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Introduction

Issue 3 of the *Review* brings together highlights from the 'Visualising the City' session held on 17 November 2009 and the 'Landscape in Ruins' session held on 18 February 2010. These sessions were the last to be held at Urbis before its closure in late February 2010 to be re-fit as the National Football Museum.

Visualising the City

In his article 'Reading the Calder Valley and Todmorden: Rural, Industrial, Nuclear', Steve Hanson draws on photographic material providing an account of the changing landscape of the Calder Valley, pre-industrial to today. In Steve's analysis, the boundaries between former rural life, industrialisation, and the post-industrial are not as distinct as might be expected. There are also powerful metaphors that appear in the form of the Stoodley Pike above Todmorden, and in the figure of John Cockroft, whose life and research spanned aspects of the pre-industrial, while also introducing the nuclear age.

Steve Hanson lectures in cultural studies at Hereford College of Arts. The article addresses some aspects of wider research currently being undertaken at Goldsmiths College.

Landscape in Ruins

Articles by Prof. Joanna Hodge and Dr. Henry Somers-Hall form part of a wider discussion falling under the rubric 'On Beauty' as part of a proposal bid for the Leverhulme Trust. In 'Landscape and Art: The Place of Beauty' Prof. Joanna Hodge introduces the range of discussion available for this topic and 'while the initiative for the bid began at the Department of Politics and Philosophy at MMU, the intention was, from the beginning, to put together a proposal open to works proximal, and often in opposition to, philosophy on questions of classicism, aesthetics, beauty and art'.

Prof. Hodge introduces the speaker's participating in the 'Landscape in Ruins' session while also giving focus to the notion of 'fine art which is no longer beautiful' (*die nicht mehr Schoene Kunst*). This opens to discussion on the multiple temporalities of classicism, the Nazi attack on decadent art in the 1930s and today.

Joanna Hodge is Professor of Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University and President of the British Society for Phenomenology.

In his article 'The Concept of Ruin: Sartre and the Existential City' Dr. Henry Somers-Hall examines the notion of ruin with particular attention paid to Jean-Paul Sartre's writings on the American cities of New York and Los Angeles.

Dr. Henry Somers-Hall is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Next Session

Failed Icons: A Roundtable Discussion

25 May, 2010, 6.00 pm

Renolds Building, off Sackville Street

Free

Prof. Michael Hebbert

(University of Manchester)

Jonathan Schofield

(Manchester Confidential)

George Mills

(MBLA Architects and Urbanists)



Reading the Calder Valley and Todmorden: Rural, Industrial, Nuclear

Steve Hanson

Introduction

The modernizing drive of industrialization can be tracked through the Calder Valley and the town of Todmorden. However, drawing upon photographic material, it becomes clear that urbanization wasn't as immediate and complete as one might assume. The area is of special significance because it was an outlier in the development of cotton production, and therefore modern capitalism. Yet, later narratives, such as the life of John Cockcroft, one of the trio who split the atom, are often overlooked in favour of a nineteenth century picture of industrialization.

Cockcroft's story is fascinating and can be mined for many metaphors as can the symbolic landmarks in and around Todmorden which are linked to his life. Cockcroft and his colleagues moved us from the age of water wheel and steam, into the nuclear era, in one generation. Yet, their 'leap' was assisted by that of the industrial revolution.

I am also interested in a more playful navigation of the old culture-and-materialism debate, and in this I try to incorporate some of the spirit of Julian Holloway's article 'The Alchemy of Concrete: Towards an Imaginative Geography of the Mancunian Way', *Urbis Research Forum Review* Vol 1., Issue 1, and provide an 'imaginative geography' of Todmorden and its move from a rural space into an industrial one and then into a nuclear age, reading the sites and landscapes and mining them for meaning.

1780-1914

Marx and Engels' 'all that is solid melts into air' is perhaps over-quoted, but it is in one sense the default background to my research material:

The arrival of American cotton in the 1780s brought a gradual change in the rural way of life. Merchants began to distribute raw cotton to farms, and the old domestic system of hand loom weaving was applied to the manufacture of cotton instead of woollen goods. About this time spinning became mechanised and the first factory in Todmorden, for spinning and carding, opened at Clough Mill in 1786.⁽¹⁾

The canal in 1802 and then the railway in 1837 increased the speed of production and the circulation of goods, raw materials and capital. Until as late as 1750, road transport was sketchy in the Calder Valley and old packhorse trails were still in use to convey cloth, but also lime, coal and iron. The 1800 Turnpike Act was passed creating new roads, but with a toll system of taxation and upkeep. Yet, all that is solid didn't evaporate immediately in places such as Todmorden. In the late nineteenth century, we can see that the road was '...peaceful enough for the local hens.'^(fig. 1)

Around 1900 we see telegraph poles. (fig.1) Marshall McLuhan, in *Understanding Media*, describes how Marx based his work on the machine, just as the telegraph began to reverse the mechanical dynamic.⁽²⁾ However, this must remain a polemic rather than a serious point. The telegraph poles and the globalised communications they bequeathed us are as much a part of 'historical materialism' as are the power-looms. (fig.1) The temporality of this era also frames the spatial, via the railway timetable and the increased instrumentalization of production in all other areas of life.



Figure 1. Chickens and telegraphy, the rustic and modern side-by-side (Roger Birch Archive).

Pavements began to arrive in Todmorden around 1908. Photographic evidence shows that the emergence from a rural space was relatively slow in Todmorden, despite the enormous changes all around. The town was a rough, almost wild-west space in the nineteenth century. Older technologies, such as the grindstone at Sourhall, were still in use during the nineteenth century, the sand from it being used instead of carpets, in farmhouses and pubs.⁽¹⁾

This juxtaposition of the rural and emerging industrial revolution couldn't have been starker. Patrick Keiller's *City of the Future* project speculates on how early film from the Edwardian era might give us a glimpse of a future where new technologies again sit next to an urban life powered by less gas, with less cars and more mixed modes of transport. (fig.2) This must remain a speculative musing, although sociologists are also thinking about the possibilities.⁽³⁾

The rural traces in the centre didn't last long. A stretch of land in Todmorden called 'Salford' became developed by factories, including the Fielden Brothers' weaving sheds, containing eight hundred powered looms, rapidly followed by another containing a further thousand. In 1829, this was the biggest uninterrupted factory operation in the world.⁽¹⁾

A photograph taken in 1888 shows John Greenwood working at a 'Bobbin-Joan', a local name for the Spinning Jenny. (fig.3) However, Birch notes that '...this type of thing was brought out simply to add interest to the posed photograph.'⁽¹⁾ Intention is impossible to prove, but I would go further and suggest that active in the image is perhaps a late nineteenth century version of what Jeanette Edwards calls 'a little bit of history' in the creation of subjectivity and place.⁽⁸⁾ Certainly, the rapid pace of industrialisation caused social upheaval, not to mention dangerous



