1 The Consequences of the Picturesque

'It is the business of an architect to understand all styles, and to be prejudiced in favour of none' (Thomas Hopper, 1830).

DILEMMAS INVOLVE CHOICE: NO choice, no dilemma. And choice lies at the root of architectural style – that is, style as understood since the Renaissance: a conscious system of design, a visual code based on tectonic preference, a post-vernacular language of forms. Between the eighteenth century and the twentieth century, architects were perplexed by one overriding concern: the search for a style which was both aesthetically and functionally valid, a style which satisfied traditional canons of beauty and was, at the same time, appropriate to their own age. That generalised statement is not just an historian's method of looking at history: it simply reflects the way in which architects – especially Victorian architects – saw themselves. We know because they said so, again and again and again. One of the few points on which Gilbert Scott and William Morris were in complete agreement, for example, was the belief that the Victorians had no style of their own. Instead they had a choice of styles. So between the disintegration of the classical tradition and the rise of the Modern Movement, architects were faced with a choice – in many cases a multiple choice – between alternative systems of design. Their dilemma was the dilemma of style.

How did this come about? In brief, it was the product first of the Renaissance, and then – more particularly – of Romanticism. Style in architecture is simply a way of building codified by time. But the idea of an individual style is in origin a Renaissance concept, a product of historical awareness and artistic autonomy. Before that, stylistic progression was basically linear: one style led into another over the centuries. After that, there was always an element of decision. But it is only with the arrival of that congeries of attitudes which we label Romantic that this liberation of the creative ego coincides with plurality of choice. During the eighteenth century romantic attitudes transformed architectural composition. Picturesque values (that is, architecture as scenery) and associationist aesthetics (that is, architecture as embodied memory) broke up the canonical harmonies of classicism. Diversified patronage
encouraged the pursuit of novelty. And the progress of architectural
archaeology multiplied the range of available options. The
nineteenth-century idea of 'the styles' replaces the eighteenth-century concept of
'taste', which in turn had replaced the sixteenth-century notion of 'manner'. Or as
today's architectural metaphysicians would say, stylistic
synchronicity succeeds diachronic evolution. Anyway, from that state of
affairs emerged the welter of styles which characterised the Regency: and
from that stemmed the two antiphonal themes which dominate Victorian
and Edwardian architectural debate: the cult of eclecticism and the idea
of modernity. After brief suppression by the 'functional' values of the
Modern Movement, atectonic criteria are once again at the centre of
architectural thinking. Post-Modernism -- or rather, Post-Functionalism --
has revived the dilemma of style. The Picturesque is back on the archi-
lectual agenda.

The word 'picturesque' derives from the Italian Pittoresco, meaning
'after the manner of painters'. The formation of the word is itself an
explanation. A group of seventeenth-century French and Italian masters,
chiefly Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa and Gaspard and Nicolas Poussin,
so impressed the susceptibilities of early eighteenth-century Grand Tour-
ists that they conditioned the Englishman's way of seeing for more than
one hundred years. By the time 'Picturesque' assumed its capital letter
in the second half of the eighteenth century -- in the writings of William
Gilpin, Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight and Humphry Repton -- this

1 Stourhead, Wiltshire (1740s-60s). Picturesque landscape.
way of looking at nature as though it were a series of pictures had been elevated into a visual philosophy, and its products—the landscape garden, the cottage orné, the suburban villa—had begun a triumphal progress around the world.

So much is familiar. The landscape at Stourhead, Wilts (1740s–60s)[1] has become a synonym for the Claudian ideal. But what part did the Picturesque play in the dilemma of style?

We must start with the idea of appropriate form. The idea of appropriateness in architecture has a long history. Vitruvius endowed the different orders with distinct characters. The classical tradition of decorum, leading to variation and thus to stylistic differentiation, was developed in Italy and France. Blondel explained the appropriate use of style as a kind of 'colouration', 'the poetry of architecture'. In a word, he suggests, 'style ... enables the architect to create a sacred genre, a heroic one, a pastoral one'. Ledoux takes such ideas of stylistic expression a good deal further, designing buildings like his notorious phallic-shaped brothel, or his bizarre house for a cooper in the shape of a barrel—buildings which are themselves three-dimensional metaphors. Architecture thus becomes a symbolic language. In England, where neo-Palladianism was, by definition, a conscious stylistic choice, associationist thinking never developed in such a literal way. But the range of stylistic reference became wider as part of the furniture of the Romantic landscape. At Shugborough, Staffs,[2] for example, from 1747 onwards, a Rococo setting by Wright of Durham was decorated with a Chinese summer house, Chinese bridges and Chinese pagoda, a Palladian bridge, a Grecian Tower of the Winds, Hadrianic Arch and Shepherd's Monument, as well as a Gothic pigeon-house and ruins. Such geo-
The Consequences of the Picturesque

graphical and stylistic diversity seemed appropriate in a garden designed
to honour Admiral Anson, circumnavigator of the globe.¹⁰

In effect, the Rococo, or Poetic or Emblematic garden had revived in
Augustan England the apparatus of the ancient Roman garden, via
surviving Renaissance examples.¹¹ This apparatus was then turned into
pictorial form and naturalised by absorption into a different climate and
a different agricultural context. The Romantic garden was not just a
paratactic art - that is a sequence of stage sets designed for peripatetic
spectators. It was also a kinetic art in four dimensions: the mobile
spectator not only experienced the three-dimensionality of landscape; he
was also carried back through time on a magic carpet of associations. As
at Duncombe Park, Yorks, where a sinuous walk between classical
temples (c. 1718, 1730, 1758) overlooks the ruins of Rievaulx Abbey:
'Space-Time', by association.

