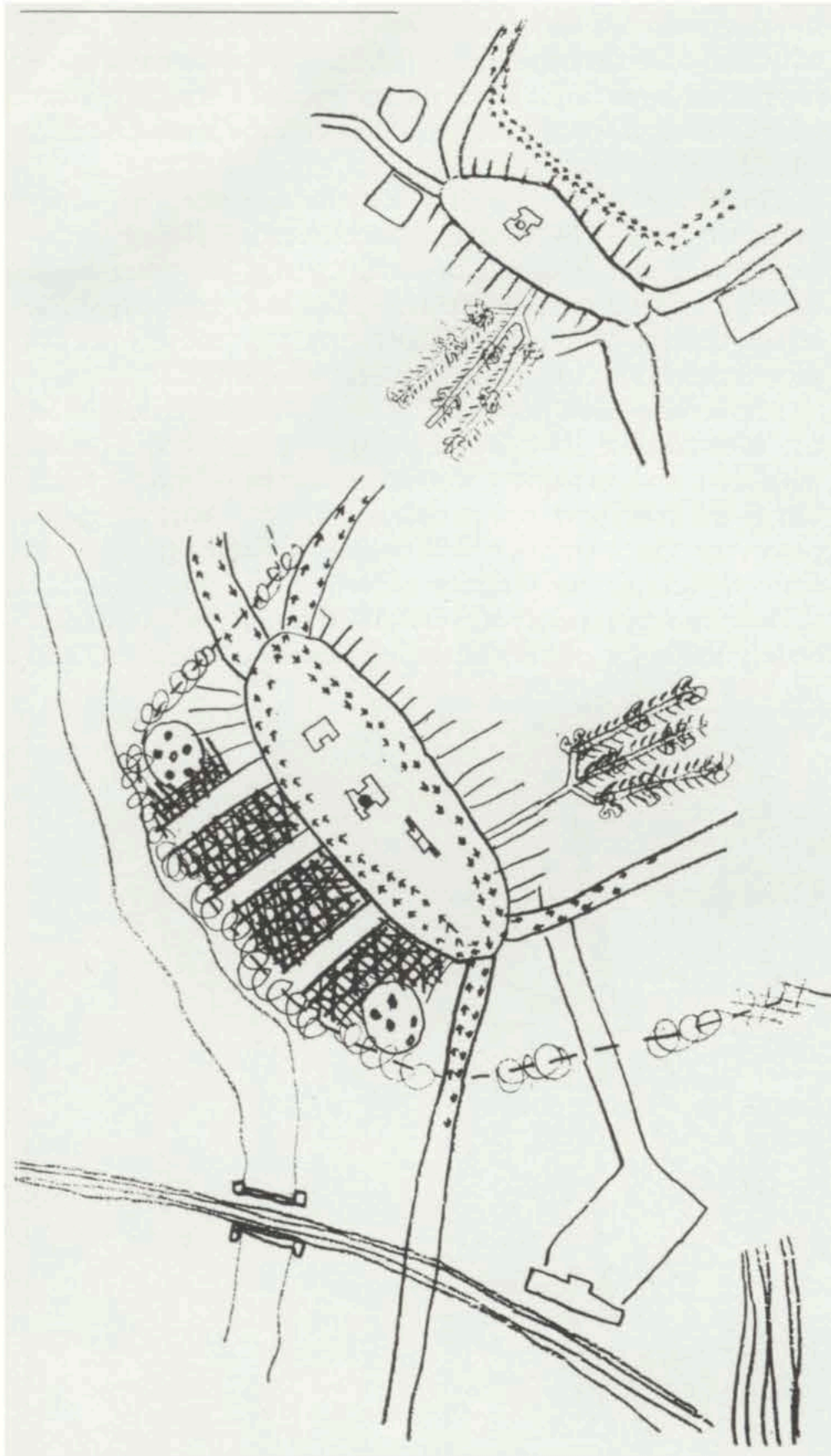


Diagram of quality-effective sites . . . choice of location
Basis of choice: place response, power of renewal of strategically positioned replacements of pieces of the city fabric
Aim: to build towards the formation of landcastles in the city, accepting that transport routes have carved up the old parochial units of city composition and that new defensible and identifiable districts can be given form



left:

A small-scale high street with the larger shops (encroachments) removed

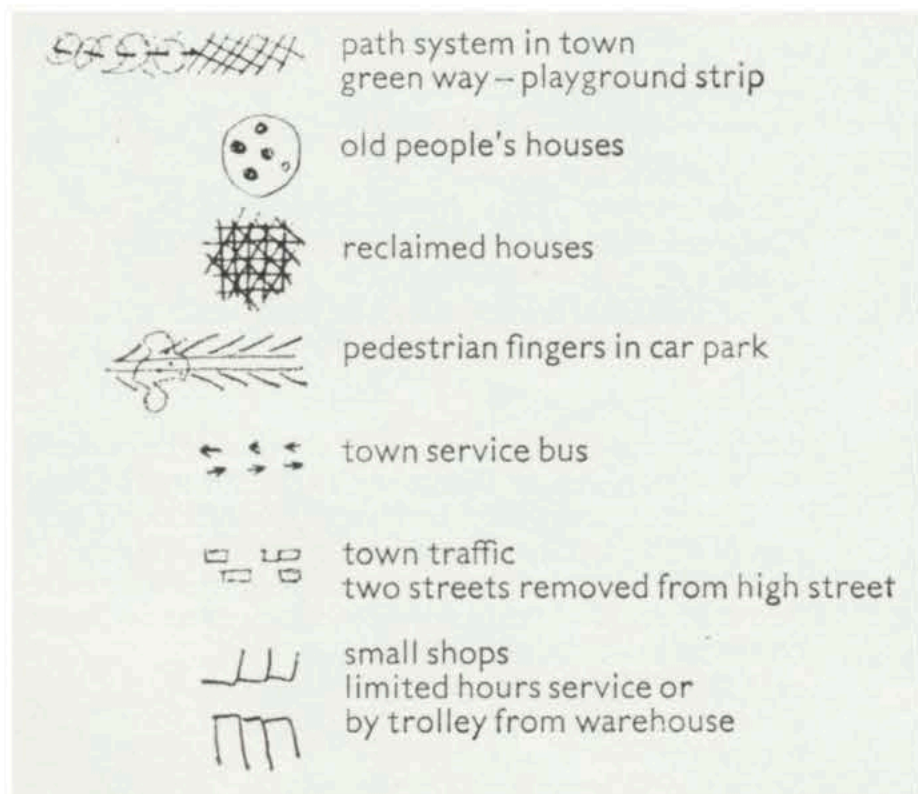
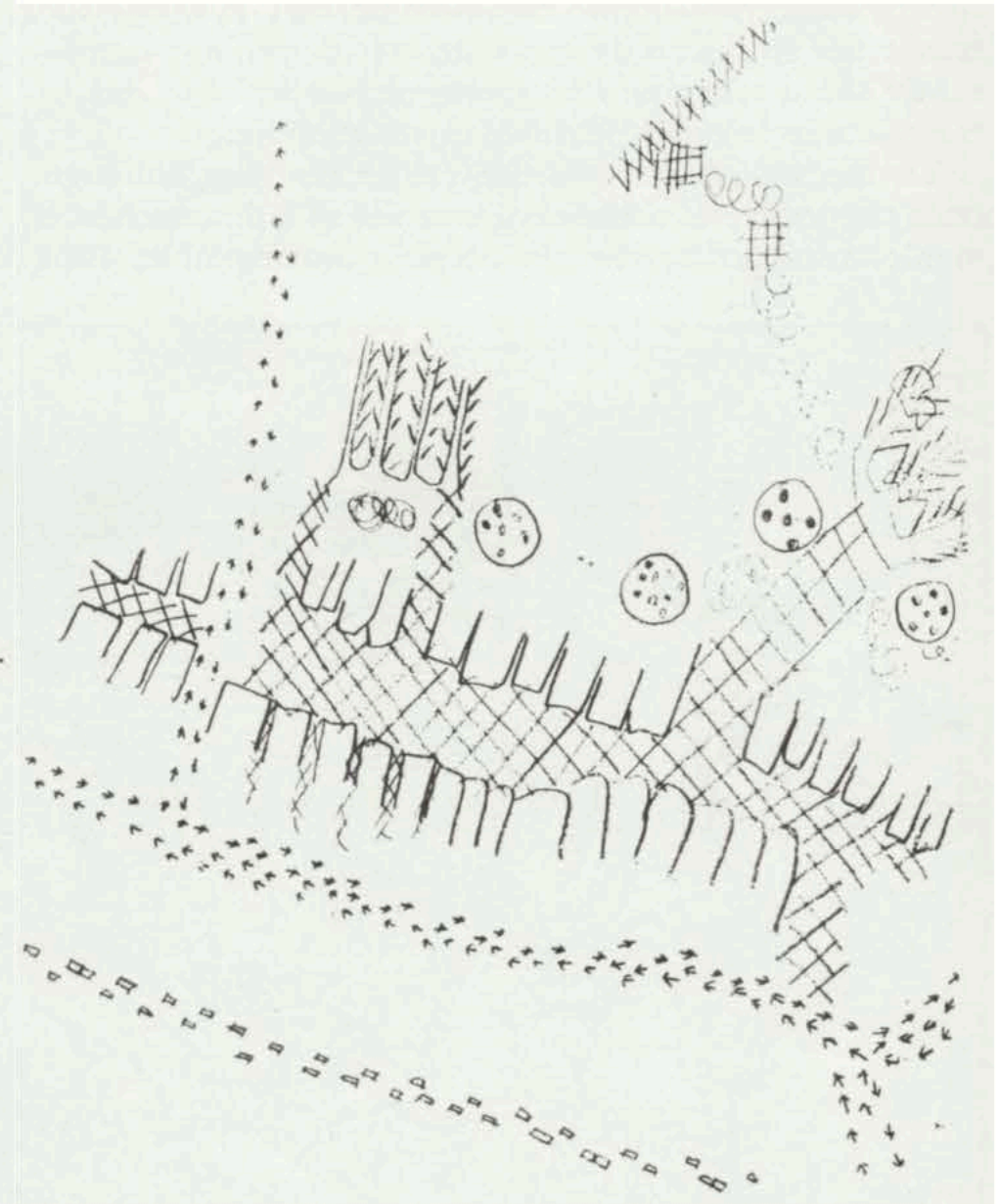
below left:

Provincial town with established local market. Large scale shops are removed from the high street to enhance its use as 'weekly' market place

below right:

High street of historic town

The premise: traffic serves the people in a town, not the existing buildings, not the right to increase the scale of commercial use in the centre of old road networks



buildings, and many solid, small-windowed buildings of previous energy epochs. *The city centre is isolated by vacant sites and is full of holes.*

Change of patronage

The open society has to have an equally open means of patronage.

