I. THE AESTHETIC MOTIVE
OF REVIVALISM

I. ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL CONFUSION

The breaking up of this wretched state of things has naturally produced a complete convulsion in the whole system of arts, and a Babel of confusion has succeeded to the one bad idea that generally prevailed. (A. Welby Pugin, Apology)

[Authority] is being dethroned in our day, and is being supplanted by a babel of clashing, irreconcilable utterances, often proceeding from the same quarters, even the same mouths. (Alfred Austin, The Bridling of Pegasus)

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach”

In August of 1861 an artistic congress convened at Antwerp to consider why the nineteenth century had no distinctive architectural style. Whatever resolutions the congress may have drawn up are less important than that the simple fact of its meeting indicates a profound and widespread dissatisfaction with the present state of European architecture. In England the chief spokesman against the riotous motley of architectural styles had been A. W. N. Pugin, who in 1843 declared that architecture, along with the other arts, was passing through a transitional period following the dissolution of Renaissance art, and that in this aesthetic wasteland anarchic individualism prevailed:

The age in which we live is a most eventful period for English art. We are just emerging from a state which may be termed the dark ages of architecture. After a gradual decay of four centuries, the style,—for style there was,—became so execrably bad, that the cup of degradation was filled to the brim; and as taste had fallen to its lowest depth, a favourable re-action commenced.

The breaking up of this wretched state of things has naturally produced a complete convulsion in the whole system of arts, and a Babel of confusion has succeeded to the one bad idea that generally prevailed.

Private judgment runs riot; every architect has a theory of his own, a beau ideal he has himself created; a disguise with which to invest the
building he erects. This is generally the result of his latest travels. One breathes nothing but the Alhambra,—another the Parthenon,—a third is full of lotus cups and pyramids from the banks of the Nile,—a fourth from Rome, is all dome and basilica; while another works Stuart and Revett on a modified plan, and builds lodges, centenary chapels, reading-rooms, and fish-markets, with small Doric work and white brick facings. Styles are now adopted instead of generated, and ornament and design adapted to, instead of originated by, the edifices themselves.

This may, indeed, be appropriately termed the carnival of architecture: its professors appear tricked out in the guises of all centuries and all nations; the Turk and the Christian, the Egyptian and the Greek, the Swiss and the Hindoo, march side by side, and mingle together; and some of these gentlemen, not satisfied with perpetrating one character, appear in two or three costumes in the same evening.

Amid this motley group (oh! miserable degradation!) the venerable form and sacred detail of our national and Catholic architecture may be discerned; but how adopted? Not on consistent principle, not on authority, not as the expression of our faith, our government, or country, but as one of the disguises of the day, to be put on and off at pleasure, and used occasionally as circumstances or private caprice may suggest.¹

I have quoted this lengthy passage in its entirety because it deals rather completely with the problem that was to be considered by the Antwerp congress and that was central to nineteenth-century architecture as well as to the Victorian age in general. Here we see the notions of a transitional age, of runaway eclecticism, of lawless individualism, of artificiality, of shams and disguises, all apparent in the displays of the Great Exhibition of 1851 and in the statements of other writers, but not as explicitly or as fully developed as in this passage.

Seven years later Edward Lacy Garbett treated one aspect of the problem when he attributed the architectural chaos to the democratization of art. As adamantly antidemocratic as Carlyle, Garbett took the elitist view that art succeeds only when dominated by an enlightened minority. “Some regret,” he wrote, “that we have (as they think) no national style. Alas! the woe is that we have a national style,—a national shame, as all national styles ever will be. . . .” The old styles were not national but the creations of “classes, priesthoods, and corporations,” and “this was the very essence of their success,—that they were the exclusive production of the thinking few, uninfluenced by the thoughtless multitude; though universally admired, yet totally
unpopular, un-national."² If Garbett runs counter to one of the central doctrines of the Gothic Revival, which is that architecture expresses national character and that Gothic is the national architecture of England, he at the same time conforms to the Romantic concept that art is the product of the gifted few. In this respect he presents an architectural parallel to a subject E. D. H. Johnson has treated in *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry*: the growing distrust of nineteenth-century poets for the tastes of those whom Arnold was to call "Philistines."

Fifteen years later, and four years after the Antwerp congress, William Burges dealt with another aspect of the problem. The absence of a single and distinctive architectural style, according to Burges, is the greatest impediment to progress in art because the architect is required to master half a dozen styles, a clear impossibility, instead of just one as in former times. From the point of view of the student, then, the multiplicity of styles is the bane of architecture:

> If we take a walk in the streets of London we may see at least half-a-dozen sorts of architecture, all with different details; and if we go to a museum we shall find specimens of the furniture, jewellery, &c., of these said different styles all beautifully classed and labelled. The student, instead of confining himself to one style as in former times, is expected to be master of all these said half-dozen, which is just as reasonable as asking him to write half-a-dozen poems in half-a-dozen languages, carefully preserving the idiomatic peculiarities of each. This we all know to be an impossibility, and the end is that our student, instead of thoroughly applying the principles of ornament to one style, is so bewildered by having the half-dozen on his hands, that he ends by knowing none of them as he ought to do. This is the case in almost every trade; and until the question of style gets settled, it is utterly hopeless to think about any great improvement in modern art.³

Burges's description of the plight of the contemporary architect is particular proof of John Stuart Mill's contention in "The Spirit of the Age" (*Examiner, 1831*) that "the grand achievement of the present age is the diffusion of superficial knowledge. . . ." Clearly the day was past when an Admirable Crichton could master the realms of all learning.

Apparently the problem became somewhat less acute as the century matured and the number of available styles decreased. In 1841 Richard Brown had listed in *Domestic Architecture* six-
teen different styles appropriate for the Victorian domicile, omitting only Gothic since it “exclusively belongs to sacred architecture and not to domestic.” In 1865, as we have seen, Burges set the number at half a dozen; and in 1884 Robert Kerr declared that there were three current styles: Gothic, Modern European (Renaissance), and Queen Anne. However, the long-sought one style never developed; and after the turn of the century, Ralph Adams Cram could walk the streets of New York, just as Burges had walked those of London fifty years earlier, and gain a similar, “indelible impression of that primal chaos that is certainly without form, if it is not wholly void.” The transitional chaos lasted longer than the Victorians anticipated, so that Cram in 1914 still looked forward to the birth of a new age. Cram speculated that historical epochs occurred in five-hundred-year cycles, one having come into being between 450 and 550 A.D., a second between 950 and 1050, a third between 1450 and 1550, and a fourth due in 1950. Thus, like Yeats, who wrote that “the centre cannot hold,” Cram believed that the current disintegration of the old epoch would give way to the birth of a new:

As mediaevalism was centripetal, so is modernism centrifugal, and disintegration follows on, faster and ever faster. Even now, however, the falling wave meets in its plunge and foam the rising wave that bears on its smooth and potent surge the promise and potency of a new epoch, nobler than the last and again synthetic, creative, centripetal.

In this time of transition from one epoch to another, the duty of art lies in giving expression to all that is worth preserving in an era so fast becoming history, and in bridging the inevitable chasm now opening between one definite epoch and the next. . . . In his work, whatever it may be, he [the artist] must record and preserve all that was and is best in a shattered era, that this may be carried over into the next and play its new part, no longer of conservation but of re-creation.

A hundred years had passed since Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” and spring was still tantalizingly not far behind.

In addition to these direct descriptions of the confused and unsettled state of architecture, another approach that gives insight into the problem is through the Victorians’ concept of...
how their architecture would appear to future generations. Peter Collins has written that "architectural historians were dominated by one notion, and one notion only; namely, that a modern building was essentially a collection of potential antiquarian fragments which one day would be rediscovered, and studied by future historians with a view to determining the social history of the Victorian age." This is putting it rather too categorically, but the Victorians were acutely self-conscious and very much concerned about the image they bequeathed to posterity. Also, we find that a projection into the future served them as a sort of rhetorical device by which to comment on the present in much the same way as Pugin, Carlyle, and many others used the past to criticize the present. Furthermore, whenever a writer uses this device, he almost surely embodies the future in the figure of a New Zealander, drawn from Macaulay's comment in "Ranke's History of the Popes" (Edinburgh Review, 1840) that the Catholic church may still exist "when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's." Although Macaulay may have taken the image from a letter Horace Walpole wrote Sir Horace Mann in 1774, everyone attributed it to Macaulay and used it as a symbol for the collapse of English civilization. Gustave Doré illustrated the New Zealander in London: A Pilgrimage (1872), and Anthony Trollope entitled a book, written in 1855–56 though unpublished till 1972, The New Zealander. Of the many references, one will suffice to illustrate how the New Zealander was used to foretell England's fall and to comment on the confused state of contemporary architecture. Writing in the Builder in 1862, T. Mellard Reade made this prediction:

If the inevitable New Zealander who is to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's from London-bridge should be anything of an antiquary, he will be sorely troubled to eliminate the history of the English nation from its writings in brick and stone. If the history of architecture be the history of the human mind, his researches will indicate a very chaotic mental state on the part of the present generation.

The New Zealander may yet come, but if he stands on that London Bridge the sands of Arizona will present him with a
spectacle closer to the one viewed by the traveler in “Ozymandias” than to the ruins of St. Paul’s. One need not, however, quibble about bridges or wait for the New Zealander to attest to the essential truth of Reade’s claim that there was little unity of aim among Victorian architects or in the larger society to which they belonged.

In The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England, Pugin had argued that “architecture to be good must be consistent”; and in An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England, he uses the word consistent over and again. In the last chapter of The Seven Lamps of Architecture, significantly entitled “The Lamp of Obedience,” Ruskin refers to liberty as a “treacherous phantom,” and maintains that the principle of creation “is not Liberty, but Law.” The practice of architecture must be brought under control, Ruskin says, for it “never could flourish except when it was subjected to a national law as strict and as minutely authoritative as the laws which regulate religion, policy, and social relations. . . .”

At the end of the century, there was an attempt to impose restrictions when a bill was presented to Parliament in 1891 requiring the certification of architects by examination. Several leading architects opposed the bill by writing essays against it in a volume entitled Architecture: A Profession or an Art, but the bill was not really what Ruskin had in mind and would have had little effect upon the proliferation of styles since its main purpose was to eliminate from practice the unqualified. If architecture could not, and for many architects should not, be subjected to external controls, then at least there might be some less formal agreement as to the direction in which architecture should go. On the classic side of the Battle of the Styles, James Fergusson argued that the renovation of art requires “some high and well-defined aim towards which it may strive,” and Samuel Huggins called for a “unity of aim and action among architects” as was the case in former days. On the Gothic side, George Gilbert Scott urged his colleagues to “unite, one and all, in one steady, unflinching effort,—constant, untiring, and in the same direction.” Later, as president of the Institute of
British Architects, he emphasized to the members "the great necessity of a singleness of aim, of a devotion to and community of effort in the advancement of art, above all individual and personal considerations. . . ."14 The formation of the Institute of British Architects in 1834, to receive a royal charter as the R.I.B.A. in 1837, further indicates a desire for concord among the architects of the time.

