

'The Hollow Victory' of Modern Architecture and the Quest for the Vernacular

J. M. Richards and 'the Functional
Tradition'

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Introduction

Modernism and anonymity have remained largely irreconcilable, especially in the field of architecture. As the omnipotent symbol of creativity and artistic power, the personality of the nineteenth-century Romantic artist defined the transgressive nature of his early twentieth-century avant-garde successor, while nurturing the emergence of the celebrity architect. Valuing authorship above anonymity, the cult(ure) of avant-gardism has invested the modern artist with the power to see beyond culture and tradition to generate cultural transformation. It is peculiar, then, to see that one of the chief editors of the leading modern architecture journals of Britain, J. M. Richards, wrote extensively on the idea of anonymity and the value of vernacular architectures.

Richards had a significant role in the development of modern architecture in Britain while at the helm of *The Architectural Review* (hereafter *AR*) alongside Nikolaus Pevsner and the journal's proprietor and editor H. de C. Hastings. He was also active in several other roles, sometimes simultaneously, as a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, architectural correspondent for *The Times* and 'in effect' architectural consultant to the BBC.¹ Richards was both a member of the Modern Architectural Research (MARS) Group, the British chapter of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) dedicated to modernism, and a founding member of the Georgian Group and the Victorian Society, advancing the cause of conservation in Britain, seemingly conflicting associations.

This chapter will focus on Richards's editorial role at *AR*, showing how he promoted anonymity as a social and cultural ideal as a result of his sympathy for Popular Front politics and 1940s Marxism in Britain, with brief background about his pre-war work on vernacular architecture. Richards believed that a reinterpretation of vernacular architecture was needed to rejuvenate anonymity in modern architecture. The urge to preserve thereby a degree of homogeneity in the built environment largely stemmed from his commitment to social realism, probably one reason why he was given the nickname 'Karl Marx' by John Betjeman. Through a recontextualization of episodes in Richards's career I aim to trace the continuity and the ruptures within Richards's promotion of anonymity, and to shed further light on the rise of interest in vernacular architecture in the post-war period.

The promotion of anonymity was a significant component of the post-war agenda set by *AR*'s editors, and on this subject Richards was the most outspoken voice. In January 1947, *AR* published an ambitious and anonymous manifesto, entitled 'The Second Half Century' in which the editors called for a post-avant-garde 'regime' in modern architecture. According to the manifesto this regime concerned the expansion and consolidation of 'the revolution' that brought forward early twentieth-century modern architecture as a succession of avant-garde movements. The editors argued that in this new regime modern architecture should be humanized by a recovery of ornament, colour, texture and a consciousness of history in relation to place. The commitment to anonymity was expressed in a section titled '*The Architectural Review* demonstrates the antiquity of *the functional tradition*.'² The aim was to develop a new anonymity by putting modern architecture in dialogue with vernaculars, complementing *AR*'s urban-design pedagogy developed under the rubric of 'Townscape'. Addressing 'Townscape''s contextualist demand, 'the Functional Tradition' was articulated as the timeless core of architecture exposed to view by the advent of functionalism. In articles and campaigns that followed, *AR* problematized the role of history, symbolism and communication in modern architecture, the augmentation of materiality and the need for regional variety in opposition to an international style that the editors found stagnant. In running campaigns that advocated cultural continuity, the editors took complementary roles: Nikolaus Pevsner interpreted anonymity in relation to cultural particularism via *Kunstgeographie*, an art-historical method that relied particularly on the relation between geography and art; Hastings saw 'Townscape' as key in order for 'built forms of local culture' and specific 'ways-of-life' to be handed over to future generations; and Richards looked for an articulation of the particular within the universal, and vice versa, via social realism.

'The Functional Tradition' began as a special issue in January 1950 and appeared in *AR* several times across more than a decade. It was an insert dedicated to domestic or industrial vernacular buildings such as warehouses, docks, sheds, beach huts, bridges, pubs, breweries, maltings, etc. Spotted in structures where 'clearly some anonymous force was seen to have dictated the form', the editors believed that specimens of 'the Functional Tradition' demonstrated a genealogical link to modern functionalism. This connection would influence architects of the younger generation, especially James Stirling and his circle, testifying to *AR*'s success.

In his May 1972 ‘annual discourse’ addressing the Royal Institute of British Architects, Richards created serious controversy when he declared that the victory seemingly won by modern architecture was, for him, hollow. Coming from the mouth of a critic and historian who had devoted almost all his life to the promotion of modern architecture in Britain and around the world, what sounded to many like Richards’s renunciation of modern architecture was, in fact, essentially a reiteration of his belief in modern architecture’s potential to create a new anonymity.

J. M. Richards and the quest for ‘the vernacular’

Richards’s interest in the vernacular stayed constant, but its subtext changed over the years. In the 1930s when Richards was affiliated with avant-garde circles he believed that a new anonymity was possible via an astylistic approach to architecture and that the developing technological infrastructure allowed for new possibilities of architectural expression. From the 1940s to the first half of the 1950s social realism and the problem of finding a cultural expression for the changing lives of different classes dominated his interest. In the late 1950s he promoted vernacular architectures as the unifying threads in built environments and as bearers of cultural continuity. When the 1960s were coming to a close Richards offered a rereading of his *The Castles on the Ground* (1946, republished in 1973) within the agendas of advocacy planning, client participation and the rooting of architects in particular localities.

In the 1930s Richards’s left-wing political sensitivities were honed in the struggle against the rise of fascism and totalitarianism. In his *Memoirs* Richards recounts the political atmosphere of the time and his subsequent disillusionment with the USSR:

What I remember as characteristic of the 1930s is something very different, which did for a time play a part in my life. This was the development of passionate political feelings among people like myself to whom in other circumstances politics would have meant nothing. They were the days of the rise of Fascism, of the Spanish Civil War, of the Popular Front; to be more specific, of Adowa and the Reichstag trial, of Leon Blum and Potato Jones; in England of Mosley’s Blackshirts and the Left Book Club. I and my friends and acquaintances joined and subscribed and protested and marched in support of left-wing and anti-Fascist causes that seemed desperately to matter. . . . At the same time the identification of freedom with the left became the common currency of my generation, and decades of disillusioning happenings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia were needed before we relinquished our deep-seated belief that in seeking the social ideal we should look always towards Russia.³

When Richards was affiliated with left-wing avant-garde circles in the 1930s, he believed that the modern movement’s aim was to give society a unity of social and cultural purpose.⁴ Richards argued that cultural unity expressed itself as a common language observed in vernaculars. In the article he contributed to *Circle: International*

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Survey of Constructive Art (1937) Richards adopted a contrary position to the other contributors' avant-gardism by ruling individualism irrelevant in architecture, in contradistinction to modern art. Superseding the individualist will to expression, anonymity would be produced instinctively as a result of the assimilation of architectural culture. An anonymous tradition of 'cultural value' could be recovered only by the astylistic contribution of modern architecture.

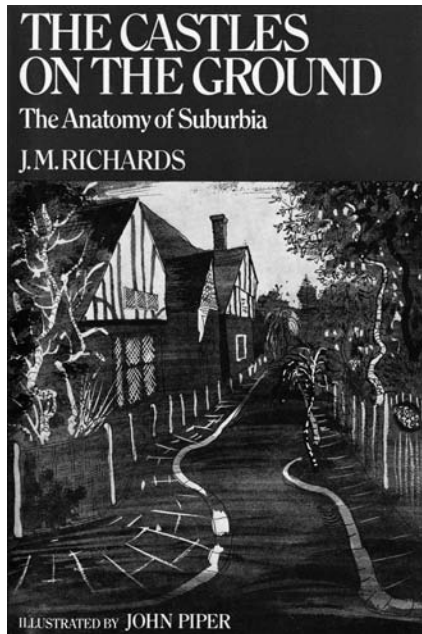
In his popular *Introduction to Modern Architecture* (1940), which was intended not only to give a historical introduction to the development of modern architecture, but also to dispel the propaganda of its detractors,⁵ Richards argued that modern architecture was not to be understood separately from the 'roots of the national culture', because it could accommodate cultural differentiation with reference to 'temperaments, ideals, climates, habits and raw materials.'⁶ It was acculturation and habit that determined the 'instinctive selection of materials, shapes and colours; [and] our emotional reaction to climate and to social relations.'⁷ Richards believed, therefore, that 'decent' modern architecture would be produced by 'decent' but ordinary architects, who could translate these sensitivities into architecture – an architecture of the community instead of an architecture of difference and constant innovation.⁸ Modern architecture could bring about the emergence of new vernacular traditions.