School children and architectural students alike expect the state to provide the function, the building, the funds, the maintenance, in variations according to the lottery of fashion (and the waxing and waning of political activity). Yet the same young people will often declare they want to live in the centre of the city because that is where the things not regulated by the state are happening: significantly these sometimes spontaneous happenings tend to take place in privately provided existing buildings.

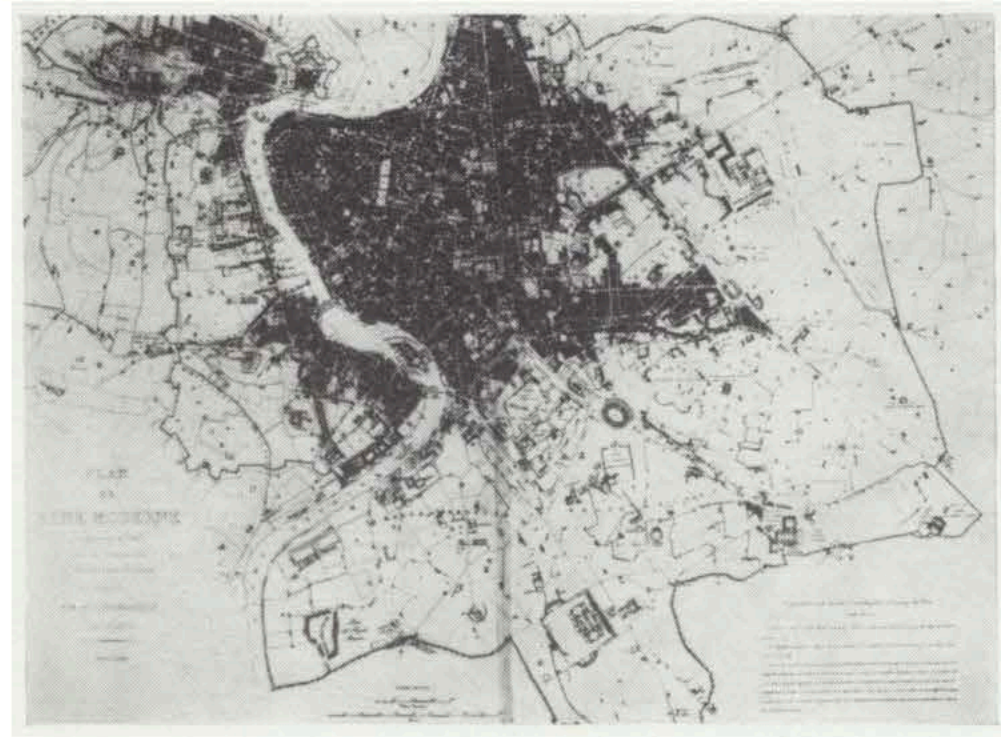
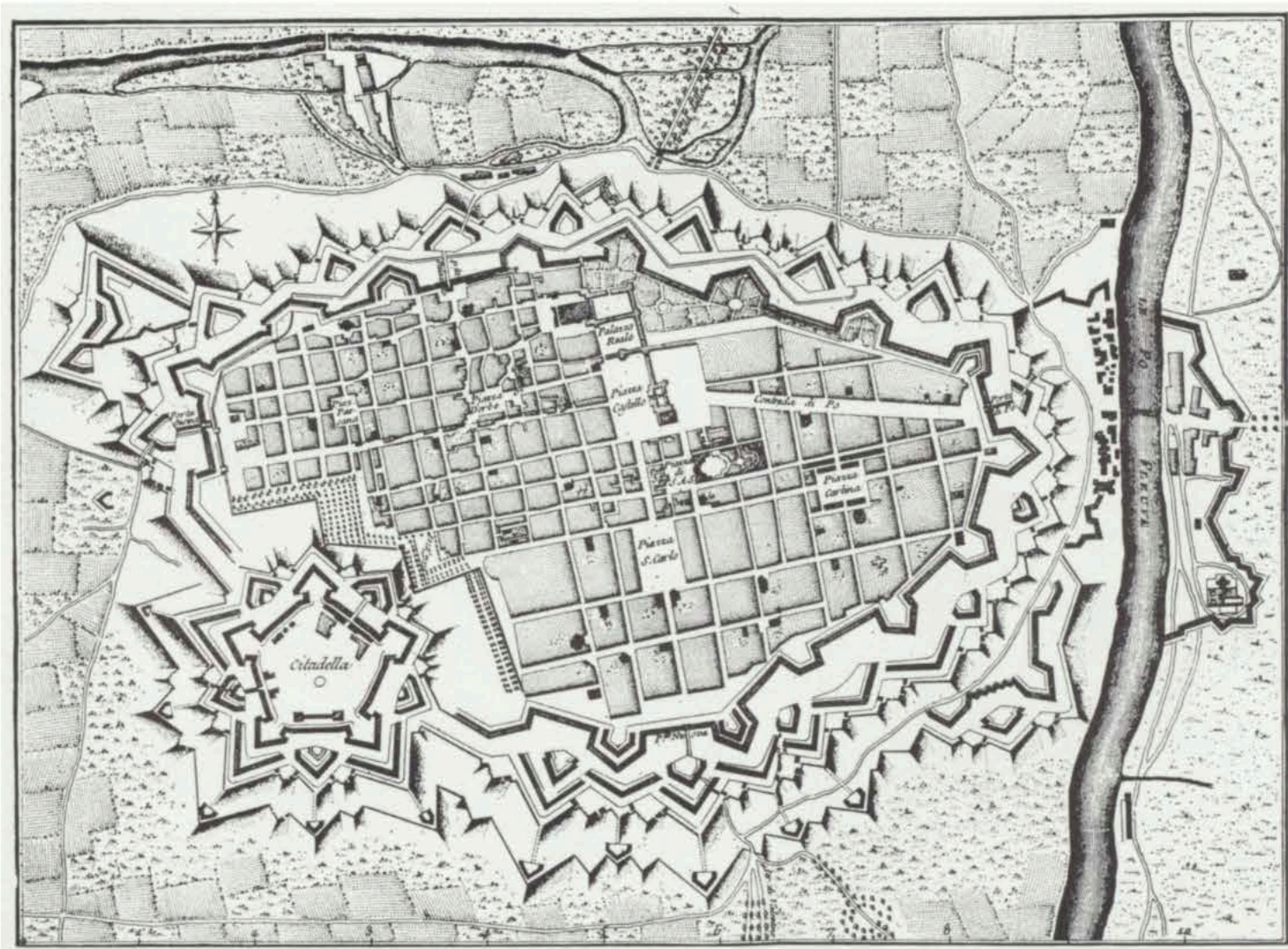
To the welfare state, dense use of housing, although once supportive of dense choice of use of cities, such as a viable transport system, is socially unacceptable. And

to an extent, we all believe this to be true, due to being educated to dislike the 'smell' or 'feel' of too dense a use – supported by a flight towards the suburbs whose texture offers a kind of freedom as our lives become more officially circumscribed.

Yet always this yearning for the idea of the easily available lively city centre is recognised as being interlocked with dense use. Those who would like to re-enter the city to partake of their idea of the rich and varied life at the centre, do not know how to get to use the empty property without incurring too great a liability.

Those who have no intention of leaving their homes in the suburbs like the idea of being able to use the centre with ease and urbanity, whenever the mood takes them, but if the transport is a problem and standards of use of place are too low, they will seek elsewhere, perhaps in many directions, the function of 'centre'.