Figure 2. In the Roger Birch Archive, as in many similar archives, a litany of floods fill entire sections. The obvious reason, floods are relatively rare occurrences and therefore worthy of a photograph, now starts to become suggestive in a different direction, one much closer to Patrick Keiller's notion that images and films from the Victorian-Edwardian period might be suggestive of the future, rather than the past...

working lives, and therefore a possible recourse to nostalgia. (fig.4) Photography and this example of it is used to document the passing old ways, and these ways would seem to be passing very quickly in the late nineteenth century. This photograph, however nostalgic, also points to the beginning of the division of labour, as accounted for by Engels, precisely in the separation of a whole way of life into separate, instrumentalized compartments, spinning, carding and weaving. (1) The decline of the handloom weaver, working from home, competing with large-scale industry, has been well-covered. Yet, local historical details can give a slightly different picture. Heywood & Jennings state that:

Handloom weavers had enjoyed relatively high wages from about 1788 to 1803, but then saw a steady decline in earnings, caused not by the power loom (the first recorded looms were not installed in Todmorden until 1822 by the Fieldens at Waterside) but by the sheer numbers coming into the trade.(5)

Heywood & Jennings dip into the diary of William Greenwood, a handloom weaver who notices the passing seasons and weather.(5)



Figure 3. John Greenwood working on a 'bobbin-Joan' (Roger Birch Archive).

He works hard but manages his own time, sometimes walking in the valley, watching the hunt and catching up on work later. That same year, 1825, Samuel Palmer completed his near-hallucinogenic 'Early Morning', exactly at the moment when such rustic cosiness - if it

ever existed - was being inverted, transformed into a pursuit for the privileged, for the next century and a half at least. (fig.5) Despite some negotiation of her or his own time, the handloom weaver worked, indoors, during every moment of available light, the mullion windows in cottages were installed to optimise its spread.

Palmer's idea of a contented 'creature of nature' was created at the very moment of industrialization. Although Palmer and the romantics were ideologically opposed to industrialism, working 'all hours god sends' was a pre-condition for both the factory worker and

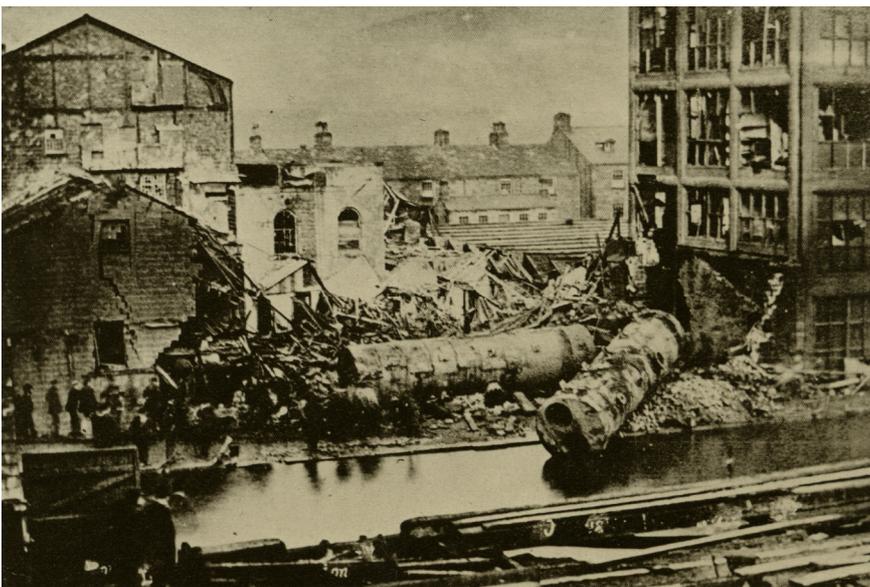


Figure 4. Boiler Explosion, Todmorden (Roger Birch Archive).

the home worker.⁽⁶⁾ The economic advantages of machine-owning entrepreneurs and the division of labour for the subsequent factory workers are the issue. Hannu Salmi points out that:

The Romantic yearning for the pastoral idyll of a pre-technological past had no influence on political decision-making yet it continued to affect people's everyday thoughts and feelings.⁽⁷⁾

The world of material change, 'progress', unstoppably transformed communities, but 'culture', the superstructural feelings of people living in these spaces, spaces which were essentially 'the base', to use Marxist terminology, were a way, as always, of re-mapping their hopes and anxieties onto an often harsh present. This point is an important one to take forward, the rift between the legislative, nation-state situation, science, technology and their supercharged thrusts and what Clifford Geertz has described as accounts of culture which rely more on what people *think* their culture is about must always be fruitfully negotiated by the researcher. However, it is also clear that often very individual breakthroughs in technology shifted the cultural ground forever, and this did not

stop with the development of the Power Loom from the Spinning Jenny.

1914-1959

During the Armistice celebrations in November 1918, Keith and Leo strung electric light bulbs on wires between the chimneys of Birks House and attached them to the mill dynamo across the road; when the band began to play the lights were switched on to the astonishment of the merry-makers in the fields below...⁽⁸⁾

Images remain of Jumps Mill, next to a farm, powered by a water wheel.⁽¹⁾ Sites like these trace the development of industry from agricultural, small scale forms, through the Spinning Jenny-type machines and on into often hybrid, large-scale industries running on water and steam power.

Similarly, Birks Mill in Walsden was powered by water wheel and steam, but is a site rich in metaphor. Owned by the Cockcroft family, this business essentially prepared son John Cockcroft to engage with large-scale electrical and industrial engineering, and for an education in Physics at the University of Manchester. Although many of the fees were paid for by studentships, Cockcroft was propelled by the industrial revolution, and in turn he would be involved in the process of propelling history beyond it.⁽⁸⁾

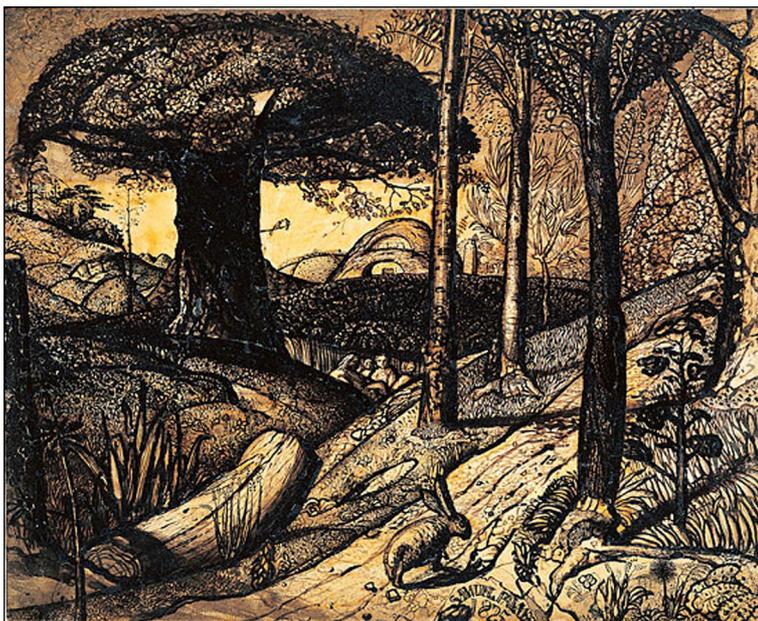


Figure 5. 'Early Morning' by Samuel Palmer, 1825.

