

Building the Visible Immortality of the Nation: The Centrality of ‘Rooted Modernism’ to the Third Reich’s Architectural New Order

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Abstract

This article sets out to contribute conceptual clarity to the growing recognition of the modern and futural dynamic behind fascist cultural projects by focusing on projects for architectural renewal under the Third Reich. It starts by reviewing the gradual recognition of the futural temporality of the regime’s culture. It then introduces the concept ‘rooted modernism’ and argues for its application not only to the vernacular idioms of some of the Reich’s new buildings, but also to the International Style and machine aesthetic deployed in many Nazi technological and industrial buildings. The article’s main focus is on the extensive use made in the new civic and public architecture under Nazism (and Fascism) of ‘stripped classicism’. This was a form of neo-classicism widely encountered in both democratic and authoritarian states throughout the inter-war period, and which can be understood as an alternative strand of architectural modernism co-existing with more overtly avant-garde experiments in reshaping the built environment. The case is then made for applying a new conceptual framework for evaluating the relationship to modernity and modernism of architectural projects, not just in fascist cultural production, but that of the many authoritarian right-wing regimes of the period which claimed to embrace the national past while striving for a dynamic, heroic future. This opens up the possibility for historians to engage with the complex cultural entanglements and *histoires croisées* of revolutionary with modernizing conservative states in the ‘fascist era’.

Keywords

the fascist era – neo-classicism – stripped classicism – rooted modernism – *histoires croisées*

Turning the Word into Stone

Accompanied by a blare of grandiose 30s film music suggesting superhuman exertions, a giant block of granite is being torn from a mountain and hauled with enormous chains by unseen hands towards the quarry floor. The scene dissolves into a sculptured group of four naked, powerfully muscled men straining to force an enormous block of stone up a slope. The name of the Titanic sculpture appears on the screen: 'Denkmal der Arbeit' [Monument to Work]. We are watching the opening scene of the Nazi propaganda film *The Word Made Stone*¹ distributed to German cinemas on the eve of the Second World War, and clearly intended to convey a sense of awe at the momentous transformations taking place in the heart of German cities in the new Reich, as well as admiration for the imposing new Nazi university for party elites that was to rise on the banks of a Bavarian lake with the task of imbuing the NSDAP cadres with exclusively 'Aryan' science and ethics (Figure 1).

The pompous martial music dragoons the audience into interpreting these ambitious building projects as material, visionary expressions of the total cultural rebirth of Germany promised by the Führer in the *Kampfzeit* and inaugurated with the NSDAP victory in 1933. They thus complemented the spreading network of 'Adolf Hitler Streets' which would one day enable ordinary workers to sweep through the German countryside in their newly bought *Kraft-durch-Freude-Wagen* (though in practice used before the war mostly by middle class families, lorries, and the Mercedes and Daimler-Benz of party officials). For convinced Nazi audiences, the advanced cinematographic technique of superimposing models of grandiose future buildings over the existing urban sprawl or open countryside, despite its lack of sophistication by modern CGI standards, must have been impressive.

With only triumphal music and captions indicating the location of the site of renewal to serve as a commentary, the camera swoops over the existing jumble of buildings in the centres of Munich, Augsburg, and Berlin, symbols of the mediocrity and anarchy into which the nation's built heritage had sunk under democratic modernity, out of which gleaming white maquettes of huge new, rigidly symmetrical civic buildings soar up triumphantly, dotted with miniscule static human figures to emphasise the imposing scale of the constructions. Before the spectator's eyes, cosmopolitan chaos is being banished by the Word of the Führer and translated into Stone; amorphous conurbations are transformed into cities with a topographical centre, an aesthetic heart, and a

1 *Das Wort aus Stein* (1939), directed by Kurt Rupli and distributed in the Third Reich, *Youtube.com*, accessed October 10, 2015, <https://youtu.be/kjiu-bIgtIE>.



FIGURE 1 *Film poster for The Word Made Stone (1939).*

SOURCE: [HTTPS://DE.ALLBUCH.ONLINE/IMAGES/THUMB/B/BE/DAS_WORT_AUS_STEIN.JPG/400PX-DAS_WORT_AUS_STEIN.JPG](https://de.allbuch.online/images/thumb/B/BE/DAS_WORT_AUS_STEIN.JPG/400PX-DAS_WORT_AUS_STEIN.JPG)

spiritual soul. The Reich's architectural revolution is metamorphizing the contingent, the ugly, and the ephemeral into the planned, the beautiful and the eternal. With such buildings, 'the future', as Speer recalled after the war, was to be 'set in stone'.²

Stylistically, these mock-ups recall those of the gigantic scale model of Ancient Rome constructed by Italo Gismondi in the 1930s for Mussolini, though in the film they represent, not a magnificent Roman past, but the glorious Aryan future being imminently realized thanks to Hitler's architectural genius. It is a future that embodies timeless (not past) Aryan values which have been given plastic form within a dynamic modernity, a paradoxical and typically fascist temporality that emerges clearly when the camera lingers three times on neo-classical statues: first, the Monument to Work which is followed by the documentary on the Reich's architectural transformation; then on a naked bronze athlete standing, right arm aloft, in triumphant pose before four rearing horses

2 The phrase is taken from an interview given by Speer in October 1973, and quoted in Jochen Thies, *Hitler's Plans for Global Domination: Nazi Architecture and Ultimate War Aims* (London: Berghahn Books, 2012), 77.

(an allusion to the quadriga atop the Brandenburg Gate, perhaps), as modern traffic rushes by along one of the wide boulevards of the newly refashioned metropolitan centre; and last, on two fearsome, dead-eyed warriors, each clasping a sword by its blade, zealously guarding the inner courtyard of the Führer's partly completed new Chancellery in Berlin. Captions indicate that these god-like embodiments of the Aryan ideal represent the NSDAP and the Army respectively, modern in conception and organization, but ancient in spirit.

The climax of this short film is the unveiling Rosenberg's new NSDAP University for SS elites that was planned to arise on the banks of the Chiemsee in Bavaria, and which we now know was to house among other artefacts of the primitiveness or decadence being expunged from history, a vast collection of materials relevant to 'the Jewish Question' pillaged on the orders of Rosenberg, along with untold numbers of precious books and manuscripts looted from the universities of Nazi-occupied Europe. The project is dominated by a soaring tower and a complex of symmetrical monastery-like buildings, the window-detail reminiscent less of ancient Rome, and more of the austere, unadorned office blocks and state buildings of the 1930s encountered in cities all over the Western world.

Conspicuously by their absence, because they were only finalized after the film was made, are Speer's plans for the new centre of Berlin, to be rebaptized 'Germania' after the *Endsieg* to mark its new status as the capital of the world.³ Pictures of Hitler pouring with rapt attention over the model of the Grosshalle or Volkshalle, designed to accommodate an audience of 180,000 spectators, have become iconic images of the Führer's self-delusion and flight from reality as the end of the Reich rushed towards him (Figure 2). Clearly, when *Das Wort aus Stein* was released on the eve of the war, the crescendo of megalomania dictating Hitler and Speer's 'fantasy architecture' in the redesign of the Reich had not yet reached its climax.

Watched distractedly so long after the defeat of the Axis, this low definition black and white film with its crackling soundtrack might come across as yet more vacuous propaganda for a Nazi regime deliberately turning its back on the modern age, especially when its images are associated with the vast public structures made from monumental stone blocks, prepared and laid by forced labour, which are the hall-mark of several 'great' ancient civilizations based on

3 Roger Moorhouse, 'Germania: Hitler's Dream Capital', *History Today* 62, no. 3 (2012), accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.historytoday.com/roger-moorhouse/germania-hitlers-dream-capital>.

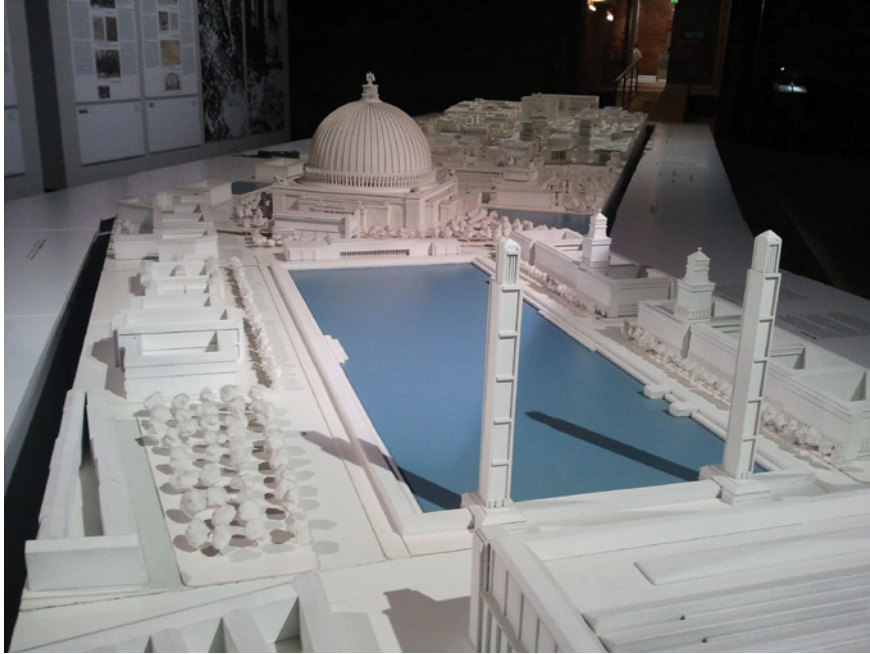


FIGURE 2 *Model of the Great Hall, Germania designed by Albert Speer.*

PHOTO BY KATERBEGEMOT—OWN WORK, CC BY 3.0, [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?CURID=19958953](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19958953)

slavery, whether Egyptian,⁴ Mayan, Aztec, Greek, Roman, or Chinese. The millions of tons of dressed stone demanded by Germany's rebirth for such projects as the colossal 'Congress Hall' and the 'German Stadium' in Nuremberg⁵ were to be provided in the first instance by the brutal 'quarry camps' such as Gross-Rosen and Mauthausen.⁶ Following this logic, it would be tempting to interpret as no more than nostalgia for a glorious past the speech made by Hitler on the eve of the war from which the documentary took its name:

4 There is some controversy about whether the Pharaohs used slaves to build the great pyramids.

5 See Katja Sebald, 'Hitler's Secret Grandstand: The Nazi Plan to Build World's Biggest Stadium,' *Spiegel Online International*, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/remains-of-grandstand-recall-hitler-s-plan-to-build-giant-stadium-a-861889.html>.

