PROBLEMS OF ECOLOGICAL BALANCE IN A
TROPICAL FOREST ENVIRONMENT: A CASE
STUDY OF KHMER HISTORY

SYMBOLS AND CINEMA: A STUDY IN
CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

HENRY JAMES: CRITIC IN EXILE

PROBLEMS OF ECOLOGICAL
BALANCE IN A TROPICAL FOREST
ENVIRONMENT: A CASE
STUDY OF KHMER HISTORY

An Extended Essay
Presented to
The Department of Geography
Simon Fraser University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Peter James Hugill
December 1969

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The Khmer, a people until recently dead and forgotten in the mists of time, are shown here to have been significant victims of the results of ecological imbalance. In their case it was not ecological imbalance of the purely environmental type so much under discussion at the present day. It was a change in deep-seated beliefs in the role of religion in maintaining environmental balance that upset the pre-existing balance; a change brought about by the diffusion of new religious ideas into the state of Kambuja.

My thanks for advice and assistance in the writing of this paper and for the ideas on ecology herein expounded are due to Professor Philip Wagner, guardian of all things cultural in the Department of Geography.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Essentially cultural geography is concerned with the way in which man interacts with his environment. Cultures which do not follow "our own" in this respect we term "alien" because of our inability to understand them. Cultures which are dead and gone are, therefore, even more alien in nature since we can no longer observe them at first hand and must rely solely on the accidents of history for our evidence. The Khmer, onetime rulers of present day Cambodia, have provided us with just such an enigma. From their highly stylised written accounts we know they dominated the Southern Indochinese peninsula until their defeat at the hands of the Thai in 1431 A.D. and that they spread their complex and highly symbolised monuments over much of that area. Yet the question remains of why they left no more than this. With a system of balanced ecology through controlled water storage their society did not collapse through lack of food, nor are there signs of tremendous destruction wreaked by an invader upon their monuments. When, in 1867, the French explorer Henri Mouhout rediscovered the site of the great Khmer capital of Angkor the physical evidences of an earlier people with their monuments, cities, vast irrigation works, inscriptions and all the so-called indices of high culture were obviously inconsistent with the then existing state of Cambodia with its primitive economic and social organisation. If, for present purposes, we accept the premise of a "decline" in cultural quality in Cambodia from the time of the Khmers to the present, we must then search for the reasons for this "decline".[1]

---

[1] Our tendency to judge past peoples on their architectural proclivity rather than on the value of their lives requires one to question the assumption that a society can "decline". I would consider, from the accumulated evidence, that Khmer society did not suffer a decline in cultural value merely because it collapsed as an Empire in 1431 A.D. (the date given by Briggs, 1948). I would consider, rather, that the value of the culture increased with the introduction of a totally new concept of the organisation of life.

The questions asked by Mouhot and by the French academics who followed him were, therefore, concerned with problems of the origins of the peoples who had constructed these great works in the middle of a tropical rainforest, their beliefs, the reasons for their success and, finally, the reasons for their collapse as an Empire. These questions concerning their ecology and symbolism have given rise to a great body of literature, largely in French, which will be considered shortly. I submit that the problem of Khmer ecology is, in fact, less of a problem than it seems, and that a closer understanding of the nature of these peoples' relationship with their environment coupled with a consideration of the effect of centuries of contradiction within this relationship in the religions of the Khmer elites will indicate that the Khmer Empire was inherently weak, as are all societies in which constant contradictions are never resolved.

The Khmer used their environment far more intensively than almost any other culture which has existed on the face of the earth. They did so because they had a mandate from the gods, a mandate reflected most closely in their architectural symbolism and in their use of the landscape. This is one of the four elements which we must consider in order to successfully reconstruct the Khmer cultural environment. As Ortega comments "Society ... contains only commonplaces and exists on the basis of these commonplaces."[2] These "commonplaces" are inherent in the symbols of that society as being the distinguishing trait of homo sapiens. Man's image of man has changed from that of man the tool-maker to man the symboliser.[3] One of the strongest

---

[2] in Man and People, quoted in Manas.

[3] See, for example White, p. 45. "It was the introduction of symbols, word-formed symbols, into the tool process that transformed anthropoid tool-behaviour into human tool-behaviour."

representations of the inherent symbolic values of a culture will be found in
the high-style[4] architecture of that culture and when such values reach out
and markedly affect the landscape their importance is vastly increased.

Secondly one must consider the role of the religious institutions
of a given culture. In many cultures the role of interpreter of symbols falls
to the religious hierarchy which, in some cases, goes so far as to become
the only medium of symbolic expression for that culture. In such cultures
religion cannot be separated from cultural traits such as social structure
or economic organisation and it therefore becomes the most satisfactory
available index of that culture. In the Khmer culture religion played
precisely this major role, a role which will be here considered at some
length, concurrently with a consideration of the effects of religion upon
the landscape.

The other elements necessary for such a reconstruction are knowledge
of the environmental setting and of the historical events that occurred in
that setting. Many questions regarding the Khmer can be answered only via a
consideration of the historical development of their civilisation and the
accompanying changes in attitudes toward the environment. Both these
considerations will be entered into in due course, both specifically and
generically.

---

[4]
    the term is Rapoport's. It infers those buildings which are designed and
    built by teams of specialists, presumably in response to the demands of the
    elite of that society.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF THE LITERATURE ON THE KHMER

Before the arrival of Henri Mouhot[5] the existence of Angkor had

been documented by a much earlier generation of European travellers, the

Portuguese and Spanish. This literature was, however, not rediscovered

until after Mouhot had rekindled interest in this tropical forest high

civilisation; it has recently been summarised in French by B.P. Groslier.[6]

Much material relevant to the Khmer has been gathered under the auspices of

L'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient which was originally set up to study the

problems posed by these people. This material has appeared in a wide

variety of journals and under the headings of a wide number of subjects,

many non-"geographic" in nature.[7] Little original work has been done in

English on this area, the lèse-majesté of Empire resulting in this

ex-colonial outpost of the French being regarded as lying almost exclusively

in the French academic sphere of interest.[8] Of late however many of the

major French works have been translated into English, presumably as a result

of the new forms of colonialism this area is experiencing.[9]

---

[5] whose diary has been translated recently by Christopher Pym.

[6] Summarised by B.P. Groslier (1958).

[7] See especially the Bulletin d'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (B.E.F.E.O.).

[8] The vast majority of work originally written in English is of the poorly
documented and highly speculative traveller's tales variety. It appears as
if all the English speaking visitors to Angkor felt obliged to publish
accounts of their jungle experiences.

Notable exceptions to this are found in major works of synthesis such as
those of L.P. Briggs (1951) and, more recently and more accurately,
Christopher Pym (1968).

[9] Prime sources are the excellent historical reconstructions produced by
George Coèdes and the works on the history of Khmer art by Bernard Philippe
Groslier. A drawback with the latter author from the geographer's view-
point is an excessive tendency towards environmental determinism. The
most comprehensive translated treatment of Khmer art itself is that of
Madeleine Giteau.

Most English speaking interest in Indochina has been expressed by Indian scholars who, having recently come to the realisation that it was their forbears who originally colonised South East Asia for mercantile purposes, have shown some concern with the historical development of South East Asian culture.[10]   This has, in turn, tended to encourage a continuing interest in the area among British historians who, although primarily concerned with India herself, were among the first scholars to demonstrate the one-time existence of a Greater India.[11]

---

[10]
For example, R.C. Majumdar and Bijan Raj Chatterji. Their work does, however, tend towards the view that the cultures of Greater India were exclusively a result of Indianisation. This is a rather short-sighted view: those cultures which were almost entirely Indian imitations collapsed when the fifth century A.D. brought to a close Indian overseas venturing and cut off the Indian mother culture. Only those cultures which had incorporated local ideas into the Indian scheme of the world throve in the South East Asian environment.

[11]
H.G. Quaritch Wales has produced an immense amount of literature on this topic.

CHAPTER 3

THE SYMBOLIC IMPLICATIONS OF RELIGION FOR THE KHMER UNIVERSE

One of the prime concepts in South East Asian religions, one
which derives directly from their largely Indian parentage, is a belief in
the parallelism between the macrocosmos and the microcosmos or, more
prosaically, between the universe of the gods and the world of men. The
implications for ecology here are numerous. If the universe of the gods can
be physically represented in the world of men it will be a highly stylised
and symbolic representation. This belief in parallelism also includes a
belief in the harmony and unity of the world. The state, the social group
and the individual must all be in harmony with the universe and therefore
with nature: this necessary harmony is then reflected in all man-made
structures or artifacts within the landscape. To further this end the state
must therefore control all the forces of production to guarantee welfare and
prosperity for all so that the gods may not find wanting the imitation of
their world of presumed luxury and plenty. In the Khmer culture there were
three primary religious forces which were the creators of the Khmer land-
scape. These three, modified slightly from their Indian origins to suit local
conditions, operated upon a base of comparatively unsophisticated religious
beliefs. In chronological order of their appearance in Khmer history these
were

A. Pre-Indian beliefs   i   The Dong-Son
                         ii   The Megalithic

B. Brahmanism

C. Mahāyāna Buddhism

D. Hīnayāna Buddhism

A. Pre-Indian beliefs

i The Dong-Son

The religion of the Dong-Son peoples who inhabited the coast of much of present day North and South Vietnam and Cambodia was essentially one which believed in the gods of the sky. A belief in "heaven" is demonstrated by the paintings on the ceremonial "rain drums" which include representations of boats laden with feather clad figures; souls embarking for the land of the blessed beyond the clouds.[12]

ii The Megalithic

The Megalithic people who inhabited Laos, highland North Vietnam, upland Cambodia away from the Mekong delta and much of Malaya appear to have held a very different view of their gods from the only other pre-Indian culture of which we have knowledge, the Dong-Son. The characteristic remnants of this culture are megalithic funerary monuments, urns, dolmens and menhirs, demonstrating the earthward orientation of their religious beliefs. Their gods were those of the rivers and the mountains, the trees and the soil.

B. Brahmanism

This, the first of the Indian religions to have major effects upon South East Asian history, was perhaps the most influential. Above all it set the pattern for all the Khmer cities as a representation of the universe in stone.[13] In Brahmanic doctrine the world consists of a circular,

---

12
R. Heine-Geldern (1947). The "rain drums" appear to have been used in a rain-making ceremony to simulate the thunder preceding rain in a tropical forest environment.

13
R. Heine-Geldern (1942) whose analysis is followed here with few modifications.

central continent named Jambūdvīpa, the home of man, which is surrounded by seven annular oceans and six annular continents. Beyond the seventh ocean the world is surrounded by an enormous mountain range. In the centre of Jambūdvīpa rises the holy mountain, Mount Meru, the pole of the universe and about which both our world and the universe revolve. On the summit of Mount Meru is the city of Brahma, home of the gods.

The principal deities honoured in South East Asia were closely related to those found in India. Shiva, destroyer of each universe at the end of its cycle when corruption has made it inherently evil, was the most popular. Vishnu, preserver of the universe, was also a commonly worshipped deity. Brahma, creator and lord of the universe, was, as in India in the first to fifth centuries A.D., very largely out of favour. One peculiarity in Brahmanic belief amongst the Khmer was the patronisation of Harihara, an unusual compound deity possessing features from both Shiva and Vishnu.

C. Mahāyāna Buddhism

The Mahāyāna cosmography is essentially similar to that of Brahmanism. Mount Meru once more provides the pole of the universe and is surrounded by seven annular mountain chains separated by as many oceans. Surrounding the seventh mountain chain is, however, a great ocean containing the four island continents, one at each cardinal point, an ocean surrounded by a final wall of mountains. The southern continent in this universe is Jambūdvīpa, the home of man. Mount Meru itself houses the lowest of the 26 heavens on its lower slopes and the second heaven, the home of Indra, chief of the 33 gods, on its summit. Notable in Mahāyānist belief is the concept of the bodhisattva, a concept which allows future Buddhas to be identified during their existence on this earth. Principal deity of Khmer Mahāyānism was the bodhisattva Lokeśvara who, ultimately, came to be identified with the Khmer priest-king or devarāja, thereby transforming him into a semi-god king; one who will be a god after death.

D. Hīnayāna Buddhism

Although descended from the same teachings of Gautama Buddha as is Mahāyānism, Hīnayānism places very different emphasis upon certain aspects of those teachings. It promotes the inner peace of the individual rather than the glory of the king; personal enlightenment rather than the welfare of the state. Hīnayānism, often called Buddhism of the Lesser Vehicle, and now most commonly termed Theravada Buddhism, has no eternal deities. As do the original teachings of Gautama Buddha it emphasises each individual's personal progression towards a state of grace, a progression marred or hastened by the actions of that individual in this life. It therefore accepts no eternal deities and requires no temples or shrines to either house worshippers of those deities or encourage them to perform actions beneficial to the worshipper. In effect it is the exact opposite of the religions of state glorification represented in South East Asia by Brahmanism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

E. Physical Manifestations of these beliefs

The basic essentials of both the Brahmanic and Mahāyānist universes can be expressed effectively on the landscape in stone. The abbreviated images of each require only a central tower and temple on a raised mountain, natural or artificial, surrounded by the requisite number of terraces and moats to symbolise mountains and oceans and oriented towards the cardinal points. The only significant differences are in the object of devotion in each religion. If the prevailing religion were Brahmanic the central temple would contain a lingam, phallic symbol of Shiva, the god of destruction, to represent the pole of the universe. If the prevailing religion were Mahāyānist the central temple would contain a statue of Buddha in his role as the bodhisattva Lokeśvara, "Lord of the World".

As an example of the type of "city" thus constructed by the Khmer
we may take the Bakheng at Angkor, a monument dedicated to Shiva and
constructed at the command of Yaśovarman, founder of Yaśodharapura, the Khmer
term for Angkor itself. The Bakheng, constructed on a natural hill which
represents Mount Meru, is comprised of 108 towers of two sizes symmetrically
surrounding the 109th. When viewed from the cardinal point in the exact
centre of each side only 33 of these can be seen at any one time, arranged
on the seven levels of the ground, five terraces and the final platform.
The 33 gods of both Brahmanic and Mahāyānist belief are thereby represented
as having domain over the seven continents.

The Bakheng is, however, more than a symbolic home of the gods.
It is, additionally, the Khmer calendar expressed in stone. [14]   The 108
towers are sited in four groups of 27, representing the four phases of the
moon and the 27 lunar mansions or days. The smaller towers comprise a group
of 60, a physical representation of the Indian belief, exported to South
East Asia, that it took the planet Jupiter a period of 60 years to complete
one revolution around the sun.

Such an expression of religious and cosmological belief in stone
has no meaning for the fervent Hīnayānist. The glorification of the gods by
the construction of monuments is not permitted by the teachings of Gautama
Buddha as interpreted in the beliefs of the Lesser Vehicle. The principle
of living a good life to accumulate Karma in order to attain rebirth into a
higher position in the next life, until the ultimate aim of the achievement of
Buddha-hood is attained, is thereby made completely at odds with the necessity
to placate the gods with sheer weight of masonry rather than good intent.

---

[14]
    B.P. Groslier (1962), p. 104.

CHAPTER 4

RELEVANT DETAILS OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment inhabited by the Khmer is, to our eyes, an altogether unpromising one. Huntington in 1922 expressed bewilderment over the success of the Khmer in establishing what he terms "high civilisation" under such conditions.[15] Although Huntington considered their success as indicating an infusion of outside vigour in the form of Indianisation rather than the result of environmental stimulation, if one were looking for an environment which would stimulate, one could experience considerable difficulty finding one more challenging than that of Cambodia. Granted the climate may have been continuously hot and humid but the physical inhabited area was nothing if not hostile to man's activities. Whilst the Mekong delta, the area occupied for a time by the state of Fu-nan, suffered from too much water and had to be subjected to flood control, the area around the Tonlé Sap, the site of Angkor and the homeland of the Khmer, suffered from a considerable water deficiency and had to be irrigated. In fact

> "Far from being a favourable site Angkor was an
> unpromising place in which to found the capital of
> a nascent empire, and its adverse physical conditions
> demanded from the settlers a supreme effort merely
> to survive."[16]

Angkor is located at the extreme northwest of the Tonlé Sap area of Cambodia, the Tonlé Sap being, literally, the Great Lake. Some measure of natural irrigation is provided for the area immediately adjacent to the lake

---

[15] p. 274.

[16] Christopher Pym (1968), p. 42.

by its yearly flooding consequent upon the backing up of the Mekong River at
the time of the high spring tide. As far as soil is concerned

> "the alluvial plain of the Angkor region was poorer
> than that bordering on the Mekong River. Moreover,
> it was gradually eroding. Some areas were marshy
> and uncultivable, and the immediate area of the
> Great Lake was subject to uncontrollable flooding."   17

In other terms, too, Angkor is a poor site for a major city.
Accessibility by sea and along the Mekong is possible but poor; in any case
the Khmer never became sailors of note! As a route centre the present
capital of Phnom Penh, situated at the junction of four arms of the Mekong,
is in a far more advantageous position. As a resource centre Angkor is again
a poor site and the sandstone used for the monuments had to be brought a
minimum of 25 miles.

The picture therefore emerges of a basically unfavourable environ-
ment in which, as with all tropical rain forest conditions, agriculture is
hazardous at best. Although rainfall is high so are evaporation rates, and
paddy rice is impractical without irrigation. For this reason even the
uncontrollable floods around the Tonlé Sap were presumably preferable to none
to the Khmer. In Cambodia this situation is heightened by the effective
rainfall, which occurs only over six months of the year, largely under
monsoon conditions. The rest of the year evaporation exceeds precipitation
and agriculture is made impractical without irrigation. Finally such
consistently high rainfall, coupled with the nature of tropical vegetation,
produces heavily leached soils with a layer of hardpan; soils which cannot be
ploughed and which, by this very facet of their nature, virtually require
standing water cultivation under which conditions soil quality becomes immaterial.

_____

17
    Ibid., pp. 41-2.

CHAPTER 5

HISTORICAL EVENTS OF RELEVANCE TO THE KHMER

There are five periods of history basic to a consideration of the

development of Khmer ecology. These are, in chronological order

A. Pre-Indianisation

B. First Act -- the development of Fu-nan

C. Intermission -- the confusion that was Chen-la

D. Second Act -- the glory that was Kambuja

E. Finale -- the collapse of Kambuja

A. Pre-Indianisation

Very little remains to be said of this period that has not been

covered in previous commentary on pre-Indian religions. The evidence is poor

because of a lack of effective archeological work in the area, [18] but from

what evidence is available we may reconstruct an extremely rapid jump from

the Neolithic to the Bronze Age.

> "Metal appears suddenly, clear proof that it came
> from abroad, in the midst of civilisations that
> remained imperturbably Neolithic, and were to
> remain so for centuries.... This is characteristic
> of the Indochinese melting-pot where, in general,
> every great advance comes from outside and has to
> wait some time before it is adopted, but once
> assimilated, completely transforms the ancient order." [19]

---

[18]
    B.P. Groslier (1960), p. 3.

[19]
    B.P. Groslier (1962), p. 28.

B. First Act -- the development of Fu-nan

The relationship between Fu-nan and the Khmer has been well

expressed by Christopher Pym when he says,

>"Imagine two concentric circles with a mutual
>centre identified as the Hindu prince Kaundinya.
>So might one express the link between Fu-nan and
>Khmer. According to legend, Kaundinya was their
>common ancestor." [20]

Kaundinya was the mythical founding father of Fu-nan, a Hindu prince

who married a daughter of the Naga king of Fu-nan. This symbolic marriage

with the daughter of the mythical snake king, who took on human form for the

benefit of Kaundinya, has strong relevance to what we may surmise actually

occurred. Fu-nan was an Indian mercantile colony set up to serve the

rapidly increasing and extremely lucrative trade in spices, perfumed woods

and gums between India and the Mediterranean world, a demand which we know

India herself was incapable of meeting. [21] Groslier has outlined the possible

consequences of this. Indian traders, from the reports of their voyagers,

knew that the Malay Peninsula, which they termed the Golden Khersonese, and

the lands beyond it in Indochina, were rich in the items in demand in

Rome. [22] In order to reach southern Indochina and safe harbour on the Mekong

the Indian traders had to sail with the monsoon, which climatic circumstance

effectively prevented their unsophisticated vessels from returning home

until its next occurence. In addition the goods they sought were scarce even

in Indochina and a profitable cargo took time to accumulate, whether by trade

with the indigenous peoples or by their own efforts. In effect a trader was

forced to remain abroad at least one year, and possibly more. Colonisation

---

[20] Christopher Pym (1968), p. 22.

[21] E.H. Warmington.

[22] Paul Wheatley. The Romans knew of the Golden Khersonese but not of the
farther reaches of Indochina.

was even further encouraged by the difficulty of exporting food from the
Indian homeland to the colony.

> "Ships in this trade being what they were, and
> the staple food of Indians, rice, being not
> transportable, because it would have fermented,
> the travellers had to produce in their ports of
> call food for their stay as well as for their
> return journey."   23

The combination of an influx of new ideas brought by a people of
obvious material wealth coupled with a new and far more productive food crop
of obvious superiority to shifting agriculture and food gathering cannot
have failed to impress the indigenous peoples. After a while it was only
natural that some of the merchants would elect to stay and to marry local
women who, because of the high economic and social status that the Indians
must have had, could only have been chosen from the upper classes. It is
therefore not surprising that Kaundinya should have married a local princess!

Hand in hand with the new agriculture went new flood control
techniques. The lower Mekong, the beating heart of Fu-nan, suffers from a
considerable excess of water. The flooded plains and swamp delta of the area
could not be successfully made productive without a sophisticated water-
control system, a system such as that already in use in parts of northern
India and Ceylon when colonisation began. Significantly most of Fu-nan's
merchants were from northern India. This ability to control water has been a
crucial one in the development of all civilisations, but one which is even more
crucial is an area of overabundance of water such as that found in South East
Asia. Without the ability to control water it is certain that neither Fu-nan
nor the Khmer Empire could have existed as they did and the introduction of

---

23
    B.P. Groslier (1960), p. 6.

this technology into South East Asia by the Indians ranks perhaps second only
to the introduction of Indian religion in its effects on future events there.