After his PhD in 1928, Cockcroft worked on particle acceleration and nuclear disintegration, which in turn led to the splitting of the atom, alongside Rutherford and Walton.⁽⁸⁾ Cockcroft took his university entrance exams in 1914, the day before Archduke Ferdinand was shot in Sarajevo. Later, he studied under Ernest Rutherford, taking part in research which irrevocably changed the face of the world, the nature of warfare particularly. The move into the nuclear age can be tracked through a couple of generations and one family, on this site. Clearly this is an exceptional situation, but it gives an

indication of the extent to which all that is solid did melt during late modernity.

In 1921, Cockcroft and his brothers wired Birks House for electricity, attached to the company water wheel, built a radio, tuned into the BBC Manchester transmitter (2ZY) and took part in a local production of Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*.⁽⁸⁾ Cockcroft then went to Cambridge, witnessing, among many things, a visiting lecture by Albert Einstein, who, along with Niels Bohr, he would later be much more familiar with.

The first visible tribute to Cockcroft's efforts appeared in Todmorden years before his blue plaque did. In 1962, a CND symbol appeared on Stoodley Pike. Just below, Cockcroft's great grandfather, Jack o' the Heights, had kept grazing land. Jack worked the putting-out system for wool in the late eighteenth

century.⁽⁸⁾

The CND paint daubers chose their target well. A monument to peace in Europe during an age of altogether new potential violence. The CND symbol was daubed on an icon of conservative power and enlightenment narratives. Traces of the CND symbol can still be seen today. Parallel to the Bush visit demonstrations in London, 2004, an effigy of the US president was toppled at Stoodley Pike. The Pike actually looks like a rocket, a stone missile placed high on the moors, a new sword of Damocles - not hanging, but waiting to launch - in a post-fusion age, an age partly ushered in by one of the town's sons.

Stoodley Pike, built in 1856, is part of a nineteenth century Masonic trend for siting obelisks all over the country. (fig.6) The design of the tower is a '...reflection of patron Samuel Fielden's freemasonry' and of the society of the time's obsession with Egyptology.⁽⁹⁾

The stairs spiral up around the central coil of Stoodley Pike, the dizzy ascent accentuated by the deliberate lack of lighting. You literally have to take a leap of faith to go up, commit yourself to the uncertainty of what lies in the darkness.⁽¹⁰⁾ This makes Stoodley Pike a religious artefact, an optical technology and a figure of control, as much as it's a peace monument, war memorial and Freemason's fancy. The plunge into pitch black as you ascend the stairs to the balcony only lasts a few minutes, but it seems much longer. As with Masonic initiation, the potential rewards for going through the ordeal are great, as the view from the balcony is breathtaking - the whole of Todmorden can be seen from there. As part of restoration work in 1889, a grill was placed in the balcony floor so that a little more light would be shed on the ascendant, and the roughly hewn stone around the grill can still be seen. But this is an afterthought, and even with this addition, nearly all of the steps remain in total darkness. A simple choice could have been made for the stairs to be lit, a couple of



Figure 6. Stoodley Pike (photograph by the author).

windows would have sufficed, but they were never part of the original design.

Paul Overy writes of attractions created for the nineteenth and early twentieth century, of Great Exhibitions and World Fairs in which '... visitors were subjected to sensations of shock, vertigo...'.⁽¹¹⁾ Overy links these panorama-like spectacles, moving dioramas, sometimes called 'vertigo machines', to the fragmenting of vision within modernity. Stoodley Pike's design certainly uses some of the tension build-and-release of the rollercoaster, albeit much more subtly. But, the Pike cannot be read completely as a fragmenting vision machine. C.L.R James's comments on modern cinema and culture are equally relevant, placing the western visual space in the 'panoramic'.⁽¹²⁾

Stoodley Pike, read as a nineteenth century optical technology, works by removing all vision from you in a way that instills fear - this is the fragmentation of vision - and then restoring your sight in a spectacular, panoramic way. The 'blind' are made to see, but of course made to see in a very didactic way. The underlying message of the view from the balcony is one of ownership; this is the land we survey, you are privileged to be seeing it. And literally, as nearly all of Todmorden's key buildings were created by Freemason Samuel Fielden, his associates and family. It's an exclusive view, not for the faint-hearted, only for those brave enough to make the leap of faith, but a leap of faith into a patriarchal, religious (though non-conformist) organisation. The link between macro view and phallocentricity has been discussed only bolstered here by Stoodley Pike's overtly phallic shape.⁽¹³⁾

The optical aspect (the view from the balcony) is a symbolic grasping at the immediate local territory, and the appropriation of aesthetics of an ancient, 'exotic' artefact (the obelisk design) at colonial territory. The Pike is an early symbol of globalization, nearby Manchester being a key early globalizing city, via its export, not only of an industrial model, but of an entire form of industrial capitalism,

from the repeal of the Corn Laws onward. A form of branding from the 19th century, the land is signed and sealed by this giant stamp, as a land registry deed would be, as the cows in Stoodley Fields below were once branded. Icon, logo, it has since become the emblem of the town of Todmorden, for instance as the emblem on the front of the *Todmorden News and Advertiser*, the town's newspaper.

The site has been used for much longer than the current monument though. The Stoodley Pike seen today isn't the first, but the second. The first version of the Pike, commemorating the surrender of Paris to the Allies in 1814, fell in strange circumstances. It was already fragile after being cracked by lightning. Then, on the afternoon the Russian Ambassador left London before the declaration of war with Russia, the first Stoodley Pike collapsed.⁽⁹⁾ The monument to peace conveniently fell on the eve of war. Stoodley Pike is officially a war memorial and peace monument. Yet, a peace monument could have been made in another form, like the Remembrance Gardens in Centre Vale Park, or the stone carved lists of the fallen found in many towns all over the world.

