V. PRAGMATISM: PLEASURE

I. PLEASURE, INSTRUCTION, AND FUNCTION

The pragmatic theory of art, as defined by Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, is that which is directed primarily toward the audience and which regards "the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim."¹ This theory seemingly works against expressionism, which emphasizes the role of the artist while depreciating that of the audience. As Shelley says in "A Defence of Poetry," the "Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds. . . ." Though he may be overheard by others, his song is not sung mainly for them but for himself—a soliloquy, to use Mill's analogy. But, in truth, the audience derives a special delight in eavesdropping on the artist, who can reveal his innermost thoughts and feelings by being consciously unconscious of his public. Mimesis, on the other hand, is incorporated by pragmatism as one means of attaining a desired effect on the audience. For example, in Johnson's comment "Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature" ("Preface to Shakespeare"), imitation is clearly subservient to the pragmatic end of pleasing the audience.

Pleasure, then, as one of the intended results of a work of art, is part of the pragmatic theory and is applicable to any art form. More particularly applicable to literature is the other half of pragmatism—instruction. The traditional association between rhetoric—the art of persuasion—and writing, as well as the inherent suitability of written discourse for instruction, has identified didacticism with literature more than with the other arts, but they, too, are quite capable of instruction. When, however, they truly rise to the level of art, beyond such purely practical forms as maps and mnemonic ditties, these other arts always blend instruction with pleasure, ordinarily with a primary emphasis on the latter. So it is, too, when writing becomes
imaginative literature, although the emphasis is not as constant as with painting or music and vascillates from age to age. Thus, Johnson says, “The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing” (“Preface to Shakespeare”). A generation later the Romantics would reverse the emphasis by celebrating pleasure at the expense of instruction.

Architecture is usually more like painting, sculpture, and music in having as its chief pragmatic goal pleasure than it is like literature in sometimes being predominantly instructive. When, however, one is dealing with church architecture, as one necessarily does with the Gothic Revival, there may be the appearance of an unalloyed or predominant design for pleasure; but behind the multicolored glass and the richness of the ornaments lies the ulterior goal of salvation, and the building, like Johnson’s poetry, instructs by pleasing. Architecture, though, is unlike all these fine arts together, for it is after all an applied or practical art and so has the additional pragmatic purpose of fulfilling a specific utilitarian requirement, the shelter of those who use it. How well a building performs its function is the third aesthetic criterion of architectural pragmatism and will serve as a fitting conclusion to our survey of architecture’s participation in the other two—pleasure and instruction.

II. THE PICTURESQUE

Picturesqueness is the very soul of Gothic architecture. (J. L. Petit, “Utilitarianism in Architecture”)

It was the study of the picturesque, the desire for the picturesque, which led to the study of Gothic architecture; and it has proceeded on picturesque ground step by step from the days of Carter and Britton till now, when the desire for the picturesque in Gothic architecture has become almost unlimited. (Robert Kerr, “On the Architecturesque”)

Throughout the centuries beauty has generally been regarded as the chief source of pleasure in art, and the Romantics did not break with tradition in this matter; but it is true that they were inclined to admit more tolerantly than their predecessors other sources of pleasure than beauty. Horror was
one of these, as we see in the "shudder" of Gothic novels, the
tales of Poe, Fuseli's *The Nightmare*, Blake's *Ghost of a Flea*, and
Goya's *Caprichos*. Perhaps there is some explanation for the
exquisite pleasure derived from the macabre and grotesque in
an inscription on the frontispiece to *Caprichos*: "El sueño de la
razón produce monstruos." This, after all, is the subject of
Fuseli's *The Nightmare* and suggests that the turn from reason to
the imagination, which faculty of mind is quite as capable of
envisioning a hell as a heaven, played some part in the attraction
dark and forbidding subjects. These subjects, moreover,
doubtlessly contributed something to the growing taste for
Gothic architecture since they were so often set in ancient castles
and abbeys, since they shared rather tenuously with architecture
the name of Gothic, and since they had in common with the
Gothic style an element of the grotesque.

Another source of pleasure, and of far greater relevance to
the revival of Gothic, was the picturesque, a kind of aesthetic
halfway house between the concept of natural beauty as regular
and pacific to that of natural beauty as irregular and
tumultuous. Picturesque doctrine became popular at the end of
the eighteenth century when the old concept of beauty was still
firmly rooted in tradition but when new sensibilities found
stimulation in wild and rough landscapes whose qualities were
just the opposite of what had long been considered beautiful.
The dilemma confronting aestheticians at this time was that if
mountain scenery, say, consisted of features directly opposite
those of a landscape traditionally regarded as beautiful, then
logically the mountain scenery must be ugly. But this designa-
tion would not do because a subtle and gradual shift in taste
causèd many people to delight in the rugged terrain of Scot-
land, Wales, and Switzerland. What was needed was a new cate-
gory to account for this delight and to solve the dilemma, and
in Sir Uvedale Price's "A Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of
the Picturesque and the Beautiful," we are provided with just
the term—the picturesque. In the dialogue Mr. Seymour, a
novice, asks in regard to a gypsy hovel if there is not some term
to describe that class of objects that he is inclined to label ugly
but that others consider beautiful. Mr. Hamilton, the authority who accompanies him, replies:

The term you require . . . has already been invented, for, according to my ideas, the word Picturesque, has exactly the meaning you have just described. . . . The set of objects we have been looking at struck you with their singularity; but, instead of thinking them beautiful, you were disposed to call them ugly. Now, I should neither call them beautiful nor ugly, but picturesque; for they have qualities highly suited to the painter and his art, but which are, in general, less attractive to the bulk of mankind; whereas the qualities of beauty are universally pleasing and alluring to all observers.²

The picturesque, therefore, was a compromise between an old aesthetic bias that refused to release its hold on beauty and a new sensibility whose popularity demanded official sanction. Taste changes more slowly than politics: the Bastille might be brought down in a day and the ancien régime in little longer, but the artistic values of the old order persisted and required the invention of a new aesthetic category before surrendering altogether and leaving the field to the values of the new. As the nineteenth century progressed, the lines of demarcation between these categories grew more indistinct and the picturesque was more frequently identified with beauty. As early as 1816 Francis Jeffrey equated the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque in his “Essay on Beauty,” and it would not be long before the new taste was secure enough to render the old distinctions unnecessary.

But at the end of the eighteenth century, those distinctions, as well as the true definition of the picturesque, were vitally important to such aestheticians as William Gilpin, Sir Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight, and Humphrey Repton, who wrote volumes on the subject and who engaged in sharp controversies among themselves. Despite their many differences of opinion about what constituted the picturesque, the one essential characteristic on which all agreed was irregularity. Price, for example, wrote that the “qualities of roughness, and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity, are the most efficient causes of the picturesque.”³ In the next century irregularity became practically the single feature of the pic-
turesque and was used synonymously with it. George Edmund Street described the Acropolis and the Forum as being "so picturesque, so irregular in their levels. . . ." Alfred Barry used picturesque as an antonym of regularity when he wrote that his father seemed "often divided between an artistic love of the picturesque and a determined architectural preference for regularity."

Street had found the Acropolis and the Forum to be picturesque, but he was talking about their arrangements rather than the irregular designs of the individual buildings, the Acropolis, for instance, adding "one building to another in an almost picturesque confusion," and it was generally conceded that Gothic architecture was more picturesque in its irregularity than was classic. Uvedale Price made this point when he said that the simplicity and symmetry of Grecian buildings make that style of architecture more beautiful than the Gothic but that the variety and irregularity of Gothic buildings make that style more picturesque than the Greek. He illustrates the point by contrasting the general outlines of the two types of buildings: the lines of the Grecian are straight and symmetrical, whereas with Gothic

the outline of the summit presents such a variety of forms, of turrets and pinnacles, some open, some fretted and variously enriched, that even where there is an exact correspondence of parts, it is often disguised by an appearance of splendid confusion and irregularity.

If, as Thomas Hardy told the S.P.A.B., "irregularity is the genius of Gothic architecture," then the defining characteristic of this architectural style and that of the picturesque were in fact the same, leading to an identification of the two. Robert Kerr asserted that the picturesque was "the essence of Gothic taste," and used the terms synonymously when he classified all architecture and art as either classical or picturesque.

Naturally, the change from regularity to irregularity did not move from one extreme to the other, for neoclassic doctrine admitted variety and Romantic theory allowed symmetry. Wordsworth justified meter in poetry by saying that it provides regularity to temper passion, Burges felt that irregularity was
permissible in the backs of large buildings but not the fronts, and Barry, more classically inclined than they, included variety only if it could be subordinated to the overall symmetry, as with the Houses of Parliament. Instead of moving from one pole to the other, taste changed by altering the balance, transferring aesthetic values from the scale of regularity to that of irregularity.

