Can we detect the English national identity through architecture during the 1920s and 1930s?

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Introduction

In his recent contribution to the debates about English and British identities '*The Making of English National Identity*', Krishan Kumar, a professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, writes that English national identity is an enigma, so elusive, and difficult to pin down, partly because of inseparability with British national identity, partly because of the intricate relation to other peoples: Scottish, Wales, and Irish. Although the history of Great Britain is understood as the history of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in general, it has largely been considered as the English history. However as the conqueror of the 'inner empire' of Great Britain, the English repressed its own national consciousness, and imposed uniformity and equality on the contributions of the various parts of the Isles, while Scottish, Welsh, and Irish had constantly begun cultivating their national identities since the Middle Ages. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003]

Kumar continues to emphasis that in fact, "there is no native tradition of reflection on English national identity". The problem of the English national identity is that it "can not be distinguished by its 'contents'— its self-conceived differences". It is common

enough for nations to develop a sense of themselves by a process of opposition and

exclusion, for instance, Britain's distinctive contrasts with her neighbouring nations,

in particular France. But in the case of England, it shows almost the opposite

phenomenon. The identification is not made by exclusion and opposition, but

inclusion and expansion, not inwardness but outwardness. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003: X]

Although English identity has been suppressed, it still can be observed through social

and cultural changes over a certain period which gives rise to a new consciousness

and forms the identification of the nation, as Liah Greenfeld, an American Sociologist,

has suggested. [Greenfeld, Liah. 1992]

There are a number of significant social changes in the English history, for instance,

the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century; two nations, England and Scotland,

were separate kingdoms until united in 1601 under the king James VI of Scotland and

I of England in seventeenth century; the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution, and

two World Wars. This essay will concentrate on the national consciousness which was

emerged in the interwar period.

During the twentieth century, England also experienced several social and cultural

changes which caused radical shifts of ideas about Englishness and English national

identity from indifference to its own national identity under the prosperous British

Empire era, to an urgent need to discover who they were, and where they were going

after the decline of the Empire removed the reason of repressing its identification of

Englishness , to finally the Cross of St George replacing the Union Jack as the

emblem of English national identity on important sport occasions. Among these

transitions, the interwar period, between the 1920s and 1930s, is the crucial moment

for developing Englishness.

After four years of fighting, British's wealth was virtually all gone, though it had been

one of the richest countries of the world before the Great War. The empire had fallen,

the mission as a liberalizing and civilizing force to modernize the world was no longer

the main interest, but had been displaced by interval problems, particularly the

growing conflict between capital and labour, exemplified by the General Strike of

1926, and problems caused by the Great Depression. A serial of social, economic and

political reform movements with the aim of 'Return to Order' led to a heightening

class differences.

At the same time we see, in English society, a "privatisation of national life" in the

1920s and 1930s. Alison Light, who teaches in the English department at University

College London, has noticed, "a move away from formerly heroic and officially

masculine public rhetorics of national destiny and from a dynamic and missionary

view of the Victorian and Edwardian middle classes in 'Great Britain' to an

Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more

private". [Light, Alison. 1991:232] These changes did not only produce ideologies,

but was also reflected on architecture.

However, how can identities be represented by architecture? Ernesto Laclau, a

political theorist, points out, in his notable research *The Making of Political*

Identities', that political practices may be defined as the highly constitutive

dimensions of social practices, and give a fixed, stable and unified identity to the

others with the intention of concealing the very contingencies of these practices.

[Laclau, Ernesto. 1994]

However, even though the political practices are regarded as the very instituting

practices among the others, yet there is no one identity which is definitively

permanent and integrated. The constructive act of identification always fails owing to

supplements, instabilities, fragmentation and slippage because there are always

undesirable factors distorting and imposing on the objects which are by nature

precarious and contingent constructions. The act is in a repetitive path: encounter

other objects, then structure a new identity, and fail to confine the concept sufficiently,

and trigger a new act again. Therefore, the search of an ideal identity never ends in an

ideal object, but generates 'substitutive objects'. Those objects can be Polity, Culture,

Social Structure, History, Literature, as individual's everyday life manner, and

architecture.

There is a suggestion proposed by Mark Rakatansky, an assistant professor of

architecture at Iowa State University, has suggested, that "The history of architecture

is a history of substitutive objects, of surrogate objects and of stand-in objects." For

this reason, "There have been and continue to be architecture tendencies that embrace

the attempt to develop stable, fixed, and unified identities" [Rakatansky, Mark.

1995:10] In other words, architecture has regularly been employed as surrogate for

identities.

Nazi architecture is one of paradigms. It was an essential part of the Nazi's party's

plan to create a cultural and spiritual rebirth in Germany. Hitler utilized the concept of

political architecture to establish the Third Reich or Nazi Germany identity. He and

his architects developed architecture in the neo-classical style, and erected edifices as

propaganda of victory of the Nazi party. Because of his enthusiastic for the classical

culture of the ancient Mediterranean and alleged the Greeks were the racial ancestors

of the Germany, Nazi party could not isolate and politicize German antiquity as

uniqueness since it succeeded to the classical antiquity. Therefore political symbols

was imported into the concept, and created a Nazi Germany identity which was based

on a spurious racial ancestry, that Greeks and the Romans as the ancestors of

Germany, which succeed the glory of the antiquity but unique . When Hitler aimed at

creating a political national identity, he imported culture of ancient Romans and

Greeks to legitimatise invasion as inheriting Roman Empire's glory. Until he realised

this could not make German as a unique nation, he then imported political symbol

into the architecture to make be the one identity for Germany. This gives an

explanation for why most identities are unstable, and produce other objects to fill the

lack generated by failures. Although the search for a pure and definitive ideological

expression may fail, it does not mean that there is no ideological component to

architecture.

Moreover, Rakatansky has observed that "all architecture is social architecture. All

architecture is political architecture." [Rakatansky, Mark. 1995:13] As different

programmes can inhabit the same space, the different institutional identities also can

dwell in the same building. In other words, social forms of architecture may regard as

either social or political institution in many circumstances depend on the performance

of architecture. Consequently he then explains that the most significant forms of

ideological identification in architecture are not the Big Symbols, such as the

Classical Orders, the Flags, the Animals of Political Myth or the Medallions, but the

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accrual of the *small symbol*, the small interpellative symbols: the ways in institutional

space that architecture organizes, hierarchizes [sic], and systematizes activities,

behaviours, orderings, visibilities, movement. [1995:10]

In contrast with the numerous studies of discovering the English national

consciousness by historians and sociologists, for instance, Linda Colley's pioneering

study in the British identity though the history, Liah Greenfeld's contribution to the

English identity from the religious point of view, George Orwell's essays: *The Lion*

and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius, and many others, there is no

satisfactory discussion of the relationship between English national consciousness and

architecture. Can we, following Rakatansky, see English architecture as the surrogate

of national identity? I will start with discussion of the features English national

identity. Next, I will discuss the national identity in relation to architecture in order to

examine whether there is any possibility we can discover national identity through

architecture. I shall then investigate if a unified sense of national identity can be

discovered from the conflict between modernism and traditionalism in the interwar

years, for this is a period when English architectural tradition was challenged by

modern architecture, a decidedly opposite style. Finally, two practical applications

which took place during the time will be examined. I have felt the need to confront all

these questions in order to provide not an answer but a way of thinking of English

national identity by means of architecture.