In terms of religion the early teachings of Gautama Buddha, alien
to the Hīnayāna, appear to have predominated among the common people in
early days. From the first century A.D. however Buddhism existed side by
side with Shivaite Brahmanism, which latter was the adopted cult of the state.
In fact Brahmanism, under the pressure of Buddhism, was undergoing two
basic changes at this time. The first of these was a change from a
religion emphasising ritual to one emphasising a more personal relationship
between the devotee and the god; the second was an increasing and very
important trend towards a monotheistic concept of god, culminating in a
tendency to worship only one of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. In South
East Asia the god most often so favoured was Shiva the destroyer, although,
to add confusion, a syncretism of Shivaism, Vishnuism and the nascent
Mahāyāna Buddhism was often found in Fu-nan.[24] What remains important is,
however, that all cults and religions appear to have been tolerated and even
encouraged despite the patronage of Shivaism as the state cult.

Somewhere in the mid-sixth century the state of Fu-nan collapsed.
What was previously the northern, vassal, neighbouring state of Chen-la,
located around the Great Lake or Tonlé Sap of Cambodia's interior, turned on
its parent and conquered her. The reasons for this rather sudden collapse
of a strong economy are not immediately apparent. There appears to have
been no ecological contradiction in Fu-nan: the captive water system of
Indian technological origin was an efficient technique for intensive rice
production in the flooded fields of the Mekong delta. What is significant,

---

[24] L.P. Briggs.(1951), p. 25.

however, is that around the end of the fifth century A.D., Indian trade with the Mediterranean world had dwindled almost to nothing, an increasingly rigid caste system in India was preventing Indian merchants from travelling abroad, and the Straits of Malacca had been closed owing to intensive pirate activity.[25] The collapse of Fu-nan appears to have been a case of outside strangulation rather than internal poisoning.

C. Intermission -- the confusion that was Chen-la [26]

The Chen-la period of Khmer history from around 550 A.D. to 802 A.D. is the most poorly documented of all. This period of transition from the Indianised, pre-Khmer state of Fu-nan to the Khmer Empire proper is, however, one of considerable importance with regard to the problem of ecological balance. Very little documentation exists concerning Chen-la and, as is the case with Fu-nan, much of that which we do possess is Chinese in origin. We do know that the new regime in Chen-la was exclusively Shivaite in origin and that Buddhist beliefs fell by the wayside.

> "The Chinese pilgrim I-ching, who wrote at the end of the seventh century, said indeed that formerly in Fu-nan "the law of Buddha prospered and spread, but today a wicked king has completely destroyed it and there are no more monks.""[27]

---

[25] See H.G. Quaritch Wales (1937) for a consideration of this problem. The Indian merchants appear to have responded to the piracy in the Malacca Straits by developing a land route across the Malay Peninsula at its narrowest point, the Bay of Bandon.

[26] The name is that given to the country by the Chinese who were regular visitors to Fu-nan and who appear to have looked with disfavour on the transfer of power in southern Indochina to the state of Chen-la.

[27] G. Coedès (1968), p. 68. This may cast some further light on the abrupt termination of the Fu-nanese line of kings. In the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. the popularity of Buddhism in Fu-nan appears to have increased rapidly. I-ching speaks highly of the devoutness of Fu-nanese monks of this period and it may be that had they begun to slip into a neglect of the state cult of Shiva, a neglect which, in South East Asian terms, might be considered as having appropriately brought down the wrath of Shiva the destroyer, assuming the earthly form of the state of Chen-la, upon their heads.

The extensively documented work of Coedès tells us what little more we know definitely of the state of Chen-la.

> "The (Chinese) T'ang histories tell us that shortly after 706 Cambodia came to be divided in two and returned to the anarchic state that had existed before it was unified under the Kings of Funan and the first kings of Chenla. "The northern half, a land of mountains and valleys, was called Land Chenla. The Southern half, bounded by the sea and covered with lakes, was called Water Chenla"."   28

Significantly this division corresponds to both the Fu-nan/Chen-la division that existed at the height of Fu-nanese power, and the much earlier one between the Dong-Son and Megalithic prehistoric cultures. It is a division into upland and lowland dwellers which is still significant today in much of Indochina.

The importance of Chen-la stems very largely from the reasons for the confusion of its history. The ability to adequately manage its environment must be considered as almost the first pre-requisite for any culture, and if expansion of that culture is to occur then the ability to cope with environmental limitations must be improved. In South East Asia the prime environmental problem is that of water. In the Mekong delta the Fu-nanese had too much: in Chen-la the effective precipitation, despite a high overall rainfall, was far too low. The State of Chen-la appears to have been as capable of managing the local water problem as it was of politically uniting its coastal and upland areas. No new systems of cultivation were developed and the arts of water control known to the Fu-nanese appear totally forgotten: there is at least no evidence whatsoever of the use of such techniques in either Land or Water Chen-la after the mid-sixth century A.D.

28

    Ibid., p. 85.

The ultimate result of this was to cause the complete disintegration of Cambodia as a political unit of any type. Her

> "... history during the greater part of the
> eighth century is a blank. Anarchical conditions
> prevailed as the realm was split up among rival
> powers. In the genealogies of later kings (of the
> Khmer Empire) .... we find that the chief object is
> to link up these ninth and tenth century monarchs
> with all the ancient dynasties which ruled in
> succession or simultaneously in the realm which
> Jayavarman II succeeded in unifying." [29]

D. Second Act -- the glory that was Kambuja

The importance of the first king of Kambuja proper, Jayavarman II, who ascended the throne in 802 A.D. and died in 850 A.D., can scarcely be overestimated. Returning to Cambodia from Java Jayavarman brought with him new ideas of cultural and religious organisation that had been developed by the Śailendra dynasty of the Śrīvijaya Empire, which at that time controlled the Indonesian islands and Malayan Peninsula, to provide a more stable and legitimate basis for the royal power. It was Jayavarman who was responsible for the concept of the temple mountain as an artificial representation of Mount Meru and for the concept of legitimising the Khmer ruler who inhabited that mountain as a priest king or devarāja committed firmly to the state cult of Shivaism.[30] It was at this point that line of descent became important to the Khmer king, Jayavarman investing the principle of the devarāja in the royal line for all time. Underlining this came the endowment of a specific family of Brahmins with the continuing right to supply the chief advisor to the monarch, a right that ensured the Shivakaivalya family considerable influence and the god Shiva the eternal loyalty of the Khmer royal line.

---

[29]
    B.R. Chatterji (1964), p. 264.

[30]
    B.P. Groslier (1962), p. 89.

The ideas of Jayavarman II were faithfully enlarged upon by his successors. The concept of the temple mountain as the home of the devarāja was strengthened by the logical extension of this principle: the home during life became the home after death and the temple mountain doubled as a funerary monument. This point was to have great implications for Khmer ecology, as will be indicated later.

Most immediately notable among these successors was the king Indravarman who succeeded to the throne in 877 A.D.. It was Indravarman who took the concept of the Khmer temple mountain as initiated by the devarāja concept of Jayavarman to its ecological conclusion. As has been indicated earlier the Angkor region appeared to be no site for a huge population concentration. The monsoon rainfall which occurs only in the hottest months of the year results in what is effectively a six-month drought, despite the volume of such precipitation. At Roluos, the site of the temple mountain constructed by Indravarman and some 100 kilometres southeast of Angkor itself, Indravarman solved for the Khmer the problem posed by the erratic rainfall. Adapting the flood control technology Indian merchants had brought to Fu-nan but which had never been exploited by the state of Chen-la, Indravarman constructed an artificial reservoir or baray of some considerable size, its sides measuring 4,400 by 930 metres. By storing the water provided by the monsoon rains and irrigating the rice crops in the dry months the potential of the year-round high temperatures at this latitude for continuous rice production was realised.

With the tremendous food surplus that could be built up from the three rice crops per year made possible by this irrigation the Khmer were now in full control of their environment. Of considerable importance in the success of this new ecological control was the concept of balance. The intimate interrelationships common to the Brahman universe may have made this

concept of ecological balance readily acceptable to the Khmer. Observation of
the care with which the god's balanced their world revealed a telling lesson
in the value of imitation: a careful balancing of the earthly world reaped
rich rewards in terms of full stomachs and continuing security.

Reinforced by the success of the new economy the Khmer went from
strength to strength.

> "The successors to Jayavarman II built reservoirs and
> temples and ... made good their founder's boast that
> with the secret of Java's kings the power of the
> devarāja could be made impregnable. The temple
> mountains had been built regularly and their
> connection with the gods of Hinduism assiduously
> maintained. In all this the Khmer kings were
> supported by the priests, who were powerful in their
> own right, often related to the royal family, and
> who worked with the kings in the building of temples
> and the development of land." [31]

This continual building of the temples, so intimately connected
with the development of the artificial reservoirs, was further encouraged by
the funerary nature of the monuments. Since the departed ruler continued to
inhabit his own temple mountain in his after-life each new king had to
construct himself a new temple, thereby providing himself with a home in this
life and the next, and his people with a further increase in economic well-
being.

This wealth does not appear to have rested solely in the hands of
the priestly elites.

> "The upper classes may have had everything and the
> lower nothing, but their humility was not so hard
> to bear. One does not, for instance, have the
> impression that a four caste system was thrust upon
> them." [32]

---

[31]
Christopher Pym (1968), p. 62.

[32]
G. Groslier (1924), pp. 126-8. (This author's translation).

Later authors have been considerably more enthusiastic about the lot of the Khmer peasant.

> "The life of a Khmer was probably far from wretched.
> In practice he was the owner of his rice-field,
> which thanks to irrigation yielded a super-abundant
> crop. There was little or no distinction of class
> and even the slaves -- prisoners of war, savages
> from the neighbouring mountains, insolvent debtors
> -- were almost one of the family. Ancient laws
> protected everyone, and the splendour of the king
> shone upon all alike." [33]

This picture, apparently very rosy, is not as far from the truth as many modern academics have implied. As late as the 1870's it is extremely probable that the rising standard of living of the working man in the industrial areas of Europe and North America was only just equalling the standard of diet and life expectancy of the average Chinese peasant.[34] What has been interpreted as the work of totalitarian despots enslaving huge numbers of the common people to work on projects for the personal aggrandisement of the ruler can only be an interpretation resulting from an essential misunderstanding of such societies.[35] When the common people are well fed and protected from their enemies they are unlikely to complain bitterly about the increase in the wealth of their community their labours will provide.

---

[33]
B.P. Groslier (1957), p. 166.

[34]
Lecture given by Rhoads Murphey, University of British Columbia, February 5th, 1969.

[35]
Most notably Wittfogel (1957). In a far-ranging and nearly comprehensive (he omits the Maya and Khmer) cross-cultural, historical analysis Wittfogel effectively makes the point that what he terms "hydraulic civilisations" require top heavy bureaucracies with considerable power. Yet this situation, as Wittfogel indicates (p. 13), is virtually a required response to the environmental problem of water-shortage: a strong power elite is almost indispensable in such conditions. Spate, in his review, sums up some of the faults in this analysis relating to a deliberate over-painting of the "evils" of such a society, but omits to concede the possibility of "benevolent despotism". This latter Wittfogel dismisses somewhat brusquely with the statement that "terror is essential for maintaining the ruler's rationality optimum" (p. 187). The ideals of the eastern religions (most notably Buddhism) appear to have been studiously ignored at this point.

As Groslier points out of the Khmer case

> "far from being a manifestation of megalomania,
> these gigantic undertakings, which followed close
> on one another, often overlapping, increased the
> zone of cultivation and multiplied wealth."   36

Nowhere in the Cambodian written record is there any evidence of the dissatisfaction of the common people. Although the written record was the product of the priestly elite one would expect comments upon an insurrection had any occurred. Likewise, in the only other written records we possess of the Khmer, the Chinese historians speak very favourably of the spirit of the Khmer "barbarians", not to mention their honest frankness and open generosity. These were not a downtrodden peasantry.

E. Finale -- the collapse of Kambuja

The successes of the ninth to eleventh centuries A.D. were very largely a result of the comparative peace enjoyed by the state of Kambuja, hub of the Khmer Empire. In the twelfth century came a remarkable change. Suryavarman II, ruler of the Empire from 1113 to 1150 A.D., and one of the most successful kings in its history, dedicated his funerary temple not to Shiva the destroyer as all his predecessors had done, but to Vishnu the preserver. This is all the more significant when it is considered that the object of this dedication was not just another temple but the greatest creation of Khmer art and architecture, Angkor Wat itself. Rather than take a posthumous name indicating service to the god Shiva, Suryavarman took as his name after death Paramavishnuloka. As Coedès comments

---

36

    B.P. Groslier (1962), p. 97.

"The name Paravishnuloka is an indication of the
favor Vishnuism enjoyed at the Court, a favor that
manifested itself less in the building of temples
dedicated to Vishnu than in the decoration of
edifices inspired for the most part by the legendary
cycle of Vishnu-Krishna. This fervor for a cult that
was more capable than Shivaism of inspiring devotion
(bhakti), the mystic pouring out of the soul toward
the divinity, is found in the same period in Java...." [37]

It is most probable that this preference for a more mystical form
of Brahmanism was sparked by the increasing popularity of Hīnayāna Buddhism
among the masses, a popularity which was to culminate in that religion's
almost complete acceptance by the Khmer common people by the end of the
thirteenth century. Although Suryavarman neither desposed Shiva from his role
as chief god of the Khmer State nor affected materially the power of the
ever-present Shivakaivalya family, his actions indicate one of the first
manifestations of discontent with the devarāja concept, at least as it was
related to Shiva.

The event that was to most severely shake Khmer confidence in
their concept of the state, and perhaps ultimately shatter it, occurred some
27 years after the probable date of Suryavarman's death. Suryavarman had
fought long and successfully against the Chams, the inhabitants of what
approximates to present-day South Vietnam, a people ever a thorn in the side
of Kambuja. In 1177 the Chams took their revenge in no uncertain terms when
they put Angkor to the sack by the devious move of invading by sea and up
the Mekong. The city of Angkor, theoretically isolated in the centre of
Cambodia, was not even walled, the Khmer wars having previously been frontier
affairs. This event proved apocalyptic in changing the attitudes of the
common people. Before they had been secure under the protection of their
priest-king, who invoked for them the power of their gods by his commission

---

37
    G. Coedès (1968), p. 162.

of the great irrigation works and temple mountains. Now the power of their
gods was questioned, and not even by alien peoples with strange gods, for
the Indian influence on Cham culture had given them a virtually identical
pantheon. It appeared as if, for the first time, the Brahman gods had ceased
to smile upon Cambodia.

It was the role of saviour of the Khmer people that therefore fell
to King Jayavarman VII, the greatest monarch of Kambuja. Before his
accession to the throne in 1181 A.D. he avenged the Khmer in no uncertain
terms, installing a vassal prince on the Cham throne. Although complete
Cham capitulation was delayed until 1203 and lasted only until 1220 A.D.,
during this period the Khmer were, more than ever before, supreme in
Indochina. Jayavarman VII continued to expand his rule north and west and
exercised "at least nominal suzerainty" over parts of the Malay Peninsula and
Burma.[38] These were however the least of this seventh Jayavarman's effects
upon Khmer history. His supreme significance lay in the fact that he was the
first and only monarch of Kambuja to specifically avow allegiance to other
than a Brahmanic deity and to dedicate a monument to that deity. He was a
fervent and devout follower of the Mahāyānist faith, a belief which was to
effect significant changes in the Khmer art, architecture, economics and
social institutions of his period.

Rather than a sacred linga symbolising the pole of the universe in
Shivaite fashion the central deity of Khmer worship now became a statue of the
Lord Buddha. The statues of Buddha commissioned by Jayavarman VII were,
however, no ordinary statues: they were, in the Mahāyānist tradition,
representations of the bodhisattva Lokeśvara, the earthly representative of
whom was the king himself. In this way every statue of the bodhisattva
Lokeśvara erected during the reign of Jayavarman VII was, in reality, a

---

[38] Ibid., p. 172.

portrait of the king himself. This new order is perhaps best reflected in the structure of the Bayon at Angkor Thom, a piece of monumental sculpture many art historians believe was both the greatest innovation and the final flower of Khmer aesthetics. At the Bayon 54 four faced towers up to 40 metres in height, each face turned towards a cardinal point, symbolise the omnipresence of Jayavarman VII in the state of Kambuja. Each tower represented one province of the empire and local rulers or administrators sent their representatives to Angkor Thom where their symbolic homes were provided by these edifices. This reflects the ultimate development of the devarāja concept introduced in 802 A.D. by Jayavarman II, a concept which was perhaps the greatest strength of the Khmer Empire. Now the omnipresence of the priest-king could be seen in stone: now the ruler was as one with the gods from whom his power descended: now more than any time previously the king of Kambuja was one of the gods.

Hand in hand with this streamlining of the chain of command from the gods to the common people went the by now usual economic improvements consequent upon the construction of new monuments. There is evidence that Jayavarman VII built as many monuments as his five predecessors combined, a phenomenal weight of sandstone and laterite when it is considered that one of those predecessors was Suryavarman II, builder of Angkor Wat.[39] In economic terms, Angkor Thom alone has been estimated as increasing ten-fold the wealth of the country around Angkor by its masterful consolidation and improved control of all the previous hydraulic schemes in the area.[40] The combined

---

[39] B.P. Groslier (1957), p. 156.

[40] B.P. Groslier (1957), p. 157. It appears as if Groslier's estimate may be very much on the conservative side. Pym (1968) indicates that Jayavarman VII was also responsible for the construction of the North Baray and the Baray of Banteay Kdei at the same time as the East and West Barays underwent improvement (p. 173). Since only the East and West Barays are mentioned by Groslier it may be that he has omitted consideration of the new constructions in his estimate.

effect of these increases in potential production indicate probably the greatest leap forward in agricultural productive capacity in the history of the Khmer.

The reign of Jayavarman VII also saw significant improvements in social conditions. These were very much related to the Buddhist nature of the new state religion. One of the essential beliefs of all forms of Buddhism is in the rebirth of the soul as a higher or lower form of life according to the amount of karma accumulated or lost during one's previous life. In the case of a king, one who acts badly will be reborn as a peasant or worse; one who acts beneficently will build up still greater karma than he already possesses and move on to the status of a Buddha. To a Buddhist the relief of the suffering of others builds up great karma, especially when it is done in the name not of him or her self but of others. Jayavarman's feelings towards his subjects are given in the inscription which claims that

> "He suffered from the ills of his subjects more than
> from his own: for it is the grief of the people
> that causes the grief of kings, and not their own
> grief."   41

This suffering Jayavarman attempted to relieve by the provision of a considerable number of welfare institutions. Many inscriptions speak of his generosity to his people and indicate his foundation of at least 102 hospitals and 798 shrines, these being supported by 11,912 metric tons of

---

41
  Quoted in B.P. Groslier (1957), p. 153. The source of Jayavarman's beliefs
  lies in the edicts of the Emperor Ashoka who presided over much of India
  in the third century B.C.. He summed up the duties of a Buddhist king in
  the following way.

  "I am never satisfied with (my) exertions or with (my) dispatch of
  business. For the welfare of the whole world is an esteemed duty with
  me.... There is no higher duty (than this). And what little effort I
  make is from debt to all beings. I work for their happiness in this life,
  that they in the next world may gain heaven." Emil Sarkisyanz, from whom
  this statement is taken, comments that "this can only mean that these
  welfare benefits were meant by Ashoka to make it easier to observe the
  Moral Law -- if not to provide them with leisure opportunities for
  meditation towards the pursuit of Nirvana", p. 28.

rice per annum, produced by 81,640 people in 838 villages connected to the shrines and hospitals.[42]   This huge building programme was in fact only a small part of the total, which included the building of new monuments, the reconstruction of old monuments, consolidation of water resources, and improvements in the transportation network by means of new roads, bridges and way stations at which travellers might rest.

This sudden growth of economic production followed by the decline of the Khmer, when regarded with the advantage of hindsight, has led many people to the conclusion that Jayavarman overtaxed the resources and ability of the Empire; in simple terms he wore the country out. Pym, for example, likens the country to

> "a plant grown under excessively artificial conditions
> or a creature forcibly fattened until it can hardly
> stand. The growth was too sudden and spectacular to
> last."[43]

Such statements, whilst seemingly accurate, are at odds with the realities of the later history of the Khmer. Jayavarman VII died in 1218 A.D.; the Empire fell in 1431 A.D. at the hands of the Thai. Two hundred and thirteen years: seven generations: the rule of perhaps half a

---

[42]

Accurate figures for the yearly consumption of the government health service are:-

Rice	11,912 metric tons	Nutmegs	3,402
Sesame	2,124 kgs.	Febrifuges	48,000
Cardamom	105 kgs.	Boxes of salve (for haemorrhoids)	1,960

After G. Coedès (1963), p. 104.
The hospital building programme, Jayavarman, to gain extra karma, dedicated to his mother:-
"By these good actions of mine may my mother, delivered from the ocean of (future) existence, attain the state of Buddha." Translated from the French translation of Louis Finot by B.R. Chatterji (1964), p. 201.

[43]

Christopher Pym (1968), p. 228.

dozen kings: these are hardly the life span of an ailing culture with a powerful enemy such as the Chams pressing from the east and another growing to the north in the shape of the Thai.