6 See chapters 'Oswald Pohl and the ss Economy: The Quarry Camps' and 'Slave Labour,' in *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camp*, Nikolas Wachsmann (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015).

The merits of every great age are ultimately expressed in its architecture. When peoples internally experience great times, they also lend these times an external manifestation. *Their word is then more convincing than the spoken word: it is the word of stone!* ... Since the construction of our cathedrals, we see here for the first time a truly great architecture on display, an architecture which does not consume itself in the service of petty, day-to-day orders and needs, but is instead an architecture that far surpasses the scope of daily life and its requirements.⁷

This article suggests a radically different interpretation of such a speech. It endorses the growing consensus within a later wave of scholarship that, such pronouncements emanate not from a visceral anti-modernism, or even a 'modernist anti-modernism'.⁸ Instead they point to an aesthetic vision inextricably linked to the socio-political utopia of a totally new order and new future, which the Third Reich pursued fanatically and genocidally in their twelve years in power, but one determined not to sever all links to the past.

Das Wort aus Stein: A Manifesto of Architectural Anti-Modernity?

There is, of course, no self-evident or objective way of interpreting the film *Das Wort aus Stein*. It has been used, for example, to explore the shifting contours of 'agency and identity' in the Nazi and post-Nazi era.⁹ It also provided an evocative title for one of the first comprehensive Anglophone surveys of the Third Reich's attempted architectural renaissance, Robert Taylor's *The Word in Stone* (1974). The present article uses it instead as a portal through which to undertake a fresh appraisal of the complex and still highly contested question of the relationship of Nazi architecture to modernity, to modernist aesthetics, and to other authoritarian regimes with ambitious cultural programmes of urban regeneration.

7 Adolf Hitler, 'Speech at the industrial Art Exhibition in the Haus der Deutschen Kunst Munich, January 22, 1938', *Volkischerbeobachteronline.com*, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.volkischerbeobachteronline.com/munich-1221938.html>. My emphasis.

8 Henry A. Turner, Jr., 'Fascism and Modernization,' *World Politics* 24 (1972): 547–564.

9 Sharon Macdonald, 'Words in Stone? Agency and Identity in a Nazi Landscape,' *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1–2 (2006): 105–126, an important secondary source on the 'magic' importance of architecture for Hitler.

It is symptomatic of mainstream Nazi studies in Taylor's day that his book simply ignores such wider issues, uncritically adopting the prevalent assumption of the day that the temperament of Hitler himself, and by extension the movement, the Reich, and its culture which he founded, was 'fundamentally reactionary', and 'seemed to promise to return to a better, more stable time before foreign values started to erode German values and to disrupt German Community'.¹⁰ Taylor's intuition is sounder when he characterizes the style of The House of German Art (Figure 3) as 'vaguely traditional, but yet modern', comparing it to the town hall or court house of 'many a city in Europe and North America',¹¹ and identifies as a central impulse behind Nazi building the desire to put an end to the 'relatively free and even chaotic' growth of German cities by a regime of centralized planning and rigorous control of design.¹² Yet his reluctance to pursue either of these judgements in greater depth, reinforced by the conviction that the Third Reich was *sui generis* rather than the permutation of a generic fascism, drastically curtails the value of his analysis today.

Berthold Hinz's *Art in the Third Reich* (1980) initially seems to exhibit a similar tunnel vision when he refers to *Das Wort aus Stein* as an exposition of the regime's architectural fantasies which 'served a purely propagandistic function'.¹³ However, in contrast to Taylor, he also recognizes (somewhat paradoxically) that, far from confused or reactionary, the 'major intent of the building programme was to transform and revitalize the appearance of German cities'.¹⁴ As evidence of this ambition, he cites Hitler's assertion, made when laying what was meant to be the first stone of the new Congress Hall in Nuremberg, that it marked 'the beginning of a new world for the German people'.¹⁵ Hinz thus tacitly concedes that it was the material symbol not of Nazism's flight from modernity, but rather of its vision of Germany's total cultural and political renewal (which I call *palingenesis*) to be realized in the glorious national future being inaugurated by the Third Reich.

It is consistent with this approach that Hinz does not interpret the Führer's comparison of the constructors of the Reich to the builders of the medieval

10 Robert Taylor, *The Word in Stone: The Role of Architecture in the National Socialist Ideology* (California: University of California Press, 1974), 271.

11 Taylor, *The Word in Stone*, 16.

12 Ibid., 79.

13 Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 183.

14 Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich*, 191.

15 Ibid., 196.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1990-073-26
Foto: o./Ang. 1 e.Dat.

FIGURE 3 *The House of German Art, by Paul Ludwig Troost, opened 1937.*

PHOTO BY BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 146-1990-073-26 / CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC BY-SA 3.0 DE, [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?CURID=5419523](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5419523)

cathedrals as the expression of political reaction. Instead he draws attention to Hitler's declaration that 'they will tower over the millennia of the future like cathedrals', providing a 'measure of the truly monumental cultural spirit of their time'.¹⁶ In other words, the new civic structures were to express in their gargantuan scale and use of huge blocks of granite, not nostalgia for the past, but rather an evocation of timeless values, a secular, national and racial eternity conceived as a futural project.¹⁷ In his conversations with Hermann Rauschning, Hitler had explicitly rejected the Christian belief in the infinite significance of the individual human soul, and asserted in its place the notion that the individual's continued existence was guaranteed '*in the visible immortality of the nation*'.¹⁸ The Reich's architectural renewal was central to

¹⁶ Ibid., 197, 195.

¹⁷ The central theme of Eric Michaud, *The Cult of Art in Nazi Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

¹⁸ Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks: A Series of Political Conversations with Adolf Hitler on his Real Aims* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1940), 249. My emphasis.

the public visibility of the Germans' new lease of eternal life understood in a nebulous, this-worldly, strictly historical sense.

However, rather than proceeding to explore the temporality, morality, and teleology of Nazi aesthetics in their own ideological terms, Hinz then insists on imposing his own value judgment by emphasizing their social regressiveness from a socialist perspective, arguing that, in their 'towering sublimity', the Reich's 'cathedrals' failed to offer 'the slightest promise of social usefulness' or 'utilitarian function'.¹⁹ For the Führer, the extravagant use of the expensive materials of stone and marble announced the end of the era of commercialism, utilitarianism, egalitarian humanism, individualism, capitalist chaos, and 'Jewish' economic interests. Simultaneously, it also demonstrated the 'titanic forces' of work, organization, creativity, and national will that Nazism alone could summon up under his leadership. Nazi architecture is thus presented by Hinz as the expression of social reaction, isolated from mainstream European history and intelligible solely within the parameters of the Third Reich itself.

Peter Adam's *The Arts in the Third Reich*, published in the early 1990s, shows how basic confusions over the temporality of fascist utopianism could still prevent the application of a coherent conceptual framework to research into the Third Reich's architecture. Though at one point he insists that its cultural production is to be seen only 'through the lens of Auschwitz',²⁰ in other words as an expression of its deep-seated genocidal nihilism, elsewhere he acknowledges that 'through cultural changes Hitler wanted to create the new man'.²¹ This is a fleeting but significant concession to the school of thought which holds that Nazi civic buildings were intended to play a role in a totalitarian project of social, anthropological, and above all temporal engineering that was essentially revolutionary. However, Adam is unable to sustain this insight as the basis of a consistent approach to his subject.

Similar confusion also reigns in the chapter devoted to fascism by William Curtis in his *Modern Architecture since 1900* (first published in 1982), significantly entitled 'Totalitarian critiques of the modern movement'. Its premise is that since totalitarian regimes had to 'foster the impression that their right to rule was embedded in the deepest aspirations of the people', their architecture had to 'steer a careful way between evocations of past imperial power and suggestions of populist support', a situation in which 'modern architecture seemed at best marginal, at worst a dangerous threat in need of

19 Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks*, 192–194.

20 Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (London: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 9, 156–165.