General survey of Englishness and English National Identity

Generally speaking, national identity refers both to the distinctive features of the group, and to the individual's sense of belonging to it. Two people may be separated by different personalities, religions, location or spoken language, but regard themselves and be seen by others as members of the same nation, because they shared certain characters, behaviours, responsibilities and thinking to other members of the same nation.

The nation is sometimes associated with ethnicity, but even people with the same ethnic origin many live in different nation-states or different ethnic origins may share the same political or cultural life. Kumar, therefore, argues that "ethnic identities, like political identities, are 'part of contingent and ever-change legacy of shared memories and communal identification'. Culture, rather than ethnicity *per se*, is the fundamental ground of identity." [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:26] And he takes Jews as one notable example. In French as well as in Britain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe in nineteenth century, Jews were able both to be 'themselves'- ethnic Jews- and at the same time to participate widely in the economic, political and cultural life of their societies and became France, British, or German. From the cultural ground, each

nation develops a sense of itself by process of opposition and exclusion, that is, the distinguishing 'contents'— its self-conceived differences and constructs a counter-image of what they are is defined by what they are not. [2003:27-28]

This pattern is probably true for the making of French, British, or German national identity, but can not entirely be applied to English. There are two things which make Englishness an ambiguous state. First, as George Orwell says in *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*: "It is quite true that the so-called races of Britain feel themselves to be very different from one another. A Scotsman, for instance, does not thank you if you call him an Englishman. ... Even the differences between north and south England loom large in our own eyes. But somehow these differences fade away the moment that any two Britons are confronted by a European. It is very rare to meet a foreigner, other than an American, who can distinguish between English and Scots or even English and Irish." [Orwell, George. 2001:259] Although the differences exist among peoples in the Isles, the nuance is too subtle to be conveyed to the foreigner.

Nevertheless, it is not only the problem for the outsider to distinguish between 'races of Britain', but also for other peoples in the Isles to recognise the difference between English and British. When I started to make a survey of English national identity, I

asked my Scottish friends if they thought British meant English, or these two had different meanings to them. They told me that in theory, they all knew British were different from English, but most of times they mingled these two nations unconsciously. That is, they do not think British are not English. This accounts for the riddle of English national identity. The confusion of others compounds the confusion of the minds of the 'races of Britain', and constructs an indefinite identity to English. This may result partly from what Orwell has observed that in the patriotic thinking the vast majority of the English feel themselves to be a single nation- the kingdom of Great Britain. This attitude gives rise to repression of English identification, [2001:260] both in the minds of English and other peoples in the Isles.

It is this ambiguity which provides an aspiration for scholars to detect when the English nationalism actually began. For instance, Hans Kohn, a professor of contemporary European history, suggests that the awakening of a national consciousness in England came, in spite of the insular situation, later than on the continent. Only in the fourteenth century did the English language gradually spoken in law courts and in official life. Also the parliament began to hold its sessions in English. [Kohn, Hans. 1940:69] In other words, the English nationalism should begin with not earlier than the fourteenth century. This claim was soon refuted by R. M. Lumiansky (1913-1987), a professor of Humanity, by providing a passage of R. W.

Chambers's research in *Man's unconquerable Mind*, 1939 which says "Bede wrote the

Ecclesiastical History before there was any English nation in existence. ... He

preferred to consider all the Germanic-speaking inhabitants of the British Isles ...

English." and indicating that English nationalism must trace back to an earlier period

as the seventh, not fourteenth century. [Lumiansky, R. M. 1941:249] Not only they

but also many other historians and sociologists think the English national

consciousness flourishing in either period, or if not then, the sixteenth, or the

seventeenth, or the eighteenth. However, Kumar's interpretation is comparatively late.

What he had discovered is that it is not until the late nineteenth century, at the earliest,

that he finds a clear concern with the question of it. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:XI] No

matter which period scholars hold to identify Englishness, concerns about identity

arise from periods of social changes.

Why does Kumar think that the urgency of identification of English was emerged in

the late nineteenth century? According to his research, before then, the English were

engaged in social structure and political systems which implicated that they were parts

of wider entities- Great Britain and the British Empire at the deepest level.

Englishness and Britishness were so interfused as to be virtually indistinguishable

Moreover, the move from 'England' to 'Britain' and back again was frequent and

common, they do not notice the confusion nor feel the need to explain it. Gradually

the English become so incurious and indifferent to their own nationalism. [Kumar,

Krishan. 2003]

Then for the first time ever, the 'moment of Englishness', as Kumar named it, came,

when new commercial rivals threatened Britain's industrial supremacy and faith in the

empire began to waver, and a degree of English self-consciousness begins to emerge.

The English realized that they have to turn the mirror directly to themselves, to see

who they are and where they may be going at this time. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:

224,251] Although the wider entities- Great Britain, the British Empire- were

collapsing, and English had awoken to the urgency of its own identity, there is

evidence showing that Englishness was still in a good degree overlapped with

Britishness. First, although the British Empire might arouse criticism from

left-wingers, for the first half of the century, the Empire was still a central presence in

the life of the English people. Then, the economy too reminded British. Imperialism

and global rivalry knit the industrial part of British together even more tightly than

before, and all regions need to share the vicissitude of this trade cycles, not only

England. And even the BBC, formed in October 1922, is British; king's Christmas

speeches, national importance all announce from it to the country. Therefore, it is

rather said that the English nationalism would take its form culturally rather than

politically, or economically, or socially.

Then the desire for discovering the nationality accelerated after the Great War.

Because even though Britain won the Great War, as Kumar has observed, the society

suffered from the trauma and tiredness following after the war. The English started to

drop the mission of civilising the world, shared signs of increasing its intense desire

for quietness and serenity. They turned their back on the squalor of urbanism and

industrialism, and contemplated instead the 'timeless' life of the English countryside.

The nostalgia of rural life seized upon England. This longing for the country life was

not only revolt against modernity, [Kumar, Krishan. 2003] but also allowed them to

recall who they were, little Englanders "leaning on gates and looking across fields",

[Paxman, Jeremy. 1999: 151] finding relief and consolation in the countryside, and

not 'big Englanders' who "want to go and boss everybody about all over the world"

[Priestley, J. B. 1977: 389] They inveighed against "this machine age" that is killing

the true England of "quiet places where there are still English meadows not yet taped

out by the jerry builders". [Giles, Judy and Middleton, Neil 1995:34] As a highly

politicised nation, Englishness embrace their national identity through a cultural

rather then a political thinking. Although after the Second World War, the Englishness

was repressed again by Britishness deliberately by the government, it has grown again

since.