Both are questions of accessibility, but of a different order, although of the same implication. The first, and



above:

The defences of Turin: from *Voyage en Italie* Tome I, plate II (Date unknown, probably seventeenth century)

left:

Rome in 1838 showing the open texture of villas and gardens within the old walls

p.11 upper left:

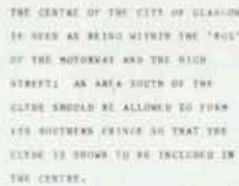
Glasgow: the city centre full of holes. Diagrams of the boundaries given to Glasgow city centre by the slashes cut by the motorway (west and north), dereliction (east), demolition (south). This brutally-formed boundary is masked by a 'wild fringe' and allows a healing process to begin. Areas of railway yards are potential spaces for layering of connective functions

p.11 lower left:

Extraction of literary matrix of diagram above

p.11 upper right:

Scharoun axonometric (Hauptstadt Berlin book)



collective responsibility. This cannot be either as isolated in protest nor as delegated as the present. The sweet change of use of old, good quality property is one of the measures whereby good quality at the centre can be retained and encouraged, vital to the support of that scale of urban order which the community has inherited. This pre-supposes an *in situ* body of appreciators of city. Collectively, and by mutual support and encouragement, those who wish to enjoy the pleasures of the centre of the city as traditionally located in a vicinity will have to help inhabit it themselves, in work, leisure or rest; become the burgher patrons of the city, responsible persons through whom those in the hinterland can communicate with each other; partake of their urban culture, using the appreciated built reference of the city fabric. The burgher patrons of city need to be new kinds of people after such a long period of delegation: concerned citizens who would set about the greening of the decayed areas as a holding operation until more prosperous and confident times.

The greening of the depleted city centre may even be the most obvious characteristic of the future city centre.

The city centre isolated by new roads and demolition

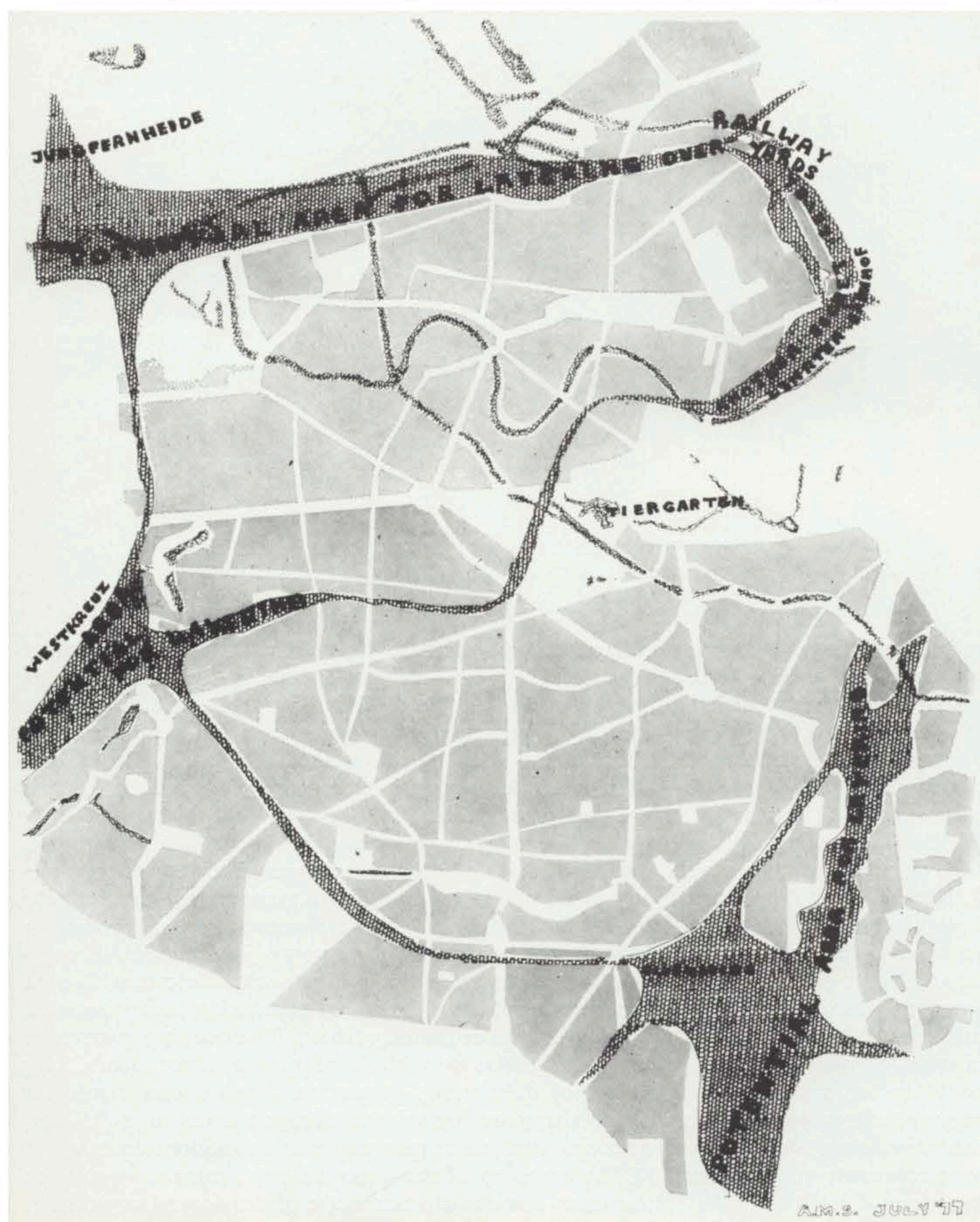
How do we defend such a city against aggressive forces? What should be the defensive science with its matching architectural language that would preserve the integrity of the place and the peace of mind of the citizens as effectively as the defensive systems of the past? Enceintes within cities also need protection; there has to be a protective face turned towards all sources of aggressive noise and energy: against traffic in transit on the new roads, even mass traffic at rest. To visually defend the centre of the city, the old street ends which debouch on to the route of the urban motorway should be terminated with new finial elements – finials speaking of things that interest people today: conservation of fabric; better response to the local weather; urban restfulness: creating an edge along the strip of territory that the motorway passes through, that begins to regenerate both the centre of city and those districts ‘cut off’ from it.

Where things are too undecided, rather than ‘invent’

functions society cannot maintain, we could create a ‘wild’ fringe, of dense native undergrowth and of indigenous trees to symbolize a new beginning, while suggesting that something else could come at a later date, after a healing process. This rough growth would be vandal- and intrusion-proof, cloaking the wounds of the old until useful finials took up their positions.³ It would protect those in adjacent buildings from the sight and sound of traffic which is too close; spare those in the traffic from too great a proximity to the ragged edge of the old centre; protect the citizens in the old streets from abrasive noise and pollution.

Recognising in dying systems, locations where the greening of city can take on new forms

The view of almost any old city from the air offers the most obvious example of disuse in some of its railway yards. These railway yards are remarkably spacious areas of inner city, often touching the city centre, yet also



p. 12:

West Berlin: disused railway yards; spaces where there is a potential for layering of connective spaces; potential for new urban forms that demonstrate the changing character of city centres; that signal new freedoms of individual action, new sensibilities that will respond to the greening of cities

below (upper and lower):

Berlin: neo-classical, an open textured city



often secret from the rest of the city and the citizens of that city by their being a level above or below their surroundings. Approached over viaducts, or crossed by bridges, the yards offer a disused network of places, a layering left vacant of their past use. How do we bring this layer of space into current use? Connect this potential of space back into the urban fabric so that we may add a layer of possibilities? At the same time we should devise the new use, so that we do not lose the new scale of ordering that the railways brought, in their penetration and serving of the city.

One of their most potent qualities lies in their 'apartness' from the daily grind of cities. The 'otherness' and 'ownness' was engendered by their original working order; this working order being responsible for the structuring of the space should be respected. How can we make these qualities available for the occupants of the city and yet not present the burgher/patrons with the problem of control and maintenance? If we can see what to do with the disused railway yards, using them as connective places, we might begin to indicate to people how to

behave towards small vacant sites, interstitial places.

Intervention in one area can indicate civilised patterns of use for other areas of city. If we can inspire reasonable attitudes to spaces and places that have no 'function', then in a more responsible era, much of the need for demolition, for no other reason than to keep public hygiene, might be avoided, and present less of a problem of 'missing teeth' in streets in decline.

The greening of the city

To maintain the sense of connection that people have with the built fabric of a place; to extend the urban meaning into the present, without demeaning the past or casting a forward shadow on continuing life in that place, is the building art of a civilisation.