21 Adam, *Art of the Third Reich*, 21.

extermination'.²² He presents Nazism as inheriting a well-established vein of anti-modernism from the increasingly vociferous populist (*völkisch*) far right that thrived in the Weimar Republic, which crystallized in virulent attacks on the Bauhaus for what was for nationalists, its rootless cosmopolitanism and abstraction, and for racists its foreignness, its 'Oriental, Jewish and Bolshevik' elements.²³ As a result, Curtis can offer nothing to reconcile his own insistence on Nazism's alleged hostility to the International Movement with Hitler's declaration in a speech of 1933, which is cited in the same chapter: 'from material and function, new forms are found and developed that *breathe more of the Greek spirit into the aesthetic of the machine*, for example, than in many a poorly conceived building' [better: '*than in a building scheme that has not captured properly the spirit of classical models*'].²⁴

Das Wort aus Stein: A Manifesto of Architectural Modernism

Such reluctance to recognize the fundamentally pro-modern, future-forging, and hence potentially modernist thrust of Nazi cultural politics, particularly in the sphere of architecture and urban renewal, is all the more unfortunate given that even before the end of the 1960s two books had already appeared that would have helped avert decades of confusion about Nazi aesthetics had their premises been taken on board at the time by the major cultural and political historians devoted to interpreting the Third Reich. The first was George Mosse's *Nazi Culture*,²⁵ a collection of primary source texts expressing different aspects of the Nazis' attempt to bring about radical social and artistic renewal. The selection complemented the series of highly original and sophisticated studies of the Nazis' world view and socio-political vision published by Mosse between 1966 and 1999²⁶ which consistently argued for Nazism to be seen

22 William Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 351.

23 Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, 352.

24 Ibid., 353. My emphasis.

25 George L. Mosse, ed., *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

26 George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); George L. Mosse, 'The genesis of fascism,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 1 (1966): 14–26 [special issue on international fascism]. For an anthology of key essays arguing the case for seeing fascism in general as a revolutionary force, see George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Towards a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Fertig, 1999).

as an attempted revolution. It was to be not just a political revolution, but a totalizing social, cultural and anthropological one powered by the populist energies unleashed by the Nazis' ability to 'capture ... the hopes and dreams of a large section of the [nation's] population'.²⁷

In the section of *Nazi Culture* entitled 'Hitler sets the tone', Mosse highlights the speech which the Führer gave at the opening of the House of German Art in July 1937, where he expounded the theory of artistic creativity which underlay the Party's recent campaign against degenerate art and its repeated announcement of an imminent cultural renaissance. A core premise is that 'art does not create a new age'. Instead 'it is the general life of peoples which fashions itself anew, and therefore often seeks to express itself anew, and goes in search for new forms of expression'. Accordingly, it is not artists and intellectuals, but 'the fighters, those who truly shape and lead peoples, who make history'.²⁸ In other words, with the Nazi conquest of the state, the age of narcissistic 'self-expression' in art, of self-indulgent individualism, and formal experimentation cut off from the spiritual life of the community and the nation, was dead. A new artistic age was dawning as a reflection of social and political regeneration.

The second book that should have been decisive in establishing a tradition of intelligent scholarly engagement with Nazi architecture, since it focused exclusively on this topic, was Barbara Miller-Lane's *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918–1945*.²⁹ This can be considered one of the first serious publications in any language to study the complexity and intensity of the debate within the inner sanctum of the Third Reich over what should be adopted as its official aesthetic for the built environment. It was also unusual in its focus on reconstructing Nazism's own conflicting ideological and ethical positions, rather than imposing external cultural criteria. Though she is clearly uninterested in the wider theoretical issues raised by Nazi aesthetics or their place within generic fascism, Miller-Lane's text is valuable for its detailed exposé of the gulf that separated two highly polarized factions of self-appointed pundits on the ideals of Nazi culture, whose passionate concerns about the art of the new age refutes simplistic notions that everything the regime produced was 'propaganda' or philistine *kitsch*, or that there was a single official aesthetic.³⁰

27 George L. Mosse, *Confronting History: A Memoir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 177.

28 Mosse, *Nazi Culture*, 14.

29 Barbara Miller-Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918–1945* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

30 See, for example, Alan Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

The members of the first group associated themselves with the radical hostility, born of nineteenth century *völkisch* precepts,³¹ to all rebellions against the artistic canon, such as 'abstraction' in painting, sculpture, music and architecture, and contributed to the campaign against 'asphalt culture' and 'cultural Bolshevism' fought by Alfred Rosenberg's *Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*. The second group was a less homogeneous, but no less vociferous, group of opinion-makers and commentators prepared to recognize the possibility of a racially healthy, Aryan, *aufgenordet* ('renordified'), but still dynamically modernizing Germany, and who thus supported the Nazification of many existing aspects of Germany's advanced organizational, technological and aesthetic modernity on a par with (an equally mythically conceived) 'German science'.

The main advocate of this modernizing faction was none other than the Reich Minister of Propaganda, and the founder and director of the Reich Chamber of Culture, Joseph Goebbels. Moreover, it emerges from Miller-Lane's account that Hitler himself, though outspoken in his condemnation of the abstract, the cryptic, unintelligible, and 'incomplete' ('das Unfertige') in the visual arts typified by Picasso's cubism and the more abstract expressionism of Oskar Kokoschka or Wassily Kandinsky, was far more reluctant to condemn the type of 'Nordic' expressionism—in which Goebbels recognized an unmistakably Aryan dynamic—exemplified in Emil Nolde, Ernst Barlach, and, one of Goebbels' favourite artists, Edvard Munch. Indeed, on occasion Hitler was prepared to make pronouncements expressing open admiration for the spirit of modernity, such as the celebration of the machine aesthetic quoted so incongruously by Curtis in his chapter on fascism.

On this point it is worth citing the 'words of the Führer' that immediately precede and follow the statement which Curtis reproduces in his chapter. Their context is the speech made to the Cultural Assembly of the Nuremberg Rally of 1933, the first made as Chancellor, where he outlined his vision of the Nordic cultural renaissance which would inevitably follow from the victory of the NSDAP's 'fighters'. He has just reminded his audience that, even as Weimar in its dying phase was still generating art that had left a 'hideous impression': important preparatory work for the renewal of nations³² was being carried out not just spiritually and politically, but culturally as well. Just as National Socialism is the realization of many visionary intuitions and actual scientific discoveries, so, equally unconsciously, the ground-work for a new artistic renaissance of Aryan man was being completed.

³¹ See Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*.

³² The references to 'nations' plural implies Hitler recognized that Nazism was the German variant of international forces of ultranationalist renewal.

After conceding that the aesthetic of the machine age could actually be closer to the (Promethean) spirit of ancient Greece than a slavish imitation of a classical model, he continues:

This powerful area of innovation offers uncharted territory in which to produce the spiritual monuments of a creativity which is just as much modern as it is aesthetically pleasing. This is the starting point for a development that involves new building materials such as steel, iron, glass, concrete etc., following a path that closely reflects the purposes of the buildings and the properties of these materials. But not every person of average talent is called upon to take this path. Those who seek the new merely for the sake of the new, all too easily find themselves straying into the land of idiocies.... In every age providence has only granted to a few with a God-given talent the mission of giving form to something immortally new.³³

Such passages are telling. They suggest that Hitler not only condemns soulless revivalist architecture as failing to capture the spirit of the Nazi rebirth, but that he was prepared to welcome buildings conceived in the internationalist style of the Modern Movement as long as they were palpably shaped by a creative, heroic, 'Aryan' genius with healthy roots in the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In the light of such important policy statements made at the outset of Hitler's rule, Miller-Lane's painstaking reconstruction of the bitter sectarian arguments that broke out over an aesthetic appropriate to the Third Reich assumes fresh significance. First, it underlines the absence of directives emanating from Hitler or Goebbels imposing an official style to be adopted in Germany's cultural renaissance. At the same time, it makes more sense of the fact that, at least in the realm of architecture, it was *de facto* the protagonists of large-scale urban renewal demanding imposing civic buildings with an unmistakably modern appearance that Hitler tacitly allowed to gain ascendancy over the *völkisch* lobby led by Rosenberg, Darré, Himmler, and Frick who stubbornly advocated vernacular and historicizing solutions. The unveiling of the buildings that the state was planning for the new Germany in *Das Wort aus Stein* thus reveals itself as a visual manifesto of the regime's commitment, not just to Germany's architectural renewal, but the extensive adoption of a severe, inornate style known as 'stripped classicism' (a term to be explained shortly) through which it would mostly be achieved.

33 Adolf Hitler, *Die deutsche Kunst als stolzeste Verteidigung des deutschen Volkes* [German Art as the Proudest Defence of the German People] (Munich: Eher, 1933).

Furthermore, given the subsequent scholarly confusion in this area, Miller-Lane's reconstruction of the acute tensions that arose between the two factions in the decade 1928–1938 is particularly valuable, because it underlines the fact that it was not the prevalence of a particular architectural aesthetic or choice of building materials that lay at the heart of Hitler's preoccupation with architectural renovation. Rather, what concerned him was the way under Weimar civic spaces and state buildings had been swamped by private dwellings and commercial buildings, resulting in the chaos and ephemerality of the modern built environment, and the hegemony over true art of the short-termist, visionless, rootless mentality that produced it. In short, what he deplored was the lack of a coherent national and racial *Weltanschauung*. Hitler saw the encroachment of the private and individualistic realm over the sphere of the public and state-planned as epitomizing Germany's racial decay under the sway of democratic modernity. Hence this key passage in the first edition of *Mein Kampf*:

Our present big cities have no monuments dominating the entire cityscape, something which could be called a symbol of the age. But this was the case in the cities of old, since nearly all of them had a special monument to their pride. The defining characteristic of the city in antiquity was not found in the private buildings, but in the monuments of the community which seemed destined not for the moment but for eternity, for they were supposed to reflect not the riches of the individual owner but rather the greatness and the importance of the community.... For only when comparing the dimensions of the state buildings of antiquity with contemporary private houses will one understand the overpowering sweep and force of this stress on the principle of giving pre-eminence to public works.... Even in the splendour of the later Rome, first place was not taken by the villas and the palaces of individual citizens, but by the temples and the *thermae, stadia*, circuses, aqueducts, basilicas, etc., of the State; that meant of the entire people. No works now are created for eternity, but at the most for needs of the moment.

