

**Allan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment*.
Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1980.
288 pp., 424 illus., \$55.00**

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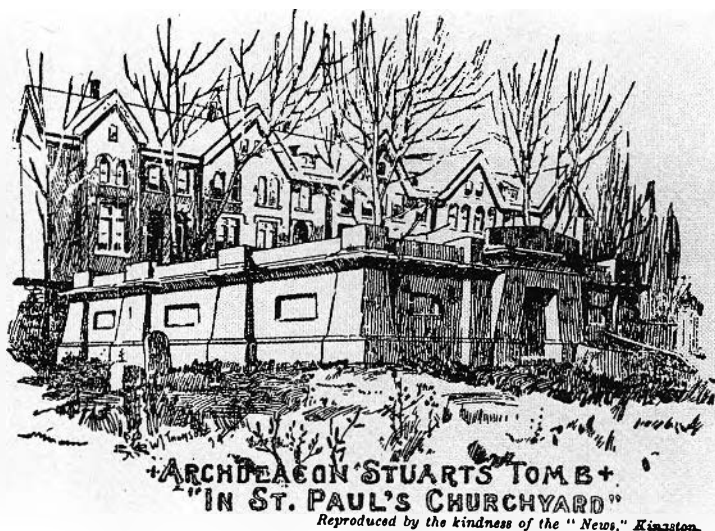


FIGURE 6. Monument to Archdeacon G.O. Stuart, Kingston, perhaps ca. 1841-44.

'magnificent but somewhat sinister,' used it as a cover illustration for his *Staffordshire*. Two years after the completion of the Trentham Park Mausoleum Thomas Harrison of Chester designed and built a large Egyptian Revival monument on the summit of Moel Famau, North Wales, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of George III. This monument was badly damaged by a storm in 1862. Yet as late as 1887 plans were made to rebuild it in honour of Victoria's Golden Jubilee. (See *Country Life*, 16 June 1977, p. 1670.)

Neither the Trentham Park Mausoleum nor the Moel Famau Monument is noticed by Carrott. These and the other omissions suggest that he has not really cast his net quite widely enough, that a full account of Egyptian Revival monuments has yet to be made, and consequently that the statements quoted here in the first paragraph are questionable.

But the above reservations should not detract from the very real merits of this book. Carrott writes with enthusiasm and wit, and has a great love for his subject. He tells us, incidentally, that although his book began as a dissertation it 'did *not* grow out of a seminar' (*italics mine*).

What Carrott is really concerned about is the 'serious' Egyptian Revival monuments built in the United States in the pre-Civil War period. He rightly excludes as 'Commercial Picturesque' buildings

such as Mrs. Trollope's 1829 shop and tea room with its Egyptian columns which was erected across the river from Hygeia in Cincinnati: 'the purpose of the exotic style cannot have been for any more profound reason than to attract attention to Mrs. Trollope's Bazaar' (p. 56).

The meaningful Egyptian Revival in America is, to Carrott, that which called up funereal associations, because of the Renaissance tradition of obelisk memorials and pyramid tombs, or else the idea of Egypt as 'the Land of Wisdom and Mystery.' It was for this latter reason that the style could be, as he notes, 'applied to a wide range of structures such as those for a school, museum, or library; and even a medical college' (p. 133). But both notions evoked ideas of the Sublime and the Timeless, which were so much part of Romantic Classicism. Formally, the severe geometry of the Egyptian style also appealed to the period. All of this complex iconography is lucidly explained by Carrott.

The author sees the major Egyptian Revival buildings in America as courthouses and prisons, and indeed he devotes a long appendix to the greatest of these, New York City's Halls of Justice and House of Detention (better known as the 'Tombs') designed by John Haviland, 1835-38. 'Here,' as he says, 'the style became the symbol for humane rectification and human regeneration. If the mode was first

employed for practical reasons of economy (*vis-à-vis* Gothic), it soon became symbolic of the new enlightened prison discipline. To mark the new attitude it was necessary to use a style other than the old Gothic one reminiscent of dungeons and oppressive gaolers' (p. 134).

