Introduction

This book is about space in eighteenth-century Britain. The book is organized in three sections. Part I discusses conceptions of space expressed mainly by architects and writers about architecture; it also discusses concepts of divine design, expressed mainly by philosophers and theologians. Part II discusses that spatial thinking in practice, in the city of Bath. Part III discusses spatial concepts in the major novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. This introduction explains the scope and purpose of each of these sections and the argument that connects them.

More convincingly than anyone else, Andrea Palladio had interpreted Vitruvius' *De Architectura* for the modern western world in 1570, but still he was just one of many interpreters of the only surviving classical treatise on architecture. Leon Battista Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria*, first published posthumously in Latin in 1485, had already been translated into Italian and French before Palladio's *Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* appeared.[1] Among Palladio's contemporaries, his countrymen Sebastiano Serlio (1537–47), Giacomo Barozzi, known as Il Vignola (1563), Pietro Cataneo (1567) and Vincenzo Scamozzi (1615) wrote renowned architectural books that included responses to Vitruvius. French theorists, meanwhile, were developing their own architectural book industry, with major tracts first by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (1559) and Philibert Delorme (1567), and later by Pierre Le Muet, who translated Palladio in 1645, Roland Fréart de Chambray (1650), Abraham Bosse (1664), René Ouvrard (1677), Pierre Bullet (1691), and Augustin Charles D'Aviler (1693–6). There was no comparable proliferation of English architectural books at the same time. Britain boasted only two slight treatises, by John Shute (1563) and Sir Henry Wotton (1624), before John Evelyn set matters right in 1664 by translating Fréart's *Parallèle*, which anthologized ten Renaissance authors. Since 'the British Palladio', Inigo Jones, at his death in 1652 had left buildings but no published theory, British connoisseurs relied on continental rather than native theoretical writing.[2]

[1] Alberti's treatise appeared in Latin again in 1541, Italian in 1546 and 1565, French in 1553, and English in 1715.

[2] The most authoritative general account of British Palladian architecture is John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530–1830*, Pelican History of Art, 7th edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), esp. pp. 319–48. For the view that British Palladianism is indebted more to Inigo Jones than to Palladio, see Summerson, *Inigo Jones* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, reprinted 1983),

The many continental treatises published between the mid sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries almost all attempted to define architecture and locate its historical origins, and to establish 'correct' standards for the proportions of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders.[3] The authors inevitably fed on each other's work, notably in their agreement that the original purpose of architecture was, as Vitruvius defined it, to provide primitive man with shelter against bad weather.[4] When Vitruvius was writing, early in the reign of Augustus Caesar, architecture had already become a conspicuous means of glorifying the Roman Empire: the state, said Vitruvius, 'was not only made greater' through the Emperor's conquests, 'but the majesty of the empire also was expressed through the eminent dignity of its public buildings.'[5] In the stream of architectural books from Renaissance Italy and France, that imperial theme is rarely lost. When a few Englishmen started to write architectural treatises of their own soon after the Restoration in 1660, they too adopted this theme, to express their optimism over the expected political rehabilitation of their nation. Although the hopes faded quickly, the function of architecture as a means of glorifying monarchy and empire continued to appear in all kinds of books and buildings.

Far from developing a genuinely vernacular architecture, after the Restoration British architects and patrons designed their houses and public buildings in a conspicuously classical idiom for just about a century. Vernacular or classical, architecture confers spatial form on human aspirations. Architects and patrons transformed ideas into structures and spaces, occasionally idiosyncratic, but usually representative of the collective ideals and values of the wealthiest classes. Concepts of space and its uses were thus both personal and publicly sanctioned. Space is the basis of architecture, of cottages, country mansions, town houses, theatres, inns, streets, squares, and cities, but although it was a common subject of philosophical speculation and debate, space was rarely the explicit subject of architectural theory. Space does occur, but for the most part indirectly, as a topic in several kinds of commentary on architecture, especially on its origins, history, proportions, organization, and functions, none of which, I should say, is a result of the 'instinctive correctness' that Siegfried Giedion considered 'the secret of the architecture of the middle eighteenth century',[6] for that 'correctness', though not itself programmatic, is the product of systematic thought rather than instinct. In the first section of this book I use this architectural discourse, in books and

p. 138.

[3] The Tuscan and Composite orders were sometimes similarly discussed, but they were not usually accepted as strictly classical.