Inspired by Hassan Fathy's work at Gournah in Egypt, Richards developed a fascination with Middle Eastern vernaculars during his years in the Ministry of Information Bureau in Cairo from 1942, and this fed into articles published after his return in 1946. This period away from Britain also inspired *The Castles on the Ground* (Figure 8.1). This book attempted to analyse suburbia by looking into the economy, class, culture and psychology that characterized the earlier twentieth-century suburban environment around London. Richards argued that the

suburban environment is the choice of people who know what they like, and the architecture of the suburb may even be called a true contemporary vernacular . . . it has the one quality of all true vernaculars, that of *being rooted in the people's instincts*, and even its shortcomings . . . are evidence of this closeness to everyday life.⁹

Richards saw the real source of the vernacular in the assimilation of traditional knowledge by builders and others who were not necessarily architects, in other words, in the existence of a seemingly subconscious architectural culture. Suburbia was the 'architecture of the people by the people', the closest embodiment of the Morrisian ideal in British society. He believed that suburbia was populated and produced by the classes who felt in control of the world around them.¹⁰ Hence, in this world the planner or architect should simply 'play the part of guide, rather than that of a didactic school teacher', enabling and consulting rather than educating the client.¹¹ His evaluation of London's early twentieth-century suburbs in relation to the cultural preferences of the middle and upper-middle class and this environment's potential to provide an exemplar for contemporary architects was largely overlooked. The book

8.1
J. M. Richards,
*The Castles on the
Ground*, London:
John Murray, 1973
(1st edition by the
Architectural Press,
London, 1946).
Cover illustration by
John Piper.



was criticized for providing a nostalgic account of suburban life from the author's childhood and for failing to provide a critical discussion of the role of taste.

Social realism and 'the next step' for modern architecture

About a year after 'The Second Half Century' and *The Castles on the Ground* were published a significant controversy broke out about how architecture should serve the people. In May 1947, *AR* published a set of thematic articles entitled 'Reconstruction in the USSR'¹² and written by leading critics and historians, David Arkin, Andrei Bunin, and Nikolai Bylinkin.¹³ Soviet architects who sent their views on reconstruction followed the party line of cultural policy formulated by Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov.¹⁴ From 1934 the Soviet regime had rejected modernism as art for art's sake, legislated censorship and instituted repressive patronage. Zhdanov believed that the Soviet people demanded a renewal of the architecture that had been produced by the classes that repressed them before the revolution. Under his control, art was reduced to therapeutic pedagogy and propaganda. Popular and realistic themes as well as folk elements prevailed in art in order to manipulate the masses. The work of modernist art critics such as Clement Greenberg would later condemn the results of the policy as 'kitsch'.

Placed before the Soviet authors' articles, the editorial introduction by *AR* argued that the international architectural community was frustrated with Soviet architecture and art because of its ostensibly 'bourgeois' and 'retrogressive' aesthetics.¹⁵ The contemporary Soviet buildings and city plans submitted by the Soviet architects were openly historicist and eclectic in their formal preferences. *AR* argued that such mediocrity could only be excused on account of authoritarian State

patronage. While the editors disapproved the aesthetic, in an implicit critique they declared, however, that they understood the rationale behind the Soviet policy which intended to provide the people with an architecture that communicated.

Almost a year later, in March 1948, the Soviet architects replied with a fierce condemnation of *AR*'s editorial preface sent via the embassy, when an exhibition on Soviet architecture took place in the RIBA. They argued that *AR* insulted the Soviet people by declaring them architecturally illiterate, and wilfully ignored the Soviet 'achievement towards an organic national culture'. *AR*'s response was to the Soviets' detriment. In a lengthier article the editors decried the repressive policies of the Soviets for excommunicating artists and writers that did not want to participate in Zhdanov's cultural policy. Artistic production could not expect to be in 'religious conformity' with dictatorial measures. The unsigned editorial introduction was presumably written by Richards who hoped that the victory of democracy over totalitarianism and fascism in the post-war world would make modern architectural programmes more responsive to people's utilitarian as well as emotional needs. He expected the USSR would be the first place to yield results in this direction. Anticipating that Soviet architecture would become a major influence in the rapidly transforming post-war world, and dissatisfied with the official policies, he attacked Zhdanovism while acknowledging that the questions socialist realism posed for modern architecture were well founded.

Richards's sympathy for socialist realism evaporated when he was invited to the Congress of Intellectuals for Peace in Poland in 1948. His expectations, shared by many in Britain, that the USSR might create an 'art for the people and by the people' were frustrated by Communist authoritarianism. Furthermore, intellectuals he held in high esteem such as T. S. Eliot, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Malraux and Eugene O'Neill were all condemned by an 'uncompromising, anti-Western, anti-liberal tone'.¹⁶

This controversy provoked Richards into explaining how his personal position differed from the art policies of the USSR, by differentiating what he called 'social realism' from socialist realism. Against the USSR-dictated Zhdanovist socialist realism, Richards attempted to define a 'social realist approach' to architecture in an article of March 1950 titled 'The Next Step?'. According to Richards, architects were split between continuing modern architecture's self-referentiality by rejecting any appeal to popular taste and by being eager to produce 'something closely resembling a popular vernacular'.¹⁷ In attempting to overcome this split, Richards assessed three alternatives that could define a future for modern architecture, and named them 'unlimited mechanization', 'conscious humanization' and the 'social realist approach'. The advocates of 'unlimited mechanization', like Buckminster Fuller (the young Reyner Banham would later fit this category), asserted that contemporary civilization would replace handicrafts with machine production. Architecture, in order to be in tune with the *Zeitgeist*, had to adapt itself to the procedures of machine production. This was not a completely viable option for Richards, since 'true functionalism' and 'unlimited mechanization' were incompatible. True functionalism had to enable a specific solution to each problem, 'every case to be treated exactly on its merits', and had necessarily to create an architecture of the particular; whereas mechanization, based on the idea of repetitive production, demanded an architecture

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of the general. Those who searched for ‘a conscious humanization’ dealt mainly with the problem of re-establishing the popular appeal of architecture by concentrating on the ‘organic and visual’, undermining its technical aspects.

By referring to the examples of New Empiricism and the Bay Region style, Richards argued that the only hope for modern architecture was to concentrate on local characteristics and to evolve a new regionalism from aspects of climate, materials and social needs, to overcome the ‘internationalism’ of the 1920s. But this approach had the problem of turning into an escape from the dynamics of an ‘increasingly unified world, whose problems cannot be solved by a sentimental pre-occupation with the charms and chances of local topography’.¹⁸ Richards believed that the disadvantages of these two approaches would not be overcome by an architectural solution. For him, social realism:

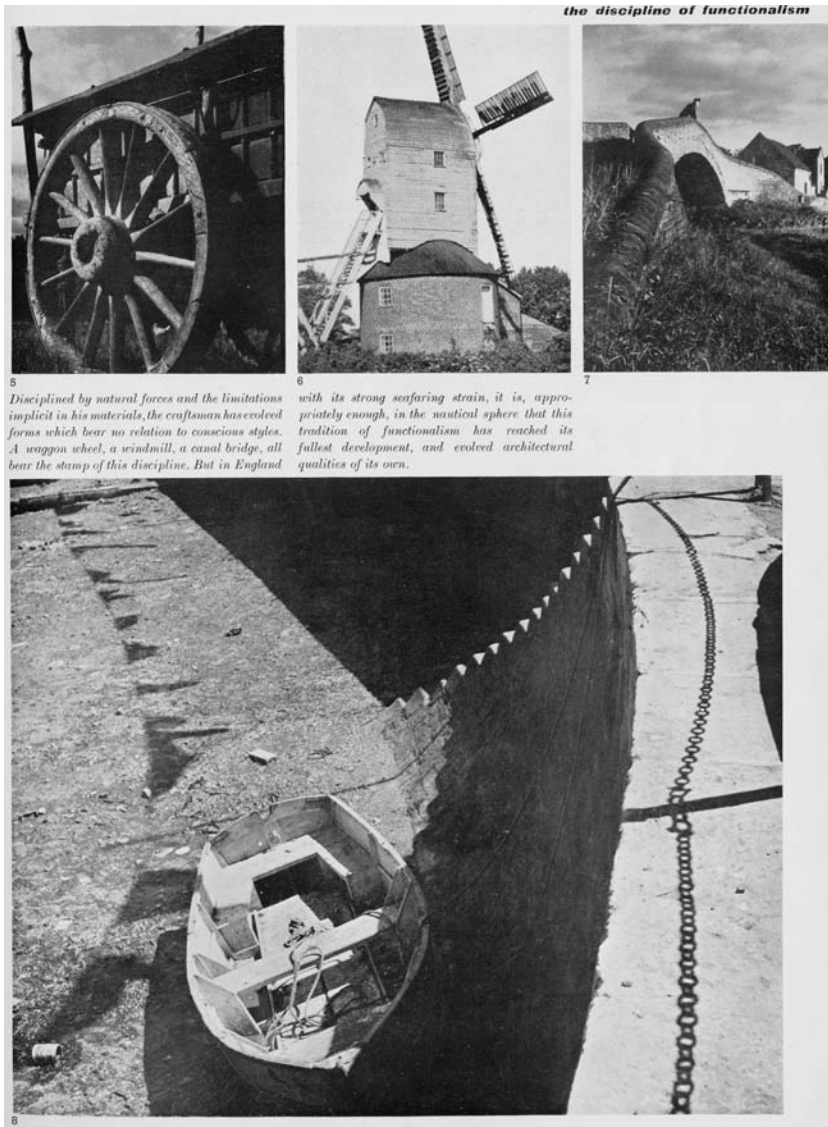
stresses always that architecture is simply a reflection of the times that produce it. . . . It goes on to say that the way for architects to enter into the life of their own time is *by making their own specialist contribution to improving the standard of life as it is lived in their time*. Rather than appeal for a renewed popular interest in architecture by making buildings more sympathetic to look at, they should concentrate on demonstrating to the public in the most practical way the role architecture can play in harnessing the products of modern science to human use and in bringing purpose, order and system into a world that suffers at present both from confusion of purpose and from too many competing systems.

When this demonstration has taken place, the argument runs, will be the time enough to see what style of architecture *a new order of society is willing to welcome and is capable of participating in*. . . . *The argument in fact ceases to be an architectural one, because architecture becomes an effect not a cause*. . . . Beyond the functionalism of the general, which is concerned with establishing principles, there is a logical next step, the functionalism of the particular . . . relating it ever more closely to the essential particulars of time and place and purpose. That is the level on which humanity and science meet.¹⁹

In conclusion, Richards’s analysis left the direction of architectural production to the run of history and to the operation of the dialectical principle, revisiting his argument of the 1930s in *Circle* that architecture should drop the search for ‘style’. However, for a modern vernacular to emerge it was essential for architecture to be welcomed and participated in by society.

‘The Functional Tradition’

Richards’s article was closely linked to the January 1950 special issue of *AR* on ‘the Functional Tradition’ (Figure 8.2).²⁰ The examples that the editors illustrated were built by generations of craftsmen employing similar principles to modern functionalism, such as designing with ‘the most suitable materials, processes and performance’ available in their localities.²¹ The editors argued that although characterized and



Disciplined by natural forces and the limitations implicit in his materials, the craftsman has evolved forms which bear no relation to conscious styles. A wagon wheel, a windmill, a canal bridge, all bear the stamp of this discipline. But in England

with its strong seafaring strain, it is, appropriately enough, in the nautical sphere that this tradition of functionalism has reached its fullest development, and evolved architectural qualities of its own.

8.2
 A page from *The Architectural Review's* special issue on 'the Functional Tradition', January 1950.

limited by utmost economic necessity, the 'Functional Tradition' transcended bare materiality and brought 'sensuous enjoyment'. The vernaculars published in the issue covered a large spectrum including warehouses, kilns, sheds, piers, signs, fencing, railing, gates, steps, road paving, drains, beach huts, bridges, pubs, windmills, etc., namely anonymous objects of design merit that populated the environment but which were kept out of art-historical interest.²²

For Richards, objects produced in 'the Functional Tradition' demonstrated that functionalism could be employed 'instinctively as well as consciously'. While modern architecture practised a scientific, 'calculated' functionalism, the 'instinctive'

kind of functionalism that operated in 'the Functional Tradition' continued throughout history. Therefore the future of modern architecture should be shaped by a new definition of functionalism that brought the instinctive into the realm of the calculated. Similarly, in defining the Bay Region Style, which for Richards was an amiable modernist development in the United States, Lewis Mumford had attributed a sense of self-maturation to the modern movement through which it shed its 'quixotic purities, its awkward self-consciousness, [and] its assertive dogmatism', and made use of its developed ability to direct machine production and the processes of industrialization for humanization.²³

Richards's argument in 'The Next Step?' was strongly influenced by Francis Klingender's pamphlet *Marxism and Art: An Approach to Social Realism* of 1943, in which Klingender evolved a critique of Zhdanovist historicism and Roger Fry's formalism, and assessed possibilities for modern art via a theorization of social realism in art.²⁴ In his memoirs Richards says little about his first wife, Peggy Angus, artist and art teacher, whose influence on his thinking about society, politics and art was probably considerable; they were effectively separated by the war and divorced in 1948. Known as 'the Red Angus', she was a vocal defender of Soviet Russia, which she had visited before the couple married in 1936, and she was in touch with art historians like Klingender. Klingender argued that, by limiting aesthetic experience to 'pure' form Fry impoverished the world of art, while his followers, who looked into art to see the emanation of the subconscious, disregarded the larger realm of human consciousness and ignored the possibility of translating social relations into art.²⁵ For Klingender, Fry attempted to construct an autonomous sphere for art where the artist lived almost completely isolated from the 'realworldly'. Such artistic autonomy could be justifiable in Victorian society because the artist, by shutting himself off from false morality, was enabled to preserve his integrity and to provide a critical attitude. As a negative consequence of this position, the unification of art with the people remained an unsolved problem.

What was crucial for Richards's article was that Klingender defined the purpose of art as expressing 'the unity of opposites'. Klingender stated that, in portraying reality, art had to express the particular in order for it to attain universal significance:

Art is thus a striking and at the same time a particularly revealing illustration of the key conception of dialectics, the unity of opposites. For in art the particular becomes the general, the general reveals itself in the particular, and it is the unity of the particular and the general, expressed in the unity of content and form, which makes art an inexhaustible source of significant experience.²⁶

Marxist theory, for Klingender, employed a dual standard to judge art. First it evaluated art with a relative standard based on the social conditions and the outlook of class it reflected, and second, it tested whether it contained a critical kernel of truth. Consequently Marxist theory did not necessarily condemn all bourgeois art as bad. Finding the 'modern movement' in art sterile, he pointed to a humanist and moral

tradition that existed in British art, starting with Hogarth's work, that expressed 'the interests and aspirations of the people' as well as allowing them access to art.²⁷

This agenda was later to be embraced by other thinkers of the early New Left, such as E. P. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), and Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* (1958), and in the rise of realism in British art promoted by critics like David Sylvester and John Berger.²⁸ James Hyman has argued that two main channels of realism were developed in British art after the war as a reaction to abstraction. He terms these 'modernist realism' and 'social realism'. Modernist realism resisted story-telling by emphasizing the metaphoric and the allusive via non-literary and non-illustrational depiction to distance itself from social and socialist realists. British social realism, however, had the ambition to 'rejuvenate notions of a national tradition of illustrative reportage' that stretched back to Hogarth. The critics that led the two currents, Sylvester in the case of modernist realism and Berger for social realism, were united in their criticism of the Continental art establishment in Paris and their resistance to Soviet and American cultures. As Hyman states, 'underscoring each was a dialectical relationship between a desire to present British culture as hegemonic and attempts to forge a decentralized, European culture free from the dominance of a single nation or superpower'. Richards's position with reference to social realism and anonymity should be evaluated as a translation of this debate into the field of modern architecture in favour of the development of local responses and against internationalization.