'The principal source of grandeur in architecture', wrote Alexander
Gerard in 1759, 'is association, by which ... columns suggest ideas of
strength and durability, and the whole structure introduces ... ideas of
the riches and magnificence of the owner.'¹² In his Observations on Modern
Gardening (1770, 1777, 1793), Thomas Whateley explained how such
buildings operate in a landscape setting, either as allegory or as metaphor.
As allegory, they act as emblems, signposts or symbols. As metaphors
their function is expressive: they 'raise and enforce character already
marked: [for example] a temple adds dignity to the noblest, a cottage
simplicity to the most ... rural scenes.'¹³ William Kent's landscape build-
ings - the Praeneste Monument (1739) at Rousham, for instance - are
chiefly informational, that is emblematic. They require explanation; their
allusions have to be read. 'Capability' Brown's are chiefly affective and
expressive. His landscape settings at Stowe, for example, where he
smoothed down the work of Bridgeman and Kent: here the forms are
naturalistic, and the temples less obtrusively allusive. As Whateley put
it, Brown's landscapes have 'the force of a metaphor, free from the details
of an allegory'.¹⁴ Repton's garden buildings - the Camellia House at
Woburn, Beds (c. 1806), for instance - are rather different: they do
furnish a landscape, but they also make concessions to utility, or at least
amenity.¹⁵

Still, one way or another, the landscape buildings of Kent, Brown and
Repton all convey messages. Hence their emphasis on style. A building
can conjure up a memory; it can reinforce a mood; it can express its
purpose or ownership; or it can simply focus a landscape and create a
sense of place. In other words, in the Romantic landscape - whether
emblematic with Kent, expressive with Brown, or utilitarian with
Repton — stylistic choices act as triggers to the imagination. In this way, the notion of appropriate character in architecture — the idea of a style for each mood, and a mood for each style — eventually emerged full-blown as the theory of architectural association.

The philosophy of association can be traced back at least to the seventeenth century, to Thomas Hobbes' *Human Nature* (1640) and, more especially, to John Locke's explanation of mental processes in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690; 4th edn. 1700). Locke's theories were popularised by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator* of 1712, and refined in David Hartley's *Observations* (1749). But it was the Scottish school — Hume and Hutcheson; Gerard, Kames, Dugald Stewart and Archibald Alison — who built on Locke's psychology and developed a consistent theory of associationist aesthetics. 'All beauty', noted Hutcheson in 1726, 'is relative to the sense of some mind perceiving it.'

'Beauty', Hume concluded in 1757, 'is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them... Each mind perceives a different beauty.' That — despite equivocation — was the basis of Burke's view in 1757. His definitions of Sublimity and Beauty were essentially sensationist: 'mathematical ideas', he wrote, 'are not the true measure of beauty.' That was a view put forward, half a century previously, by Claude Perrault. But whereas Perrault preferred fitness to proportion, the Scottish school preferred association to either. Burke had denied that architectural beauty was eternally related to the proportions of the human body. Alison went further. 'What we mean by proportion', he wrote, 'is merely fitness for the ends of stability and support.' In other words, proportion was a variable, not a constant. What counted was not proportion but association. Our awareness of the beauty of proportion is due not to mathematics but to a mental association of the relationship between form and function: certain proportions are thought to be good because they have been known to work. 'When any object, either of sublimity or beauty, is presented to the mind', Alison explained in 1790, 'I believe every man is conscious of a train of thought being immediately awakened in his imagination, analogous to the character or expression of the original object.' Now that psychology of association — what Alison called 'the constant connection... between the sign and the thing signified' — is surely sound. Cicero expected to find pediments in heaven. Pugin would have been horrified to find anything but pointed arches. Habit and association — just as much as instinct or training — will always lie at the root of aesthetic judgement. Coleridge derided it as mere mechanical fancy. But Hume thought it as inevitable as gravitational thrust.
Take one famous, near contemporary, comparison. At Hagley Hall, Worcs, stand Gothic[3] and Grecian[4] landscape features, 1747–8 and 1758–9. by Sanderson Miller and Athenian Stuart respectively. These ornaments are not simply signposts to some future Battle of the Styles: Walpole’s ‘true rust of the Barons’ Wars’ versus the Arcadian Vision. They are really products of the same mental process, symptoms of associationist thinking. When Joseph Heely visited the Gothic Ruin, he noted: ‘in reality, it is nothing but a deception’. In fact it is nothing but a symbol.

It was with such monuments as these that the tradition of a canonical language in architecture – an ultimate standard of taste, however diluted, however vernacularised – was broken, and replaced by the idea of aesthetic relativism. The old aesthetic absolutes dissolved in a haze of association. ‘In different climates’, wrote Adam Smith in 1759, ‘and where different customs and ways of living take place ... different ideas of beauty prevail. The beauty of a Moorish is not exactly the same as that of an English house.’ ‘If you judge Gothic architecture by Grecian rules’, wrote Bishop Hurd in 1765, ‘you find nothing but deformity, but when you examine it by its own the result is quite different.’ Archibald Alison is always given the credit for the propagation of these ideas in Britain. But he was not well known south of the Border until he was noticed by Francis Jeffrey in the Edinburgh Review of 1811. ‘There is no such thing as absolute or intrinsic beauty’, Jeffrey concludes; ‘it depends altogether
on ... associations.... All tastes [if not all men of taste, are therefore] equally just and correct.' Universal standards of taste had thus no foundation except in 'universal associations'.