[4] *De Architectura*, II, i, 1–2.

[5] *Ibid.*, I, preface, 2.

[6] *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*, 5th edn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 147.

buildings, not to rewrite architectural history but to explore the spatial thinking of men who designed places where people would live and work.

My second section may seem quixotic, because I have taken as an example of the practical side of British architectural discourse not the most obvious choice, London, but a city that is both representative and aberrant: Bath. The ring of buildings constructed around the medieval centre of Bath was one of three substantial urban extensions built in eighteenth-century Britain. The other two were the Harley-Cavendish estate north of Oxford Street in London and the new town on the north side of Edinburgh. London and Edinburgh are only partly Georgian cities, but Bath is dominated by its eighteenth century accretions.[7] While the new districts of London and Edinburgh remained districts or suburbs, intimately connected to, but still distinct from the older areas, Bath's new buildings redefined the old town, so that Bath became virtually a purpose-built new city.

Georgian Bath today looks like everybody's idea of a neoclassical city, a compact cluster of strictly Palladian buildings. Although Bath is Palladian, the city's principal designer and developer, John Wood the Elder, had in mind more than Palladian theory. Aiming to outdo Palladio, and arguing forcefully against Vitruvian principles, Wood gave orthodox neoclassical theory relatively little prominence as he planned the new city on the basis of a theory of British history that has been dismissed from time to time as idiosyncratic, arcane, bizarre or insane. Wood's argument about his country's past was unhistorical, but not esoteric, since he drew much of it from the readily available published writings of historians, antiquaries and philosophers. What is perhaps oddest about Wood's theory is that it had never before been put explicitly into practice by an architect in Britain. That, together with Wood's willingness to carry his theory to an implausible extreme, is probably the reason for the dismissive reactions to his thinking.

Largely under Wood's self-appointed tutelage, Bath was designed as a playground for the 'great', the 'rich' and the 'middle sort', to use Defoe's terms.[8] Fashionable Bath was the most famous social symbol of the leisured classes in the eighteenth century and its disposition of space was a symbol of those classes. I go into the intellectual origins of Bath – however eccentric at times they may seem – in detail, in order to illustrate the ideology that could create the social spaces of a Georgian city.

A reader might reasonably expect that I should then discuss in part III the theory of architectural space and the buildings of Bath as they appear in the novels. I do not do so exactly, for two reasons. First, I do not discuss the

[7] New squares affected the character of Glasgow, Manchester, and Dublin but did not transform the topography of the whole city.

[8] In the *Review*, vol. 6, no. 36 (25 June 1709), p. 142, Defoe divided the population into seven groups: the great, the rich, the middle sort, labourers, farmers, the poor and the miserable. For analysis of Defoe's commentaries on class, see Peter Earle, *The World of Defoe* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), pp. 162–66.

theory because I know of no evidence to suggest that the novels of Defoe, Richardson and Fielding are somehow contrived as conscious responses to architectural writers, individual buildings, or particular theories of space. It would be an indefensible contrivance of my own to suggest that, say, Richardson's treatment of space is the same as Palladio's, is expressed in the same terms, or uses precisely the same concepts. The architectural books and novels with which I am familiar did not share the same views or methods of interpretation: an architect's spaces and a novelist's are rarely identical. But, divergent as their concepts of space are, the writer discussed here share a habit of spatial thinking. That thinking is what I concentrate on. Second, I do not discuss Bath's architecture and society in the novels because, although there is a case for a new critical study of this subject, it would be irrelevant here, because my subject is neither architectural history, nor the relations between architecture and the novel, but space.

My main purpose in part III is to investigate conceptions of space and place in writing that is usually not concerned with architecture at all. The principal uses of space that I seek to identify in the literature are: narrative as spatial design; the language of architecture employed to describe people; the exploitation of personal spaces, in such experiences as imprisonment, isolation and alienation; and the constitutive control of human activity that occurs when a particular function is assigned to a social space. My argument is that the spaces created (in theory or practice) by architects and those created by the novelists – whether or not they are the same spaces – express specific ideology and are therefore political.[9] I use political concepts of space to investigate the nature of a subject in relation to society in the major fictions of Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson. For one who resists the pressure to conform as for one who does not, the self is defined, to a remarkable degree, by space.