Combining with the picturesque on the common ground of irregularity, Gothic architecture gained respectability and acceptance through its association with the new aesthetic category. If Gothic could not be called beautiful, classical architecture still claiming exclusive rights to that aesthetic tribute, it had at least shaken off the contemptuous epithets to which it had for so long been subjected and established itself as an alternative source of pleasure by means of its designation as picturesque. As the nineteenth century progressed and the distinctions between the picturesque and the beautiful faded to join the two categories together and to make the picturesque a type of beauty, Gothic architecture emerged from its role as a stepchild and claimed in its own right the appellation of beautiful. By this time so firmly had irregularity implanted itself as an aesthetic virtue that the architects of the Queen Anne style attempted to satisfy their own and the public's taste for it through what Lethaby derisively called "the dilettante-picturesque by the so-called Queen Anne style." The new style capitalized on the very principles that had made Gothic popular, assumed the term by which it became aesthetically respectable, and competed quite successfully with it in municipal buildings and private houses.

If the Gothic style was so consistently identified with the picturesque, it is puzzling how some writers, such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Robert Macleod, deny the influence of the picturesque on leaders of the Revival. After all, Alfred Barry declared that though his father favored symmetry, "many (and his friend Pugin especially) contended for irregularity, picturesqueness, and variety." Yet Hitchcock has written that "Pugin and the Anglican ecclesiologists who soon echoed his
principles verbally abjured the Picturesque. . . .” The reasoning behind his claim, and Macleod’s as well, is that the picturesque approach regards architecture from a predominantly visual point of view, whereas, in Macleod’s words, “the progeny of the Gothic Revival can be most clearly identified by their primary commitment to non-visual criteria.” To be mainly concerned with non-visual criteria—that is, with function—does not mean, however, to be neglectful of the way buildings look, and we have already seen that the continuation of the painting-architecture analogy into the nineteenth century signifies the importance of visual criteria. One of the Revival’s progeny, John Sedding, had in fact defined the architect as “a picturesque manipulator of vast forms.”

What perhaps both Hitchcock and Macleod are working toward, although they are not explicit, is that the Revivalists sacrificed visual principles, including those of the picturesque, when there was any chance of conflict with functional principles, and that the picturesque was admissible only when it proceeded naturally from the plan of the building. In other words, they did not object to the picturesque when it evolved spontaneously—indeed, they approved it wholeheartedly and welcomed its sanction—but only when it was contrived for its own sake and therefore militated against one of Pugin’s true principles that everything should serve a purpose. Maybe this is what Hitchcock intends when he says that “the Victorians, when on their critical battle horses, almost consistently abjured the Picturesque as such,” the key phrase being “as such.” Therefore, we do find that Pugin condemns the picturesque when it is the primary concern in design: “An edifice which is arranged with the principal view of looking picturesque is sure to resemble an artificial waterfall or a made-up rock, which are generally so unnaturally natural as to appear ridiculous.” What an architect should do, on the other hand, is to allow the picturesque to proceed naturally from the building’s requirements “by turning the difficulties which occur in raising an elevation from a convenient plan into so many picturesque beauties. . . .” This is what the builders of the original Gothic did and the
reason their buildings are naturally and beautifully picturesque. On this matter both Barry and Scott agreed. J. L. Wolfe said this about his friend Barry: "That he had an artist's eye for the picturesque was certain from the happy choice he was sure to make of the best points of view for sketching. But actually to plan irregularity, because it was picturesque, he thought unworthy of the dignity of art." Similarly, Scott declared, "Especially have I spoken against all direct pursuit of the picturesque beyond what naturally results from skilful though simple treatment. . . ."

For the Revivalists, then, the picturesque was wrong if taken as an end in itself but quite permissible, indeed very desirable, if a natural consequence of a building's primary, functional goal. As it happened, they could easily afford to be so haughty in condemning a studied picturesque effect; for the picturesque was fortuitously an almost invariable result of functional planning since a design based upon the principles of convenience and truthfulness, to use the Victorian terms, would quite naturally have an irregular, picturesque elevation. "The most picturesque objects I have seen," wrote J. L. Petit, "are buildings of the most strictly utilitarian character . . . without the slightest attention whatever to appearance."

I have dwelt upon the intimate association of the picturesque and the Gothic because I am convinced that the picturesque was immensely important to the early rise and later popularity of Gothic architecture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Because of its association with the picturesque, chiefly through the common property of irregularity, the Gothic style was enabled to emerge from centuries of disrepute and to gain an aesthetic foothold, so to speak, which, if it did not allow Gothic immediately to usurp the title of beautiful from the classical antagonist, at least provided a measure of popular acceptance secure enough to issue a challenge. By mid-nineteenth century the picturesque had succeeded so spectacularly in a brief span of time as to become a category of the beautiful, thereby winning for itself and for Gothic the ultimate artistic accolade. Finally, and perhaps in the end most im-
importantly, the association of Gothic with the picturesque provided a solution for an artistic problem that had long existed but that had become much more acute by the Revivalists’ insistence upon designing for convenience—the problem of reconciling utility and beauty. Now, by reasoning that utility created irregularity, which was the chief quality of the picturesque, which was one type of beauty, architects could show that the ultimate cause of beauty—picturesque beauty, at any rate—was utility and thus satisfy at once the demands inherent in their ambivalent roles as practical builders and as artists.

III. UNITY AND VARIETY

The fundamental and all-important principle of UNITY. (E. Trotman, “On the Comparative Value of Simplicity in Architecture”)

The human mind is adapted for viewing, as a whole, an indefinite number of parts. . . .” (J. C. Loudon, “On Those Principles of Composition, in Architecture, Which Are Common to All the Fine Arts”)

Before the picturesque could be accounted beautiful, a change in the concept of beauty had to occur, and one of the elements in this change was a growing preference for variety in nature and in art. An early indication of this new development, discussed in a different context in the preceding chapter, is evident in Horace Walpole’s comment to Sir Horace Mann about Grecian architecture: “The variety is little, and admits of no charming irregularities. I am almost as fond of the Sharawaggi, or Chinese want of symmetry in buildings, as in grounds and gardens” (1750).

But this change created an aesthetic problem because the newly emerging taste for variety was directly opposed to artistic unity, which had been an unquestioned aesthetic criterion from Aristotle’s Poetics to Pope’s version in An Essay on Criticism:

In wit, as Nature, what affects our hearts
Is not th’ exactness of peculiar parts;
’Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call,
But the joint force and full result of all.

Nor did the commitment to unity in art cease with the eighteenth century, for well into the nineteenth Walter Bagehot
judged pure art, of which Wordsworth is the exemplar, to be superior to ornate art, as in the poetry of Tennyson, because the simplicity of pure art creates a unified effect whereas the multiplicity of ornate art distracts and fragments. "Such ever," he writes, "is the dividing test of pure art: if you catch yourself admiring its details, it is defective; you ought to think of it as a single whole..." ("Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry," 1864). In his preface to the 1853 edition of Poems, Arnold took Greek poetry as his model for an art that subordinated the parts to the whole, and chose Keats as an example of one who was misled to reverse the order.

Here, then, was the predicament: on the one hand, unity in artistic form as an essential element of beauty was backed by centuries of tradition and seemed indomitably secure in aesthetic doctrine; but, on the other hand, variety, both as a characteristic of nature to be reflected in art and as a source of pleasure, arose as a contradictory principle. The way out of the predicament was similar to the aesthetic accommodation made for the principle of irregularity by the creation of a separate category, designated the picturesque, in that variety was reconciled with unity by adding to the old unity of form a new class: unity of expression or feeling. The reclassification of unity into two types allowed for the continuation of the traditional type, acknowledged the validity of variety, and avoided open conflict between the old aesthetic value and the new taste by a compromise between them that made it possible to invoke the one while approving the other. By the 1830s the two categories of unity were clearly defined, as one sees in E. Trotman's explanation:

As to the principle of unity, it is necessary to premise, that it has, architecturally, a twofold reference; regarding, on the one hand, form and distribution, and, on the other, expression of style and purpose: the first embracing the symmetrical, the second the picturesque. Whatever praise such examples of Grecian art as the Parthenon and Theseum may have received on the ground of simplicity, it is rather for the merit of unity of form that we consider them admirable; and, though in our modern cruci-
form churches in the pointed style, that unity of form is not so entirely acknowledged by the eye, the unity of expression and of character is generally more than enough to satisfy the demands of taste.\(^{20}\)

It is evident in this passage how much the new category is a direct result of expressionism, with its emphasis upon substance and meaning. What has happened, it seems, is that although the balance of artistic theory began to move from imitation to expression, the principle of unity was retained, but in its new application came to refer to inner substance rather than outer form. Accordingly, it was less important that a work of art achieve unity through simplicity, balance, repetition, and so forth, than that the ideas and feelings it expresses be consonant and produce a single impression upon the audience. There are signs that the redefinition of unity began at least as early as Edmund Burke, who wrote that "when we consider the power of an object upon our passions, we must know that when any thing is intended to affect the mind by the force of some predominant property, the affection produced is like to be the more uniform and perfect, if all the other properties or qualities of the object be of the same nature, and tending to the same design as the principal . . ." (A Philosophical Enquiry, 3).\(^{21}\) The new application of unity to feeling allows for variety and irregularity since unity now depends upon consistency of details rather than, as was earlier the case with unity of form, upon balance and simplification of details. In other words, as long as the individual items in a composition are of a kind and affect the audience in a uniform way, those items can be as profuse and asymmetrical as one desires. But one should not, for example, mix elements of the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque (assuming them to be separate categories); and one should not, as Pugin repeatedly argued, attempt to combine incongruous architectural styles in a single building.

