**CRITICISM: The Architectural Press and the Public**

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The market for architectural services changed in the aftermath of the war. Legislation such as the Housing and Town Planning Act (1919) had transformed national and local government into patrons of architecture on a scale much larger than before. Private businesses and public utility societies were now starting to build again following the hiatus of building during the war. In this new market, architects were competing with speculative builders for the attention of these new patrons. Architects had to promote their expertise and specialist skills by new and more effective means. This meant exploring the potentials of public relations and advertising, which were developing as industries in their own right in the burgeoning consumer culture of the 1920s.

The media landscape in Britain was also changing rapidly; the British Broadcasting Company expanded the potential audience for discussions of all types of culture, including architecture. This commercialisation of architecture and changing media was coupled with the changing civic and democratic culture of Britain; citizenship had been redefined following the extension of the Representation of the People Act in 1918 and new government departments like the Ministry of Health were changing the relationship between the government and the people. The new patrons, new competitors, new media outlets and new conceptions of who constituted an ‘architectural public’, meant that architecture as a profession and as a discipline had to present itself to a new audience. The ‘architectural public’ comprised the people involved in making decisions about architecture and construction, namely government officials and municipal authorities involved in public works as well as private business patrons and speculative developers. This fundamental shift in architectural practice and professionalism was evident in the design of new homes, civic centres and commercial offices, but it was also present in the changing form and content of architectural magazines.

The challenge facing the profession was how to speak to this new audience about architecture; how to make architecture relevant, even interesting; how to make it intelligible; how to change people’s perspectives and ideas about architecture and thereby about architects? Editors, journalists and critics helped to both frame and answer these questions.[[1]](#footnote-1) By the 1920s there were numerous professional publications relating to architecture and building. In Hugh Casson’s account of architectural journalism, written in 1948, he named *The Builder*, *The RIBA Journal*, *The AA Journal*, *Architect and Building News*, *The Architect’s Journal* (*AJ*) and *The Architectural Review* (*AR*), as just a selection from hundreds of competing titles.[[2]](#footnote-2) Casson argued that *Architect and Building News* had been the most important periodical of the period between the world wars.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, this chapter is concerned with the *AJ* (weekly) and the *AR* (monthly), both titles produced by The Architectural Press publishing house. Building on their origins in the nineteenth century Arts and Crafts and wider design reform movement, this pair of magazines pursued a particular agenda during the 1920s, which reveals the evolving function of architectural publishing after the war.

The Architectural Press publishing house had a long association with advertising and promotion, which meant that it was particularly well positioned to respond to the new demands facing the architectural profession after the war. The company was owned jointly by Percy Hastings and Maurice Regan. Percy Hastings, had worked in advertising for Talbot Newspaper and Co, the original owners of the *AR*. When Talbot and Co went bust in 1900, Hastings was part of a syndicate that formed to buy up the publishing portfolio. The new company, called Technical Journals and Co, employed William Regan (Maurice Regan’s father) as a consultant to help with advertising and in 1907 he also became a shareholder in the company.[[4]](#footnote-4) By 1925 Technical Journals and Co had become The Architectural Press (AP) and that year Percy Hastings brought out one of the other shareholders to become joint owner with Maurice Regan. In 1926 Percy Hastings retired and passed the joint-chairmanship to his son, Hubert De Cronin Hastings. In the same year, De Cronin Hastings began editing the Supplement section in the *AR*. By 1927 he was editor of the entire magazine. In the AJ and the *AR* after the war, the editors and owners were developing a form of architectural criticism that aimed to interpret and promote architecture for a lay public reader.

Existing histories of the *AR* are largely focused on the period after 1927 when De Cronin Hastings was editor and the magazine became known for its innovative layouts and photography and its overt promotion of modern architecture.[[5]](#footnote-5) This periodisation is typical of the broader historiography of modern architecture in Britain, which posits 1927 as a ‘turning point.’[[6]](#footnote-6) However, in the years prior the magazine was changing in ways that reveal the shifting relationship between the press and the profession.[[7]](#footnote-7) The *AR* in the 1920s was experimenting with not only what architectural criticism could be but perhaps more profoundly to whom it should be addressed.