Of course, much of this is myth-structure. The first Stoodley Pike is rumoured to have been a beacon where fires could be lit to warn of the Spanish Invasion. Oral histories frame its identity. I've heard parents asking their children if they think they'll see 'The Stoodley Pike ghost' inside. In William Law's poem, *Wanderings of a Wanderer*, a stanza on Stoodley Pike reads: 'Thou standest upon the tomb of one unknown'.⁽⁹⁾ A skeleton discovered when the first Pike's foundations were laid is rumoured to be the body of a murder victim, but even this anecdotal evidence died along with the workmen building foundations for the second Pike, who did find bones there, but never confirmed if they were human or animal. When restoration was finished in 1889, twenty Masons visited Stoodley Pike. The foundation stone of the current incarnation of Stoodley Pike was laid with Masonic honours and a '...youngster

perched on his father's shoulder, leant forward to see all that was going on, and was touched accidentally by the Tyler's sword, and blood flowed freely'.⁽⁹⁾

Flints and other stone age artefacts have been found on the moor, so it is likely the area has been familiar to man for a long time.

Todmorden people didn't always live down in the valley, early man lived on the moors as the valley was a densely vegetated swamp.⁽⁵⁾

Before any built monument existed, a heap of stones used to stand on the spot, the keeper of which, it is said, had to keep them tidy, otherwise: '...no-one could sleep. The banging of doors and other noises started up... Elusive flames were to be seen playing around the stone'.

The habit of building new churches and cathedrals on older pagan sites is active here, but this kind of myth and Masonic speculation I will leave for the Ackroyds and Sinclairs of the world. There is a much more straightforward reading to be had here, perhaps a more Foucauldian one: this myth encourages order through building (literally, ordering stones) the penalty for failure being chaos, hell. 'Redemption' in this era comes through a Cartesian ordering of space.

Again, what is important to remember here is that all these landmarks trigger the symbolic myth structures which they are meshed in. Discussing Philippe Hoyau, Patrick Wright says 'The past may still be an imaginary object, but it is now organised around three major models: the family, conviviality and the countryside. Purged of its leading political tensions, the past can then be offered to one and all in newly inclusive ceremonies of collective identification'.⁽¹⁴⁾

Stoodley Pike is 'naturalised' as a tourist site, busy on summer days, but below this veneer of 'collective identification' it is a bizarre collage of styles, aspirations and religious motifs, as Freemasonry itself is. The 'traditional' is always to some extent 'fake', but the practice of siting great public works is, in

the final analysis, still an exercise in power, from the Roman-era on up.

A lightning conductor was added to the second Pike. This enlightenment science element is another strong narrative emerging from Stoodley Pike, returning us to John Cockcroft. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* inevitably shadows a narrative such as this. Victor Frankenstein's teacher introduced him to almost unlimited godlike powers, as did John Cockcroft's. As Todmorden artist and writer William Holt put it in his novel *The Wizard of Whirlaw* he had discovered 'the key to unlock the powerhouse of the universe'.⁽¹⁵⁾ The CND symbol is still visible on the Pike, and though faded, it is now as much a part of the Frankenstein's monster that is Stoodley Pike, as are its bricks and mortar.

Again, much of this is to read Stoodley Pike symbolically or as a metaphor, of course, but myth structure is always important. On some of the more over-excitabile websites, it is suggested that Masonic influence may have been behind the choice of Trinity for the test of the first atom bomb. Alchemy, another practice linked with Freemasonry, was the attempt to transmute base metals into gold. John Cockcroft achieved a true alchemy of base substance – in nuclear fusion – where alchemists failed. Yet as I write, 'Rutherford's room', in Manchester University, is being investigated, as those who inhabited offices above, below, and to the sides, have been dying of cancer. In this we can read another old and strong myth related to Victor Frankenstein, that of Prometheus.⁽¹⁶⁾

An interesting anecdote in Cockcroft's biography relates to his childhood, when he and his brothers would jump the iron bar used to re-start the water wheel in Birks Mill.⁽⁸⁾ One of the brothers, not so agile as the others, missed his footing and ended up clinging to the bar, going dangerously around the wheel, out of control, the atom spinning around the electron, soon to take the human with it.

In 1940 Cockcroft '...agreed that the

government should investigate the possibility of making a Uranium bomb'.⁽⁸⁾ These developments during World War Two led to the practical discussions around nuclear energy, working with other scientists in Canada and occasionally in tandem with the Manhattan Project and international developments in reactor physics. Eventually, Cockroft worked on various experimental reactors including Harwell and Sellafield (Windscale).⁽⁸⁾

It has been suggested that Cockroft was a highly skilled engineer, more so than a physicist.⁽⁸⁾ These skills emerge directly from his work at Birks Mill, in the industrial era, and allowed the Cockroft-Walton-Rutherford trio to split the atom first, by creating machinery to do it. There is a kind of garden-shed-with-legs-on element to their work together, which

All of this would be incidental biographical detail if it didn't historically map out further, and then back on to my research area. Investigations into particle physics created a world in which plastics and oil became more central for manufacturing, and nuclear energy itself began to slowly emerge. Cockroft and his generation of physicists were navigating the twentieth century away from the dominant forms of the industrial era.

1959-2009

The *Reynolds News* announced the splitting of the atom as 'nothing less than the complete abolition of irksome manual labour...'.⁽⁸⁾ Yet, the ramifications for the industrial worker can be tracked historically, globally and locally, with the Fielden Mill at Waterside becoming Waterside Plastics, itself closing in 1990.⁽¹⁷⁾ (fig.7)

