Defining the Profession of Architect in the Twentieth Century: France, Italy and the United States

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Anthony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 311 pp., $60.00 (hb), ISBN 0–393–730484.

Hélène Jannière, *Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'. L'émergence de nouvelles revues en France et en Italie (1923–1939)* (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 2002), 377 pp., €24.50 (pb), ISBN 2–909109–26–7.

Paolo Nicoloso, *Gli architetti di Mussolini. Scuole e sindacato, architetti e massoni, professori e politici negli anni del regime* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1999), 239 pp., €19.63 (pb), ISBN 88–464–1305–9.

The distinction between the notion of architecture as a separate and autonomous discipline and one that recognises the multiple intersections lying behind it remains, at least among architectural historians, a controversial issue. Certainly this persistent dichotomy reflects academic habits as well as a cultural attitude common among professionals. It is this dualism that has characterised the profession of architect for the better part of the twentieth century.

Despite almost universally accepted assumptions, the figure of the architect – as a profession legally and institutionally recognised – is relatively recent. The genesis of architectural education reflects this essential piece of information: academic curricula intended to train practitioners in the field of architecture were established only in the last 200 years. To take the case of just three countries, in France the formation of professionals active in the sector of building design was for long time disputed by competing institutions, the oldest of them – the Ecole des Beaux-Arts – being the product of a post-revolutionary reform; in Britain, it was the introduction in 1882 of the examination for entrance to the Royal Institute of British Architects that forced the reorganisation of a training process previously divided between attendance at a private school and apprenticeship to an established professional firm; in the

Contemporary European History, **13**, 3 (2004), pp. 345–356 © 2004 Cambridge University Press
DOI: 10.1017/S0960777304001766 Printed in the United Kingdom

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777304001766 Published online by Cambridge University Press

United States, the first university programme was not launched until 1868 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Perhaps as a corollary to this youthful legacy, the architectural profession as a subject of research is a relatively underdeveloped area for architectural historians. A limited number of studies has appeared since the publication of the work co-ordinated in 1977 by Spiro Kostof:[1] one must examine a period of more than twenty years in order to go back to a set of solid and pioneering scholarship on this theme.[2] With a few exceptions, many of these studies seem to fail in positioning the profession of architect – and its technical, cultural and symbolic apparati – within the context of the time. Moreover, they apparently do not recognise the specific conditions in which architects operate, for instance the necessary relationships with other professional groups active in the realms of the building industry, territorial transformation or city management.[3] Scholars rarely linger over the social role of the architect in contemporary history.[4] As a result, those seeking this kind of contextually grounded approach must call on studies that consider some specific aspects of the architectural profession: from these partial views one can construct more general interpretations. Three recently published books provide such an opportunity, offering different perspectives through which to look at the profession of architect in the twentieth century, even if they consider different contexts, moments or places. These works tackle three aspects that are central for analysing the figure of the architect in modern society: architectural education, the media and its role in the circulation of architectural knowledge and the relationship of architects with political power and the state's apparatus.

Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'. L'émergence de nouvelles revues en France et en Italie (1923–1939) (Publishing policies and 'modern' architecture. The emergence of new periodicals in France and Italy) by Hélène Jannière is derived from her Ph.D. dissertation (from which it inherits a somewhat excessive length). It analyses two

[1] Spiro Kostof, ed., *The Architect. Chapters in the History of the Profession* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). Curiously, in the same year a history of the profession of architect was published in the German Democratic Republic with the clear intention of addressing an East German audience: Herbert Ricken, *Der Architekt. Geschichte eines Berufs* (Berlin: Bauakademie der DDR-Henschelverlag, 1977).

[2] Andrew Saint, *The Image of the Architect* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Roberto Gabetti and Carlo Olmo, *Alle radici dell'architettura contemporanea. Il cantiere e la parola* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989); Louis Callebat, ed., *Histoire de l'architecte* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998). Concerning some specific national or regional contexts see Gérard Ringon, *Histoire du métier d'architecte en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession. The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press: 1999); Françoise Amon and Dominique Hervier, eds., *Hommes et métiers du bâtiment 1860–1940. L'exemple des Hauts-de-Seine* (Paris: Centre des monuments nationaux–Éditions du patrimoine, 2001).