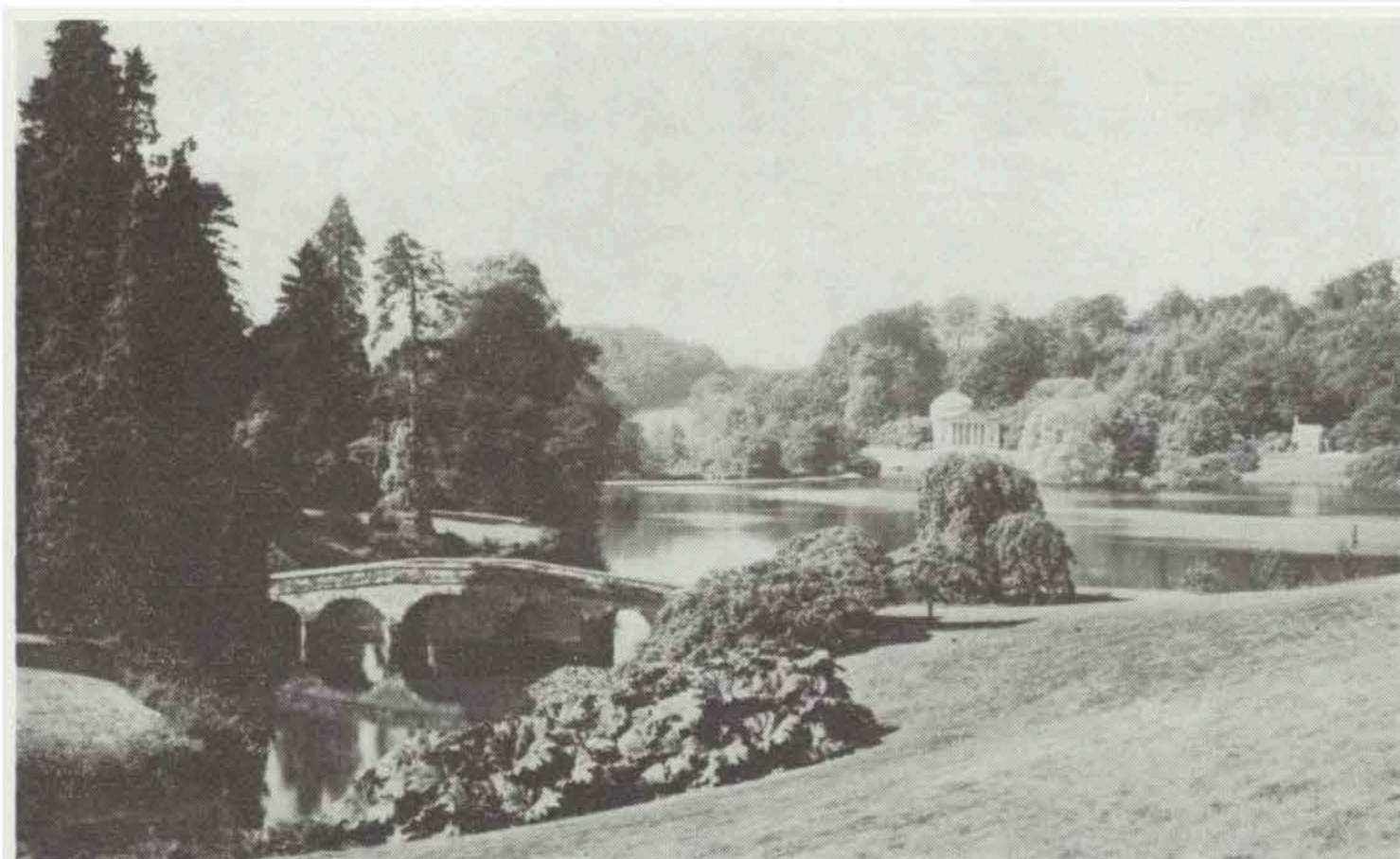
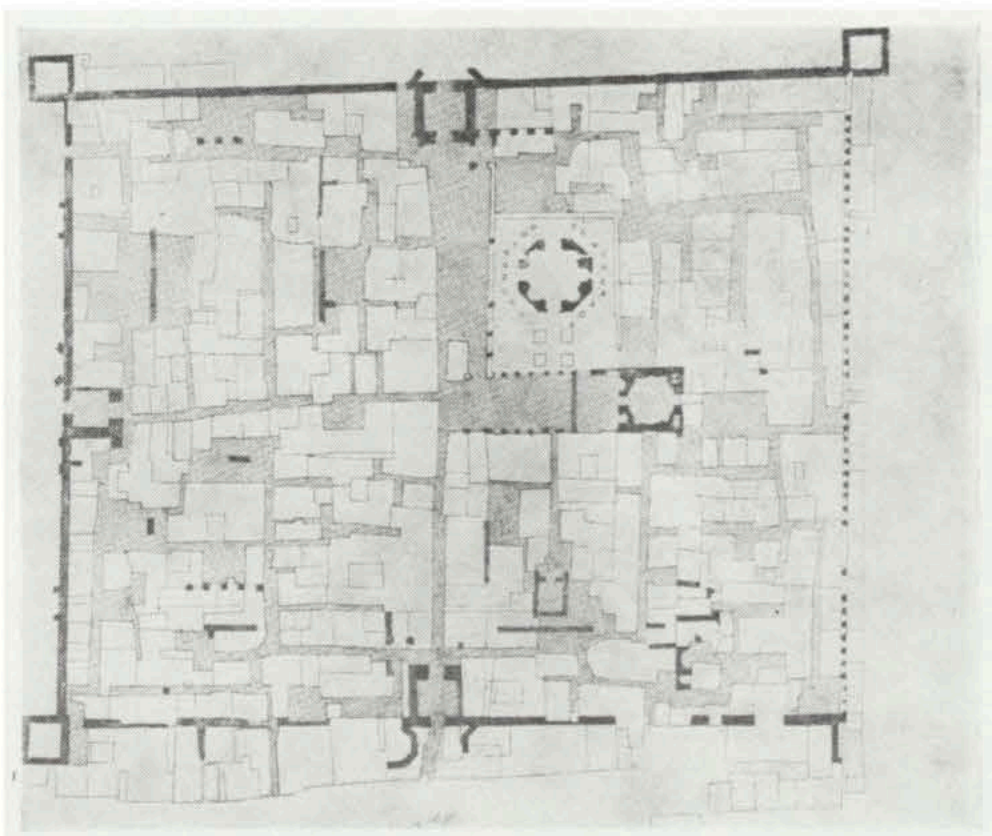
Perhaps the prime problem for the immediate future is the indicating of 'no-present-use' for a place, but nevertheless signalling that the city centre is not dead, only resting; that it is becoming available, a place for the nature of change to make itself manifest, a place of change for the better in a climate of hope.

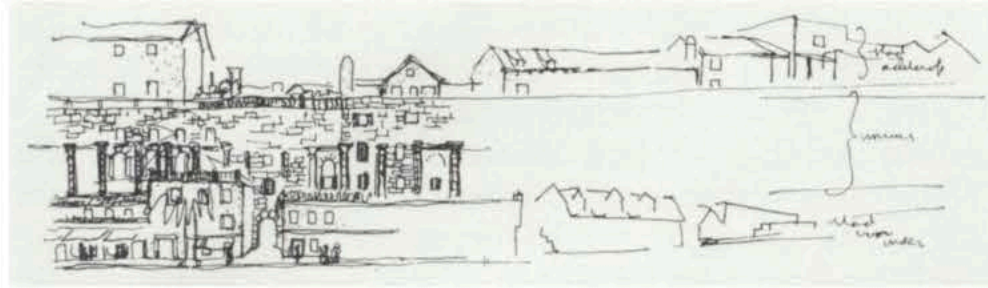
Part 2:

A lyrical architecture appropriate to the city full of holes

Many previous cultures have been accustomed to live with ruins, among ruins. Indeed ruins were more part of their lives than we in England can perhaps imagine. For our ruins tend to be abbeys in secluded vales, something Roman dug up, an earthwork; all manifestations we do not think of as 'ruined buildings', but objects enhancing the landscape, that we therefore easily and naturally embrace, without any burden of thought about built form, or any sense of guilt.

Those living in Europe have a different kind of memory; so much so that they can happily live with exceedingly dilapidated buildings without those in the Mairie having the least palpitations, or Eurocrats feeling impelled to rush out with orders and forms; and more interestingly, without even the 'wino' desiring to unpick the place further. Vandalism as we know it – and as Italy perhaps





p.14 upper:
Plan of Diocletian's Palace, Spoleto Yugoslavia, as inhabited today
p.14 centre:
Stourhead Wiltshire 1972, looking other way to 1777 illustration
p.14 lower:
Stourhead Wiltshire 1777



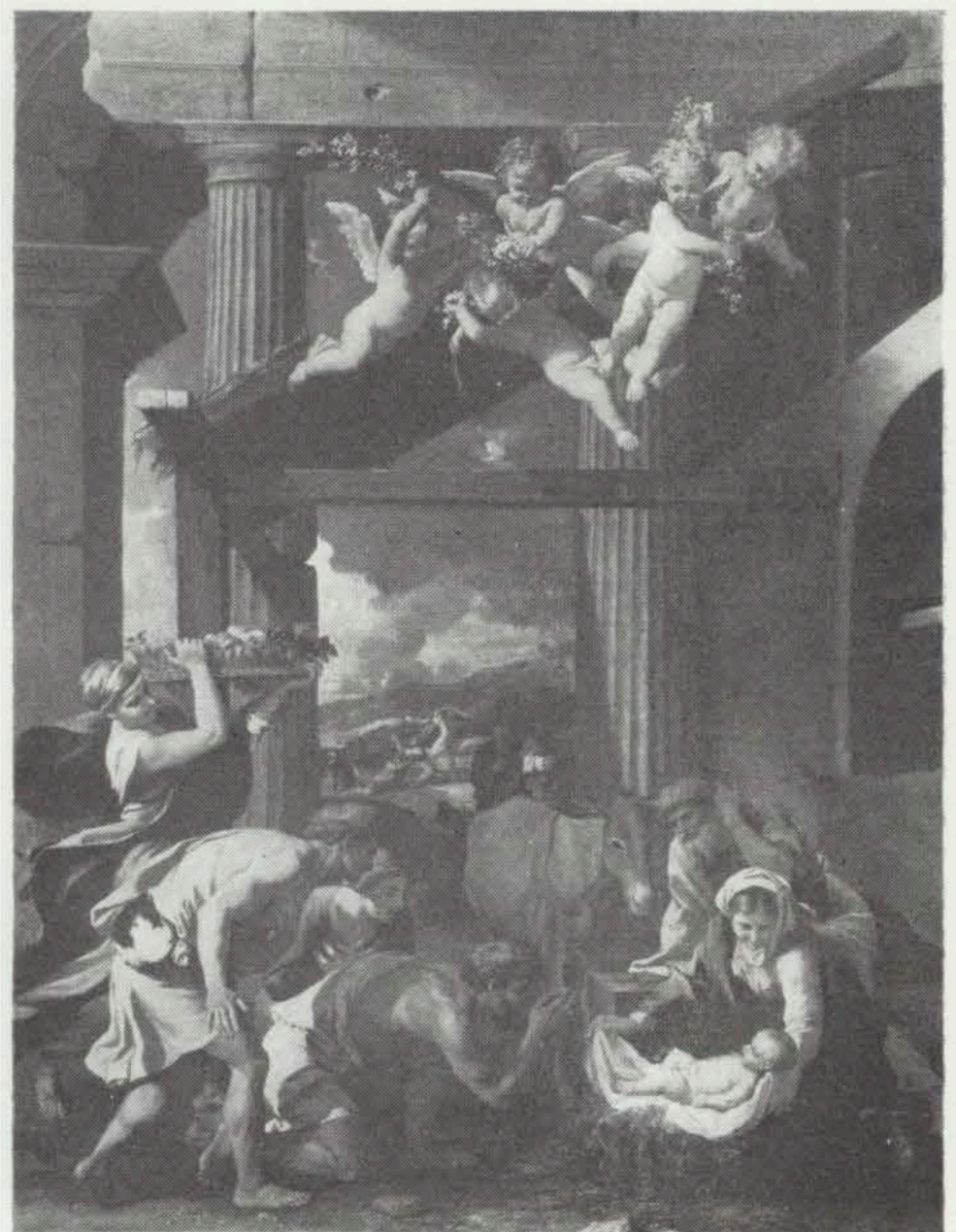
knew it – is now unknown in Europe: maybe peasant instincts deepened by the events of the last century, never know when a ruin, even a bit of wall, may be handy.