Significantly, in the 1941 edition of *Mein Kampf*, this section is rounded off with a new paragraph: 'Munich has its Kunsthalle, Berlin its new Chancellery and Olympic Village. Millions have been spent on such buildings, and unlimited millions may still be poured into them'.³⁴ From such a passage it is clear that

34 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Vol. 1, 'A Reckoning', Chap. x, 'Causes of the Collapse' (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), accessed January 12, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/meinkampf035176mbp/meinkampf035176mbp_djvu.txt.

the vision of the new civic centres and state buildings arising in Munich, Augsburg, and Berlin magically conjured up by *Das Wort aus Stein* are intimately bound up with the Nazis' 'imagined community', creating epic cityscapes that were to signal the creation of a magnificent, Aryan New Order fit for the reborn, 'eternal' *Volksgemeinschaft*. Moreover, Hitler fully endorsed the efforts of the Party's modernizing faction to lobby for the erection of monumental buildings in a classicizing style and for ambitious projects of urban renewal so as to ensure a steady production of buildings which once more inspired a sense, not of tradition or the past, but of a national 'eternity' and 'immortality' projected into a mythic, millennial future. For Speer and his admirers, at least in civic space, Germany's total rebirth as nation, race, and culture was best symbolized, not in homely vernacular buildings set in rural idylls, but in vast edifices of stone standing out against the city skyline, silently conjuring up the continuity between Germany's imminent rebirth and the last great cultural flowering of the Aryan race in classical Greece and Rome. Such edifices, this article argues, represent the Nazi dialect not just of cultural modernity, but of modernism itself.

The Uneven Progress in Recognizing Nazi Modernism

The premise that the Third Reich strove to achieve not just a Nazi modernity but a Nazi modernism arguably makes more sense of a number of facts from the history of Nazi architecture than such paradoxical concepts as 'anti-modernist modernism' (Henry Turner Jr.) or 'reactionary modernism' (Jeffrey Herf). Examples are: the invitation extended in 1933 to both Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus, by the commission responsible for the design of the new Reichsbank to submit entries for the public competition, even though the Bauhaus itself had been forcibly closed down by the new regime (their designs predictably turned out to be highly influenced by International Style, suggesting that it was the left-wing utopianism of the Bauhaus that was anathema to the regime, not Rationalism as such);³⁵ Goebbels' invitation to former director of the Bauhaus, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, later

35 It is symptomatic of the traditional dogma that Nazism was inherently anti-modernist that in his collection of essays on the partial survival of Bauhaus under the Nazis, E.G. Winfried Nerdinger, editor of the collection of essays *Bauhaus-Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1993) shows how some Bauhaus design elements were modified to adapt to the Nazis' new cultural regime, so perpetuating a Bauhaus-related 'Neues Bauen' under the regime. However, it seemingly

to become identified with that icon of American modernism, the skyscraper, to be admitted to the Reichskulturkammer, and to participate in designing the *Deutsches Volk, Deutsche Arbeit* exhibition of 1934 (though apparently Hitler reacted violently to Mies van der Rohe's submission); the striking circular—and unmistakably modernist—design of the Reich-Funkkammer Pavilion³⁶ at this exhibition which showcased the regime's advances in radio technology; Goebbels' organization in Hamburg of the 1934 exhibition of the latest Futurist *aeropittura*; and Albert Speer's testimony that on the visit to the Hermann Göring Works in Linz in 1943 Hitler 'expressed appreciation of steel and glass architecture'.³⁷

No less symptomatic of the modernist current in Nazi ideology was Goebbels' role in promoting Albert Speer's rise to become the Reich's leading architectural and eventually industrial potentate, and possibly even more significant, Hitler's unwavering choice of Speer as his architect-in-chief, even though it was clear from the outset that his mentality was diametrically opposed to the *völkisch* taste for modern versions of the vernacular, rural, medievalizing, Alpine styles of pre-industrial Germany advocated by the *Kampfbund* and by Himmler.

Taken together, such facts suggest that, even if by the late 1930s Hitler had allowed the Rosenberg faction to win the cultural battle over recognizing the Aryan qualities of aesthetic modernism in painting and sculpture,³⁸ he deliberately allowed the Goebbels faction to win the Nazi *Kulturkampf* in the sphere of architecture. Despite such 'evidence', the historical imagination of

does not enter his head to ask whether in its own way Nazism itself was pioneering idiosyncratic modernist aesthetics of its own.

- 36 See photograph 'Views of the Reichs-Funkkammer Pavilion and the NSV Pavilion under construction for the Deutsches Volk—Deutsche Arbeit exhibition' by George Bienek, *Artnet.com*, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/georg-bienek/views-of-the-reichs-funkkammer-pavilion-and-the-TpZsRoBOD-FikM8omSnGpw2>.
- 37 Jonathan Petropoulos, *Artists under Hitler: Collaboration and Survival in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 56. The book casts valuable light on the collusion of many modernist artists with the Nazi regime after 1933, but perhaps underestimates the deep modernist currents flowing through the veins of the regime which explains why figures such as Gottfried Benn and Speer, the creator of the 'Cathedral of Light', felt such a profound elective affinity with it.
- 38 Of course, the aesthetic tastes of some leading Nazis embraced a wide range of modernist works officially considered 'degenerate' (not to mention an even wider recognition of their market value): see Lynn Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1994); Jonathan Petropoulos, *The Faustian Bargain: The Art World in Nazi Germany* (London: Penguin Press, 2000).

some historians still seems unduly influenced by the traumatic impact on the sensibilities of liberal humanists of the Degenerate Art Exhibition of 1937. This national act of ritualized iconoclasm directed against a list of indexed artists reflected Hitler's concession on pragmatic grounds to Rosenberg's fanaticism about the extent of cultural cleansing necessary to purge German culture of all that was alien and dangerous to it, at least as far as painting was concerned. As a result, Goebbels' defence of jazz and modern cinema, and his enthusiasm for Italian Futurism and the figurative expressionism of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch is widely ignored because it does not fit the 'reactionary modernist' narrative.

Similarly, the significance of the regime's qualified embrace of the modernist writers Gottfried Benn and Ernst Jünger, of the modernist musicians Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss, and the modernist philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, still tends to be overlooked, along with the profoundly futural, utopian dynamic of so much of Nazi culture in practice.³⁹ Accordingly, the modernism latent in the aesthetic solutions which the Third Reich improvised in defiance of Marx's pronouncement that 'all that is solid melts into air',⁴⁰ and so defy what Zygmunt Bauman called the 'liquid modernity'⁴¹ of metropolitan life by erecting emblems of a German eternity hewn from solid stone seemingly defying time itself, have till recently gone widely unrecognized.

The confusion is exemplified by the recent volume *Urbanism and Dictatorship: A European Perspective*,⁴² a genuinely international collaborative research project, which sets out 'to contribute to the understanding of the urbanism of the European dictatorships of the first half of the twentieth century as a joint European matter' (and, one might add in the light of this two-part special issue, a matter of the whole Europeanized world!).⁴³ The book breaks down distinctions between architecture and town planning and explores comparative perspective across fascist, authoritarian right-wing, and Soviet borders, thereby 'transcending the national tunnel vision'.⁴⁴ Harald Bodenschatz's opening chapter marks the progress academia has made away from the assumption

39 On this see Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), Chapters 9–11.

40 See Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

41 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

42 Harald Bodenschatz, Piero Sassi and Max Welch Guerra, ed., *Urbanism and dictatorship: A European perspective* (Gütersloh: Bauverlag, 2015).

43 Ibid., 11.

44 Ibid., 16.

that fascism was 'reactionary' and towards embracing transnational perspectives when he asserts that 'the dictatorships of the first half of the twentieth century established themselves on the basis of repression and terror, but also through social approval of their political projects: a New State, a renewed empire, a New Society, a New Man, and a global mission'.⁴⁵ Despite such refreshing premises and intentions, when we get to Tilman Harlander's 'commentary' on 'Urbanism and Housing Policy in Nazi Germany' we are still being assured that National Socialism set out, 'in Klaus Hildebrand's words', 'to achieve a pre- or anti-modern utopia using modern means', which meant that it could bring no more than 'a partial modernization'.⁴⁶

Harlander's recycling of an outdated and paradoxical assessment of Nazism's relationship to modernity first formulated thirty-five years earlier indicates the long shadow still cast by the heavily redacted reconstructions of Nazi culture offered by an earlier generation of scholars. These found it axiomatically impossible to entertain the notion that fascism could spawn its own permutations of modernity and modernism outside the sphere of technological change, let alone that the right-wing totalitarianism of the fascist regimes contains a utopian, futural, revolutionary dynamic on a par with that of Bolshevism or Maoism. Notable proponents of this genuinely and perversely 'reactionary' perspective in the past have been H.A. Turner Jr., Ralph Dahrendorf,⁴⁷ David Schoenbaum,⁴⁸ Vincent Sherry,⁴⁹ Jeffrey Herf, and Ernst Nolte. Nolte's cryptic verdict in the conclusion of *Three Faces of Fascism* was that fascism, and first and foremost Nazism, is to be seen as 'at the same time resistance to practical transcendence and struggle against theoretical transcendence'.⁵⁰ Once deciphered,⁵¹ this is little more than a reassertion of the prevailing assumption of the day that the Third Reich was driven by an exclusively destructive,

45 Ibid., 23.

46 Cited from Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), 176.

47 Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

48 David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933–1939* (Garden City, Doubleday, 1966).

49 Vincent Sherry, *Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and Radical Modernism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993).