That this redefinition of unity was crucial for an appreciation of the Gothic style may be seen by briefly tracing the development of the artistic principle in its application to architecture. As long as unity meant unity of form, Gothic always suffered in
comparison to classic, and so the diarist John Evelyn found that in looking upon Gothic buildings, "full of Fret and lamentable Imagry . . . a Judicious Spectator is rather Distracted and quite Confounded, than touch'd with that Admiration, which results from the true and just Symmetrie, regular Proportion, Union and Disposition [of classical buildings]. . . ." Not surprisingly, then, Evelyn found little to admire in Henry the Seventh's chapel at Westminster Abbey, with "its sharp Angles, Jetties, Narrow Lights, lame Statues, Lace and other Cut-work and Crinkle Crankle," since the abundance of Gothic ornament "rather Gluts the Eye, than Gratifies and Pleases it with any reasonable Satisfaction."22

A hundred years or so after Evelyn first made these observations, the concept of unity had begun to change, as we have seen in Burke's comments on the subject, and accompanying this change was a growing appreciation of Gothic. Hogarth stands at the crossroads of this new direction in the concept of unity. Writing in The Analysis of Beauty, he contrasts St. Paul's with Westminster Abbey, and though his preference for the former allies him with traditional taste, his appreciation for variety looks forward to things to come. Hogarth praises the moderation and subordination of ornament in St. Paul's where "you may see the utmost variety without confusion, simplicity without nakedness, richness without taudriness, distinctions without hardness, and quantity without excess." Westminster Abbey, on the other hand, lacks simplicity and distinctness, for "the great number of its filligrean ornaments, and small divided and subdivided parts appear confused when nigh, and are totally lost at a moderate distance. . . ." Yet, despite Westminster Abbey's inferiority, Hogarth admits, and in doing so anticipates the notion of unity of feeling, that the details are consistent and produce a uniform effect: "yet there is nevertheless such a consistency of parts altogether in a good gothic taste, and such propriety relative to the gloomy ideas, they were then calculated to convey, that they have at length acquir'd an establish'd and distinct character in building" (chap. 8).
Although Hogarth is moving toward Coleridge’s concept of multeity in unity, a preference for Westminster Abbey over St. Paul’s would not be possible until people came to believe that unity of feeling was not only compatible with confusion and irregularity of details but as important as unity of form. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, they had come to believe so, as we see in Byron’s description of an old abbey, perhaps modeled on Newstead:

Huge halls, long galleries, spacious chambers, joined
By no quite lawful marriage of the arts,
Might shock a connoisseur; but when combined
Formed a whole which, irregular in parts,
Yet left a grand impression on the mind,
At least of those whose eyes are in their hearts.

_Don Juan_, canto 13

The change from unity of form to unity of feeling—from perception by the mind’s eye to the heart’s eye, as Byron has it—allowed Gothic to fulfill one of art’s most firmly established standards; and it is just because of this change that E. Trotman could describe King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, a building often compared with Henry the Seventh’s Chapel, as “stand[ing] forth among human works in glorious pre-eminence . . . as an example of the supreme beauty of unity. . . .”

Unity of feeling did not, however, entirely displace unity of form, and some defenders of Gothic found that the new category was not an altogether satisfactory compromise. Ruskin, for example, although he believed that unity of feeling “is the first principle of good taste,” nevertheless felt obliged to establish Gothic architecture as unified in form as well. Unity of form must have exerted a powerful influence at the time to force Ruskin not simply to reckon with it but to suggest such an extreme measure as viewing Westminster Abbey from Highgate Hill at five in the morning in order to satisfy it. Looking at the Abbey from a distance and in the greyness of dawn, Ruskin wrote, “You will receive an impression of a building enriched with multitudinous vertical lines. Try to distinguish one of
those lines all the way down from the one next to it: You cannot. . . . Look at it generally, and it is all symmetry and arrangement. Look at it in its parts, and it is all inextricable confusion."²⁵

Viewed under more normal circumstances, however—in daylight and at close range—Gothic architecture often upset the precarious balance of unity and variety with its irregular masses and profuse details. T. G. Jackson, for example, saw no such compromise when he made this contrast between classic and Gothic styles: "On the one side is clearness, on the other confusion; on the one hand simplicity, on the other complexity and turmoil; in the first, the calm and monotonous beauty of a classic temple, in the second the picturesque variety, and the intense struggling vitality that breathes in every stone of a Gothic minster."²⁶ Jackson’s failure to assert the unity of a Gothic minster would not have been looked upon as an unfavorable reflection on the style at the time he wrote these words in 1873, for by then so well established had irregularity and variety become as aesthetic values that the catchword of "unity" was no longer necessary to sanction them and had, in fact, lost much of its influence as an evaluative standard. Gerard Manley Hopkins, like Byron and Ruskin, could perceive, and wish to perceive, unity in a Gothic building, but he makes it clear in the following letter to Butterfield that the majority of people had grown accustomed to associating the style with irregularity alone:

I hope you will long continue to work out your beautiful and original style. I do not think this generation will ever much admire it. They do not understand how to look at a Pointed building as a whole having a single form governing it throughout, which they would perhaps see in a Greek temple: they like it to be a sort of farmyard and medley of ricks and roofs and dovecots.²⁷ (26 April 1877)

Perhaps in the end the compromise between unity and variety that Hopkins found in Butterfield’s churches or that Ruskin discerned in Westminster Abbey was too subtle a combination for the ordinary Victorian to apprehend. Perhaps, too, its apprehension depended too heavily upon the mists of dawn or
the imagination of a poet, and its incorporation in a building upon the genius of a Butterfield. At any rate, when C. F. A. Voysey surveyed the heritage bequeathed by the Revival and as revealed in private houses, he saw only confusion. These houses, Voysey wrote in 1909, are characterized by their angularity and infinite variety of shapes and proportions jutting out at you with surprising wildness as if they were waving their arms impatiently and angrily; and to add to their complexity they are composed of an infinite number of differently coloured materials and textures, just like the drawing-rooms inside, which I likened to drunken brawls. It is our mad rush for wealth and material things that feeds on advertisement, until our very houses shout at us for attention.\(^2^8\)

What Voysey blames on a desire to advertise material wealth might also be attributable to the end result of the trend toward irregularity and variety, for what Voysey is describing here is what Bagehot had warned against when he said that art was defective when it drew one's attention to its details rather than to its single design. Also, the emphasis upon the individual features of these houses corresponds quite closely to the technique of Pre-Raphaelite painting, which distractingingly highlights the minutest of details. In effect, the Pre-Raphaelites returned to the eighteenth-century principle of clarity and distinctness, although carrying that principle to an extreme, but adopted the new concept of particularity, and so contrived to make unity of composition very difficult if not impossible. One might achieve unity by drawing clearly and distinctly as long as the details were few and the object was general nature, or one could unify one's work using many details as long as they indistinctly blended together; but one could not combine unity and distinctiveness of profuse details. In this defense of Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, Ruskin addresses this problem by admitting that "to many persons the careful rendering of the inferior details in this picture cannot but be at first offensive, as calling their attention away from the principal subject."\(^2^9\) Ruskin's answer is that since the distraught and excited mind fixes on trivial objects, the use of details accords with the mood of the picture, and so a kind of unity of feeling is achieved. This
explanation answers very nicely for this particular picture, but what of the great majority of Pre-Raphaelite paintings whose subjects do not allow for so ingenious an interpretation? One is more likely to approach these pictures from the point of view of W. F. Axton, whose account of them is strikingly similar to Voysey's description of private houses. Axton points out that unlike traditional works in the Royal Academy, composed to create a unified impression, Pre-Raphaelite paintings made for a situation in which "the spectator's visual apprehension of such paintings is disturbed, if not confused, by their ambiguities and contradictions, and his comprehension is baffled by the plethora of glaring details, each and every one of which is crying out for narrow inspection." "Our very houses," Voysey had written, "shout at us for attention." The compromise between unity and variety, even with the change from unity as form to unity as feeling, had collapsed, leaving variety the dominant aesthetic standard.