One of the few concrete evidences we do have of the changes in Khmer culture after 1218 A.D. is concerning religion. Jayavarman VII's frenetic outburst of Mahāyānism that Pym indicates may have overtaxed the state's economy was really a response to something far more deep-seated. It was a response to the increasing belief among the common people in the principles of Hīnayāna Buddhism, a belief almost entirely opposed in its values to the devarāja cult of the royal line of Kambuja. As Chatterji points out

> "It is remarkable that at the end of the thirteenth
> century Buddhist monks were known in Kambuja by a
> Siamese name. This shows that Hīnayāna Buddhism was
> in the ascendance at this time and that it came from
> Siam."   [44]

This creeping conquest of the masses by Hīnayānism Groslier sees as precipitating, at least in part, Jayavarman VII's remarkable proliferation of monuments. As he says of the new art of this era.

> "Jayavarman VII went beyond the rather subtle
> symbolism of Mount Meru, which was a little esoteric
> for the ordinary man .... Hence forward the great
> religious themes were outlined against the sky for
> all to see. There was no time for refinement; the
> gods had to be conciliated before the swift arrival
> of death, a foretaste of which had been provided by
> the Cham.

---
[44]

B.R. Chatterji (1964), p. 211. For further details see Y.A. Gorgoniyev (1966) who comments on the great number of loan words in the Khmer language. Most religious loan words are Sanskrit but by the early fifteenth century A.D. Pali words from Hīnayāna Buddhist texts have become common.

> This art was above all a sacred drame enacted
> before permanent scenery in the theatre of the
> world, for gods who were turning away from
> Cambodia and whose attention had to be retained." [45]

All Jayavarman's efforts to appeal to the common people were in vain. Whether his fervent Mahāyānism would have won them over will never be known since his successors reverted immediately and completely to Shivaite beliefs. The people certainly built the monuments Jayavarman commissioned from them, though their inherent fatalism may have allowed them to do so whilst maintaining Hīnayānist beliefs. We do know that their ancestors had patronised local deities left over from the Dong-Son and Megalithic pre-Indianisation cultures rather than the esoteric imported gods of the elite. Perhaps we may therefore assume that Jayavarman VII was making a noble attempt to popularise the devarāja concept with the people upon whose labour it was built. Whatever the case he failed completely. Subsequent Shivaite kings were apparently never again able to capture the imagination of the people, no more massive monuments were constructed, and even the written record collapsed. The last Sanskrit inscription of Cambodia, completely [46] impregnated with Shivaite mysticism, contains the information that

> "le dernier roi Khmèr connu par la dernière
> inscription angkorienne que nous possédions (sic),
> monta sur le trône vers 1327. Et le seconde
> moitié du XIVe. siècle a vu l'effondrement de la
> cililisation d'Angkor.... La fondation d'Ayuthya
> aux environs de 1350, marque en quelque sorte la
> fin de la prééminence d'Angkor." [47]

---

[45]
    B.P. Groslier (1962), p. 177.

[46]
    G. Coedès (1968), p. 228.

[47]
    B.P. Groslier (1958), p. 7.

In 1431 A.D. the city of Angkor itself was taken by the
Hīnayānist Thai with, as far as we can today ascertain, practically no major
fighting. The monuments are undamaged and there are no written records of
such bloodshed. It appears as if the Khmer common people, religious
compatriots of the Thai by this time, simply did not resist, a point which
will be later conjectured upon.

CHAPTER 6

THE RESULTS OF KHMER CULTURAL/ECOLOGICAL IMBALANCE

As was indicated in the introduction the Khmer system of balancing their ecology through water storage was an exceptionally effective solution to their special environmental problems as well as to one of the problems central to all cultures; that of remaining in balance with one's environment. The Khmer system was one carefully built up over a period of many centuries of innovation, innovation stemming primarily from the diffusion of Indian ideologies and technologies into the area. The Khmer did not destructively exploit their resources, destroy the nutrients in their soil, submerge themselves in a sea of pollution or fail to match their food supply to their population. They were not, so it seems, victims of a genocidal war, violent internal revolution, or subject to mass suicidal impulses: they appear, through the evidence dimly visible to us through the veil of history, to have simply vanished.

Such a manifestation is, to say the least, disturbing, which perhaps encourages our interest in these people! Yet the problem of Khmer collapse is one which has always been looked at in the essentially pragmatic terms outlined in the preceeding paragraph. In many ways, and largely as a result of their religion, the later Khmer came to be out of balance with their environment, not so much ecologically as spiritually. Their perception of their relationship with their universe was altered. The whole period of Fu-nan, Chen-la and Kambuja before the advent of Indravarman and controlled irrigation saw the Khmer city as a religious centre remarkably similar to that of the Maya in function, around which the common people

"farmed the soil in an empirical way, or rather
cultivated it only according to the rhythm of
natural factors, depending upon actual levelling,
rains or periodic floods to fill rice-fields.
Pre-Angkor Cambodia was but the juxtaposition of small
groups in geographical units, living in accordance

with the natural capacity of these units. In
complete contrast with this "natural" structure,
Angkorean Cambodia appears as a systematic and
artificial organisation of the whole available
space, favourable or not, made cultivable by a
huge hydraulic network, and farmed to the limit
of its capacity. This, and only this, explains
the nature of the Angkorean "city", which is in
fact the system evolved for intensive exploitation."   48

The average Khmer saw himself as fitting very snugly into this

picture. He worked for the construction of both "city" and irrigation works,

for the structuring of his whole environment for the glory and benefit of the

gods,and, more specifically, he worked for the glory of the devarāja himself.

In this way he ensured that the gods would smile upon him and his descendents

just as they had upon his ancestors. The Khmer could not separate himself

from his religion since it was the focal point around which his whole life

revolved and which moulded all of his actions. As Pym says

"There was no gap between work and worship, for
work was worship. Worship was not just saying
a prayer to a divine being or lighting incense;
it was actually being in a divine universe."   49

It was therefore inevitable that the Khmer world would become,

especially by the time of Jayavarman VII, a divinely ordained map of the

universe upon which the gods might gaze.

"It is a magic diagram traced on the parchment
of the plain, visible only from above, decipherable
in fact only by the immortal gods, for whom indeed,
it was built."   50

Such a firm conviction immutably held implies its own dangers.

Totally rigid values are the most easily shattered when exposed to cultural

pressure. The Khmer were pressured from two sides: the sack of Angkor by the

---

48

    B.P. Groslier (1960), p. 27.

49

    Christopher Pym (1968), p. 91. This author's emphasis.

50

    B.P. Groslier (1957), p. 13.

Cham in 1177 and the subtle infiltration of Hīnayāna beliefs among the
common people. The contradictions inherent in the Khmer perception of their
environment were therefore to be found in their relationship with their
environment as it was structured for them by the religions of the elites.
If the universe they inhabited was divine, as the devarāja concept implied,
it could not be destroyed. The Chams sacked more than Angkor itself in
1177: they sacked the whole rationale of Khmer existence. The contradiction
of a single purpose universe, so long inherent and accepted, was exposed in
a single instant. The gods had either deserted Kambuja, which seemed
unlikely as monument building had not noticeably abated, or they had a higher
purpose, which did not favour the continuance of that particular state.

At the same time as the Chams were beating down the front door
of Khmer ideology the Thai were sneaking through the side entrance. The
steady stream of Thai monks which apparently flowed into Kambuja from the
eleventh century A.D. on brought with it a tide of new concepts of man's
relationship with his world. The offering of a new religion of inner peace
and tranquility probably had great appeal to the common Khmer: after all
the building of the monuments did nothing for him, however much the
irrigation schemes filled his belly. Once again the contradictions of a
single purpose universe were exposed, as was the folly of a life built around
that purpose. This we may term an ecological imbalance as influential as
any physical variety: it was a spiritual ecological imbalance that
disturbed peoples' perception of their role in the environment and that led
them ultimately to abandon that role.

The adoption of Mahāyānism by Jayavarman VII may therefore be seen
as a last ditch stand to resist the compelling advance of a convincing new
ideology. The revenge wreaked upon the Cham and the concern shown for the
people were attempts to bolster the devarāja concept, attempts which were to

be apparently no more than delaying actions. The reversion of the court to Shivaism upon the death of Jayavarman VII nullified all of these potential gains. The seeds of doubt in the abilities of the state to adequately balance and control the microcosm of the universe that was the state, seeds sown so effectively by the infiltration of the Hīnayānist Thai monks and fertilised by the Cham invasion, were thereby allowed to resume their growth.

The situation never reached the status of a true people's revolution, although there was no real need for revolution. As Wolf says

> "revolt occurs not when men's faces are ground into the dust; rather it explodes during a period of rising hope, at the point of sudden realisation that only the traditional controls of the social order stand between men and the achievement of still greater hopes."
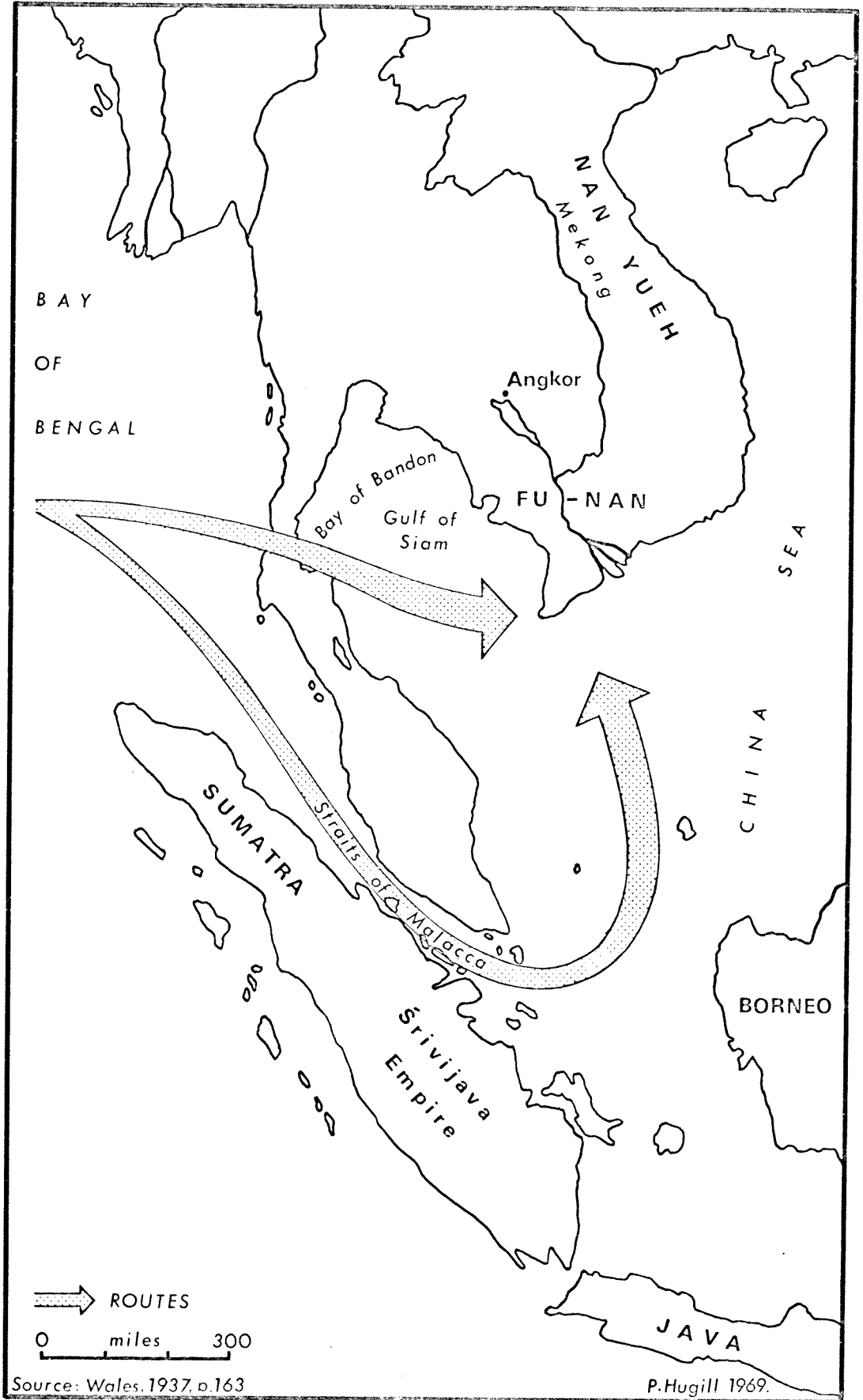>
> 51

The Khmer people were never put into such a situation. However strong the priestly reversion to Shivaism may have been this reversion was not imposed upon the masses. There are no monumental edicts calling for loyalty to the old faith and no massive attempts to lure the people away from Hīnayānism once Jayavarman VII had passed from the scene.

However they could not continue under the old regime forever. Hīnayānism promised not only an individual universe of peace and personal enlightenment but also a divorce from the gods who had failed them and a release from the constant warfaring and monument building that had marked most of Khmer history. It is probable that the arrival of the Thai armies at the gates of Angkor in 1431 A.D. was therefore welcomed by the common people of Kambuja as a final relief from the burdens imposed upon them by gods proven

---

51

    Eric Wolf (1959), p. 108.

faithless by past events.[52]   For that matter were not the Thai their

religious mentors who had effected their introduction to Hīnayānism in the
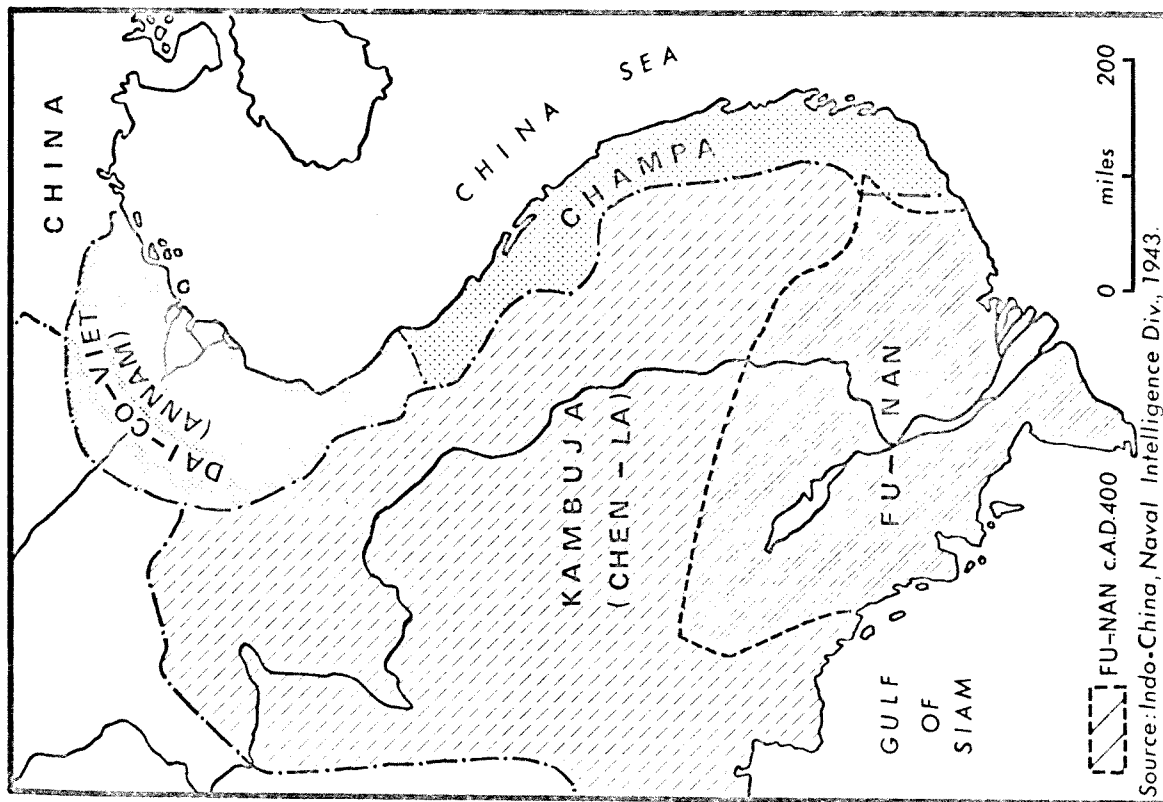
first place?

The fate of the Khmer Empire may therefore be taken as an apt

illustration of the consequences of the collapse of a too rigidly held set of

cultural beliefs; a set of beliefs that, in this case, conceived of an

intimate connection between the gods, the devarāja and the physical environ-

ment.   The shattering of these beliefs by outside interference called them

into so much question that they were abandoned, although the process of

abandonment was here long drawn out.   Without the discipline of a rigid

social order or the drive of a single, massively held cultural belief, the

Khmers faded from the face of Indochina leaving the once mighty empire of

Kambuja to the Thai and the people to their newfound personal freedom in

Hīnayāna Buddhism.

---

[52]

     A view strongly embraced by Wales (1965).

MAP 1

BAY

OF

BENGAL

NAN YUEH

Mekong

Angkor

Bay of Bandon

Gulf of
Siam

FU - NAN

CHINA

SEA

SUMATRA

Straits of Malacca

BORNEO

Śrivijaya
Empire

JAVA

⟹ ROUTES

0   miles   300

Routes of Indian Cultural Influence in Indo-China
First to Fifth Century A.D.

MAP 3

CHINA SEA

200

miles

P. Hugill 1969.

Mekong

Angkor Kingdom

Angkor

Tonle
Sap

GULF
OF
SIAM

• SITES

Source: B. Groslier, 1957.

0

Principal Angkorean City Sites
Post 802 A.D.

MAP 2

CHINA

CHINA SEA

CHAMPA

DAI-CO-VIET
(ANNAM)

KAMBUJA
(CHEN-LA)

FU-NAN

GULF
OF
SIAM

200

miles

FU-NAN c.A.D.400

Source: Indo-China, Naval Intelligence Div., 1943.

0

Indo-Chinese States Fifth to Twelfth
Century A.D.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bouquet, A.C., Hinduism. London, Hutchinson University Library, 1949.

Briggs, Lawrence Palmer, "Siamese attacks on Angkor before 1430", Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 8, 1948-9, pp. 3-33.

_____, The Ancient Khmer Empire, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Volume 41, 1951.

Chatterji, Bijan Raj, Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia. Calcutta, University of Calcutta Press, 1964. Revised edition of original 1928 publication.

Coe, Michael D., "Social Typology and the Tropical Forest Civilisations", Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 4, 1961-2, pp. 65-85.

Coedès, George, Angkor. Translated and edited by Emily Floyd Gardiner, London, Oxford University Press, 1963. Originally Pour Mieux Comprendre Angkor, Hanoi, 1943 and Paris, 1947.

_____, "Une période critique dans l'Asie du Sud-Est", Bulletin de la Societé des Etudes Indochins, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1958, pp. 386-400.

_____, The Making of Southeast Asia. Translated by H.M. Wright, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966. Originally Les Peuples de la Péninsule Indochinoise, Paris, 1962.

_____, The Indianised States of Southeast Asia. Translated by Susan Brown Cowing, Edited by W.F. Vella, Honolulu, East-West Centre Press, 1968. Originally Les Etats hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, Paris, 1964.

Eliot, Sir Charles, Hinduism and Buddhism: an historical sketch, Volume III. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1921.

Filliozat, Jean, "Le Symbolisme du monument du Phnom Bakheng", Bulletin d'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi, Vol. XLIV, 1954, pp. 527-54.

Finot, Louis, "Hindu Kingdoms in Indochina", Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, Vol. 1, 1925, pp. 599-622.

_____, "Outline of the History of Buddhism in Indochina", Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, Vol. 2, 1926, pp. 679-689.

_____, "Indochina in the records of Chinese Pilgrims", Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, Vol. 2, 1926, pp. 250-261.

Groslier, Bernard Phillippe and Arthaud, Jacques, Angkor: Art and Civilisation. Translated by E.E. Smith, New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1957.

Groslier, Bernard Phillippe, Angkor et le Cambodge au XVIe Siècle d'après les sources Portugaises et Espagnoles. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1958.

_____, "Our knowledge of Khmer civilisation: a re-appraisal", Journal of the Siam Society, Bangkok, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, 1960, pp. 1-28.

_____, Indochina. Art in the melting-pot of races. Translated by G. Lawrence, London, Methuen, 1962.

_____, Indochina. Translated by James Hogarth. Cleveland and New York, World Publishing Co., 1966. University of Bordeaux Archaeologia Mundi series.

Groslier, George, Angkor. Paris, Librairie Renouard, 1924.

Gorgoniyev, Y.A., The Khmer Language. Translated by V. Korotky. Moscow, Languages of Asia and Africa series, "Nauka" publishing house, Central department of oriental literature, 1966.

Giteau, Madeleine, Khmer Sculpture and the Angkor Civilisation. Translated by Diana Imber. New York, H.N. Abrams, 1966. Originally Les Khmers.

Heine-Geldern, Robert, "Conceptions of State and Kingship in South East Asia", Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 2, 1942, pp. 15-30.

_____, "The Drum named Makalamau", India Antiqua, London, 1947.

Huntington, Ellsworth, Civilisation and Climate. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1922.

Isaac, Erich, "Religion, Landscape and Space", Landscape, Vol. 9, 1959-60, pp. 14-18.

Ling, Trevor, "Buddhist Mysticism". Paper read at International Association for the History of Religions, London, 1965. In Religious Studies, Vol. I, 1965, pp. 163-175.

Majumdar, R.C., Hindu Colonies in the Far East. Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1944. Second revised edition, 1963.

_____, Ancient Indian Colonisation in South East Asia. Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad Honorarium Lecture, 1953-4. Baroda, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda Press (Sadhana Press), 1955. Second edition, 1963.

Manas, Volume XXII, Number 9, February 26th, 1969. Los Angeles.

Murphey, Rhoads, "The ruin of Ancient Ceylon", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 16, 1957, pp. 181-200.

Naval Intelligence, Indo-China. London, British Naval Intelligence Geographical Handbooks, 1943.

Pym, Christopher, (Ed.), Henry Mouhot's Diary: travels in the central parts of Siam, Cambodia and Laos during the years 1858-61. Oxford University Press, 1966.

_____, The Ancient Civilisation of Angkor. Mentor Paperback, 1968.

Rapoport, Amos, House Form and Culture. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Sarkisyanz, Emil, Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1965.