The last chapters concentrate on literature that was extremely popular in its day. This book is certainly not a survey of all the bestsellers of eighteenth-century Britain, but an attempt to locate in contemporary spatial discourse some of the most important and popular writing, which has continued to be considered important, if not necessarily popular, in the twentieth century. I am therefore dealing with some of the most familiar passages in eighteenth-century fiction, where many have been before me. Numerous other novels and poems have just as good a claim to inclusion, but one cannot have everything because there would be nowhere to put it.

[9] For commentary on spatiality as a part of the aesthetics of the novel, involving such concepts as 'chapter architecture' and spatial secondary illusion, see Philip Stevick, 'The Theory of Fictional Chapters', in *The Theory of the Novel*, ed. Philip Stevick (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 171–84; and Joseph A. Kestner, *The Spatiality of the Novel* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).

PART I

1

Space, architecture, and politics

> Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place. Isaiah 5:8

> Or, de toutes les actes, le plus complet est celui de construire. Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos, ou l'architecte*

I

Many people, particularly city-dwellers, know the experience of crossing a street from one range of buildings to another range that looks similar but has an entirely different atmosphere. One might sense carefree gaiety on one side of a New York street, tension and menace on the other. And yet all one has done is pass through an empty space, from the shadow of one building to that of another. Various factors, such as street lighting, garbage, or street furniture of some kind, can contribute to such a change, but the most significant factor is surely what other people do in the spaces on each side of the street. Perhaps one area is devoted to making money by legal means, the other, illegal, or one might be a centre of power, the other of powerlessness. The empty space that is the street (occupied only temporarily by passing traffic) is sometimes the line that divides two communities. Most people, I imagine, would probably not acknowledge this to be a function of the street itself, that is, of the space. In Berlin or Belfast, everyone recognizes the bounding and divisive function of the infamous walls, which are in any case intended to prevent anyone from crossing the street at all, but in less eccentric circumstances than these we can identify the diverse human activities on each side of the street without even looking for a physical boundary such as a wall. Some urban spaces, such as London's Hyde Park, appear from certain vantage points to be limited only by perspectives, rather than by buildings or streets. Paul Zucker's example, the Place de la Concorde in Paris, may suggest boundaries by no more than an illusion, but there are other, far from illusory, boundaries that have no tangible existence.[1] As Joseph Rykwert has

[1] Paul Zucker, *Town and Square from the Agora to the Village Green* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 186.

explained, the Roman augural *templum* might have had 'visible and permanent physical bounds, but its real boundaries were not fixed by them,' since they were 'fixed' by the verbal assignation of a function to the space of the *templum* itself.[2] A boundary can be defined by the function which people attach to an empty space: not all boundaries have to be marked by walls, fences, and hedges. Contiguity need not suggest continuity of subculture.

In our everyday lives, most of us interpret some particular spaces, which we visit or use so habitually that interpretation is unconscious. People who use banks scarcely need to interpret the space inside a bank, for instance, although that is precisely what they do when they enter a bank building in order to cash a cheque. We know that the place is a bank, either because we think we have always known, or because it happens to be the bank we have been using for four years, or because a sign outside the building tells us that this is a branch of the First Pacific Bank of California. The interior arrangements will usually suggest *bankness*: that is, they will include counter tops with supplies of printed forms for various transactions, windows where customers speak with cashiers, an informal desk or two where one can open new accounts, and so forth. We would recognize all these familiar features of a bank at a glance, irrespective of differences in their disposition between one branch and another. The familiarity given us by experience enables us therefore to 'read' the internal arrangement as a statement rather like: 'This is a bank. People conduct financial transactions here.' In this entirely mundane example of interpretation of interior space, a visitor defines the space by the activity that occurs within its limits. The exterior of a typical modern bank in a western nation will probably not suggest, by its design, the activities that take place inside. We are likely to need the sign outside to indicate those activities. This is not to say that all modern banks look like all other modern buildings, but rather to say that *bankness* is no longer as likely as it once was to be implied by the shape of the building or the disposition of its wall surfaces, pillars, or windows. Some decoration, such as dollar signs carved into brickwork, might suggest to one observer the function of the building, or to another the cost of its construction. Alternatively, a conspicuous, massive classical portico might imply solidity and weight, or tradition and empire, none of which may be inherent in *bankness* but in which financial institutions might be thought somehow to participate. Such inferences about an individual building are simpler to posit than reactions to outside space, to the block, the street, the town, the city, or whatever space surrounds the building. Outside space may be more difficult to interpret because it is less easily divisible into discrete functions than the interior space of a single building usually is. An individual building thus makes a more readily comprehensible state-

[2] *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 48. What is more, *templum* originally meant (1) an open place, and (2) the extent of the heavens (Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, VII, 6).

ment about itself than it does about the space outside it, even though it contributes to a definition of that outside space.