Architecture and Identity

Yuswadi Saliya, a professor of architecture, identifies Architecture a men-made or

man *chosen* spatial entity, with an adaptation in mind. And design is a deliberate and

purposeful act. Consequently architecture is a work of design. By designing buildings,

a certain degree of consciousness is involved in the process. However, how much

degree is involved may differ among cultures because it is culture-bound, and is the

question for architects. On the other hand, "Identity... is the result of self-conscious

way of thinking, of separation between man and nature, an ontological one. Identity in

this sense... becomes a human *need:* it has unbelievably transformed itself into a

necessity." And he questions if we need 'identity'. He believes that architecture is a

part of culture because of consciousness involved, but it is a mistake to take identity

as a point of entry for discussing architecture, because it is just its by-product which

will come after architecture is formed. [Saliya, Yuswadi. 1986:32] However, identity

is not only a tool to separate man from nature, but also a sensation of belonging to a

defining group by noting differences with other groups or cultures. Therefore, we do

need identity to determine differences from others. Moreover, architecture is one of

instruments to represent culture. Although, indisputably, identity happens after subject

is created, it is necessary to determine and argue as a whole.

What part of architecture corresponds to the issue of identity? In Chris Abel's book

'Architecture and identity'; he proposes that "The emergent interest in architectural

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identities is likewise premised on the assumption that architecture has a specific

essence, the understanding of which is essential both to the discourse and practise of

the field." [Abel, Chris. 1997: 147] However, this is open to question, for if as Charles

Jencks claims that "architecture is irreducibly plural... an unstable hybrid based partly

on codes external to itself", [Jencks, Charles. 1980: 72] how can it have an essence?

That is, the formation of the building combines with several practices, such as

engineering, sociology, politics, environmental psychology, and so forth. They all

affect the outcome. It will lead to a misunderstanding of the content of architecture if

we only discuss the essence of it.

Abel recognizes that how we choose between two positions, either to accept that

architecture has its central purpose, or to reject this position and regard architecture as

a composite of varied contents, affects not only the interpretation of architecture, but

also the attitude toward those factors which form it. It is an argument about essence or

compound of architecture as a form of human culture. He, therefore, suggests that

since architecture can be treated as a communication system, the choice might be

similar to the choice of theories of language, and uses of the language analogy in

architecture supports "the contention that the essence of architecture as a

cultural-form has especially to do with the formation of personal, social and cultural

identities." [Abel, Chris. 1997: 148] However, as Umberto Eco claims that every

individual speaker has autonomy in using their dialect to create their own messages

for circumstances. [Eco, Umberto 1980:39] This also implies that the compound of

architecture as a human cultural form is constructed by various factors. There is no

universal, as the essence, but relative principle defining identities depending on what

situation and factors it engages.

What is, then, the relation between architecture and national identity? Can we

discover national identity by means of architecture? Abel suggests that "hybrid forms

of architecture tell us more about the general nature of the relations between built and

social form, than do the relatively purer architectural forms we commonly refer to as

typical of a given architectural language or style." [Abel, Chris. 1997: 156] Malaysian

architecture at the British colonial period is an exemplar. When Britain colonised

Malaysia in the later nineteenth century, British colonists endeavoured to recreate

familiar environments in alien locations in order to retain a part of their identity via

architecture. Under the process of relocation from homeland to an alien milieu,

architecture was undergoing a significant transformation to adapt to the local climate

and customs. After relocation processes, buildings are clearly not the homeland style

which they brought in for preserving their identity, but a hybrid form which only

exists in Malaysia, and becomes a part of its identity. That is, the transformation

involved as a result of an interaction between different cultural forms, or 'forms of

life'. Subsequently he proposes that the proper and most useful definition of cultural

identity will arise out of a fuller understanding and appreciation of the creative

processes of cultural interaction, not out of some kind of pre-selection of the

supposedly more pure elements of original and national culture, and regards

architecture as representing the product of a creative process of cultural interaction.

Whenever two or more vital cultures meet and produce their hybrid offspring a new

identity emerges. [Abel, Chris. 1997]

Polemic between traditionalist and modernist in the 1920s and 1930s

During the Twenties, Several countries which had not been involved in the struggle of

First World War developed the first wave of modernism, such Sweden, the

Netherlands and Demark. Britain, shattered by the War, looked to them for the new

order of society and architecture, and soon they were introduced in. In the beginning

of the movement, they were influential on British architecture. The *Architectural*

Review constantly commented on modern Dutch and Swedish architecture. F.R.

Yerbury, an architectural photographer, even went to these counties frequently,

photographed modernist buildings, and published on several journals and books.

Those all became channels for young architects to study modern architecture. It was

the first wave of the British Modern Movement. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:7]

Then, a second wave followed at the end of the twenties inspired by Le Corbusier,

Walter Gropius, Mies van de Rohe, and Erich Mendelsohn. This impact jolted British

architects, and the differences between modernists and traditionalists were

increasingly notable since the Great War had produced deep chasm between the

generation who had caused the War (conveniently represented by the reactionary

Reginald Blomfield) and those too young to have been involved in it (almost all of the

'Modern Movement' architects and writers), as Gavin Stamp has defined. [Stamp,

Gavin. 1979:7] It might be as Anthony Jackson observes that England did not change

"its concept of national responsibility", [Jackson, Anthony 1965:97] or as Sir

Reginald Blomfield expresses "that the 'New Architecture' is essentially Continental

in its origin and inspiration, and it claims as a merit that it is cosmopolitan. As an

Englishmen and proud of his country, I detest and despise cosmopolitanism."

[Blomfield, Reginald, Sir. 1933: 124] Fierce resistance had already shaded the

development the Modern Movement. Even the most important architectural journal,

the Architectural Review, only turned partly to modern architecture.

On the one hand, since the first modernist building, 'New Way', a house designed by

Peter Behrens in Northampton, was built in 1926, one after another, more modernist

buildings were erected. Architects followed examples of the Continent modernism to

design what they thought was the modernist building. However, most works "showed

no consistent quality. ... it is evident from the published designs ... that what was really lacking was not only opportunity but proficiency. [Jackson, Anthony. 1965: 99]

Then the condition changed in 1933 when the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) was formed. "As practice on the Continent was menaced by Fascism, the MARS group members encouraged their foreign colleagues to emigrate to England" [1965: 102] Settling in England, they started having partnerships with British architects: Erich Mendelsohn partnered with Serge Chermayeff, Walter Gropius and Marcel Lajos Breuer formed a partnership with Maxwell Fry, and Berthold Lubetkin founded Tecton with six British architects a year before the MARS. This provided English modernists great opportunities to emulate modernistic masters' achievement closely.