Starting with a series of adverts produced by Dawnay and Sons (an engineering firm) and evolving into editorials and experiments in styles of writing about architecture, the *AR* was exploring ways in which the profession could engage with the architectural public and persuade them of their expertise. Even if these magazines continued to be read predominantly by architects, their editors and critics were increasingly preoccupied with how to write about architecture for lay readers.[[8]](#footnote-8) The magazines’ editors were asking not only who should judge architecture, but also what methods of judgement should be employed, and indeed to what ends.

The magazine was joined in this endeavour by other organisations concerned with engaging public audiences in architecture and culture more broadly, namely the BBC and The Architecture Club. Tracing the evolution of architectural criticism on the pages of the AR and AJ throughout the 1920s, the chapter reveals the shifting priorities of editors, writers, designers and manufacturers, bringing to the fore the increasing role of promotion and advertising in architectural culture and practice.[[9]](#footnote-9) Between 1920 and 1927 the *AR* explored the function of architectural criticism as a means of promoting architecture to public audiences. This chapter will explore how architectural criticism evolved during this period as a means of both promoting the expertise of architects and as a tool to cultivate engaged public audiences who could understand and appreciate the work of architects.

**The history of *The Architectural Review* and public engagement with architecture**

In April 1920, the news and comment page of the *AR* reproduced extracts of an article by architect and educator, William Richard Lethaby, one of the more prominent advocates for the Arts and Crafts Movement in the early twentieth century, under the heading ‘Pedantry and Punditry’.[[10]](#footnote-10) Lethaby was at this time heavily involved in the Design and Industries Association (DIA) and concerned with promoting ‘decency, cleanliness, order’ and ‘fitness’ in design and architecture.[[11]](#footnote-11) Lethaby’s original article (which had been a talk given at the launch of the DIA) had been published the previous month in the *London Mercury*, which was a monthly publication concerned with the arts, edited by J.C. Squire. Through Squire, the *London Mercury* had a growing link with architecture; in 1922 he founded the Architecture Club, discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The *London Mercury* was part of the growing media culture that was presenting architecture to the middle classes in Britain. The *AR*’s coverage of Lethaby’s article from the *London Mercury* signalled the links between the two publications and marked the beginning of the *AR*’s attention to writing about architecture for lay readers.

Lethaby’s article was a call for the public to judge architecture more actively. He implored his reader to ‘take notice of what he sees in the streets.’[[12]](#footnote-12) He argued that architecture had been mystified and isolated from the interest and understanding of ordinary people, it had been rarefied into realms of expertise and become a subject of ‘pedantry and punditry.’[[13]](#footnote-13) Without ordinary people who were interested in and had an intelligent appreciation of architecture, British civilisation would stagnate; so Lethaby demanded, for the sake of civilisation, that his readers ‘do not pass by in a contemplative dream, or suppose that it is an architectural mystery, but look and judge.’[[14]](#footnote-14) He implored the public to ask questions about the buildings around them, to ask ‘is it tidy, is it civilized, are these fit works for a proud nation?’[[15]](#footnote-15) This was a call for architectural criticism in the form of the public critically engaging with buildings. This issue of the public’s engagement with architecture and design had its roots in nineteenth century design reform campaigns but were being reimagined in the post-war context of civic reconstruction, growing consumer culture, and economic turmoil.

The Arts and Crafts movement, proselytized by William Morris and his followers, was based on the idea that design originated in the values and practices of society. From this perspective, Arts and Crafts proponents argued that industrialisation and mass production had eroded the values of honesty and unity and with it the standards of design and architecture. Morris and others, developing the tenets of Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin, looked to pre-industrial models of production as the basis of their utopian ideals for design. Through organisations such as the Art Workers’ Guild and the Arts and Craft Exhibition Society (both founded in the 1880s) artists, architects, designers, craftsmen and writers worked together to promote values such as the importance of function, truth to materials, and unity between the arts. In 1896, a new title –*The Architectural Review* – was published for the first time, intended as a magazine for the broad family of creatives and professionals involved in the ‘art of architecture.’ As the front page of the new magazine declared, it was for the ‘artist, archaeologist, designer and craftsman.’[[16]](#footnote-16)

Henry Wilson, the first editor of the AR, was a member of the Art Workers Guild (AWG) and he used the magazine as a vehicle to explore and promote the ideas and values of the Arts and Crafts. This link continued into the twentieth century as the magazine’s editorial board and then individual editors, were all drawn from the founders of the Art Workers Guild.[[17]](#footnote-17) In 1905 Mervyn Macartney was appointed editor and remained in post until 1921. Macartney was known for his Neo-Georgian architecture and was described his successor W.G. Newton as ‘looking upon architecture more as an art than a profession.’[[18]](#footnote-18) Macartney was replaced by Ernest Newton, who was joined by his son W.G. Newton.