The key point here is the abandonment of the idea of objective standards of beauty – absolute values – and in particular the rejection of classical harmonies as the eternal verities of architectural taste. Classicism is no longer the universal style. Architecture is no longer synonymous with classical architecture. What occurred was a kind of aesthetic Reformation, in which private judgement – in this case stylistic multiplicity – triumphed over prescriptive authority. So much so, that the mysteries of classical proportion came popularly to be regarded as a forgotten secret. 'A rule of proportion there certainly is', lamented William Gilpin in 1792, 'but we must inquire after it in vain. The secret is lost. The Ancients had it. They knew well the principles of beauty: and had that unerring rule, which in all things adjusted their taste.... If we could only discover their principles of proportion.' Even in 1792, that was not entirely true. The Vitruvio-Palladian system of proportional harmony was not quite lost. Architectural skill was still thought to consist in the manipulation of standardised components. But there had been a distinct shift in aesthetic attitudes: from objective to subjective, from the pursuit of harmony to the cult of sensibility, from absolute standards to relative values, from unitary style to plurality of choice, from mimetic to expressive, from classic to eclectic. We call that shift of taste Romanticism.

Alison’s personal taste was basically Neo-Classical. But his theories had a far wider application. By giving birth to a kind of stylistic agnosticism, associationist thinking opened up a veritable Pandora’s box of stylistic choice. 'The principle [of association]', Coleridge complained, 'is too

4 James Stuart, Temple of Theseus, Hagley Hall, Worcestershire (1758–9). The Arcadian vision.
vague for practical guidance – Association in philosophy is like the term stimulus in medicine; explaining everything, it explains nothing; and above all leaves itself unexplained’. Certainly Richard Payne Knight seized upon this vagueness to build up his own theories of eclectic associationism.

It was Payne Knight who produced the definitive statement of associationist thinking:

As all the pleasures of intellect arise from the association of ideas, the more the materials of association are multiplied, the more will the sphere of those pleasures be enlarged. To a mind richly stored, almost every object of nature or art that presents itself to the senses, either excites fresh trains and combinations of ideas, or vivifies and strengthens those which existed before: so that recollection enhances enjoyment, and enjoyment heightens recollection ... [For example] a person conversant with the writings of Theocritus and Vergil will relish pastoral scenery more than one unacquainted with such poetry. [And a] spectator [whose] mind [is] enriched with the embellishments of the painter and poet ... [feels] beauties which are not felt by the organic sense of vision, but by the intellect and imagination through that sense.

Hence, most famously, C.R. Cockerell’s compounded delight on seeing William Wilkins’s recreation of a Grecian temple at Grange Park, Hants
The Consequences of the Picturesque

(1805–9)[5]: 'Nothing can be finer, more classical or like the finest Poussins ... There is nothing like it on this side of Arcadia.'

That viewpoint had been nicely summed up some years before, in 1769, by William Gilpin, in a letter to William Mason. 'I have had a dispute lately', writes Gilpin — with Mr Lock of Norbury Park — 'on an absurd vulgar opinion, which he holds — *that we see with our eyes*: whereas I assert, that our eyes are only mere glass windows; and we see with our imagination.' Not a bad explanation of the physiological process by which the brain makes sense of the images transmitted to it by the eye.

Ruins were the most obvious stimuli. 'Bless'd is the man', mused Payne Knight.

... who, 'midst his tufted trees,
Some ruined castle's lofty towers sees.'

These 'towers and battlements', noted Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1786, these 'Castles of Barons of ancient Chivalry', bring 'to our remembrance ancient costume and manners', and 'give ... delight ... by means of association of ideas'. 'Real ruins', explained Whateley in 1790. produce the best 'effects ... but [effects] are [also] produced in a certain degree by [ruins] which are fictitious; the impressions are not so strong, but they are exactly similar.' Robert Adam's Hulne Priory (1778) at Alnwick, Northum, for instance; or Miller's Chichele Tower at Wimpole, Cambs (1750: 1768) — both designed in conjunction with 'Capability' Brown.

In 1772 Sir William Chambers noted that the Chinese had thought of the same thing long ago:

They are fond of introducing [into their gardens] statues, busts, bas-reliefs ... [for] they are not only ornamental, but ... by commemorating past events, and celebrated personages, they awaken the mind to pleasing contemplation, hurrying our reflections up into the remotest ages of antiquity ... their aim is to excite a great variety of passion in the mind of the spectator.

For Chambers, such excitements — what Gilpin and Knight called 'the chain of ideas' — formed the basis of architectural aesthetics. 'Materials in architecture', he wrote in 1759, 'are like words in Phraseology: which singly have little or no power; and may be so arranged as to excite contempt: yet when combined with Art, and expressed with energy, they actuate the mind with unbounded sway.' By 1791 he had managed to link these two arguments — the power of architectural composition and the magic of scenic symbols — into a workmanlike theory of association. The effect of visible objects, he notes, 'is not alone produced by the image on the [eye]; but by a series of reasoning and association of ideas, impressing and guiding the mind in its decision.'

Certainly Kew Gardens
became an advertisement for Chambers' theories. Besides his Chinese Pagoda (1761–2), there was a ruined Roman Arch (1759–60), Ionic temples of Victory (1759) and Peace (1763), and Tuscan temples of Aesopus (c.1760; 1845) and Bellona (1760), a Mosque and an Alhambra—all by Chambers—as well as a Gothic Cathedral (1753–9) and Moorish Alhambra (1750; 1758) by J. H. Muntz, a Palladian bridge, and a House of Confucius (designed c.1750 by Goupy or Chambers with furniture by Kent). Queen Charlotte's Cottage (1770; 1805) adds a touch of vernacular rusticity. Kew Gardens had indeed become a nursery of architectural exotics. Picturesque values put a high premium not only on variety, but on novelty and surprise.