As Berthold Lubetkin has argued, Britain was far from the Modern Movement, "intellectual and political developments". Here the Modern Movement was truly foreign. He "commented that the country was fifty years behind Europe in its architectural maturity, and set about importing Modernism into Britain." [Bowman, Graeme. 2001] Now all émigré architects were actively establishing their careers in England. First, "as much as any traditionalist, the young modernists turned to family

ties and social relations for their first commission." [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 28] then

expanded their practices gradually to all types of buildings.

As members of the MARS, these partnerships were acts of homage, and put the

Bauhaus theory into practice. While Connell, Ward, and Lucas were almost Dutch in

their constructivism, Lubetkin had reached the same obsession with style as Le

Corbusier. Apart from these, "the English group produced simple, clean buildings".

Although the buildings were unpretentious, and unprovocative, [Jackson, Anthony.

1965:102] the intention of "no longer indulging in forms borrowed from earlier

period" was determined. [Zucker, Pual. 1965:102]

Stanley Casson, a fellow at New College, had expressed this phenomenon was caused

by the attitude that artists in the interwar period have all decided to *start afresh* upon

their work without *necessarily* considering that the past had any validity to *control*

them. "They see how essential all the art of the past is to their inspiration. But they

insist on regarding it a past and done with, as a steeping stone, of a 'footprint in the

sands of time,' or as any of those sad transitory things which so delighted the utterly

static culture of the last century." [Casson, Stanley. 1930:123] Unlike Casson, Marcel

Breuer even proclaims this attitude radically that "for us the attempt to build in a

national tradition or an old-world style would be inadequate and insincere. To pride

oneself on such things is bad symptom. For the modern world has no tradition for its

eight-hour day, its electric light, ... or for any of its technical methods." [Breuer,

Marcel. 1935:134] No matter which attitude they had to the tradition, both provoked

English conventionality to defend itself. For modernists, as Berthold Lubetkin had

said, "fighting for each innovation represents an enormous amount of creative energy.

Each step on the road to progress is struggle against conservatism and prejudice".

[Lubetkin, Berthold. 1937:29], but traditionalists and their allies thought that they

"defended their homes and professional domain from the invasion by 'alien

architects'", [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 25] who were going to destroy their

well-established tradition.

Sir Reginald Blomfield was a leading figure in "the 'traditionalist versus modernist'

debate", [Fellows, Richard. 1985:146] and "a perfect- and necessary- gift to the

Modern Movement". [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:8]In 1934 he even published his

well-known book 'Modenismus', and criticised contemporary arts, such as

architecture, painting, sculpture, and music. Blomfield's objections to the 'new

architecture' were based on his background as an Edwardian architect, and he

believed that any nation's architecture must reflect its heritage and temperament. He

argues that one can not dissociate ourselves from the past, whether they want to or not,

because beauty was governed by criteria established over the centuries and stretching

back to the foundations of civilisation. [Fellows, Richard. 1985] When the

'Modernismists' were claiming that beauty and inspiration were to be found in all

sorts of things that were not previously considered as having any aesthetic merit, he

asks that how architectural works can be judged as succeed or failed, the aesthetic not

based on any recognisable architectural precedent.

On the other hand, he admits that "Art of course cannot stand still. The conditions of

life and its demands inevitably change, and the extraordinary developments of applied

science in the last fifty years have introduced elements that have to be reckoned with

in the design of buildings." We have central heating, motor roads, and filling stations,

but there should have no change in "instincts and traditions which are ingrained in our

people even if not consciously realized." [Blomfield, Reginald. 1934:52-53]

Abandoning tradition would annihilate the aesthetic of architecture. Osbert Lancaster

also corresponds Sir Blomfield's viewpoint in his "entertaining instructive surveys of

English architecture and interior design". [Watkin, David. 1979:89] In 'Progress at

Pelvis Bay', he writes "While it is undoubtedly tragic to think of a fine old house as

Pelvis Towers passing out of the hands of those have owned them for countless

generations, the necessity for progress and development cannot be denied, and

although there were many who regretted the passing of the old ivy-covered walls and

quaint mullions of the seat of the Cinqbois, few who are acquainted with the

cocktail-bar, the squash courts, the eighteen-hole golf-course and other delights of

"La Provençale." as the clubhouse is now called, will be found to admit that the

change is altogether for the worse." [Lancaster, Osbert. 1936:14] It implies that in the

necessity for progress, when the tradition is substituted by the modern, the situation

does not go best as the modernist have promised. Instead, it goes worse because all

the traditional values and aesthetic have gone in this replacement.

The modernists were not only accused by abandoning of the past. They also argue that

most architects who practiced modern architecture were aliens, and the modern

architecture they had brought was a foreign style which caused for concern that would

harm the existed built environment. It can not be denied that although they settled in

and practiced their profession in England, they did not have any knowledge of

England at all. As Gavin Stamp has observed, the failure of so many modern

buildings, and then rapid visual deterioration, was evidence that few of them had any

real experience or knowledge of English conditions and, inevitably, no interest in the

traditional English concern with harmony in a landscape. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:20] In

'*Progress at Pelvis Bay*', we also see that Lancaster has the same concern by jesting

the council's policy in Pelvis Bay. "A striking tribute to the council's policy of

insisting on the erection of dwellings with an individual character of their own and

turning a deaf ear to all those cranks and so-called Modernists who are so constantly

urging the merits of vast stream-lined, undecorated blocks of flats or rather

tenements. ... Do they realize when they try to foist these continental barracks on us,

that English is the only language that has a word for 'home'?" [Lancaster, Osbert.

1936:48-49] Even Christopher Hussey criticises "advanced Modern Movement

architects for their totalitarian insistence on their own style as the only possible style

on all occasions, and for their lack of sensitivity to local conditions." [Watkin, David.

1979:88]

The polemic made traditionalism and modernism into two extremes. However, as

Hélène Lipstadt observes, during the time some traditionalists had accepted that the

root of modern architecture was in Britain through studies from Germen. "Looking

backward, the concern of traditionalists, and looking forward, the duty of modernists,

emerged from the centenary years as if laminated together." [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983:

24] In 1928, one year after Le Corbusier's Vers une architecture was translated into

English, many traditionalists architects realised Britain prominence in the history of

modern architecture and established it with the help of German scholarship. This

viewpoint was soon jointed by modernists as well. Forerunners such as William

Morris, and Charles Mackintosh who once were enemies in England now were to be

revered. Traditionalists and modernists united their interest in a search of root for

origins that were entirely British. [1983: 24] and claimed the legitimacy of modernism

in English tradition. As Lionel Cuffe mentions that "The Continent, since the

beginning of the century, has, on other hand, developed the principles which Morris

started. In England, where were the pioneers, we are now the last. Perhaps if we

realized that in following Morris we were following our example, we would have

another opportunity for patting ourselves on the back and thanking God, rightly this

time, for the old ways and old country." [Cuffe, Lionel. 1931:151]

Nikolaus Pevsner also indicates that "England's activity in the preparation of the

Modern Movement came to an end during less than ten years after Morris's death.