For some this development was not altogether undesirable. On the one hand, variety meant excitement, and, as we shall see shortly, Victorian art was calculated to stimulate thoughts and feelings by a restless, frenetic quality. On the other hand, whereas the unity of eighteenth-century works of art allowed the audience to comprehend them logically and instantly, the multiplicity and variety of Romantic art and Gothic architecture elicited in the audience a sense of wonder, which emotion was especially desirable in ecclesiastical buildings. Philip Webb wrote to Lethaby that "wonder is, I feel, an essential of Gothic. Indeed, I'm claiming it should be a primary essential; and only by the Gothic system of multiplication and disposition of parts can 'wonder' be gained. . . ." Many years before, Pugin had recognized the same causal relationship between multiplicity and wonder. Like Hogarth, Pugin saw that an important difference between Gothic architecture and classic was that "in pointed architecture the different details of the edifice are multiplied with the increased scale of the building: in classic architecture they are only magnified." Hogarth would not, of course, have said "only magnified," for he believed that this magnifica-
tion made for clarity and that the multiplication of ornament led to confusion. Pugin, however, anticipated Webb in thinking that the multiplication of ornament in Gothic architecture accounts for the sense of wonder and awe produced by buildings in that style. “One of the great arts of architecture,” Pugin wrote in *True Principles,* “is to render a building more vast and lofty in appearance than it is in reality.” The illusion of size and height, leading to wonderment, takes the place of a logical understanding of art and explains much about the aesthetic evolution from unity to variety. Why the illusion was more important than the fact we shall now see.

IV. ASSOCIATIONISM

The association of ideas is now generally asserted to be the only source of our perception of beauty. . . . ("On the Principles of Taste," 1821)

A second and more profound change in the concept of beauty was the transference of beauty from the object in nature or in art to the observer. The change had been set in motion by Locke and later exponents of the association of ideas, but it was not finally achieved until the end of the eighteenth century when Archibald Alison and others applied the associational theory directly to aesthetics. The basic premise of associational aesthetics is that beauty does not exist independently in objects of perception but only in the capability of those objects to excite the observer’s imagination and to put in motion a train of thought, which, then, is responsible for the creation of beauty. It is significant that Alison refers to the “emotion of beauty,” for the phrase suggests that beauty is subjective, dependent upon the observer’s response, rather than objectively inherent in the object itself. The major emendations of Alison to Locke’s theory are that the imagination is assigned the primary role in this perceptive process and that the ultimate effect is emotional. Alison’s most succinct expression of the theory appeared in *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790):

When any object, either of sublimity or beauty, is presented to the mind, I believe every man is conscious of a train of thought being immediately
awakened in his imagination, analogous to the character or expression of the original object. The simple perception of the object, we frequently find, is insufficient to excite these emotions, unless it is accompanied with this operation of mind; unless, according to common expression, our imagination is seized, and our fancy busied in the pursuit of all those trains of thought which are allied to this character of expression.

Thus, when we feel either the beauty or sublimity of natural scenery . . . we are conscious of a variety of images in our minds, very different from those which the objects themselves can present to the eye. Trains of pleasing or of solemn thought arise spontaneously within our minds; our hearts swell with emotions, of which the objects before us seem to afford no adequate cause. . . .

In accordance with this theory, Coleridge refers in “Dejection: An Ode” to the imagination as “This beautiful and beauty-making power”; Wordsworth in the second book of The Prelude comments that “An auxiliar light/Came from my mind, which on the setting sun/Bestowed new splendour”; and Shelley writes “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.”

Of course, the transference of beauty from object to subject was not total, and most Romantic writers recognized that the quality of beauty was partially inherent in the object and partially created by the observer’s imagination. Thus, Wordsworth writes in “Tintern Abbey” about “all the mighty world/Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,/And what perceive”; in “Mont Blanc” Shelley describes the reciprocal relationship between the “everlasting universe of things” and the human mind; and later in the century, Alexander (Greek) Thomson explicitly states the idea when he writes, “The pleasures which we derive from objects of sight derive partly from the association which they suggest, and partly from their own inherent beauty.”

Expressionism naturally develops out of this new concept of beauty based upon the association of ideas, for if the artist is to portray beauty, as it is his primary goal to do, he cannot simply depict nature directly since beauty only partially resides there, but must instead express the effect of nature on him since his response, through an imaginative association of ideas, completes the act of perception and the creation of beauty. In other words, if “an auxiliar light,” the imagination, bestows new
splendor on the setting sun, then Wordsworth must describe the sun not simply and objectively, but express his own imaginative response to the sun, at least if the total beauty of sunset is to be conveyed to the reader. Therefore, Wordsworth writes that “the appropriate business of poetry . . . her appropriate employment, her privilege and her duty, is to treat things not as they are, but as they appear: not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the senses, and to the passions” (“Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815”). As early as 1757 Edmund Burke had anticipated this expressive approach to art when he declared in his Enquiry that the purpose of poetry is “to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves” (5.5). In the Victorian era John Stuart Mill stated that “descriptive poetry consists, no doubt, in description, but in description of things as they appear, not as they are; and it paints them not in their bare and natural lineaments, but seen through the medium and arrayed in the colours of the imagination set in action by the feelings” (“Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties,” 1833). Two years later Alexander Smith wrote an article for Blackwood’s Magazine in which he made this distinction between poetry and prose: “Prose is the language of intelligence, poetry of emotion. In prose, we communicate our knowledge of the objects of sense or thought—in poetry, we express how these objects affect us” (“The Philosophy of Poetry”).

What all of these writers have in mind when they speak of the effect of objects on the observer is the association of ideas stimulated by the object; that is to say, personal memories and feelings associated with the object and with each other. In Alexander Smith’s words, “The mind [of the poet], anxious to convey not the truth or fact with regard to the object of its contemplation, but its own feelings as excited by the object, pours forth the stream of its associations as they rise from their source” (“The Philosophy of Poetry”). Moreover, not only does the poet present the ultimate feeling produced by the train of thought, but also the very process that creates the feeling.
Therefore, "Kubla Khan" and many other Romantic poems portray the creative act itself, and Wordsworth says that the object of the poems in *Lyrical Ballads* is to take common incidents and situations, and

> to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. ("Preface," 2d ed., 1800)

This Romantic approach to art was directly opposed to objective realism, as indeed were eighteenth-century aesthetics, for the purpose of art was to present a subjective distortion of empirical reality rather than an objective, direct impression of it. At first there was no attempt to reconcile the artistic results of an imaginative association of ideas with truthfulness, pleasure being derived from sources admittedly magical and illusory. Bishop Hurd wrote, for example, that this type of poetry appeals "solely or principally to the Imagination; a young and credulous faculty, which loves to admire and to be deceived . . ." (*Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 1762). Later, however, as expressive art became something more than a novel plaything and began to require the aesthetic sanction of truthfulness, so dominant a value in neoclassic art criticism, some compromise was necessary if the new art was to gain acceptance. Keats struggled with the problem and never did resolve it, but others did by dividing truth into perceptual and conceptual, phenomenal and noumenal, physical and spiritual, rational and imaginative. Referring perhaps to the Platonic concept of the poet, Macaulay declared that "truth, indeed, is essential to poetry; but it is the truth of madness" ("Milton," 1825). The Romantics went beyond this division, moreover, to assert that the truth of the imagination was superior to that of sensory cognition, and even so far, as with Shelley, to maintain that it was the only reality, this world being but a dream. Art based on visionary truth, therefore, grew to claim not merely acceptance but superiority over more earthbound works, and
so it is that in his Memoir Hallam Tennyson recalls his father saying, "Poetry is truer than fact."

Because of its special nature, architecture has seemingly little to do with the subject we have just been discussing. In poetry Wordsworth can show how his imagination bestowed new splendor on the setting sun, and in The Fighting Téméraire Turner can do the same with paint. But how is the architect to do in stone what they accomplish in words and oil, and if he cannot, then how is the association of ideas pertinent to architecture at all? The answer is that the new mode of perceiving beauty was adopted by those who appreciated art as well as by those who created it, and that the same relationship as existed between nature and the artist obtained between the work of art and the audience. Consequently, although the architect does not build as the poet writes or as the painter draws, the beauty of his buildings depends upon the active, imaginative participation of the observer even as the beauty of poetry and painting depends on it and even as the beauty of nature requires the sensitive response of the artist. 36 We are, therefore, concerned here with the effect of buildings on those who see them, for our present subject is, after all, the relationship between art and the audience—pragmatism, that is, not the expressive theory dealing with the relationship between art and the artist.

A building can as successfully arouse the imagination to assemble thoughts and feelings leading to the emotion of beauty as any picture or poem or carving or song, and it is in this capability to affect the imagination that the beauty of architecture depends upon the association of ideas. Therefore, as a stimulus to the imagination, architecture shares in common the purpose of the other arts. Coleridge wrote in Lectures on Shakespeare that "the power of poetry is, by a single word, perhaps, to instill energy into the mind, which compels the imagination to produce the picture." Reynolds said in "Discourse IV" that the end of painting "is to strike the imagination," and later in "Discourse XIII" commented that one principle architecture shares with poetry and painting "is that of affecting the imagination by means of association of ideas."
This way of looking at architecture—regarding it and evaluating it not so much as what in itself it was but as how successfully it could arouse feelings by setting in motion a train of ideas—ran concurrently with Romanticism through the nineteenth century. One of the first things Ruskin ever said about architecture was that it is, or ought to be, a science of feeling more than of rule, a ministry to the mind, more than to the eye. If we consider how much less the beauty and majesty of a building depend upon its pleasing certain prejudices of the eye, than upon its rousing certain trains of meditation in the mind, it will show in a moment how many intricate questions of feeling are involved in the raising of an edifice.