Since its founding, the content and form of the *AR* had followed the changing discourses and agendas of design reform. After the war, the role of the press in architecture was shifting as the persuasive and promotional potential of publishing was embraced by the architectural profession. The *AR* had always been a site for debating and disseminating the ideas of its editors and contributors. In the 1920s it increasingly became a tool with which to engage the broader public in issues of design and architecture and to promote the architectural profession.

In 1915 the Design and Industries Association (DIA) was set up by a group of artists, architects and businessmen, with the agenda of applying the principles of the Art and Crafts movement to industrialised mass production.[[19]](#footnote-19) In doing so they planned to bolster the standards of Britain design and architecture.[[20]](#footnote-20) The working committee of the DIA met in the same building as the Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square in London, setting them firmly in the context of the Arts and Crafts, but with the new aim of embracing mass production and imbuing it with the values of good design. This meant that the DIA turned their attention to the retailers and consumers of design, as well as its manufacturers and producers.

In a speech to the DIA in 1915, Lethaby explained that the problem with previous attempts to improve design standards had been that they kept the designer, the manufacturers and the ‘purchasing public’ in ‘separate compartments.’[[21]](#footnote-21) Instead the DIA proposed much closer contact between the ‘several branches of production and distribution’.[[22]](#footnote-22) The press were tasked with explaining the DIA ‘aims and ideals’ to the public.[[23]](#footnote-23) Criticism, Lethaby explained, should be less concerned with the individual tastes of critics and more focused on the betterment of British industry.[[24]](#footnote-24) The DIA immediately established a programme of public promotion and education of consumers.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Neither Mervyn Macartney nor the Newtons were members of the DIA. However, throughout the 1920s the *AR* increasingly adopted what Michael Saler calls the DIA point of view.[[26]](#footnote-26) This meant that the editors of the magazine increasingly embraced their role of promoting the architectural profession for both commercial and civic interests. Other journalists such as Noel Carrington, John Gloag and Christopher Hussey, were also involved in this promotional work.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The architectural criticism that evolved on the pages of the *AR* in the 1920s ingeniously aligned the commercial interests of architects with lofty civic ideals. This overlap between advertising, publicity work and civic education was characteristic of British culture in the 1920s as public relations became an increasing part of the work of national and local government.[[28]](#footnote-28) Civil servants were preoccupied by the need to create a ‘well informed public opinion’ in the years after the war and they increasingly drew on the expertise of advertising and public relations professionals.[[29]](#footnote-29) In the *AR*, this overlap was revealed in the advertorials of Dawnay and Sons Ltd.

**Dawnay and Sons ‘Advertorials’**

Ten months after publishing the extracts from Lethaby’s *London Mercury* article, the *AR* published an advert from the constructional engineering company Dawnay and Sons (**Figure 1**). In this ad, the company signalled its intention to run a ‘series of announcements’ which would be ‘framed to interest the public in the architect’ and promote architect’s ‘professional services.’[[30]](#footnote-30) The series would ‘show clearly why it is as essential in building to have the services of the architect as in legal matters it is necessary to employ a lawyer.’[[31]](#footnote-31) The strategy behind Dawnay and Sons’ campaign differentiated their adverts from others featured in the *AR* at this time. The conventional mode of communication was a direct advertisement to architect-readers by manufacturers, construction companies and office suppliers. The Dawnay and Sons announcements also appealed directly to architects, but they positioned the company as the ‘champions’ of the architectural profession.

In the first advert Dawnay and Sons explained that they understood how important it was to promote architect’s expertise to the public but that architects, constrained by professional etiquette, may wish to avoid actively promoting themselves. This sentiment was echoed by Herbert Read in 1933.[[32]](#footnote-32) Writing about the formation of the group Unit One, Read described how artists and architects had to be ‘propagandists’ for their work but that it was ‘generally considered questionable taste for an artist to employ a publicity agent and openly advertise himself’.[[33]](#footnote-33) Over a decade earlier, sensible to these constraints, Dawnay and Sons had stepped in to advertise on behalf of architects.