In a passage quoted above, T. Mellard Reade applies the nineteenth-century maxim that architecture reflects the society from which it springs by saying that the New Zealander of the future will regard the ruins of London architecture as evidence of "a very chaotic mental state on the part of the present generation." So it does reflect it, although not in ruins; for, as I have already suggested, there is a close parallel between the architectural problem and the troubled state of Victorian society at large. In fact, the parallel is so apparent that it is impossible to read these architects and not be instantly reminded of familiar statements by their more celebrated contemporaries. For example, the general confusion in architecture corresponds to the well-known description of Victorian uncertainty at the end of "Dover Beach": "And we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,/Where ignorant armies clash by night." Tennyson develops the image more fully in "The Passing of Arthur" with the "dim, weird battle of the west" wherein "even on Arthur fell/Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought." The individualism Pugin held accountable for "the carnival of architecture" meets equal disapproval in Arnold's "Doing As One Likes" from Culture and Anarchy. Garbett's attack upon democracy in art and his contempt for "the thoughtless multitude" run parallel to Carlyle's scorn for the mob and his fear that "the Niagara leap of completed Democracy" will lead England over the precipice into a political and social maelstrom (Shooting Niagara: and After?). The factionalism of the Battle of the Styles reflects Arnold's description of the "Servants of God": "Factions divide them, their host/Threatens to break, to dissolve" ("Rugby Chapel"); and in the popular hymn "The Church's
One Foundation" (1866), Samuel John Stone portrays the Church as "By schisms rent asunder,/By heresies distrest."

The social critics quite often attributed this restlessness, uncertainty, and confusion to the transitional nature of the Victorian age just as the architectural critics believed that architecture was passing through a time of change. In Sartor Resartus Carlyle shows that after rejecting the mechanistic philosophy in "The Everlasting No," Teufelsdröckh must experience the difficult and trying search of "The Center of Indifference" before arriving at the affirmation of dynamic organicism in "The Everlasting Yea." In The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and The Prelude, Coleridge and Wordsworth describe similar trials when the soul is on dead center, unable to move in any direction. The problem is one of a moral and philosophical vacuum, for, as Carlyle writes in "Characteristics," "the Old has passed away: but, alas, the New appears not in its stead. . . ." Mill says almost exactly the same thing in the same year: "The first of the leading peculiarities of the present age is, that it is an age of transition. Mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones" ("The Spirit of the Age"). The idea is often repeated throughout the century as the momentum of change, far from slowing to a settled condition wherein new and universal values obtained, accelerated with the rapidity sensed by Thomas Arnold in his comment that "we have been living, as it were, the life of three hundred years in thirty" ("Letter II," 13 Letters on Our Social Condition). Twenty years later his son still speaks of "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born" ("Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse"); and as late as 1884 William Morris told the seventh annual meeting of the S.P.A.B., "Let us admit that we are living in the time of barbarism betwixt two periods of order. . . ." In 1920 Yeats was still awaiting the Second Coming, and today, bewildered by the vagaries of Future Shock, we wait for a Godot who will never arrive, at least not in the way expected by Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, and Morris.

As we have seen, Ralph Adams Cram thought that it is the duty of the artist to preserve his art until the new epoch arrives
and society once again provides a congenial climate in which culture might thrive. Similarly, Arnold writes that if the turbulent age makes it impossible "to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly," then the poet should transmit to his successors "the practice of poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced . . ." ("Preface to First Edition of Poems," 1853). The phrase "wholesome regulative laws" echoes Ruskin's belief that the principle of creation "is not Liberty, but Law" and recalls that liberalism threatened with anarchy poetry as well as architecture. Indeed, in society at large no less than in poetry and architecture, there was an absence of common goals. Samuel Huggins, in a passage quoted above, called for a return to the "unity of aim and action among architects" of earlier days, and Arnold tells us that the great advantage of the Scholar-Gipsy over "this strange disease of modern life,/With its sick hurry, its divided aims" is that he "hadst one aim, one business, one desire." For Arnold, culture would afford the unity needed to hold in abeyance the threat of social anarchy; for Pugin, Scott, and others, the answer to the corresponding architectural problem lay in the revival of Gothic.

II. THE GOTHIC REVIVAL AS A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF STYLISTIC CONFUSION

We must look backwards under all circumstances, go backwards as soon as we find that we have got upon the wrong road. (Augustus Reichensperger, Die Kunst Jedermanns Sache)

No one could have guessed that of all the arts it was architecture that was destined to be the first to emancipate itself from its degrading thraldom, the first to retrace its steps to the right path, and the first to enter upon a new career of sound and legitimate development (Benjamin Webb, "The Prospects of Art in England")

One explanation for the Medieval Revival in the nineteenth century is that it offered a therapeutic escape to those suffering from the "strange disease of modern life," or, if not an escape, at least a nostalgic ideal of a golden age of order, faith, and
meaning directly opposite to a modern world so lamentably deficient in those virtues. As Alice Chandler has written in *A Dream of Order*, which takes this point as its theme:

But behind all these varying expressions of a medievalizing imagination lay a single, central desire—to feel at home in an ordered yet organically vital universe. The more the world changed, and the period of the medieval revival was an era of ever accelerating social transformation, the more the partly historical but basically mythical Middle Ages that had become a tradition in literature served to remind men of a Golden Age. The Middle Ages were idealized as a period of faith, order, joy, munificence, and creativity.¹⁵

At times the seductiveness of the Middle Ages corresponds to the escapist element in Romanticism. Horace Walpole wrote Montagu that “there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old histories, and the babble of old people, make one live back into the centuries, that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past” (5 January 1766). A youthful Edward Burne-Jones praised Tennyson’s “Sir Galahad” to his friend Cormell Price, saying that Tennyson is “the only poet worth following far into dreamland.” Tennyson, for his part, found delight in the past more from the equally Romantic notion that “distance lends enchantment to the view” than that it is an avenue of escape. In explaining “Tears, Idle Tears,” Tennyson wrote James Knowles that “it is what I have always felt even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the ‘passion of the past.’ And it is so always with me now; it is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate to-day in which I move.” Whatever the motive, the Middle Ages held an enormous appeal during the course of the century as a charmed land of dreams. Even such an inveterate classicist as Matthew Arnold was not immune from its allure. His fond and well-known description of Oxford as “whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age” (“Preface,” *Essays in Criticism, First Series*, 1865) is reinforced by a letter to his youngest sister in which he wrote, “I have a strong sense of the irrationality of that period, and of the utter folly of those who take it seriously, and play at restoring it; still, it has
The City of Breakwater

The growing appreciation for the Middle Ages brought about by the romance of the past created an atmosphere quite naturally conducive to the advancement of Gothic architecture. As Charles Eastlake has said,

The Mediaeval sympathies which Scott aroused were enlisted less by reference to the relics of Pointed architecture than by the halo of romance which he contrived to throw around them. The fortunes of the Disinherited Knight, the ill-requited love of poor Rebecca, the very jokes of Wamba and the ditties of the Bare-footed Friar, did more for the Gothic Revival than all the labours of Carter and Rickman.¹⁶

Or, as Peter Collins has remarked, Gothic architecture made it possible for readers to live out fantasies elicited by Gothic novels and so make more real and vivid the vicarious pleasures of fiction.¹⁷

If, however, the Medieval Revival were nothing more than a vehicle for escape or an enchanting prospect charmed by the passage of years, it would never have developed into other than a plaything, as trivial and frivolous as Strawberry Hill or the Eglinton Tournament, as artificial and exotic as the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. But for those who were mainly responsible for it, the Revival was a matter of utmost seriousness; and for those who now look back, it seems a natural, almost inevitable, phenomenon. Without some profound and fundamental need for such a revival, without some sympathetic identification of the one age with the other, interest in the medieval period would never have become the dominant cultural force that it was. There must be more to it than an object of curiosity for dreamers and antiquarians; there must be something inherently responsive in the Victorian imagination for a large segment of the population to embrace with such pleasure and dedication the revived institutions and art of the Middle Ages.

In his History of Civilisation in England (1856–61), Thomas Buckle wrote,

There must always be a connexion between the way in which men contemplate the past, and the way in which they contemplate the present; both
views being in fact different forms of the same habits of thought, and therefore presenting in each age, a certain sympathy and correspondence with each other.

This important principle of historiography suggests not only that the Victorian era and the Middle Ages shared certain things in common but also that one may learn much about the Victorians by studying how they regarded their medieval forebears. Roy Strong, who quotes Buckle in *Recreating the Past*, has recently shown how historical painting reveals nineteenth-century attitudes, and I am developing somewhat the same premise through architecture in this book. More to the point, Buckle implies that an interest in history and, by extension, in the revival of historical modes is not capricious or shallow. And more explicitly, Ralph Adams Cram insisted upon the importance of the Gothic Revival by declaring that

the inception and growth and culmination of the new Gothic mode is not a whimsey of chance, a sport of erratic fancy: it was and is a manifestation in art forms of a world impulse, as fundamental as that which gave itself visible form in the Renaissance, as that which blossomed in the first Gothic of the twelfth century, as that which created Aya Sophia or the Parthenon. It meant something when it happened, it means something to us to-day, it will mean more to our children....

What does it mean to us and what does that meaning explain about its origin and popularity? One answer is that the Gothic Revival, and the entire Medieval Revival of which it is a part, was a result of Romanticism and especially of those aspects that were to bring about the inception of modern historical inquiry: dynamic organicism, primitivism, material progress, nationalism, and particularity, among the more important. To unravel and explain all these extraordinarily complex determinants would go far beyond the aesthetic limits of this book and be more the task of a historian, but to understand the context of the Revival, we must take a brief though necessarily superficial look at the influence that the study of history bore upon it.

At its worst the new historical consciousness manifested itself in the snobbish vanity of those who wished to establish pedigrees imbued with the aura of antiquity. In *Rural Rides* William Cobbett ridiculed Fonthill Abbey and William Beckford's claim
to be lineally descended from seventy-eight knights: "Was there ever vanity and impudence equal to these!" Others, like Tennyson's uncle Charles, who changed his name to d'Eyncourt and sought a peerage throughout his life, adopted Norman names and built castellated mansions in their pretensions to gentility. Often this sort of thing was harmless enough, even amusing. There is, for example, nothing reprehensible in Walpole's self-conscious and flippant remark to Henry Conway that he writes "from Strawberry Castle" where he gives himself "the airs, in my nutshell, of an old baron" (23 September 1755). It is no less difficult to take seriously the change from Jeffrey Wyatt to Sir Jeffrey Wyatville in light of the remark of his chief patron, George IV: "Veal or Mutton, he could call himself what he liked."

Far more importantly, these elements in Romanticism conjoined to develop an awareness of the differentness of the past. As long as the notion of general nature, especially in the sense of human nature, dominated, there existed the corollary that there was no essential difference between people past and present. In the words of R. G. Collingwood,

> the eighteenth-century historians . . . assumed that human nature had existed ever since the creation of the world exactly as it existed among themselves. Human nature was conceived substantialistically as something static and permanent, an unvarying substratum underlying the course of historical changes and all human activities. History never repeated itself but human nature remained eternally unaltered.\(^\text{19}\)

While this attitude lasted, there could be little advantage in studying human nature obscured by the mists of time when the very same traits were so much more readily apparent in the present. Nor could curiosity be piqued by the strange or unusual. When, however, the Romantic historian came to view past epochs as distinct and individual, then there simultaneously arose an interest in what had gone before.