[3] A task – that of analysing the presence and the work of 'technical' elites within the context of the city – better undertaken by social historians: see, e.g., Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Changing the city: urban international information and the Lyon municipality, 1900–1940', *Planning Perspectives*, 14, 1 (1999), 19–48; Viviane Claude and Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'L'Urbanisme au début du siècle. De la réforme urbaine à la compétence technique', *Vingtième Siècle*, 64 (1999), 25–39; *Contemporary European History*, 11, 4 (2002), theme issue 'Municipal Connections: Co-operation, Links and Transfers among European Cities in the Twentieth Century'.

[4] Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1991).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777304001766 Published online by Cambridge University Press

French architectural magazines, *L'Architecture Vivante* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and two Italian ones, *Casabella* and *Domus*. *L'Architecture Vivante* appeared in 1923, while the other journals were first published in the early 1930s. The work of Jannière makes evident the fragile *raison d'être* of architectural magazines in this historical moment: suspended between avant-gardism and professional service, these publications for a long time remained in a sort of editorial limbo. Starting from the mid-nineteenth century architectural magazines had tended to focus on technical and professional aspects (César Daly's *Revue générale de l'Architecture et des Travaux Publics* probably being the most telling example), while in the early twentieth century an increasing number of periodicals espoused the causes embraced by contemporary art movements, in so doing emphasising the 'creative' and 'inventive' aspect of the figure of architect, implicitly stating its supposedly autonomous nature.[5] But this was a short-lived penchant: during the second and third decades of the century, magazines assumed a profile that reflected the more complex reality to which they gave expression. As the author correctly observes, around the second half of the 1920s, the European architectural debate was no longer characterised by a rigid dualism between a 'radical and progressive fringe' and the 'rest of a profession castled on conservative positions' (p. 78).

One of the most interesting parts of Jannière's volume is when she explains the process through which the architectural press of the 1920s and 1930s tried to create its own cultural legitimacy. By supporting the idea that a common tendency towards a new architectural language was spreading in different countries, architectural publications (but also the architectural publishing industry in general) adopted a supposedly unifying element, one that could differentiate them from other editorial products. Under the banner of 'internationalism', in fact, they promoted the concept of a uniform architectural aesthetic which was now ripe to eliminate cultural or geographical differences. The qualification of 'international' – writes Jannière – was usually considered to offer three distinct interpretations: international could mean at once the European and world *diffusion* of the new architecture, the *transnational* character of this architecture in terms of formal solutions adopted, and the sometimes vague political nuances associated with the notion of *internationalism*. No doubt the 'international' character advocated by some architectural magazines of the 1920s and 1930s entailed the implicit aspiration by the same magazines to state their claim as modern.

This international image was more artificial than real. French and Italian magazines often reacted in different ways to similar issues: still, numerous analogies do exist, probably more the byproduct of a similar socio-political context than the sign of a common strategy. For instance, the intermittent attention paid in the 1930s by *L'Architecture Vivante* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* to the German-speaking world, in sharp contrast to the anti-Germanism that characterised the French press and the

[5] On architectural avant-garde magazines of the early twentieth century see the monographic issue of *Rassegna*, 'Architecture in the Avant-Garde Magazines', *Rassegna*, 12 (December 1982).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777304001766 Published online by Cambridge University Press

publishing sector in general after the First World War, was part of a common trend.[6] Similarly to their French counterparts, Italian magazines published some accounts of the state-of-the-art architecture in Germany. Both French and Italian publications tended to recognise the latest trends in contemporary architecture as an international phenomenon: in the meantime, however, they tried to emphasise specifically national aspects or – as Jannière writes – 'to assert the national ramifications' of the modern movement in architecture (p. 142).