The builder of the first hut, if ever there was such a thing, defined not one but two spaces: the space outside the hut, and the space inside it. If we imagine the surface of the earth as a single space, the first edifice – be it a hut or a palace – divided that space into two new spaces. The second edifice divided the remaining outside space, and so on. Anyone who builds divides space. To create a building is to create a space, or more precisely to limit a space and, by limiting, to define it. To build a wall, a fence, or a street where none existed before is to divide one visible space into two, to violate infinite though knowable space by marking boundaries. An interior space remains inviolate until interior walls are erected, converting a single space into rooms. Rooms themselves are converted less definitely into smaller units of space by the addition of a fireplace, an alcove, or furniture. But definitions of space require the participation of designers, builders, inhabitants, and other users and visitors. The 'builder' of a nutshell may define the space it encloses as narrowly confined, while its 'user' may, like Hamlet, imagine counting himself a king of infinite space.[3] Interpreting space involves interpreting the use or uses to which space can be put, and it also involves differences of individual perception. One individual's sprawling and impersonal metropolis may be another's compact and intimate town.

Neoclassical theorists did not contemplate space, architectural or cosmic, in such ways as these. Instead, their favourite themes are oriented around other human needs and desires. Since space is man's inescapable element, the history of architecture is the history of man.[4] Together with the need for food, there is no human necessity more fundamental than shelter. Architecture, said Antoine Yves Goguet in 1758, in an unexceptionably orthodox Vitruvian remark, was born of necessity as shelter against the weather and wild animals.[5] And yet to speak of the crudest imaginable shelter as 'architecture' is almost heretical in view of architecture's long history as an art. Writing after centuries of emphasis on the aesthetics of architecture, the neoclassicists often distinguished between the origin of building and the origin of architecture as two entirely different things. If architecture was not mere building, what did neoclassicists think architecture was? Vitruvius had said originally that it was the arts of building, dialling (i.e. clockmaking) and mechanics.[6] Most later commentators ignored the last two and stuck to building. With his customary pragmatism the learned Dean of Christ Church, Henry Aldrich, defined architecture in 1710 as 'the art of building well,' adding that the

[3] *Hamlet*, II, ii, 260–61.

[4] Cf. Andrew Saint, 'A Plan without a Maze', review of Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), *TLS*, 14 February 1986, 168.

[5] *De l'origine des loix, des arts, et des sciences et leur progrès chez les anciens peuples* (Paris, 1758), I, p. 126.

[6] *De Architectura*, I, iii, 1.

architect could 'be considered in three views:' patron, designer, and builder.[7] Had Aldrich's contemporaries had access to a published text of his book, few would have dissented from his view. After Vitruvius it was orthodox to recognize two branches of building: public and private; and three classes of the public branch: civil, military, and religious. Writers with this passion for dividing and subdividing their subject would then duly account for the origins and characteristics of each class and branch. It was orthodox also to identify the fundamental principles of architecture as utility, strength, and beauty. By this route architecture could be defined then as a harmonious union of these three principles, with beauty arriving later than the other two as the inutile sophisticating factor that transforms a mere building into 'architecture'.[8]

With this perspective Robert Anthony Bromley suggested in the 1790s that ancient Persian architects were building

> long, very long before any ideas of regular order in architecture had taken possession of the human mind. We shall consequently find the Persians acting on those notions for the obtaining of strength, and duration, and conveniency in buildings, which common sense with some future assistances from studious individuals must supply. It must be remembered that the buildings, which are now seen in ruins at Persepolis, were not intended to be inhabited, but were formed for a temple.[9]

The distinction between building and architecture was nicely expressed in 1674 by André Félibien, who wrote in his *Principes*:

> Bien que les Bastimens soient considerez entre les premiers ouvrages des hommes, l'Architecture neanmoins n'est pas un des Arts les plus anciens. Elle a eu comme tous les autres de foibles commencemens, & ne s'est perfectionée qu'aprés un long usage.[10]

Although buildings are considered among the first works of men, architecture is nevertheless not one of the oldest arts. Like the other arts, it was weak at first, and was not perfected until it had been in use a long time.