This change in historical perspective is more readily apprehensible in its ontogenetic application than in its phylogenetic. It is something of a cliché that eighteenth-century parents looked upon their children as miniature adults,
undevolved perhaps but sharing basic traits common to all ages. Rousseau, on the other hand, was one of the first to maintain that the child was different and should be treated as such. Blake was to divide sharply childhood and maturity in Songs of Innocence and Experience, and Wordsworth was preoccupied with the distinct stages of life in such major poems as The Prelude, “Tintern Abbey,” and the “Intimations Ode.” In minor poems, too, like “We Are Seven” and “Anecdote for Fathers,” Wordsworth explores the difference between the way children perceive the world and the way adults do. Now there is a direct parallel between the attitudes toward childhood and those toward early historical epochs, for, as Shelley says in “A Defence of Poetry,” “the savage is to ages what the child is to years.” It is no accident, then, that the cult of childhood in the Victorian era should occur simultaneously with the Medieval Revival, that interest in the childhood of an individual should coincide with interest in the childhood of the race. Furthermore, it is no accident that the glorification of a child as an innocent and blessed creature, “trailing clouds of glory,” should be cotemporaneous with the idealization of the Middle Ages as a golden age, since childhood, whether of an individual or a race, was considered to be not only different from maturity but superior to it as well. The “Intimations Ode” and Contrasts are but different versions of the same idea.

Nevertheless, readers will recall that though Wordsworth distinguishes between the stages of a person’s development, he also stresses the organic continuity of them—“The Child is father of the Man”—and it is no less true phylogenetically that historians came to be interested in their nation’s origins for what those origins embryonically revealed about the mature society. The first step in this process, though, was to overturn the neoclassic bias that conceived the Middle Ages to be savage and barbarous times, “tedious years of Gothic darkness” as Cowper puts it in Table Talk. This was accomplished by innumerable writers, among them Bishop Hurd in Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762) and Sharon Turner, whose History of the Anglo-Saxons (1799–1805) reversed the concept of the de-
struction of the Roman Empire "as a barbarization of the human mind; a period of misery, darkness, and ruin" by claiming instead that the Germanic triumph was "a new and beneficial re-casting of human society in all its classes, functions, manners, and pursuits."

Once this battle had been won, historians were prepared to establish the Germanic origins of English society. John Kemble, for example, wrote in *The Saxons in England* (1849) that "the Englishman has inherited the noblest portion of his being from the Anglo-Saxons. In spite of every influence, we bear a marvellous resemblance to our forefathers." In their attempt to prove that English character and institutions were primarily Germanic, Kemble, who also edited *Beowulf*, along with Bishop William Stubbs and Edward Freeman, both Regius Professors of Modern History at Oxford, met opposition from the Romanists, as the Battle of the Styles was waged in the theater of history in addition to those of architecture and painting.

Although it is interesting and worthwhile to note how widespread was the classic-Gothic controversy, the pertinent point is that by retracing their cultural, social, and political streams back to the fountainhead, the Victorians sought a better understanding of themselves and of their future. In other words, this retrospection is in part both symptom and anticipated cure for that loss of identity suffered by the Victorians as they searched for meaning and values in a world of change and confusion. To understand where they had come from might explain who they were and where they were headed just as the seed or embryo holds the secrets to the plant or animal. In "The Spirit of the Age," Mill writes that the future may be learned in the present: "And since every age contains in itself the germ of all future ages as surely as the acorn contains the future forest, a knowledge of our own age is the fountain of prophecy—the only key to the history of posterity." In "English Architecture Thirty Years Hence" (1884), Robert Kerr justifies a historical review before discussing the future with this statement:
Now we pretty well understand in these scientific days that all continuous enterprises of human industry or skill, or of social or intellectual activity . . . are found to be subject to the government of certain laws of progression; so that it is the critical study of the past that becomes the only means of forecasting the future.  

Finally, one might note that in 1879–82 Walter Skeat published his *Etymological Dictionary* and that in 1879 James Murray began to compile the *O.E.D.* “On Historical Principles,” both works reflecting this same tendency toward definition by origin.

Once we understand the retrospective habit of mind among the Victorians, we are naturally led to question why they should focus on the Middle Ages. All of them, of course, did not. The Classical Revival in architecture, painting, and sculpture; the Romanist group in history; and the classical subjects popular with Tennyson, Arnold, and Swinburne, all testify to the persistence of another tradition throughout the period. But for a large number of others, the question remains a valid one. For some of these the return to the Middle Ages was simply a matter of harkening back to an immediately preceding age that had come to a close around the end of the eighteenth century. Walter Houghton has pointed out that for many Victorians the institutions and ways of life that had been lost in the Romantic revolution and that left the Victorians between two worlds were essentially feudal. To this effect, Houghton quotes from Baldwin Brown’s *The Revolution of the Last Quarter of a Century* (1869–70): “Until quite recently our modes of thought and speech, our habits of action, our forms of procedure in things social and political, were still feudal.” We must remember, too, that the precise and analytical Linnaean categorization of history was foreign to people who were accustomed to dividing history into three epochs: ancient, medieval, and modern. This tripartite division is, after all, what explains why the eighteenth century coined the terms “medieval” and “middle ages” to define a historical segment between two others. When a Victorian looked back, therefore, he had but the two choices we see reflected in the primary revivals during the century.
On the other hand, the scientific analysis by which modern historians so precisely dissect the past into many and distinct groups had made inroads among some Victorians, who came to regard their own age as distinct and to employ the term "Victorian" in reference to themselves. As Mill says in "The Spirit of the Age," "Before men begin to think much and long on the peculiarities of their own times, they must have begun to think that those times are, or are destined to be, distinguished in a very remarkable manner from the times which preceded them." Not only, however, did they regard their own time as having been separated from the past by Romanticism, the Industrial Revolution, democracy, or whatever, but they also came increasingly to fix the end of the Middle Ages not so much at the advent of their own time as at the Renaissance, much as we do now. For these men, then, who recognized a major cultural break coinciding roughly with the Tudor dynasty, a return to the Middle Ages represented a reversion to the penultimate historical epoch instead of to the last. In seeking to revive certain medieval traits, they were involved in what W. Jackson Bate has explained as "the 'leapfrog' use of the past for authority or psychological comfort: the leap over the parental—the principal immediate predecessors—to what Northrop Frye calls the 'modal grandfather.'" In other words, the Medieval Revivalists rejected the parental influence—that is to say, the neoclassic—by appealing to the grandparental authority of the Middle Ages. Believing that with the Renaissance things had begun to go wrong and that the predicament of modern times was largely due to the false steps taken at that period, the Revivalists sought in the Middle Ages, the wise and true grandparent, answers to their questions, solutions to their problems, values for their void of them, order for their chaos. Young Englanders sought political solutions in the feudal rapport of lord and serf, Tractarians sought religious solutions in an unreformed church, Pre-Raphaelites sought artistic solutions in the unconventionalized naturalism of early Christian painting, and Gothic Revivalists sought
architectural solutions in a Christian, national, and uncorrupted style.

The leading Goths were as unequivocal in their scorn for the cultural parent as their forebears had been of the Middle Ages. John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb, founders of the Camden Society, derided the neoclassic architecture of Georgian England as "that ne plus ultra of wretchedness," and Pugin wrote from Rome in 1847 of earlier examples: "The Sistine Chapel is a melancholy room, the Last Judgment is a painfully muscular delineation of a glorious subject, the Scala Regia a humbug, the Vatican a hideous mass, and St. Peter's is the greatest failure of all." Even as the Tractarians, especially Hurrell Froude, regarded the Reformation as the great calamity for the church, so did others consider it disastrous for art. Following Pugin, the Ecclesiologists believed the ruin of art was precipitated by the renaissance of classical design that accompanied the upheaval in the church: "About the time of the Reformation, the partial recurrence to classical forms, induced by the vitiated and unhappy taste for Italian architecture, completely corrupted the pure Pointed style by giving birth to various anomalous compositions, generally termed Debased."

It is especially important that we understand their attitude toward the Reformation, for it is in large measure both justification and explanation for the Revival. The Revivalists have continuously been blamed of attempting to thwart the natural course of art by imposing artificially on the present a worn-out style from the past. In their own age The Times charged in the 1840s that the study of the Middle Ages was "a foolish interference with the natural progress of civilization and prosperity." The Revivalists held, to the contrary, that the introduction of classical art in the Renaissance was the false and unnatural interruption in the progress of art. As the Builder states in 1850, "Subsequent to the Reformation a new element was introduced in Europe—that of copying antecedent and dead styles; progress was unknown, retrocession the fashion..." For the exponents of Gothic architecture, therefore, the art against which
Fig. 4. Contrast from King's Parade, Cambridge. To the left is James Gibbs's Senate House, 1722–30; to the right is Alfred Waterhouse's Gonville and Caius College, 1868–71.
they were rebelling was artificial, pagan, foreign, and dead, whereas the style they favored was natural, Christian, national, and vital, not exhausted and fossilized, as George Edmund Street emphasized, but having existed in a state of suspended animation from which he and others now meant to resuscitate it.\textsuperscript{30}

By reviving the Gothic style of the cultural grandparent, these men would turn architecture back to the true and natural course from which it had been diverted, and in so doing would lead the art of building out of the chaotic morass in which it was presently mired. This is the practical goal of the Revivalists that makes them something more than “dreamers of dreams born out of due time”; this is the aesthetic aspect of that larger motive impelling the Young Englanders and the Tractarians. We see this most important motive in George Gilbert Scott, who writes in mid-century:

I am no mediaevalist; I do not advocate the styles of the middle ages as such. If we had a distinctive architecture of our own day worthy of the greatness of our age, I should be content to follow it; but we have not; and the middle ages having been the latest period which possessed a style of its own, and that style having been in part the property of our own country, I strongly hold that it has greater \textit{prima facie} claims to be used as the nucleus of our developments than those of ancient Greece or Rome.\textsuperscript{31}

It is typical of later neo-Gothic architects to disclaim dedication to Gothic per se and to profess instead devotion to architecture and art in general. For them Gothic architecture is not necessarily and absolutely the best style, but the Gothic is best for restoring architecture to the condition from which its natural progress might resume and lead to other forms. As T. G. Jackson says later in the century:

The real and proper end of the revival of a bygone style is an indirect result from it; namely, the recovery of that artistic temper by which men will be led to express themselves in their work with truth, force, and feeling, just as their forefathers once did by means of that style which is now adopted for revival. The task that is set before us of the nineteenth century is not the revival of this or that particular style; it is something far wider than that: it is nothing less than the revival of art itself. We have to learn once more to look to art as a ready outlet for ideas, and a natural vehicle for thought; to regard it as an instrument to be used, not a curiosity to be
looked at; the equal heritage of all men, not an appanage of wealth and learning.  

There is at the end of this passage, incidentally, that democratic element which played so large a part in justifying the Gothic as expression and property of all the people instead of an aristocratic few, which had been the case with neoclassic art.

Finally, we see the motive quite explicitly stated after the turn of the century by Ralph Adams Cram, who asks,

> What is the meaning of the return to Gothic, not only in form, but "in spirit and in truth"? Is it that we are pleased with its forms and wearied of others? Not at all. It is simply this, that the Renaissance-Reformation-Revolution having run its course, and its epoch having reached its appointed term, we go back, deliberately, or instinctively,—back, as life goes back, as history goes back, to restore something of the antecedent epoch, to win again something we had lost, to return to the fork in the roads, to gain again the old lamps we credulously bartered for new.