Spate, O.H.K., "The 'Hydraulic Society'", Review article of Wittfogel's Oriental Despotism, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 49, 1959, pp. 90-5.

Wales, H.G. Quaritch, Towards Angkor. In the footsteps of the Indian Invaders. London, Harrap, 1937.

_____, The Making of Greater India: A Study in South East Asian Culture Change. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1951. Second revised edition, 1961.

_____, Ancient South East Asian Warfare. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1952.

_____, The Mountain of God. A Study in early religion and kinship. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1953.

_____, Prehistory and Religion in South East Asia. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1957.

_____, Angkor and Rome: a historical comparison. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1965.

_____, The Indianisation of China and South East Asia. London, Bernard Quaritch, 1967.

Warmington, E.H., The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India. Cambridge University Press, 1928.

Wheatley, Paul, "The Golden Chersonese", Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, Vol. 21, 1955, pp. 61-78.

White, Leslie A., The Science of Culture: a study of Man and Civilisation. New York, Grove Press, 1949.

Wittfogel, Karl A., Oriental Despotism: A comparative study of total power. Yale University Press, 1957.

Wolf, Eric, Sons of the Shaking Earth. University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1959.

SYMBOLS AND CINEMA: A STUDY IN CULTURAL

LANDSCAPES

An Extended Essay

Presented to

The Department of Geography

Simon Fraser University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Peter James Hugill

September 1969

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Geography has always been, essentially, a pragmatic science concerned with space. Yet our philosophy of space has changed markedly during the course of this century, most notably through new beliefs in the inextricable linkage between space and time and in the existence of a multiplicity of realities. That such a belief is important to the geographer is evidenced by the existentialist belief that the only objective reality is the landscape itself and the concrete objects it contains, and that this is the scene set for all man's activities. This paper attempts to show how the mainstream of geographic thought has avoided these issues and how one of the few places their implications have been realised is in Cinema. It might be supposed that, leading from the dictum that "the camera never lies", the motion picture as possibly our most sophisticated art-form, would have led to a more accurate rendering of reality. In fact Cinema has proved that the camera always lies. What we have attained through Cinema, largely through its ability to portray immense and complex combinations of cultural, spatial, temporal and artistic themes, has been a heightened awareness of reality or, rather, the awareness of the numerousness of realities. Different schools of Cinema have depicted very different sets of realities in very different ways, only some of them progressing as far as the representation of complex space-time relationships or existential realities. A discussion on the cinematic results of the awareness, or lack of awareness of the director of these philosophical themes in the depiction of landscapes on the screen precedes a conclusion in which the implications these themes may have for the cultural geographer are briefly put forward.

CHAPTER I

SPACE AND SYMBOLISM IN GEOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY.

"The beauty of nature is its conformity to our
understanding, and that conformity is something
originally imposed upon it by our intuition."   (1)

It is now fashionable for the geographer to search for order in

the world of man: Bunge, Haggett, and Chorley and Haggett continually

exhort us to do so, and not without justification. Yet theirs is a world

reduced to applied mathematics, in which numbers necessarily replace words

and complex and possibly illogical ideas are expressed with difficulty, or

not at all, and in which man, although not necessarily national, still

operates in a world of actual physical phenomena.[2] Here there is no

erotic dream space but solid, mathematically reducible Christaller networks:

here there is no acceptance that objects themselves have moods and an infl-

uence on their surroundings. This is not a facetious or light-hearted

statement: many geographers embrace the principle of the reduction of man's

activities in space to mathematical terms; many more fight against this and

embrace outmoded principles of uniqueness and regionalism. Neither school

yet offers any adequate explanation of man's activities in spatial terms.

---

[1] Emmanuel Kant, quoted in Langer (1953), p. 399.

[2] As Cassirer reminds us, "No mathematical content as such arises from
the sensuous world, for the sensuous world lacks the characteristic
feature, the constitutive principle of the mathematical .... The direct
consequence of this differentiation of "distinct" and "confused" know-
ledge is that, for Leibniz, no single, truly mathematical object is
grounded in sense perception," p. 360. Kant, however, splits logical
and mathematical knowledge much further apart: he "goes so far as to
declare that pure mathematical concepts in themselves represent no
knowledge at all, except insofar that there are things which can be
represented to us only in accordance with the form of pure sensory
intuition", p. 363. "For Kant... the dividing line (which Leibniz
puts between intuitive and symbolic thinking) ... passes ... rather
between the discursive concept and "pure intuition", and the meaning of
mathematics can only be provided by, and grounded in, the latter", p. 363.

One attempts the rationalisation of man's activities into categories that are either too broad or applicable only to what may be loosely termed as the "Western-developed" culture group; the other involves a long and involved process of description which is time-consuming and results in purely individual interpretation. Both tend to be wasteful of time and energy in that they explain the obvious in a complicated fashion. Both ignore substantial sections of the real world and, even worse, both assume reality is a constant. Yet for most purposes reality is relative, it is "arrived at through senses, interpreted through need priority"[3] and action is only resultant upon the retained impression.

What each individual person sees as "reality" is not necessarily the same as what any other person sees, yet there are broad classes within which the same visual stimuli elicit the same effective reaction from the perceiver, given that the broad determinants of culture are held constant. The messages out of which individual reality are constructed are sprung from several sources which are received by the body's senses of vision, hearing, touch and taste. In human terms all messages are symbols (whether they be simple messages such as objects or single words, or compound messages such as paintings, sculptures or sentences). This may mean, in terms of Jung's social subconscious, or rather "collective consciousness" of mankind, that some symbols are more universal than others; that there is a hierarchy of symbols from those that apply to the whole present population of the world down to the symbol that applies only to one individual.

---

[3] Smith, p. 2.

It is certainly true that people's perceptions can be collectively limited by society; yet society's ideas are inadequately thought out and based on emotion and irrationality. As Ortega has said, "Society .... contains only commonplaces and exists on the basis of these commonplaces."[4] The "commonplaces" a society exists on are inherent in that society's symbols and man's ability to symbolise is becoming rapidly and increasingly recognised as being the distinguishing trait of homo sapiens. Man's image of man has changed from that of man the tool-maker to man the symboliser.[5]

To return to the opening quote from Kant the imposition of conformity on nature we impose with our intuition can perhaps best be explained through our interpretation of symbols. As Dubos comments, man's "responses are determined less by the direct effect of the stimulus on his body fabric than by the symbolic interpretation he attaches to the stimuli".[6] Man appears to have attached symbolic interpretation to any and all of the stimuli which surround him or which he is brought into contact with -- which naturally include the landscape. There are two perceptual levels, each quite distinct and important in studies of landscape perception by different

---

[4] Quoted in _Manas_.

[5] In such diverse sources as White and Cassirer. See, for example, White, "It was the introduction of symbols, word-formed symbols, into the tool process that transformed anthropoid tool-behaviour into human tool-behaviour," p. 45. Cassirer comments "Pathological behaviour has in a sense lost the power of the intellectual impulse which forever drives the human spirit beyond the sphere of what is immediately perceived and desired. But precisely in this step backward it throws a new light on the general movement of the spirit and the inner law of its structure. The process of spiritualisation, the process of the world's "symbolisation", discloses its value and meaning where it no longer operates free and unhindered, but must struggle and make its way against obstacles", p. 277. The primitive use of tools, mainly by apes, is "pathological behaviour" in that the rationale behind the symbolised use of tools is absent and the use of tools in such a case is really learned behaviour, not conceptualised behaviour.

[6] Dubos, p. XVII.

culture groups. Before defining these a more precise statement on space
itself and the problems attached to studying it should however be considered.
As Langer says:

> "Space as we know it in the practical world has no
> shape. Even in science it has none, though it has
> "logical form". There are spatial relations, but there
> is no concrete totality of space. Space itself is
> amorphous in our active lives and purely abstract in
> scientific thought. It is a substrate of all our
> experience, gradually discovered by the collaboration
> of our several senses -- now seen, now felt, now real-
> ised as a factor in our moving and doing -- a limit to
> our hearing, a defiance to our reach. When the spatial
> experience of everyday life is refined by the precision
> and artifice of science, space becomes a co-ordinate in
> mathematical functions. It is never an entity. How,
> then, can it be "organised", "shaped", or "articulated"?" (7)

The two perceptual levels of space "organise" it very differently:
the one by abstraction; the other by symbolisation. Abstract or geometrical
space is "perceptual or literal-space perception which deals with the world
of colours, textures, surfaces, edges, slopes, shapes and inter-spaces". (8)
As Cassiver puts it, it is space abstracted from "all the variety and heter-
ogeneity imposed upon us by the disparate nature of our senses", (9) and, of
course, our culture. This is a level of space increasingly familiar to
the geographer, yet it is a very recent human experience. As Haggett has
recognised:

> "order and chaos are not part of nature, but part of
> the human mind: in Sigwart's words, 'that there is
> more order in the world than appears at first sight
> is not discovered till that order is looked for' ....
> order depends not on the geometry of the object we see
> but on the organisational framework into which we place
> it." (10)

---

(7)   Langer (1953), pp. 71-2.

(8)   Isaac, p. 15.

(9)   quoted in Isaac, p. 17.

(10)   Haggett (1965), p. 2.

Despite Haggett's denial here of the importance of the geometry of an object, this is still essentially abstracted space and equally so is it abstracted from the real world.

The question to be asked concerning our perception of the "real" world is rather one of how we arrive at this organisational framework and the answer has already been indicated: we construct a symbolic space. This level of space perception has been termed "schematic" perception; "the perception of the world of useful and significant things".[11] Here the world can only be made "useful and significant" by the construction of symbols: the necessity springs from a lack of uniqueness in the universe. When Max Weber stated that even if no two stones were alike they still belonged to the class "stones" he was denying the concept of uniqueness -- within geographical literature methodological treatises (such as Schaeffer's) have established this position with some force. As Langer points out "the uniqueness of a form is logically impossible to establish. No form is necessarily unique, and short of that the characterof uniqueness could not serve to bestow a metaphysical status on it".[12]

The division of objects in the sensed world into classes is a useful one: it relieves us of a major data handling problem. Yet the classes implied by scientific logic imply the construction of an abstract and geometrical space which is a peculiarly western invention, and recent

---

[11] Isaac, p. 15.

[12] Langer (1953), p. 13.

western at that. This use of "classes" cannot be expected to be readily,
if ever, applicable to the world of man the "satisficer", man the
irrational animal and, above all, man the myth-maker and mystic. Yet man
has to find order in the universe: a universe without order appears, for
man, to be a universe leading to man's psychological unbalance. He must
extract order out of apparent chaos and where scientific abstraction is
inadequate he does so by symbolisation, the primary mode of which Langer
calls art. Art does not have to be solely a statement of the author's
feelings; it can equally well be a stimulus provoking the spectator's
reaction, even to the extent of channeling that reaction by its invocation
of specific symbols. Otto Baensch comments that

> "Art, like science, is a mental activity whereby
> we bring certain contents of the world into the realm
> of objectively valid cognition; and .... furthermore,
> it is the particular office of art to do this with
> the world's emotional content."   (13)

This is a view of art as non-pleasurable -- rather as functional
and informational. We look at things in their totality and extract their
meaning to us by interpreting the symbolic messages contained within. In
the same way when a geographer studies a landscape he sees it partly in its
totality; that is to say, before he begins to abstract details, he will
acquire a sensory impression of the total landscape.

There has, unfortunately, been a tendency for geographers to
ignore this attribute of the landscape. Hartshorne, in the <u>Nature of
Geography</u>, passes over this with the comment "Presumably most geographers

---

(13)   In "Art and Feeling" in Langer (1958), p. 10.

will .... have little or no use for any concepts based on our psychic
sensations of area".[14]   This seems a rather short-sighted view which
ignores Hettners "Concept of the 'character' (wesen) of an area" which is
sensed rather than objectively observed;[15] Passarges' "pure landscape
study", a study limited to those objects perceptible to the senses;[16]
and, more specifically, the work of Banse and Volz who were significantly
influenced by the work of Sir Francis Younghusband. Younghusband was
"particularly interested in the study of nature in geography"[17] and his
article published in German, "Das Herz der Natur" helped Banse underline
his belief in the importance of aesthetics in geography and maintain the
concept of "Landscape as the form or picture of the landscape, representing
the outward manifestation of the total milieu".[18]

When we speak of the mood of a landscape in the context of this
paper

> "We mean, then, that the landscape, because it is
> without a soul, is naturally also without a mood per
> se; but that the contemplation of it evokes in us a
> mood, and that we project our own mood, which is caused
> by the landscape, into the landscape -- that we object-
> ify the mood in it."   (19)

---

(14)   Hartshorne, p. 160.

(15)   Ibid., p. 191

(16)   Ibid., p. 207.

(17)   Ibid., p. 218-9.

(18)   Loc.cit.

(19)   Baensch, "Art and Feeling" in Langer (1958), p. 11.

The "mood" of the landscape is only one of its many attributes; but it is the "language" in which the landscape "talks" to us and therefore a vital attribute in terms of human recognition of this "mood".

> "We never think of regarding the language as a sentient being whose outward aspect "expresses" the mood it contains subjectively. The landscape does not express the mood, but <u>has</u> it. The mood surrounds, fills and permeates it like the light that illumines it or the odour it exhales. The mood belongs to our total impression of the landscape, and can only be distinguished as one of its components by a process of abstraction." (20)

Geographers are always being asked by other geographers to "see" an erosion surface; to "recognise" a settlement type; to "understand" a relationship. All of these are highly nebulous concepts which cannot be fully understood if the mood of the landscape is not adequately realised. Geographers are traditionally involved with "recognising" discrete areas on the earth's surface and calling them regions. In this sense the geographer's role in society is a simple one: it is well summed up by a comment of Tom Sawyer's (albeit in one of Twain's more disastrous novels), that the geographer has to paint regions "so you can tell them apart the minute you look at them, hain't he?". For this reason it should be considered the geographer's responsibility to study <u>all</u> modes of space and the construction of those modes if he is to arrive at a fuller understanding of real world relationships, spatial or otherwise. (21)

---

(20) Loc.cit.

(21) This is, however, a very idealistic approach and only the French school accepts it as a realisable possibility.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SPACE BY ART

As has been previously indicated art is one of the means by which

man orders his universe, both personal and societal. Art reflects differ-

ences in space perception in two ways: it reflects the differences in

space perception between cultures and it reflects the differences in

space perception through time in a single culture. This paper is oriented

towards the latter function of art insofar as Cinema is the product of a

single culture, although differences between cultures do have an effect upon

the construction of space in this art mode, effects largely dependent upon

the individual director. The Western culture has, however, a very different

sense of space from that of any other culture and, before differences within

the culture through time or through the divergence of ideas upon art themes

from their original meaning can be considered, some reasons for this

different sense of space must be outlined. Before the Renaissance art used

similar methods of representation the world over. As Malraux comments

> "Christianity had imported into a world that had
> known little else than representation of a more or
> less subtly symbolical nature something hitherto
> unknown, which I would call "dramatic representation".
> Buddhism has scenes but no drama; pre-Columbian Amer-
> ican art, dramatic figures but no scenes. Even the
> decline of Christianity, far from weakening this
> occidental sense of the dramatic actually strengthened
> it, and at the same time heightened another sense, of
> which the sense of drama is only one of several manif-
> estations -- the sense of Otherness, that desire for volume
> and figures in bold relief which is peculiar to the
> West, and links up with its political conquest of the
> world. Europe replaces that tone by relief, chronicles
> by history, tragedy by drama, saga by the novel, wisdom
> by psychology, contemplation by action -- and, as a
> result, the gods by Man". (22)

---

(22) In "Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures" in Langer (1958),
pp. 317-8.

Such a view of art is of course based largely on the Aristotelian tradition of reality[23]: fidelity to the optical appearance of objects is the only true artistic description of that reality. Yet there are major modifications. What we "see" is, for example, and on the most basic plane, not exactly what the camera sees; all considerations of cultural interpretation of the scene left aside. The camera is totally objective: within its limitations it "never lies", although it can be fooled into "lying" by careful use as I hope to show later. Nevertheless cultures develop and therefore they interpret space very differently through time. However much we may consider our culture depends on, for example, Greek culture, it is no more like Greek culture than our world is like the Greek world. It has developed and changed: it has outgrown concepts that are no longer found valid, and therefore it has developed a very different perception of reality. To quote Kepes on art schools;

> "Of all artists, the Greeks alone reveal space
> conceptions limited by Euclidean geometry.[24] The
> past seven centuries have given us the "symbolic"
> space of the Early Flemish masters; the "rational"

---

[23] Our view of Aristotle in the West has been much affected by our continuing embracement of the Greeks as our intellectual forefathers. As Werner Jaeger comments on Aristotle "the evolution of independent philosophical achievement in European culture has taken the form of a five-hundred-year's struggle against him", quoted in Ivins, p.113. Our view of reality today can be no more like that of Aristotle than our world can be as static and as discontinuous as that the Greeks.

[24] This was not the Greeks only artistic limitation. They did not appreciate the unity movement gives to a group of apparently diverse figures or objects, whether it is the movement of the figures or objects or of the observer himself. As Ivins says "this unity of the group in flow, to which the Greeks were blind, has become the essential aspect of the world for modern eyes", p. 15. Of the difference between Euclidean and modern geometry Ivins points out that "Greek geometry is thoroughly subjective, and that the modern geometry of abstract relations comes as near to being objective as the general epistemological and logical predicaments permit", p. 104.

space of Fifteenth Century Renaissance Italy, deep and
clear; the "ideal" space of Raphael and the High Ren-
aissance, in which a clear foreground, continuing the
spatial characteristics of the world in which the
observer finds himself, converges upon a spatially
mysterious, other-worldly realm beyond; the soaring,
levitational space of Gothic Cathedrals; the poised and
balanced spatial volumes of the High Renaissance Church
of San Biagio at Montepulciano; the "exploding" space of
the German Baroque at Vierzehnheiligen; the pervasive
space of the Impressionists, dissolving all solid form;
the laminated, timebound space of the later Cubists."   (25)

Yet distance perspective was not popularly used before the Renaiss-

ance. It is difficult to determine why: man has always had the physical

equipment in his two eyes and binocular vision, but this does not mean that

he has had to use it. As Cassirer indicates physiological effects may be

very much contingent upon human feeling: "the depth of human experience ...

depends on the fact that we are able to vary our modes of seeing, that we

can alternate our views of reality."[26]

The widespread use of "true" perspective by Renaissance artists

heralded a new world view. Man began to search within his environment for

meaningful relationships and expressed what he began to find in his art.

This search was not just for meaningful objects but, as previously indicated

in Baensch's comments on Landscape moods, the human perception of those

meaningful objects. As Langer says

"Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human
feeling".   (27)

---

[25] Kepes (1956), p. 28. However as Carpenter points out in his article
"Image Making in Arctic Art" in Kepes (1966), "Euclidean space is a
concept unique to literate man", p. 221.

[26] quoted in Kepes (1956), p. 23.

[27] Langer (1953), p. 40.

There are however certain independent "objective feelings" which
exist apart from human beings. Even so these feelings are not totally
independent.

> "They are always embedded and inherent in objects
> from which they cannot be actually separated, but only
> distinguished by abstraction: objective feelings are
> always dependent parts of objects."   (28)

One of the functions of art is to create objects which embody the
feelings we wish to hold so definitely that "any subject confronted with
these objects, and emphatically disposed towards them, cannot but experience
a non-sensuous apperception of the feelings in question. Such objects are
called "works of art" and by "art" we designate the activity that produces
them". (29) These created objects therefore act as symbols, and pure symbols
at that. As Jung pointed out, symbols are neither allegories nor signs, but
images of content that largely transcend consciousness.

A major problem of art has been in its treatment of space. Art
cannot treat of the same space as does geography, for example, because the
space in art is not "experiential space". That is to say you cannot touch,
hear, or experience motion in a non-moving picture since it is basically an
illusion, albeit a highly sophisticated one. Renaissance Western art
perfected that illusion, compared with the lack of depth in primitive art,

---

(28) Baensch, quoted in Langer (1953), p. 20.

(29) Ibid., pp. 21-2.

or rather the lack of spatial cues as to depth, and the reversed perspective

of Byzantine art. This problem has been solved by the motion picture: at

least experiential space can be recorded, although it must be admitted that

is but one mode of experiential space. Before this can be commented upon

however it is important to consider briefly the manner in which cultures

construct their space.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE, ART AND SPACE

Within a given culture art may be either stable or unstable.

> "In a culture that has a seat and a tradition,
> certain basic forms are evolved that are true to
> simple feeling, and ... comprehended by those who,
> lacking creative imagination, adopt current ideas and
> apply what they have learnt. But in a footloose
> society surfeited with influences, nothing is invio-
> late long enough to be governed by one clear feeling
> and to be really expressive of it ... only an except-
> ional sensitivity to form can survive this tangle of
> historical lines all ending in the snarl we call
> civilisation." (30)

Each individual constructs his own "environment" from the range

of sensory data presented to him: this is something he must do whatever

his cultural origin. By his own accumulated experience, and using his

own body and its extensions as his centre, Man organises the kinetic realm

of tangible volumes or objects, as well as the shapes of the free air space

surrounding them three dimensionally, into his "world". In terms of a

whole culture art is paramount and vital. To quote Langer

> "Art is a public possession, because the formulation
> of "felt life" is the heart of any culture, and molds
> the objective world for the people. It is their school
> of feeling, and their defence against outer and inner
> chaos. It is only when nature is organised in imagina-
> tion along lines congruent with the forms of feeling
> that we can understand it, that is find it rational ....
> Then intellect and emotion are unopposed, life is
> symbolised by its setting, the world seems important and
> beautiful and is intuitively "grasped"." (31)

---

(30) Langer (1953), p. 53.

(31) Ibid., p. 409.