Despite the focus on France and Italy, the book offers more than an analysis of the four magazines mentioned above: it describes a world where architectural publications were a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge as well as a tool to define the symbolic boundaries of a profession with a relatively recent past. In this respect, *Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'* deals primarily with the typical contents of the architectural press of the first half of the twentieth century but also with the tools it commonly used to communicate its message (texts, images accompanied by captions, photomontages, etc.). At first, this looks like the less convincing aspect of a work that otherwise seems solid as regards the contents and well documented in terms of bibliographic references. The book, in fact, analyses architectural publications from the perspective of their originators and not from that of the readers and users: in short, *Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'* says nothing of their actual reception. However, we cannot blame the author for this absence; one must acknowledge that dealing with the history of the publishing industry implies facing a fundamental problem, the lack of substantial record of readers' response.

Not many book-length works have been devoted to the subject of architectural periodicals in the twentieth century, and these studies have rarely been able to provide accurate information in terms of circulation, let alone something of the social and cultural profile of the readers.[7] The fact is that it seems quite difficult to assess the real

[6] This is not surprising: as social historians have already demonstrated, early in the century French elites were at times susceptible to the fascination of the German world, despite the nationalism that apparently dominated the rhetoric of the time. On the subject of the German influences on the French culture see Hélène Barber-Say, *Le voyage de France en Allemagne de 1871 à 1914* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1994); *Image de soi, image de l'autre, la France et l'Allemagne en miroir: chantiers de recherche* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1994), proceedings of the conference at the Maison des sciences de l'homme de Strasbourg, May 1993; Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999).

[7] Among them are Roberto Gabetti and Carlo Olmo, *Le Corbusier e l'Esprit Nouveau* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973); Beatriz Colomina, 'L'Esprit Nouveau': Architecture and 'Publicité', in Beatriz Colomina, ed.. *Architecture Reproduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 56–99; Joan Oackman, 'Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of "Oppositions"' *ibid*., 180–99; Ramón Gutiérrez, *Revistas de arquitectura de América Latina, 1900–2000* (San Juan: Universidad Politécnica de Puerto Rico, 2001); Martijn Le Coultre, ed., *Wendingen, 1918–1932. Architectuur en vormgeving* (Blaricum: V+K, 2001); Jean-Michel Leniaud and Béatrice Bouvier, eds., *Les périodiques d'architecture. XVIIIe–XXe siècle. Recherche d'une méthode critique d'analyse* (Paris: École des chartes, 2001); C. Greig Crysler, *Writing Spaces. Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Built Environment, 1960–2000* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003): this last contains essays on the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *Assemblage*, *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, and *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*.

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circulation of the architectural press.[8] Consequently, it is not easy to evaluate its impact and influence on architectural professional, aesthetic and technical practices. From this point of view, Jannière's emphasis on the role of photographic images in architectural publications is indeed correct. Books and magazines of the 1920s and 1930s did seek to create a 'new vision' of the discipline through an instrumental use of visual apparatus: not only was the presence of photographs considered a tag of modernity, but the frequent recourse to the technique of photomontage was instrumental in reinforcing this view. Ultimately, images used in magazines and books often created a parallel discourse, a narrative that was not necessarily in correspondence with the world of building industry. The attention Jannière pays to the visual language of architectural publications may suggest alternative ways of judging the dissemination of architectural knowledge, for instance by trying to trace the circulation of distinct groupings of forms or images and their material implementation.

This new volume consolidates a view that has become quite generally accepted in the last decade among architectural historians, one that refuses to consider modernism as a uniform phenomenon and sole protagonist of the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. As Jannière states in her Introduction, the architecture of the so-called Modern Movement never represented a homogeneous phenomenon. On the contrary, its history was marked by conflicts and differences, and its supposed homogeneity was the outcome of a social and, later, historiographical construction. Interestingly, the architectural press made an important contribution to this construction, trying frequently to accentuate a sense of autonomy from the profession and the world of the building industry. In this respect, *Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'* reminds us that to confuse architectural publications with architecture *tout court* would be a glaring mistake.