The vernacular for Richards, then, was the kind of architecture that expressed the 'interests and the aspirations of the people' without the signature of the professional architect, free from the dominance of a single language, yet able to create a unified environment. In a healthy cultural transformation, Richards believed, a new vernacular would emerge from existing vernacular traditions to express people's ways-of-life with the aid of modern architecture's technological and programmatic infrastructure. Locally produced past vernaculars would help fulfil this need by supplying ahistorical and astylistic precedents.

AR's interest in 'the Functional Tradition' continued uninterruptedly through the 1950s and 1960s, unaffected by a rapidly transforming outside context that saw the rise of New Brutalism. The polemic had a wide impact. For instance 'Den Funktionelle Tradition' was published as an offprint by *Arkitekten* in Denmark in 1951.

Richards was not alone in promoting anonymity via *AR*. Nikolaus Pevsner gave support to the cause. Pevsner's early interest in 'national characteristics' stemmed from his art-history education in Leipzig under the tutelage of Wilhelm Pinder. He was also highly influenced by Pinder's personality as a 'tireless popularizer driven by a cultural and political commitment'.²⁹ What is important for this chapter, however, is that *Kunstgeographie* grounded Pevsner's warning against the proliferation of a formulaic and monotonous International Style. In his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* (1937) one of Pevsner's main concerns was to define the artist's role with reference to an artistic canon, the strength of which established cultural unity. He sympathized with the paternal socialism of Labour – mostly due to his belief in

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William Morris's ideals – and the Victorian elite's dedication to public service. Later, in a talk titled 'Art for Everyone: Art and the State' and aired in June 1946, Labour's first year of government, Pevsner elaborated on the roles of the State, art and the artist with a view to the common good of society.³⁰ The facilitation of communication between the artist and the public, a social role previously managed by the church, had, he argued, to be taken up by 'the State, town councils and semi-public bodies'.³¹ The State could wed the Morrisian principle of 'art for everyone by everyone' with concerns for visual education.³²

In 1949, Pevsner set himself against Siegfried Giedion's promotion of the avant-garde as an agent of cultural progress in a harsh review of *Mechanisation Takes Command*, casting Giedion as a false prophet.³³ He implied that he arrogated it to himself to define the path of civilization instead of confining himself to the 'proper' limits of the art historian. Referring to Giedion's doctoral work, he argued that it employed Wölfflinian historiography at the expense of 'Kulturgeschichte, Geistesgeschichte or Sozialgeschichte'.³⁴ For Pevsner, the architect had to cater to the needs of the community and work for the development of an anonymous culture. He argued that the twentieth-century avant-garde, as Giedion defined it, had become no more than the reincarnation of the culturally and politically detached nineteenth-century Romantic artist.³⁵ The architecture of this anonymous culture would largely emerge from the contemporary vernaculars produced by architects of social commitment (Figure 8.3).

In 1953, in a joint effort by Pevsner and Richards, *AR* started discussing contemporary architecture in the dominions with regard to the possible emergence of regional vernaculars. Concerned by the reduction of modern architecture to an

8.3
Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Johannesburg: The development of a contemporary vernacular in the Transvaal', *The Architectural Review*, June 1953.



Nikolaus Pevsner

In the struggle to consolidate and exploit the new architecture as a manner of everyday construction—often a more heroic battle than the original invention of the style—the Dominions are playing a vital, though sometimes unappreciated, part. In the article which follows Professor Pevsner draws attention to a hitherto unremarked phenomenon: the sudden appearance of a 'little Brazil' within the Commonwealth. For in Johannesburg a group of architects have evolved a contemporary vernacular for the many large buildings, mostly blocks of flats, which have been erected there since the War. The greater part of this development lies in the suburb of Hillbrow, seen opposite in two high-level views—one from the other towards, the gleaming sand-tips which form a suitably exotic and dramatic complement to an area extraordinarily consistent in its use of a modern idiom.

JOHANNESBURG

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEMPORARY VERNACULAR IN THE TRANSVAAL

The train climbs nearly 6,000 feet from Cape Town to Johannesburg. You travel through the vineyards and fruit plantations of the Cape Province, then up the Hex River, in serpentine as during as those of the Gottard route across the Alps, rising by two and a half thousand feet over a distance of 36 miles, and then you reach the Great Karroo, miles upon miles of flat, bare and barren table-land both sides of the railway track, untoned perhaps within eye-sight by any human hand, scrubby low growth, never tended; red soil, red rocks, no water. The towns and villages, where there are any, are of low houses along wide, dusty, tree-lined streets. The hotel may be the only house rising to three stories, the Leed Miller Hotel for instance, at Matielofontein, 3,000 feet up. European population 120. But from Matielofontein it is still 650 miles to Johannesburg, 650 miles through the Central Karroo and then the Northern Karroo or the High Veld.

You stop at Kimberley, where they found the first diamonds in 1871 and still show you 'the largest man-made hole in the world', a crater 1,300 feet deep, and finally you reach the Rand, the reef that runs in a west-east direction, and on which Johannesburg stretches out its suburbs, its locations, its subsidiary towns, for something like 40 or 50 miles in one direction, for 7 or 8 in the other. Gold-mining has left its mark in handsome sand-tips and slime-dams of all sizes. The sand-tips are often conical, the silences of a stripped tabular shape something like models of Table Mountain. They say a number of them have already settled so firmly that one could build on them.

They also point at one of them or near one of them and tell you that there the first gold of the Rand was dug in 1852. The conical tips look very much like the white china-clay dumps of Cornwall, but vary in colour from a pale yellow to gold and almost pink. They stand on your right and don't leave you, until the train pulls in at the station.

It is an untidy station, because it is obsolete in its size, and rebuilding has begun. The old station still proudly displays its Imperial Roman looking bulk, by Gerhard Loth—and indeed, for the building dates back to about 1904. Now the designs for a new station have been approved. It will be modern and extensive and have all the most up-to-date facilities, separation of the rare long-distance traffic from the suburban traffic along the Rand, concentrated to maximum capacity in the rush hours, and of course another kind of separation, providing for the Mack their own entrances, looking-offices, cloak-rooms, luggage-counters and waiting-rooms. It will make a fine-looking group, though placed against the screen of a sixteen-storey block which in the present design is rather schematically symmetrical.

But gone are the giant columns of Rome, America and St Herbert's; gone is the make way for a straightforward idiom of today, handled apparently with complete ease and without any of the self-consciousness which in Europe might lead to a more sensitive, more personal design, or on the other hand to overdesigning. If you have not much work on a scale larger than that of a cottage or terrace of cottages, you tend to overdesign: what you have to

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issue of style by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, and by the proliferation of the International Style, Pevsner bemoaned the failure of architects to search consciously for particularized versions of the international idiom. Rather they stuck to narrow formulas: 'little independent thought had gone into the problem of marrying modern form with conditions of climates'.³⁶ In 1961, these articles were compiled into a book titled *New Buildings in the Commonwealth*. In the introduction, Richards explained that all the dominions represented in the book were expected to evolve a 'consistent architectural style of their own'. What Richards meant by this consistent architectural style was a local vernacular variant that remained loyal to the principles of modern architecture. In response to the brief sent by Pevsner and Richards, architects from the dominions evaluated the relation of local people to architecture, the state of architectural education, the spread of modern architecture, the development of the profession, the availability of traditional and modern materials to architects, and, with added emphasis, the possibility of a modern vernacular's emergence. Maxwell Fry, writing from West Africa, stated that the modern architect's task was 'creating a *regional character* answerable to local needs, a *dialect of internationalism*'.³⁷ Modern architecture's theoretical core, and its imperative to utilize new technology but not a limited aesthetic vocabulary codified under style, would serve as the grammar that underlaid these dialects. The move towards a regional vocabulary would allow modern architecture to address the sympathies of local communities and increase its popularity. While Pevsner pointed to the potential of an international modern architecture adapted to locales to provide regional diversity, Richards directed architects' attention to local and industrial vernaculars as inspiring precedents to achieve the same goal.