Culture, art and space can therefore be seen to be a comprehensively interlinked set of entities, all interdependent. Examination of the space resulting from the actions of a specific culture should therefore illustrate certain facets of that culture's activities; likewise an examination of its art. A study of any one of the three elements will provide insight into aspects of the other two. Even though the painter or sculptor works for himself his work will still reflect the basic symbolisation of the culture within which he is working. Similarly the landscape artist, although he is not bound by the supreme ideal: Capability Brown did not design solely for himself, nor did he not design for the urban industrial poor of the Eighteenth Century; he reflected more the ideals of his age. The film director, working for an audience of either minimal or vast extent must still reflect values current to his age and to do so will have to use symbols which are adequate in their meaning for that age.

Furthermore there is the role of art and its symbols in constructing our reality.

> "It is not with tools only that we domesticate our
> world. Sensed forms, images and symbols are as essential
> to us as palpable reality in explaining nature for
> human ends. Distilled from our experience and made
> our permanent possessions, they provide a nexus between
> man and man and between man and nature. We make a map
> of our experience patterns, an inner model of the outer
> world, and we use this to organise our lives. Our
> natural "environment" -- whatever impinges on us from
> outside -- becomes our human "landscape" -- a segment
> of nature fathomed by us and made our home."   (32)

(32) Kepes (1956), p. 18.

Finally such a symbolism built up within a culture and expressed in all its outward manifestations produces an overall "mood" within the landscape; a "mood" which Langer has termed an "ethnic domain". This "is not a 'thing' among other 'things' but rather the sphere of influence of a function or functions; it may have physical effects on some geographic locality or it may not."[33] There is a marked difference between the location of a culture _in_ a place and cultural space itself. For example, whilst something like a gypsy camp is _in_ a place, culturally it _is_ a place.[34] Space cannot therefore be regarded as a constant: the geographic location of a nomadic camp of one culture may at some other point in time be, or have been, the geographic location of an entirely different culture, thereby providing us with an entirely different, but equally valid, space.

> "A place, in this non-geographical sense, is a created thing, an ethnic domain made visible, tangible, sensible. As such it is, of course, an illusion. Like any other plastic symbol, it is primarily an illusion of self-contained, perceptual space. But the principle of organisation is its aim: for it is organised as a functional realm made visible -- the centre of a virtual world, the "ethnic domain", and itself a geographical semblance." [35]

---

[33] Langer (1953), p. 95.

[34] This is approaching the existentialists view of space, that it is "far from being a simple concept; it is felt." Unfortunately our culture is replacing its cultural space with what Matoré calls "the uniform technical environment which denies the individual and depersonalises all human relationships. It has been said that the value of the individual tends to decrease along with that of the place, and modern man asks if there will soon be only DP's in a concentration camp world", p. 6.

[35] Langer (1953), p. 95.

Cultures therefore produce "ethnic domains" by virtue of the manner in which they symbolise things within their landscape.[36] In some ways this is the role of the artist, in some the sculptor and in some the architect, but all strive to produce through their various skills "a physically present environment that expresses the characteristic rhythmic functional patterns which constitute a culture".[37] To penetrate the heart of any culture the geographer must understand what Langer terms "forms of feeling" and appreciate the landscape as art not only in terms of his own culture but with relevance to the culture he is concerned with: it should be hardly necessary to state this!

---

[36] See, for example, Ivins on Greek landscape and Carpenter on the complexity with which the Eskimo symbolises his environment. The Eskimo carver discovers significant things present in his environment within the ivory he is carving. As Carpenter says "he rarely sets out to carve, say a seal, but picks up the ivory, examines it to find its hidden form and, if that is not immediately apparent, carves aimlessly until he sees it, humming or chanting as he works. Then he brings it out: seal, hidden, emerges. It was always there: he did not create it. He released it: he helped it step forth", p. 206. Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art" in Kepes (1966).

[37] Langer (1953), p. 96.

CHAPTER 4

THE CINEMA AND SYMBOLIC SPACE

Cinema, as one of the most sophisticated art modes our culture
has developed, gives us many examples of the construction of symbolic spaces
which represent variations in culture and cultural heritage within Western
culture as a whole. To the cultural geographer such evidence can be
invaluable since it provides visually represented evidence of the
psychological space constructed by a culture, albeit significantly modified
by the personalities of individual directors. Even so the directors of
all film schools will tend to draw very heavily on their national ideolog-
ical and philosophical heritage and variations will only be within certain
limits. It is the purpose of this section of this paper to examine
critically the variations in space perception within Western culture by
means of the evidence presented by the cinema, and to link these variations
in space perception to the various national philosophies and ideologies that
lie behind them.

The compilation of symbols from indirect or artificial sources
allows the motion picture to produce a compound message with both visual
and vocal elements. It has, in addition, two spatial dimensions and one
temporal dimension and although there have been experiments with 3D motion
pictures these have proved to be either impossible in colour with present
techniques or, in the case of the Russian multiple-reflector screen system
which allows colour, prohibitively expensive. Present Cinema in two
spatial dimensions is a highly sophisticated message-transmitting device
and one of the most "omnivorous" arts our culture possesses.[38] Although

---

(38) Ibid., p. 412.

live theatre possesses three spatial and one temporal dimension it has
numerous and major disadvantages compared with Cinema. The lack of a
third dimension in Cinema can be discounted at present as non-vital --
depth can be indicated by spatial cues and perspective -- and, in addition,
the Cinema can employ more than one temporal mode with facility, which is
far less possible in live theatre.

Cinema can be looked upon as the logical successor to Baroque
art. The motivation behind both is the same -- both are theatrical;
emphasising gestures and emotions and thereby building up a sequence of
events. Andre Malraux looks upon photography as the liberating force
behind new Western art, liberating it from the search for better representat-
ional technique pursued consistently since the Renaissance. It is interesting
that most Western art has now reverted to flat perspective rather than
attempting to imitate the "real" world which is far more easily done by
photography. The attempt to capture motion was therefore transferred to
still photography but was stopped short at the same point as it was in
painting. Even the early motion picture was little more than this; a series
of pictures stuck together without real motion. In fact "the cinema (this
author's emphasis), through enabling the photography of movement, merely
substituted moving gesticulation for unmoving."[39]

This search for motion in art came about at the turn of the last
century when the philosophical foundations of Western culture were prof-
oundly shaken by changes in our concept of time. There has been an evolution
from the fixed time sense of Kant, the idea that time exists independently
of all objects (or, conversely, that time is present only as a sensory
experience of the observer), to a sense of the unity of time and space.

---

(39) Malraux "Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures" in Langer
      (1958)   220

This was first proclaimed in 1908 by the mathematician Minkowski in his

statement that

> "henceforth space alone or time alone is doomed to fade
> into a mere shadow; only a kind of union of both will
> preserve their existence".   (40)

Under this new philosophy even common household objects took on

a new significance. The futurist sculptor, Umberto Boccioni, considered

that

> "We should start from the central nucleus of the
> object wanting to create itself, in order to discover
> those new forms which connect the object invisibly
> with the infinite of the apparent plasticity and the
> infinite of the inner plasticity."   (41)

As Giedion comments,

> "Boccioni tried in these words to circumscribe the
> sense of a new plasticity which conceives objects (as
> they are in reality) in a state of movement. This is
> reflected directly in his plastic "Bottle Evolving in
> Space", 1911-12, with its intersecting spatial planes". (42)

Similar events were to occur in all the arts, but one school was

to have a far-reaching unifying effect over all these new concepts of space

and time; that school being the Bauhaus. Established by Walter Gropius at

Dessau in 1926 the Bauhaus School of Design was to be more than a unifier of

"art and industry, art and daily life, using architecture as the intermediary": [43]

it was to express, in the very building that housed it, the new perceived

relationships between space and time. In Giedion's words

---

(40) Quoted in Giedion, p. 439.

(41) Quoted in Giedion, p. 441.

(42) Giedion, p. 441. For photograph of "Bottle Evolving in Space" see p. 442.

(43) Ibid., p.485.

> "there is the hovering, vertical grouping of
> planes which satisfies our feeling for a relational
> space, and there is the extensive transparency that
> permits interior and exterior to be seen simultan-
> eously, en face and en profile ....: variety of
> levels of reference, or of points of reference, and
> simultaneity -- the conception of space-time, in
> short." (44)

Instead of the single view perspective of a building that had been

encouraged by previous architectural schools, the Bauhaus broke away to a

new concept, that of movement of the observer around and/or through an

ever-changing and architecturally created landscape. This was something

the cinema had also to accomplish: the ability to move through a scene or

landscape rather than just look at it; and it was something that was not

achieved until Eisenstein developed the principle of the mobile camera, a

point which will be enlarged upon in the following pages.

The physiological problem of motion and human perception as the

key to depth vision in Cinema is well revealed by Kepes.

> "The world as we perceive it is made up of things
> with persisting identity, existing in a frame of
> reference of stationary space. Motionless objects
> .... are perceived as though flat, and only when the
> eye receives a successive flow of light patterns
> reflected from an object can we recognise depth and
> detect the objects three-dimensional extension. The
> changing position of our eyes relative to an object
> reveals its characteristic three-dimensional "thing-
> ness"....

---

(44) Ibid., p. 489.

This paradox has its inversion. Stationary photographs of successive views of moving objects projected at the frequency at which they were taken are perceived as though the object were moving. Changing patterns of successive stationary retinal stimulation inevitably induce an experience of motion. There is, thus, a fundamental figure-ground relationship of constancy and change. One does not exist without the other. Together, they build all the figures of our experience."   (45)

Cinema as such, rather than the motion picture, did not arrive until the realisation that "the means of reproduction in the cinema is the moving picture, but its means of expression is a series of planes."(46) In other words the motion picture had to be removed from its stage setting and the medium exploited to full advantage via variable length shots and editing technique before it could honestly be called Cinema. The same cycle recurred with the introduction of sound on film: until the sound stopped sounding as if it were a recording of a stage show and was exploited for its effect the sound film was a two-dimensional representation of three-dimensional action and nothing more.

Of all directors it was, perhaps, Eisenstein, despite his immense and frequently admitted indebtedness to D.W. Griffith, who first made the cinema "art". To Eisenstein Cinema was, "in the full sense of the term, a child of socialism"(47), yet, paradoxically, Eisenstein was to completely break away from most accepted tenets of Soviet art. As Carpenter comments

---

(45)   Kepes (1965), p. iii.

(46)   Malraux "Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures" in Langer (1958), p. 320.

(47)   Eisenstein, p. 181.

"Soviet Russia is the final, most sterile
expression of literacy, with all the worst of the
Renaissance and none of the freedom and hope and
release of that incredible experiment. Everything
is segmental and replaceable -- especially people:
Napoleon's citizen army at last! Everything visual
requires a single point of view -- a review position,
like Stalin reviewing troops; all painting is three-
dimensional perspective; every plaza is to be viewed
from X. One cannot enter into an experience, complete
it, modify it, interpret it. All communications:
high-definition, exact, with the same meaning for
everyone."   (48)

Eisenstein, in effect, abandoned both of these concepts. He broke

away from the principle of the single viewpoint by exploiting the mobile

camera, thereby forcing the viewer of his work to enter into the events

depicted on the screen, events as historically diverse as the storming of

the Czar's Palace in "October" and the routing of the Teuton horde in

"Alexander Nevsky", but events closely connected in the Russian's sense of

their own cultural identiry. Neither did Eisenstein consider people

"replaceable", although he did discard the concept of bourgeois individualism

on the principle that films which did not treat of social problems were not

complete films. As he himself comments: "We brought collective and mass

action onto the screen, in contrast to individualism and the "triangle"

drama of the bourgeois cinema. Discarding the individualist conception of

the bourgeois hero, our films of this (early) period made an abrupt deriva-

tion -- insisting on an understanding of the mass as hero."(49) This hand

line dialectic was later revoked in favour of development of the individual

_____

(48)   Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art" in Kepes (1966).

(49)   Eisenstein, p. 16.

within the collective (witness "Alexander Nevsky") but this is still a
concept "irreconcilably opposed to bourgeois individualism".[50] Even so
Eisenstein considers this period a vital and necessary one, without which
Soviet Cinema would have been left floundering amidst a sea of bourgeois
social irresponsibility. At the time this book was written Eisenstein saw
the ultimate purpose of a human director as pushing forward to "a synthesis
of all the best that has been done by our silent cinematography, towards a
synthesis of these with the demands of today, along the lines of story and
Marxist-Leninist ideological analysis".[51] This was Cinema's introduction
to the phase of social realism.[52]

Eisenstein looks on Cinema as "that genuine and ultimate synthesis
of all artistic manifestations that fell to pieces after the peak of Greek
culture."[53] Though this is a strong statement his reasons for making it
are well justified. Cinema, as developed by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and the
other Russian directors of the inter-war years, combines for the first time
the plastic forms of sculpture, the solution to the problem of movement in
pictorial images, the releasing of the rhythmic flow of music from a purely
auditory role, and the materialisation of literary images into a new
perceived reality. To Eisenstein, for the first time in the history of art,
Cinema was the "unity of man and space".[54]

---

(50)   Loc.cit.

(51)   Ibid., p. 17.

(52)   Of the existing major directors only Jean Luc Godard has maintained
       that the film serves political principles, and he is as violently
       opposed to Soviet realism as he is to American materialism, both on the
       grounds of derpersonalisation of the individual by whatever techniques
       are applicable.

(53)   Eisenstein, p. 181.

(54)   Ibid., p. 182.

Although Eisenstein's view here is necessarily ideologically narrow the logical outcome of this approach was to create a new "cinematic space" which is not and cannot ever be fully connected to what we perceive as the "real" world. If Eisenstein's dictums were followed exactly they would lead to an exposure of an "unreal" reality, yet Cinema does not do this. Cinema "meets our inmost needs precisely by exposing -- for the first time, as it were -- outer reality and thus deepening, in Gabriel Marcel's words, our relation to "this earth which is our habitat".[55] This is the existential-ist viewpoint: that space is the only reliable property in an unstable psychological world; that, as Sartre implies, "the world is enclosed, without the possibility of our fleeing it, a place where man has to define his condition in spatial terms".[56] In the existential universe objective space can be the only fixed variable, the rest of life being spent in other modes of space of dreamlike quality. As Matoré points out this idea is the product of our culture and is therefore reflected in all aspects of that culture.

> "In all forms of expression from the most learned
> treatise to the popular weekly magazine we frequently
> run across terms with a spatial origin. This is a
> matter neither of choice or fashion; there can be no
> doubt that the tendency reveals one of the profoundest
> sentiments of our time: an obsession with situation." (57)

When sights which are normally familiar to us in everyday life become unusual patterns this existential "dream-space", which is equally the space created by Surrealism, comes into existence, a fact much exploited by

---

(55) Kracauer, p. XI.

(56) Matoré, p. 5.

(57) Loc.cit.

what I have termed "The Cinema of Dream-Space". A "case in point is Kuleshov's "creative geography", a device which dissolves given spatial relationships. Pictures of material phenomena taken in different places are juxtaposed in such a way that their combination evokes the illusion of a spatial reality which of course is found nowhere in nature. The artificial space thus created is mostly intended as an excursion into the realm of fantasy."[58]

Fantasy or not fantasy, Cinema creates for us a new space which must be filtered into our perceived reality by the brain. Although the brain is dichotomously regarded as variously either

(a) a filter which interferes with our vision of a suprephysical reality -- the mystic point of view -- i.e., the filter is only removed during the delirium of disease or under the influence of drugs, or;

(b) a trustworthy interpreter of reality only in perfect health (the empiricist viewpoint viewing hallucination as aberrant),

the experimentally shown fact remains that hallucinations and dreams are both a "spontaneous activity of the nervous system when it goes unchecked by sensory information."[59] This had led a wide variety of observers to the conclusion that the film mode is unlike many of the other modes of art. It is exploitation of motion by Cinema which makes for this vast and important difference. As Kepes says:

---

(58) Pudovkin, quoted in Kracauer, p. 48.

(59) Gregory, p. 132.

"We have been accustomed to making ordered
relationships by mapping objects and even individuals
in their positions relative to one another. Now we
are forced to recognise that objects do not have
fixed positions, that human relations are among the
things in the man-created environment that have direc-
tion and velocity. We have learned to recognize that
a description of position tells us only half the story
.... Our information must include velocity as well as
position if we are to do anything about the situation." (60)

The manipulation of motion by the mechanical technological achieve-
ments of our culture (trains, cars, planes, etcetera, as well as cinema) has
intensified our awareness of time, whilst modifying spatio-temporal relation-
ships. The intervention of mutational mechanical motion into our lives has
resulted in the mutation of our faculties and perceptions. Where before
relations were simply causative, now they clash between complex causative
and scientifically inferred relationships. Cinema has brought this clash
home with a vengeance: it has produced[61]

(1) A greater awareness of time and the efficacy of time.

(2) New perceptions of the external "reality".

(3) An increasing preference for dynamism in art.

(4) A desire to express and describe "state of mind" as kinetic
perception changes: in other words an awareness of psychol-
ogical causation, and finally,

(5) A dissociation of man from chronological, physiological and
cosmic time by means of an emphasis on technical and mechan-
ical time, which is paradoxically beginning to produce a
re-examinination of chronological, physiological and cosmic
time in the light of an altered perception of "reality".

Cinema is now beginning to move away from technical and mechanical
time, the time of Eisenstein and the social realists, into psychological
space-time with its symbolic occurrences and dream-like nature.

---

(60) Kepes (1965), p. vi.

(61) Loosely adapted from Dorfles' categories in "The Role of Motion in our
Visual Habits and Artistic Creation" in Kepes (1965), p. 48.

CHAPTER 5

THE NEW CINEMA -- THE CINEMA OF DREAM-SPACE

The Eisensteinian insistence on story has begun, in the face of
the development of the new perceived psycho-spatial "reality", to lose its
force. As Hans Richter puts it "we are not only accustomed by habit to
look at films as stories. The flow of visual images _always_ makes a story,
whether there is a story or not; that is how our mind works".[62] The
film is not like drama, however -- it does not have to follow a lineal
pattern -- nor can it be judged in terms of drama. At the same time as the
Russian directors Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Kuleshov began to talk about
"filmic time" and "dynamisation in space" the Bauhaus group in Germany
were using the terms "space-motion" and "space-time". The lack of a pre-
existing aesthetic by which Cinema can be judged has meant that it has been
able to step outside theatrical "space-time" and enter into its own. Even
though the artistic experience of Cinema "should lead to an aesthetic
judgment, based on artistic discipline",[63] Cinema is an entirely different
basic mode. As Langer says, Cinema remains "a poetic art. But it is not
any poetic art we have known before; it makes the primary illusion -- virtual
history -- its own mode."[64]

---

[62] In "My Experience with Movement in Painting and in Film" in Kepes (1965), p. 155.

[63] Gessner, in "Seven Faces of Time: An Aesthetic for Cinema" in Kepes (1965), p. 159.

[64] Langer (1953), p. 412.

Cinema has, in order to establish this new mode of art, adopted the spatial ideas of the existentialists and surrealists. The recognition that man dreams within a spatial, objective framework has freed Cinema to concentrate upon the true geography of man, the geography of his mind. The landscape, especially in the film, then becomes the backdrop which reflects this new geography. This is not, of course, a new philosophy to Cinema alone. It is the new philosophy of our culture, and it is a new philosophy which must find its way into every aspect of that culture, including geography. As certain Cinema schools have already done the geographer must increasingly become aware of Marcel's statement that

> "an individual is not distinct from his place; he
> is that place." (65)

The creation of the new space by Cinema has resulted in its creation of its own mode of art. This mode Langer terms "the dream mode .... Cinema is "like" dream in the mode of its presentation: it creates a virtual present, an order of direct apparition".[66] The dream, for the dreamer, has one specific importance: the dreamer is always at its centre; he is "equidistant from all events".[67] Everything created by the dream or by the camera has this tremendous sense of immediacy: the camera creates a virtual present. However, since the camera and microphone are not the dreamer, the picture is not necessarily dreamlike in its structure. "It is

---

[65] Matore, p. 6.

[66] Langer (1953), p. 412.

[67] Langer (1953), p. 413.

a poetic composition, coherent, organised, governed by a definitely con-
ceived feeling, not dictated by actual structure."[68] For the year in
which this was written this is a sophisticated statement applying to only
a few films: it has proved to be a prophetic statement as well. The film
has now fully entered the dream mode even in its structure: major works
such as Resnais', "Last Year at Marienbad"[69] and Bunuel's "Belle de Jour"[70]
are adequate illustration of films which are dreamlike in their structure.
In Cinema then, the water "takes the place of the dreamer, but in a perfectly
objectified dream -- that is, he is not part of the story. The work is the
appearance of a dream, a unified, continuously passing, significant
apparition".[71]

        Eisenstein speaks of shots as "elements" which are combined into
"images" which are "objectively unpresentable" (Langer calls them "poetic
impressions") but are, in fact, greater elements compounded of "representa-
tions", whether by montage, or symbolic action, or whatever. The artistic
whole "is governed by the "initial general image which originally hovered
before the creative artist" -- the matrix, the commanding form; and it is
this (not, be it remarked, the artist's emotion) that is to be evoked in the

---

[68] Loc.cit.

[69] Resnais is typically existentialist in his description of the landscape.
As McGuire says of his treatment of objects in Last Year at Marienbad,
"defying the mob of our animistic or protective adjectives, things are
there", p. 31.

[70] Bunuel's space is different from that of Resnais, his background in
Surrealism denying the possibility of objective description. His land-
scapes therefore "happen"; they are not "described" as a reference point
for "reality".

[71] Langer (1953), p. 413.

mind of the spectator".[72]   The film therefore far more approaches the

novel and the dream than any other mode of art.

> "It has no framework itself of fixed <u>space</u>, as the
> stage has; and one of the aesthetic peculiarities of
> dream, which the moving pictures takes over, is the
> nature of its space. Dream events are spatial -- often
> intensely concerned with space -- intervals, endless
> roads, bottomless canyons, things too high, too near,
> too far -- but they are not oriented in any total
> space. The same is true of the Moving Picture, and
> distinguishes it -- despite its visual character --
> from plastic art: <u>its space comes and goes</u>. It is
> always a secondary illusion."   [73]

But not only is the film what we might term "a-spatial": like the

dream it is equally a-temporal.