Paolo Nicoloso's *Gli architetti di Mussolini. Scuole e sindacato, architetti e massoni, professori e politici negli anni del regime* (The architects of Mussolini. Schools and unions, architects and Freemasons, professors and politicians in the years of the regime) deals with one of the most contentious, yet seemingly alluring periods of contemporary history. The years of Fascism, in fact, attracted and still attract numbers of architectural historians, in and outside Italy:[9] this tendency increased in recent times

[8] As an example of the complexity and intricacy of publishing activity, in particular in the field of architecture, I would like to refer to my study of the case of a small publication of 1931 devoted to the Dutch architect Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud: Paolo Scrivano, 'J. J. P. Oud and Dutch architecture in the writings of Henry-Russell Hitchcock', *Zodiac*, 18 (September–February 1997–1998), 90–103; *idem*, *Storia di un'idea di architettura moderna. Henry-Russell Hitchcock e l'International Style* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2001), 103–6. The book in question, *J.-J.-P. Oud*, by the American art and architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, was a substantial commercial failure, with twenty-two copies sold of 500 printed some months after publication.

[9] Worth of mention and of recent publication are: Giorgio Muratore, Daniela Carfagna and Mario Tieghi, eds., *Sabaudia, 1934. Il sogno di una città nuova e l'architettura razionalista* (Sabaudia: Comune di Sabaudia, 1999); Libero Andreotti, 'Oceanic rituals: Mario Sironi and the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution', *Architecture and Ideas*, 2, 2 (2000), 96–109; Maristella Casciato, 'The Casa all'Italiana and the idea of modern dwelling in Fascist Italy', *Journal of Architecture*, 5, 4 (2000), 335–53; Antonello Alici and Maria Teresa Iovacchini, eds., *Le nuove provincie del fascismo. Architetture per le città capoluogo* (Pescara: Archivio di Stato di Pescara–Italia Nostra di Pescara, 2001); the monographic issue of *Parametro* 'Nuove

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777304001766 Published online by Cambridge University Press

when it also probably assumed new dimensions. The visualisation of politics put into practice by Europe's dictatorial regimes of the twentieth century has proved to be particularly successful today, encouraging some authors to talk of a 'new fascination with Fascism'.[10] This is particularly true in an age when the connection between reality and ideology has become even more tenuous and the simplified contrapositions that characterised the totalitarian ideologies seem to reacquire strength. The presence of an increasing number of architectural histories devoted to the years of the Fascism might not be related solely to these recent trends: but it is certainly accurate to say that, when it comes to architecture, the Fascist period further emphasises its controversial aspects.

Gli architetti di Mussolini is an analysis of the process that led to the birth of the figure of the modern architect in Italy. By a deliberate use of a prose that tends often to become a chronicle (the entire narrative is composed in the present tense), Nicoloso not only offers a passionate handling of the theme but also an approach that contains several original elements. The study of professional groups is a recent interest of Italian architectural history and *Gli architetti di Mussolini* belongs to a very short list of titles.[11] In addition, the work of Nicoloso relies on impressive archival research that is largely unprecedented.

The constitution of the schools of architecture in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century occupies a central place in the book. Institutions entirely dedicated to the teaching of architecture were established relatively recently.[12] The first school was opened in Rome in 1919 and the second in Venice in 1926, while those in the other major urban centres followed within a few years (Turin in 1929, Naples and Florence in 1930). Surprising is the case of Milan (Italy's economic capital), where the school of architecture was inaugurated only in 1933. Along with the opening of the schools progressed the creation of a body of legislation: the title of architect was recognised in 1923 and professional codes were published in 1925. As

città tra le due guerre': *Parametro*, 235 (July–October 2001); the 2002 republication of Francesco Garofalo, *Adalberto Libera* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992); Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Anno X. La Mostra della Rivoluzione fascista del 1932* (Pisa and Rome: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003).