So all styles were grist to the associationist mill. But were all styles equally appropriate? And if not, why not? In 1743, Robert Morris attempted a fairly simple system of differentiation. Architecture, he announces, 'is divided into three classes, the Grave, the Jovial, and the Charming'—and the choice should depend on purpose and situation. Thus 'a Champaign open country requires a noble and plain Building ... A situation near the Sea requires ... Rusticity and Lowness ... The Cheerful Vale requires more Decoration and Dress, and if the View be
long, or some adjacent River runs near by it, the Ionic Order is the most proper.\textsuperscript{49}

As early as the 1730s and 1740s, at Stowe, Gothic and Grecian styles had been used symbolically. Ancient Virtue (Kent, 1734) is a classical temple: antique ideals expressed in classical symbols. Old English liberties, on the other hand, take on Gothic forms, as in Gibbs's Temple of Liberty (c. 1740–44). Inside, ceilings were decorated with emblems of the Saxon Heptarchy.\textsuperscript{50}

Lord Kames, whose \textit{Elements of Criticism} (1762) developed Hume's 'Association of Ideas', distinguishes – rather speciously – between the impact of Greek and Gothic ruins. 'Should a ruin', Kames asks, 'be in the Gothic or Grecian form? In the former, I think; because [a Gothic ruin] exhibits the triumph of time over strength: a melancholy but not unpleasant thought: a Grecian [or Roman] ruin suggests rather the triumph of barbarity over taste: a gloomy and discouraging thought.\textsuperscript{51}

But Kames did concede that beauty in architecture was twofold: relative and intrinsic – intrinsic beauty consisting in proportion, harmony, etc.; relative (or extrinsic) beauty consisting in a building's fitness for purpose, contextual relevance, etc. For example, he thought Inverary Castle (1745 onwards)\textsuperscript{8} appropriately Gothic because of 'the profuse variety of wild and great objects' in the vicinity. Dr Johnson was more forthright: 'what

\textsuperscript{8} Roger Morris \textit{et al.}, Inverary Castle, Argyll (1745 onwards). Castle and symbol.
I admire here’, he boomed, ‘is the total defiance of expense.’ In fact, Kames and Johnson were both right: Inverary is a symbol of wealth and power – a trigger of neo-feudal emotions – but it is also a symptom of habitual stylistic preference, in other words, taste.

But it was Humphry Repton who made stylistic differentiation popular. Repton was not greatly concerned with symbols. He was concerned with pictorial impact, that is, he was concerned to maximise – partly through architecture – the picturesqueness of a given site: to bring out the genius of the place.

In his poem The Landscape (1794), Payne Knight had summed up the indissolubility of architecture and landscape:

... Mixed and Blended over let it be
A mere component part of what you see.

In his Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening (1816), Repton set out to explain the mechanics of that fusion. He showed first how Grecian, Gothic or castellated trimming could change the nature of otherwise identical buildings. And then how Grecian and Gothic compositions suited different settings. Grecian suited a site which was in Burke’s sense Beautiful, that is pastoral or Arcadian. Gothic maximised the pictorial impact of a setting which was already Picturesque. And Gothic could, in turn, be divided into ‘castle Gothic’ and ‘abbey Gothic’: ‘castle Gothic’ for a rocky eminence, ‘abbey Gothic’ for a
fertile valley.\textsuperscript{57} In his Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening (1795), Repton had already pointed out that irregular Gothic houses looked best surrounded by deciduous trees. Classical buildings looked best surrounded by ‘spiry-topped’ or coniferous trees. Partly that was due to contrast: the horizontal lines of Greek architecture contrasted well with vertical pines and cypresses. Partly, however, he admits the effect is due to association: ‘the ideas of Italian paintings [or paintings on Italian themes], where we often see Grecian edifices blended with [pines], firs and cypresses.’\textsuperscript{58}

In Repton’s writings, the choice of style in landscape or garden buildings is dictated as much by considerations of status, situation or use as by historical associations. He recommended a rustic hut\textsuperscript{11} for a primeval forest;\textsuperscript{59} an irregular Gothic house for an irregular landscape, as at Luscombe, Devon (1800–04); a cottage orné, as at Endsleigh, Devon.

\textsuperscript{11} Humphry Repton. ‘Rustic’ Hut (1816). Refuge and symbol.

10 Humphry Repton. ‘Grecian’ and ‘Gothic’ (1816). Style suited to setting.
(1800–11), for a small-scale, variegated landscape.\textsuperscript{60} or again a seat in the manorial style, as at Stanage Park, Radnorshire (1803–7), for the sort of place where 'the Lord of the Soil' resides among his Tenants.\textsuperscript{61}

By means of landscape buildings strategically placed and appropriately styled, Repton turned landscape gardening into a species of furnishing. And it was period furnishing of a fairly precise kind. He dismissed James Wyatt's Sheffield Park, Sussex (c.1779) as a 'heterogenous mixture of Abbey, Castle and Manor House ... [a] mongrel breed of architecture ... propagated ... by buildings of all dimensions from the Palace to the Pigsty.'\textsuperscript{62} When he came to design Apsley Lodge, near Woburn, Beds (c.1805)[12], he cited no less than eighteen different precedents to guarantee its archaeological accuracy.\textsuperscript{63}