The initiative now passed to the Continent and the United States, and, after a short

intermediate period, Germany became the centre of progress." [Pevsner, Nikolaus.

1936: 29] Therefore, many might think Le Corbusier is one of the most important

pioneers in the Modern Movement. In fact, "Le Corbusier scarcely belongs to a book

dealing with pre-war matters; and, though he has tired in his writings to make himself

appear one of the pioneers, he was not among the first comers. ... The historian must

emphasise this point, because Le Corbusier, partly owing to his magnificent artistic

imagination and partly to a certain showmanship, had been taken for one of the

creators of the Modern Movement." [1936:177] Although Pevsner was not the first

historian argued that the root of the Modern Movement was British, but his argument

reversed traditionalists' contention; alien style became home-grown tradition, and

traditionalists emerge as pioneers.

Indeed the polemic between traditionalists and modernist in the interwar period is a polemic for the legitimacy of modern architecture in England. "Historians sympathetic to the traditionalist and anxious to revise the disequilibrium introduce by purely heroic accounts of the British Modern Movement, have described it as the design of foreigners and colonials, ignorant of the English tradition, and incapable of building anything but white cubes for eccentric and socially marginal private clients", [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 29] when many thought modern architecture was an inextricable tendency in the modern twentieth century. However, when one reviews the English architectural history, they can see that the history is repeated. In eighteenth century, when the Baroque style was brought into England by Nicholas Hawksmoor, it was enormous resistance as well. In Cyril Bruyn Andrews's article 'A diarist's view of architecture' in the Architectural review, he describes that "his [John Byng, afterwards fifth Viscount Torrington] attitude was very similar to those who today are resisting very different but equally drastic foreign innovation in architecture. There is the same battle between tradition and change. And in many other parts of the diaries we find curiously close parallels to what is happening in other directions today." [Andrews, Cyril Bruyn. 1934:125] The conditions are akin. The traditionalist shifts their attitude from resisting the foreign innovation in the first place, then

making a compromise with it, to finally emerge into English tradition. This is, the

English modern architecture may be eclecticism. And the debate between

traditionalist and modernist is not as Lipstadt has suggested that locked in struggle in

the sadly polarised decade, but the process to make real English modern architecture.

Application I: Joseph Emberton (1889-1956)

Joseph Emberton was born in Audley, Staffordshire. It is an ancient village which has

a Norman castle, and a medieval church where he was baptised. At the age of

seventeen, he was articled to a local architects firm, and started his apprenticeship.

Twenty-two years old, he came to London for the scholarship to the Kensington

College of Art. In the college, he met an influential figure, W. R. Lethaby, a professor

of Ornament and Design. Lethaby was sympathetic to the aims of William Morris, but

with a positive attitude towards machine art, "he proposed to use machinery itself in

the struggle to reimpose the excellence of craftsmanship which had been destroyed by

the misuse of the machine- a homeopathic remedy for design." [Ind, Rosemary.

1983:10] Although Emberton claims that he never received a single fundamental idea

for those two years in the College, he would seem to have been predisposed to

welcome such views. [Reilly, C. H. 1931] After leaving the College, he worked at the

firm of Trehearne and Norman as the first professional job. At work, he met Sir John

Burnet, and Thames Tait who had designed the Kodak House. Sir John Burnet had a

good knowledge of the Chicago School and the works of Louis Sullivan and the

Parisian Beaux Art training and Thames Tait's had a real enthusiasm for Dutch

modern architecture. All of these contributed Emberton a turning point of career

because this was opportunity for him to combine the traditional skills he learned form

the apprenticeship and the college, and modern design methods. [Ind, Rosemary.

1983]

After the Great War, he decided to be architect. As Rosemary Ind, a tutor in Modern

Architecture and Design at the Open University, has observed, Emberton thought "he

would give the architecture of our own say a 'new logic'. It should be in his hands the

means of interpreting the law of nature rather than the manners of mankind. Of the

reliability of the latter the war had provide him with sufficient evidence." [Ind,

Rosemary. 1983: 13] Then he opened his own office in 1926. Before opening, he went

to the Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in the previous year. For a

short period, this visit had repercussions in Emberton's work, such as Austin Reed's

lift gates in Regent Street, and the façade of Madelon Chaumet hat shop in Berkeley

Street. However, "After his flirtation with Paris '25 styling, his work changed

direction." [Ind, Rosemary. 1983: 19], and achieved several important modernist

buildings, such as Olympia, 1929, the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club, 1931, Simpson's

of Piccadilly, 1935, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, 1935, and His Master's Voice shop,

1939.

The Royal Corinthian Yacht Club was the project which won Emberton an

international reputation by exhibiting it in the first exhibition of Modern Architecture

in New York. "It is white-skinned, three-storey building with narrow horizontal

clerestory windows, sits on a concrete platform supported on stilts in the water, and

on the river wall behind", as Ind describes. [Ind, Rosemary. 1983:23] This building is

"the closest he came to the manner of Le Corbusier": pure cubical building with

horizontal window form one side to another. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:15] However,

because concrete was an affordable material, for the tight budget, Emberton design a

steel-framed structure, carried on reinforced-concrete piles with 4 1/2 in. hollow

bricks walls which caused restriction on the interior spaces and the fenestration in the

stair well. One might think the Club is a modernistic building which modified the

modern notion to English conditions. However, after examining his later works, we

will fine that it is an expedient for a tight budget rather than a hybrid form of English

modern architecture which arises from transformation for adapting to the local climate

and customs. In some measure, the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club is imitating the

modern architecture more than transforming it for English circumstance.

Simpson's of Piccadilly might be Emberton's most well-known design. Although it

simply consists of horizontal bands of windows in a large frame, it is well make and

stylish modernist building. Moreover, after Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Emberton

acquainted more with coloured light and the application of the canopy. He applied

these two skills and the lettering which he had been used on several earlier works in

Simpson's and makes it a certain distinction. Consequently, it is thought by many to

be his master piece. This building was designed to showcase the clothing of the

innovative manufacturer DAKS Simpson in West End of London. Emberton used a

steel framed structure again after the Royal Yacht Club, but this time with a difference.

He appointed the structural engineer who designed the structure of Mendelsohn and

Chermayeff's De la Warr Pavilion to design the structure of Simpson's. It was a great

beginning to have the first welded steel frame in London.

Compared with the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club project, Emberton used all kinds of

material more mature and skilful. Strong vertical bands of Portland Stone and bronze

give various shade and shadow during day and night, black granite clad on the ground

façade with a bans of show-windows on the both side of the entrance door provide a

reliable image of the shop, the concave, non-reflective glass in the windows, a patent

registered in the mid Thirties, prevent reflections form spoiling the view, and most

significant application: the inspired use of coloured light: "there neon tubes, red, blue

and green, run in a moulded-bronze channel above each window strip" [Ind,

Rosemary. 1983:31], with a selection of different colour for different seasons, sales

and other purposes. All these characteristic features do not only give this project a

sophisticated simplicity, but also achieved Emberton a distinctive, skilful and

individual architecture style which regrettably might have nothing to do with English

modern architectural style or the style of other masters.