[10] By drawing on a definition coined by Susan Sontag in the early 1980s ('Fascinating Fascism') and referring to the 1990s proliferation of exhibitions devoted to German art and architecture of the 1930s, historian Paul Betts has related the rediscovery of Fascist and Nazi culture to the loss of 'cultural charisma and/or clear connection to politics' by contemporary art objects: Paul Betts, 'The New Fascination with Fascism: The Case of Nazi Modernism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 4 (2002), 541–58.

[11] If we exclude Guido Zucconi's *La città contesa* (where the issue of the architectural profession was examined in contrast to the world of engineers), works on the profession of architect in Italy are the producs of the last ten years of historical research: Guido Zucconi, *La città contesa* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1989); Donatella Calabi, 'L'architetto' in Maria Malatesta, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali 10. I professionisti* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 339–61; Guido Zucconi, 'La professione dell'architetto. Tra specialismo e generalismo' in Francesco Dal Co, ed., *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento* (Milan: Electa, 1997), 294–315. See also Salvatore Adorno, ed., *Professionisti Città e Territorio. Percorsi di ricerca tra storia dell'urbanistica e storia della città* (Rome: Gangemi, 2002).

[12] Departments for teaching architecture existed from 1865 and 1866 at the Istituto tecnico superiore of Milan and at the Scuola di applicazione of Turin (later the Polytechnic Schools of Milan and Turin).

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we can see, the process that contributed to the creation of the figure of architect in Italy corresponded chronologically with the rise of Fascism. It was not simply a coincidence: the regime attributed a precise political meaning to the shaping of architecture as a trade, a profession and an endeavour. The effort made by Fascism to put the profession under its direct political control illustrates this fact well. An initially formed professional organisation representing architects (the still existing Ordine degli Architetti) was soon replaced by a Fascist union, the Sindacato fascista architetti, created in 1923 and placed under the direction of Alberto Calza Bini, the brother of the founder of the important 'Fascio' of Rome. As Nicoloso remarks, 'The peculiar origin of the architects for which they will never have their own professional organisation, but just a Fascist union that [carried] out the functions of the organisation, [accentuated] the political connotation of the category' (pp. 18–19).[13]

Undoubtedly the birth of the figure of architect as an institutionalised profession reflects the general history of Italy in the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, the fact that Rome was the first city to have a school of architecture (and Milan the last among the principal centres) reflected the regime's attempts to affirm the centrality of the capital, in a tough (and historically grounded) competition with other Italian cities for cultural hegemony over the country. But *Gli architetti di Mussolini* does not confine itself to a mere registration of the possible correlations between architectural and social or political history. It makes a clear point about the intrinsic weakness of the cultural image of the architect. The vague contours of the profile of the profession – a recurring and problematic issue in contemporary architectural history – are quite evident in the case of Italy. This is well illustrated by the equalisation of professional degrees that the regime was forced to put into effect: not surprisingly, after the establishment of the architectural schools and the constitution of the Sindacato, one of the first tasks of the Italian authorities was to regularise the position of those who, without a recognised title, until then had practised architecture. Between 1927 and 1929 a specifically established commission licensed 694 new architects from a total of 1,310 individuals without a degree who had applied for that title. As Nicoloso puts it, in Italy the profession of architect was basically the upshot of an 'act of indemnity' (p. 73).

Although the book traces a history of corruption, embezzlement, affiliation to Freemasonry (banned, by the way, by the Fascist regime) and barely honest recommendations (note the customarily derogatory connotations of the word *raccomandazione* in the Italian language), what becomes evident through reading Nicoloso's work is the existence of a conflict that opposed different groups of architects according to social, professional or geographical characteristics. The collision of architects with engineers, a body that traditionally had (and in part still has today) strong control over many sectors of the Italian building industry, was for instance one of the results of the close identification of the Italian architectural

[13] Author's translation.

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world with the regime: one should note that, in the years before the Second World War, engineers outnumbered architects by a ratio of 10 to 1. At stake in the conflict between engineers and architects were the supposed scientific competencies of the former versus the ideological connotations of the latter.