Later Edward Burne-Jones provided an example of how the theory operated in practice when he described his impression of an ancient pile:

I have just come in from my terminal pilgrimage to Godstowe ruins and the burial place of Fair Rosamond. . . . In my mind pictures of the old days, the abbey, and long processions of the faithful, banners of the cross, cope and crosiers, gay knights and ladies by the river bank, hawking-parties and all the pageantry of the golden age—it made me feel so wild and mad I had to throw stones into the water to break the dream. I never remember having such an unutterable ecstasy, it was quite painful with intensity, as if my forehead would burst. (Georgiana Burne-Jones, Memoirs of Edward Burne-Jones)

There is not a word describing the abbey itself; instead Burne-Jones describes the associated images aroused in his mind by the building, and it is these, not the actual ruins, that produce the feeling of ecstasy.

The imaginative association of ideas described by Burne-Jones required certain things both on the part of the observer and on the part of the object. On the one hand, the observer’s mind must be properly disposed to receive sense impressions and to allow the imagination free rein. But this state of mind is impossible when the observer attempts to analyze the object critically. Thus, Alison points out in Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste that no feeling of beauty is possible when one analyzes the individual parts of a composition:
When we sit down to appreciate the value of a poem or of a painting, and attend minutely to the language or composition of the one, or to the coloring or design of the other, we feel no longer the delight which they at first produce. Our imagination in this employment is restrained, and instead of yielding to its suggestions, we studiously endeavor to resist them, by fixing our attention upon minute and partial circumstances of the composition. 

Wordsworth had written in “The Tables Turned” that “Our meddling intellect/Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:/We murder to dissect.” Macaulay said in his essay on Milton that “analysis is not the business of the poet. His office is to portray, not to dissect.” We have already seen how analytical reason stood opposed generally to art as a hindrance to its natural and spontaneous development. We now see that it was considered inimical to the appreciation of art by thwarting the imaginative association of ideas and thereby destroying beauty. Benjamin Robert Haydon recalled in his Autobiography the “Immortal Dinner” in December 1817 when Charles Lamb and Keats agreed that Newton “had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colours.” Keats later treated the subject poetically through the destruction of Lamia by the philosophic stare of Apollonius. Analysis and dissection could be just as destructive of architectural beauty, for, as John Sedding observed, to approach architecture scientifically as if one were an archaeologist or geologist is “ruthless or disastrous to the work upon its poetic side, for it strips it of wonder.”

A great deal of Romantic poetry describes the attempt to circumvent or somehow to render passive the analytic reason so that the imagination might be free to create beauty, and just as surely these poems record the ultimate failure to maintain that freedom because of the inevitable intrusion of reason. There exists in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Our Old Home an architectural parallel to the visions recounted in such poems as “Kubla Khan” and “Ode to a Nightingale,” and to the mood described by Alison. When first Hawthorne saw Lichfield Cathedral, the edifice appeared to be “the most wonderful work which mortal man has yet achieved,” and he felt drawn “into is harmony”
while it "whispered deeply of immortality." This initial response of wonder, spiritual union, and immortality approaches very near a mystical vision. However, just as Coleridge wakes from his dream of Xanadu and is interrupted by the infamous man from Porlock, so does Hawthorne's momentary vision fade, giving way to a minute and unappreciative analysis of individual features of the building:

If the truth must be told, my ill-trained enthusiasm soon flagged, and I began to lose the vision of a spiritual or ideal edifice behind the time-worn and weather-stained front of the actual structure. Whenever that is the case, it is most reverential to look another way; but the mood disposes one to minute investigation. . . .

Now in a critical frame of mind, Hawthorne notices niches empty of statues, statues corroded by time and climate, and a disappointingly small interior, enveloped in "monkish gloom." He learns from this experience

the folly of looking at noble objects in the wrong mood, and the absurdity of a new visitant pretending to hold any opinion whatever on such subjects, instead of surrendering himself to the old builder's influence with childlike simplicity.

A similar incident occurs shortly afterward when Hawthorne witnesses one of the services in the cathedral. Initially, his imagination conceives of the boy choristers as "a peculiar order of beings, created on purpose to hover between the roof and pavement of that dim, consecrated edifice, and illuminate it with divine melodies, reposing themselves, meanwhile, on the heavy grandeur of the organ-tones like cherubs on a golden cloud." This glimpse into heaven, however, is curtailed when one of the cherubs removes his surplice to reveal an ordinary lad in frock coat and provincial trousers. This little shock, Hawthorne confesses, "had a sinister effect in putting me at odds with the proper influences of the Cathedral, nor could I quite recover a suitable frame of mind during my stay there." The change in perception recalls the difference between Blake's "Holy Thursday" of Innocence and his "Holy Thursday" of Experience. The observer of architecture, like the per- cipient of anything, artistic or otherwise, must look through the
imaginative eyes of innocence, or "with childlike simplicity" to use Hawthorne's phrase, if he is to feel the emotion of beauty.

Granted, then, that the observer approaches the object in the proper frame of mind, the object for its part must fulfill certain requirements, too, in order that the imagination be adequately inspired. Although both Wordsworth and Coleridge maintained that sensitive minds needed very little from the object by way of stimulation, less poetic imaginations depended on particular features in the object for the apprehension of beauty, and it so happened that Gothic architecture possessed these features to a far greater extent than did classical. This ability of buildings in the Gothic style to arouse the imaginations of nineteenth-century people goes a long way in explaining the popularity of the Gothic Revival.

One requirement of the object is its ability to elicit the sympathy of the observer, whether he be artist or audience. For his part the artist attempts to merge sympathetically with his characters, as Wordsworth says when he declares that the poet should try "to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs . . ." ("Preface," 2d ed. of Lyrical Ballads). It was Keats more than Wordsworth, though, who made this principle a cardinal rule of his poetic theory, and logically so since he was more dedicated to objective expressionism than the elder poet. Actually, Keats's concept is nearer to empathy and manifests itself in such familiar poems as "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn," where in listening to the bird the poet grows "too happy in thine happiness" and in viewing the urn he participates in the happiness of its figures. But sympathy is the connecting link between art and the audience, too, as "Ode on a Grecian Urn" makes clear, and the reader was expected to react to a poem emotionally by means of a similar sympathetic identification and so join the poet in feeling the beautiful. After stating that the object of poetry is to affect the emotions, John Stuart Mill goes on to say that poetry "is interesting only to those to whom it
recalls what they have felt, or whose imagination it stirs up to conceive what they could feel, or what they might have been able to feel had their outward circumstances been different” (“Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties”),

J. C. Loudon made the same point about responding to architecture when he wrote that “the imagination sees only in other things what it has first made its own by observation and memory.” Loudon used this point to argue that a person should learn as much as possible about architecture in order to appreciate it fully, but other writers were to argue from the same premise that to respond properly to ecclesiastical architecture conscientious study was unnecessary since the Christian observer already possessed a storehouse of information, and, as importantly, of feeling, awaiting only the architectural inspiration to rise in the heart and mind. The end purpose of this line of reasoning in the hands of Gothic advocates should easily be foreseen: Gothic is the only possible style for churches since only Gothic can evoke thoughts and sentiments proper to Christian worship and crucial to the feeling of beauty. Greek architecture may please the eye, but it can never arouse feelings since people no longer believe in the doctrines it embodies. For this reason, writes a contributor to *Arnold’s Magazine* in 1833, “If we were to erect a church upon the most perfect model of a Grecian temple, its architecture could never speak to our minds, that awe, that deep mystery, and overwhelming possession, which it spoke to the ancient Greek. . . . But in that which may with propriety be termed Christian architecture, how powerful and how sublime the association of thought. . . .” The argument was not, however, restricted in its application to churches, for Gothic was superior to classic in secular buildings also through its ability to evoke historical and patriotic feelings, as, indeed, is clear in Burne-Jones’s description of Godstowe ruins.

Another feature required of an object if the observer’s imagination is to be allowed free play for the creation of beauty is the contrary of perfection—either imperfection or incompleteness. Formerly, of course, perfection had been an attribute of
beauty. Uvedale Price adopts the neoclassic attitude when he says that organic beauty balances precariously on the cusp of immaturity and decay: "Each production of nature is most beautiful in that particular state, before which her work would have appeared incomplete and unfinished, and after which it would seem to be tending, however gradually, towards decay." When applied to architecture, this principle means that buildings in good repair are more beautiful than ruins, although Price admits that ruins are more picturesque. The reason behind the principle lies in the effect of perfection on the viewer, whose mind delights in completeness. In Owen Jones's words, "True beauty results from that repose which the mind feels when the eye, the intellect, and the affections are satisfied from the absence of any want."