Apart from these two projects, there is some other his works need to be mentioned.

First building is a house built in Weybridge for Mrs Ian Anderson in 1926. It is

designed as a long rectangle with a drawn-forward porch. [Ind, Rosemary. 1983:15]

Curves thatch, pebble walls and a chimney which is given prominence on the front

elevation are in Arts and crafts manner. Next one is his most sensational work: "the

new streamliner horizontal façade to the Olympia exhibition hall, which looks as if it

of concrete but is actually of brick and plaster." [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:15] This project

also establishes him as a Modernist, although he would try to escape the label.

However, it is not an original piece which can show "English temperament"

[Blomfield, Reginald. 1934:12]. Then, the His Master's Voice shop in Oxford Street is

similar to Simpson's of Piccadilly, but with tiny windows surrounded by glass bricks

which result from the internal function, and the day light was used instead of electric

coloured light. In spite of these, most ideas borrowing from Simpson's remained the

same which only give the project a strong Emberton character but less elegant. Last

building is Audley house for his sister. It is a two-storey house which states

Emberton's predilections in timber and Dutch De Stijl detailing.

Is Embertona a modern architect or English modern architect? And what is the belief

of English modern architects? Before the Thirties when the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier

influence came to England, he was already at work, and well acquainted with the most

advanced work on the Continent and the United States. He flirted with Paris '25

styling for few years, and then soon changed the direction to modern architecture. He

tried to escape form this label but had a romantic attitude towards modern architecture:

logic, reason, and efficiency. He thinks "that a building is as a machine to work in, or

to live in, as these are for transport. These have all produced beautiful- or, at least,

satisfactory- forms, without much thought having been given to aesthetic. In many

cases the quality of beauty is directly related to efficiency." [Emberton, Joseph.

1933:130] Nevertheless, as Stamp has observed, Emberton does not only "clearly

designed his machine with aesthetic considerations in mind. He was concerned with

style", [Stamp, Gavin 1979:5] he but also moved among styles: modern, Arts and craft,

traditional and so forth, revealing from his works.

The Thirties was represented by buildings in a variety of styles, many influence by

Continental and American Expressionism. Architects worked in different styles often

for very good reasons. Even modern architects who began with impeccable Modern

Movement careers turn out to have designed buildings in various modernistic styles.

[Stamp, Gavin 1979:7] However, for English modern architects, they did not only

shift from one modernistic style to another, but to traditional styles. It is not due to

stylistic confusion, but to their philosophy towards architecture and to

accommodating different building types. As Jackson points out, the English traditional

architects are individualists, and believed in laisser-faire. [Jackson, Anthony.

1965:103] Their attitude towards architecture is different to architects from the

Continent who might insist upon one style. For many English architects, they actually

cooperated with both. This might result in what Jackson has observed that they are

"lack of ideological intensity". [Jackson, Anthony 1970:25] However, can we judge

them by this criterion? This would not be fair to criticise them by this criterion.

Furthermore, they received the training mainly from apprenticeship or at the college:

formal and conservative. Then when they began their professional career, the Modern

movement had been in fashion. Modern and tradition were impacting their career.

They did not give up one for another since they had good skills to design buildings in

both styles. Instead they were shifting between two schools, such as F. R. S. Yorke

(1906-1962), Oliver Hill (1887-1968), and Emberton, in order to satisfy a range of

building types which might be in favour of certain styles. This is, moving between

two might be the attitude most English architects' have towards the modern

architecture. They did not want to be forced into taking sides, they were prepared to

admired what their regarded as true English modern architecture where it appeared,

and they did not yet create it, they were seeking it from both schools. So was

Emberton.

Application II: the Hornsey Town Hall complex (1933-1935)

The Hornsey Town Hall is located in Crouch End. It was a small village until the mid-

nineteenth century, but had been developed into the major shopping centre for an

expanding urban district by the next century. Before the Town Hall was built, there

was a council office in Southwood Lane, Highgate, completed in 1868, administering

some aspects of the life of three detached settlements: Hornsey Crouch End and

Highgate. The council office, which mainly dealt with the business in Highgate, soon

became inadequate, since Hornsey population was growing rapidly during 1880. For

this swift growing suburb, Hornsey needed a new hall for its own business. Then a

competition was advertised subsequently in 1929.

In October 1933, the result was announced; a New Zealander Reginald Uren won the

competition over other 217 participators. "Instead of a regular competition with

classical portico ..., Uren proposed a boldly massed asymmetrical group ingeniously

adapted to the awkward site hemmed in by back garden walls. The building is set

back as far as possible to give the approach some dignity; its dual function is clearly

expressed". [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:8] This is, the Uren's layout and design articulate

the civic functions- of administration and as a public meeting space of the Hornsey

Town Hall successfully and appropriately. The building as completed was later

awarded the bronze medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects for the best

London Building erected during the three years ending in December 1935. [Cherry,

Bridget. 1995:9] Shortly the Town Hall was joined with the buildings of the adjacent

gas and electricity showrooms, and became an integrated and unique combination in

the site; "the three 'centres of power and energy'- Gas, Electricity and Local

Government- were at the hub of borough with strong aspirations to be modern and

progressive." [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:12] On the one hand, Uren brought an

architectural hierarchical strategy- setting the Town Hall back from the noisy street-

into the plan to construct a focal centre to the community. On the other, it "produces a

physical manifestation of a modern and progressive suburban community, defining

itself against London at large." [Campkin, Ben. 2000: 3]

Strictly speaking, the character of the Hornsey Town Hall had been formed initially by

the competition's requirement. The brief for the Town Hall was specific about what

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the building should be like in reference to its overall form. It says that the town hall

should be 'dignified' in character and 'should rely on good proportions and a fitting

architectural setting rather than on elaborate decoration and detail which is not desired.

[Cherry, Bridget. 1988: 20] This implies that in the design of Town Hall, the effect of

overall setting should outweigh those of sophisticated detail. Intriguingly, as an

institutional building, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), also launched a

competition for its headquarters in Thirties, gave important criteria to different aspects:

the "evidence of imaginative handling of plan, structure and material, and for a due

sense, in the external and internal aspects of the building, of the dignity and

significance to the national life of the profession of architecture." [Richardson,

Margaret. 1979:61] Although both competitions laid stress on 'dignity', the assessors

the RIBA sought a building which can convey it effectively; by contrast, in the

Hornsey Town Hall, the impression of a fitting architectural setting was more

essential than the representation of a single building. In a sense, the requirement

disengages itself from a conventional idea that the building should perform a principal

role in a project. Instead, the entire plan becomes the significant criteria and

represents 'dignity in character' with the community. It is consistent with modern

architectural thought in Thirties, as Jackson has observed, that the problem for urban

planning seemed political, for the principles of English socialism were in accord with

those of architecture. The conservatives believed in individualism, while the socialists

advocated collaboration. [Jackson, Anthony. 1965:103] In modern architecture, as in

the competition requirement, architects were advised to regard buildings as elements

in a social environment not only a work of art.