Still, Repton never claimed to be a scholar. He did, however, put himself forward as a theorist. His design for the Royal Pavilion at Brighton gave him the chance to fabricate a whole theory of architectural development.\textsuperscript{64} 'We are on the eve', he wrote in 1806, 'of some great future change ... in gardening and architecture ... in consequence of our having lately become acquainted with scenery and buildings in the interior provinces of India.' From this would arise 'a new species of architecture more applicable to this country than either Grecian or Gothic.'\textsuperscript{65} In other words, Hodges and Daniell were to do for India what Stuart and Revett did for Greece.\textsuperscript{66} He begins by allegorising the progress
of architecture through the ages[13]: castellated Gothic, ecclesiastical Gothic, mixed Gothic (or Elizabethan), Grecian (or classical) – and then, half hidden by Time – his own Indian style. Just as classical architecture had been introduced by Inigo Jones under royal patronage, so he hoped this new oriental style would benefit from royal favour. The Castle Style, he thought, was now only suitable for prisons, the Abbey Style for colleges. Mixed Gothic was by definition imperfect; pure Grecian posed innumerable problems of adaptation. The ‘Modern Style’ – diluted Neo-Classicism – lacked character altogether. For Brighton Pavilion, therefore, Repton proposed to transform Henry Holland’s demure classical villa into something worthy of England’s imperial destiny. We raise the Reptonian flap: and lo and behold, he has invented an Anglo-Indian mode.

So Repton was certainly an eclectic. But he was an eclectic in taste rather than an eclectic in style: he never developed the idea of synthesis. ‘To add Grecian to Gothic, or Gothic to Grecian’, he wrote, ‘is equally absurd.’ The result would be a mere ‘pasticcio, or confusion of discordant parts’. He preferred to think of himself as a stylistic utilitarian. When it came to designing conservatories, he found Gothic easily adaptable: ‘it is better to apply old expedients to new uses than to invent a new and

The Consequences of the Picturesque

an absurd style of Gothic or Grecian architecture.' At Plas Newydd[14], for instance, he took the idea of a cathedral chapter house, and turned it into a green-house-cum-prospect-pavilion, a charming conceit, especially delicious by moonlight.69 Conservatories he thought particularly suited the 'flat Gothic arch of Henry viii', because it admitted more light.70 In short, adaptation not synthesis is Repton's keynote. 'This', he explained, 'I call characteristic architecture.' Too often 'our hospitals resemble palaces, and our theatres appear like warehouses ... every building ought to tell its own tale.'71

Repton's ideas can be traced in a whole series of publications on picturesque design, by Plaw, Malton, Elsam, Lugar, Gandy, Papworth, Middleton, Goodwin, and others.72 In particular, Repton's theories formed the basis of J. C. Loudon's writings. Repton's 'amenity' becomes Loudon's 'function', and both are heavily dependent on Alison's 'association'. The architectural styles in Loudon's Encyclopaedia are only minimally concerned with utility. Their expressive role is functional in no more than a symbolic sense. What Loudon called 'the beauty of truth'73 turned out to be no more than association made popular, Alison suburbanised. Hence his influence. Social and functional propriety finds its expression in a hierarchy of style. The chain of influence, forwards from Blaize Hamlet, nr. Bristol (1811), through Great Tew, Oxon (1819 onwards) — school of Loudon rather than Loudon himself74 — to Park Village, Regent's Park (1824 etc.)[35], and thence to innumerable suburbs, is clear enough. So is the chain backwards: 'it's a long way from Tew to Tivoli'.

14 Humphry Repton, Conservatory, Plas Newydd (1805). Gothic adapted.
noted Christopher Hussey, but the Italian origins of the Picturesque are unmistakable. Still, Loudon was enough of a radical in social and aesthetic matters to talk wistfully of the fading away of style: traditional taste, he believed, would eventually go the way of traditional social attitudes. However, this withering away of the empire of style never actually happens: Loudon's *Encyclopædia* — with all its multitude of styles — remains a compendium of bourgeois taste.

For an evolving eclecticism of style we must look not to Repton or Loudon but to Richard Payne Knight. 'In the pictures of Claude and Gaspar', he notes, 'we perpetually see a mixture of Grecian and Gothic architecture employed with the happiest effect in the same building, and no critic has yet objected to the incongruity of it.' Such a 'miscellaneous' or 'mixed style', Knight recommends as 'the best style for irregular and picturesque houses'. And he designed his own house, Downton Castle, Herefordshire (1771–8), to be — as he put it — 'Gothic ... without, and Grecian ... within.' The fact that trabeation and arcuation, to say nothing of domestic and military forms, might be 'promiscuously mixed' in the same building, did not worry him. Gothic, he believed, was a corruption of Roman, and anyway there was no such thing as 'pure Gothic'.

Now whether eclecticism — conscious, synthetic eclecticism — can be traced back before Knight to William Kent and Batty Langley, and even before that to Vanbrugh, is a matter for debate. More likely is the assumption that Knight derived his concept of Graeco-Gothic synthesis from one Scots writer, William Duff, and one French writer, the Abbé de Cordemoy. But Duff and Cordemoy dealt in abstractions. Payne
Knight built Downton Castle. In consciously propagating synthesis rather than accumulation, Knight was well ahead of his contemporaries. He certainly anticipated Thomas Hope who – at the Deepdene, Surrey (1818–19; 1823) – managed to mingle Gothic, Greek, Tuscan, Pompeian and Lombardic.84 J. C. Loudon, writing a generation later than Knight, never went so far. For Loudon multiplicity of style was a function of multiplicity of purpose, not a method of producing novelty through fusion. He did have a rudimentary knowledge of architectural semiotics. He thought that English emigrants to Van Dieman’s Land might – in their early days at least – be justified in building houses like church towers, because their ‘associations’ were ‘so characteristic of British scenery and civilisation’.85 Only when a new, post-colonial culture had developed, would a new, post-colonial style emerge. But Loudon’s Encyclopaedia is more of a pattern book than a treatise on aesthetics. Payne Knight is the subtler mind. In particular, Knight took one key conceptual step: his synthesis was consciously modern. ‘The design of almost every age and country’, he wrote, ‘has a peculiar character … [every house] should … maintain the character of a house of the age and country in which it is erected.’86 That proto-Hegelian notion – what Summerson once called ‘the Mischievous Analogy’87 – had a long life ahead of it.