The turn to cultural anthropology

Cultural anthropology was a fruitful resource for *AR* in convincing its readers of the universal validity of 'the Functional Tradition'. In February 1954, the magazine published an article by Alan Houghton Brodrick entitled 'Grass Roots: Huts, Igloos, Wigwams and Other Sources of the Functional Tradition'. Brodrick had been the Joint Secretary General of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences from 1934 to 1938. *AR*'s editorial introduction stated:

The forms of these dwellings are as diverse as the cultures which use them . . . Primitive societies live at the upper limit of their technological resources, civilized societies live, on a statistical average, well below theirs, and can therefore learn much that is useful and necessary from their less well-equipped brothers of the tropics, the Arctic and the steppe lands.³⁸

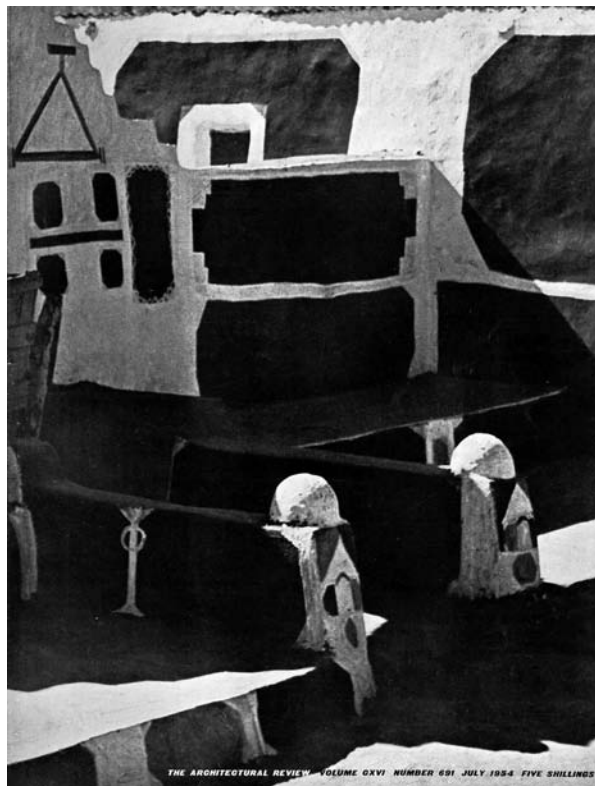
Most probably authored by H. de C. Hastings, with his usual scepticism of science and technology, the editorial introduction asserted that the 'primitive builder' was a fiction just like 'his brother the noble savage' and invited modern architects to explore the efficiency, diversity and symbolism achieved by their 'primitive' brothers.

By directing its readers to the proofs of anthropology and situating the

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discussion firmly under the generous umbrella of culture, *AR* diverted 'the Functional Tradition' from the realm of taste and ideology. In an intriguing allegory of modernity, *AR* ran a cover story in the same year based on the colourful architecture of the South Ndebele people, to the north of Pretoria in South Africa (Figure 8.4).

Some of these people, which the *AR* referred to as M'Pogga and Bantu, had been forcibly moved to make way for an airport in 1953. In their new settlement they were unable to find the building materials to which they were accustomed. Instead of using thatch, they started to build with mud brick and whitewash.³⁹ *AR*'s editorial introduction stressed that 'a people with long-standing traditions of its own, living on the fringe of Western culture' had established a memorable built environment in a land that they had inhabited for a very brief period. In their new buildings they borrowed 'figurative and abstract elements from every level of *the cultural experience of a people suspended, temporarily between two ways of life*'.⁴⁰ What was common to the modern subject was this suspended, transitional state of life. The moral of the story was that in order for modern architecture to satisfy the demands of people who participate in a certain culture, it had to adapt itself to the 'cultural pattern'. The remedy that the Ndebele found in exile was to reconcile an existing architectural language with new building technologies and materials. When left to themselves, the example proved, people created edifices that transferred cultural memory from one place to the other. Architecture, as the inheritor of cultural



8.4
South African
Ndebele
architecture, *The
Architectural
Review* cover,
July 1954.

memory, could help us to adapt to modernity, and the transition between 'two ways of life' could be smoothed, easing the sense of suspension.

AR's editorial subscribed to a type of cultural particularism developed by the anthropologist Franz Boas and his followers Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, who studied culture as an integrated way of life. Benedict saw culture as a systematic body of learned behaviour. She believed that modern people could better see their own socially transmitted behaviour, as well as understand the difference of standards between different cultures, through comparative studies of so-called 'primitive' cultures. 'Primitive' cultures were accepted as laboratories of modern social problems set in simpler terms which allowed identification of 'cradle traits' fundamental to all human thinking.⁴¹ The Ndebele represented the original human mind and its architectural desires, demonstrating how the subconscious of the modern subject operated.

'The Functional Tradition' came back in another special issue in July 1957, this time drawing on the simple conventional architecture of the nineteenth century that responded to the Industrial Revolution's utilitarian programmes. Against the concrete grain elevators and silos of white, plain, unadorned surfaces that inspired an earlier generation of modern architects, Richards pitched a new set of precedents, such as warehouses and breweries built of brick, wood, stone and iron, and covered with pitched roofs. In other words, Richards was challenging the stylistic vocabulary and imagery codified by pre-war modern architectural discourse, and the popularity of New Brutalism at the same time. The highly successful book that followed the special issue in July 1957 came out in 1958 from the Architectural Press. It was later regarded as an important contribution to the birth of industrial archaeology, diverting attention from Richards's central intentions.⁴² The book owed its success to a visual essay composed of brilliant photographs by Eric de Maré (1910–2002), a massively influential architectural photographer of the post-war period and a major actor in *AR*'s visual education effort (Figure 8.5).

'The Functional Tradition' was expected to have a 'taming' influence on the anti-aesthetics advanced by 'New Brutalism'. Banham's defining essay published in *AR* in December 1955 set 'memorability of image, clear exhibition of structure and valuation of materials as found' as the fundamental principles of 'New Brutalism'.⁴³ These qualities were those that Richards appreciated most in the industrial structures of 'the Functional Tradition'. Against Banham's portrayal of New Brutalism as the birth of an English avant-garde current, Richards saw it as a trend inspired by the post-war work of Le Corbusier, just like Hunstanton School was interpreted as a successful derivation of Mies's work, in smooth continuity with modern architecture.⁴⁴ For him New Brutalism was a return to modern architecture's first principles, proudly English, not a radical rupture that could define modern architecture anew. Richards's attempt to establish a link of inspiration between 'the Functional Tradition' and the early work of the Smithsons, especially for Hunstanton School and the Sugden House, was soon met with protest. Readers' letters pointed to the discrepancy between *AR*'s representation of the Smithsons in terms of continuity versus Banham's and their own self-promotion as the new English avant-garde. In September 1957, one reader urged the editors to refrain from implying a relationship between the 'conscious,

8.5
The Albert Dock
in Liverpool.
Photograph by
Eric de Maré,
1957, reproduced
in J. M. Richards,
*The Functional
Tradition*
(London, 1958).



educated casualness of the New Brutalists' and the 'spontaneous quality' of anonymous architecture.⁴⁵

In featuring Stirling and Gowan's Ham Common Flats, however, the editors were convinced that British architects were moving towards the creation of a sophisticated vernacular. In 1960 James Stirling published an article, 'The Functional Tradition and Expression', in *Perspecta* that set him apart from those who saw New Brutalism as the neo-avant-garde that finally put British modern architecture on the map.⁴⁶ Stirling contextualized the qualities of anonymous architecture in the post-war work of Le Corbusier and in his own partnership with Gowan, almost confirming Richards. Acknowledging the influence of De Stijl and the Jaoul houses as inspiring precedents to the flats of Ham Common, he admitted a particular fascination with the 'vernacular brick buildings such as the Liverpool warehouses and the great virtuosity of English nineteenth century brick technology'.⁴⁷ Stirling agreed with *AR*'s genealogy that buildings of 'the Functional Tradition' were 'suggestive of the early ideas of Functionalism but less of the machine aesthetic, which was primarily a style concern.' His analysis of the nineteenth-century industrial vernaculars emphasized possibilities of alternative expression via volumetric arrangement, the display of structural members and robust materiality via textural quality – 'an unsophisticated but successful integration of large and small elements with a degree of inevitability'.⁴⁸ Here was an attempt to reconcile 'the Functional Tradition' with a new modernist architectural language in the work of an architect who set himself apart from the rhetorical avant-gardism of New Brutalism by situating his work with reference to 'anonymous' historical precedent.