Seemingly, the requirement was not satisfied in Uren's winning design in some

measure. He set the Town Hall back from the late Victorian style street as far as

possible and apart it from the setting. By this approach, the Town Hall retreats for its

social content, forms itself a focal point in the site, and acts as a definite centre. This

architectural hierarchical gesture gives the Town Hall a serene, dignified impression,

and creates a town square "which increases the sense of the building's separation from

the shops, and especially from the ornate Topsfield and the contemporary clock tower

of 1895, by F. G. Knight." [Campkin, Ben. 2000: 3] Nevertheless, as Raymond Unwin

commends, in pioneering study 'Town planning in Practice', that the grouping of

public buildings in central places or square, emphasising the need for definite centres;

not just in cities, but in their component districts and suburbs as well. [Raymond,

Unwin. 1909:176-234] This is, although Uren set the Town Hall back for the street

and apart it from the setting. It declares a centre the community's autonomy against

London at large. This is to say the Hornsey Town Hall is a rational development of

traditional urban planning in response to modern notions of architectural response to

the society.

As we have discussed, the Thirties is a contrastive and controversial decade. The

fierce confrontation between traditionalists and modernists produced the problem of

style which beset architects. However, as Stamp observers, "much individuals or

groups insisted upon one style- whether Georgian or modern- as the only possible

architectural expression of the age, in the Thirties as in Edward VII's reign, a

hierarchy of style according to building type seems to have operated. For public

buildings, a Classical manner, Roman or Stripped, or Hilversum or Stockholm, was

desirable. ... The more vulgar styles- modernistic or *moderne* or whatever- were used

for more commercial buildings or for buildings requiring extravagance and display."

[Stamp, Gavin 1979:15] Although the classical style was much in favour of public

buildings, there were some who could not abandon the classical manner or accept

modern style wholly supported eclectic modernistic style such as Stripped, or

Hilversum, or Stockholm.

Among those, "Dudok's modernism was also accepted for public utilities, such as

schools or hospitals ... which were one of the concrete manifestations of the social

consciousness of the period." [Stamp, Gavin 1979:15] Because, as Lewis Mumford

has commented of Dudok's architecture, "he has shown us how to do justice to the

new forces at our disposal, in science, in technics, in practical life, without losing hold

on deeper needs. This is true architecture of humanism, capable of finding the answer

to every mode of architectural construction." [Dudok, Willem Marinus. 1954: 55] In

the decade when architecture was in the conflict between new and old, he found an

answer for deeper human needs in architecture. We can easy to see why so many

English architects follow his work as a prototype for civic buildings which always

deal with of the problems that a community face on a day-to-day basis.

As Bridget Cherry, an architectural writer, says Dudok's architecture is too "the

quieter modern style... the principle of letting form follow function was combined

with classically inspired proportions and simple details, while plain surfaces were

made interesting by carefully brickwork." [Cherry, Bridget 1995: 7] And its 'quiet

style' which was considered appropriate to a municipal building had also influenced

several London town halls, such as Greenwich Town Hall (1939) by Clifford Culpin,

Wembley Town Hall (1935-40) by Clifford Strange, and E Berry Webber's

Hammersmith Town Hall (1938-39). Obviously this style had a formative influence

on Uren's design for Hornsey Town Hall as well with an austere, sober and friendly

quality.

However, he did not just transfer Dudok's architecture into the Hornsey Town Hall,

but combined it with English classical decoration, sculpture. Although elaborate

decoration and detail were not desired in the requirement, and also as Cherry notes

although "architectural sculpture had been a familiar accompaniment to buildings in

the classical tradition. The most extreme modern architects not only rejected

traditional classical proportions and vocabulary, but considered that almost any form

of ornament was unnecessary", Uren did not restricted himself in this modern

conception, on the contrary, he followed a tradition set by a number of progressive

contemporary English buildings, which had incorporated caved work by notable

sculpture, such as the London Transport Headquarters, designed by Charles Holden in

1927, the BBC Headquarters, designed by G Val Meyer in 1932, and the Shakespeare

Memorial Theatre, designed by Elizabeth Scott in 1932. [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:10],

and designed a noticeable sculptures and ornamental metalwork as an important

feature for the Town Hall. As Cherry observes, "The austerity of this brick tradition is

leavened by the carved stone lintel by the sculptor A. J. Ayres, and by ornamental

metalwork." [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:8] In addition, Margaret Richardson, an

architectural writer, mentions that "the idea of using applied decoration to build up the

symbolism of a building was much used [in Thirties]." The BBC headquarters has

exterior groups of sculpture symbolising the 'invisible sprit of the air', and India

House has Asoka columns skied on corbels carrying the lintel over the entrance- India

symbols of Empire. [Richardson, Margaret 1979:68] While the "self-indulgent"

[Cherry, Bridget. 1995:6] Knight's Clock Tower stand at the corner of the busy last

Victorian Street, the Town Hall's sculptural decoration illustrate a symbol of "civic

art". [Campkin, Ben 2000:7]

It is difficult to define the general characteristics of the competition designs, as there

is not one design available. It could be envisaged from an approach, from other

competitions at the time. Once again the RIBA headquarters competition in 1931

provides a good indication. Richardson notes "from what survive one can judge that

the majority are classical compromises. ...Only a very few... are fully-fledged

classical, using the orders. Again a handful... are 'modern', progressive..."

[Richardson, Margaret 1979:64] This reveals that most architects in Thirties were

seeking eclecticism, a compromise between English traditionalism and Continent

modernism. On the other hand, Hornsey was a community which a combination of a

prosperous suburb with the Victorian shopping centre and of a borough with strong

aspirations to be modern and progressive. [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:12] Therefore, the

assessors of the Hornsey Town Hall may not choose a plan which could only transfer

Continent modernism without any consideration for English tradition, or which

followed the self-indulgent classical tradition without any progressive thinking, but a

plan which could merge two thoughts and generate a proper building which represent

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Hornsey. As Ben Compkin suggests that "the right combination of progressiveness

and traditionalism would be essential in representing an authority governing a

'booming' community." [Campkin, Ben 2000:8] And the Hornsey Town Hall

displayed symbolism.

Conclusion

As Kumar argues, "In all parts of the world, national identity historically has been a

matter for scholars, intellectuals, artists and statesmen, who in their different ways

have sought to shape it… It is no just some affair of the 'superstructure', of

ideological posturing. It leads to visions and definitions which may be all we have

when we need them- in a time of conflict or crisis, for instance." [Kumar, Krishan.