Let us sum up the argument so far. At the European level, the classical tradition: the notion of a universal system of aesthetic values gradually
eroded by its own practitioners – character in Vitruvius, individualism in Alberti, fitness in Perrault, appropriateness in Blondel, symbolism in Ledoux. At the English level, the Picturesque: perception in Locke, emblem and expression in Whateley, association in Alison, eclecticism and modernity in Knight. So the cult of styles can be traced back, effectively, to the early eighteenth century, to that cultural watershed when nature replaced religion – perhaps became religion – as the motive force for creative artists.88 Nature, often enough, in ideal form. A hundred years later, attitudes had changed. ‘A gentleman’s park is my aversion’, wrote Constable in 1823 – thinking of Fonthill. Wilts. (1796–1812); ‘it is not beauty because it is not nature.’89 But in Augustan England, the Romantic landscape is indeed contained in a gentleman’s park, controlled and idealised: in a word, classicised. ‘Nature’, wrote Chambers, ‘is incapable of pleasing without the assistance of art’90 – in particular, the art of architecture. So historic architectural styles – that is, alternative sets of post-structural conventions – have a key part to play in the reciprocal operation of the Romantic imagination: a process by which art controls nature and nature controls art.91

Now we can be more specific, and examine these ideas at work: first in one style, and then in a whole spectrum of styles. Firstly, the Gothic Revival. Gothic emerges as a stylistic term in the sixteenth century, with Vasari: and that emergence confirms the idea of style in architecture.92 But in England it is not until the early eighteenth century, when Revival can be clearly distinguished from Survival, that Gothic takes its place as simply one option in a range of available modes. Sir Christopher Wren’s approach was essentially environmental: Gothic was chosen for Tom Tower, Oxford (1681–2) – as for Westminster Abbey (1698–1722) – to avoid ‘a disagreeable mixture’. Hawksmoor, however, at All Souls, Oxford (1715–40), takes a major step towards stylistic autonomy. William Kent goes one stage further: his Rococo syntheses of Gothic and Classic – at Esher (1729–32)[16], Hampton Court (1732) or Rousham (1738–41) – indicate a shift from environmental to associational design. And in the work of Batty Langley, Sanderson Miller and their circle the evolution from environmental to associational thinking is complete. The Rococo rejoiced in severing the link between form and structure, and treated Gothic ornament simply as a species of communication – a kind of visual morse code tapping out the message ‘medieval’. By comparison the Picturesque placed less emphasis on ornament and more on pictorial impact. Thanks to the cult of Picturesque attitudes – at Edge Hill, Warwick’s (1747–50) for instance – architectural design becomes basically a scenic device: these buildings are pictorially conceived as memories in
three dimensions. Miller’s Tower at Edge Hill echoes Guy’s Tower at Warwick, but there are other echoes too: it was designed to enshrine a statue of the Saxon hero Caractacus on the spot where Charles I raised his standard against the Roundheads, and it was ceremonially opened on the anniversary of Cromwell’s death.

Uvedale Price had recommended that an architect should ‘accommodate his building to the scenery, not make [the scenery] give way to the building.’ And he put his theories into practice when, at Castle House, Aberystwyth (c. 1795; dem. 1845) he forced Nash to produce a triply octagonal structure designed to take full advantage of the coastal site. Thus the Picturesque completed what the Rococo began, the conjunction of architecture with nature. Picturesque theory subordinated architectural detail, architectural planning, and indeed architecture itself, to scenic considerations. This tendency was accentuated by new techniques of architectural drawing and by new tendencies in architectural criticism: henceforward the architectural perspective takes a prominent place at the Royal Academy. Architects, critics, and the public are all thinking pictorially. The habit of regarding buildings as scenery – as aggregates of separate visual units – encouraged not only irregular Skylines and asymmetrical plans, but triangular, hexagonal and octagonal features, eyecatchers and all manner of follies: the polygonal Bird House at Knole, Kent (1761) for example. This Picturesque habit of breaking up architectural composition into a series of scenic tableaux – based on the principle of the mobile spectator – certainly encouraged drawing-board architecture: designing a house from the outside inwards rather than from the inside outwards. It was a process of design ideal for landscape features – Thomas Harrison’s Hawkstone Citadel, Shropshire (c. 1824) for instance: a multi-angular plan recalling several designs in Richard Elsam’s Essay on Rural Architecture (1803). Here we have the reciprocal Picturesque: buildings designed to be looked at as well as looked from; scenographic design, based on spectator-mobility and on the multiplication of points of vision.