50 Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: New American Library, 1969), 563.

51 Emily Long, 'A Critique of Ernst Nolte: Nazism as a Transcendental Metapolitical Phenomenon,' *Proceedings of The National Conference On Undergraduate Research* (NCUR) 2012, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://www.ncurproceedings.org/ojs/index.php/NCUR2012/article/viewFile/208/154>.

regressive animus against modernity, progress, and the emancipation of the human spirit. He thereby reinforced the prejudice which most to even contemplate the possibility that the Third Reich's extraordinary dynamism and systemic violence stemmed from a fanatical conviction, common to all political revolutionaries, that new variants of all three would be arrived at but only through a sustained campaign of 'creative destruction'.

These outdated assumptions continue to sow confusion among some contemporary scholars trying to make sense of Nazism's peculiar relationship to modernity. One example is the art historian, James A. Van Dyke. In his recent monograph on Franz Radziwill, a German magic realist painter, unmistakably modernist in style, who became a passionate Nazi, he accepts that his subject believed 'in National Socialism as a revolutionary movement that would transform German society and culture',⁵² a belief that would logically suggest a congruence between two compatible futural temporalities, artistic and political. Yet because Van Dyke assumes the regime's anti-bourgeois, anti-democratic, anti-Bolshevik and anti-Semitic obsessions to be intrinsically *regressive*, he creates a contradiction for himself that he seeks to resolve by devoting an entire section to an exposition of Nazism as a form of 'reactionary modernism'.

This muddled thinking probably stems from the same preconception about the politics of modernism common within Art History that explains the blind spot among social and political historians concerning fascist modernity. Already in the inter-war period most art critics and historians were happy to recognize an elective affinity between the avant-garde and the radical left because of its allegedly 'progressive' ideology, but equally predisposed to a natural antipathy or hostility to exist between cultural and aesthetic modernism and the radical right because of its allegedly reactionary, anti-modern vision of the ideal society.⁵³ Even now few historians of Soviet modernism would claim that Constructivist or Stalinist buildings have to be seen through the lens of the Gulags. A central goal of the present article, then, is not just to help put this myth finally to rest, but to suggest a fresh conceptual framework for perceiving and evaluating the relationship to modernity and Western history of the many schemes for architectural and urban renewal enacted or proposed by anti-communist dictatorships between the 1920s and the 1950s. These include

52 James Van Dyke, *Franz Radziwill and the Contradictions of German Art History, 1919–45* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

53 For examples of this subliminal prejudice at work, see Christina Lodder, 'Searching for Utopia,' and David Crowley, 'Nationalist Modernisms,' in *Modernism 1914–1939: Designing a New World*, ed. Christopher Wilk (London: V&A Publications, 2006).

not just of Nazism and Fascism, but a number of authoritarian 'parafascist' states⁵⁴ which consciously adopted some of the institutional, organizational, and political 'style' of fascism, but without embracing their totalitarian mission to socially engineer a radical social, cultural and anthropological revolution which marked a profound caesura with traditional conservatism.

With hindsight it can be seen that the conceptual foundations for such a radical revision of how such regimes are understood in the context of modernity were already being laid in the 1960s and 1970s through the solitary efforts of a minority, notably George Mosse, Stanley Payne,⁵⁵ and Emilio Gentile.⁵⁶ However, their voices were lost in the Babel of conflicting theories that had grown up around the concept fascism, a situation so frustrating that it caused Stuart Woolf, convener of a major international conference on fascism and editor of the subsequent papers, to utter this *cri de coeur*: 'Perhaps the word fascism should be banned, at least temporarily, from our political vocabulary'.⁵⁷ It was not till the 1990s that a flurry of publications on generic fascism appeared which converged on the recognition that it was driven by, and definable by, a myth of ultranationalist rebirth, an outbreak of relative peace in comparative fascist studies that for a time I decided to refer to it, somewhat provocatively, as 'the new consensus'.

The Breakthrough in Recognizing the Modernism of Nazi Architecture

This belated development within comparative fascist studies which recognized the modernism of fascism as an assault on the political, social, and cultural status quo was corroborated by highly individual contributions to the location of fascism within a progressive modernity from such diverse scholars as Zygmunt

54 António Costa Pinto, A. Kallis, ed., *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

55 Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).

56 For a sample of his pioneering essays in English translation see Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

57 Stuart Woolf, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968).

Bauman,⁵⁸ Peter Osborne,⁵⁹ Peter Fritzsche,⁶⁰ and Thomas Rohrkämper,⁶¹ all of whom rejected the anti-modern model of fascism or Nazism, though from highly contrasting perspectives.⁶² It was against this background that a major breakthrough compatible with these developments took place within Anglophone studies of architecture in the Third Reich when Iain Boyd Whyte published his seminal essay 'National Socialism and Modernism' in the catalogue of the *Art and Power* exhibition of 1996.⁶³

In it he highlights such inconvenient truths for the old school of thought about Nazi anti-modernity as the fact that the eminent Weimar art historian and recent convert to Nazism, Wilhelm Pinder, gave an audacious speech to the *Kampfbund* celebrating the Modern Movement as essentially German; that Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Emil Fahrenkamp, two of the most prominent modernist architects of the day, were signatories of Goebbels' manifesto published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* 'Aufruf der Kunstschaffenden' [Proclamation of the Creative Artists]; and that not just Mies van der Rohe and Gropius, but also the established expressionist architect Hans Poelzig were invited to submit entries for the design competition to build the new Reichsbank. Boyd Whyte was unequivocal in his verdict: 'Modernist and traditionalist tendencies were both constantly present in the party ideology, as essential counterweights in the balancing act performed by Hitler'.⁶⁴ As a result, even as late as 1937 former Bauhaus member, Ludwig Hilberseimer was working on modernist designs for the University City to be built in the Reich, and only left Germany in 1938 when the Gestapo started investigating him for left-wing tendencies.

Less high-profile modernist architects worked on projects for the Hitler Youth and for the Heinkel airplane manufacturers, as well as on some of the large-scale social housing projects which were integral to the Nazi utopia for Aryan workers which was to celebrate 'die Schönheit der Arbeit' [the Beauty of Work]. Boyd Whyte notes the way Berlin's new Tempelhof airport 'nodded

58 Zygmunt Bauman *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

59 Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995).

60 Peter Fritzsche, 'Nazi Modern,' *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 1 (1996): 1–22.

61 Thomas Rohrkämper, 'Antimodernism, Reactionary Modernism and National Socialism: Technocratic Tendencies in Germany,' *Contemporary European History* 8, no. 1 (1999), 29–50.

62 For an overview of this development in fascist studies see Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 172–183.

63 Iain Boyd Whyte, 'National Socialism and Modernism,' in *Art and Power: Europe under the Dictators*, ed. Dawn Ades (London: Hayward Gallery, 1995), 258–269.

64 *Ibid.*, 261.

simultaneously towards classicism and modernism',⁶⁵ and how the integration of modern transport hubs into the ultra-historicist edifices of Speer's make-over of the centre of Berlin, the future Germania, was conceived in a spirit more akin to Futurism and to Le Corbusier's visions of the modern cityscape than an older generation of historians were able to detect at a time when Nazism was assumed to belong to a bygone age of barbarism.⁶⁶ In contrast, Boyd Whyte goes as far as to suggest that the more technocratically inclined Nazi leaders such as Robert Ley, Fritz Todt, and Albert Speer shared the vision of 'a Modernist National Socialist state' which was 'almost American' in its commitment to technology.⁶⁷

Hitler own predilection for granite and marble over steel and glass for the monuments of the reborn Germany may seem to place him at the opposite pole from the modernist faction in practice, despite his occasional flourish of rhetorical endorsements of their use. Yet Boyd Whyte is surely right when he argues that, even when the civic building is made of stone, 'in terms of emotional response ... monumental architecture and the power of industry and technology are linked by the aesthetics of the sublime, in that both overwhelm our perceptual or imaginative powers'. Though the classicizing designs the Führer was drawn to were far removed stylistically and ideologically from the world of the Bauhaus, Le Corbusier, Constrictivism, or De Stijl, the sheer scale of the architectural projects he became so obsessed with were clearly intended, not to recapture the past, but to encapsulate, in his own words, 'a realm of power in the formation of a stronger, protected community as the bearer and guardian of a higher culture',⁶⁸ a task modernist in dynamic, imaginative leap, and palingenetic thrust if not in aesthetic. Boyd Whyte concludes that Nazi architecture was a triumph of the latest technology, design, and logistics, even though the gargantuan supply of raw materials and inhuman levels of productivity it demanded could only be supplied by slave labour. This gave rise to what he calls an 'enigmatic fusion of Modernism based on Instrumental Reason with animal barbarity of concentration and work camps', a combination which poses 'still unanswered questions about the modernist project' (though surely no more insistently than the Bolshevik equivalent of the same paradox in contemporary Russia).⁶⁹

65 Ibid., 263.

66 For a more recent example of this approach see Jay Gonen, *Roots of Nazi Psychology: Hitler's Utopian Barbarism* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

67 Boyd Whyte, 'National Socialism and Modernism,' 261.

68 Ibid., 262.

69 Ibid., 264.

Boyd Whyte's convincing, impeccably researched essay directly associated with a highly successful international exhibition of cultural production under the main totalitarian and authoritarian regimes of the interwar period should surely have been sufficient, if not to silence the historians of the 'old guard' on the issue of Nazi modernity, then at least to serve as a catalyst to profound soul-searching about the reliability of their instincts, as well as to stimulate them to engage in energetic debate with protagonists of the new wave of scholarship about whether there was still a sustainable case for assuming Nazi architecture was 'backward looking', 'anti-modern', 'regressive', and 'resistant to transcendence'. Equally, it should have laid to rest superficial assumptions that its products were little more than studies in megalomaniacal *kitsch*, cynically euphemizing and aestheticizing not just 'politics', as Walter Benjamin would have us believe, but an unspeakably reactionary programme of social engineering and systemic inhumanity which meant they could only be contemplated through the 'lens of Auschwitz'.