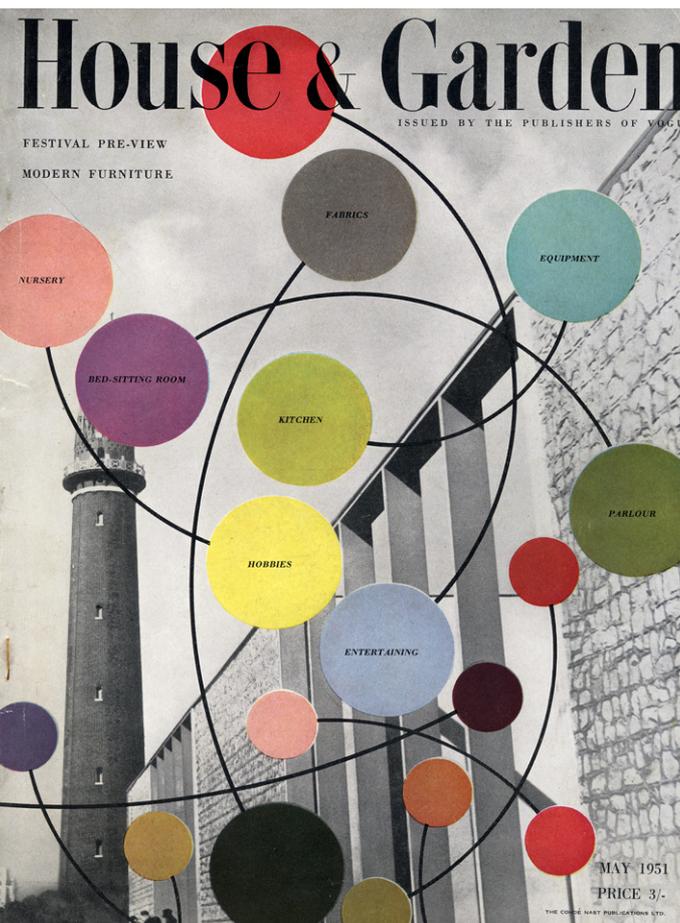


Figure 7. Home interiors in a post-fusion age. couches it firmly in the industrial revolution.⁽⁸⁾

Globalization, or rather the relocation and divorce of capital and labour, becomes more extreme in a post-Reagan, Thatcher (and Hayek) world of de-regulation and laissez-faire. This is to say nothing of the radically changed state of warfare during this era. (fig.8) The 'irksome manual labour' question would not vanish for those who did not need to do it, nor would it cease to often be scarce for those who did. As Salmi pointed out, protest and worry often fails to stop the onrush of material progress, but the myth structures of people experiencing change are crucial to figure in, as they are the ways in which their lives are negotiated, made tolerable. One can argue about the effect CND has had (or hasn't) on the development of nuclear power, in the same way arguments still occasionally flare up about the influences of the Chartists.⁽¹⁸⁾

One of Adorno's aphorisms, in *Minima Moralia*, circles the culture-materialism dialectic in a highly complex way. It is called 'Baby with the bath-water', and explores the difficulties of negotiating cultural perceptions alongside the economic base.⁽¹⁹⁾ Walter Benjamin uses the figure of the 'constellation'.

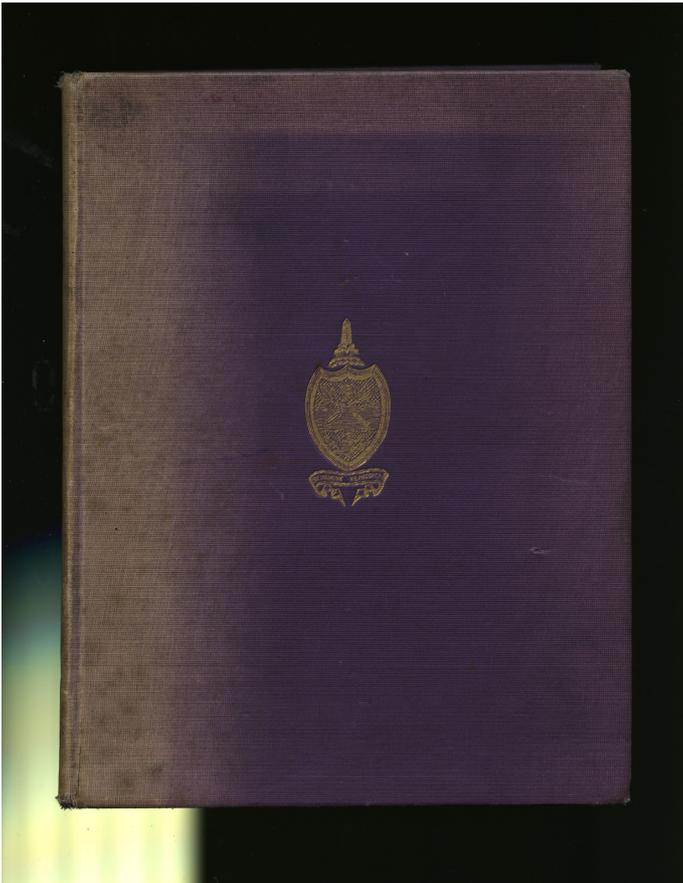


Figure 8. This book on Todmorden and the Great War (WW1) was rescued from the Birks family Mill by my Great Grandfather, who worked there as a labourer. Stoodley Pike is symbolized on the cover, above the motto 'By Industry We Prosper'. Birks Mill is where John Cockroft learned large-scale electrical engineering, preparing him for the study of physics, after which he split the atom with Rutherford and Walton, not only shifting the possibility of different sources of energy, but also of mass warfare. Cockroft experimented with light particles. The book's cover is itself a photograph, depicting the time it spent on the shelf by the window, being exposed to light. There are further metaphors to be mined regarding over-exposure, the industrial revolution, the way light and heat work, and the possibility that the flood photographs may be linked to all of this.

The lights switched on by Keith and Leo Cockroft in 1918 were a constellation, illuminating the immediate territory via science. They looked also, in that armistice moment, to the future. Their wires though, stretched a long way back into the dark space of the mill, into earlier technologies, through even older brickwork and crumbling mortar, applied by long-dead hands. Benjamin, in 'Konvolute K' of

The Arcades Project, writes of:

Awakening as a graduated process that goes on in the life of the individual as in the life of generations. Sleep its initial stage. A generation's experience of youth has much in common with the experience of dreams. Its historical configuration is a dream configuration. (20)

He goes on to outline 'The Copernican revolution in historical perception...' writing that:

Formerly it was thought that a fixed point had been found in "what has been" and one saw the present engaged in tentatively concentrating the forces of knowledge on this ground. Now this relation is to be overturned, and what has been is to become the dialectical reversal – the flash of awakened consciousness. (20)

The lights at Birks Mill switched on, the celebrations continue, the constellation reflects on the surface of John Cockroft's round spectacles. The Cartesian ordering of space trembles, time buckles again.

Notes

(1) Birch, R. (1972) *A Way of Life*. Todmorden: Woodlands

(2) McLuhan (1964) *Understanding Media*. Aylesbury: Abacus

(3) Dennis & Urry, (2009) *After the Car*. Cambridge: Polity, and see documentation relating to Kieller's *City of the Future* exhibition

(4) Edwards, J. (1998) 'The Need for a "Bit of History": Place and Past in English Identity' in Lovell, N. (ed.) *Locality and Belonging*. London Routledge

(5) Heywood, Heywood & Jennings (1996) *A History of Todmorden*. Otley: Smith Settle

(6) Salmi (2008) points out in *Nineteenth Century Europe – A Cultural History*, that Blake got his accounts of northern industry second hand, illustrating poems against the dark satanic mills with water wheels, after steam power became dominant.