This juxtaposition materialised in a battle over the control of the public works sector. Given the importance attributed by the regime to the consolidation of consensus, the governance of public works (with the impressive number of employment opportunities it could guarantee) was obviously a delicate matter. It was also deemed of paramount importance by the architectural organisations: in fact – and Nicoloso makes this very clear – many considered that the future of architects was in proportion to their affiliation to the power. It is important to note that the close ties of the Italian architectural world to Fascism were beyond ideological affinities. The Sindacato, for instance was a strong supporter of public competitions for the selection of designers of government buildings. Thanks to the connections between the union and Fascism, between 1926 and 1942 all the architectural competitions held by the Italian government or by state-controlled agencies or institutions were virtually under the monopoly of architects.[14]

The way in which architects were involved in the symbolic policies of Fascism has important implications in terms of historical interpretation. Their contribution to the construction of the regime's rhetoric has often led historians to speculate about the ideological nature of the architectural language of the period. But a certain overemphasis on the issues of monumentality, style or the supposed *Italianità* – 'Italianess' – of Italian architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, has at times concealed a central question.[15] Far from being an issue of theoretical relevance, the discourse on architectural aesthetics represented for the new profession one of the possible means of defining a precise field of competency. Moreover, this stance seemed capable of nourishing the public image architects wanted to give themselves while averting the danger of competition with other professional figures. One finding of the book is quite illuminating in this respect: the extensive use of white marble in some of the works realised by the dominant architect of the time, Marcello Piacentini – who described himself as 'Mussolini's architect' – had more to do with an intricate interweaving of interests with those of builders and quarry owners than with a precise aesthetic choice. The documents uncovered by Paolo Nicoloso reveal that even Mussolini raised suspicions about the existence of some conflicts of interests. From a retrospective viewpoint, this sounds somewhat ironic: what was quite evident to the dictator is still today given insufficient consideration by some architectural historians.

[14] On the same subject see Paolo Nicoloso, 'I concorsi di architettura durante il fascismo', *Casabella*, 64, 683 (2000), 4–7.

[15] An exception to this tendency is represented by works that try to analyse the architectural language of so-called Fascist architecture in connection with Italian social dynamics or popular culture of the time: see Brian L. McLaren, 'The Italian colonial appropriation of indigenous North African architecture in the 1930s', *Muqarnas*, 19, 19 (2002), 164–92; *idem*, 'The Tripoli Trade Fair and the Representation of Italy's African Colonies', *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 24 (2002), 170–97.

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The third book under examination, Anthony Alofsin's *The Struggle for Modernism. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard*, belongs to the ambit of studies devoted to the origin of architectural education in North America.[16] Despite the reference in the title to the term 'modernism' – a mention that, at first, makes the reader think of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s – this work uses a timeframe that ranges from the end of the nineteenth century to the present time. While the Harvard architectural milieu before and after the Second World War has been the object of recent groundbreaking studies, this work tries to offer a broader look at the theme by considering the case of the Harvard school of architecture since it was founded in 1895.[17] Besides the obvious chronological logic, the assumption of this date as the starting point for the narration is particularly important in that it indicates the lateness of Harvard's entry into the field of architectural education. Between the opening of the school of architecture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and that of its sister institution in Cambridge, seven other schools had been established in the United States: among them, those at Cornell, Syracuse, Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania.

Notwithstanding its late start in the realm of architectural education, Harvard was able to establish its primacy at least in two correlated sectors: landscape and planning. The Harvard School of Landscape Architecture (opened in 1900) and the Harvard School of City Planning (opened in 1929) were the first institution of this kind to be established in North America. The creation of these different bodies was the outcome of conflicts existing within the school of architecture. As Alofsin writes, internal tensions 'appeared, disappeared, and reappeared throughout the history' of the different programmes. This was quite a common trend in the United States. In general, the shaping of architectural education in America was characterised by the dilemma about which existing educational system to embrace: if the French beaux-arts *système* became the most widely adopted, some schools preferred to refer to models imported from the German-speaking world.