2003:252-253] It was as clear in England at the interwar period. Before the time, in

order to ensure that uniformity and quality could across the all 'inner' Empire- the

Great Britain, English repressed their own national consciousness. While other

nations, Scottish, for instance, began forming their national identity, English was

proud of being British. They were incurious even indifferent who they really were.

Not until grand social changes occurred: the winder entities- 'inner' and British

Empires were collapsing politically and economically, did national consciousness

arise. They then differentiating themselves from British, and found themselves being

pleased to be 'Little Englanders' who were sober, moderate, and longing for a

peaceful country life, and dislike of bossy, loud-voiced 'Big Englanders'.

English national identity was now put on public agenda, and shaping by different

social groups in the debate, architecture, for example, since the history is a history of

surrogate objects, as Rakatansky has identified. This claim is based on that

architecture is a compound form of human culture which defines identities depending

on various factors. Then, it can be seen that from the general nature relation between

built and social form, hybrid forms of architecture can tell us more than pure

architectural forms. And the most significant forms of ideological identification in

architecture, as Rakatansky has suggested, are not the 'Big Symbols', but the accrual

of the *'small symbol':* the ways in institutional space that architecture organizes

activities.

Meanwhile, if we want to observe what English national identity was formed at

interwar period through architecture, the controversy over English modernism might

provide a vital sign. In the Twenties, two schools had begun their battles. On the one

hand, Albert Richardson, who was a partisan of classical revival, took over the

Architect's Journal in 1919, and published a number of historical studies of English

architects. [Watkin, David. 1979:84] On the other, the *architectural Review*

continually introduced modern Dutch and Swedish architecture into England. Then

the polemic grew bitter when the MARS invited émigré architects to settle in England.

Two groups attacked one another's legitimacy from various aspects. At the time,

Pevener, an émigré historian, turn the polemic into intriguing direction: the

traditionalists emerge as pioneers, and make English architects feel at home in

modern architecture.

However, no matter how the polemic was going, history, as always, was repeated

itself. English architects, as before, would find their own style from the foreign

innovation, and emerged into their tradition. And this polemic is dialectical debate for

the making of English modern architecture.

From the first application, we can see that in his mind, Emberton was a traditionalist

influenced by the modern movement. He moved between two schools and practiced

both successfully. This is might be odd to the Continental architects who insist upon

one style, and think that is 'lack of ideological intensity'. However, it is ordinary to

English architects at the time. For him and others, taking sides is not the only

condition to form English modern architecture, seeking it between two was the best

way to form it. Emberton, as others, might not yet create English modern architecture,

but he found a way to form it.

The second application is different case. Architect, Reginald Uren, was born and had

his architectural training in New Zealand, then came to England in 1930. But when

designing the Hornsey Town Hall, he knew how to balance the Continental

modernism with English traditionalism. The Town Hall is set back from noisy to

obtain a calm dignity, decorated with carved stone lintel and ornamental metalwork to

express 'civic art', and designed as a democratic space from all residents. It illustrates

that Hornsey is a Victorian style suburb with a modern spirit. This proves that Uren

did not just transfer a modern architecture to an English community, but transform it

to suit local circumstances. Moreover, this implies that it is not necessary to be

English to design English modernistic buildings, but crucial to be an architect who

knows how it is essential in representing a 'booming' community in the right

combination of progressiveness and traditionalism.

In conclusion, after studying the historical and case studies, we found that national

identity is not a single consciousness. There is no one answer which can reach a

consensus, especially English identity. It was arose in a very short period, and

frequently confused with British. However, "English identity will to some extent be

shaped by the various success of different groups in the debate" [Kumar, Krishen

2003:253], but need more time, so as in Architecture. We might find some institutes or

houses exhibiting some features of English modern architecture, the Hornsey Town

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Hall, for instance, but we can not declare that we have it because they are a few and

have unstable quality. However, one thing is certain; English architects were in

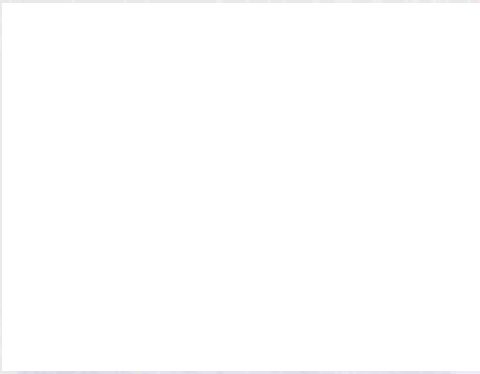progress to create national identity through architecture at the interwar period.

Figure1.

Do they realize when they try to foist these continental barracks on us, that English is the only language that has a word for 'home'?" form Osbert Lancaster's *Progress at Pelvis Bay*, Page 48

Figure2.

Diagonal windows of service stair Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 56

The fenestration in the stair well is restricted by the structure.

Figure3.

Simpson's of Piccadilly. hotograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*,72

All these characteristic features do not only give this project a sophisticated simplicity.

Figure4

House built in Weybridge for Mrs Ian Anderson in 1926. Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*,
23

Curves thatch, pebble walls and a chimney which is given prominence on the front elevation are in Arts
and crafts manner.

Figure5.

New Empire Hall, Olympia in 1930. Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 41

This project establishes Emberton as a Modernist.

Figure6.

The His Master's Voice shop in Oxford Street in 1939. Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 89

It is similar project to Simpson's of Piccadilly.

Figure7.

Audley house for his sister in 1939. Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 91

This building states Emberton's predilections in timber and Dutch De Stijl detailing.

Figure8.

The Hornsey Town Hall, c. 1947 Photograph form postcard Hornsey Collection No.21.

It produces a physical manifestation of a modern and progressive suburban community, defining itself against London at large.
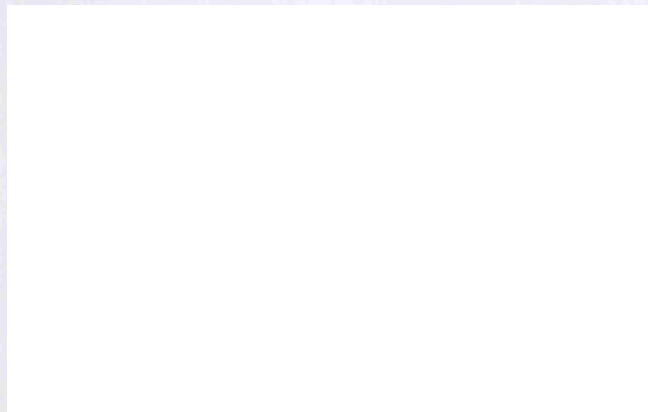
Figure9.

Crouch End Broadway c. 1905. Photograph form postcard Hornsey Collection No.18.

The ornate Topsfield and the contemporary clock tower of 1895, by F. G. Knight

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