Clever enough. But it was a dangerous game. And taken in conjunction with the multiplication of stylistic choice, it came near to disintegrating architectural design altogether. As in the Menagerie at Woburn, Beds (c. 1806), where Repton suggested different styles for each elevation: Classic for the formal approach, Gothic for the informal. Or at Castleward, Co. Down (c. 1762) [17], a house with separate Palladian and Gothic facades. Or at Castle Goring, Sussex (c. 1790): Neo-Classical and Castellated; a stylistically schizophrenic house designed by Biagio Rebecca for the eccentric Shelley family. Eccentric or calculated, this pursuit of
optical effect lay at the root of Picturesque thinking. Smirke’s Lowther Castle, Westmorland (1806–11) was Gothic on one side and Baronial on the other. Wilkins’ Senior Combination Room at King’s College, Cambridge (1823) has Grecian windows facing one way and Gothic windows facing another. And the greater the range of stylistic choice, the greater the danger that architectural composition would disintegrate into a mosaic of Picturesque devices. That was the nub of Soane’s criticism of Smirke’s Covent Garden Theatre (1809–10): each façade was independently conceived.97

One man whose career encompassed all styles was John Foulston of Plymouth, the leading Regency architect of the West of England. He was a Gothic Revivalist who could rival Wilkins. He was a town planner who could rival Nash, and he was a Neo-Classicist who could occasionally rival Soane. But Foulston will always be remembered for something else.
He appears in every textbook as the architect of the extraordinary group of buildings at Kerr St., Devonport, Plymouth (1821–24) [18]. Here no less than five styles are simultaneously represented: a range of terraced houses in Roman Corinthian; a Greek Doric Town Hall and Naval Column; an ‘Oriental’ or ‘Islamic’ or ‘Mohammedan’ Mount Zion Chapel (now demolished); a pair of Greek Ionic houses (now also demolished); and an Egyptian Library (now appropriately perhaps – an Oddfellows Hall).

What was Foulston trying to do? He called it an ‘experimental group’, and he justified his actions as follows:

It occurred to [me] that if a series of edifices, exhibiting the various features of the architectural world, were erected in conjunction, and skilfully grouped, a happy result might be obtained. Under this impression, [I] was induced to try an experiment (not before attempted) for producing a picturesque effect, by combining in one view, the Grecoan, Egyptian, and a variety of the Oriental. [18]

Architecture was starting to flex its muscles for the Battle of the Styles. But as yet there is no conflict. There is a choice, but Pugin had yet to give the dilemma a moral dimension. The style of the Commissioners' Churches, for instance, is entirely arbitrary: neither the traditional elasticity of Georgian nor the passionate experimentalism of Victorian church design. It is all symbol and no substance – even the churches of Sir John Soane [19] are stylistically haphazard. In the 1830s and 1840s, the
choice of styles tended to settle down on typological grounds: Gothic for churches, Greek for art galleries, Renaissance for banks and insurance offices, Romanesque for gaols, Tudor for schools and almshouses – and any one of these for villas. But the categories are not yet exclusive. Regency architecture, in all its chameleon variety, was an architecture appropriate to the age of Romanticism. Neo-Gothic, Neo-Greek, Neo-Egyptian, Neo-Oriental: styles equally exotic, equally remote in time and place, but not yet equally assimilated or understood. Classical archaeology, for instance, was still far more sophisticated than its medieval or oriental counterparts. But clearly the comparability of styles has become something of an article of faith. As Thomas Hopper put it in 1830: 'it is the business of an architect to understand all styles, and to be prejudiced in favour of none.'

Foulston’s successor, George Wightwick, clearly found the experiment irresistible. In 1840 he published an architectural romance entitled *The Palace of Architecture*, in which he portrays just the sort of stylistic fantasy Foulston was dreaming of, a veritable ‘epitome of the architectural world’. Wightwick’s imaginary palace would have outdone Fonthill in its scale.

---

19 Sir John Soane, Commissioners’ Churches: alternative styles (drawn by J.M. Gandy, c.1818).
just as it outdid in its variety another Regency fantasy of eclecticism. Charles Kelsall’s *Phantasm of a University* (1841).\(^{100}\) ‘My book’, Wightwick explains, ‘aspires to that station in regard to Architecture which the novels of Scott occupy in relation to History.’ The palace itself was Neo-Classical. But its gardens were the *reductio ad absurdum* of Picturesque theory: an anthology of all styles known to man: Indian, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Constantinian (i.e. Lombardic Romanesque), Norman, Decorated Gothic, Old English or Manorial, Tudor Gothic, Turkish, Protestant Baroque, Soanean, Anglo-Greek, and Anglo-Italian. But it was reserved for the entrance gateway[20] to combine all these styles. This fantastic portal, compounded of fragments of all styles, Wightwick explains, ‘symbolises MUSEUM…. A masonic riddle, teeming with multiplied significance, and exhibiting a kind of monstrous combination, in which discordant features seek to harmonise themselves with a general outline of forced conformity – the dark rock of India, the granite of Egypt.

the marble of Greece and the freestone of Italy and middle Europe. [are] here commingled; each compartment being as distinct in form as in material, and the whole, in its composition, wearing an aspect which, at the same time, challenges admiration and defies criticism.\textsuperscript{101} Indeed it does: the only comparable conflation which comes to mind is Joseph Hansom’s design of a mausoleum for the Duke of Sussex (1843), also combining all styles – Gothic buttresses, Egyptian entrance, Roman arches and Grecian mouldings.\textsuperscript{102}

Wightwick made no attempt to explain the choice of any particular style; he merely rejoiced in the fact that choice existed. But in the following year, 1841, a book appeared which did attempt such an explanation: Richard Brown’s compendious volume, \textit{Domestic Architecture}. Here every conceivable historic style is set out: Cottage Orné, Tudor, Stuart, Florentine, Flemish, Pompeian, Venetian, Swiss, French Chateau, Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Anglo-Grecian (which is actually Soanic), Anglo-Italian, Persian, Chinese, Burmese, Oriental, Morisco-Gothic, Norman, Lancastrian, Plantagenet, Palladian. And to assist the budding architect or patron, Professor Brown suggests that the choice of each style should be determined by purpose and situation. He illustrates, in one view,\textsuperscript{103}\textsuperscript{21} appropriate landscape settings for at least four styles: Norman, Tudor, Grecian and Roman – that is, rugged mountains

\textsuperscript{21} Richard Brown, ‘Norman, Tudor, Grecian and Roman’ (1841). Four styles in suitable settings.
for a Norman castle; bosky plantations for a Tudor seat; rolling woodlands – with hints of Arcadia – for a Grecian villa; and verdant pasture – with hints of the campagna – for a Roman (i.e. Palladian) mansion.