The duality set by Pevsner at the beginning of *An Outline of European*

Architecture (1943), which was adopted by Richards throughout his career, Lincoln Cathedral versus the bicycle shed as architecture versus building, was reinforced by cultural anthropology's categorization of architecture as the communitarian versus the vernacular.⁴⁹ This correlated with the dynamics of culture theorized by T. S. Eliot: an elusive dialogue existed between high culture ('Modern Architecture') and low culture (vernacular architectures/building) and a dynamic boundary was in constant reconfiguration. Eliot believed that it was possible to intervene in this dynamic if the elite developed and implemented 'proper' cultural policies that would safeguard the existence of the two cultures and their dialogue. Reluctant to give space to the rise of mass culture and media in the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s, *AR* stressed instead the art that was produced by ordinary people themselves, as featured in the 'Pub Tradition', 'Fishermen Net-Shelters' and 'The Unsophisticated Arts' series of the 1950s by Barbara Jones. Instead of mass habits of consumption and their impact on design, *AR*'s editors were interested in the everyday habits of producing the so-called minor arts and their contribution to the larger framework of culture (Figure 8.6).⁵⁰ The continued allocation of space to vernacular buildings in the journal was not, therefore, simply a nostalgic move yearning for a return to a harmonious architectural culture. The editors, especially Richards, saw it rather as their duty to perpetuate this dialogue between high culture and low culture – or modern architecture and vernacular architecture – especially at a time when low culture was endangered by mass culture.

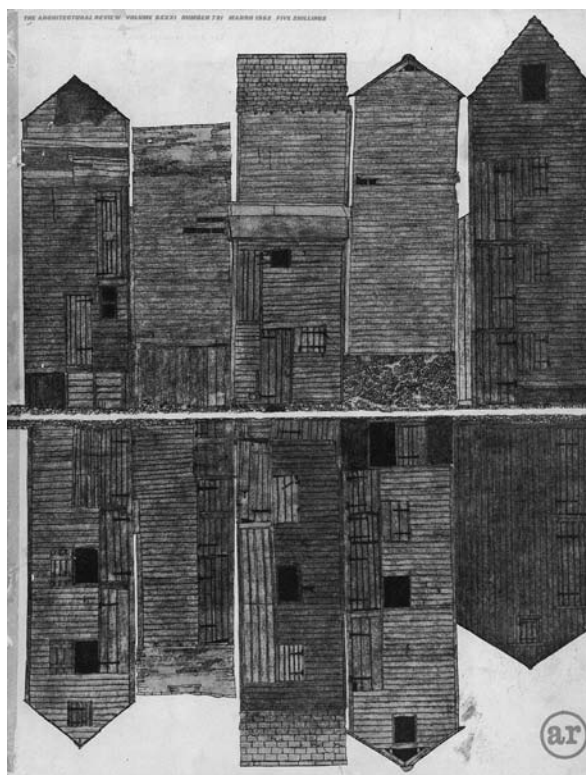
While Banham and the Independent Group perceived culture as a broad front that embraced the diversity of consumption habits and media culture, and argued that regional traditions of craft were destined to die, Richards saw mass culture as a force that dragged cultural diversity into uniformity. Vernacular architecture was but one vital component of that diversity. Bernard Rudofsky's Museum of Modern Art exhibition, 'Architecture without Architects', in 1964 saw vernacular architecture accepted into the sanctuaries of high culture. Thereafter Richards's interest was increasingly directed to the development of a contextualist and preservationist sensitivity in modern architecture.⁵¹

Conclusion: the hollow victory

When 'The Functional Tradition' was published in book form in 1958 Richards defined a task for the modern architect, an agenda that clearly demonstrates why the book is misclassified as the first book on industrial archaeology:

New and more sophisticated standards are achieved gradually and unselfconsciously as one anonymous mind after another applies itself to the modification of an established pattern. *That is how all styles of architecture perfect themselves, and our problem is to set this procedure satisfactorily in motion at a very difficult moment in history . . .* Architecture's special need now is to perfect such a vernacular, even in the face of the difficulty that it means achieving the unselfconscious virtues in an age peculiar for its self-consciousness.⁵²

8.6
Two views
of a group of
fishermen's
net shelters
in Hastings,
Sussex.
Photograph
by Eric de
Maré, 1956,
reproduced in
*The Architectural
Review's*
article on 'the
Functional
Tradition',
September 1957;
*The Architectural
Review* cover of
March 1962 by
Gordon Cullen.



The developments of the 1960s were not entirely friendly to this agenda. The rise of consumer culture and the increasing popularity of neo-avant-garde groups like Team X and Archigram against the backdrop of New Brutalism's spread to become a ubiquitous international language was probably the exact opposite of what the editorial board at *AR* promoted. To resist this domination, Richards continued *AR*'s emphasis on the world's vernaculars through articles specifically targeting environments where stylistic unity was observed to arise from the continuation of vernacular building traditions.⁵³ To his earlier emphasis on people's architecture he added the encouragement of self-help and the economical propriety of local technologies – 'reinforced but not supplanted by modern technology' – to maximize the use of existing resources. Although his editorial introductions were imbued with a sense of nostalgia that harked back to a communitarian cultural unity expressed through the vernacular, Richards believed that the empowerment of a local economy ensured the preservation of continuity and the creation of familiar settings.⁵⁴

In a lecture given to the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1970, shortly before he retired from *AR*, Richards outlined a new trajectory for modern architecture. At a time when advocacy planning and self-build were acquiring popularity he reframed his views on user participation and the social obligations of architecture, the possible impacts of industrialization and his categorization of architecture as the anonymous versus the symbolic. Richards's lecture was structured as a brief review of modern architecture's history, permeated by a sense of frustration as he evaluated a progression of 'fashion and style', when style for modern architecture should only be a by-product.⁵⁵

Richards's lecture in Australia was an early version of his 'annual discourse' of 1972 at the Royal Institute of British Architects entitled 'The Hollow Victory'. This was received by many as his renunciation of modern architecture.⁵⁶ It was a provocative and auto-critical talk, and a condemnation of decades of modern architecture in Britain. Richards bemoaned his shared responsibility for having encouraged modern architecture's anti-historical foundations. As he saw it, modern architecture's main objective, to create a new relationship between architecture and society, was obscured by emphasis on the aesthetic and a relentless search for novelty of expression. This inhibited the dissemination of the culture of modern architecture and its favourable reception.⁵⁷ Richards blamed art history's emphasis on 'change and geniuses' for undermining the value of anonymity and held art historiography responsible for the rise of 'the celebrity architect'. There was only dim hope for a new vernacular to overcome the pluralistic, image-based consumption culture fed by the mass media and its culture industry:

A vernacular language is in any case the product of a particular social situation. The Georgian vernacular of one hundred and fifty years ago was so widely spread because the masses accepted whatever the educated admired, and the question we must ask now is whether, in our self-conscious age, we can expect to look forward to a vernacular architectural language in a Georgian sense. We already have the popular vernaculars of the spec builder's housing estate and the caravan park;

does our contemporary culture, with its differences of internal tempo and its acceptance of continually changing fashion, with its enjoyment of allusive images such as those which form the basis of pop art, require a single visual language to be spoken in all places and at all times?⁵⁸

When the paternal organization of society was irretrievably lost during the mass affluence of the 1960s, and when identities were increasingly shaped by habits of consumption, preservation rose to become for Richards the sole protector of continuity in the environment. As long as the resources of technology were not assimilated into a social culture of preservation, cultural continuity would be impossible to sustain in the built environment. The logical action to stem the tide against continuity would then be a redefinition of the role of the modern architect, to recharge and set a new course by declaring that 'the battle for modern architecture' had actually been lost, and that modernism's victory was hollow.⁵⁹ The new modern architect would be defined by 'humility', and his willingness to conform to an established pattern. Proposing the reintegration of the previous pupilage system into architectural education to develop this humility, Richards suggested that architects be localized and buildings be supervised in these locales by a single architect in order to oversee unity of expression. The local architect would then be administered both by the professional organization and the public, and architecture would be redefined as a profession of civil service operating under a cultural consensus. An ideological consensus on the social and professional role of the architect would be imposed from the outside as the public's will, involving the public in architecture and obliging the architect to be responsible towards a local constituency.