In the Renaissance it was hardly respectable for the Nativity not to be set in a handy ruin. Only Piero della Francesca dared such bold invention as that most marvellous new grey wall and the stone slabbed lean-to. All other ladies with babies sat amid ruins and make-shifts, sometimes quite Syrian in magnificence. Red currant-eating barbarians north of the Alps, bereft of much Roman heritage due to the 'Limes' following the Rhine, had to sit Mother and Child against draught excluding Gothic reredos, or exceptionally, in the attic.

The infliction of holes

Outside the field of classical ruins, unacquainted with resistance movements, the British felt no restraint with the advent of planning in slashing cities open: they even felt they were keeping up with well-earned possibilities available to bombed Europe. So we have cities full of holes.

left:
Continuing occupation of Diocletian's Palace, Spoleto Yugoslavia (sketch by J B Bakema c1960)
below left:
Madame de Pompadour Francois Boucher 1758 (collection Victoria and Albert Museum, London)
below right:
The Adoration of The Shepherds Nicholas Poussin (courtesy National Gallery, London)



Puerile new towns spread out over farmland, lauded as achievements, implied that new buildings were owing to all who felt they had claims on the welfare state. Urban nerve seeped away almost without official cognizance, although the transport systems, etc, were all signalling through their users, their staffs, and their losses, that these systems of railway and bus were out of nerve, out of energy. Lack of sensibility and enthusiasm of use reflected lack of desire to act collectively except in bargaining: the face of the idea of the collective looked sulky when not aggressive.

A loss of faith in the meaning of the urban pleasures, fed by a feeling of individual inability.

Part 3:

In pursuit of lyrical appropriateness

Our current work (and writing) is directed towards a new sensibility: our instinct that is we are on the threshold of a new Romantic Period. By Romantic Period, we do not mean Fragonard swings and roses, but that search which lay behind the scented scene: a time when people begin

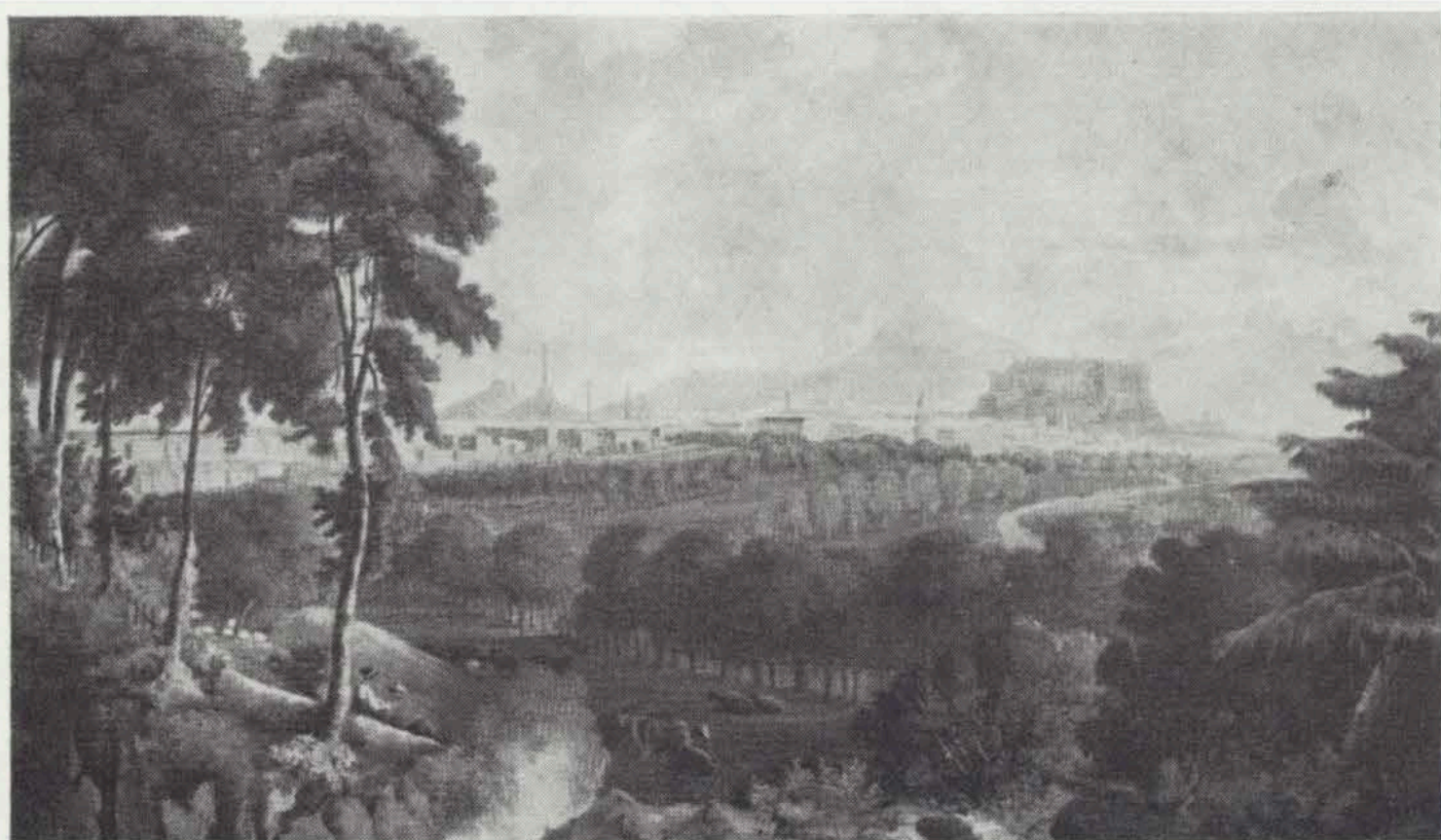
to look about, to see how their acts could become one with an idealized land. A time of a new growth of humanism in the spirit-stirring, all-pervading, European sense.

The roots of lyrical appropriateness

England bears many marks on its landscape: nearly everywhere is an overlaid tracery of patterns of work and movement, from 1900 BC (supposed start of Stonehenge) to the present time.⁴ Therefore, we can be fairly confident that the trick of giving form to patterns supportive of life can be performed here again. The 'spark' can be in many ways unexpected; those paintings by Claude or Poussin brought back by the English from the Grand Tour somehow made visible to all, their national sensibility to the landscape: the paintings becoming 'enabling images' in the development of the English Landscape Garden, a genre virile enough to be re-exported. That this sensibility became universal within Britain, and extended from the garden into all aspects of

life, is the especial nature of English urbanism – vide Newcastle, Edinburgh – finally buildings as landscape: a whole sensibility neatly and palatably communicated in the writings of Jane Austen . . . for, apart from the land, the other internal communication of conviction is, for the English, through literature, the English being fairly unmoved by form; but if something can be walked on, or read, it can be accepted as worthwhile. The mysterious nature of the 'spark', Addison attempted to describe in *The Spectator* (number 414, 25 June 1712):

'The Sett of Ideas, which we received from such a Prospect or Garden, having entered the Mind at the same time, have a sett of Traces belonging to them in the Brain, bordering very near upon one another; when, therefore, any one of these Ideas arises in the Imagination, and consequently dispatches a flow of Animal Spirits to its proper Trace, these Spirits, in the Violence of their Motion, run not only into the Trade, to which they were more particularly directed, but into several of those that



p.16 (upper and lower):

Edinburgh: town as urban landscape; c1824, c1854, respectively

below:

Paxton's 'ruined' aqueduct, Chatsworth Derbyshire



lye about it; By this means they awaken other Ideas of the same Sett, which immediately determine a new Dispatch of Spirits, that in the same manner open other Neighbouring Traces, till at last the whole Sett of them is blown up, and the whole Prospect or Garden flourishes in the Imagination.'