Carrott believes that the serious Egyptian Revival style ended in America towards the middle of the nineteenth century. There were various reasons:

... unfunctional aspects such as the problems of fenestration in a windowless architecture, flat roofs in a climate anything but torrid, and the weathering of battered walls. But most of all the propagandizing of Pugin, Ruskin, and the Camden Society, along with the general religious revival betokened by the rise of Methodism turned popular taste against the heathen associations of Greece, Rome, and Egypt. For the Egyptian style there were no deep cultural values germane to the American sociological psyche; *vis-à-vis* Gothic, which evoked an entire religious tradition, or Classical Antiquity, which called forth a vital political heritage. (p. 136)

One might add that the work of scientists in destroying the old Ussher chronology concerning the age of the world must also have had its effect. When one believes (as most people did until the middle of the nineteenth century) that the world was created in 4,004 B.C., then architecture like that of Egypt might literally seem 'eternal,' and evoke the requisite emotions. But it is difficult to sustain such feelings when you come to believe that the earth is millions of years old.

In conclusion, one should note that Carrott's book is handsomely produced, and lavishly illustrated. It is also very modestly priced.

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ALLAN BRAHAM *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1980. 288 pp., 424 illus., \$55.00.

Allan Braham, Keeper and Deputy Director of the National Gallery, London, who collaborated with Peter Smith on *François Mansart* (London, 1973) and with Helmut Hager on *Carlo Fontana: The Drawings at Windsor Castle* (London,

1977; both published by Zwemmer), has now written on his own a superb if somewhat misleadingly titled study of French architecture from about 1730 to about 1800. As Professor Anthony Blunt has already noted in his review of the book in *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4030, 26 June 1980, p. 694, the work would be better entitled *The Architecture of the French Age of Enlightenment* as it is not solely concerned with the reflection in architecture of the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment. This minor shortcoming is compensated to some extent by the very last sentence in the book in which the author describes the architects as 'artists of the Enlightenment who responded with ... deep and varied sensitivity to the intellectual, aesthetic and social pressures of the time.' For the first time we are presented with a clear and balanced survey of the architecture of the period. Early-twentieth-century studies either stopped at the death of Louis xv in 1774 or practically ignored the works of Ledoux and Boullée. Of late, scholars, led by the pioneering publications of Emil Kaufmann, have tended to concentrate upon and emphasize the works of these so-called Revolutionary architects, and the resulting picture is as distorted as the earlier one. Braham has given us the work we have needed and been waiting for.

The book consists of four parts, each divided into chapters, preceded by an Introduction wherein the author weighs the appropriateness of various names proposed for the period – Neo-classicism, Romantic classicism, and late Baroque classicism. He seems to favour the last named of these and, throughout the book, convincingly argues that it best describes a period which in many ways, is a continuation of the Baroque, especially as the architecture under consideration is particularly indebted to French seventeenth-century architecture. The Introduction however, goes beyond mere terminology by placing French eighteenth-century architecture in an international setting. Braham's writing, here, constitutes a model of clarity.

The first of the four parts is devoted to J.-G. Soufflot and his contemporaries (ca. 1730 to ca. 1760). Braham's thorough and sympathetic treatment of this major