In the late 1950s and 1960s *AR*'s resistance to 'pop' stemmed directly from its scepticism towards 'mass culture' as defined with reference to the 'popularly consumed' by the likes of Banham or the Independent Group. By denying popular agency, the culture of consumption provided no solution to alienation, which Richards thought was at the source of 'cultural decay'. Banham's belief that the consumer had a critical potential merely through being able to choose from options in the market was not convincing. For Richards, the elevation of 'pop' overlooked the passivity of consumers. It should be noted, however, that a concept of the 'popular' as 'collectively made' and Banham's call for the 'popular' to be what was 'popularly consumed' were mutually exclusive. Banham simply dismissed the collectively made as due to 'traditional lore' and as out of tune with the *Zeitgeist*, denying the technologies that produced the popular any future use or chance of survival. In contrast, the scepticism that *AR* had for consumer culture sought to undermine the culture industry's power, which prevented any possible critical resistance by the consumer.

Richards and the rest of *AR*'s editorial board promoted 'anonymity' in the realm of architecture and urban design in an attempt to protect popular culture against being subsumed by mass culture, and in seeking possibilities within architecture and urban design for cultural continuity. According to Raymond Williams, the processes of culture bring forward a continual selection and reselection of ancestors and a competition between the agents that make this selection. *AR* was a strong agent, and Richards its outspoken editor in this competition. Williams adds

that the practice of recording and the absorption of these records into a tradition inevitably end up defining a culture different from the one that was actually lived, hence the reinterpretation of a vernacular within a new technological infrastructure would produce a new vernacular. A new 'anonymity' could foster reconciliation between culture as anthropology, as 'ways of life' or 'structures of feeling', and culture as aesthetic – that is culture as the arts, a reconciliation which Richards hoped to achieve by allocating space to promoting vernacular precedents within a modernist architecture journal. He pointed outside the narrow realm of architecture defined by high culture, to recognize the creative energies of folk culture (including popular arts and vernacular architecture) as well as those of 'primitive' communities, and aimed to direct these energies to society as a whole via architecture and urban design.⁶⁰ 'Townscape's emphasis on contextual continuity and 'the Functional Tradition's emphasis on historical continuity aimed to sustain 'the particular ways of life' manifested in the anonymous qualities of the built environment. *AR's* casebook approach, which defined 'The Functional Tradition' and 'Townscape' sections, provided an open-ended platform to accumulate precedents that would inspire the endurance of continuity but also accommodate change.

The erasure of the difference between high culture and low culture via anonymity carries a certain paradox into the production of architecture, be it the contextual anonymity that Richards advocated, or the technological anonymity that Banham promoted after announcing the death of New Brutalism. The logical conclusion of the anonymity that Richards advocated would be the dissolution of 'Architecture', through the adoption of local technologies and the sharing of the architectural vocabulary of place. It would also lead to the disappearance of the 'Architect' in favour of the builder, policy maker or enabler of community-building production. One might see 'critical regionalism' as defined by Kenneth Frampton as an attempt to overcome this paradox. In contrast, the technological anonymity that Banham advocated by way of 'Archigram', the 'well-tempered environment', and 'Non-Plan' leads to the dissolution of 'Architecture' in infrastructure. It reduces the role of the architect to that of a technician struggling to preserve status among a proliferating mass of technicians responsible for architectural production.

In *Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965* (1968), written as part of a series of essays dedicated to Pevsner, Reyner Banham condemned *AR's* editors, Richards and Pevsner, for having 'thrown principle to the wind' when the younger generation returned from the war.⁶¹ He asserted that these two 'leading oracles of modern architecture' had started to 'espouse the most debased English habits of compromise and sentimentality' in the post-war period. He also cited the Smithsons' collaboration with Gordon Cullen for the Economist Building in 1965 as complicity with the 'Establishment', marking the death of New Brutalism. Alluding to the promotion of the Picturesque in *AR's* post-war editorial campaigns Banham concluded that the 'Picturesque faction' had then, in essence, defeated the New Brutalists through an infiltration of their design thinking.⁶² 'So total [had] been the triumph of the unacknowledged Picturesqueness of the Picturesque's avowed enemies.'⁶³

Although Banham's essay provides an accurate portrayal of principal

issues in architectural debates in the space of a nine-page essay, it is far from providing deeper insight into the impact of *AR*'s 'Townscape' and 'Functional Tradition'. Banham's attribution of victory to the Picturesque faction makes Richards's pronouncement that the victory of modern architecture was 'hollow' four years later all the more surprising. How can one explain this disillusionment in the spokesmen of both the 'younger generation' and the 'Establishment', an opposition that has created much material for British architectural history? By invoking a conspiracy of betrayal against modern architecture perhaps, one devised by those who were the most ardent advocates of modern architecture in the 1930s? Or, as Richards implies, by seeing a betrayal by the post-war generation that abandoned the ideals of the 1930s in order to replace them with its own version of modern architecture? The answer will probably seal a major discussion in the architectural history of post-war Britain.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 J. M. Crook, 'Sir James Richards (1907–92): A Bibliographical Tribute', *Architectural History*, 42 (1999), pp. 354–74.
- 2 Italics mine.
- 3 J. M. Richards, *Memoirs of an Unjust Fella* (London, 1980), p. 119.
- 4 J. M. Richards, 'The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity', in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art* (London, 1937), p. 184 and in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, eds J. Leslie Martin *et al.* (New York, 1937). *Circle* was first intended as an art magazine to be published by Faber and Faber, but it was later published as a book. Contributors included British artists as well as émigré artists who were in Britain at the time. *Circle* brought together the work of a range of painters, sculptors, architects and thinkers, to survey 'emerging cultural unity' in the words of Naum Gabo. *Circle* was not a manifesto and the contributors were from diverse backgrounds subscribing to varying positions – such as historians/critics Lewis Mumford, Siegfried Giedion and J. M. Richards, or painters and sculptors like Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, or architects like Walter Gropius, J. Leslie Martin and Alberto Sartoris. Le Corbusier also submitted an essay classified under painting. In 1982 an exhibition in Kettle's Yard Gallery commemorated the journal and constructive art. See ed. J. Lewison, *Circle: Constructive Art in Britain 1934–40* (Cambridge, 1982).
- 5 '[T]here is much truth in the latter allegation if it means that Western architecture is too often an architects', not a people's, architecture. For connoisseurship of modern architecture is still largely confined to the professional man and the intelligentsia. This is a defect that time and modern architecture's own ability to cultivate the graces on which popular appreciation rest should succeed in remedying. People generally, not only architects, can be taught to look forward. . . . The weakness of the Soviet attitude was that it opened no window on the future'. J. M. Richards, *An Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1940), p. 102.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- 7 *Ibid.*

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- 8 Ibid., p. 129.
- 9 J. M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia*, 2nd edn (London, 1973), pp. 17–18.
- 10 Ibid., p. 36.
- 11 Ibid., p. 89.
- 12 'Reconstruction in the USSR', *AR*, 101(1947), pp. 177–8.
- 13 David Arkin, 'Some Thoughts on Reconstruction', *AR*, 101 (1947), pp. 178–9.
- 14 The Zhdanovist line was initiated in the Union Congress of Soviet Writers held in Moscow in 1934, and drafted into a resolution in 1946 by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by the Party Secretary and cultural boss Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov. Although Zhdanov died in 1948, his principles ruled until Stalin's death in 1953.
- 15 '[I]t is the artistic taste shown in contemporary Russian architecture – and for that matter, in the other arts as well – which other nations find most puzzling . . . [other nations] see Russia as the example of a country where no building takes place but by order of the State; and the designer – town-planner, architect or decorator – is wholly dependent on the State; and seeing that, according to sophisticated European Standards, Russian buildings appear bourgeois and retrogressive, they wonder whether this is the inevitable result of extensive State patronage – whether the rule of the official does not by its nature result in leveling down to an uninspired mediocrity.' Ibid.
- 16 See Richards's account of the congress in *Memoirs*, pp. 198–200. Looking back to the 1950s in *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* (London, 1966), Reyner Banham would categorize *AR*'s support for New Empiricism in social-democratic Sweden as the 'Anglo-Zhdanov line', an assessment which might be evaluated as highly biased in the light of Richards's position. The split between modern architects in Britain in the post-war period had become most visible in the London County Council's Department of Architecture. This split was later embodied in the stylistic duality between the eastern and the western halves of the Alton Estate housing project in Roehampton. For a short account of this split see Stefan Muthesius and Miles Glendinning, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (London, 1994), pp. 104–9.
- 17 J. M. Richards, 'The Next Step?', *AR*, 107 (1950), p. 168.
- 18 Ibid., p. 180.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Before 'The Functional Tradition' was prepared as a special issue the role of vernaculars in the built environment was explored in *AR* in two shorter sections, one on Britain's canals and the other on the 'Pub tradition'. *AR* also organized a competition for hypothetical pub designs for architects to analyse the local pub as a vernacular type, determine its material and spatial characteristics and reinterpret it within the vocabulary of modern architecture. See 'The pub tradition recaptured', *AR*, 107 (1950), pp. 383–96.
- 21 'The Functional Tradition', *AR*, 107 (1950), special issue.
- 22 Ibid., p. 65.
- 23 Lewis Mumford, 'The Sky Line: Status Quo', *The New Yorker*, 11 Oct. 1947, pp. 104–10.
- 24 Klingender's activities were scrutinized by MI5 until his death in 1955, but he was not suspected of being a dangerous Marxist according to www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page270.html (retrieved on 6 May 2008).
- 25 Francis D. Klingender, *Marxism and Modern Art: An Approach to Social Realism* (London, 1943), p. 7. It was published in New York in 1945.
- 26 Ibid., p. 23.
- 27 'With the appearance of Hogarth in the early eighteenth century British painting lost its provincial backwardness and assumed a leading role in Europe. Hogarth's art is essentially "moral" i.e. it is constantly and intimately concerned with social life. This social interest survived in the marvelous school of British caricature based on Hogarth which reflected the interests and the aspirations of our people from the time of the South Sea Bubble to the rise of Chartism . . . as soon as this vital