By the time Jones wrote these words in 1856, however, most Victorians had come to demand of art incompleteness rather than perfection, unfulfillment rather than satiety, and excitement rather than repose. One can see the beginnings of this change of taste as early as Edmund Burke, who made infinity a necessary part of the sublime. Infinity, which is opposed to the finite completion of perfection, accounts for the pleasure one derives from the spring and from the young, since "the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense." Similarly, Burke finds that with "unfinished sketches of drawing, I have often seen something which pleased me beyond the best finishing . . ." (Philosophical Enquiry, 2.11). About twenty years later, Sir Joshua Reynolds agreed with Burke that sketches give free scope to the imagination. Speaking generally and not in the context of the sublime, Reynolds writes in "Discourse VIII" that

sketches, or such drawings as painters generally make for their works, give this pleasure of imagination to a high degree. From a slight undetermined drawing, where the ideas of the composition and character are, as I may say, only just touched upon, the imagination supplies more than the painter himself, probably, could produce; and we accordingly often find that the finished work disappoints the expectation that was raised from the sketch; and this power of the imagination is one of the causes of the great pleasure we have in viewing a collection of drawings by great painters.
In poetry a similar effect is achieved when the writer is suggestive rather than clearly explicit in his descriptions. Reynolds, in fact, draws an analogy between sketches and suggestive poetry when he attributes the beauty of Eve in Paradise Lost to Milton's use of "only general indistinct expressions, every reader making out the detail according to his own particular imagination,—his own idea of beauty, grace, expression, dignity, or loveliness . . ." ("Discourse VIII"). In the next century Macaulay, perhaps with Reynolds's words in mind, praised the suggestive quality of Milton's poetry as being the chief cause of its beauty. Also like Reynolds, Macaulay compares Milton's poetry with sketches:

The most striking characteristic of the poetry of Milton is the extreme remoteness of the associations by means of which it acts on the reader. Its effect is produced, not so much by what it expresses, as by what it suggests: not so much by the ideas which it directly conveys, as by other ideas which are connected with them. . . . The works of Milton cannot be comprehended or enjoyed, unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer. He does not paint a finished picture, or play for a mere passive listener. He sketches, and leaves others to fill up the outline. He strikes the key-note, and expects his hearer to make out the melody. ("Milton")

In addition to liberating the imagination of the audience by the technique of suggestion, the artist could reach a similar goal through his choice of an incomplete action, which would compel the imagination to furnish its own resolution. In other words, if the artist portrays a completed incident with a clearly fixed ending, there is no opportunity of an imaginative participation by the audience since the climax is distinctly visible for all to see. As Dr. Johnson was in the habit of saying to ensure that his was the last word on a subject, "There's an end on't." If, on the other hand, the artist stops short of carrying an action through to completion, then the audience's imagination is stirred to furnish its own resolution; and so there is an active participation in the perception of art. Lessing applied this principle in explaining the sigh of Laocoön. Since the painter and sculptor have but one moment to work with and since they must choose the moment that gives freest rein to the imagina-
tion, they must never portray the moment of climax; for "there is nothing beyond this, and to present the utmost to the eye is to bind the wings of fancy and compel it, since it cannot soar above the impression made on the senses, to concern itself with weaker images, shunning the visible fullness already represented as a limit beyond which it cannot go." The sculptor of Laocoön knew this and depicted only the sigh, allowing the viewer to imagine the cry for himself.

This principle explains why unheard melodies are sweeter than heard ones and why Keats's Cupid and Psyche, like the lovers on the urn, enjoy the divine bliss of anticipation, eternally and exquisitely poised on the verge of consummation:

They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love.

"Ode to Psyche"

Perhaps this principle accounts as well for so many of Tennyson's poems with unresolved endings, poems that Christopher Ricks has referred to as exercises in the "art of the penultimate." Furthermore, if Owen Jones is right in saying that perfection in art leaves the audience satisfied, then incompleteness produces the opposite effect by arousing and stimulating, and thus the audience is made to share the delicious unfulfillment of Cupid and Psyche or of the countless other figures in nineteenth-century poetry who, "yearning in desire," embark on the Romantic quest. Thus does Tennyson's Ulysses, no more content than Achilles with the prospect of a long and easeful life of repose, call his mariners for one last exploit; and thus do readers of this and other poems, left with an indeterminate conclusion, imaginatively share the adventure with them.

The application of the principle of incompleteness to architecture is apparent with ruins, but perhaps less so with preserved buildings. In part the application is to the form of
Gothic, which, like Romantic organicism, is a matter of flux, always becoming and therefore always incomplete. "The Greek idea of perfection," according to Coventry Patmore, "demanded that its limits should everywhere be seen. Now, the perfection of modern art, as we find it in Gothic architecture . . . consists in its unlimited and illimitable character." In other words, the illimitable character of Gothic suggests the kind of infinity Burke had in mind for sketches. Surely the great span of years required to build the large cathedrals, during which designs changed and portions were left undone, contributed to this characteristic of Gothic. Also, old houses in the Gothic style were added on to by successive generations and were, in fact, constantly changing, either away from original completion or toward future perfection, however one might view them. Neoclassic architecture, on the other hand, was not old enough for ruins or many additions and could not compete with Gothic on these grounds even if its principles of design were not based on symmetry.

In addition to form, Gothic architecture suited the new taste better than classic in execution, where the value of incompleteness is more fittingly described as imperfection. Ruskin had advocated imperfection of workmanship because of religion and morality. For these reasons he approved of Gothic architecture, disapproved of Egyptian and Renaissance, and opposed the use of machine-made ornaments. There was, however, a purely aesthetic reason for imperfect execution in that work which imperfectly realized an ideal concept, like work which incompletely realized it, suggests the infinite and allows the observer to participate imaginatively in the creation of beauty. This is the reasoning behind Baillie Scott's opposition to what he calls the "mechanical ideal" in buildings, which he defines as making "all surfaces smooth and all lines mathematically straight." The problem with mechanical perfection as an ideal, Scott says, "is that it is an 'ideal' which may be realised—the only goal worth striving for in art is that which can never be reached. In trying instead to express character, our work will
become full of suggestions of the infinite rather than statements of the finite."\(^{47}\)

In execution as in form, Gothic architecture is obviously less finished than classic and was therefore able to gain popularity on the strength of this curious and paradoxical change in taste whereby the incomplete and imperfect were more esteemed than the complete and polished. Browning's Andrea del Sarto, whose fault lies in his faultlessness, becomes entrapped in this paradox, as do the proponents of Grecian architecture, at least in the eyes of their Gothic antagonists. Ten years before Browning's poem, the *Ecclesiologist* provided the following architectural precedent of the "doctrine of the imperfect":

> It is clear that to satisfy the mind, any object presented to it ought to be infinite. It should stimulate the imagination; should give room for a play of thought and exercise of active reason; there should be scope for ranging into newly discovered fields of invention,—for achieving something ourselves, not merely observing what has been achieved by others. The spectator should be made to take part in the work of creation.

This is as neat a summary of the associative doctrine with which we are presently concerned as one is likely to find. But the writer goes on to tell why Grecian architecture furnishes less pleasure, according to the doctrine, than does Gothic. Grecian art is finite, exact, complete, allowing no imaginative play, whereas Gothic is infinite, inexact, incomplete, encouraging the active participation of the observer. The writer concludes with the paradox "Gothic architecture, therefore, to be perfect, must be imperfect; to be complete, it must have something to desiderate."\(^{48}\)

Related to the change of aesthetic values from perfection to imperfection is the shift from clarity to obscurity. The relationship between the two is that the indeterminate, like the incomplete or the imperfect, is limitless, suggestive of infinity. Furthermore, the indefinite becomes a positive aesthetic value through its association with the sublime just as incompleteness had. Obscurity not only produces the terror necessary to the sublime, Burke says, but also is important because
hardly any thing can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing. A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea. (Philosophical Enquiry, 2. 4).

As infinity ceased to be an exclusive property of sublimity and became a requisite of all art and all art subjects generally, obscurity similarly became a universal aesthetic value. Wordsworth comments in his preface to the 1815 edition of Poems that the imagination "recoils from everything but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite." Had, for example, Wordsworth understood Gaelic and been able to interpret the song of the Solitary Reaper, he could not have speculated imaginatively on the universality of the song. Because, however, the meaning of the song was obscure, he carries the music in his heart "long after it was heard no more." Reason feeds on clarity, imagination on uncertainty—such is the distinction Coleridge draws in an 1811 lecture entitled "The Grandest Efforts of Poetry": "As soon as it [the mind] is fixed on one image, it becomes understanding; but while it is unfixed and wavering between them, attaching itself permanently to none, it is imagination." Like Reynolds before him and Macaulay after him, Coleridge furnishes a quotation from Milton to illustrate his point about the value of suggestiveness.