(7) Salmi (2008) *Nineteenth Century Europe – A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity

(8) Allibone & Hartcup (1984) *Cockcroft and the Atom*. Bristol: Hilger

(9) An excellent local history pamphlet: Savage, E.M. (1998, orig., 1974) *Stoodley Pike*. Todmorden Antiquarian Society

(10) Hanson, S. (2004) 'Open letter about Stoodley Pike: Does it represent Masonic 'leap'? in *Todmorden News and Advertiser*, Friday December 3, 2004, page 6. I wrote this letter to the local paper about Stoodley Pike and its strange features a few years ago (it was printed in the Friday December 3, 2004 edition). I was hoping to draw some Freemasons out of the woodwork to comment. As well as the obelisk shape, the compass symbol of Freemasonry is on the lintel above the door. About a quarter of the way up the obelisk is a balcony offering views of the valley. This balcony can only be reached by narrow stairs, which have to be navigated in total darkness. I suspect this is a version of the Freemason's blindfold ceremony, compulsory on your ascent, built into the monument. During the actual Freemason ceremony, a hangman's noose is placed around the neck of the blindfolded 'candidate', the end of the rope hanging down behind him (it's always a 'him'). The Inner Guard places the point of a dagger to the candidate's left breast. This is baptism by fear, in the presence of the 'Great Architect of the Universe'.

(11) Overy, P. (2003) 'Re-Inventing the Wheel, Speed In Slow Motion', from *Visual Cultures in Britain*, Vol. 4, Number 2. Manchester University Press

(12) James, C.L.R. (1954) 'Popular Art and the Cultural Tradition' reprinted in *Third Text* No. 10, 1990. C.L.R. James had Anna Grimshaw as an assistant in his later years, who taught visual anthropologist Amanda Ravetz. Her PhD thesis is an ethnography of Todmorden.

(13) Deutsche, R. (1991) 'Boys Town' *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space*

(14) Wright, P. (1985) *On Living in an Old Country*. London: Verso

(15) Holt, W. (1959) *The Wizard of Whirlaw*. Printed and published by the author

(16) *Albert's Boy* by James Graham uses Albert Einstein's schizophrenic son as a metaphor for the atomic bomb, embellishing the myth of Frankenstein's monster as a dysfunctional child. (BBC Radio 4: 10/11/09)

(17) Law, B.R. (1995) *The Fieldens of Todmorden – A Nineteenth Century Business Dynasty*. Littleborough: Kelsall

(18) Chase, M. (2007) *Chartism, A New History*. Manchester University Press

(19) Adorno, T. (1997 [1951]) *Minima Moralia – Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso

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Landscape and Art: The Place of Beauty **Prof. Joanna Hodge**

Disputing Classical Aesthetics

The rubric, 'On Beauty', would seem to invite a response in terms of a classical aesthetics, or a history of art, or both, in some way awkwardly conjoined, the one affirming historical process, the other asserting timeless values and concepts. It would also seem to invite a discussion of what happens to such theory and history, in an era when art has been declared to be 'no longer beautiful', '*die nicht mehr schoene Kunst*', the fine arts which are no longer beautiful, German conveniently using one and the same word for both terms, fine and beautiful. This too opens up a possible line of discussion of what actually happened when one section of the Nazi party sought to exhibit, and then abolish such art, in yet another *auto da fe*, while another section of the Nazi party celebrated and appropriated that art, hiding it from its would be destroyers. However, even these discussions, challenging though they are to classical conceptions of art and aesthetics, fall too readily within the disciplinary boundaries and practices of a philosophy narrowly conceived, concerned with conceptual analysis and the consolations of meditation on matters eternal. From the start, the intent was to open such a philosophy up to various sources of contestation. One such source is the re-organisation of the theorising of art and of aesthetics consequent on the arrival of a new art form: photography, for example, and film. Another is the persistent, indeed irreducible challenge to art theory posed by the activities of artists. The spectacle of art theorists hastily rewriting their definitive statements in the light of new

developments in the studio is a source for endless entertainment.

Rather less amusing is the spectacle of those who suppose that the categories sufficient for a thinking of art were already available in the works of Plato, or possibly Kant, with no need for much more than a little clarification, leading to further specification. On this model, art theory and aesthetics take their place alongside, if slightly subordinate to, the heroic enterprises of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. The elucidations of the Platonic enquiry into the timeless values of beauty and truth, provided under the contemporary rubrics of, for example, cognitive science and modal logic, merely permits art theory and aesthetics to express the truth of art, already intimated, but more clearly.

This model whereby all the sub-disciplines of philosophy are construed as working together, but some are subordinated to others, and whereby all art is organised, as parts of a single unified and unifying system of meaning and value, is to be contested in the proposal put together, under the rubric 'Landscape and Art; The Place of Beauty'. The contra claim is that invention of new media transforms the scope and aspiration of existing media; and that the invention of, for example, new modal logics and new styles of phenomenological enquiry transforms the scope and aspiration of philosophical enquiry. Eternal value is circumscribed by the finite time of thought, action and performance.

Landscapes, Actual and Virtual

Two sets of considerations arise in relation to the notion of landscape. One is that different landscapes give rise to different organisations of materials and entities, within those landscapes. The second concerns the different roles to be assigned to a notion of place, depending on the art form in question.

Sculpture and painting have different kinds of relation to place, as actual landscape; film and photography may even be thought to invent the landscapes of the imagination, in which a modernity seeks out its various meanings, and delimitations. The art which is no longer beautiful presupposes and revalorises a landscape which is no longer classically beautiful. The contrast between allegorised beautiful Edenic landscapes and the landscapes of modernity, Arcadia and Wasteland, poses one set of issues. Through the contrast of supposedly actual and supposedly imaginary landscapes, there arises a further thought: maybe even the landscapes of Constable and Turner, Wordsworth and Hölderlin were always, and from the start, landscapes of artifice.

Landscapes turn out to be not natural and eternal, but constructed and worked over, with the odd consequence that it is not possible to place a sculpture in a given landscape.

This thought is to be pursued by the reference to a quite specific context and place, posed by the question of renovating the Irwell Sculpture Trail. Before it became the Irwell Sculpture Trail, there was simply the Irwell Valley, flowing from a source above Bacup into what has become the Manchester Ship Canal, somewhere between Manchester Cathedral, or Victoria Station, and the Imperial War Museum, or the Salford Docks. This description reveals how the geography has changed, for since the building of the Ship

Canal, the Irwell no longer flows into the sea, but is managed through a series of locks. The Irwell, it is true, is not the River Rhine, the taming of which Heidegger discusses, in his meditations on Hölderlin's hymns, but it provides a suitable focus for analysis. It becomes possible to bring together considerations of the impact of a technical management of landscapes, with considerations of the fate of technique as art, thus underlining a connection between Heidegger's later meditations on technology and the line of reflection brought out in the famous but obscure 1936 paper, 'The Origin of the Art Work'. In the latter, Heidegger diagnoses a process, whereby art no longer promises to mediate a relation between the human and the immortal, between fragile worlds and an indifferent earth. In the former, the consequences of that broken relation are brought into focus.