It was not to be. In the two decades that have elapsed since Boyd Whyte's essay was published, several years longer than the duration of the Thousand Year Reich, confusion still reigns. The present article intends to do more than pay tribute to Boyd Whyte originality and insight into the profound relationship of Nazi architecture to modernism, those like Mosse and Miller-Lane, who prepared the ground for him: it seeks to build on it by introducing a new heuristic concept that will hopefully make it easier for those engaged in the study of Nazism and fascism studies to grasp their deeply paradoxical relationship to the future.

Rooted Modernism and the Era of Fascism

Despite the prevailing confusions about the temporality of Nazi cultural production, it has long been recognized that there was no stylistic uniformity in its architecture, and that, broadly speaking three main styles can be identified: first, vernacular styles used in rural settings for domestic housing and communal buildings and housing where a *völkisch* impression was appropriate, but a category that can also include the use of Romantic and medievalizing designs, notably in the castle-like academies for the training of the SS, the Ordensburg, the Hitler Youth homes, and also in some bridges, monuments and towers; second, the choice of a machine aesthetic indebted to the Modern Movement, both in the functionalist design and the building materials used, was the norm in utilitarian structures such factories, power-stations, housing estates for urban workers, and some motorway bridges, not to forget certain communal

buildings, such as the gigantic holiday apartment blocks that dominate at the sea-side resort of Prora on the island of Rügen, designed for the working-class heroes of the Kraft-durch-Freude organization.

The third permitted style was reserved for civic, official, and state architecture, and was overwhelmingly classical in inspiration, as evident from its taste for a geometrical carcass, rigid symmetry of design features and window detailing, the frequent incorporation of decorative rather than load-bearing columns, and the use of stone, granite and marble. But this is no slavish imitation of Greece and Rome. Where there are columns they are usually unfluted, square, and belong to no classical order (other than a vague hint of the Doric in their lack of a decorated capital which emphasises the overall sense of sobriety and minimalism). Moreover, entrances with classical proportions are frequently combined with glass windows set back and framed with the wide stone surrounds common in new official and office buildings which became a hallmark of the Western world in the 1930s. This article will make the case for seeing all these three styles, even the most severely 'classical', as manifestations of the same cultural phenomenon: 'rooted modernism'.

In the context of its architectural aesthetic, rooted modernism describes a building unmistakably modern in terms of function and construction techniques, standard of building services, décor, and comfort, but whose aesthetic design deliberately evokes or implies a 'usable past', real or mythic. It is this hybrid of functional modernity with elements of conservatism and tradition (and not necessarily the nation's 'real' history) that embodies the ethos of a regime that sees itself as pioneering a new society and opening up a new future for its people, while simultaneously maintaining its continuity with, and rootedness in, the unique, 'eternal' genius of the nation as manifested in its cultural past. The aspiration to create a permanent legacy of civic buildings which declare to the world the power, cultural creativity, and greatness of the new state system while remaining familiar, intelligible, and reassuring to the national community that it represents precludes the extreme experimentation of a visionary architecture unconstrained by respect for continuity with the past or by a recognizable national tradition and sense of place. By contrast, such extreme innovation was second nature to the Futurists, Expressionists, Constructivists and Abstractionists who thrived in the first phase of a Soviet communism whose ideology demanded that it was systematically severing all ties to the Tsarist, Orthodox, capitalist and bourgeois past. Even for the most technocratically inclined of Nazi modernists, the triumphant internationalism and rampant experimentalism of such architects was deemed alien in spirit to the Aryan tradition, emblematic of the racial decadence of an avant-garde indulging in its own fantasies rather than remaining true to the spirit of the

Volksgemeinschaft. However, this left several acceptable aesthetic idioms to serve the architectural needs of the Third Reich.

The 'rootedness' of the Nazis' vernacular idiom is self-evident, and is tempting to mistake for symptomatic of Nazism's nostalgia for a lost national past, so it is important to recognize how its examples wove bucolic, Romantic, and medievalizing elements into a hybrid pattern with modernity. For instance, the function, layout and standards of interior design of the Waldsiedlung estate built in a wood at Krumme Lanke near Berlin to house the SS, are utterly modern, however idyllic the effect of the picturesque exteriors.⁷⁰ Hitler's Kehlsteinhaus, or 'Eagles Nest', at Berchtesgaden similarly has markedly vernacular elements in its overall design and conception, but its sheer scale, complex ground-plan, and up-to-date equipment and security arrangements, notably the labyrinth of underground tunnels built by slaves, belong to a different era.

The rootedness of the overtly Modern Movement designs used in industrial, infrastructural, and technological projects is less apparent. Yet here too modernism could be used with good Aryan conscience (at least outside the orbit of Rosenberg's *Kampfbund*) without suggesting a decadent cosmopolitanism, thanks to the core myth of Nazism, explicitly stated in *Mein Kampf*, that the Aryans were 'founders and creators of culture' (Kulturbegründer und Kulturschöpfer), the 'Prometheus of Mankind, from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times'.⁷¹ It was a vision of racial determinism which fully accounted for and embraced national advances in science and technology. For Nazis this particular racial gift was demonstrated by Germany's rapid industrialization in the late nineteenth century after unification, and the world dominance it had so rapidly achieved in so many branches of the natural sciences and in industrial processes involving advanced mechanical engineering, machine tools, and applied physics, chemistry, and biochemistry.

There was thus nothing intrinsically 'un-German' about the building of vast industrial complexes with no regard for classical proportions or vernacular tradition, their form primarily determined by their function, but still capable of gestures towards a certain aesthetic elegance. The almost Expressionist grandeur of the new Volkswagen works in Wolfsburg, resembling four huge power

70 Ben Bansal, 'Waldsiedlung Krumme Lanke', *Benbansal.me*, accessed January 12, 2017, <https://benbansal.me/?p=1438>.

71 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972), 290. See also Johann Chapoutot, *Greeks, Romans, Germans: How the Nazis Usurped Europe's Classical Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 30–31.

stations yoked together, and the decision to provide the vast new Heinkel aircraft factory complex with the semblance of a classical façade made of brick where it adjoined a public road, reflected the sense that the booming industrial-military complex of the late 1930s expressed a definitional trait of Germanness which had been restored by the Third Reich along with the nation's pride and political might. When on 11 February 1933 Hitler opened the *Internationale Automobilausstellung* (IAA; International Motor Show) in Berlin a few days after he had become Chancellor, and announced a vast road-building programme, this was no less a performative enactment of Germany's rebirth as the speech he delivered at the opening of the House of German Art.

But it is in the sphere of classicizing state architecture that the concept of 'rooted modernism' is of greatest potential value in relocating the 'anti-modern'/'modern' debate within Nazi studies to a new conceptual framework. Consulting a wide selection of architectural reference works on the relationship of neo-classicism to modernism soon makes it clear that any analysis is likely to get snagged on a dense hedge of thorny terminology and of conflicting approaches to how different styles relate to each other and to modernity. 'Neo-classicism' has, of course, an extraordinarily ancient, rich, and tangled history in the West and beyond, but of concern here is the proliferation in the course of the 1920s and 1930s all over the Westernized world, irrespective of the political regime of the day, of prestigious state, civic, public, and commercial buildings whose designs alluded to a greater or lesser extent to the Graeco-Roman classical tradition. Such allusions could be expressed in the choice of rigid symmetry and geometric proportions, the incorporation of columns, generally unfluted and flat, arches, and the frequent use of stone, granite, marble, domes, and sometimes statues. Other features were the austere, sober, almost Spartan (in the generic sense) lack of visual richness, colour, and fantasy, and the absence of ludic decoration, either within the surface of the building materials or attached to the façades, liable to entertain and excite the eye, or direct the gaze upward to the skyline. These cumulatively produced a sense of unadorned simplicity, *gravitas*, and authority that came in some quarters to be referred as 'stripped classicism'.⁷²

It is tempting to associate stripped classicism with the contemporary Western mood of fiscal austerity and economic crisis of the 1920s, as well as the collective psychological trauma of the First World War itself (which was felt even

72 Some experts have equated 'stripped classicism' with 'starved classicism', which others see as only appropriate for buildings with no *gravitas* and a paucity of funds.

in non-combatant countries), creating a 'mood of the times' inhibiting exuberance and fantasy. This was then intensified by the Depression, which deepened the general sense of civilizational crisis, and a wide-spread longing for a strong state and strong leaders to restore order. The result was the accentuation of a movement against ornament and expressionist effervescence that had started taking place before the First World War and whose beginning was marked symbolically by the publication in 1908 of Alfred Loos' essay 'Ornament as Crime'. After the war, the continuation of this trend saw a marked shift of taste in state art outside Russia away from the visionary extravagances of ornate revivalist styles, Art Nouveau, Expressionism, Italian Futurism, Russian Constructivism, and the asymmetries of Bauhaus and De Stijl, and towards the more geometrically regular, clean-lined, and *hygienic* spirit of Art Deco, Neue Sachlichkeit (the New Objectivity/New Sobriety), as well as the more restrained, forms of industrial design, the machine aesthetic, and what is variously called International Style, Modern Movement, or (in Italy) Rationalism.⁷³