> "The "dreamed reality" on the screen can move for-
> ward and backward because it is really an eternal and
> ubiquitous virtual present. The action of drame goes
> inexorably forward: it creates a future, a Destiny;
> the dream mode is an endless Now."   [74]

---

[72] Ibid., p. 414.

[73] Ibid., p. 415.

[74] Loc.cit.

CHAPTER 6

THE APPLICATION OF CULTURALLY PERCEIVED SPACE IN CINEMA SCHOOLS:

SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES.

In the previous section, I chose to quote Suzanne Langer at length to illustrate some specific aspects of the nature of perceived space in the Cinema. In this final section I intend to show briefly how some of these observations are manifested in the "Cinema of the Sixties". Not all Cinema Schools have advanced as far in the depiction of dream space as a higher plane of perceived "reality" as, for example, the French. This is, perhaps, stating the obvious but it requires justification. For simplicity in this present work only the English films of the cliche-ridden "Angry Young Man" era of the late 1950's and early 1960's based on the novels of urban, industrial and usually northern authors such as John Wain, John Braine, Alun Owen, Alan Sillitoe, and the equally loosely termed French "New Wave", or rather "Nouvelle Vague", Cinema will be considered.

As Penelope Houston points out;

> "Main-stream British Cinema during the late 50's
> and early 60's has meant "Look Back in Anger" and "A
> Taste of Honey" and "The Loneliness of the Long
> Distance Runner" (Tony Richardson); "Saturday Night
> and Sunday Morning" (Karel Reisz); "A Kind of Loving"
> (John Schlesinger); and "Whistle Down the Wind" and
> "The L-Shaped Room" (Bryan Forbes) ....

> Easy enough to see what these films have in common.
> Their centre is the provinces rather than London; their
> idiom is hard ...; they get across to their audiences
> by stimulating identification and a direct response.
> They are anti-authoritarian, but they are not noticeably
> celebrating a ..."sense of community". They dislike
> a great many of their characters -- the television ruled
> parents of "A Kind of Loving" and "The Loneliness of the
> Long Distance Runner", almost anyone in a uniform, even
> a bus conductor's, the people who fill their semi-

> detacheds with knickknacks. They see life as grey,
> grimy and desperately restricted, never more so
> than in its pleasures, which are taken solemnly and
> almost always end in quarrels .... To a formidable
> extent these films represent English puritanism,
> a melancholia of youth." (75)

All the above-mentioned films are set in urban-industrial, and often economically depressed, areas. All reflect the despair of working-class people trapped in such an environment and the aimless violence thus produced. All are, in fact, anti-urban, or rather anti whatever it is that urbanism has done to their character's souls. There is a tremendous sense of relief in many of these films at going out into the country and perhaps the best example of this is to be found in "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner", which, although bearing a marked resemblance in its poetic rendering of "escape" into the countryside to François Truffauts "Les Quatre Cents Coupe", is couched in English urban terms, rather than French. There is a desire to escape the city in Richardson's production which is present from the beginning, a desire which in Truffaut's work is not built in but which we discover along with the director.

Despite these comments it is the urban environment which most often wins. Arthur Seaton of Karel Reisz's "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning", the archetype of the whole school in many ways, is eventually defeated by his background.

> "Arthur exists within a context of pub and
> factory, back-to-back houses, and Sunday mornings on the
> river bank.... He keeps up his running fight with the
> obligations society tries to lay on him, but this is not
> a case of war to the knife: in the end, the housing estate
> waits to claim him, for all the stones he throws at it." (76)

---

(75) Houston, p. 118.

(76) Ibid., pp. 121-2. This author's emphasis.

The English School of this period is completely predictable and the landscapes reflect this predictability. It is not so much that the landscape is over-familiar, it is just that the director has left us no surprises: the urban squalor is a must, but as Houston says "one can almost visualise the mobile canteen and the studio cars parked just out of camera range."[77] Nevertheless this group of films represents well a form of perceived space: it was a form made popular by the social conditions prevalent in certain parts of England at the time and in some ways it owes much to the ideals of social realism laid down by Eisenstein, yet without Eisenstein's optimism: in this sense it is, rather, a reflection of social nihilism.

The "New Wave" in France and in Europe generally has not reflected such a solidarity of social interest. To be sure many of Truffaut's films have possessed this quality, but there have been notable exceptions within his own work (such as "Jules et Jim") which have not. There has also been, under the auspices of the "New Wave", an increased understanding of the Cinema as Art; something rarely comprehended in the English Cinema and even more rarely in that of the U.S.A.. "Jules et Jim" evokes some landscapes of rare beauty "it is nearly always enchanting to look at, a symphony of greys carried out with spectacular brilliance".[78] The backgrounds, especially the rural ones, owe much to impressionist painting in the imprecision of their detail: our eyes are kept on the movement rather than the landscape, yet the landscape remains vital and important. This was the conception of "a total cinema in which every component part, whether

---

(77) Ibid., p. 124.

(78) Taylor, p. 29.

already existing in the arts, like words and music, or new and specific to
the cinema, like visual and spatial movement, should have equal importance."[79]

Yet there is little dream space in "Jules et Jim" -- there is
much more in Bunuel's "Belle de Jour". Owing much to Surrealism, Bunuel
develops the story in a "straightforward, linear narrative, interspersed
with obviously relevant daydreams, night-dreams and flashbacks. Fantasies
are clearly signalled, either by their intrinsic improbabilities, or by the
ringing of carriage bells."[80] Yet when Pierre dies his conventional
screen death and then miraculously is restored to life the jingling
carriage passes under the window, empty, as if to signify it is no longer
needed. As Durgnat comments "the equal realism of these climactic contrad-
ictions -- Pierre dead, Pierre well -- seems to place both in the same
order of reality, it cannot but throw doubt on the reality, or otherwise,
of every scene in the film."[81]

The gradual shift within the film from differences of reality to
a virtually ambiguous reality follows André Breton's surrealist dictum that:

> "Everything leads us to believe that there exists
> a certain point of the spirit at which life and death,
> the real and the imaginary, the past and the future
> .... cease to be perceived as opposites." (82)

Within "Belle de Jour" there are numerous "realities": there is
reality itself; there are daydreams; there are Freudian dreams and there are
"hypnagogic visions" ("the scenes or patterns which flow before our eyes

---

(79) Graham, p. 23.

(80) Durgnat, p. 139.

(81) Loc.cit.

(82) quoted in Durgnat, p. 140.

when we are half awake and, according to psychologists, honeycomb our
waking hours rather more than most of us remember").[83] An example of
the latter is the orgy under the table in the restaurant, a scene which is
only "seen" by Séverine (and of course the watcher).

As a final example perhaps the best cinematic use of existential
dream space is Resnais' tour de force, "L'Année Dernière à Marienbad".
Set symbolically in the physically realised and exquisitly visually described
fabtast if a Baroque château, the film constructs its own time-space
"reality" which exists only for the duration of the film. As the author
of "L'Année Dernière" comments, Cinema "creates a reality with forms"[84]
and this particular film "deals with a reality which the hero constructs
out of his own vision, out of his own words. And if his persistence, his
secret convictions, finally prevail, they do so among a perfect labyrinth of
false trails, variants, failures and repetitions."[85] The Baroque hotel of
Marienbad is filled with innumerable rooms, endless corridors and a wealth
of decoration. "Outside there are only formal gardens, statues, fountains,
with nowhere a trace of untamed nature, and indeed the whole setting forms
a world totally cut off from reality, hermetically sealed against social,
political or economic pressures."[86]

This is indeed the world of the mind. As in the dream "the univ-
erse in which the film takes place is, characteristically, that of a
perpetual present which makes any recourse to memory impossible."[87] This

(83) Durgnat, p. 141.

(84) Robbe-Grillet, p. 7.

(85) quoted in Armes, p. 93.

(86) Armes, pp. 93-4.

(87) Robbe-Grillet, quoted in Armes, p. 95.

type of space is Cinema's most valuable contribution to art and to culture.
We see in this film

> "sequences involving time previous in juxtaposition to
> sequences of time present "which" are so intricately
> blended cinematically that time becomes meaningless;
> all that appears to matter is a dream-like _motion_
> that has a mysterious psychological _flow_."   (88)

Marienbad is set in the dream space inside our minds, a space which we

inhabit more than we remember, a space the geographer never recognises

except, perhaps, in his dreams! This is the essence of the new cinematic

space of the largely French "New Wave"; a dream space more in tune with the

times than the mainly social-realist school of English Cinema in the early

1960's which owes so much to Eisenstein.

These examples provide only a small sample however and some

comments no longer hold so true today, but they indicate some of the potent-

ialities of this type of study. The English "Angry Young Man" phase has died

down, although it was notable for its solidarity of expression while it

existed, reflecting, as it were, a unified cultural landscape. The French

"New Wave" really never was. It had none of the solidarity of the English

Cinema at the same time, but it was far more willing to experiment with new

modes of space and time based on new philosophies. The French have however

always tended to be more willing to accept new space-time ideas in art and

the "New Wave" Directors have therefore not been so unwilling to accept that

the landscape need not be static. They have been ready to use a multiplicity

of landscapes in the world their cinema constructs, with different points

---

(88) Gessner, in "Seven Faces of Time: An Aesthetic for Cinema" in Kepes
(1965), p. 166.

emphasised by different landscapes. Whilst this can be traced almost directly to the French acceptance of existential ideas on space-time they have still provided a significant breakthrough in man's depiction of the space around him.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

Until the geographer can appreciate the intimacy of man's
relationship with the space surrounding him he cannot claim to understand
man's behaviour in space. We may talk about "regions", "culture areas",
"boundaries" defined by various criteria, Löschian "economic landscapes",
Christaller networks or whatever, but in each case we are suffering from one
of the prime failings of modern philosophical thinking: our attention has
been turned away from the "real objects presented to us in experience to the
conceptual and logical apparatus by which these objects are presented."[89]

Equally man is looking for reality, a search which occupies nearly
all fields of knowledge. If we are to find it we must therefore heed
Cassirer when he urges us to

> "reverse the direction of inquiry. We should seek
> true immediacy not in the things outside us but in our-
> selves. Not nature, as the aggregate of objects in
> space and time, but our own ego -- not the world of
> objects but only the world of our existence, of our
> existential reality -- seems able to lead us to the
> threshold of this immediacy."   (90)

As the existentialists will have it the only reality lies in the
objects around us: the rest is our perceived and existential reality; the
reality of our own ego; the space of our dreams. If the cultural geographer
is interested in the way people inhabit space, he must be aware of the space,
or spaces, they inhabit. If, as existentialism implies, the geographic
space we inhabit is our only real reference point, then the geographer must

---

[89] Wild, p. 9.

[90] Cassirer, p. 22.

be as willing to describe that space as is Sartre or Resnais before he can

go on to analyse the actions of man within that space.

> "In order to affirm the reality of its objects,
> classical epistemology had to degrade sensation to
> subjective appearance, and ultimately set it down as
> a mere name."   (91)

> "The result has been a fading away of the object,
> which has receded farther and farther from the central
> focus of attention."   (92)

This is therefore not a plea for a descriptive geography: it is

a plea for a re-direction and re-application of description, for a sophis-

ticated return to the considerations of the landscape mentioned earlier,

considerations glossed over by Hartshorne, who has misdirected geography

for several decades. We must provide the objective set of reference points

in space by describing the landscape in the manner of Passarges or Young-

husband and then indicate which of these man reacts to, and in what manner.

Only in this way can we hope to answer questions concerning man's behaviour.

---

(91) Ibid., p. 23.

(92) Wild, p. 9.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armes, Roy, <u>The Cinema of Alain Resnais</u>. London, A. Zwemmer Ltd., 1968.

Bunge, William Wheeler, <u>Theoretical Geography</u>. Stockholm, Lund University
          Studies in Geography, Gleerup, 1966.

Cassirer, Ernst, <u>The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms</u>. Volume 3: <u>Phenomenology
          of Knowledge</u>. Translated R. Manheim, New Haven and London,
          Yale University Press, 1957.

Chorley, R.J., and Haggett, P., <u>Socio-Economic Models in Geography</u>.
          London, University Paperbacks, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1967.

Dubos, Rene, <u>Man Adapting</u>. Yale University Press, 1965.

Durgnat, Raymond, <u>Luis Bunuel</u>. University of California Press, 1968.

Eisenstein, Sergei, <u>Film Form</u>. Translated and edited Jay Leyda, New York,
          Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949.

Giedion, Siegfried, <u>Space, Time and Architecture: the growth of a new
          tradition</u>. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press,
          1963.

Graham, Peter, <u>The New Wave; Critical Landmarks</u>. New York, Doubleday, 1968.

Gregory, R.L., <u>Eye and Brain: the psychology of seeing</u>. New York, World
          University Library, McGraw-Hill, 1966.

Haggett, P., <u>Locational Analysis in Human Geography</u>. London, Edward Arnold
          Ltd., 1965.

Hartshorne, R., <u>The Nature of Geography</u>. American Association of Geographers,
          1939. Reprinted 1961.

Houston, Penelope, <u>The Contemporary Cinema</u>. Penguin Books, 1963.

Isaac, Eric, "Religion, Symbol and Landscape", <u>Landscape</u>, Volume 9,
          Number 2, 1959-60.

Ivins, W.M., Jr., <u>Art and Geometry: a study in space intuitions</u>. New
          York, Dover, 1964.

Kepes, Gyorgy (Ed.), <u>The New Landscape in Art and Science</u>. Chicago, Paul
          Theobald and Co., 1956.

Kepes, Gyorgy (Ed.), <u>The Nature of Art and Motion</u>. New York, George
          Braziller, 1965.

Kepes, Gyorgy (Ed.), <u>Sign, Image, Symbol</u>. New York, George Braziller, 1966.

Kracauer, Siegfried, <u>Theory of Film: the redemption of physical reality</u>.
          New York, Oxford University Press, 1960.

Langer, Suzanne K. (Ed.), <u>Reflections on Art: a source book of writings</u>
        <u>by artists, critics and philosophers</u>. Baltimore, John
        Hopkins Press, 1958.

<u>Manas</u>, Volume XXII, Number 9, February 26th, 1969. Los Angeles.

Matoré, Georges, "Existential Space", <u>Landscape</u>, Volume 15, Number 3,
        Spring 1966.

McGuire, Diane K., "Last Year at Marienbad", <u>Landscape</u>, Volume 15,
        Number 1, Autumn 1965.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain, <u>Last Year at Marienbad</u>. Text for the film by Alain
        Resnais, translated R. Howard, New York, Grove Press, 1962.

Schaeffer, F.K., "Exceptionalism in Geography: A Methodological Examination",
        <u>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</u>, Volume XLIII,
        1953, pp. 226-49.

Smith, Joel, "Art as a Vision". Department of Communications, Simon Fraser
        University, 1969 (unpublished).

Stephenson, R., and Debrix, R.J., <u>The Cinema as Art</u>. Penguin Books, 1965.

Taylor, John R., <u>Cinema Eye, Cinema Ear: some key film-makers of the</u>
        <u>sixties</u>. New York, Hill and Wang, 1964.

Truffaut, François, <u>Jules et Jim</u>. Translated Nicholas Fry, New York,
        Modern Film Scripts Series, Simon and Schuster, 1968.

White, Leslie A., <u>The Science of Culture: a study of man and civilisation</u>.
        New York, Grove Press, 1949.

Wild, John, <u>The Challenge of Existentialism</u>. Bloomington and London,
        Indiana University Press, 1955.

HENRY JAMES:

CRITIC IN EXILE

An Extended Essay

Presented to

The Department of Geography

Simon Fraser University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Peter James Hugill

February 1970

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The novels of Henry James provide us with a set of insights into the thoughts of one of the nineteenth century's most perspicacious social critics. Special emphasis is given here to his criticisms of both the society of North America in the late nineteenth century and to the most complex product of that society, the city. James' view of the city was not, however, a view of the city as merely a concrete object: he saw the city for what it was, the product of society, and he saw that society as, ultimately, the product of the interactions of the numerous individuals of which it was comprised. This is a view which modern critics of the North American city have all too frequently failed to adopt. Urban problems are not simple, nor are they given to simplistic solutions: if they are the product of societal disorders then only the repair of those disorders can provide a solution. James understood, intuitively, that societal disorders are possessed of complex causes, complex if for no other reason than that society comprises a vast number of individual people who do not necessarily think or act alike. Perhaps more than any other novelist of his time James built his novels around this understanding and in so doing arrived at a more complete understanding of North American society and its problems than have many of its more recent critics. A study of the social criticism of Henry James is, therefore, much more than a study of the ideas of one man: it is a suggestion that we should not ignore relevant social criticisms intuitively arrived at merely because they do not agree with the Methodological viewpoint presently prevalent in Geography. It is hoped that this paper will indicate

just how penetrating the social criticisms of so "unscientific" an observer as a novelist can be.

I would like to thank Len Evenden of the Department of Geography for tolerating this paper in its original form and Evan Alderson of the Department of English for his many constructive criticisms on the topic. Without these latter I am sure that my interpretation of the mind of Henry James would have been considerably less valid.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the most vexing geographical tasks has always been the
attempt to reconstruct past landscapes. The search for geographical
"objectivity" has almost invariably prevented more than either the
production of the vast regional monographs of the past or the sterile
statistical analyses so popular in recent years. Neither of these
techniques enables us to more than partially establish the character of
any specific past landscape. This is not to say that the character of
the landscape has been inevitably ignored: the best of the regional
monographs heeded Hettner's comments on the "wesen" of an area; [1] other
scholars, such as Sir Francis Younghusband, Banse and Volz, went much
further. [2] Nevertheless such methods of study, although resurrected from
time to time, have tended to remain geographic loose-ends. Yet there is
existing, in readily available form, a vast body of literature dealing
continually with the character of man's environment and with his relation-
ships with that part of it of which he is conscious. Whether specifically
or generically all novelists must and do deal with this problem: this
aspect of literature the geographer has consistently ignored.

---

[1] Hartshorne, p. 160.

[2] Ibid., p. 218-9.

In many ways the novel provides the most comprehensive survey of historical events, social habits and customs prevalent at the point in time at which the novel in question was written. The sample is one which is highly biased: it is, after all, provided by a deliberately subjective observer with, usually, preconceived ideas. Nontheless this apparent fault may be turned to considerable advantage. There is no question of false objectivity: the recorded observations can be immediately accepted as highly subjective and their interpretation begun from that premise.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century a tremendous quantity of adverse criticism of the North American city began to be generated by the rapacious expansion of the great metropolitan areas. Foremost among the urban critics of the day were many American novelists, and foremost among these was one of the great masters of American literature, Henry James. To discuss all of James' comments on the American way of life at the turn of the century in a paper of this, or indeed of any, length would be a total impossibility. To consider even his urban criticism with any degree of comprehensiveness would be almost equally tedious. The intention of this paper is to deal with the major aspects of social criticism present in some of his more important works. These themes will, by means of specific examples, be presented in the generally urban setting in which James originally developed them.

CHAPTER 2

HENRY JAMES AND HIS ERA

A. A brief early biography

Born in 1843, Henry James was the son of a well-to-do Boston
family. Much of his upbringing was in Europe; his indulgent father
discouraging local attachments. Whilst in the U.S.A. the James family
oscillated back and forth between Boston and New York, owing allegiance
to neither. By this time, however, James was already fastidious in his
aesthetic outlook, made so by intimate contact with the world's great
cities.

> "The capitals in Jamesian geography, extending
> from the new world to the old, were Boston and New
> York, London, Paris and Rome. Florence and Venice
> were way stations."   (3)

This background coupled with an early predilection towards the
study of human nature made James'

> "particular landscape .... that of the affluent and
> civilised humans who visited these places."   (4)

The formative years of James' life which were passed in New
England must not, however, be skimmed over merely because documentation
concerning them is inadequate. The early social history of that area was
illuminated from within by a tremendous drive to present the world with a
new humanity, set free from the caste barriers and poverty of Europe, which

---

(3)
    Edel, p. 13.

(4)
    Loc.cit.

would return to the mother countries only for plunder to further the cultural development of New England. Despite the considerable amount of time the James family spent in Europe some of this idealism must have rubbed off onto the young Henry on those occasions when his family was in contact with the Bostonian social scene. Equally the failure of this idealism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as money replaced all other North American gods must have considerably disheartened the novelist, as well as reinforcing his growing apprehensions concerning the course of civilisation on the northern part of the continent.

As early as 1858, at the age of 15, James evinced a strong distaste for removing himself from the European social scene to visit the U.S.A. with his parents: in 1867, for example, he found Cambridge, Massachusetts, "about as lively as the inner sepulchre". (5) In 1869 and again in 1872 he left his family in New England and returned to Europe.

> "to show whether his pen could accomplish -- what
> it had failed to do in America -- give him freedom
> and independence, the sense of being footloose and
> unattached, and above all self-possessed." (6)

At this stage in his career James was, in fact, firmly of the opinion that he was unable to write effectively of North American affairs. In 1871 he went so far as to state that

> "to write well and worthily of American things one
> need even more than elsewhere be a master. But
> unfortunately one is less." (7)

---

(5)
  Holder, p. 20.

(6)
  Loc.cit.

(7)
  in a letter to Charles Elliot Norton, quoted in Matthiesen, p. ix.

James therefore saw little future for himself at this point in his life should he remain in North America. Coupled with his strongly expressed consideration that the capacity to respond to things European was "almost the strongest American characteristic" [8] and his retrogressive criticisms of "our crude and garish climate", "our silent past", and "our deafening present" [9] his permanent departure for London in 1875 comes as no great surprise. As an artist specialising in the social scene the U.S.A. could only be disadvantageous to him.