The Irwell Sculpture Trail is a landscape of the imagination, which joins together what remains of a series of sculptures, put up in a sequence of bursts of activities between 1988 and 2004. Some of these sculptures have been preserved, some will be restored and some will be abandoned. And some will have had their meanings changed and transformed by vandalism, by the addition of graffiti and by the workings of decomposition of materials. These three processes must be included in any discussion seeking to revalorise and restore such a sculpture trail and this practice of placing sculpture in the public domain. The Henry Moore sculpture which is stolen to order for a private collection contrasts to the Henry Moore sculpture stolen and melted down for its raw material content, which in turn contrasts to the one removed from Greenwich Park, for fear of thieves and vandals.

The question of beauty here acquires a very definite place, as location; and in this case, the landscape is in ruins. For the Ship Canal does not flow as it should; indeed it was outdated before it was completed, as a consequence of the ever increasing size of merchant vessels. The thought of delineating an actual locality, with actual artworks already arrayed within it, reveals them as subject to different kinds of erasure, from that performed in the name of the art which is no longer beautiful. The actual sculpture trail also poses the challenge of inventing a virtual sculpture trail, where the works have not yet been put up, or where works are there, already as configured materials, but to which the label 'art' or 'sculpture' has not yet been assigned. For, while ruins are ruins, photographs of ruins are art. (This is a variant on the famous remark 'garbage is garbage but the history of garbage is scholarship'). This exploration of a contrast between an actual sculpture trail in ruins and a sculpture trail to come is one of the main themes of the research proposal.

Vectors of Disruption

Various vectors of disruption then occur: nature and artifice, and a disruption of the boundary between them; eternal value and the passage of time, eroding certainty and delineation; actualised art, with a place in nature and history, and virtual art, through which natural and historical order is not only invented, but invented in a way that disturbs that reassuring boundary between a domain of necessity, nature, and a domain of freedom, art. In pursuit of this series of disruptive thoughts, I have in the past six to nine months benefited from conversations with our speakers, flagged up for this evening, and with Christine Arnold, also of MIRIAD, who is here, and with whom I associate a notion of an ambulatory art, such that the horizons

provided by naturalising landscapes are put in motion. The sequence of contributions will be from:

Henry, speaking on a notion of the organic and of the inorganic city, as sketched by Jean Paul Sartre, in response to a first encounter with grid iron patterns in North America;

Kay, on Photography, and Poetic meditation, on colour and form, developed from a joint publication, with Gina Glover, of photographs and a sonnet sequence, *Objects of Colour: Baltic Coast*;

Felicity, on the art and adventures of Robert Smithson, with specific reference to the Spiral Reef;

And Chris Drury, on the shaping of abandoned land.

And I should like to thank Mark Rainey again for arranging this Research Forum; and again to announce a regret at the passing of the Old Urbis, and its recreation in the image of Football: from flat iron building to bouncing global sphere.

The three temporal determinations here are the timeless authority of classicism; the date, 1936, marking a juxtaposition of Heidegger's nostalgic return to Greek origins, and the Nazi attack on decadent art; and 2010, the year we find ourselves in.

The Concept of Ruin: Sartre and the Existential City **Dr. Henry Somers-Hall**

Rather than talk about the aesthetics of the landscape in ruins, I want to talk a little today about the very idea of ruin itself, and how this may tell us something about some of the presuppositions that characterise our notion of the city. I want to suggest that the notion of ruin, or the collapse of order, structure, or function, illuminates the way in which we naturally see the city in terms of order, structure and function. I want to suggest that the natural way of viewing the city borrows heavily from an analogy with organic life, with its differentiation into parts and ascription of an overarching whole.

If we provisionally recognise that ruin involves the recognition of an absence of an order, the first question should be, how do we characterise this absence of order? In responding to this question, Henri Bergson writes the following:

If I choose a volume in my library at random, I may put it back on the shelf after glancing at it and say, "This is not verse." Is this what I have really seen in turning over the leaves of the book? Obviously not. I have not, and I never shall see, an absence of verse. I have seen prose.⁽¹⁾

In the case of the book on the shelf, therefore, the failure of our expectations to be met by the book that we take from the shelf ('this is not verse') means that we attribute an absence to the matter itself. We do not recognise the structure we are seeking, and so introduce a nothingness into the world. In this case, it is clear that the frustration of expectations is a purely subjective matter. In claiming that the book lacks the structure I was expecting, I do not really want to claim that it is lacking any structure whatsoever – that the 'not verse' of the book presents a merely formless

language. So frustration involves the failure to find the kind of order that we were expecting – it is essentially a subjective phenomenon. Can the same be said of the concept of ruin? That is, can we see the decay of the landscape, the inevitable results of de-industrialisation, purely in terms of a frustration of expectation? I would suggest that our encounters with urban decay do not simply present themselves as a frustration of expectation, but that we cannot help but see in the failure of the city an objective phenomenon. That is, we do not treat the concept of ruin as a failure of expectation or of recognition, but as something which is present in the heart of things themselves. Whereas frustration tells us something about our subjective expectations of structure, ruin tells us something about our objective conceptions of the world. This, of course, opens up the question: how do we conceive of the landscape such that it can be capable of ruin? In other words, what is it about the structure of the landscape, and particularly the urban landscape, that allows alteration to be seen not merely as the transposition of matter from one state to another, but as a genuine reduction or failure?