[7] *The Elements of Civil Architecture, according to Vitruvius and other ancients, and the most approved practice of modern authors, especially Palladio*, translated by Philip Smyth (Oxford, 1789), p. 1. A portion of Aldrich's Latin manuscript was published in 1750, the whole of it in 1789 together with Smyth's English translation.

[8] After Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, I, iii. See Jacques-François Blondel's article on 'architecture' in the *Encyclopédie* (1751), I, p. 617, and Diderot's prospectus (1751). Eric Bentley reminds us 'of the man who, having watched for weeks the construction of a modern Gothic building, cried one day: "Oh, look, they're putting the architecture on now!" ' ('*The Importance of Being Earnest*', in *The Playwright as Thinker* [New York: Reznal & Hitchcock, 1946], reprinted in *Oscar Wilde: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Richard Ellmann, Twentieth-Century Views [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969], p. 114).

[9] *A Philosophical and Critical History of the Fine Arts, Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture*, I (London, 1793), pp. 145–46. Bromley's own source was P. F. Hugues d'Hancarville, *Recherches sur l'origine, l'esprit, et les progrès des arts de la Grèce*, 3 vols. (London, 1785).

[10] *Des Principes de l'Architecture, de la Sculpture, de la Peinture, et des autres arts qui en dépendent* (Paris, 1674). I quote from the 2nd edition (Paris, 1690), p. 1.

And indeed Goguet recognized that 'c'est du luxe qu'elle a reçu ses embellissemens' (it is from luxury that architecture received its embellishments).[11]

'Building' did not have artistic principles, but 'architecture' did. These beautifying principles would dignify building by raising it above its obvious level of manual skill to one of high artistic achievement. Such 'improvement' was inseparable from growing political organization and sophistication: in antiquity, said Germain Boffrand, 'les habitations rustiques ont reçu une nouvelle forme, toujours fondée sur le besoin & sur l'utilité' (rustic habitations were given a new form, still based on necessity and utility), but only after societies had been united by the introduction of civil laws.[12] Beauty and magnificence, D'Aviler had argued, follow utility as a direct result of the increasing power and wealth of great men.[13] In such an historical perspective necessity and utility begin to lose some of their dominance. As societies grew more sophisticated, trees were still used for columns, but by giving them bases and capitals, art made them more elegantly contoured than trees are naturally: the classical orders, whose cohering feature is the column with its capital, traditionally merge 'nature' as expressed by a tree with 'nature' as found in the proportions of the human body.[14] Who discovered and developed these principles of beauty is another question: evading it, the revolutionary Etienne-Louis Boullée was certain that anyone seeking the origins of architecture could conclude that the principles were either unknown or undeveloped.[15]

As for the origin of building, almost every writer apparently felt obliged to preface his theory of architecture with an account of the origin, rise, and progress of building. One loses count of the number of writers who express the Vitruvian view that the first buildings were primitive huts: typically, these authors relate how, from a hut of mud and leaves, perhaps animal skins too, assembled rather like a lean-to supported by a standing tree, the earliest primitive shelter would gradually grow in sophistication, until it was replaced by a sturdier structure built exclusively from hewn wood. Once these structures acquire neighbours, for reasons of security and communication, the origins of a city are established. From considerations of strength, utility, and a freer choice of site, the huts become houses with solid foundations; as soon as they acquire ornaments, they begin symbolically to represent the goals and desires of their inhabitants. The theory of the primitive hut does not rely

[11] Goguet, *De l'origine*, I, p. 126.
[12] *Livre d'Architecture* (Paris, 1745), I, p. 5.
[13] Augustin Charles D'Aviler, *Cours d'Architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, I (Paris, 1696), preface, sig. i, verso.
[14] Boffrand, *Livre*, I, p. 5. Cf. Isaac Ware's suggestively titled *A Complete Body of Architecture* (London, 1756), p. 135: 'Nature has formed the trunk of no tree square, therefore there could be originally no such thing as a square pillar.' The basic text is Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, III, i.
[15] *Architecture. Essai sur l'art*, ed. Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos (Paris: Hermann, 1968), p. 52. Boullée's treatise was composed no later than 1793.