In power of suggestiveness architecture and music rise above the other art forms, for, as J. M. Capes remarked in 1867, these two alone possess "no verbal language for expressing the definite emotions and actions of mankind, or the material phenomena of the universe." What might seem to be a handicap, however, is in fact an advantage since "it is through this very indefiniteness of the language of music and architecture that the two arts are able to kindle emotions and suggest currents of thought which are all their own. They ask more from those who are affected by them than is asked by the poet, the sculptor, and the painter; but in return they permit a far wider liberty of feeling and conception than is allowed by their rivals and sisters." This suggestive power of architecture and music, Capes concludes, is their strength and peculiar charm.
A second application of the principle of obscurity to architecture is by means of interior light. Neoclassic windows are clear, admitting as much light as possible. The brightness of the rooms is further enhanced by the reflection of light on flat walls and ceilings that are generally whitewashed, or at least painted in light colors. Gothic windows, on the other hand, are stained, the walls are broken with niches and ornaments, and the dark stone and wood are left unpainted. I am thinking principally of churches, but the same distinction applies to domestic and public buildings. In fact, Palmerston turned the Gothicist argument against Scott in the debate over the style for the Foreign Office by saying that Gothic was not best suited for the English climate because it admitted so little light in a country that was dreary to begin with. What was needed instead was a style that would take advantage of what little light there was.

Palmerston, however, was taking a hardheaded, utilitarian approach to the matter and was not in the least concerned with the building’s poetic side. But for those who were more interested in buildings for the effect they created than for their functional value, Gothic answered very nicely for the creation of a dim atmosphere so conducive to an active imagination. Burke had written that “all edifices calculated to produce an idea of the sublime, ought rather to be dark and gloomy . . .” (Philosophical Enquiry, 2. 15). William Beckford knew this and so arranged to show off Fonthill Abbey to his guests, Lord Nelson and the Hamiltons among them, in the darkness of night. Churchmen knew this, too, and so built Gothic and neo-Gothic churches to inculcate in the worshipers a sense of the mysterious and awesome sublimity of God. James Fergusson explained the connection between darkness, imagination, and religious awe in churches when he made these comments in reference to Butterfield’s All Saints’ in Margaret Street:

It has to be observed that one of the primary principles in this extreme kind of ecclesiastical architecture seems to be the coercive production of the “dim religious light” of the poet. Internally, at least, the express exclusion of common worldly daylight—which has been a rule from the earliest ages to the latest whenever mystery had to be cultivated—contributes so greatly to the creation of a feeling of awe that it becomes a direct and
leading historical element in Art. It may be suggested that one chief difference between the forms of worship of the Romanists and those of the Protestants (until lately) is that in the one case the light of day is intentionally shut out, and in the other intentionally let in. In the one case, accordingly, the exercise of the imagination is encouraged, in the other it is restrained.

Although Fergusson acknowledges the effect of darkness in churches, he is too fundamentally opposed to Gothic architecture to allow himself to praise Butterfield’s church. He concludes, therefore, that the gloom of All Saints’ is overdone and that the church’s merits “are generally voted to be, at the best, needlessly lugubrious.”

Another change in taste relative to the principle of allowing the imagination free play was the growing preference for distant objects over immediate ones. Ruskin advised viewing Westminster Abbey from Highgate Hill, and in the preceding century Arthur Young had recommended looking at ruins from a distance because “the imagination has a free space to range in, and sketches ruins in idea far beyond the broadest strokes of reality” (A Six Months Tour through the North of England, 1770). William Hazlitt, who dealt with the subject directly in the essay “Why Distant Objects Please,” points up the similarity between obscurity and distance: “Whatever is placed beyond the reach of sense and knowledge, whatever is imperfectly discerned, the fancy pieces out at its leisure. . . .” As Hazlitt goes on to remark, distance of time has a similar effect as distance of space; and when Thomas Campbell wrote his well-known line “‘tis distance lends enchantment to the view” (The Pleasures of Hope, 1799), he was using a spatial analogy to describe a temporal phenomenon. Since it was a far easier matter to contemplate the antiquity of Westminster Abbey than to rise before dawn and view it from Highgate Hill, temporal distance was the preferred mode of perception for buildings; and here again the Gothic style held an advantage over the Grecian, for the only examples of classical architecture in northern Europe had been erected since the Renaissance and were far less old than Gothic piles. In The Genius of Christianity (1802), Chateaubriand remarked how a Gothic church was capable of calling to
mind such vivid images of medieval life that "Ancient France seemed to revive altogether. . . ." The key ingredient is age, for "the more remote were these times the more magical they appeared. . . ." Revived Grecian temples, on the other hand, cannot stir these reveries because "there is nothing marvellous in a temple whose erection we have witnessed, whose echoes and whose domes were formed before our eyes." This release of the imagination affords yet another explanation of the nineteenth-century phenomenon that Tennyson called the "passion of the past."

Up till now we have been examining those features in an object of perception that allow the viewer to participate actively in the creation of beauty through an association of ideas. Whether the object is imperfect, incomplete, dark, or far off, its infinitude gives range for imaginative wanderings, unlike neoclassic art, where the contrary qualities clearly define boundaries and leave little scope for speculation. Neoclassic art attempts through its perfection to satisfy the reader or viewer and thereby bring forth a feeling of repose. Romantic art, and Gothic architecture, deliberately withhold the fullness of perfection so that the insatiate audience is enticed to complete the process on its own, and instead of creating a sense of repose, agitates the audience with desire. In "The Nature of Gothic," Ruskin listed "Changefulness" as the second most important characteristic of Gothic architecture, and described it thus:

It is that strange disquietude of the Gothic spirit that is its greatness; that restlessness of the dreaming mind, that wanders hither and thither among the niches, and flickers feverishly around the pinnacles, and frets and fades in labyrinthine knots and shadows along wall and roof, and yet is not satisfied, nor shall be satisfied.51

Ruskin ascribes this characteristic of Gothic to variety, but certainly the infinitude of imperfection, incompleteness, darkness, and distance are responsible as well. In addition, there are other features of Gothic architecture that produce an emotional reaction of restlessness rather than of repose and that, lacking the specific purpose of liberating the imagination, seem calculated simply to arouse. But these, too, have a part to play
in the association of ideas, for they arouse feelings into a state of excitement conducive to imaginative activity. These features are angles, vertical lines, color, and profuse ornamentation. The eighteenth century had a decided preference for curves over sharp angles as features of beauty, and Hogarth's "Line of Beauty" is the most famous example of this taste, although Thomas Jefferson's serpentine wall at the University of Virginia and John Nash's serpentine lake in St. James's Park are well known also. Burke acknowledged his indebtedness to Hogarth in proposing "gradual variation" as an element of beauty, and went on to add, "I do not find any natural object which is angular, and at the same time beautiful. Indeed few natural objects are entirely angular. But I think those which approach the most nearly to it, are the ugliest" (Philosophical Enquiry, 3. 15). Sir Uvedale Price and Archibald Alison agreed that "insensible transitions," as they called them, were essential to beauty; but, unlike Burke, they had a new and more acceptable category for angular objects—the picturesque. Just, then, as irregularity became a respectable aesthetic value by means of picturesque theory, so did angularity; and just as picturesque scenery excited rather than soothed the viewer, so did this particular feature of it have the same effect. Edward Lacy Garbett remarked that angles present contrasts, whereas curves owe their beauty to gradation. Furthermore, "Of these two qualities, contrast is certainly that calculated to excite; and gradation, that calculated to soothe."\(^5\) Gothic architecture, which had risen to popularity along with the picturesque and which shares so many features with the theory, excited viewers with its sharp, acute angles and thus satisfied the growing taste for emotional stimulation.

Angles, along with the vertical lines necessary to their acuteness, were also opposed to horizontal lines, the trademark of classical architecture. As Garbett pointed out, with Gothic the vertical lines are continuous and the horizontal lines are broken, whereas with Greek buildings the pattern is reversed with continuous horizontal lines and broken vertical ones.\(^5\) The horizontal character of classical architecture determined
by these lines elicits a feeling of calm and repose, whereas the verticality of Gothic arouses and excites. Of all writers who made this distinction, Voysey best expressed it when he likened the effect of sharp angles to the movement of lightning and to crooked or cranky people who “show a want of stability that is disturbing.” Horizontal lines, however, are prevalent in nature and express “the sweetest calm and repose.” The difference between vertical angles and horizontal lines is the difference between a stormy sea and a tranquil one. Unfortunately, from Voysey’s point of view, Victorian house-builders had ignored this principle, for “most of our houses resemble the forms of storms. Hardly anywhere do we see houses standing peacefully as if to stay and calm you by their reposefulness.”