Concurrent with Addison's 'Sett of Ideas' (*The Spectator* being the beginning of regular communication by literary comment) the study of ruins had much to do with foraging for a language of architecture. The seekers quite naturally, by spending measurement and excavation time on antique sites, absorbed the site's ethos – real and appended – to depths unknown to us of the Camera Age (which device makes it possible for the student to catch the return bus). In sketches of other artists and fellow countrymen sitting amid bush-growing heaps of ruins, pen and wash figures seen to ruminate also on the aims of their own society, and the 'form-language' used by themselves as artists, writers, aestheticians: individual practitioners in a cohesive culture, instinctively in tune with others of that culture in what now seems a wonderful, if not idyllic,

classic-based, collective-understanding, clothing the aspirations of their society. Time spent communicating with stones, or with visitors of one's nationality *lessens*; the camera *speeds* the conscientious Englishman's Morning Walks in Florence (or Venice) Ruskin (abridged version) in hand.

The antique in the past, seeded dreams of glory, and decay: a note inside Volume 1 of James Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* from Sheffield's *Life of Gibbon* (1796):

'It was at Rome on the 1st October 1764, as he sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter (now the church of the Zoccolantes, or Franciscan friars), that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city (empire) first started to his mind.'

Ruins present to the open-minded observer a great continuum; in that place, flowing through him . . . as to the simple necessities of life . . . the basic virtues and the graces . . . enjoyment of untrammelled life . . . the pleasures of nature . . . 'Soleil, Espace, Verdure'. The chain of continuity, the continuing interest in the antique, the 'reading' of ruins for our own purposes was handed on to us by Le Corbusier through *Vers une Architecture*, 1923. France was of course the most 'romanised' of the European countries and, in his essays, Le Corbusier extended towards us (as students in the late '40s), the traditional French attitude in their interpretation of classical ruins, more serious to their culture than our national innocent interest. This French attitude tails back to collections of Roman pieces before the Napoleonic Wars – latterly Greek objects, knowledge of Greek places.

England was located far from Hadrian's touching of Rome with Greek culture, and in terms of the forms that the word 'ruins' normally evokes – the tumbled columns of a recognizable temple – we in England have nothing remotely like the Maison Carrée; but what we do have is more meaningful to us, the great Roman Mark on our landscape, Hadrian's Wall: a mark made at the true heroic scale of the boldest 'Limes', North African or Syrian. This touches us in our most sensitive vein – the English landscape – something we all understand. Although we have yet perhaps to fully accept our heritage of 'industrial marks' as part of this same tradition, industrial ruins, pit heaps, are there to be read as a form language-invented by industrialists.

The search for the form of lyrical appropriateness

To a generation barely touched by the end of Beaux Arts schooling – just an assertion handed on that there had been such qualities as scale and style – it took some time to see architecture as an art of building towards place-making, and that a tradition flowed through this attitude. Mid-point in this process, Scully's *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods* (1962) acted as curtain-raiser to a new level of awareness: a re-appraisal not simply of ruins, and their settings, but of the meaning of placement, implying a whole topographical sensitivity we had assumed to be absent in the case of Classical Greece, but had sensed in barbaric Europe where once you get the wave length, you can feel when you are getting near a Mycenaean tomb, a Dordogne cave or an English Saxon site. Topographical languages existed in England before

the Romans; the Roman surveyor/engineers worked through a continuing language. That other topographical languages existed in Europe at other periods, is lost or indistinct to us at present, but is clear again in England in the Railway Age. The holding of the topography in the mind is a faculty still known among hydrographers. Among architects the beginning of a new awareness began back in the '50s with the desire for new imagery. Sparked by the realization among artists and architects of the aridity of much of their immediate inheritance, some artists, able to use collage techniques, utilizing material of Duchampian ordinariness (materials as found, the throw away object, city jetsam) did so with a free inventiveness the envy of us as architects of the same age, struggling for alternative urban and house forms.

The then current myth of acceptable social use, revived by CIAM's *Heart of the City* (1952) is that of Mediterranean open space filled with life: gesticulating men standing about outside the Basilica, filled cafes

nearby. Fashion in opinion tends to ignore the even longer tradition of the empty space, of which, until recently, people could be unafraid: Rome rattling about within its walls; early Renaissance perspectivist's urbanism; ruins inhabited by shepherds; antique sites clothed in bushes, to the northern European, sublimely evocative of melancholy: all contemplative places, as such revered.

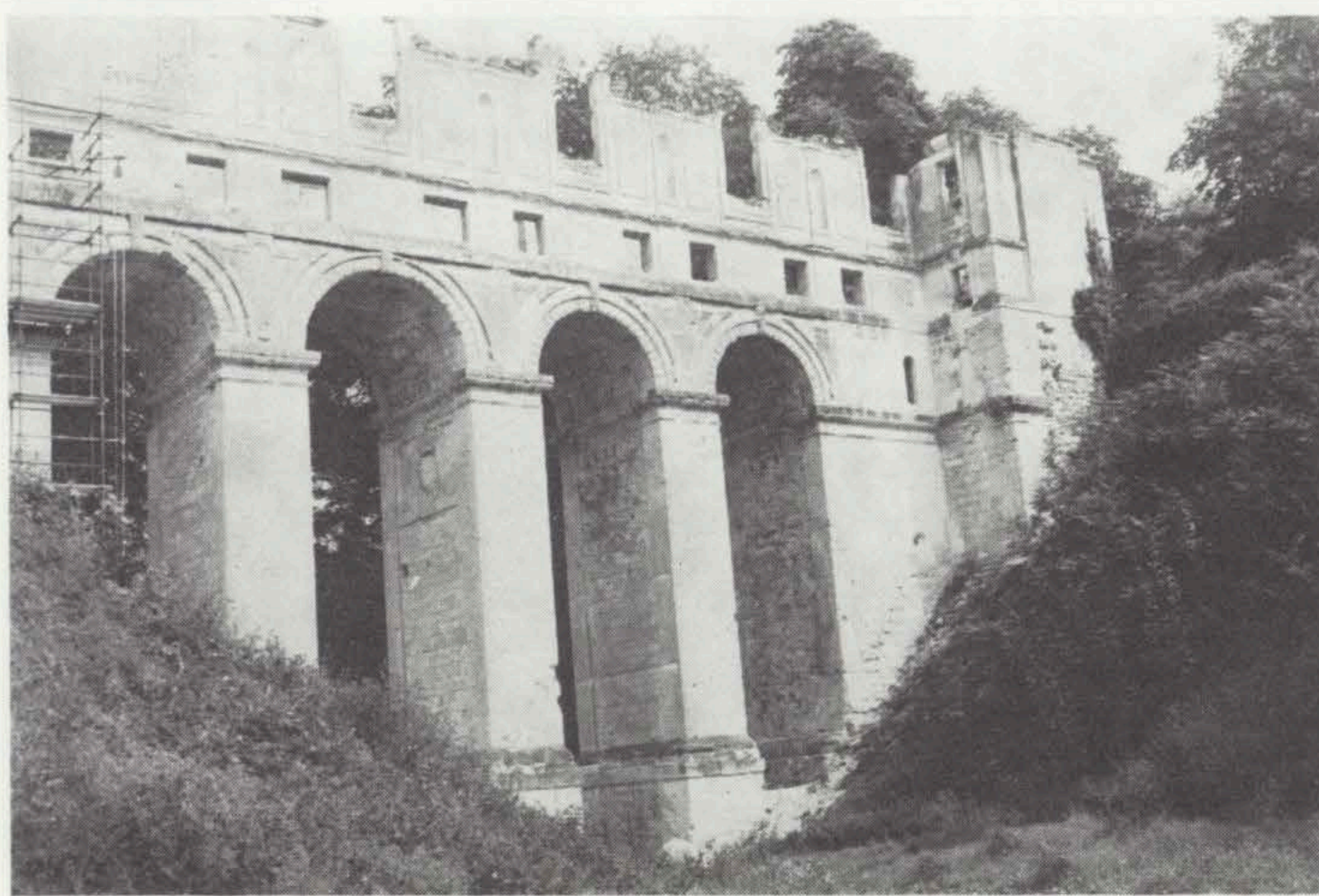
A culture turns to take stock of its direction by contemplating ruins. Today the ruins of Industrial England, stripped to their essential fabric, comprising silent waterways and walls, induce the same emotion which Gibbon felt in Rome.