It is not the intent of the Revivalists, Cram says, to "re-create an amorphous mediaevalism and live listlessly in that fool's paradise," but rather, like a man faced with the obstacle of a narrow stream, to back up, get a running start, and clear the barrier at a bound: "We are getting our running start, we are retracing our steps to the great Christian Middle Ages, not that there we may remain, but that we may achieve an adequate point of departure; what follows must take care of itself."

In view of these statements by Scott, Jackson, and Cram, we should reassess the usual attitude toward the Gothic Revival, common from its beginning to the present, that it is essentially retrogressive. One might claim, to the contrary, that many of the exponents of the Revival believed as fully in the new idea of progress, especially evolutionary progress, as those who accused them of being perverse and musty antiquarians; for although it is true that they went backward, they did so only that they might move architecture off its dead center and propel it forward once more. In *The Prelude,* when Wordsworth describes the terrible despair into which his soul had fallen, he tells us that he regained his spiritual health only by recalling certain "spots of time" from his youth. By means of retrospection he was able to emerge from his "Center of Indifference"
and to continue with his growth; no less did the leaders of the Gothic Revival mean to move architecture forward out of its malaise by first going backward. There is really nothing inconsistent in Pugin’s motto, “En Avant.”

III. ARCHITECTURAL ANTIQUARIANISM—THE PROBLEM OF COPYING

The more progressive artists of the day are denounced by mere antiquaries as rash innovators, and by their opponents as mere archaeological copyists. The truth is, that their advance is made from a new starting-point which they could only reach by a preliminary retrogression. (Benjamin Webb, “The Prospects of Art in England”)

It may be that many among our revivalists keep too long in leading strings, and that we want an occasional spur to make us strike boldly forward and develop for ourselves, and to make the revived art more decidedly our own; but this is a very different thing from decrying all we are doing as mere blind servility. (G. G. Scott, “Copyism in Gothic Architecture”)

At the very beginning of *A Laodicean* (1881), Thomas Hardy introduces his protagonist, the young architect George Somerset, engaged upon a sketching tour in which he is copying down the details of ancient buildings. Since Hardy told a friend that this novel “contained more of the facts of his own life than anything else he had ever written,” one may assume that Hardy’s architectural apprenticeship, like that of so many other Victorian architects, was similarly employed in learning his craft from the rich heritage of his country’s buildings. Paul Thompson reports that for William Butterfield “the examination of old buildings was by far the most valuable part of an architect’s education, and he had begun his own career with an intensive study of this kind.” In a sort of Victorian version of Wordsworth’s “The Tables Turned,” the *Builder* counsels that “Gothic architecture is not to be learnt from books and illustrations, but from examples themselves. . . .” The sight of a young architectural student busily sketching away before an old Gothic pile must have been a fairly familiar part of the Victorian landscape, for if Gothic was to be revived, it must first be learned from what had survived the ravages of time and Cromwell.
Behind these students stood the age-old artistic habit of learning from predecessors. Horace had advised in *On the Art of Poetry*, “Give your days and nights to the study of Greek models.” In the preface to *Annus Mirabilis*, Dryden proudly acknowledged his debt to Virgil: “I have followed him everywhere, I know not with what success, but I am sure with diligence enough; my images are many of them copied from him, and the rest are imitations of him.” And we know from the scores of “Imitations” surviving in the works of English poets that students well into the nineteenth century were taught to write by modeling their compositions on Greek and Roman authors.

But was not copying incompatible with the Revivalist doctrine, and with Romantic theory in general, as evidenced by “The Tables Turned,” that art should derive immediately from nature? Did copying not commit the same sin of artificiality with which neoclassic art was charged? In the field of literature, the accusation had been made by Henry Mackensie in *The Lounger*: “another bad consequence of this servile imitation of the ancients . . . has been to prevent modern authors from studying nature as it is, from attempting to draw it as it really appears; and, instead of giving genuine descriptions, it leads them to give those only which are false and artificial” (10 October 1785). In painting Holman Hunt chose as an epigraph for chapter 6 of *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* this quotation from Leonardo’s *Trattato della Pittura*: “I say to painters, Never imitate the manner of another; for thereby you become the grandson instead of the son of Nature.” For many others, however, the problem had been solved long ago by Pope. Pope no less than Wordsworth believed that the chief rule for the artist was to “follow Nature,” although he of course understood the word in a different way. and he had in *An Essay on Criticism* reconciled the dictum with the equally potent tradition of following the ancients by maintaining that classical authors were in much closer touch with nature than writers in more civilized times and that, as Virgil discovered, “Nature and Homer were . . . the same.” Therefore, he can recommend,
“Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;/To copy Nature
is to copy them.” Although George Gilbert Scott does not make
as complete an identification between the two, he nevertheless
believes that they are closely related when he advises architects
to learn from old buildings, “not studying Nature through them,
but only using them as helps in the study and application of
lessons learned from the fountain-head...”

Despite Dryden’s claim to have followed Virgil so closely,
there was in his time, even when originality had not attained to
the inflated premium of the nineteenth century, a clear differ­
ence between the unimaginative and servile practice of copying
and the freer adaptation of imitating. Pope wrote his mentor
Walsh on this matter: “I would beg your opinion, too, as to
another point: it is how far the liberty of borrowing may ex­
tend?... A mutual commerce makes poetry flourish; but then
poets, like merchants, should repay with something of their
own what they take from others; not, like pirates, make prize of
all they meet” (2 July 1706). In the middle of the next century,
Ruskin echoed almost exactly these words, even using the same
image, in The Seven Lamps of Architecture: “It is no sign of dead­
ness in a present art that it borrows or imitates, but only if it
borrows without paying interest....” Finally, George
Edmund Street applied the advice more directly to architecture
and the practice of sketching as a way of learning:

The value of ancient examples for educational purposes cannot be over­
estimated. But they must be used and not abused; for individuality is a
necessity in a great artist, and copyism is the almost infallible sign of a bad
one. This, however, does not make it any the less advisable for the architect
to register in his memory or in his sketch-book the beauties which are all
around him....

That Street should feel it necessary to issue this warning
indicates that architects were borrowing “without paying inter­
est,” and there is plenty of evidence to support the view that in
their zeal for correctness many Revivalists adhered narrow­
mindedly to precedent. At the very outset of the Revival, this
had not been true. Walpole’s Strawberry Hill, which Beckford
deprecated as “a Gothic mouse-trap,” was so free in its adapta-
tion of Gothic designs that T. G. Jackson could later deny its importance in the history of the Revival: "There was, therefore, no more chance of Strawberry Hill bringing about a revival of Gothic than of the Pavilion at Brighton introducing the general use of Hindoo architecture, for one was as little Gothic as the other Indian." But after Thomas Rickman had classified the several stages of Gothic style in *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture* (1819), and after the elder Pugin and E. J. Willson furnished correct models in *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* (1821), and after the Revival had developed into a serious cause, correctness became an architectural watchword. The Reverend Alfred Barry, son of Sir Charles, wrote that during the thirties and forties "'correctness' was everything, and any innovations were ruthlessly hunted down as heretical." At about the same time (1845), a writer to the *Builder* complained that "there seems to be a general feeling against everything new in architectural design; and unless we have a precedent for what we do, it is not correct and does not please.

The antiquarian spirit, which played so influential a part of the Revival in its early stages and which, as Geoffrey Scott has pointed out, "attaches an undue importance to detail," manifested itself no less conspicuously in other areas as part of the developing historical conscience of Victorian England. Roy Strong has commented that in historical painting an anachronism became "little short of a crime against art itself," and offers support in Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick's statement in 1836 that "an anachronism in an historical picture is as offensive to the eye of taste as is an imperfect metaphor or a defective verse to the ear." In 1850 Ford Madox Brown wrote in the *Germ* that the historical painter should become thoroughly familiar with the times he seeks to depict so that all the details may be accurately portrayed ("On the Mechanism of a Historical Picture," February 1850). In literature Walter Scott based descriptions on actual buildings and insisted upon the historical accuracy of his novels in prefaces and notes. J. W. Mackail in his biography of William Morris attributed the failure of "Sigurd the Volsung" to Morris's being "bound by an almost impossible loyalty
to his original,” Morris apparently forgetting the advice he once gave his daughter, “When you are using an old story, read it through, then shut the book and write in your own way.” In the theater Charles Kemble and Charles Kean performed Shakespeare in accurate costumes. William Burges objected to an actor’s holding his shield on a straight arm instead of properly on a crooked arm and concluded that because of this and many other examples “a theatre is not quite the place to make an antiquary happy.”

If architectural correctness owed something to antiquarianism in general, it also was associated with the scientific exactitude of paleontology whereby ancient buildings become fossils and architects comparative anatomists. As he toured de Stancy castle with its new owner, who wished to restore it, the young architect George Somerset “pointed out where roofs had been and should be again, where gables had been pulled down, and where floors had vanished, showing her how to reconstruct their details from marks in the walls, much as a comparative anatomist reconstructs an antediluvian from fragmentary bones and teeth” (Hardy, A Laodicean). Arthur Edmund Street remarked that his father’s knowledge of old buildings enabled him to reconstruct them even “as some learned man will construct an entire prehistoric animal from a fossil footprint” and quoted Thomas Drew, a Dublin architect, on Christ Church Cathedral: “To Mr. George E. Street’s marvellous instinct for the comparative anatomy, as I may term it of an ancient building, and profound architectural erudition, we owe the recreation of the perfect and unique twelfth and thirteenth century church from the merest shreds of evidence.” Applying this skill in a somewhat different area, Street was one of the first to suggest the purpose of the walls in the Colosseum floor, which archaeologists had recently uncovered. Interestingly, so popular was the Victorian fascination with fossils that the analogy was extended to literature as well. In his History of English Literature (trans. 1873), Hippolyte Taine compared an old piece of writing to “a fossil shell, an imprint, like one of those shapes embossed in stone by an animal which lived and perished”; and
in "The Critic as Artist" (1891), Oscar Wilde claimed that "criticism can recreate the past for us from the very smallest fragment of language or art, just as surely as the man of science can from some tiny bone, or the mere impress of a foot upon a rock, recreate for us the winged dragon or Titan lizard. . . ." My chief point here is that these analogies reflect the antiquarian approach to architecture, which valued so highly detailed correctness, but we might notice at the same time that they signify two other important features of the Revival. First, the associated interests in paleontology and archaeology help explain the Victorian concept of modern buildings as future fossils and ruins to be examined by the New Zealander who would come in some distant age. The acute awareness of the mutability of all things, revealed in FitzGerald’s "Rubaiyat" and Pater’s "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, caused Ruskin and Browning to warn that England’s greatness would fade no less surely than that of Venice, and led the Victorians to believe that their own monuments would remain to be studied even as they themselves studied the relics of earlier times. Second, these analogies point up the subject of chapter 3, which deals with the aesthetic doctrine of expressionism. The Victorians believed, as did the Romantics before them, that art reflects the character of an artist and his society. It follows, therefore, that a work of art is an index to the artist and his age just as surely as the fossil reveals the animal. It is not simply, then, that the Victorians were concerned about what posterity would think of the buildings in themselves but about what posterity would think of the Victorians as they were revealed in those buildings.