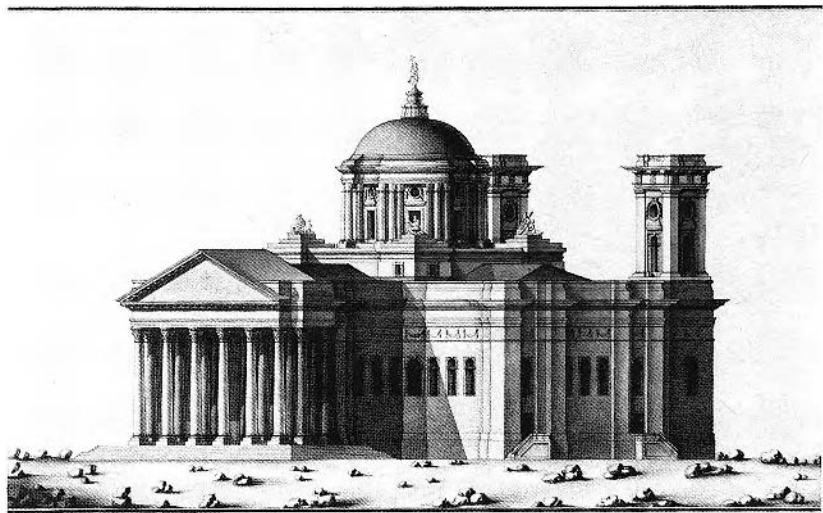


FIGURE 7. Soufflot, Project for Sainte-Geneviève, ca. 1757. Montréal, Collection Phyllis Lambert, on loan to the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

architect stands out by way of his ability to see architecture in terms of its historical context, including the social and intellectual milieu. He provides, for example, an excellent tableau of Rome in the 1730s when Soufflot was there, giving at the same time the only clear explanation this reader has seen of the working of the Académie d'architecture in the 1740s. Soufflot's major work Ste-Geneviève, later the Panthéon, occupied the architect for nearly twenty-five years, and Braham enables us to follow the numerous changes and modifications which occurred to the design.

Although the books is copiously illustrated, it was not possible for the author to include all the various changes in the plans for the church of Ste-Geneviève. One of the most interesting not shown or discussed is the oblique view of the project from the southwest (Fig. 7), one of three drawings pertaining to this edifice now in the Canadian Centre for Architecture/Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal. It may illustrate a stage in the project before that which was approved by the king in 1757 and engraved by Bellicart. In this seemingly earlier drawing, which I believe has been published only in the catalogue entitled *Exhibition of French Drawings: Neo-Classicism* (Heim Gallery, London, 20 February–27 March 1975), no. 114. The east end towers are shown although they were omitted in the later approved design;

similar towers were actually erected in 1769 but were later removed by Quatremère de Quincy when the windows were blocked up as part of the church's conversion to the Panthéon.

Soufflot is the outstanding figure in Part I, but other major architects, such as A.-J. Gabriel and J.-F. Blondel and the theorist Laugier, also receive considerable attention. Various topics and themes are covered, such as church architecture, engineering (which is to be expected of Braham after his excellent article in the Piranesi colloque volume), English-style gardens, archaeology, and the 'goût grec.' The last two of these are surprisingly brief considering their importance for eighteenth-century architecture and decoration. Perhaps the author felt that they have been treated adequately elsewhere, but one wishes Braham had made his discussion as rich here as it is on other topics.

Part II, dealing with the 1760s and its major architects, naturally focuses on de Wailly, a man on whom Braham has already published extensively. The thorough treatment of this architect is nearly matched by that of the oddly neglected M.-J. Peyre. Others covered are Moreau-Despoux, Chalgrin, and Victor Louis, to name only a few. The reader may be surprised at the comparatively brief discussion of Boullée. Admittedly, Kaufmann and others have over-

emphasized his importance and distorted his work (most of which is much smaller in scale than realized), but Braham seems to have gone to the other extreme by devoting only seven pages, including illustrations, to him. Even so, the short section may well be the fairest one in print concerning that architect.

Ledoux, the other major 'revolutionary' architect, is the sole subject of Part III. Incredible as it seems after all that has been published on this artist, Braham finds a great deal new to say while correcting many false preconceptions. The thorough, perceptive, and above all, sane essay on this *major* architect – and Braham is very convincing on this score – is a significant contribution to the subject and must share the honors with those on Soufflot and de Wailly. A map of Paris situating many of the buildings discussed (as well as a few hardly mentioned) is particularly valuable in helping to clarify the chapter on the *barrières*. Here as elsewhere Braham provides a wealth of biographical and historical details, including travellers' accounts, remarks by Horace Walpole and Mrs. Thrale, and even paintings related to the discussion.