One quality of Alofsin's book is that it tries to challenge some enduring mythologies of contemporary architectural history, in particular those concerning the

[16] There is a consolidated bibliography on the subject; for instance, on the School of Architecture of Columbia University see Richard Oliver, ed., *The Making of an Architect, 1881–1981. Columbia University in the City of New York* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981); on schools located in the Boston area see Margaret Henderson Floyd, *Architectural Education in Boston. Centennial Publication of the Boston Architectural Center, 1889–1989* (Boston: Boston Architectural Press, 1989); on the School of Architecture of the University of Texas at Houston (with a focus on the postwar years) see Alexander Caragonne, *The Texas Rangers. Notes from an Architectural Underground* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1995). Slightly outside the broad theme of architectural education within the world of US academia – but still concerning some aspects of it – are Janet Parks and Gwendolyn Wright, eds., *The History of History in American Schools of Architecture, 1865–1975* (New York: The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture–Princeton Architectural Press, 1990); Vincent Katz, ed., *Black Mountain College. Experiment in Art* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2002).

[17] On the Harvard Graduate School of Design between the second half of the 1930s and the early 1950s see Jill Pearlman, 'Joseph Hudnut's Other Modernism at the "Harvard Bauhaus"', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 56, 4 (1997), 452–77; *idem*, 'Joseph Hudnut and the unlikely beginnings of post-modern urbanism at the Harvard Bauhaus', *Planning Perspectives*, 15, 3 (2000), 201–39.

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impact of the European intellectual emigration of the 1930s on North America.[18] The history of Harvard's school of architecture has been often identified with the presence of Walter Gropius, the former director of the Bauhaus in Dessau. Gropius was at Harvard from the second half of the 1930s until his retirement in 1952 as a professor emeritus of architecture, and he continued to exert his influence on the school until his death in 1969. The recollections of the presence of the German architect are often accompanied by inaccuracies and imprecision: for instance, he is often credited with having acted as dean of the school while, in reality, in 1937 he had been invited to the United States by Dean Joseph Hudnut to be appointed chair of the Department of Architecture. The removal of the teaching of architectural history from the school's programmes by the cohort of European 'modernists' who escorted Gropius in his transplant to the United States is another of the long-lasting myths: as Alofsin demonstrates, the revision of Harvard core curriculum in a direction that gave less space to an historical approach began during the 1920s, under the deanship of George Harold Edgell, paradoxically a holder of a Ph.D. in art history and a specialist in the Italian Renaissance.

The book is developed along two main lines: one addresses the introduction in the United States of the concept of collaborative work in architectural design and the other the attempt to make American modern architecture distinct from European modernism in order to create a genuinely indigenous approach. As the author states at the beginning of the book, the history of the Harvard Graduate School of Design may represent a good testimony of the 'collision between American and European identities' (p. 11). However, the opposition between the American and the European scenes does not completely convince. The image of the early twentieth-century European modern architecture that seems to emerge from Alofsin's account is that of a monolithic and uniform phenomenon, while in reality the so-called Modern Movement not only varied greatly from country to country (and sometimes within the same country) but also represented only a small fraction of the continent's architectural mileu: from this point of view, American architecture from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1920s was in many respects not so distant from the 'common' architectural world of Europe. It is highly debatable that – as the author states – early twentieth-century European architecture underwent a tendency towards unification 'with the need for a more unified and pragmatic vision of rebuilding war-torn lands' (p. 52): unlike what happened during the following

[18] Many publications are available on the intellectual emigration from Europe to the United States during the course of the twentieth century, e.g., *The Cultural Migration. The European Scholar in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), that contains an important testimony by Erwin Panofsky on the subject of art history; Donald Fleming and Barbara Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960* (Cambridge, MA: Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, 1968); Dante Della Terza, *Da Vienna a Baltimora. La diaspora degli intellettuali europei negli Stati Uniti d'America* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987). More recently see Margrit Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America. First Contacts 1919–1936* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999); Mariuccia Salvati, *Da Berlino a New York. Crisi della classe media e futuro della democrazia nelle scienze sociali degli anni trenta* (Turin and Milan: Paravia Bruno Mondadori, 2000).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777304001766 Published online by Cambridge University Press

world conflict, the First World War affected only circumscribed geographical areas while the major European urban centres were untouched by the hostilities.[19]