Alas, he makes no attempt to explain either the uses or the settings appropriate, for example, to Burmese, Chinese, Persian, or Morisco-Gothic. And, of course, there could be no such appropriate setting. The choice of these bizarre styles had nothing to do with utility, and everything to do with romance. Henry Holland’s Dairy at Woburn, Beds (1792) is Chinese; Cockerell’s Dairy at Sezincote, Glos. (1827?) is Moorish. The choice of style is dictated neither by setting nor by purpose. During the Regency, English architects were simply indulging their imaginations. Sezincote (c.1805), was indeed a nabob’s retreat, but its ‘Indian’ style had no contextual relevance to the Cotswolds.104 ‘In the midst of all this’, noted John Weale in 1844, ‘there was but one man, the late Sir John Soane, who dared to be positively original. All others were mad in some particular foreign fashion; but he alone was mad in his own way … there was a method in the old knight’s madness.’105 Indeed there was. But half the impact of Soane’s genius stems from the genius of J. M. Gandy. And it is Gandy’s illustrations to Soane’s Royal Academy lectures which provide historians with their most eloquent commentary on the roots of Regency taste.106

Gandy himself adopted an eclectic viewpoint. Imitation he denounced as ‘unworthy of modern genius’; ‘a comprehensive mind’, he explains, ‘will select from all styles’; we ‘moderns [must] prepare a system selected from all tastes … [culled from] the beauties of every climate and every
age."¹⁰⁷ Such assumptions readily lent themselves to fantasy, and it is for example, in Gandy's 'Tomb of Merlin' (1815)¹⁰⁸ that we see his dream of 'a new style of architecture' emerging from a fantasised vision of Roslyn Chapel, a dim confusion of late antique and early medieval forms. In the whole spectrum of historic styles, Gandy believed, there must be some unifying bond; some explanation of the elusive link between style and culture. Without it there could be no hope of finding that architectural philosopher's stone: a new style for a new age. Hence his diagrammatic fantasy, 'Comparative Architecture' (1836),¹⁰⁹[22] an attempt to decode the mnemonic power of style by a codification of all styles. Here, in effect, Gandy was attempting to find a future in the past: to trace the mystic symbolism of architectural form back to its organic roots, back to its 'Natural Model' (1838)[23]. Out of what he calls the primeval 'protocol of architecture', that new style would one day emerge, 'a symbolic system ... perfect, durable, and universal.'¹¹⁰

Alas, it did not emerge in Gandy's own architecture. Some of his villa designs do indeed possess a prophetic simplicity, and as such they appealed powerfully to the Modernists of the 1930s. But on the whole, Gandy – just as much as any of his generation – was locked into the Picturesque system. Sewell's Folly, Battersea (c.1830) [24], was a folly not a prototype.

By 1844, one commentator, John Weale, was able to spot what had happened: Neo-Classicism had fallen victim to the Picturesque. Among all those revivals, Neo-Classicism at least, in its abstract geometry, suggested – negatively speaking – a way out of the historicist jungle. 'A feeling for what was termed "classic simplicity" pervaded every art', writes Weale, 'even our tea-caddies became mere cubes of wood.' Then came the graphic revolution. 'The introduction of our richly illustrated annuals administered more and more to that taste for picture which had already existed; and...what may be termed the romance of architecture obtained a considerable influence on the public [Salvin's stables and laundry at Mamhead, Devon, 1828–33] [25] are an extreme example' [11]

...architects were now induced to leave the academical formalities of their Greek and Latin Grammars, and to cultivate...picturesque effects. Hence 'the triumph of picture over geometry – the conquest of poetry over mathematics.' [112] He meant, of course, the victory of imagination over reason; the victory of atectonic criteria over structural harmonies. In other words, the triumph of the eye over the mind: the triumph of the Picturesque.

Let us go back for a moment to Edmund Burke. 'No work of art can be great, but as it deceives.' [113] That was Burke's answer to the rationalist
The Consequences of the Picturesque

credo – beauty is truth, truth beauty – and in a sense all Picturesque art is the art of illusion. Perhaps illusion – or at least artifice – is the basis of all conscious (i.e. post-vernacular) architectural design. Even Laugier – arch-rationalist of the eighteenth century – conceded this point with his doctrine of apparent utility.114 But architecture in the age of Romanticism was peculiarly susceptible to illusory treatment. For if the Romantic aesthetic has any basis, it lies in the cult of subjective criteria. Classicism aspires to the absolute, Romanticism glories in the incidental. Where Classicism is abstract and universal, Romanticism is concrete, particular, personal. Thus the architecture of Romanticism subordinated objective criteria – harmony, balance, proportion, utility; the formal and functional values of classical tradition – to criteria which are primarily subjective: the autocratic criteria of sensation and association. Hence the primacy of pictorial values – composition, silhouette, texture, in other words appearances – in early nineteenth-century architectural aesthetics. Hence, indeed, the whole panoply of eclectic historicism.

By the late 1830s, the time was ripe for a return to rationalism – and rationalism did indeed return. But it returned in a rather devious way. It returned in the guise of the arch Victorian romantic: Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin.

25 Anthony Salvin, Mamhead, Devon: stables, laundry and brewhouse (1828–33).
'The triumph of picture over geometry'.