The fourth and final part is devoted mainly to two major architects: Brongniart and Belanger. Various minor figures such as Lequeu, Thomas de Thomon, and Robert Mique, however, are presented in a wide-ranging essay on Paris and the country at the end of the century. The last chapter on theory and practice before and after the Revolution is an excellent if unexciting summary.

Two aspects of the production of the book deserve comment. One is the very complete captions and comments under each of the illustrations. Even if the reader only looked at these, he or she would get an excellent summary of the book. Therefore this study may also serve as a useful quick reference work. The other, less pleasing, feature is the absence, in the text, of numbered references to footnotes. At the back of the book there are excellent notes arranged by part, chapter, and page; however, the reader must search them out. Is it too difficult for printers to insert numbers?

One looks almost in vain for

omissions or minor faults. The most obvious of these may be the lack of discussion of the first use of *groteschi*, which Fiske Kimball thought to be the basis of the Louis XVI style. Perhaps Braham felt that too much had already been written on this problem or that *groteschi* were not the crucial element Kimball thought them to be. However, since he does illustrate many such panels one could have wished for some discussion of this problem, including the difficulty of dating early examples. Also, this reader takes exception to Braham's description of the painted chapel in the church of Ste-Marguerite (Paris) in terms of unappealing, heavy, fake architecture. These, however, are but minor points in a work which represents scholarship at its finest.

Throughout the book one is impressed by Braham's exceptional sensitivity to works of art, by the eloquence of his prose, and by his ability to characterize buildings.

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JOHN UNRAU *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978. 180 pp., illus., \$15.00.

John Unrau's study of Ruskin's visual appreciation of architecture lends validity to the assertion made by that dominant figure in nineteenth-century criticism: 'the errors of affection' are preferable to 'the accuracies of apathy.' He supplies the art historian with a refreshing view of the breadth and sophistication of Ruskin's commentaries on architecture which balances the more academic and categorizing analyses published by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner and Dr. K.O. Garrigan (respectively, *Ruskin and Viollet le Duc: Englishness and Frenchness in the Appreciation of Gothic Architecture*, London, 1969, and *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 1972; Garrigan, *Ruskin on Architecture: his Thought and Influence*, Madison, 1973). Unrau, justifiably, reveals the limitations of these and other books that were intended to 'place'

Ruskin's writings in context and to provide an orderly summary of his ideas. For, though Unrau does not propose this, the major problem with Ruskin is that he was, perhaps, the greatest of the proverbial English amateurs, an unscientific, if an exhaustive, student, given to generalizing but really fascinated by the particular (as in his minute examination of decorative detail on San Donato, Murano, with illustrations almost worthy of a nineteenth-century pattern book), and, above all, subjective and partial while wishing to be objective and consistent.

In his 'extended introduction' Unrau in effect seeks to prove R.F. Jordan's contention that the twentieth century 'has attributed to him opinions he never held' (*Victorian Architecture*, London, 1966, p. 170). It is a further outcome of a lengthy acquaintance with Ruskin's daunting corpus of creativity, the first fruit of which was 'A Note on Ruskin's Reading of Pugin,' *English Studies*, 48 (August 1967), pp. 335-37. He demonstrates how Ruskin's enthusiasms and inconsistency mask much perceptive and subtle observation on the nature of architecture by rescuing habitually overlooked quotations, and unearthing others previously unpublished, which compensate for such sillier but oft-repeated declarations as 'ornamentation is the principal part of architecture.' He also reproduces an admirable series of Ruskin's drawings and comparative photographs. Indeed the former offer an excellent extension to Paul Walton's *The Drawings of John Ruskin* (Oxford, 1972), and confirm Ruskin as one of the most remarkable illustrators of architecture, at best managing to depict form, ornament, spatial relationships, and those more evanescent qualities, atmosphere and character. The literate and engaging text is served by a thorough bibliography, including a list of unpublished writings by Ruskin, well disciplined notes and a useful index. The one complaint which might be voiced by the uninitiated Ruskin reader is that many of the quotations are only identified by volume and page reference to the Library Edition compiled by Cook and Wedderburn. The book is pleasing to read since the typeface is clear and the presentation attractive.