The strength of the book lies in its precise description of the difficult circumstances under which architecture had to establish its legitimacy at Harvard. In its more than 100-year existence, the school several times faced the risk of being shut down or at least of having its ambitions drastically modified. The university's other departments hardly regarded architecture as a discipline worthy of academic consideration. Many attempts were made to raise the cultural profile of the programmes and render them worthy of the university's expectations. A recurring initiative consisted in trying to emphasise a possible 'objective' side of the discipline: the foundation in 1938 of a new undergraduate programme, eloquently called 'Architectural Science', was part of this strategy. To wonder whether or not the effort to give academic authority to architecture was successful might be too provocative, but certainly it was of no help that the Hudnut–Gropius alliance collapsed in 1952 over the question of what basic architectural pedagogy should be adopted in the school.

Each of the three books deals with a very specific subject. Nevertheless, one must not think that they are noteworthy only in relation to the themes on which they focus. If considered in a broader perspective, their investigations surely add elements to an all-embracing analysis of the profession of architect during the twentieth century. This reason alone should make this kind of material welcome. Much work remains to be done. Many more topics that could contribute to positioning the figure of the architect within the social, cultural, and economic history of the century are waiting for specific analysis: subjects such as publications, educational curricula, professional institutions and unions, and international organisations are all worthy of consideration. It should be added that the periodically resurfacing image of the architect as artist or of the architect-as-hero would deserve particular attention, especially in the present age of world-class competitions and star-system architecture.

Some inspiration can come from the books that are discussed in this review. For instance, the three publications incidentally highlight the fact that the architectural profession has for long time been a male-dominated profession (and some might polemically append that nothing has changed today): indeed, this condition emerges from many recent works, although it is rarely made explicit.[20] The scarcity of studies on the female presence in the architectural world is probably the paradoxical reflection of a historical condition:[21] often being excluded from power, women

[19] More importantly, the war did not alter the structure of land ownership; for the case of France see Marcel Roncayolo, 'La production de la ville', in Georges Duby, ed., *Histoire de la France urbaine*, vol. IV, *La ville de l'âge industriel. Le cycle haussmannien (1840–1950)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983), 135–55.

[20] A recently published six-volume biographical dictionary of the architecture of the twentieth century lists not more than twenty entries on female architects and about thirty on women who are or were in partnerships: Carlo Omo, ed., *Dizionario dell'Architettura del XX Secolo* (Turin and London: Umberto Allemandi, 2000–2001).

[21] To count the number of book-length publications on the presence of women in twentieth century architecture is particularly depressing; not much seems to have been issued since the late 1970s: Susana Torre, ed., *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977); *'That Exceptional One': Women in American Architecture 1888–1988* (Washington,

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did not get access to prominent positions in the architectural domain and were therefore condemned to less 'visible' careers. But it is a methodological problem too: architectural history still seems to be concerned more with the representation of the figure of the architect as an individual unrelated to his or her social and cultural environment, than with a more complex and problematic approach.

Perhaps, this is a too specific example, but certainly it makes one think of the many opportunities that are left for innovative historical methodologies. Today, in architectural history as well as in other sub-disciplines of history, a synthetic approach may appear particularly problematic, given the overproduction of hyper-specialised research works. Nonetheless, scholarship would significantly benefit from an effort to position new studies on specific subjects within more general and broader contexts. There is no doubt that this is also the case with architectural history.

DC: American Architectural Foundation, 1988), catalogue of an exhibition organised by the American Architectural Foundation and the American Institute of Architects; Elen Perry Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid, eds., *Architecture. A Place for Women* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); Clare Lorenz, *Women in Architecture. A Contemporary Perspective* (London: Trefoil Publications, 1990).

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