B. The increasingly urban society

The century 1790 to 1890 was a crucial one in the urban history of North America. During this period the total population of the U.S.A. increased 16 fold whilst the urban population was multiplied by a factor of 139. This tremendously unbalanced growth was naturally much reflected in the thoughts of nineteenth century American philosophers, academics and writers in general. James was a product of that growth. He was a product of a newly and overwhelmingly urban society and he was thoroughly at home in it. Being an offspring of the new order did not, however, blind him to its faults, but equally it did not lead to his following blindly, as did so many of his less penetrating contemporaries and literary colleagues, what has been called the

---

[8]
    in a letter to Henry Harland, quoted in Jefferson, p. 41.

[9]
    quoted in Jefferson, p. 66.

> "powerful tradition of anti-urbanism in the
> history of American thought."   (10)

The great novelist, by virtue of both first hand observation
and a comprehensive understanding of the social structure of the North
American city, saw that institution's faults with considerable clarity.
These faults were not those or urbanism as a way of life but rather faults
of a society that had led to the particular brand of urbanism embodied in
the North American city. They were, essentially, faults in a "genre de
vie".

Nearly all of James' characters are distinctly urban, usually
of the leisured class; from the evidence of his novels he cared little for
things rural. In any case, the wilderness and the farm

> "have left only a peculiar blankness on the faces
> of his characters".   (11)

One aspect of James' peculiar genius may therefore be taken to
be this recognition of the increasingly urban nature of the late nineteenth
century North American way of life and the essential dangers inherent in
that urbanisation. James was conscious of the dangers of a destructively
exploitative society many decades before such consciousness has become
fashionable. It is both interesting and instructive to speculate as to
whether James' lack of recognition in the U.S.A., especially during the
early part of his career, was any reflection on the refusal of the society

---

(10)
> White (1962), p. 15. Typical among such anti-urbanists are Herman
> Melville, Edgar Allen Poe, Henry Adams and William Dean Howells. Even
> stronger pro-rural statements can be found in Mark Twain and, more
> recently, in the novels of John Steinbeck. The message is always the
> same; the city is "unnatural"; the "true America" lies in the soil.
> Non-literary examples may be found in the work of Schlesinger and in
> review and bibliographic articles by Glaab and Lampard.

(11)
> Dupee, p. 144.

of that time to recognise and remedy its shortcomings.

When compared with James other literary critics of the North American city have displayed an almost total lack of recognition of the true nature of urban problems. Silas Lapham, in William Dean Howells' novel of the businessman's rise to fame and fortune, is treated with considerable sympathy by the author, a treatment not afforded any business-man so intent on accumulating money in the novels of Henry James. Such writers as Howells tended to criticise effect rather than cause: they related faithfully the dangers they saw, but the dangers filled them with dread since they understood neither cause nor remedy. Henry James was, in fact, the first commentator upon the American scene to put forward a holistic view of the situation, or to attempt a solution. Whereas earlier critics saw urban villains in terms of black and white, James neither exaggerates emotions nor insists upon sensation and in so doing presents a critical picture much closer to reality.

C. Approaches to the City

Much adverse criticism has been levelled at James based on the argument that he never lived in the North American city and could not therefore presume to judge it. Whilst we may agree with Anselm Strauss that

> "Not only does the city dweller develop a
> sentiment of place gradually, but it is extremely
> difficult for him even to visualise the physical
> organisation of his city, and, even more, to make
> sense of its cross-currents of activity. Apparently
> an invariable characteristic of city life is that
> certain stylised and symbolic means must be resorted
> to in order to "see" the city." (12)

---

(12)
    Strauss, p. 6.

and that

> "The city, as a whole, is inaccessible to the
> imagination unless it can be reduced and
> simplified,"   (13)

this does not negate James' comments on the North American city. He was

not, in fact, directly concerned with urbanism as such: his method of

ordering and stylising the city was by means of a study of social class.

All his novels are basically concerned with studies of societal conflict:

they are concerned with "manners"; how people behave in specific situations.

The social groupings of American cities in the nineteenth century were

notably less rigid, especially in terms of the elite, than those of the

European and James, seeking for some permanence in his troubled personal

world, could hardly have been expected to approve. Throughout his life he

was to rationalise this, especially after his visit to the U.S.A. in 1904,

but it is upon this underlying theme of lack of social rigidity, based on

his personal fears, that most of his criticisms of North America are built.

To consider for a moment why James preferred the European to the

American city

> "one wants to object that life in American cities
> is over-organised. But when we speak of excessive
> organisation we are actually thinking of a kind of
> ordering of life, not of a degree; the quality of
> organisation, not its extent. The institutional-
> isation of life in a city can stuftify but it can
> also vitalise; it can enslave but it can also
> liberate. When freedom, spontaneity and creativity
> are the object, the problem is one of institutions
> and organisation -- not how much but how."   (14)

---

(13)
   Ibid., p. 8.

(14)
   Haworth, p. 36.

James, valuing "freedom, spontaneity and creativity", found London society far better institutionalised to his purpose than that of New York, Boston, or even Paris, hence his decision to settle there. Even so James' main value, as previously indicated, was stability. To him, as to Haworth, the

> "institution bestows its resources upon him,
> enabling him to grow through his specific mode
> of participation". (15)

London contained

> "a large number of people, in good "society" and
> out, who would rather pursue interesting inquiries
> in human nature than play the strenuous part". (16)

Yet, at certain times, James could disapprove. When London exhibited those traits of social selfishness he abhorred so much in the North American city, as for example at Victoria's Jubilee, he made his distaste known. As far as artists are concerned, however, nowhere did he ever consider the American city was an adequate habitat, since to James the artist needs moral and mental detachment,

> "the freedom from practical obligations which
> will compromise his work, the freedom from
> intellectual and social ties which will obscure
> his vision". (17)

Within the context of the U.S.A. James spoke of the great adventure of a society expanding into the world, yet, in virtual contradiction to this, he was fascinated by the baronial state of society where the poor and declassed exist solely in relation to the rich and well born. For this reason

---

(15)
     Ibid., p. 37.

(16)
     Dupee, p. 35.

(17)

"he saw only limited parts of the human comedy in
America, but he saw with a remarkably trained and
tenacious eye"

presenting details of immense accuracy, but

"only in so far as they bear upon the action".   (18)

Unfortunately one of James' great idols was Balzac and he felt challenged

by the

"intensity of Balzac's provincial town"

and hampered by his own failure to

"find in his rapidly changing America anything like
the fixed solidarity of French manners and customs
to base his own work upon".   (19)

The lack of permanence in North American urban society of the

late nineteenth century James found very much to his dislike. His attitude

might be summed up as being, in this respect, close to that of a more recent

urban critic.

"The American community which is being talked of so
often, and so profoundly, is essentially super-
ficial and highly mobile. Provided that only a
certain homogeneity of social class and income can
be maintained, American communities can be
disassembled and reconstituted about as readily as
freight trains."   (20)

In delving into the reasons for such superficiality James appears

to have come up with two main causes. Easy money and the rise of the

nouveau riche comprise one, misdirected sexuality provides the other. North

---

(18)
　　Matthiessen, p. xiii.

(19)
　　Ibid., p. ix.

(20)
　　Starr, p. 35. This critic makes the same mistake, however, for which
James is constantly criticising North American society: that of
equating social class and income. Once again it is a criticism of
effect rather than cause.

American attitudes to both topics were, in James' lifetime, almost equally juvenile.

> "Most moderately well-brought up Americans
> were told as children that only the vulgar
> discuss money; they did not know how much money
> their parents had or earned, an innocence that
> had the natural effect of making dollars as
> interesting as sex, and as little understood". (21)

Both of these attitudes of James' stem from his own background. He had adequate independent means and thereby learned to despise the nouveau riche, the group from which he considered all the urban problems that he saw emanated. His opposition to the cause of feminism, so obvious in a novel such as The Bostonians, and his personal avoidance of lasting female contacts throughout his life, are more vexatious questions. It is certainly ironic that the voyeuristic attitude towards money for which James so condemned the nouveau riche should be so similar to his own personal attitude towards sex. It has been considered that James'

> "whole view of sex and love was on the oral,
> infantile, pre-oedipal and pre-sexual level.
> His own attitude .... was .... consistently
> that of the pubescent (at best) voyeur, 'spying
> out' the hidden, mysterious, and ultimately
> sinful, area of 'adult intimacy'." (22)

This may then be taken as at least a partial explanation of the nature of the world represented in James' novels. It is one inhabited very largely by women and it is these females who largely control the course of most of his books. Whilst his own personal life of drawing-room tea parties and social calling during daylight hours may be taken as in some

---

(21)
    Ibid., p. 53.

(22)
    Geismar, p. 358.

part the reason for this concentration James appears to see women as a
threat to his beloved safety and security. His male characters are, when
they are involved in the business world, "divorced" from their wives or
lovers by it: the city, as the seat of busines activity, has symbolically
castrated them.

For these reasons James represents the North American nouveau
riche in a permanent context of social disaster, not merely in their
surface inability to obey the rules of etiquette, but in situations in
which one person's attitude or rules collide with those of another or of a
community. His nouveau riche characters are well in the tradition of
"American helplessness". (23) He is preaching his continuous message that
money only belongs in the hands of those who know how to use it; the
leisured rich with inherited wealth.

If sex and money are both so closely related in the context of
American innocence it is hardly surprising that James, especially after
his 1904 visit, should become so obsessed with money: it must be looked
upon as representing his unconscious obsession with sex. Whereas before
money had been merely an element in high society (James' "up-town"), now
it was the "searing blight" of the down-town. In his last short story,
"A Round of Visits", James puts forward a "hero" who may be taken as
embodying the nearest overt recognition by the author of his own subconscious
mind. The "hero"

> "has something -- some secret sorrow, trouble,
> fault -- to tell and can't find the recipient". (24)

---

(23)
    Jefferson, p. 94.

(24)
    Matthiessen, p. xxiv.

Is this James himself, encountering in his search for a sympathetic listener only an appeal "more pitiful than his own"? James certainly never found any respite in the North American city and may be identifying himself with the work-worn American male: the "appeal more pitiful than his own". The end of this story shows widespread corruption seeping into the "up-town"; the corruption of "cataclysmic" money, to borrow a phrase from Jane Jacobs. To James this was to be the death of the American city, its heartlessness and violence metaphorically summed up by the confusion felt by the hero of the tale when he steps into his hotel lobby from the cold of a New York winter. James,

> "contrasting a heavy blizzard with the heavy
> heat of the luxury hotel, so that it was only a
> step from the Tropics to the Pole",   (25)

leaves us with little doubt of his disapproval of the contrasts and conflicts of the new social order.

---

(25)
    Loc.cit.

CHAPTER 3

ASPECTS OF JAMES' VIEWS ON THE CITY

As has been previously indicated James was not opposed to the
city as such but rather to the new materialism of North American society.
He was in many ways an appalling intellectual snob, disliking "democracy"
not on political but on social and aesthetic grounds. He saw it, as
applied in the U.S.A., as encouraging a monotony of social type, a
reluctance to engage in self criticism and, above all, a gregarious
passion for the public and communal. This was, of course, a direct threat
to his personal privacy and social stability.

Early in his literary career James began to develop the themes
he would substantially adhere to for the rest of his life. As early as
1870 he commented on the lack of men in the city, asking

> "but where were the men? Alas, back in the city
> offices condemned by the American scheme of life
> to toil for the money to support their wives in
> elegant society".

(26)

This early part of his career also saw the commencement of his
interest in the "American Girl" typified by Daisy Miller, heroine of the
novel bearing the same name which was published in 1879. Eventually James
was to combine these two themes and show the corrupting effect a surplus
of money and a lack of men would have on the innocence of the "Daisy Miller"
type. By the end of the decade James was therefore embarking upon the
production of what literary critics have termed the "Social" novels.

---

(26)
    quoted in Kelley, p. 121.

A. The exiled critic: the example of The Bostonians

The Bostonians, a novel hinging upon its urban setting, was James' first attempt at a "naturalistic" novel. First published in 1886 it conjures up brilliant social scenes in the typically New England urban context of Boston and represents the author's new role. He had become a

> "detached, sensitive, ironic, visiting observer of
> the American city, and within the range of his
> interests described some manifestations of urban
> growth with stirring accuracy and intense dismay
> at its social effects".   (27)

In The Bostonians James studies almost exclusively the upper and upper middle social classes, or those aspiring to similar status. It is this concentration which makes it worthy of both our further attention and a careful consideration of those few mentions which are made of the lower classes. Much of the novel is concerned with the women's reform movement, headed by one Olive Chancellor, and the conflicts of social class which result in that lady's personal failure to "control" her friend, Verena Tarrant. The ironic failure of the reform movement to communicate with the women of the lower classes, and it is they who are intended to benefit by Olive Chancellor's crusade, is well summed up in her unspoken thought that such women

> "cared far more about Charlie .... in a white
> overcoat and a paper collar .... than about the
> ballot".   (28)

---

(27)
  White (1962), p. 101. In fact he criticised the Boston social scene to such good effect that the novel was a critical failure on the North American market!

(28)
  James (1886), p. 28. "Charlie" was, of course, the mythical urban male.

Olive meets Verena Tarrant at a reform meeting and immediately
takes a liking to her on the grounds that she is in tune with the "people".
To Olive this

> "threw her into the social dusk of that mysterious
> democracy which Miss Chancellor held that the
> fortunate classes know so little about, and with
> which (in a future possibly very near) they will
> have to count".   (29)

Olive "adopts" Verena in an attempt to prove, both to herself and
others, her interest in the "people". In other words Verena is a sop to
Olive's conscience: as the latter says of herself

> "She ... was nothing of a sybarite, and she
> had proved, visiting the alleys and slums of
> Boston in the service of the Associated Charities,
> that there was no foulness or disease or misery
> she feared to look in the face; but her house had
> always been thoroughly well regulated, she was
> passionately clean, and she was an excellent woman
> of business."   (30)

Such a statement rather gives the lie to her initial disclaimer:
contacts with the lower classes are all very well when awaiting her return
home are

> "the refreshment of a pretty house .... an imported
> tea service, a Chickering piano and the Deutsche
> Rundschau".   (31)

As a self-appointed champion of the "people" Olive does, perhaps,
recognise that she needs them to ensure her own continuing importance. She
sees in them at least one great virtue: they lack vulgarity, something she
despises above all else.

---

(29)
        Ibid., p. 67.

(30)
        Ibid., p. 148.

(31)
        Ibid., p. 153.

him because he works for his living as a newspaper reporter; he is not his
own man.[35]

Apart from Matthias, who is lower or lower middle class because he works, there are only two real members of the lower classes in the novel. Verena's father, Selah Tarrant, and a policeman who crops up in the closing pages of the book, during the confusion attending the preliminaries to Verena's first public speaking engagement at the Boston Music Hall. Selah and the policeman form an interesting contrast. On the one hand James gives us Selah, made to appear a fool after Olive has bribed him to let her assume command of his daughter's life, corrupted by the money Olive has given him. On the other hand he gives us

"A robust policeman, in his helmet and brass
buttons"[36]

refusing to let Basil Ransom, Verena's eventual fiance, into the Hall to see Verena; yet who passes,

"without the slightest prejudice to his firmness,
into a sociable, gossiping phase".[37]

Selah is eternally uneasy in his role as father to the genius of Verena. He is especially confused by Olive:

---

(35)
A similar situation arose in a previous novel, Washington Square, first published in 1880. Morris, suitor to Catherine Sloper, attempts to go into business for himself so that he can aspire to the same social class as Catherine's father, Doctor Sloper. Only in this way can he avoid the degredation of working for somebody since he has no inherited wealth. Matthias, fortunately, is not similarly obsessed since he does not recognise Verena as of a superior class.

(36)
James (1886), p. 363.

(37)
Ibid., p. 365.

> "he had never met anyone so much in earnest as
> this definite, literal young woman ... He
> hardly knew in what language to speak to her".　　　(38)

Where Selah is confused the policeman is quite at ease, his mind untroubled by the "goings on" of the upper classes.

In terms of their implications of James' own views, however, none of these lower class characters matches the importance of Basil Ransom. The Bostonians shows an upper class in its moment of decay and how, when such decay begins, retrenchment will take place. The vehicle of that retrenchment in this novel is Basil Ransom. "Born to the prospect of a fortune"（39）, Basil is uncorrupted by money and even though he loses all such prospects in the ruin of his family during the Civil War he is not degraded, nor does he lose his innocence.（40）　It is this innocence which enables him to maintain his sanity in a world of changing social values. These changes result in Verena's mother, the well-born Mrs. Tarrant, becoming slowly insane as Selah, her low-born husband, drags her lower and lower on the social scale. Basil is capable of resisting this, largely because his

> "conception of vice was purely as a series of
> special cases, of explicable accidents".　　　(41)

---

(38)
　　Ibid., p. 141.

(39)
　　Ibid., p. 271.

(40)
　　Witness, for example on page 159, the unscheduled departure for Europe
　　of his business partner, complete with all the business funds!

(41)
　　Ibid., p. 15.

Even though he admits to a life of

> "much Bohemianism -- he drank beer, in New York,
> in cellars, knew no ladies, and was familiar with
> a 'variety' actress"   (42)

- at all times he remains the gentleman. It is significant that Basil,
coming from a plantation family of the South, is far less of an urban
character than any other in the book. It is notable that his greatest
strength emerges at the little town of Marmion, where Olive takes Verena
to get her away from Basil, and whence Basil pursues her to plead his case.
Marmion

> "was a town where you smelt the breath of the hay
> in the streets and you might gather blackberries
> in the principal square".   (43)

Here Basil "takes" Verena from Olive in a direct fight, gaining
his strength from the reality of the country, its closer connection with
life, and the consequent escape from the enervating effect that city
society, represented by Olive, is having upon Verena's character. Basil
is seen as a type

> "whose criticism of modern civilisation is rooted
> in traditionalist principles"   (44)

and it is this distinctly non-urban trait which helps keep him strong.

---

(42)
    Loc.cit..

(43)
    Ibid., p. 300.

(44)
    Philip Rahv, on p. ix. of the introduction to the Signet Classics
paperback edition of The Bostonians.

In many ways The Bostonians is a study of what happens to people
when they lose their life-myths. Without a rationale to order their
existence they begin to crack up under the strain. The primary and
ancillary sets of characters suffer like fates. Miss Birdseye, the "grand"
old lady of the reform movement, lapses into total anomie and dies.
Verena's parents become corrupted by the hard cash Olive feeds them to
relinquish their daughter and with which they still fail to repair their
failing social fortunes. The Burrages, a nouveau riche family dabbling
in the reform movement for social purposes, change their social colours as
often as does a chameleon, and for the same reasons. Only Basil Ransom,
heir to an older way of life, survives. In forcing Verena to accept his
own personal myth he saves her from a life of either total ineffectualness,
the fate of Miss Birdseye, or of increasing lack of meaning and ultimate
disillusionment, the fate James projects for Olive now she has lost both
Miss Birdseye and Verena. To extend this chain of reasoning one link
farther Basil, because his way of life is based on solid and proven ground,
however "outdated" his ideas may be, because, in other words, he is not of
the city, is the only person in the book who is able to avoid the corrupting
influences of the new order as James saw them being realised in the city.
Basil, by resisting the concepts of a social order based on money, by
resisting the moves towards female domination of the city, by resisting
newness and change, avoids the increasing social anomie that accompanies
the progressive abandonment of the old myths and the adoption of the new.
Unfortunately James does not tell us what price Basil will have to pay
for the firmness of his retrenchment, although he does indicate, at the
very close of the novel, that Verena is unlikely ever to be happy in her
"new" role.

B. The 1904 visit

If the "Social" novels saw James as a "detached, sensitive, ironic, visiting observer", the shock of his 1904 visit was to change all that. Whereas in 1883 he had commented that New York was

> "altogether an extraordinary growing, swarming,
> glittering, pushing, chattering, good-natured,
> cosmopolitan place, and perhaps in some way the
> best imitation of Paris that can be found (yet
> with a great originality of its own)" (45)

in 1904 he found the city showing

> "all the signs of the heaped industrial battle-
> field, all the sounds and silences, grim, pushing,
> trudging silences too, of the universal will to
> move -- to move, move, move, as an end in itself,
> an appetite at any price". (46)

James felt himself at a gross disadvantage in the city. He realised early that the "downtown" was the key to its workings, but his upbringing and education had left the door to the business world a closed mystery. He could, however, comprehend the "up-town", but whereas in his childhood the "up-town" had been a comparatively well-peopled social area, it was now so different he could hardly recognise it. Now James indicated how alone he felt there;

> "alone I mean with the music masters and French
> pastry-cooks, the ladies and the children --
> immensely present and immensely numerous these,
> but testifying with a collective voice to the
> extraordinary absence (save as pieced together
> through a thousand gaps and indirectness) of a
> serious male interest". (47)

---

(45)
      quoted in White (1962), p. 94. James' comparison of New York with
      Paris was not, however, necessarily favourable -- he found Parisian
      society stultifying.

(46)
      James (1907), p. 84.

His 1904 visit brought grave doubts as to the future of North American society.

> "What bothered him about America was that so
> booming a civilization, capable of the greatest
> things, was addressed so markedly to material ends."   (48)

The U.S.A. had neither enlarged nor enriched her capacity for leisure: her main aim seemed to him simply to allow her population

> "to make so much money that you won't, that you
> don't 'mind', don't mind anything ...."   (49)

To James this attitude was palpably wrong. The possession of money should have done no more than allow the possessor to forget the necessity for it and to thereby indulge in

> "an untroubled awareness of beauty".   (50)

Money had not done this to American society: instead it corrupted it by becoming its sole god. In his 1904 visit he saw that corruption striking firmly at one of his most well developed characters, the American girl so well personified by Daisy Miller. In the short story "Crapy Cornelia" James gives us the nouveau riche American female. To underline this new role he contrasts the

> "comforting, dusky restfulness of Cornelia Rasch"

with the

> "gleam, glare and hard dazzle that always surrounds
> Mrs. Worthingham".   (51)

---

(48)
Edel, p. 37.