The kinship of stripped classicism with such contemporary modern movements is apparent in its marked tendency to eclecticism and hybridization. Thus, the brief history of American state buildings constructed by the General Services Administration (GSA) notes that in the 1930s 'architects began introducing the new aesthetic of industrial design, combining classical proportions with streamlined, Art Deco detailing'.⁷⁴ As early as 1923, Marcello Piacentini had already produced the first of a series of sophisticated versions of stripped classical designs to be incorporated into major buildings completed under Mussolini. Arnaldo dell'Ira's rigorously symmetrical classical design for Piazza d'Italia contain elements of the vernacular and suggest the mood of de Chirico's highly modernist metaphysical paintings. Eclecticism can also be seen in Ludwig Troost's almost abstract Ehrentempel in Munich, a carcass without curtain walls or façade, built to commemorate the Fallen of the November

73 Bryant surely takes her argument too far when she claims that Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como, an icon of Italian Rationalism/International Style, is 'firmly entrenched with the stripped classical movement' and is a 'premier example of it'. Brittany Bryant, *Reassessing Stripped Classicism within the Narrative of International Modernism* (MA Thesis, Savannah College of Art, 2011), 44, available at <http://ecollections.scad.edu/iii/cpro/DigitalItemViewPage.external?sessionId=931F8146600B1788F006DB18D60EA374?lang=eng&sp=1000695&sp=T&sp=Pall%2CRu1000001%40%2CQbryant&suite=def>, accessed January 12, 2017.

74 'Architecture and Government', GSA website, accessed January 12, 2017, <https://www.gsa.gov/node/79722>.

Putsch of 1923 in a design of such minimalist classical simplicity that it betrays marked 'modernist tendencies'.⁷⁵ In the case of Hitler's 'fantasy architecture' so lovingly designed for him and turned into vast maquettes by Speer, it is above all the surreally megalomaniacal scale of the buildings that betrays a deeply un-classical, anti-humanistic, totalitarian and *modern* mindset at work.

Rather than attempt to improvise a series of rigorously demarcated subcategories or invent my own hyphenated terms for the bewildering array of hybrids that neo-classicism could form with other styles in the inter-war period, I would suggest that each exercise in stripped classicism be imagined as occupying an approximate position along a spectrum moving from unadorned, rigorously symmetrical neo-classicism at one pole (pure stripped classicism), to highly eclectic blends with contemporary modern styles at the other (hybrid stripped classicism). In the context of the Third Reich, the new Reich Chancellery and the House of German Art (Figure 3) can be seen as examples of a relatively 'pure' specimen of stripped classicism, while the Annex to the Reichsbank (Figure 4) and Tempelhof airport (Figure 5) are examples of the more 'hybrid' variant, with obvious non-traditional elements, namely the use of stripped classical window detailing and a 'Mendelsohnian' modernist curve respectively. In Fascist Italy (which, as Aristotle Kallis' article makes clear, was far more open to avant-garde modernism) the Triumphal Arch in Bolzano is at the 'pure' end of the spectrum while the Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro at the site of the planned EUR in Rome lies at the other, with the Post Office of Palermo and the front courtyard of La Sapienza University lying somewhere in between.

In both fascist regimes, we argue, permutations of stripped classicism, with admixtures of overtly modern aesthetics, signified not a nostalgia for the past and reaction against modernity, but a longing for a new civilization which maintained its continuity with a mythic past, whether Germany's Aryan origins, or Italy's essential 'Romanness', its *Romanità*. In both regimes, though for different ideological reasons, this modernized classicism represented one of *their* variants of modernism, as much as Constructivism did for Bolshevism before Stalin became the supreme adjudicator on cultural matters. Stripped classicism is thus to be seen as the material expression of their core palingenetic myth of the reborn 'ultra-nation'.⁷⁶

75 Alex Scobie, *Hitler's State Architecture: The Impact of Classical Antiquity* (Michigan: University of Michigan Library/Ann Arbor, 1990), 58.

76 Roger Griffin, *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018).



FIGURE 4 *Annex to the lost Reichsbank building, by Heinrich Wolff, opened 1938.*
BY BEEK100—OWN WORK, CC BY-SA 3.0, [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.
ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?CURID=5743610](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5743610)

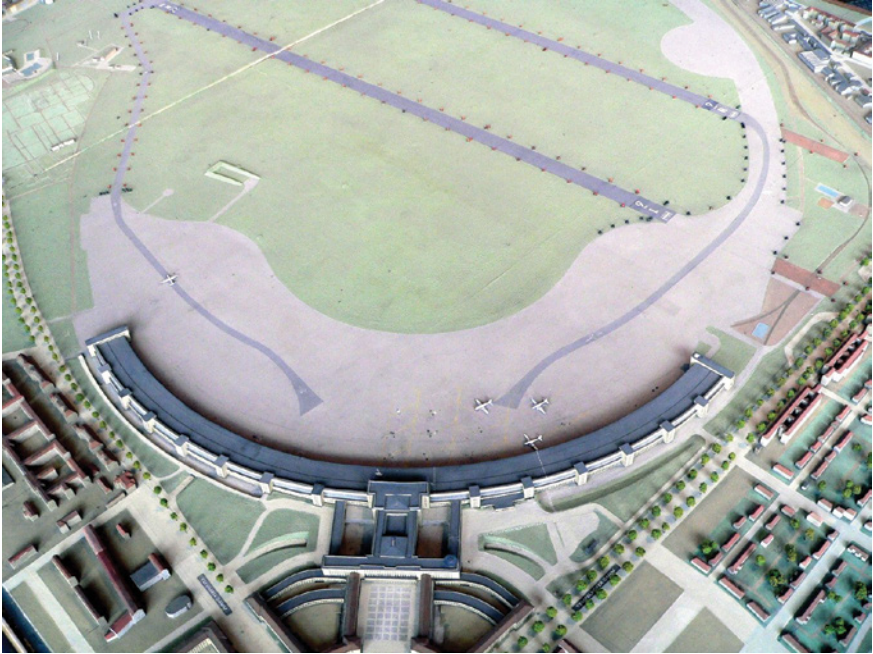


FIGURE 5 *Model of Tempelhof Airport, by Ernst Sagebiel, opened 1937.*
 PHOTO ASSUMED TO BE BY JUERGEN G. (BASED ON COPYRIGHT CLAIMS),
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 CURID=466671

Scholarly Corroboration for the Modernism of Nazi Classicism

It is yet another sign of the velvet revolution in the understanding that has been unfolding since the 1990s that, just as the composition of this article was in its final stages, a book was published that independently lent copious scholarly support to its central argument. Among the sixteen chapters of *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (2018), several emphasise the error of reading into fascism's taste for the classical aesthetic idiom a symptom of its anti-modernity. In her introduction to the volume, Helen Roche states that 'both regimes seem to have engaged anew with time itself, forging a novel historic imaginary in which antiquity was perceived as utterly contemporary, and the quintessentially fascist "new man" could appear in the guise of an ancient Greek athlete or a Roman legionary without any sense of anachronism'. She goes on:

Instead of recognizing a complete dichotomy between antiquity and modernity, both Fascism and National Socialism attempted to blend the two,

fusing and eliding past, present and future, whilst ennobling their claims to imperial greatness through the universal language of classicism. This, then, was no mere 'reactionary modernism', but rather a form of 'classicizing modernism', in which any nineteenth-century tendencies to treat the classical as having little or no relevance whatsoever to the 'modern' had been utterly discarded.⁷⁷

Jan Nelis' chapter on 'Fascist Modernity, Religion and the Myth of Rome' bears out this observation when he stresses that 'Fascism's intent was that antiquity and modernity should be perceived, if not as one organic whole, then at least as distinctly interconnected'. Such an interconnection was central to *romanità* and produced a specific style of architectural classicism, generally referred to as *stile littorio*, which he characterizes as a "stripped" (neo-)classicism presenting a particular, highly recognizable blend of art deco, modern, functionalist and ancient Roman influences' which 'could be observed in a host of (mostly representative) buildings, first and foremost in the nation's capital'.⁷⁸

Iain Boyd Whyte's chapter observes a similar process of renegotiating and synthesizing the relationship between past and future under the Third Reich, concluding that:

the National Socialist approach to architecture ... vacillated wildly between traditionalism and modernism, turning variously to the German soil, to the exemplars of antiquity, and to the high-tech triumphs of German science as inspirations for contemporary design. The likes of Himmler and Rosenberg were advocates of the former strategy, while Speer and Todt pushed for the latter.⁷⁹

Yet he sees both factions as sharing a common aspiration:

The goal was a new, universal manner of public building, which would somehow *combine the emotional resonance of antiquity with the power and functionality of modernity, and which would emerge simply from the inherent dynamism of the political revolution*. As one of Speer's apologists, the architect Rudolf Wolters, insisted in typically convoluted prose: 'Whoever speaks of "Neoclassicism" at the sight of our great communal

77 Helen Roche and Kyriakos Demetriou, ed., *Brill's Companion to the Classics, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 22.

78 *Ibid.*, 137–138.