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- substratum of popular, socially conscious art had disappeared, British art as a whole relapsed into provincial eclecticism.' Klingender, *'Marxism'* p. 11.
- 28 See James Hyman, *The Battle for Realism: Figurative Art in Britain during the Cold War 1945–1960* (London, 2001).
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- 30 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Art for Everyone: Art and the State', 16, 18 and 19 June 1946. The producer was Noni Wright. The talk was aired on Pacific Service, African Service and North American service respectively. A copy of the script was supplied to me by the BBC Written Archives.
- 31 Herbert Read (1893–1968), one of the foremost critics of his time, had an anarchist agenda for the promotion of modern art and literature. He wrote articles for *AR*, probably via invitations from Richards and Pevsner. Richards and Read helped found the Institute of Contemporary Arts. For more on Read, see James King, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read* (London, 1990) and ed. David Goodway, *Herbert Read Reassessed* (Liverpool, 1998).
- 32 For Pevsner the activities of the Council for Visual Education stimulated the interest of the local people the artwork was intended to serve, and supplied patronage for young and local artists, establishing a social role for community art. The Council published Pevsner's pamphlet, *Visual Pleasures from Everyday Things: An Attempt to Establish Criteria by Which the Aesthetic Qualities of Design Can Be Judged* (London, 1946).
- 33 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Judges VI, 34', *AR*, 106 (1949), pp. 77–9. In this article he differentiated himself from Siegfried Giedion in terms of the historian's role as well as in terms of historiography. The article reflected the clash of the two historians' opposing projects. Pevsner started the article with 'Judges VI, 34', the biblical verse, the first part of which he quoted as an epigraph: 'But the spirit of the Lord came upon Giedion and he blew a trumpet'.
- 34 'But the combination of historiography and propaganda has its dangers, and Dr Giedion has not always escaped them. What has established him in his precarious and fascinating position is a matter of peculiar personal experiences. He took his degree with Wölfflin, of all art historians of the twentieth century the most convinced that art history is a history of visual matters exclusively and should not be disturbed by any *Kulturgeschichte*, *Geistesgeschichte* or *Sozialgeschichte* – history of culture representing the trend of the nineteenth century which culminated in Wölfflin's own master Burckhardt, history of thought representing what came to the fore with the most inspiring art historians slightly his younger, with Dvorak and Pinder, and social history representing what began to haunt those who only started when he was sixty.' *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- 35 For a more detailed discussion of Pevsner's review of Giedion's book, see Erdem Erten, 'Shaping the Second Half Century: The Architectural Review 1947–1971' (doctoral thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2004).
- 36 Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Commonwealth 1', *AR*, 142 (1959).
- 37 E. Maxwell Fry, 'West Africa', in J. M. Richards and Nikolaus Pevsner, *New Buildings in the Commonwealth* (London, 1961), p. 103, italics mine.
- 38 Alain Houghton Brodrick, 'Grass Roots: Huts, Igloos, Wigwams and Other Sources of the Functional Tradition', *AR*, 115 (1954), pp. 101–11.
- 39 Betty Spence and Barry Biermann, 'M'Pogga', *AR*, 116 (1954), pp. 34–40. M'Pogga is now considered a derogatory form of address by the Ndebele. See [www.sahistory.org.za/pages/artsmediaculture/culture%20&%20heritage/kwamsiza/earlyHistory.htm (accessed 15 November 2009)]. I would like to thank Peter Guillery for directing me to these sources.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 36, italics mine.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 'The Functional Tradition as Shown in Early Industrial Buildings', *AR*, 122 (1957), special issue; J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition* (London, 1958).
- 43 'These are found to be a strongly moralistic attitude to structure, in its widest sense, and materials in their crudest sense, coupled with a desire to render every building with a memorable visual

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- image.' See the editorial introduction to Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *AR*, 118 (1955), pp. 354–61.
- 44 The Hunstanton School was reviewed by Philip Johnson for *AR*. The editors deemed Johnson a true Miesian and thus the most appropriate reviewer. See *AR*, 116 (1954), pp. 149–62. Letters from readers found the building 'utterly unenglish'.
- 45 See correspondence in *AR*'s September 1957 issue.
- 46 Also see John McKean's account of Stirling's disassociation from New Brutalism in John McKean, *Leicester University Engineering Building* (London, 1994).
- 47 James Stirling, 'The Functional Tradition and Expression', *Perspecta*, 6 (1960), p. 89.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- 49 'A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.' Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, 7th edn (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 15.
- 50 These series were later published in Barbara Jones, *The Unsophisticated Arts* (London, 1951).
- 51 Rudofsky's exhibition (9 November 1964 to 7 February 1965) was received as a pleasant contribution 'to a cause that the readers of *AR* had been familiar with' for about a decade. See the short mention of 'Architecture without Architects' in the 'World' section of *AR*'s December 1966 issue.
- 52 J. M. Richards, *The Functional Tradition in Early Industrial Buildings* (London, 1958), p. 18.
- 53 For instance, the architecture of Malta was featured as a synthesis of the vernacular and the modern several times between 1965 and 1970 via the work of Richard England. See 'Building on Rock: Malta', *AR*, April 1965; 'A modern vernacular in Malta', *AR*, August 1965, pp. 143–5; 'England rocks', *AR*, December 1966, front cover and p. 391; and, finally, the special July 1969 issue on Malta.
- 54 Richards's interest was increasingly directed to different cultures and vernacular architectures in *AR* in the second half of the sixties. See 'Traditional architecture of Ceylon', February 1966, 'The Painted Churches of Moldavia', March 1966, 'Finnish Vernacular', January 1968, and 'Gourna', February 1970.
- 55 'The course of recent architectural history, for the public that tries to follow it, is largely a history of fashion and style . . . the only thing that matters about modern architecture is its ability intelligibly to apply available means to scientifically ascertained needs, and that style is only a by-product.' See J. M. Richards, *A Critic's View* (Victoria, Australia, 1971).
- 56 Richards, *Memoirs*.
- 57 'The modern architect's persistent search after novelty helped to prevent the growth of an informed body of public opinion.' J. M. Richards, 'The Hollow Victory', *RIBA Journal*, May 1972, p. 195.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 'We are no nearer than the Victorians were to achieving a vernacular language that the man in the street as well as the architect regards as right and inevitable. In this sense, it is nonsense to assert that the battle for modern architecture has now been won.' *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 60 See Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford, 2000), p. 18.
- 61 Banham refers to the emergence of concepts such as indeterminacy, topographical sensitivity, endlessness, etc. in architectural design theory. Reyner Banham, 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965', in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London, 1968), pp. 265–73.
- 62 Gordon Cullen, 'The Economist Buildings, St. James's', *AR*, 137 (1965), pp. 114–24.
- 63 Banham, 'Revenge'.