(49)
quoted in Holder, p. 27.

(50)
Dupee, p. 85.

(51)
Matthiessen, p. XXII.

The diamond-like character of Mrs. Worthingham underlines her wealth that must be ostentatiously exploited, a wealth thrust upon her and her peers by the absence of the male.

In *The Ivory Tower* James sums up this transformation by his character sketch of the town of Newport. He had found it transformed from his own pleasant memories of it in 1860, a transformation he symbolises by comparing it to "a little, bare, white, open hand" suddenly crammed full of gold, a quiet Eighteenth Century town transformed by a "vast, florid, nondescript excrescence" of new villas. Whereas the old social elite had been

> "united through their feeling for art and their sense of Europe" (52)

the new elite are as drab as their villas are florid, as if they had poured all their life into their ornament. The vulgar nouveau riche woman wants

> "everyone for something so much more than something for everyone"; (53)

her male partner is a

> "sponge of saturation in the surrounding medium". (54)

One senses his regret for the replacement of the well-rounded gentleman with the narrow specialist. There is the millionaire, Mr. Gaw,

> "incapable of thought save in the sublimities of arithmetic (for) money was his life" (55)

---

(52)
    Ibid., p. XV.

(53)
    quoted in White (1962), p. 99.

(54)
    Loc.cit..

(55)
    Loc.cit..

and, more ominously, there is his lawyer

> "whose mind was so full of perfect nests or bags
> of other facts, leaving no room in their inter-
> stices for mere appreciation to turn around ...
> They so covered the ground of his consciousness
> to the remotest edge that no breath of air either
> of his own mind or of anyone else's could have
> pretended to circulate about them".   (56)

This almost Orwellian figure was James' prophecy of what was to be, of the age of superbly efficient specialists whose minds are so well trained that they can see no further than the next specialised problem they are fitted to deal with. It is to be hoped that Orwell's own prophecies of what has yet to come are somewhat less accurate.

James' 1904 visit brought further development of yet another branch of his criticism of North American life: its gross lack of any aesthetic quality. This was of course, as it still is, much more notice-able in urban areas than in rural, if for no other reason than the mere concentration of unpleasant configurations that assault our every sense. In his short tale "The Jolly Corner" James puts the case against the city from exactly this point of view. The hero, Spencer Brydon, has just returned to the U.S.A. after an absence of 23 years only to find that

> "Proportions and values were upside-down; the
> ugly things he had expected, the ugly things of his
> far-away youth, when he had too promptly waked up
> to a sense of the ugly -- these uncanny phenomena
> placed him rather, as it were, under the charm;
> whereas the 'swagger' things, the modern the monstrous,,
> the famous things, those he had more particularly,
> like thousands of ingenuous admirers every year,
> come over to see, were exactly his sources of
> dismay."   (57)

---

(56)
    Loc.cit..

(57)
    Fadiman, p. 604.

"The Jolly Corner" is in many ways an enquiry into the workings
of Spencer Brydon's mind, the complexity of which James indicates in his
description of the inside of the old house that Spencer Brydon's family had
inhabited for three generations. The inside of the house is, of course,
the inside of Spencer Brydon's mind and it contains a ghost, the ghost of
Spencer Brydon's alter ego; the person he might well have been had he
remained in North America and not left for Europe as a young man. This
ghost Spencer Brydon is afraid of; he cannot bear the thought of encount-
ering it. He wanders through the house (in effect through his mind) until
he penetrates to the top, where he is most afraid of encountering his alter
ego. Notably he does not find him there: the encounter, when it finally
comes, is at the bottom of the stairs. Brydon spends much of his time in
the house leaning over the back stairs, looking down, searching for his
might-have-been. Yet it is he and his world which survives after his
encounter with the ghost because his is the more real world, the more
alive. James underlines this for us by his use of location within the
house: at the top of the house Brydon is safe, his alter ego lurks only
at the bottom of his mind, in the submerged part of his past.

This alter ego Brydon has no compulsion in destroying. His
encounter convinces him that this alternative self is

"evil, odious, blatant and vulgar". (58)

Whereas before the encounter he has been sentimental about his
family house and unwilling to redevelop the site, after it he can only
welcome its imminent demolition. Unable to find food for his aestheticism

---

(58)
    Ibid., p. 635.

in the new New York, even in that place which should have been so rich in
memories, his old family home, Brydon rejects North American urban society.

> "Had they ever, he asked himself, the hard-
> faced houses, which had begun to look vivid in
> the dim dawn, had they ever spoken so little to
> any need of his spirit? Great builded voids,
> great crowded stillnesses put on, often, in the
> heart of cities, for the small hours, a sort of
> sinister mark".   (59)

Many urban critics have taken Spencer Brydon as being James'
representation of himself and his outlet for his personal opinions. This
is not exactly true. James had many comparable sensitivities but he does
not fully condone the character he created in Brydon. Brydon is merely the
mouthpiece for the many people who are unable to "get on" with the city
on almost purely aesthetic grounds. James' own opinions went much deeper
than this and Brydon can therefore be taken as an only partial representa-
tion of James' own feelings. Nor is such a criticism of the city unique
to Spencer Brydon in James' works: Dr Sloper of Washington Square and
Basil Ransom of The Bostonians encounter similar aesthetic problems in
their urban environments; Spencer Brydon is merely the best developed of
James' characters with this specific sensibility.

---

(59)
    Ibid., p. 630.

C. Little men and domineering women

James saw the role of the woman in North American society change markedly over the last half of the nineteenth century; it is therefore hardly surprising that he should comment upon it so often. The men he saw as being symbolically castrated by business and the city, the women as being gradually corrupted by the money made available to them by their absent men. In the early novels his girls are of the "heedless Daisy Miller type" but they grow up rapidly into a girl

> "whose freedoms have caught up with her, who as a
> consequence of her mother's reckless divorces and
> her own un-supervised foolish engagements finds
> herself shut out from the correct marriage that,
> with her lack of money (from over-spending) she
> desperately needs".   (60)

It was not only money that James saw corrupting the North American woman: she also lacked sex. She was "so little married" that she came to monopolise society and thereby slowly assumed a male role.

> "The partial segregation of the sexes due to
> the male compulsion to overwork and the female
> monopoly of all cultural and social activity"   (61)

is to blame for this. In addition the assumption of the male role exposed the North American woman to the brutal, competitive drives of the city and business world and slowly began to involve her in it. As certain of James' women become more masculine he produces characters such as Olive Chancellor in The Bostonians, a self-willed, strong-minded spinster and feminist. The feminist movement was, as previously indicated, a notably urban one and it

---

(60)
     Matthiessen, p. XXIII.

(61)
     Jefferson, p. 85.

can be no accident that Olive Chancellor, striving for political equality
with men, is cast as a lesbian, even though she herself appears unaware of
it and is convinced that her desire to dominate a young woman,

> "to make her live with her, to teach her to make
> speeches on women's rights, to prevent the
> eligible young Southerner from marrying her, is
> all ardor for the feminist cause".   (62)

With regard to money the North American woman is corrupted rather
by her substitution of money for sex than by money alone. The men produce
money in lieu of sex by their involvement in the city. The female role in
sex is traditionally regarded as "giving" and when money is substituted the
woman must spend to maintain the outgoing pattern. Mrs Westgate of "A New
England Winter" asserts that "An American woman who respects herself must
buy something every-day of her life". The implications are obvious!

As the tragedy unrolls the North American girl deteriorates.
Amy Foy in the play "The American Scene" produces perhaps the most telling
comments:

> "I loathe the American girls ... how can I do all
> the grace, all the interest, as I'm expected to?...
> Haven't I .... been too long abandoned and too much
> betrayed? Isn't it too late, and am I not, don't
> you think, practically lost?"   (63)

Abandoned by an American male preferring the office to the bedroom and
betrayed by the section of American womanhood adopting the male role, Amy
can hardly be blamed for pouring out her sense of defeat.

---

(62)
    Dupee, p. 168.

(63)
    quoted in Matthiessen, p. XXV.

By the publication of "A Round of Visits" James has transformed his older women into the quintessence of evil: they have become part of the

> "startling flora and fauna of the hotel lobby"   (64)

an oppressive, overheated jungle

> "where the plumaged women are still birds of
> prey."   (65)

The men become affected by this. They begin to value conservatism to the extreme. In The Europeans Mr. Acton decides not to marry the Baroness

> "who has proved such an upsetting element in the
> community"   (66)

and in the short story "A New England Winter" Florimond Daintry returns to Boston from Paris to feel that he is

> "in a city of women -- a country of women; as if
> there were a war and all the men were away."   (67)

Of course there is a war and the men are away fighting it. It is one being waged in the city; one of commerce and money making.

---

(64)
Ibid., p. XXIV.

(65)
Loc.cit..

(66)
Dupee, p. 168.

(67)
Jefferson, p. 75.

D. Architectural absurdities

To conclude a discussion of the major aspects of James' urban criticisms without reference to his comments on architecture would be a critical absurdity. James was notoriously sensitive to architecture, especially in its role as an index of cultural history, and reserved many of his most venomous asides for its numerous aesthetic failures in the North American city. About European cities James could write in a most humorous and lightheartedly approving manner. He extols the variety of types of scenery offered by London, both architectural and human, particularly mentioning railway stations and the bookstalls of W.H. Smith and Sons. To him such a bookstall was

> "a feature not to be missed in any enumeration of
> the charms of Paddington and Euston. It is a focus
> of warmth and light in the vast smoky cavern; it
> gives the idea that literature is a thing of
> splendour, of a dazzling essence, of infinite gas
> -- lit red and gold".   (68)

Literature symbolised as a pool of light in an intellectual darkness was bound to appeal to a mind of a literary bent, especially when it contained the implication of privacy and intellectual superiority. James found New York notably lacking in such pools of light.

In contrast to his European experiences James found public buildings in North America

> "too public, too open to penetration, devoid of
> a prohibited inner sanctum".   (69)

---

(68)
   quoted in Starr, p. 27.

(69)
   Holder, p. 30.

The element of surprise, the aesthetic presence as opposed to a valueless jumble, was what he missed. In 1878 he had written of New York that the streets were an

"endless rude channel, rich in incongruities"; (70)

Broadway in particular he found to suffer from a

"high coloured heterogeneous architecture" and an air of "brightness, newness, juvenility". (71)

The 1904 visit saw this impression very much reinforced over a much wider range of urban experiences. Indeed, of all the cities James visited during that tour, only Washington D.C. came away at all lightly on both aesthetic and commercial grounds, and then largely because of its unique lay-out.

"Clearly quite immeasurable, on American ground, the value of such an assertion of a town-type directly opposed to the unvarying American, and quite unique, on any ground, so organised a social indifference to the vulgar vociferous Market". (72)

Boston he did not find so alluring. Much of James own feeling towards the city is communicated through the character of Florimond Daintry, hero of "A New England Winter" and, like James himself, a person with aesthetic sensibilities returning to North America after a sojourn in Europe. Daintry finds his vision of the U.S.A.

---

(70)
    Jefferson, p. 59.

(71)
    Loc.cit..

(72)
    James (1907), pp. 341-2.

"benumbed by brown-stone fronts" (73)

superimposed on houses that were

"ancient in the sense of being 80 years old". (74)

Most horrible of all are the windows. Marshall Mcluhan has

pointed to windows as putting the world "in a frame" and thus conditioning

man's whole outlook on life (75) : James somewhat anticipated him.

"there was something terrible in the windows;
Florimond had forgotten how vast and clean they
were, and how, in their sculptured frames the
New England air seemed, like a zealous housewife,
to polish and preserve them ...." (76)

"The continuity of glass contributed a kind of
exposure, within and without, and gave the street
the appearance of an enormous corridor in which
the public and the private were familiar and
intermingled." (77)

The windows of Boston thus reflect the very essence of puritan

virtue. People must be seen to be virtuous -- so the public and the private

cannot be separated -- just as public buildings must be intensely public.

In other words people are "guilty" until they are seen to be "innocent" in

support of the old puritan adage that "where there's smoke there's fire".

But once again it was New York which claimed James' greatest

attention. The inhuman scale of the skyline of 1904 compared with that of

1878 horrified him. Whereas he had found it impressive on the approach by

sea he was soon to come to think of it as,

---

(73)
   Jefferson, p. 43.

(74)
   Matthiessen, p. X.

(75)
   McLuhan, p. 121.

(76)
   quoted in Jefferson, p. 61.

> "practically, a huge, continuous fifty-floored
> conspiracy against the very idea of the ancient
> graces".   (78)

The skyscraper he saw as the end product of the rampant commercialism that was destroying North American society. In "The Jolly Corner" Spencer Brydon, wondering what would have happened to him had he stayed in the U.S.A. and gone into business, comes to the conclusion that

> "If he had but stayed at home he would have
> anticipated the inventor of the skyscraper. If
> he had but stayed at home he would have discovered
> his genius in time really to start some new variety
> of awful architectural hare and run it till it
> burrowed in a gold-mine".   (79)

The vision of Trinity Church overshadowed by these first generation skyscrapers so affected James during his 1904 visit that he became finally convinced that the brand of commercial and industrial capitalism developing at this period in the U.S.A., disregarding completely the aesthetic and historical values that he held so dear, could only be detrimental to the North American way of life.

There is, perhaps, an additional reason for James' dislike of the skyscraper. The fantasy of North America's pioneering days; the exaggerated stories of the "wild west", had radically altered North American modes of thought. Characters such as Newman in The American had

> "seen tall stories grow taller without toppling
> over, and his imagination had learnt the trick
> of building straight and high".   (80)

---

(78)
    James (1907), p. 92.

(79)
    Fadiman, p. 607.

(80)
    quoted in Dupee, p. 146.

The implication is therefore that the skyscraper was a North American invention for no more reason than that Americans were more capable of conceiving of them. The underlying interpretation in Freudian terms is that James saw the skyscraper as the phallic symbol of North American maleness; a maleness imprisoned in the city and forced to express itself there, but which could never have been expressed without an underlying willingness to indulge in such tricks of the imagination, the product of a frontier heritage. Whilst such an interpretation may rely very heavily on Freud this cannot be taken as a necessarily severe criticism. Both James and Freud were products of the same era and exposed to the same environmental processes. In their own eyes, as in those of their contemporaries, their criticisms were valid for their time. Whilst hind sight may point out certain faults in their analyses, and whilst it must be accepted that their criticisms are not necessarily valid for environments in which the motivating forces have changed, or been changed, radically, they were physically present in the era about which they wrote and therefore more connected to it than we can ever be.

James appears to have felt hemmed in by this phallic growth. He felt particularly the lack of

> "quiet interspaces, always half the architectural
> battle",   (81)

and criticised severely the failure to make such a provision, occuring as it did purely on the grounds of expense. He was also depressed by the drabness of the new architecture which

---

(81)
         James (1907), p. 95.

> "can only afford lights, each light having a
> superlative value as an aid to the transaction
> of business and the conclusion of sharp
> bargains".   (82)

Although, as Mcluhan says, electric lighting

> "has brought into the cultural complex of the
> extensions of man in housing and city, an
> organic flexibility unknown in any other age"   (83)

this flexibility was certainly not exploited in the New York of 1904.

James saw the use of electricity in a very cynical light: the big

commerce and big industry of the city attracting business in rather the

same way as light is used to attract and destroy moths.

---

(82)
      Ibid., pp. 95-6.

(83)
      Mcluhan, p. 121.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Many people have criticised the North American city, each criticism

with a different final cause for its problems, each of them valid in its

own context, each of them equally dissatisfying. It is the old story of

the search for general causes, for "scientific laws", and of the dangers of

applying theories built up over individual cases as if they were such

overriding laws. Very few of these urban critics have borne in mind the

comments of a past generation.

As the Whites comment

> "he who would improve the American city can only
> profit by an awareness of what some of our greatest
> minds have said, felt and thought about one of the
> most conspicuous and most troubling features of our
> national life".   (84)

It is regrettable that they themselves do not adequately put into

practice their own maxim, at least where Henry James is concerned. His

target was American society in general and the degrading effects upon that

society of a naive belief in materialism and money as a cure for all

social evil.

James can be looked upon as a very biased observer and his

conclusions criticised on these grounds. Yet it was his very subjectivity

that allowed him to reach the conclusions he did; conclusions that have

been increasingly validated as time has worn on. Out of his 1904 visit

arose the conviction that materialism

---

(84)
　　　White (1961), p. 215.

> "was clearly going to be the music of the future
> -- that if people were but rich enough and
> furnished enough and fed enough, exercised and
> sanitated and manicured and generally advertised
> and made "knowing" enough .... all they had to do
> for civility was to take the amused ironic view
> of those who might be less initiated".   (85)

The materialism he saw as the product only of an unfeeling

exploitation of a country, its resources and its original inhabitants. It

is through the eyes of the latter that he himself speaks.

> "If I were one of your painted savages you
> have dispossessed .... it wouldn't be to you I
> should be looking in any degree for beauty or for
> charm. Beauty and charm would be for me in the
> solitude you have ravaged, and I should owe you my
> grudge for every disfigurement and every violence,
> for every wound with which you have caused the face
> of the land to bleed."   (86)

This vicious offence against all aesthetic sensibility was,

however, only one of the many observances James was to make concerning his

homeland after his 1904 visit. His recognition of the deep-rooted problems

of a nascent culture extended much further than the mere rape of a country.

The exploitative attitude to resources combined with a belief that

sufficient money could solve any conceivable social problem James saw as

producing, via a new materialism, an entirely new social order based solely

on wealth. James, through the medium of his novels, reasoned that this

new society could not succeed. He saw, as did few of his contemporaries,

that, instead of the equality the apologists of the materialistic system

---

(85)
>   quoted from "Crapy Cornelia" by Leon Edel on p. XX of the introduction
>   to the 1968 Rubert Hart-Davis edition of The American Scene.

(86)
>   James (1907), p. 463.

predicted, big business and big money would come increasingly to control society in all its aspects. He saw the decline of aesthetic standards as evidence of an increasing inhumanity in the social system, as an excuse for the multiplication of trivia, whether manufactured or mental, and as the ultimate cause of a decreasing pride in personal ability and achievement. Finally he saw the changing social order as a dangerous move towards a nouveau riche upper class with only a limited range of abilities, not noted amongst which was an ability to handle money in other than a business sense, and within which class women moved to a pre-eminence dangerous to what had previously been a man's world.

James may have been a considerable social and intellectual snob (87), he may have been grossly overweening in his criticism, but the fact remains that his vision of the future of North America has, with detail modifications, been more realised than not. This realisation has been especially true in the city, perhaps the greatest failure of the North American way of life. The impersonality of the new social order James saw as becoming overbearingly concentrated in the urban areas and it was this very impersonality with which he most concerned himself. However much he may have looked upon himself as a "special person" by virtue of his own too well developed sensibilities, he saw through to the sham of a way of life based only on materialistic values. The mediocrity

---

(87)
      as Matthiessen, p. XVI, points out, "James' standards for speech were too conservative and too aristocratic to meet the full needs of a varied democracy".

of it both obsessed and depressed him: North American life did not even
bear the distinction of ugliness, it was merely plain. [88] To cap it all
the city, which should have represented the greatest achievements of the
new order, was no more than a sham: it had

"plenty of vulgarity but too little coarseness"; [89]
in any aesthetic or social sense it did not "live".

---

[88]
"even nature, in the western world, has the peculiarity of seeming
rather crude and immature." Henry James, quoted in Dupee, p. 265.

[89]
quoted in Matthiessen, p. XIII.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dupee, F.W. (Ed.), The Question of Henry James: a collection of critical essays. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1945.

Edel, Leon, Henry James. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1960.

Fadiman, Clifton (Ed.), The Short Stories of Henry James. New York, Random House, 1945.

Geismar, Maxwell, Henry James and the Jacobites. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1963.

Glaab, C.N., "The Historian and the American City: a bibliographic survey". In Hauser, P.M., and Shore, L.E. (Eds.), The Study of Urbanisation. New York, Wiley, 1965.

Hartshorne, Richard, The Nature of Geography. American Association of Geographers, 1939. Reprinted 1961.

Haworth, Lawrence, The Good City. Indiana University Press, 1963.

Holder, Alan, Three Voyagers in Search of Europe: a study of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966.

Howells, William Dean, The Rise of Silas Lapham. Signet Classics paperback edition, 1963.

Jacobs, Jane, The Life and Death of Great American Cities. New York, Vintage Books, 1963.

James, Henry, Washington Square. First published 1880. Signet Classics paperback edition 1964.

_____, The Bostonians. First published 1886. Signet Classics paperback edition 1964.

_____, The American Scene. First published 1907. London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968.

Jefferson, D.W., Henry James and the Modern Reader. New York, St. Martins Press, 1964.

Kelley, C.P., The Early Development of Henry James. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1965.

Lampard, E., "American Historians and the Study of Urbanisation". American Historical Review, Vol. LXVII, No. 1, 1961, pp. 49-61.

Matthiessen, F.O. (Ed.), <u>The American Novels and Stories of Henry James</u>. New York, A. Knopf, 1947.

Mcluhan, Marshall, <u>Understanding Media: the extensions of man</u>. Signet paperback, 1966. First published 1964.

Schlesinger, A.M., <u>The Rise of the City, 1878-98</u>. New York, Macmillan, 1933.

Starr, R., <u>The Living End: the city and its critics</u>. New York, Howard McCann, 1966.

Strauss, Anselm, <u>Images of the American City</u>. Glencoe Free Press, 1961.

White, Morton, and White, Lucia, "The American Intellectual versus the American City" in Rodwin, L. (Ed.), <u>The Future Metropolis</u>. New York, George Braziller, 1961.

_____, <u>The Intellectual versus the City</u>. Mentor paperback, 1964. First published 1962.

Ziff, Larzer, <u>The American 1890's: Life and Times of a Lost Generation</u>. New York, The Viking Press, 1966.