This tumultuous effect is created, according to Voysey, not only by their angularity but also by the “infinite number of differently coloured materials and textures” of which the houses are composed. Neoclassic architects had neither painted buildings nor used constructional polychromy because they believed that the Greeks and Romans had not done so. But at the beginning of Victoria’s reign, it was discovered that the ancients had in fact used paint, on statues as well as buildings, and neo-Gothic architects availed themselves of the classical precedent. Butterfield is best known for his use of color, although unfortunately by the derisive remarks of journalists, who compared the walls of Balliol College Chapel to “slices of streaky bacon” and who described the style of Keble College as “holy zebra.” Furthermore, writers pointed out that the effect of Butterfield’s use of color, like that of angles and vertical lines, is restlessness, the R.I.B.A. Journal commenting, for example, that the interior of Keble College Chapel “is racked by restlessness...”

In discussing ornaments, Sir Joshua Reynolds had declared that “nothing will contribute more to destroy repose than profusion, of whatever kind, whether it consists in the multiplicity of objects, or the variety and brightness of colours” (“Discourse VIII”). By this standard there is nothing more destructive of repose than the Gothic style and Victorian art in general.
Voysey believed that "lavish ornament is like a drug, the dose requires increasing as it loses its effect." Ruskin, on the other hand, in defending the use of elaborate details in Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, had stated that attention to minute details is characteristic of a feverish and excited mind, a psychological proposition seemingly verified by the paintings of Richard Dadd. Whether the products of such minds or not, ornaments in abundance are the cause of similar mental states. As T. G. Jackson commented, a building with a profusion of ornaments and irregularities "has no repose. . . . Everything about it is 'busy'; it fidgets one to look at it; nothing seems at rest." It may be, as Voysey said, that the Victorian public reacted less sensitively to abundant ornament because it had become inured to it, but I rather suspect that the Victorians had come to crave excitement from art and to value it above repose.

V. COOPERATIVE AESTHETICS

You feel him to be a poet, inasmuch as, for a time, he has made you one—an active creative being. (S. T. Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*)

It is no accident that these features of Gothic architecture should excite the viewer into a state approaching the creative passion of the artist, for the whole tendency of Romantic art is to draw the audience as an active participant into the act of artistic creation. The underlying principle of associative aesthetics—that beauty lies largely in the percipient's mind—requires that the artist work suggestively, indeterminately, for the very purpose of allowing his audience to complete imaginatively the building, or painting, or poem and so to become, as it were, collaborators in bringing forth artistic beauty. Macaulay had written that one cannot enjoy the works of Milton "unless the mind of the reader co-operate with that of the writer." The *Ecclesiologist* commented that in any work of art "the spectator should be made to take part in the work of creation." And George Wightwick, in *The Palace of Architecture*, elevated the observer to the level of the artist when he wrote,

A spectator of this happy class, when contemplating a noble piece of Architecture, becomes his own poet; unites himself with it in the bond of a perfect
reciprocity; elevates it on the "vantage hill' of his own imagination; and there beholds it with all the rapture of an eager recipient.  

I remarked earlier that the relationship between an artist and nature is comparable to the relationship between the audience and a work of art in that nature inspires the artist's imaginative association of ideas even as his work of art inspires the audience's. We may now take the parallel further by saying that the relationship between an artist and God, the creator of nature, is similar to the relationship between the audience and the artist, the creator of art, in that the artist and God join imaginatively in the creation of natural beauty even as the audience and the artist join imaginatively in the creation of artistic beauty. Thus, the artist approaches divinity, since divine power, in Wordsworth's words, "is the express/Resemblance of that glorious faculty/That higher minds bear with them as their own" (The Prelude, bk. 14). In like manner the spectator of architecture "becomes his own poet," or, to use Wilde's phrase, the critic becomes an artist.  

The chief prerequisite of impressionistic criticism is that the critic be able to respond sensitively to art, just as this is the main requirement of the artist, who must respond to nature. Pater wrote in his preface to The Renaissance that the critic should have "a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects." Wilde repeated this in "The Critic as Artist" (1891), the most cogent statement of this theory of criticism, and proceeded to draw another parallel between artist and critic, which is that since both have sensitive temperaments they require very little stimulation. Gilbert, Wilde's spokesman in the dialogue, tells the naïve Ernest that "the critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticises as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. He does not even require for the perfection of his art the finest materials. Anything will serve his purpose." Wordsworth had indeed said that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants" ("Preface," 2d ed. of Lyrical Ballads), and had shown
in many poems how his own imagination had been aroused by the most trivial of things. The effect of Wilde's theory obviously is to lessen in value the work of art, which is important only insofar as it stimulates the imagination of the critic. The theory, furthermore, proceeds very naturally from associative aesthetics, which transfers beauty from the object to the observer, and we find an early version of it in Alexander Smith's remark that many imaginative readers "find any poetry exquisite, however destitute of meaning, which merely suggests ideas or images that may serve as the germs of fancy in their own minds" ("The Philosophy of Poetry," 1835). All poetry or any kind of art need do, then, is provide a "germ of fancy"—nothing more—and the audience supplies the rest. To return to Wilde, Gilbert says that criticism

treats the work of art simply as a starting-point for a new creation. It does not confine itself...to discovering the real intention of the artist and accepting that as final. And in this it is right, for the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it. Nay, it is rather the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings, and makes it marvellous for us.

A second result of Wilde's theory, implicit in the above passage, counteracts an effect of expressionism by diminishing the importance of the artist, whose role is usurped by the critic and whose intentions matter less than the artistic response of the critic. For Gilbert, therefore, Ruskin's response to Turner and Pater's response to Leonardo are as valuable and beautiful as the feelings and ideas of the painters themselves. The critic becomes an artist, Leonardo's *La Gioconda* becomes for Pater "older than the rocks among which she sits," Turner's *The Fighting Téméraire* becomes for Ruskin "that broad bow that struck the surf aside, enlarging silently in steadfast haste, full front to the shot—resistless and without reply," and St. Mark's in Venice becomes for all as once for Ruskin "a vision out of the earth...a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light..."

Whistler, for one, recognized the dangers inherent in art
appreciation of the sort advocated by Wilde, rightfully fearing the abolition of all values of aesthetic judgment. In its extreme form the system asks only whether art stimulates the audience, and because the sensitive critic requires so little stimulation, even this question becomes unnecessary. Since all art capable of providing the germ for imaginative associations, which is to say practically all art, is worthwhile, there is no way of separating the good from the bad, and Beethoven’s symphonies are on a level with “Yankee Doodle.” Whistler’s opinion, as he states it in “The Red Rag,” is that “art should be independent of all clap-trap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye and ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like.”

Some years later Irving Babbitt addressed the same problem in The New Laokoon, where he quotes as an illustration of this tendency toward leveling of the arts Gerard de Nerval’s “Fantaisie”:

Il est un air pour qui je donnerais
Tout Rossini, tout Mozart, tout Weber,
Un air très vieux, languissant et funèbre,
Qui pour moi seul a des charmes secrets.

Or, chaque fois que je viens à l’entendre,
De deux cents ans mon âme rajeunit;
C’est sous Louis treize . . . et je crois voir s’étendre
Un coteau vert que le couchant jaunit.

The poem continues on to describe other fanciful associations inspired by the tune, which because of its associative power is worth all the works of Rossini, Mozart, and Weber. One need not agree wholly with Babbitt that this kind of attitude is responsible for chaos in artistic judgments to admit that the threat, at least, is there.

We are dealing here, however, with a tendency that develops late in the Victorian era and that is not immediately applicable to the contemporary appreciation of Gothic architecture. But if the fully developed theory does not apply, the earlier form of it does, and it is very important for an understanding of the popularity of the Revival to remember the attitude with which
the Victorians approached architecture as well as the other arts. It is easy to forget in this analytical age of ours that the associations of a building or other work of art were perhaps more important to them as an element of beauty than any inherent properties in the work itself, and if one forgets this and insists on regarding Victorian art objectively, failing to participate imaginatively in the artistic process, he will fail to appreciate it and to understand the appeal it had as surely as, according to Macaulay, one fails to appreciate Milton who does not cooperate with the author.

There is a plate in Max Beerbohm's little book of pictures, *Rossetti and His Circle*, in which Benjamin Jowett is observing Rossetti paint a mural in the Oxford Union during the "Jovial Campaign." As he stands before the painting, rotund and professorial, Jowett asks the painter, "And what were they going to do with the Grail when they found it, Mr. Rossetti?" It is, of course, the wrong question, for not only did the Grail have no practical purpose but it was never really meant to be found. The quest was all—the reach that exceeded the grasp—for though the holy cup might never be discovered, heroic deeds, challenging boons, beautiful ladies were encountered along the way, all making the search worthwhile. So, too, with art. The imaginative quest for truth might never be realized as one struggled to apprehend the mysteries of nature or the wonder of a Gothic cathedral, but the fanciful images magically associated by the mind in its endeavor to do so brought joy to the beholder and made a beauty of their own. If we, like Jowett, ask the wrong, logical question, beauty will evaporate before us; but if, like Burne-Jones, we surrender to the spells of our imaginations, we too may glimpse "banners of the cross, copes and crosiers, gay knights and ladies by the river bank, hawking-parties and all the pageantry of the golden age," and come to understand what so many Victorians saw in Gothic art.