The resurgence of the sense of the urban

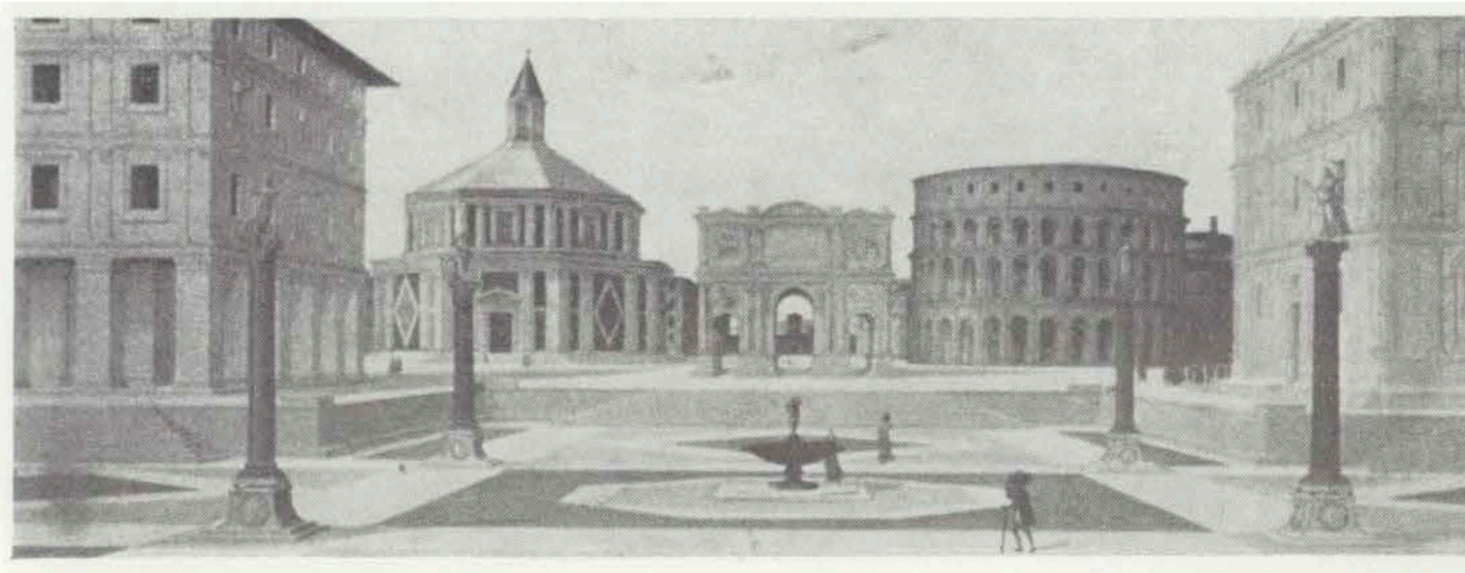
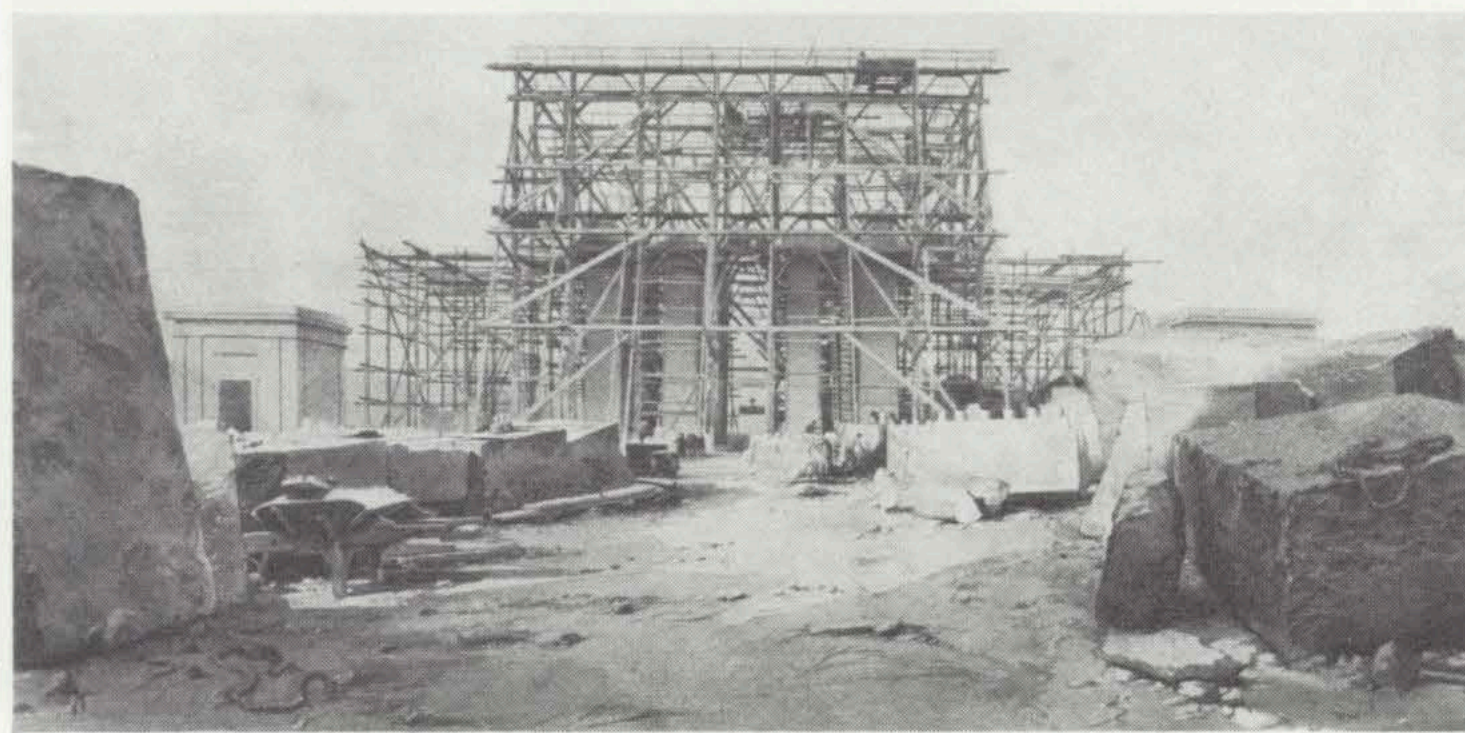
The change in vision that has been taking place since 1952, when Team 10 formed through a simultaneity of recognition that something had devalued the lucid aims of CIAM, and this 'miss' between the things in the mind and the things on the ground was sufficient to drain most of the



p.18:
Ruined aqueduct: Nicolaes Berchem seventeenth century
(courtesy National Gallery, London)



below (upper):
Fere en Tardenoise, France. Sixteenth century gallery joining
castle to parade ground, Bullant
below (centre):
Heroic language suitable to heroic endeavour: the Euston Arch
under construction, LNWR 1838
below (lower):
Renaissance perspectivist's 'empty' space, Luciano da Laurana



vital spirit from the four functions and other tenets of CIAM: but the need to rethink – for our own formal needs, as well as the poor quality of places made in the name of the modern movement – in no way denigrated the achievement of CIAM thought. The idea of a clean framework for clear thinking towards the making of non-stultifying buildings, releasing the possibility of a life for all, where the bare necessities became raised to a poetic level, was wonderful.

How wonderful now to pass among the tumbled columns of classical ruins; to be liberated by spaces intended for life but emptied by time, the clean yet evocative stones, the threshold of a period of lyrical appropriateness.

Augustus Hare quotes Niebuhr:

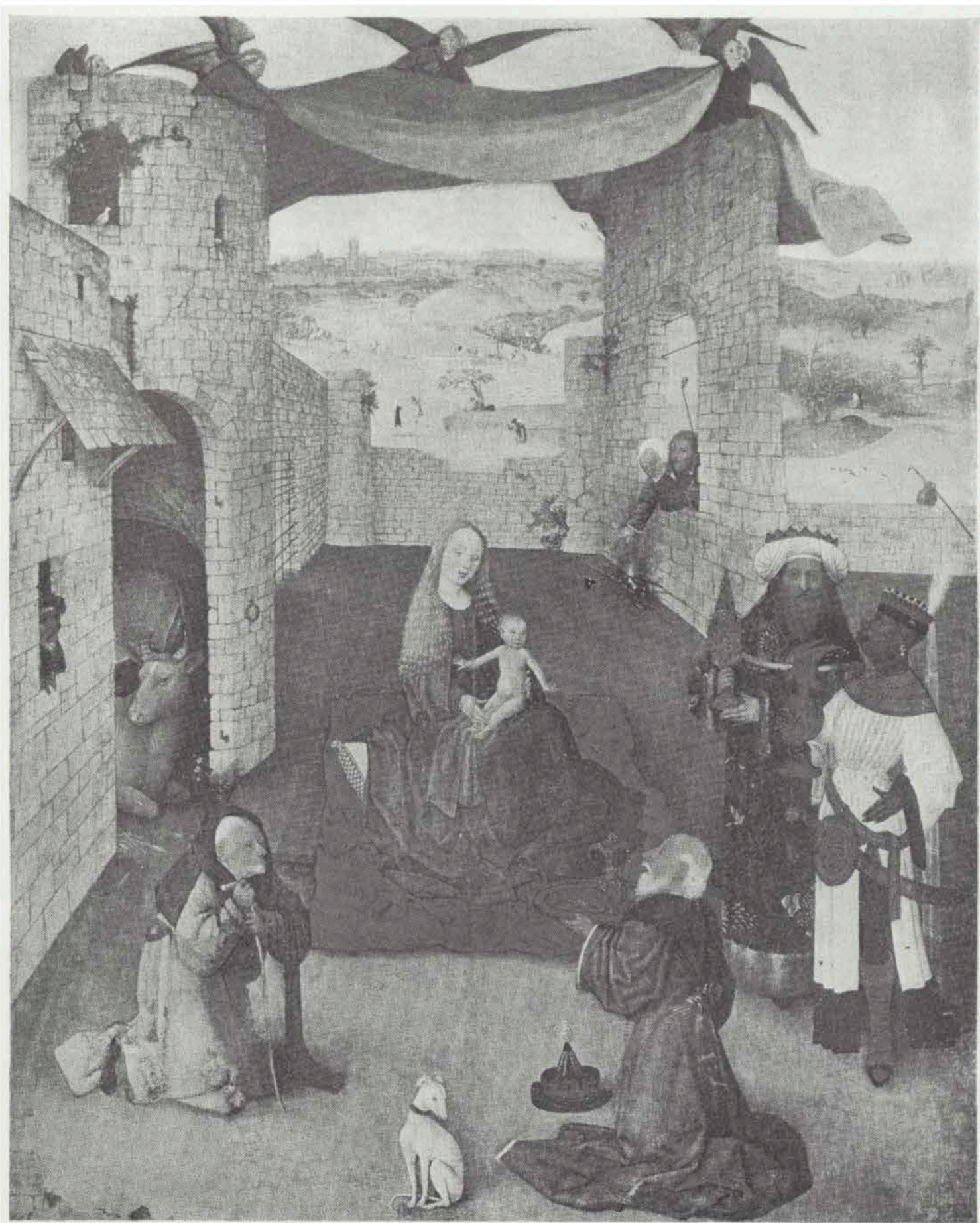
‘My presentiment of the emotions with which I should behold the Roman ruins has proved quite correct. Nothing about them is new to me; as a child I lay so often, for hours together, before their pictures, that their images

were, even at that early age, as distinctly impressed upon my mind as if I had actually seen them.’