In addition to the historical and scientific trends reflected in architecture and the other arts, there are specifically aesthetic causes for antiquarianism in building. Nikolaus Pevsner has suggested that one of these lies in the materialistic and ignorant Victorian public, which was incapable of appreciating art for any reasons other than its accuracy. In Pevsner’s words, “Accurate copying of period detail could appeal strongly. . . . For whereas to risk verdicts on artistic merit seemed unsafe and also a little dubious, accuracy could be checked and hence
CITIES BUILT TO MUSIC

I must admit to some skepticism about this argument, for it is doubtful that the Victorians of whom Pevsner speaks could draw fine distinctions between middle pointed and perpendicular, or that many would, like Burges, object to a shield held on a straight arm. A more convincing reason may be derived from T. G. Jackson's statement that "the first danger that besets the revival of a dead style arises from an excessive regard for precedent; from that blind imitation of the letter or outward form of the adopted art, which is so much more common because it is so much easier than the intelligent study of the spirit and principles which once animated it..." What we may infer from this passage and from the prevalence of copyism at the beginning rather than at the end of the Revival is that the preoccupation with precedent and the insistence upon correctness were necessary first steps in learning an art that had been lost. After all, one learns any skill by copying, and it is only after the apprentice at last becomes master that he perceives the principles behind the forms and gains the confidence to break rules the beginner is wise to follow. So it was with the exponents of the Gothic Revival in its earlier stages—they kept very meticulously to precedent because Pugin had not yet taught them the "True Principles." When Pugin announced in *Contrasts* that "the mechanical part of Gothic architecture is pretty well understood, but it is the principles which influenced ancient compositions, and the soul which appears in all the former works, which is so lamentably deficient," the time had come to progress to the next stage wherein the old forms might be adapted with more originality and freedom. The intolerant views of "preterpluperfect Goths," the limited abilities of lesser architects who could never grasp principles, and the meretricious opportunism of other architects who cared nothing for those principles all collaborated to make antiquarianism tenaciously resistant to the progress Pugin called for, but its responsibility for the unimaginative and sometimes foolish resurrection of old forms should not blind us to the important and absolutely necessary part it played in the Revival. It rescued Gothic from the rococo frivolity of Strawberry...
Hill and laid a groundwork that allowed later architects to develop a style based upon "true principles" and that we now acknowledge to be distinctively Victorian. As Sir Joshua Reynolds had recognized earlier, "A confidence in the mechanick produces a boldness in the poetick. He that is sure of the goodness of his ship and tackle puts out fearlessly from the shore; and he who knows, that his hand can execute whatever his fancy can suggest, sports with more freedom in embodying the visionary forms of his own creation" ("Discourse XV").

IV. THE METHOD OF IMITATION—PRINCIPLES AND SPIRIT, NOT RULES AND FORM

Hitherto, in this country, at least as far as we know, there has not been the slightest attempt to teach architecture on any other basis than that of precedent; and the consequence is, that the minds of most architects are incapable of tracing effects to first principles. . . . (J. C. Loudon, "Forms, Lines, Lights, Shades, and Colours")

Utter, O some one, the word that shall reconcile Ancient and Modern!
Arthur Hugh Clough, Amours de Voyage

In his survey of the Gothic Revival, Charles Eastlake divided modern Gothic architects into three groups: (1) the Traditional or Correct, who attempted literal reproduction; (2) the Adapta­tional or Artistic, who modified for modern requirements; (3) the Independent or Eclectic, who believed in a free and unrestrictive application of the style. We have just seen how the first of these three was most influential in the early stages of the Revival; however, in its refusal to give way to the other two, it became the most vulnerable to censure. Looking back from the perspective of 1909, Charles Spooner found that "the greatest mistake [of the Revival] was the attempt to revive the letter of mediaeval art rather than the spirit of it—to reproduce what had been done, rather than to learn the underlying principles. . . ." Furthermore, there was a long-standing prejudice against imitation. Johnson's Imlac had said that "no man was ever great by imitation" (Rasselas); A. W. Schlegel had written that "in the fine arts, mere imitation is always fruitless" (On Dramatic Art and Literature); and Holman Hunt told Millais in...
1846 that "Revivalism . . . is a seeking after dry bones" (*Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*).

But, since one could not disregard precedent altogether, a solution was found in the advice to emulate the artist rather than to copy his work. So in 1759 Edward Young gave this counsel in "Conjectures on Original Composition": "Must we then, you say, not imitate ancient authors? Imitate them by all means; but imitate aright. He that imitates the divine *Iliad* does not imitate Homer; but he who takes the same method which Homer took for arriving at a capacity of accomplishing a work so great." Sir Joshua Reynolds approved of this advice and added that "it is not by laying up in the memory the particular details of any of the great works of art, that any man becomes a great artist, if he stops without making himself master of the general principles on which these works are conducted" ("Discourse XI"). A. W. Schlegel maintained that what we borrow from others must "be born again within us" (*On Dramatic Art and Literature*).

The very same advice—to follow the spirit rather than the letter of earlier artists—was given by the leaders of the Gothic Revival and by none so insistently as Pugin, whose greatest contribution to the Revival may well lie in his delineation of the principles of pointed architecture. At the same time, no other architect was as misrepresented as Pugin, whose eminence attracted the lightning bolts of such enemies as James Fergusson, who, like Ruskin, opposed Pugin on religious grounds but who, unlike Ruskin, compounded his animus with an anti-Gothic bias. Fergusson wrongly accused Pugin of being one of those who attempted to revive the letter of the Gothic style by comparing his architectural work to the theatrical productions of Charles Kean: "What Kean did for the stage, Pugin did for the church. The one reproduced the drama of the Middle Ages with all the correctness and splendour with which it was represented at the Princess's Theatre, and with about the same amount of reality as the other introduced into the building and decoration of the Mediaeval churches of the nineteenth century. . . ." In making these charges Fergusson chose to
ignore the title of one of Pugin's books, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, and the many statements throughout his other books to the effect that one must imitate in spirit only. Pugin fully realized that Gothic architecture was not to be revived by simply re-creating the forms and details of the old style. As he says in *Contrasts*:

And now I cannot dismiss this subject without a few remarks on those who seem to think, that, by restoring the details and accessories of pointed architecture, they are reviving Catholic art. Not at all. Unless the ancient arrangement be restored, and the true principles carried out, all mouldings, pinnacles, tracery, and details, be they ever so well executed, are a mere disguise.54

Like Young and Reynolds, Pugin believed that the answer lay in emulating the artist, not in copying the work: "for we do not wish to produce mere servile imitators of former excellence of any kind, but men imbued with the consistent spirit of the ancient architects, who would work on their principles, and carry them out as the old men would have done, had they been placed in similar circumstances, and with similar wants to ourselves."55

Later in the century T. G. Jackson was to make the same appeal. It is no more desirable nor possible, Jackson said, to restore Gothic art in its exact form than it is to bring back the Crusades or trial by ordeal. In attacking what he calls "Formalism and Purism," Jackson singled out those who "mistake superficial features for essential elements" and held, as had Pugin before him, that "traceried windows and pointed arches did not make Gothic architecture then, nor will they now." Instead, then, of obeying the letter of the style, architects should "catch the spirit of the old work" and "master the principles which made it what it was..."56 Others, too, followed Pugin's advice. Scott, Street, Burges, and Butterfield all gave the principles of medieval design precedence over exact models, indicating, as I have suggested, that antiquarianism in architecture continued after it had served its purpose of establishing correct precedents not in the hands of the leaders of the movement but in those of its lesser, unremembered followers.
In other areas there is a similar insistence on the importance of spirit over letter in the use of precedent. One of Owen Jones's propositions for the decorative arts is, "The principles discoverable in the works of the past belong to us; not so the results. It is taking the end for the means." In literature Arthur Henry Hallam as early as 1831 made the same point in commenting on Tennyson's "The Ballad of Oriana":

"We know no more happy seizure of the antique spirit in the whole compass of our literature. . . . The author is well aware that the art of one generation cannot become that of another by any will or skill; but the artist may transfer the spirit of the past, making it a temporary form for his own spirit, and so effect, by idealizing power, a new and legitimate combination. ("On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry and on the Lyric Poems of Alfred Tennyson")"

Swinburne, who had objected to the license with which Tennyson adapted the Arthurian legends in The Idylls of the King, nevertheless maintained in his essay on Hugo's "L'Année terrible" that the artist should treat the past "not by mechanical and servile transcript as of a copying clerk, but by loving and reverent emulation as of an original fellow-craftsman."

With their belief in following the spirit rather than the letter of the Gothic style, it is not surprising that many of these architects fell into that category defined by Eastlake as "Adaptational or Artistic." Not only was the modification of the old style a matter of artistic integrity for an architect whose creative instincts would not be satisfied with mere copying, but also it was a matter of practical expediency since these men were quick to realize that unless the neo-Gothic could fulfill the functional needs of modern people and provide them with the comfort to which they were fast growing accustomed, it would never gain the popularity required for its success. In A Laodicean Dare tells his father, Captain de Stancy, that the Captain's failure to win the hand of the newly rich Paula Power means the end of their family line: "We de Stancys are a worn-out old party—that's the long and short of it. We represent conditions of life that have had their day—especially me. Our one remaining chance was an alliance with new aristocrats; and we have
failed. We are past and done for." When, at the end of the novel, Dare burns down de Stancy castle, now owned by Paula Power and recently restored by her, Hardy implies that the old architecture will perish along with the old families unless it too can somehow be married to the new and vital. However, when George Somerset suggests to Paula that they plant ivy about the charred ruins and build a new house on eclectic principles, the reader surmises that Hardy is pessimistic about the chances for a union between old and new.