During his visit to America in 1945, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote a series of articles in which he presents his impressions of the American city. In particular, he talks of the failure of his categories of thought, the categories of the European city, to allow him to recognise the American city. In writing of what he calls the 'parallel and non-communicating significances,'⁽²⁾ of the Avenues of New York, he asks, 'is it a city I am lost in, or is it Nature?'⁽³⁾ This is a key question, as a precondition of answering this question, must be implicitly the provision of an account of the structure of the city. The first point to note is the absence of unity: 'the space, the great, empty space of the steppes and pampas,

flows through New York's arteries like a draught of cold air.' Sartre cannot find any unity in the city where the avenues do not seem to end, but simply continue indefinitely. That is, there is no definitive point at which the city demarcates itself from the natural world, as opposed to what Sartre calls the European 'circular city,' with its deliberate separation from nature. It is not simply unity which Sartre fails to find in the American city, it is also differentiation. He writes, 'In New York, where the major axes are parallel avenues, I was unable to discover any quarters except on Lower Broadway. I could only find filmy atmospheres, longitudinally stretched masses with nothing to mark a beginning or an end.'⁽⁵⁾ Similarly, he is surprised to find that there is no sharp differentiation between areas by class, and mentions the Bostonian who, pointing across the street from where the 'nice' people live, says, 'no one has ever been able to find out who lives there.'⁽⁶⁾

If the idea of ruin presents the absence of a structure that *should* be present, Sartre's account, regardless of its accuracy in its description of the American city, begins to illustrate some of the details of this structure. It illustrates the categories by which one might recognise the structure of the city. Looking back at this account, we can see three moments in his description which he does not find, and which leads to his failure of recognition ('is it a city I am lost in, or is it Nature?').⁽⁷⁾ The first moment which Sartre sees as lacking is the notion of unity. The American city is not enclosed, but rather simply runs out, blurs into the landscape. This is contrasted with the enclosed nature of the European city. The second moment is the lack of differentiation. The American city, in Sartre's view, is not divided up into parts, but exists as an undifferentiated whole: 'in the numerical anonymity of the streets and avenues, I am simply anybody, anywhere.'⁽⁸⁾ The third point is the lack of communication. As well as the 'non-communicating significances' of the parallel avenues, we have the Bostonian's separation of the two sides of the street. How are these three moments, unity, differentiation, and

communication combined to define the idea of a city that Sartre fails to find in America? Sartre is here falling back on another system that combines unity, difference, and the communication of parts. This is the idea of the organism with its overall unity, its differentiation into parts and organs, and its overall integration through the harmonious interrelation of these parts. I want to talk briefly about how why the organism provides a model for the city before returning to the idea of ruin.

At the beginning of this talk, I raised the question of what it is about ruin that allows it to be seen as more than just the alteration of matter from one state to another. This question has a parallel in the natural world when we ask what is it about an organism that allows it to exist, or to cease to exist? That is, what is it about an organism that allows it to have a centre, and to exclude the world from it? The traditional philosophical answer is that what allows the organism to form a unity, and to centre itself is that it has a purpose. It is Kant who provides the foundation of the modern purposive conception of the organism, in order to be considered as a purposive unity, there are certain requirements on the structure of the thing in question. If something is to be considered purposive, the parts must depend on the relation to the whole, since it is this whole, and its purpose, which defines their relations to one another. Second, the whole must be determined by the reciprocal relations of the parts. Thus, Kant writes that "just as each part exists only *as a result* of all the rest, so we think of each part as existing *for the sake* of the others and of the whole, i.e. as an instrument (organ)."⁽⁹⁾ The purposive conception of the organism therefore shows that the unity of the parts or organs is provided by the whole, but that the whole in turn only exists as a result of the parts. The organism is a process of communication between unity and differentiation. In terms of the European city, Sartre is thus proposing that the city functions much like an organism, with the different quarters of the city fulfilling various functions which together allow it to fulfil the

overarching function of perpetuating itself, and unifying itself in the face of nature. This idea of the city (and also the state) as organism is common in philosophy, and the central aspect is shared by Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel. In fact, Sartre also applies this model to the American city, arguing that it can be seen as a primitive form of organism:

The perfectly straight cities show no sign of organisation. Many of them have the rudimentary structure of a polypary. Los Angeles, in particular, is rather like a big earthworm that might be chopped into twenty pieces without being killed. If you go through this enormous urban cluster, probably the largest in the world, you come upon twenty juxtaposed cities, strictly identical, each with its poor section, its business streets, night-clubs and smart suburb, and you get the impression that a medium-sized urban centre has schizogenetically reproduced itself twenty times.⁽¹⁰⁾

What is the relation between this structure and the idea of ruin? This will also be understood by analogy to the structure of the organism. In organ failure, an organ does not simply change its structure, a mechanical alteration, but fails to fulfil the function which the organism as a whole accords it. The unity of the organism therefore allows us to understand failure and destruction as more than simply a failure of expectation, but as something objective. Likewise, when part of the city falls into ruin, this is because it no longer performs a function within the unity of the city as a whole (the collapse of the textile base in Manchester from 1924 onwards). Ruin would then be understood as a failure of the city to maintain its organic unity.

The difficulty with this approach is that ruin is only understood as the failure of a part to fulfil the function of the whole. It ignores the fact that this kind of degeneracy can be essential for the evolution of the city (the reclamation of the mills first as factory space, and then as housing), and for the evolution of the organism

(mutation leading to the adoption of new functions and possibilities for the organism as a whole). Ruin can only be understood as the absence of structure, rather than the alteration of structure. As Sartre found, it is difficult to avoid some kind of organic metaphor, and he is forced to salvage it by talking about the most primitive forms of life (in effect, to see the American city as underdeveloped). Likewise, we cannot move back to viewing the city as pure mechanism (this would be to reject the concept of the cityscape itself along with that of ruin). Perhaps, however, the idea of ruin, and the idea of the city, can be saved by recognising that recently the conception of the organism itself has changed since Kant in order to overcome the apparent impasse between the unity of the organism and the dissolution required by evolutionary theory. This new conception recognises the porous nature of the organism, and the malleability of its structure. Rather than reject the notion that the city itself has a life, perhaps the return to the city as organism, albeit the new evolutionary conception of organism, will allow us to give a positive signification to ruin.

Notes

- (1) Bergson, H., *Creative Evolution*, trans. Mitchell, A. (USA: University of America, 1984), 220.
- (2) Sartre, J-P, 'New York, The Colonial City' in Michelson, A (ed. And trans.) *Literary and Philosophical Essays* (UK: Hutchinson & Co., 1968), 121.
- (3) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 122.
- (4) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 120.
- (5) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 119.
- (6) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 120.
- (7) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 122.
- (8) Sartre, *New York, The Colonial City*, 121
- (9) Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Pluhar, Werner S. (USA: Hackett Publishing, 1987), §373.
- (10) Sartre, J-P, 'American Cities', in Michelson, A (ed. and trans.), *Literary and Philosophical Essays* (UK: Hutchinson & Co., 1968), 121. 113.

About the Urbis Research Forum

Introduced in the summer of 2009, the Urbis Research Forum seeks to provide an informal space for discussions exploring urban issues. The forum brings together people who live in cities, people who work trying to design, manage and improve them and people who study or analyse them.

The forum is also a space to encourage dialogue on the past, present and future of Greater Manchester.

Forum activities include talks, walks, roundtable discussions and special events. The proceedings are published online through the *Urbis Research Forum Review*.

The Urbis Research Forum is run by a steering group including staff from Urbis, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester.

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