and Goethe (7 November 1786):

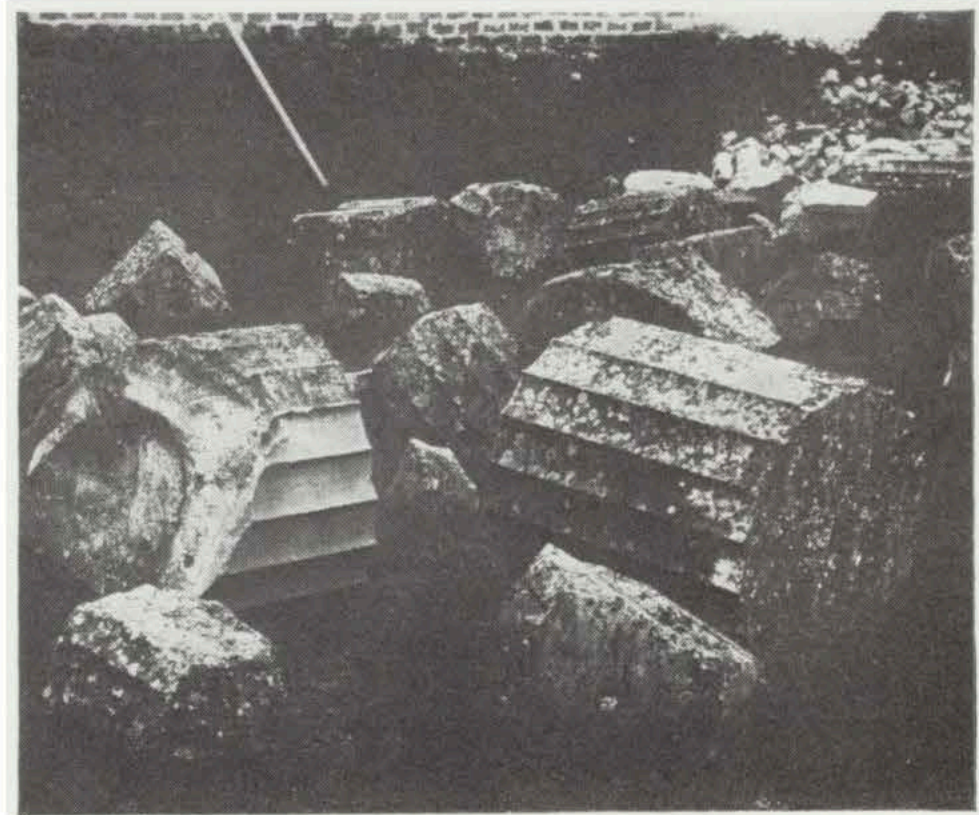
‘... it is only in Rome one can duly prepare oneself for Rome. It must, however, be confessed that it is a sad business to track out ancient Rome in modern Rome; but it must be done; and we may hope for incalculable gratification.’

Amid ruins, one is humbled, reminded in one and the same moment of the heroic, classical days where hospitality was simply enough: olives, oil, wine, bread, a bath, clean clothes, a seat by the fire, good tales of memories – such as the intentions of the heroic period of modern architecture and those wonderful clear thoughts and bright hopes. Ruins can be promise of survival in men’s lives – as weather bulletins comfortingly prompt us as to another reality, ‘unbureaucratized’, uncontrolled – and ironic comment on our doings and our culture. The sense of long connection, the unchanging takes on another value



p.20:
 Virgin and Child amid ruins: *The Adoration of the Magi*
 Hieronymus Bosch

below:
 Rural scene, work amid ruins: eighteenth century tapestry
 right:
 Tegea Greece: tumbled columns of a Doric temple



when in cultures in change, a measure that relates our purposes back into history, and forwards into time. The problems of form, the workings of the mind of the architect, can be seen as the same, a continuity: Vitruvius . . . Palladio . . . and so on. Hear the mind of Vanbrugh, perhaps our most European architect, yet characteristically English:

Reasons Offer'd for Preserving some Part of the Old Manor at Blenheim (11 June 1709)

'There is perhaps no one thing, which the most Polite part of Mankind have more universally agreed in; than the Vallue they have ever set upon the Remains of distant Times Nor amongst the Severall kinds of those Antiquitys, are there any so much regarded, as those of Buildings; Some for their Magnificence, or Curious Workmanship; and others; as they move more lively and pleasing Reflections (than History without their Aid can do) On the Persons who have Inhabited them; On the Remarkable things which have been transacted in them, Or the extraordinary Occasions of Erecting them.

'I hope I may be forgiven, if I make some faint Applica-

tion of what I say of Blenheim, to the Small Remains of ancient Woodstock Manour.

'That Part of the Park which is Seen from the North Front of the New Building, has Little Variety of Objects Nor dos the Country beyond it Afford any of Vallue, It therefore Stands in Need of all the helps that can be given, which are only Five; Buildings, and Plantations. These rightly dispos'd will indeed Supply all the wants of Nature in the Place. And the Most Agreeable Disposition is to Mix them: in which this Old Manour gives so happy an Occasion for; that were the inclosure filld with Trees (principally Fine Yews and Hollys) Promiscuously Set to grow up in a Wild Thicket. So that all the Building left, (which is only the Habitable Part and the Chappel) might appear in Two Risings amongst 'em, it wou'd make One of the Most Agreeable Objects that the best of Landskip Painters can invent. And if on the Contrary this building is taken away; there then remains nothing but an Irregular, Ragged Ungovernable Hill, the deformities of which are not be to cured but by Vast Expense; And that at last will only remove an Ill Object but not

produce a good One, whereas to finish the present Wall for the Inclosures, to forme the Sloops and make the Plantation (which is all that is now wanting to Compleat the Whole Designe) wou'd not Cost Two Hundred Pounds.

'I take the Liberty to offer this Paper with a Picture to Explain what I endeavour to Describe, That if the Present Direction for destroying the Building, shou'd happen hereafter to be Repented of, I may not be blam'd for Neglecting to set in the truest Light I cou'd, a Thing that Seem'd at least to me so very matteriall.'

Not allowed to retain Woodstock, Vanbrugh consoled himself with a brick 'castle' at Greenwich and (according to Augustus J C Hare *Walks in London*) in Scotland Yard's of the old Whitehall Palace:

'Sir John Vanbrugh the architect built here, from the ruins of the palace, the semi-grecian, semi-gothic house satirised by Swift in the lines –
*Now poets from all quarters ran,
to see the house of brother Van;*

*Look'd high and low, walk'd often round,
But no such house was to be found;
One asks a waterman hard by
'Where may the Poet's palace lie?'*
*Another of the Thames enquiries
If he has seen its gilded spires?
At length they in the rubbish spy
A thing resembling a Goose-pie,
A type of modern wit and style,
The rubbish of an ancient Pile.*

To us, as students, Vanbrugh's Seaton Delaval and Castle Howard were the nearest accessible European scale buildings that transmitted a measure of architectural thought: equally accessible, Hadrian's Wall and Stephenson country where railway thought came into being, and to fruition. Recoil from what the Industrial Revolution had inadvertently done to Europe, created the heroic period of modern architecture; to us, both periods equally are history.



Goddess and nymphs amid ruins: sixteenth century tapestry

below:
God and goddess amid ruins: tapestry c1754



The provoked city, or urban virtue in danger

This is again a time when people want to learn to live without despoiling, to let live those things that have worth, to enjoy all possibilities that do not infringe on others' enjoyments – finding a way that is mutually ennobling, so that we reside in a state of equipoise. We need to learn to see things as found, whose reality includes a consciousness of layers of meaning in historical depth. To be sensitive to the 'genius of the place' it is necessary for the observer to be somewhat at peace, contemplative. To be considerate of places, things, people, is to be in some state of repose, of inner balance, of receptiveness. In terms of this open-mindedness there is nothing to be afraid of in being a simple shepherd leaning on his crook, listening to the muses, appreciative of the graces, watching the nymphs at play: a way of life, an attitude of mind, too ruthlessly brushed aside by the Industrial Revolution, anathema to the nineteenth century concept of education, the twentieth century concept of progress: lost to increasing numbers since Greek times; hankered after by the Roman poets, for already the thrusting crowd poured

out of the amphitheatre into the pot houses and swarmed the streets seeking further entertainment; the bought experience: the sort of devaluation of quality of life, and places, many cultures can no longer afford, and, more hopefully, no longer want to pay.

The idea of a city full of green holes need not be unnerving: green can signal an opening for a new urban form.

Footnotes

¹ *Architects' Journal* special issue, 19 January 1977.

² We might initiate the era of common sense by such a simple decision as re-introducing an equivalent of the school slate: this one act would instil into the growing generation not only the need for conservation of natural resources, but the difference between what is merely a vehicle to the absorption of information and what is the nature of an activity that makes things.

³ Laced with dense horizontal meshes of barbed wire until the growth took, at which time the wire would be rusting away.

⁴ Watkins *The Straight Track*.