Others were no less skeptical about the adaptability of Gothic to modern conditions, and many of these opposed the Revival on religious grounds, feeling that the old, Gothic arrangements in churches were Catholic in design and ill-suited for Protestant worship. Alfred Barry tells us, for example, Sir Charles “felt strongly that the forms of mediaeval art, beautiful as they are, do not always adapt themselves thoroughly to the needs of a service which is essentially one of ‘Common Prayer.’ Deep chancels, high rood-screens, and (in less degree) pillared aisles, seemed to him to belong to the worship and institutions of the past rather than the present.” Barry adds in a note that his father and Pugin not surprisingly disagreed on this matter. James Fergusson found Gothic unsuitable for Protestant services, as he found it unsuitable for all other purposes; and Ruskin, who attempted to reconcile the Gothic with the Protestant, was compelled to admit that Gothic was more appropriate to Catholic worship. Representative of the ordinary citizen’s distrust of Gothic as tending toward Rome is a letter to the Builder in which Thomas Goodchild writes that churches should be designed “for seeing and hearing,” leaving off “the fopperies of image worship” as out of place in “an enlightened nation adoring the Great One.” Some, on the other hand, objected to Gothic on functional grounds, feeling that the old forms simply would not satisfy modern requirements. Richard Norman Shaw, who had begun his career in Gothic architecture, later explained his rejection of it by saying that “it is totally unsuited to modern requirements. When it came to building, especially in places like the City, we found it would not answer.”
However, those faithful to the Revival—Burges, Butterfield, Webb, Jackson, Scott, Pugin, Ruskin, Street, Viollet-le-Duc in France, Cram in America—all believed that Gothic could be adapted to modern needs, even as on the other side Charles Robert Cockerell believed that classical could be practically applied. Pugin belies his reputation as a narrow-minded zealot when he writes that "any modern invention which conduces to comfort, cleanliness, or durability, should be adopted by the consistent architect; to copy a thing merely because it is old, is just as absurd as the imitations of the modern pagans." Ruskin similarly recommended that one who borrows from the past do so with audacity, by which he means "the unhesitating and sweeping sacrifice of precedent where precedent becomes inconvenient." But more than any other writer, George Gilbert Scott championed Gothic as a flexible and universal style of architecture. In *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture*, Scott sought to remove from the Revival the stigma of antiquarian impracticality by demonstrating that Gothic was perfectly suitable to modern times; and, further, he attempted to secure for the style a broader application and acceptance by claiming its appropriateness for buildings other than ecclesiastical. In the introduction to the book, Scott declares that pointed architecture is "pre-eminently free, comprehensive, and practical; ready to adapt itself to every change in the habits of society, to embrace every new material or system of construction, and to adopt implicitly and naturally, and with hearty good will, every invention or improvement, whether artistic, constructional, or directed to the increase of comfort and convenience." And with the belief that Gothic was not only receptive to modern developments in building but also was adaptable to secular purposes, Scott spoke against "the absurdity of the theory that one style is suited to churches and another to houses," arguing against the prevailing opinion that Gothic was proper for churches, but classic was the style for public buildings. The choice for domestic houses was more open, but Italian Renaissance was making inroads there as we see in Osborne House, designed in 1844 by Thomas Cubitt and Prince Albert.
Fig. 5. An example of how the Gothic style could meet contemporary requirements. This office building has obvious Gothic features yet a surprisingly modern appearance. Oriel Chambers, Liverpool, by Peter Ellis, 1864.
The Goths having pretty well won the Battle of Styles on the ecclesiastical front, Scott at the height of the controversy in the late fifties and early sixties intended to extend the influence of the Revival by making claims on secular and domestic buildings. The one great victory behind him was the New Houses of Parliament; ahead lay the successes of Waterhouse’s Manchester Assize Courts and the New Law Courts, although the latter was personally disappointing to Scott, who was passed over in the competition in favor of Street. But more immediately loomed the crushing defeat of the Foreign Office at the hands of Palmerston, a defeat only partially assuaged by having his way with the Gothic design of the St. Pancras Hotel at the end of the next decade. There was greater success with domestic buildings, and Tennyson’s explanation in 1892 of his preference for Gothic—“It is like blank verse; it will suit the humblest cottage and the grandest cathedral” (Tennyson and His Friends)—witnesses to the durability and pervasiveness of the idea. Scott’s book, therefore, and the Revivalists’ emphasis on the adaptability of Gothic that it reflects, should be considered as an offensive in the Battle of the Styles as well as a reaction to the literal copyism of antiquarians within their own ranks.

Before proceeding to the third category of architects Eastlake established, we might conclude by asking how precisely the old could be adapted to the new. One area that gives insight into the matter is windows—how could the pointed arches of casement windows be made to accommodate the far more convenient sashes that had been developed in the seventeenth century? Ruskin addressed the problem in The Stones of Venice by saying there was no reason a sash could not be fitted into a pointed arch. “There is not the smallest necessity,” he argued, “because the arch is pointed, that the aperture should be so. The work of the arch is to sustain the building above; when this is once done securely, the pointed head of it may be filled in any way we choose.”64 T. G. Jackson, however, less dedicated to the pointed arch as an essential feature of Gothic architecture and freer in his application of the old style, felt there was no need for the compromise since a sashed window in an arched
Fig. 6. Philip Webb's Red House, Bexleyheath, Kent, 1859–60. Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record, London.
frame is a sham and, besides, weakens the arches. One simply should use a lintel and forget about arches. In the house he built for William Morris, Philip Webb utilized both methods, designing some of the windows of Red House according to Ruskin's advice and some according to Jackson's. But whatever the approach, for all three Gothic was capable of incorporating the advantage of a sash window.

The third school of architects designated by Eastlake, the Eclectic, was yet more liberal than the Adaptational in its treatment of Gothic although it, like both the Adaptational and the Traditionalist, attempted to find a solution to "the carnival of architecture." But though Eclecticism was similar to the other two groups in seeking an answer to the problem, it was different in that its fundamental approach to art had been in large measure responsible for the problem in the first place. Had the Victorians not had something of an eclectic temperament, they would never have been so hospitably receptive to the several styles that struggled for recognition and that added to the artistic confusion of the age.

There are at least two forces behind the eclectic proclivity of the Victorian period: one is diversitarianism and the other is the proliferation of knowledge. Of the first of these, Arthur O. Lovejoy has written that "the shift from the uniformitarian to the diversitarian preconception [is] the most significant and distinctive single feature of the Romantic revolution. . . ." As we have already seen, the shift from the uniformitarian outlook to the diversitarian played an important part in changing historical studies. In aesthetics the turnabout was no less influential. The neoclassicist tended to apply universal and absolute aesthetic values, believing along with Johnson's Imlac that the poet "must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same . . ." (Rasselas). Practically, this meant an appreciation of the ancients, who were close to Nature, and a disapproval of medieval times when the atrophy of reason blinded men to the precepts of Nature. When the change de-
scribed by Lovejoy occurred, people began to apply relative standards out of a belief that each age is unique and must be evaluated on its own special terms. Practically, this meant an appreciation of medieval artists, who came to be regarded not as having deviated from the universal rules of General Nature but as having followed the principles of a particular and mutable Nature peculiar to their own times.

With this aspect of Romanticism, or with that of any cultural movement for that matter, manifestations appear long before the trait reaches full bloom; and as far back as Dryden, one may find evidence of relative standards. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Dryden wrote in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* that “the climate, the age, the disposition of the people, to whom a poet writes, may be so different, that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience.” In 1754 Thomas Warton defended *The Faerie Queene* with the opinion that “it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to” (“Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser”). Eight years later Bishop Hurd made a similar defense of Spenser in *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* and argued for Gothic architecture on the same principles:

> when an architect examines a *Gothic* structure by *Grecian* rules, he finds nothing but deformity. But the *Gothic* architecture has its own rules, by which when it comes to be examined, it is seen to have its own merit, as well as the *Grecian*. The question is not, which of the two is conducted in the simplest or truest taste: but whether there be not sense and design in both, when scrutinized by the laws on which each is projected.

With the coming of Romanticism, eclectic values become a typical feature of criticism. In the first decade of the new century, A. W. Schlegel echoed the opinions of Warton and Hurd in *On Dramatic Art and Literature*:

> We will quarrel with no man for his predilection either for the Grecian or the Gothic. The world is wide, and affords room for a great diversity of objects. Narrow and blindly adopted prepossessions will never constitute a genuine critic or connoisseur, who ought, on the contrary, to possess the power of dwelling with liberal impartiality on the most discrepant views, renouncing the while all personal inclinations.
At the end of the century, writers were still proclaiming the eclectic ideal. Walter Pater based his belief “that in literature as in other matters it is well to unite as many diverse elements as may be” (“Postscript,” Appreciations) on his earlier statement in the preface to The Renaissance that for a critic “beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done.” Similarly, Oscar Wilde wrote under Pater’s influence in the last decade that the true critic “will seek for beauty in every age and in each school . . .” (“The Critic as Artist”).

With so much emphasis upon catholicity of taste, it is no wonder that architects were influenced toward an eclectic approach; but there was a second determinant at work leading in the same direction, and that was the proliferation of knowledge. Superficial it may have been, as Mill commented in “The Spirit of the Age,” but profuse as never before it nonetheless was. “We live,” Robert Kerr observed in 1864, “in the era of Omnium-Gatherum; all the world’s a museum, and men and women are its students.” The aptness of the metaphor is borne out by the number of museums erected during the course of the century, and the availability of so much new information made eclecticism almost inevitable. Kerr goes on to say that the architectural style of the present is one of “miscellaneous connoisseurship,—the style of instinct superseded by knowledge,—a state of things characteristic of our age as no other state of things could be characteristic of it.”67 Others also attributed eclecticism to the diffusion of knowledge. Pater spoke of “an intellectually rich age such as ours being necessarily an eclectic one” (“Postscript,” Appreciations), and The Builder perceived an “Eclectic revival” replacing the revivals of classic and Gothic and owing its rise to the fact that “the vast extension of modern art-knowledge has brought about a possession of almost world-wide forms of art, which with astonishing and the most elastic adaptation have appeared in recent architecture. . . .”68
As I have already said, eclecticism both contributed to the architectural confusion and provided a way out of the labyrinth. It contributed simply by making available a plethora of styles such as had never before perplexed architects, who had but one style from which to choose and for whom the question of style was meaningless. An eighteenth-century architect would have as naturally and unhesitatingly chosen Palladian as a medieval one chose Gothic, but when Hardy's George Somerset was beginning his career, he had been unable to decide which of the architectural styles "that were coming and going in kaleidoscopic change was the point of departure for himself. He had suffered from the modern malady of unlimited appreciativeness as much as any living man of his own age" (A Laodicean). Robert Kerr wrote that current architecture "exists in utter bewilderment. Much learning hath made it mad." And it was bewildering not only for the architect, who must choose and execute, but also for the client, who must determine which style best suited him. In an imaginary dialogue with a perplexed client who wants only "a Plain, substantial, comfortable Gentleman's House," Kerr's architect offers these choices:

You can have Classical, columnar or non-columnar, arcuated or trabeated, rural or civil, or indeed palatial; you can have Elizabethan in equal variety; Renaissance ditto; or, not to notice minor modes, Mediaeval in any one of its multifarious forms, eleventh century or twelfth, thirteenth or fourteenth, whichever you please,—feudalistic or monastic, scholastic or ecclesiastic, archaeological or ecclesiologistic, and indeed a good many more.

Such a cornucopia of architectural riches might drive the most omnivorous dilettante in search of simpler fare.

At the same time, however, that it was partially responsible for the architectural chaos of the era, eclecticism sought a solution to the problem in a new style that would be a composite of the old ones. If returning to an old and lifeless style was out of the question and if no wholly new style was possible until constructional technology produced one, then this approach was indeed the only alternative remaining. In refuting Coleridge's distinction between the fancy, which combines, and the im-
agination, which creates, Poe had argued that “all novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can imagine nothing which has not really existed . . .” (“Fancy and Imagination”). This attitude is the basis of the Eclectics’ faith that a new style could—in fact, could only—be derived from combinations of the old ones. T. L. Davidson, professor of architecture at University College, London, put the solution most clearly when he said in 1842 that “we are wandering in a labyrinth of experiment and trying by an amalgamation of certain features in this or that style of each and every period and country to form a homogeneous whole with some distinctive character of its own, for the purpose of working it out into its fullest development, and thus creating a new and peculiar style.”