79 *Ibid.*, 430.

buildings has not understood the essence of our building program. This essence lies in the new task, in the great common purpose of our buildings, which are without precedent in their plans and spatial dispositions, and in their urban forms, and which only emerge from the substance of our National Socialistic existence'.⁸⁰

'Combining the emotional resonance of antiquity with the power and functionality of modernity' eloquently sums up the synthesis referred to with the concept 'rooted modernism'. Perhaps Hitler expressed its underlying principle most succinctly and eloquently of all: 'Nur aus dem Vergangenen und Gegenwärtigen zugleich, baut sich die Zukunft auf'.⁸¹ (Only when the past and the contemporary become simultaneous can the future be built.) Rooted modernism expressed precisely this simultaneity as a portal to a new age.

Refreshingly, another valuable source of corroboration of the central thesis of this article is offered, not by an established academic, but by postgraduate Fine Arts student Brittany Bryant in her MA thesis devoted to making the case for the inclusion of stripped classicism within the Modern Movement and the modernist canon. What ensues is a powerful argument for categorizing stripped classicism as a permutation of architectural modernism rather than its rejection, stressing its function in finding an aesthetic which expressed a symbolic resolution in built form to the socio-political crisis of the nation after World War One and the civilizational crisis of the West. In doing so it offers, as I have put it elsewhere, a metaphorical 'fixing solution' to what Zygmunt Bauman describes as the liquefaction of modernity.⁸²

Bryant claims that after 1918 'each country was driven by similar political aspirations, the reestablishment of the nation following the total devastation of World War 1 and the challenges presented by the international economic depression of the 1930s'. As a new architectural aesthetic, stripped classicism served this end and each nation could identify with its historical connections. Despite its appeal to historical tradition, it was nonetheless a modern architecture. Conceived entirely from new principles and modernist ideology, it reflected modern technology and modern thought of the time. Although each regime employed stripped classicism to achieve different political goals, the underlying aspiration of each nation was to create a connection to the great

80 Ibid. My emphasis.

81 Hitler, *Die deutsche Kunst*, 11–12.

82 Roger Griffin, 'Fixing Solutions: Fascist Temporalities as Remedies for Liquid Modernity,' *Journal of Modern European History* 13, no. 1 (2015): 5–23.

empires of Greece and Rome that had lasted for centuries and whose architectural monuments had stood the test of time.⁸³

This observation may apply more to European nations and the United States than to Latin America, where the sense of a direct lineage to Classical Civilization is far weaker. Nevertheless, given the way neo-classical architecture had become an architectural *lingua franca* of high culture and authority in the Europeanized world, her next comment holds as much for interwar Brazil or Argentina as for Britain or Italy. In the interwar period, stripped classicism was 'inspired by modernity through the use of modern technology and simplicity of form'. It endeavoured not just 'to create a sense of nationalist pride in each country', but 'to represent modern man and provide a context for modern society'.⁸⁴

Rooted Modernism, Fascism, Parafascism and beyond

Highlighting the inadequacy of defining architectural modernism solely in formal terms of 'flat roofs and ribbon windows', Bryant calls in her conclusion for it to be located within a wider discourse about 'events, building, and publications' so that its deeper relationship to modernity can be grasped. Approached in this way it becomes clear that 'stripped classicism' constitutes a second current within the international Modern Movement, an alternative to radically innovative, anti-traditional, avant-garde modernism, but nevertheless a form of what we have called elsewhere 'programmatic modernism'⁸⁵ in its own right. As Bryant observes, it became prolific during the inter-war period because 'it allowed the state to embrace modernity without completely displacing past traditions, it bridged the historical past to an absolute modernity'.⁸⁶

Bryant's insights finally provide the vital international context and conceptual framework so conspicuous by its absence when Taylor casually recognized in *The Word in Stone* that the House of German Art was 'vaguely traditional, but yet modern', like the town hall or court house of 'many a city in Europe and North America'.⁸⁷ They also highlight just how wrong-headed Curtis' judgment was that, just because fascist regimes wanted to 'foster the impression that their right to rule was embedded in the deepest aspirations of the people',

83 Bryant, *Reassessing Stripped Classicism*, 59–60.

84 Ibid., 60.

85 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 61–64.

86 Bryant, *Reassessing Stripped Classicism*, 61.

87 Taylor, *The Word in Stone*, 16.

this necessarily meant that 'modern architecture seemed at best marginal, at worst a dangerous threat in need of extermination',⁸⁸ so that no sort of creative *hybrid* between the two was possible.

This richly variegated, often highly imaginative alternative modernism to the one expressed in the iconoclastic, experimental architecture of the early twentieth century we have termed in this article 'rooted'. Its dominant form in the interwar period was a classicizing modernism adopted by the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler in the futural spirit of what Mark Antliff has called in the French context 'avant-garde fascism'. Certainly, it was closer in its utopian assault on the present to Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation than to Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin, and to Gropius's Bauhaus building in Dessau than to Giuseppe Sacconi's 'Altar to the Fatherland' in Rome.⁸⁹ Under the Nazis, stripped classicism in buildings might even be conceived as the regime's equivalent of Futurism or Constructivism, instinctively fulfilling the precept formulated by Hitler, and which we cited earlier, that: 'Only when the past and the contemporary become simultaneous can the future be built'. It in the spirit of rooted modernism that Hitler convinced himself that monumental buildings constructed in the style of stripped classicism, in Speer's words, 'set the future in stone'. *Das Wort aus Stein* was made to persuade the new Aryans of the *Volksgemeinschaft* that that each new building project embarked on by the Reich turned the Word of the Nazi Gospel into Stone, announcing the dawn of the Nazi millennium.

The recognition of the elective affinity between stripped classicism and the palingenetic ultranationalism of the two fascist regimes has important implications for the comparative study of fascism, and, more generally, the architectural history of right-wing regimes in the fascist era that were ideologically opposed to experimental modernism in architecture associated with Bolshevism. In the context of fascist studies, it suggests much would be gained by examining on a nation by nation basis any architectural plans or projects for urban renewal conceived in fascist movements that never succeeded in seizing power, and in particular, any cases of modernist architects being drawn even marginally into the orbit of fascism (which was certainly the case of such luminaries as Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Adalberto Libera, and Le Corbusier).

The present argument also suggests that it is worth also revisiting the plans for architectural and urban renewal of the many authoritarian regimes of the

88 William Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 351.

89 Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909–1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

period that, while rejecting radical totalitarian and revolutionary solutions to the national and civilizational crisis, nevertheless, in their own more restrained authoritarian way, were drawn to syntheses of national tradition with international architectural modernity. They would then have been intent on creating their own national variants of stripped classicism, their own simultaneities of past and present, their own forms of rooted modernism. Hopefully, this article and the five that follow over the next two issues of *Fascism* will lay the basis for a series of specialized studies of national architectures between the wars which demonstrate the porous membranes, not just between the modernity of fascism and of what we have called 'parafascism', but between their modernity and that of the cultural production of the liberal democratic world.

This would add to our knowledge both of the internationalism of fascism, and of its entanglements and *histoires croisées* with non-fascist authoritarian and democratic of the interwar period. To take just one example, applying 'rooted modernism' to comparative research along these lines would provide a broader historical context within which to discuss the extravagant fusion of stripped classicism with art deco in New York's Empire State Building. It might also shed new light on the decision to place enormous fluted columns set into the wall either side of the skyscraper's main entrance. Topped with art deco eagles rather than axe-heads, their effect remains curiously reminiscent of the stylized fusion of columns with *fasces* familiar from Mussolini's *stile littorio*.

The Nazis' use of stripped classicism was integral to their collective 'immortality project'⁹⁰ to transform Germany into the foundation and heartland of a new social, political, technological regime, an utterly modern but historically rooted 'new order' which would form the basis of a total culture, a radical solution to the contemporary crisis of civilization while at the same time spawning countless architectural sacral spaces opening out onto a this-worldly eternity. The Nazi new world was to be experienced by its Aryan or Aryanized subjects as a creative, dynamic, heroic reality, one which emulated the unique grandeur of the ancient Egyptians, Mayas, Greeks, and Romans, living on as an epic myth in the minds of future generations long after its demise, and conceived in that extraordinary act of futural reflexivity which dictated that Speer had to imagine how his major buildings would look after the Third Empire had met the fate of all empires and entered the cycle of decline into a mere 'civilization' predicted by Oswald Spengler.

In the event, the millennial future that was to be 'set in stone' by the Third Reich was drastically curtailed. The vast stripped classical edifice of the

90 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973). See too Michaud, *The Cult of Art*, which documents the centrality of art to the Nazis' immortality project.

Congress Hall in Nuremberg, a gigantized version of the Colosseum seating 50,000, demonstrated its ‘ruin value’ far short of its intended 1000-year lifespan (Figure 6), a fact that now imbues this statement the speech which Hitler delivered as he laid its foundation stone in 1935 with the ghostly presence of Shelley’s *Ozymandias*:

If the Movement should ever fall silent, then this testimony to it will speak even after millennia. In the middle of a holy grove of ancient oaks men will then admire these first giants among the buildings of the Third Reich in awestruck amazement.⁹¹



FIGURE 6 View of Colosseum-inspired Congress Hall from across the Dutzendteich Lake, Nuremberg. Designed by Franz and Ludwig Ruff, construction suspended 1943. PHOTO BY ADAM JONES, PH.D.—OWN WORK, CC BY-SA 3.0, [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/W/INDEX.PHP?CURID=22166745](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22166745)

91 Adolf Hitler, *Die Reden Hitlers am Parteitag der Freiheit 1935* (Munich: Eher, 1935), 18.