

6-3. Compare the idealist and utopian proposals for cities and communities made by architects to the paternalist strategies adopted by industrialists.

Industry, Utopia, and Modernity

Robert Campos

The aims of utopian modern architects are, upon close analysis, often difficult to distinguish from those of the industrialists—and by extension, the ruling classes—in whose service they frequently found themselves, despite whatever differences in rhetoric the two protagonists may have professed. Robin Evans describes the dynamic of “improvement” in the discourse of housing reform in Victorian England: “...two words, physical and moral, were as good as welded together in the literature of improvement” (95), and in the architecture of such figures as Henry Roberts and the reforming ideals of their patrons. Evans cites the progressive Henry Mayhew as the first of his contemporaries to clearly grasp the connection between morality and industry: “[r]eformed housing [to Mayhew] was not so much a reward for hard work as its necessary counterpart” (113).

Philanthropy’s “attack on domestic habits” (Evans 111) was first realized architecturally at the scale of the home, in the differentiation of rooms, installation of sanitary fixtures, establishment of thresholds, and limiting of communication channels. (Evans again, on p. 107: “Two critical divisions were sown into the plan; one between families and the other between the members of each family.”) In her chapter “Factory as Model: Early Versions”, Gillian Darley traces the parallel operation played out at the scale of the factory, and—if such a distinction can even be made in these examples—the city. And here, again paralleling the domestic example, relations between industry and nature, factory and city, worker and manager, and worker and worker would be realized spatially.

Darley quotes the *architect* Ledoux (not the industrialist or political patron behind the project) on the design principles underpinning his Royal Saltworks at Chaux, completed 1778, on the necessity “...to conform to the needs and conveniences of a productive factory where the utilization of time offers a first economy” (51). Note also the component of time introduced into the matrix of industrial control, made manifest in the ubiquitous factory clock (of which Darley notes an early example at the Le Creusot foundry, p. 41).

If Ledoux can be hardly be deemed utopian enough to complicate the idealist/paternalist duality, then consider the case of the Scotsman Robert Owen. As Darley makes clear, Owen’s New Lanark textile mill of 1816 was to be “the working exemplar of his utopian ‘New System of Society’ as laid out in his *A New View of Society* (1813)” (56). Owen’s industrial system was remarkable in its day for outlawing the employment of children and insisting on the education of adult workers’ children. At the same time, “silent monitors” observed production outputs, curfews imposed, and fines levied for moral transgressions.

In example after example, from Lowell and Saltaire to Cadbury and Bourneville—reaching its nadir in Pullman, and also in the quasi-Fourierist familisteres at Guise, the image of utopia and industry are as conflated as the protagonists of each ideal. Surely this state is symptomatic of the larger transformations taking place which we have come to call “modernity”. Consider the oft-cited first chapter of Marshall Berman’s *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*, “Goethe’s Faust: The Tragedy of Development”, in which Berman identifies Faust as a “culture hero” (borrowing Warren Sussman’s term?) for the modern age (38):

"One of the most original and fruitful ideals in Goethe’s *Faust* is the idea of an affinity between the cultural ideal of self-development and the real social movement toward economic development....The only way for modern man to transform himself...is by radically transforming the whole physical and social and moral world he lives in” (40).

Industry is the tool, and perhaps the only tool, which can realize these transformation. Berman’s Marxian analysis traces the underbelly of industrial utopia as a line from Goethe’s Faust and Baudelaire’s Paris to Robert Moses’s “meat-axe” through New York; Francesco Dal Co declares that the “criticism of ideology as a whole and, above all, the Marxian theory of value have demonstrated that utopia is ultimately not an alternative to the organization of the class struggle but a design for the orderly progress and possible planning and programming of productive forces” (149). In such a (unashamedly Tafurian) analysis, “utopians” are always on the side of “industrialists”, no matter what ideals they claim to represent.