How this solution might be practically effected, however, was a matter of much less general agreement, and one could hardly expect otherwise of a group of liberal-minded men whose very philosophy rested on individualism. Nor, despite their protests of impartiality, did they propose an eclectic style as distinctive as they desired, for old prejudices invariably intruded in the form of one style dominating the composition. Fergusson advocated Italian, Jackson recommended Gothic, and Ruskin, Scott, and Kerr foresaw a merger of Gothic and classic, which for Ruskin and Scott would be preponderantly Gothic and which for all three would have the added advantage of resolving the Battle of the Styles. But the truce was never signed, and about the only agreement between the Gothicists and Classicists was founded on their mutual disapproval of the one, distinctive eclectic style, the Queen Anne. Mark Girouard has described the development of this style in the 1870s by such architects as George Frederick Bodley, J. J. Stevenson, E. R. Robson, Richard Norman Shaw, and William Eden Nesfield; its affiliation with the Art-for-Art’s-Sake movement; and its eventual eclipse at the turn of the century. A mixture of Queen Anne, Dutch, and Flemish; espoused by young, apostate Goths who preserved a distrust of symmetry; sometimes called “Free Classic”; Queen Anne architecture was the only truly eclectic
Fig. 7. Richard Norman Shaw's New Zealand Chambers, Leadenhall Street, London (1871–73). An early example of the Queen Anne style. Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record, London.
style of the age. But if this particular style did not survive the century, the eclectic principle that fostered it did. Looking back from the perspective of his old age in the early twentieth century, T. G. Jackson remarked, “We are now become eclectic and smile at the simple and narrow enthusiasms of our callow age.”

Today the choices offered by Kerr’s architect to his client shrink in comparison with those offered a prospective home-builder, who no doubt wonders why his Victorian forebears made such a to-do about style.

V. THE BURDEN OF THE PAST

Poeta nascitur, non fit.

The Waterbeetle here shall teach
A sermon far beyond your reach:
He flabbergasts the Human Race
By gliding on the water’s face
With ease, celerity and grace;
But if he ever stopped to think
Of how he did it, he would sink.

Hillaire Belloc, “A Moral Alphabet”

When people talk most about Work of Art, generally speaking at that period they do least in art. (William Morris, “The English Pre-Raphaelites”)

Diverse though the three schools of architecture may have been in the means by which they meant to solve the problem confronting them, the ultimate goal for all of them was the same: to establish a distinctive style of architecture, and to do so, moreover, by returning to the past either as a point of departure or as a quarry from which to mine elements that were to be newly combined. Their retrospection was supported by the artistic tradition of using precedents, a Romantic love of remoteness, and a sense of insecurity requiring an acknowledged authority for guidance. As we have seen, the knowledge they culled in their antiquarian research recoiled upon them in that although it provided them with the necessary material, it also aggravated the problem by contributing to their uncertainty and confusion. But the abundance of architectural
precedents militated against the success of their goal in another way, too, for the Revivalists found themselves hooked on the Romantic dilemma of a twin emphasis on precedent and originality that W. Jackson Bate has discussed in *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*. Fuseli's *The Artist Moved by the Grandeur of Ancient Ruins* or Keats's reaction to the Elgin Marbles summarizes Bate's theme that, caught in the Romantic conflict between revering the past and being original, the poet came ambivalently to regard the past both as help and as burden. No less did the Victorian architect find himself caught in the same trap, discovering that the end was thwarted by the means.

In its early and more radical form, the problem of knowledge for the artist is that everything has already been done and there remains nothing left to do. Addison gives a good example of this attitude in the *Spectator* when he writes, perhaps with La Bruyère's "Tout est dit" in mind, "It is impossible for us, who live in the latter ages of the world, to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science, which have not been touched upon by others" (20 December 1711). More than a hundred and fifty years later, John Stuart Mill was daunted by the same prospect. Like a young Alexander fearful that his father would leave no worlds to conquer, Mill despaired that there were no undiscovered realms of music:

I was seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations. The octave consists only of five tones and two semitones, which can be put together in only a limited number of ways, of which but a small proportion are beautiful: most of these, it seemed to me, must have been already discovered, and there could not be room for a long succession of Mozarts and Webers, to strike out as these had done, entirely new and surprisingly rich veins of musical beauty. (*Autobiography*, 1873)

What Mill could not anticipate, and what would scarcely have made him more optimistic, is that once musicians abandoned the standard of beauty, the number of combinations increased and made originality once more possible. The overshadowing achievements of the past loomed over architects as well. George Edmund Street's son, himself an architect, wrote,

The field of discovery in architecture is exhausted. It is undeniable, as Ruskin tells us, that no principle of construction has been discovered for
centuries. My father thought that Gothic architects had left nothing to be found out worth the finding in construction, and he scoffed at the idea, which some have been bold enough to entertain, that a brand-new Victorian style might be invented, whose birth should rival that of Athene—springing fully armed from the brain of some king of architects.  

If nothing new were possible in the arts, what was possible? Refinement was the usual answer. After observing that no new discoveries are possible, Addison concludes that “we have little else left us, but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon lights” (Spectator, 20 December 1711). Pope, who had been advised by his friend Walsh that he could excel only in correctness, wrote in the same year as Addison his famous lines in An Essay on Criticism, “True Wit is Nature to advantage dress’d./What oft was thought, but ne’er so well express’d.” This attitude toward art in the Augustan age furnished Peacock with his description of it in “The Four Ages of Poetry” as the age of silver that followed the golden age of Shakespeare. If matters had rested there, the Revivalists would have found confirmation for their theories and could have been content endlessly refining and correcting the features of Gothic architecture. Unfortunately there is another aspect to this attitude that was to make for serious problems because, while finding solace in the elegance of their compositions, neoclassic writers acknowledged that refinement was both inferior to invention and antithetical to it as well. Addison relied upon the authority of Longinus in saying, “The Productions of a great Genius, with many Lapses and Inadvertencies, are infinitely preferable to the Works of an inferior kind of Author, which are scrupulously exact and conformable to all the Rules of correct Writing” (Spectator, 2 February 1711). Pope stressed the observation of rules in An Essay on Criticism, but he also admitted that bold writers sometimes “snatch a grace beyond the reach of art”; and in the preface to his translation of The Iliad (1715), he recognized that Homer’s genius rested on his originality: “It is the invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great geniuses. The utmost stretch of human study, learning, and industry, which master
everything besides, can never attain to this." Later in the century Joseph Warton turned the tables, damning Pope with the faint praise that he was "one of the most correct, even, and exact poets that ever wrote" and therefore a lesser poet than Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton ("An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope," 1782). On the one hand, a belief in the superiority of earlier writers based upon a valuation of genius over rules could justify Gothic architecture as the work of a golden age in the same way that it explained the excellence of Shakespeare; but on the other hand, it created a sense of inferiority and hopelessness among writers and architects alike. Romantic primitivism attempted a solution by seeking through a return to nature the restoration of those conditions that made originality possible in a golden age. Although gaining partial success, the attempt was inherently futile, as Coleridge makes clear in faulting Wordsworth's precept of simple language and as Byron shows in "The Island." Once lost the innocence of paradise could not be regained; the wisdom and experience of ages could not be suddenly forgotten, and the nineteenth century found itself condemned to bear the burden of the past.

When Sir Joshua Reynolds claimed in "Discourse VI" that the mind of the artist is inspired and fed by the ideas of his predecessors, he was continuing a tradition that stretched at least as far back as Longinus, who had similarly held that "many authors catch fire from the inspiration of others" (On the Sublime), but he was running directly counter to the growing tendency to regard learning as antithetical to originality. Seven years before Reynolds made these claims, William Duff had argued to the contrary that, instead of nurturing creativity, knowledge of other writers makes originality impossible:

Another effect of learning is, to encumber and overload the mind of an original Poetic Genius. . . . For as no man can attend to and comprehend many different things at once, his mental faculties will in some cases be necessarily oppressed and overcharged with the immensity of his own conceptions, when weighed down by the additional load of learning. The truth is, a Poet of original Genius has very little occasion for the weak aid of Literature: he is self-taught. He comes into the world as it were completely accomplished. ("An Essay on Original Genius," 1767)
Eight years before Duff, Edward Young had objected to learning as an impediment to originality on the slightly different ground that a study of early writers stifles individuality:

Illustrious examples engross, prejudice, and intimidate. They engross our attention, and so prevent a due inspection of ourselves; they prejudice our judgment in favor of their abilities, and so lessen the sense of our own; and they intimidate us with the splendor of their renown, and thus under diffidence bury our strength. ("Conjectures on Original Composition," 1759)

Ben Jonson had faulted Shakespeare for having "small Latin and less Greek," that is to say, little formal education. Young suggested that Shakespeare is preeminent precisely because he did not labor "under the load of Jonson's learning," and further proposed that "if Milton had spared some of his learning, his Muse would have gained more glory than he would have lost by it."

The doctrine of natural genius, especially as put by Duff, gathered greater force as it flowed into the next century, where it vitalized so many different features of Romanticism. Like Young, Macaulay felt that Milton's great learning was a hindrance to his poetical genius but believed that he triumphed over the handicap and became a great poet in spite of his education ("Milton," Edinburgh Review, August 1825). Some years later Ruskin wrote in The Stones of Venice that Raphael "painted best when he knew least." As the doctrine spread into the nineteenth century, it reached out to inform the principles of architecture as well. Street believed that the architects of old buildings had the advantage of being "much less hampered and restrained by self-imposed rules than we are." Scott thought that "our knowledge of all arts which have existed. . . . absolutely precludes us from generating a perfectly new art, spontaneously growing as a plant from its seed, as has been the case in former periods." In advocating the use of Gothic for domestic buildings, Scott admitted that there were very few medieval houses left for examples, most of the remains being churches. But instead of presenting a difficulty to an architect who has little to copy, the lack of precedents is actually an advantage since "it leaves more to the imagination and in-
ventive powers of the architect, and leaves him more un­fettered by precedent to strike out freely such developments as the practical conditions prescribed to him may suggest.”  

Finally, Burges reflects something of the Romantic yearning for an age of innocence when he remarks impatiently, “If some kind fairy could make a clean sweep of all our existing buildings and all our books on architecture, to say nothing of the architects, being then left to our own resources we might do something of our own.” 

Frequently, the villain in the dissemination of knowledge so antagonistic to natural and spontaneous genius is criticism, for, as Matthew Arnold had said, the aid of criticism is “to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world” (“The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”). But criticism was antithetical to art in another way, too, for in addition to over­burdening the natural genius of the artist with the heavy weight of knowledge, restricting his flight with the shackles of rules, and daunting his courage with examples of insurmountable attainments, criticism threatened imaginative creativity with rationalism. I am not talking here about the quarrels between artists and critics that are so common and well known. Rather, I mean the opposition of the critical, rational faculty of mind to the creative, imaginative faculty that is so persistent a theme in Romantic poetry. On a wider scale than poetry, Carlyle found that criticism in this sense was as destructive to society at large as Keats’s Apollonius is to Lamia or the man from Porlock to Coleridge’s memory. “The healthy Understanding,” Carlyle wrote in “Characteristics” (1831), “is not the Logical, argumentative, but the Intuitive; for the end of Understanding is not to prove and find reasons, but to know and believe.” The disease of religion, literature, and society as a whole is attributable to a dependence on the logical instead of the intuitive:

Never since the beginning of Time was there ... so intensely self-conscious a Society. Our whole relations to the Universe and to our fellow-man have become an Inquiry, a Doubt; nothing will go on its on accord, and do its function quietly; but all things must be probed into, the whole working of man’s world be anatomically studied.
This last phrase brings us back to those architects who, by their thorough knowledge of past styles and by their scientific approach, could reconstruct an old building as a comparative anatomist might re-create a prehistoric lizard from the merest shred of evidence. Could it be possible, as some maintained, that the architects who analytically dissected architecture into its many different styles and then subdivided each into its several different phases after the best modern way, were in fact murdering the very creature they meant to revive? Such at least was the opinion of John Sedding, who wrote that before the breach with artistic tradition in the early part of the nineteenth century, “there was no scrutiny, for the simple reason that there were no critics. They did not talk art then, they made it, and enjoyed it as it came. There was no scrutiny, for there was no anxiety; no annual fingering of the nation’s art-pulse; no malady to combat. . . .”

Carlyle had written in “Characteristics” that “self-contemplation . . . is infallibly the symptom of disease”; but the symptom had developed yet another malady as the analysis that was to find a cure impeded the only true healer—the creative imagination. As architecture entered the twentieth century, Ralph Adams Cram continued the warning against rational analysis, reminding his readers that “the curious inquiries of Calvin wrought hopeless havoc with the heavenly vision of St. Augustine,” but his is one of the last utterances from the deathbed of Romanticism.

Cram’s protest is out of date because both functionalism and the change in constructional techniques dictated by the use of new materials had brought about a corresponding shift of emphasis from architecture as an art to architecture as a science. As long as architecture was regarded primarily as an art, it belonged appropriately to the domain of the imagination; but by developing into more of a science, it became the prerogative of analytical reason. Furthermore, as long as architecture was considered mainly as art, the Revivalists found support for their doctrines since architecture could no more be expected to keep up with the giant strides of material progress than could any of the other arts. In 1814 William Hazlitt set down the
primitivistic theory, well established by that time and to be repeated later in Macaulay's "Milton," that whereas science progresses and therefore flourishes in civilized societies, art often thrives among more primitive people since it depends on natural genius instead of accumulated learning. In "Why the Arts Are Not Progressive" (*Morning Chronicle*, 1814), Hazlitt denies the parallel between art and science by this reasoning: "What is mechanical, reducible to rule, or capable of demonstration, is progressive, and admits of gradual improvement: what is not mechanical or definite, but depends on genius, taste, and feeling, very soon becomes stationary or retrograde, and loses more than it gains by transfusion." Some years earlier Blake, who shared the common Romantic notion that geniuses are born not made, jotted down in his copy of Reynolds's *Discourses* that if art were progressive, "we should have had Mich. Angelos & Rafael to Succeed & to Improve upon each other. But it is not so. Genius dies with its Possessor & comes not again till Another is Born with It." The Revivalists employed this sort of thinking in defense against the growing number of voices calling for a new style befitting an age of scientific developments. As late as 1886 Henry Van Brunt argued that "architecture is a fine art upon a basis of science; if it were a pure science, we could emulate the electrician, the geologist, the political economist, the naturalist, the civil engineer. . . ."82

Such arguments were becoming more untenable as the century drew to a close, but perhaps they were never really very effective against a population that expected progress in all things and that was increasingly impatient with revivalism in any form. The Gothic Revival, then, came to be threatened externally by modernism even as it was threatened internally by the burden of the past. The latter was ironically its own creation; the former was beyond its control and ultimately more damaging.

Sir John Soane once sued a man for the libelous accusation that Soane had introduced a new order of architecture in Regent Street houses. The Gothic Revivalists were less dogmatic, but they, too, considered the creation of an entirely new style as
“the philosopher’s stone of architecture” and blamed the demand for such a thing upon a foolish craving for novelty. Despite their protestations the desire for originality in art was not to be put off, and T. Blashill could count on popular support for his statement in the Builder that if modern architecture is to interest future generations, “we must, besides being honest and learned, be original.” Nor were all convinced that art and architecture should not be expected to progress along with science. To the contrary, some writers maddeningly persisted in making art answerable to the laws of progress and in wondering why it was perversely disobedient to them. For example, T. Mellard Reade wrote in the Builder (1862) that although “giants in science, we are pigmies in art,” and eleven years later another architectural critic wrote in the same journal,

Nature and philosophy, as well as the evaluation of civilization itself, point to a law of progression, or a process of education which must be accepted, which Comte, Dr. Spurzheim, Herbert Spenser [sic], and a host of our foremost thinkers of modern times have laid down and are elaborating; a process to which modern art and religious thought curiously stand, forsooth, in strange and direct opposition. . . .

The idea of progress undermined the uniqueness of art by denying the regressive theory of a golden age and by repudiating natural genius through its corollary, utilitarian rationalism. For Bentham, Mill, Arnold, and increasing numbers of others, education was the solution to all problems—a man and a society became great because of their learning, not in spite of it. As James Fergusson said, great art, or greatness in any area, depends on the gradual accumulation of knowledge rather than the sudden flash of genius: “The only means by which man ever did any thing great, either in the useful or fine arts, was by this aggregation of experiences. . . . A thousand little steps of a thousand little men, if in advance of one another, will surpass the stride of the greatest intellectual giant the world ever saw. . . .” Another Victorian who believed in artistic progress was Dickens, who in the following year attacked the Pre-Raphaelites for ignoring the lessons to be learned from the past
three hundred years of painting ("Old Lamps for New Ones," Household Words).

A slightly different perspective on the assimilation of art into the aggregate of human endeavor might be taken by asking how it could now be possible for art to stand beyond the laws of progress when its creators were themselves moving ever upward. In In Memoriam Tennyson writes of mankind’s spiritual improvement, in Culture and Anarchy Arnold speaks of realizing our best selves, and in An Historical Inquiry Fergusson says that we should “progress and perfect ourselves, for this is our true mission on the face of the globe...” If man was progressing toward perfection and if, according to the expressive theory, art reflects the man, then it follows that art should be advancing, too. At times, however, it was doubtful that man's moral and spiritual development was any more in step with the abundantly clear material progress than art was, for an age that Carlyle and Arnold described as diseased could hardly be on the path to perfection. Tennyson suggested a resolution to the paradox when King Arthur consoles Sir Bedivere after the fall of Camelot with the words, “The old order changeth, yielding place to new,/And God fulfils himself in many ways...” ("The Passing of Arthur"). Perhaps the turbulence of modern life was a necessary transitional moment in the long-range evolution forward. Samuel Huggins holds out the same hope in the midst of architectural chaos: “The dissolution of old styles may have been but preparation for new and more glorious ones, and not the general decline of architecture in the world.”

The idea of progress naturally restored self-confidence to artists, who had long suffered from a sense of inferiority imposed by the regressive theories of a golden age. We see, for example, a self-assertive pride in William Richard Lethaby’s boast that “an age that can produce Watts’ Physical Energy, Madox Brown’s Manchester paintings, and the Forth Bridge, should be able to produce anything...” The pendulum of opinion was swinging back to the attitude of a hundred years earlier that the Middle Ages were savage and barbaric. Mark Twain’s Connecticut Yankee, for instance, shows the superior-
ity of modern ingenuity and mechanical know-how by making fools of King Arthur's superstitious louts.

The better-informed and more realistic supporters of the medieval ideal, like Carlyle and Morris, never pretended that the Middle Ages were utopian; but they did believe that, with all its flaws, the time was nonetheless superior to the modern world. Twain reversed that opinion, and others less bold argued that the days of King Arthur were at least no better than those of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Barrett Browning pointed out the folly of idealizing the past in *Aurora Leigh*: "And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat/As Fleet Street to our poets."

A final argument employed against the Revivalists turned their own most effective weapon against them. Ever since Pugin had charged neoclassic art with being a sham and had launched a crusade against architectural dishonesty, truth in building became a Revivalist catchword and deceit anathema. Pugin may very well have been correct in attributing truthfulness to the original Gothic, but it struck others that neo-Gothic, no matter how honest in construction and materials, was intrinsically a sham in its imitation of a style alien to modern times. Lethaby referred to the "sham antiquity of our buildings," and W. Miles Barnes, a member of the S.P.A.B., commented that "to imitate old work is a forgery. . . ." On the other hand, in their zeal for Gothic some Revivalists forsook the principle of truthfulness and justifiably drew the charge of committing shams. Had Pugin lived to see the iron structure of Tower Bridge disguised by stone in a medieval style (and perhaps he did see Pope's Oscillating Engine decorated with Gothic tracery at the Great Exhibition), he would have lamented along with Ruskin "the accursed Frankenstein monsters of, indirectly, my own making." "Shade of Pugin," says Hardy's George Somerset on viewing a red-brick chapel, "what a monstrosity!" Unfortunately, some of these monsters were creatures of Pugin's own inadvertent making.

In this chapter a consideration of the aesthetic origins of the Gothic Revival has led to some of the reasons for its ultimate
failure, since, like Frankenstein's monster, the seeds of destruction were implanted with those of conception. With the waning of the classical ideal in architecture and the dissolution of the general cultural ideal of which it was a part, a hodgepodge of different styles rushed in to fill the artistic vacuum. As a way of restoring order and at the same time breaking whatever last grasp the classic held on public taste, the revivers of Gothic sought to return to that style of architecture whose development had been so unnaturally interrupted by the introduction of an alien style at the time of the Renaissance. Their avowed purpose was not to restore Gothic in its medieval form but to use Gothic as a point of departure, by drawing upon its principles and by adapting its forms to modern purposes, for a continued development toward a style that would bring stability and order to architectural chaos. This is the aesthetic motive of the Revival. However, to bring this about it was first necessary to learn about that art which their predecessors had neglected so long as to allow for its lapse into obscurity, and so they set about their antiquarian searches, busily making notes and drawing sketches of the wealth of medieval buildings across their land. But, paradoxically, as they accumulated the information necessary to provide a foundation upon which to erect their new buildings after the old style, they found that the greater the amount of facts they had available, the more difficult it was to break with the old in pursuit of the new. Too much knowledge became a dangerous thing. Their return to Gothic created problems without their ranks as well in the modernist opposition to revivalism in any form, even that which meant ultimately to go forward.

There is, however, another aspect to the aesthetic motives of the Gothic Revival, and one that, in the end, is more completely satisfying as an explanation for its popularity. It is that, despite so many avowals that the purpose of the Revival was not to bring back Gothic specifically but art generally and that the Gothic style was only a means to this greater end, at bottom the Revivalists were devoted to Gothic for what it was in itself. To say this is not to impute hypocrisy, for the two motives are not
really contradictory and the architects themselves would have admitted as much; but it is to say that they combined a calculated mission to save art with an impulsive love of Gothic. This taste for Gothic is the more satisfying explanation because it alone accounts for the widespread acceptance of the style. It is all very well for a few to take upon themselves the high purpose of rescuing art from the depths to which it had fallen, but how many ordinary people would be concerned enough with art in the abstract to rally to such a standard? It is safe to say that those who worshiped in Gothic churches, lived in Gothic houses, sat on Gothic furniture, and who, in short, responded so enthusiastically to Gothic designs of all sorts as to ensure the popularity of the style, did so not because they shared the expressed goals of the Revival’s leaders but because, to put it quite plainly, they liked the way it looked. They liked it because their tastes were determined by the radical changes in aesthetics wrought under the name of Romanticism. To these changes, then, the popular acceptance of the Gothic Revival is largely due, and to these changes and their part in what Eastlake called “one of the most interesting and remarkable phases in the history of art”\(^9\) we now turn.