Dawnay and Sons specialised in steelwork, a venerable business with a reputation for structural engineering.[[34]](#footnote-34) Before the war they had worked with Adams, Pearson and Holden, providing the steel work for Evelyn House Oxford Street; they were also well known for their work in aircraft and factory construction, particularly during the war. They were responsible for some of the finest aircraft buildings in the country as well as providing steelwork for some of the largest buildings in England including the Stock Exchange and the School of Hygiene in Bloomsbury, as well as many cinemas and theatres.[[35]](#footnote-35) The company – or perhaps more accurately, their advertising agents – recognised that Dawnay and Sons’ commercial interests were closely tied to the interests of architects: the more architects were commissioned, the more business potentially available to Dawnay and Sons.

The innovative advertising strategies suggest that Dawnay and Sons were working with an advertising agency, which were becoming ubiquitous in both commercial and none commercial fields during this period.[[36]](#footnote-36) There are no records of which agency the company worked with; it may have been a firm such as Godbolds Advertising Agency, who were advertising in aviation publications during this period (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**).[[37]](#footnote-37) Surviving examples of Dawnay and Sons adverts in *Flight* magazine between 1917-1918, show that the company were experimenting with their advertising techniques during the war (**Figure 4** and **Figure 5**). Between February 1917 and November 1918, the company ran a series of adverts each featuring a keyword such as Service or Specialisation, which described the company’s brand values. Although the adverts did mention the products that the company produced (standardised steel components for aircraft factory construction), their primary purpose was to promote the brand and position Dawnay and Sons as a source of expertise and authority.

In January 1920 a new advert appeared in a similar style (**Figure 6**), but this time Dawnay and Sons sought to engage their consumers directly, announcing; ‘our object is to ask you to write to us’. This was the same technique used in the announcements in the *AR* the following year (**Figure 1**), in which the text explained that the architect could aid in Dawnay and Son’s endeavour to engage the public with architecture and the services of architects, by cutting out the announcement and sending it to their clients. Alternatively, architects could send the names and addresses of their clients directly to Dawnay and Sons (whose address dominated the bottom third of each announcement) and they would send a copy of the magazine out to the client. This was of course also advertising for the *AR* itself, who described the announcements as ‘an enterprising and public spirited scheme.’[[38]](#footnote-38)

The ads referred to themselves as ‘announcements’, which reinforced the educational dimension of their content. However, there were more akin to what we would today refer to as an ‘advertorial’, being a combination of an advert and an editorial. In the series of fifteen, monthly advertorials (between March 1921 and January 1923) Dawnay and Sons directly addressed the architectural public of officials and others who could potentially commission an architect’s services. This was the public that the *AR* would discuss and experiment with writing for, over the coming years.

The advertorials offered the reader a basic introduction to the history of architecture in Britain. In the top corners of the double page spreads were rectangular sections entitled ‘What to Look For’, which contained illustrations of different historic architectural styles from Norman to Gothic and Renaissance. In the left-hand corner was an illustration of a building, sometimes with the name of the building and details of the architect below, underneath were the dates periodising the style. On the right-hand side, were drawings of particular details characteristic of that style, such as scalloped capitals for Norman architecture and vaulting for Gothic architecture. These sections were giving the public the basic tools with which to look at and understand buildings and the language to describe them.

The advertorials were also promoting architects as cultural and civic decision-makers and architecture as an object of national significance. The first three advertorials focussed on the practical understanding of what architects did and what they contributed. In the second, titled ‘To Build is Every Man’s Ambition’, the text explained that when a client first visited an architect, the client would quickly come to understand why the realisation of their ideals relied upon ‘the expert knowledge and trained vision of the architect.’[[39]](#footnote-39) It detailed the various technical and legal procedures that architects undertook in the process of designing and constructing a building, but above all emphasised that the architect turned a building ‘into something of worth, a thing of beauty.’[[40]](#footnote-40) The following month’s advertorial expanded this claim, stating that a ‘fine building is a national asset’, and concluding that

As the public find increasing pleasure and inspiration in fine Architecture, so will the debt of the community to architects be ever more highly appreciated.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The fourth advertorial emphasised the public contribution of architects. Entitled ‘The Architect and Public Health,’ the text explained that before the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 1919, architects had long been concerned with the issue of public health.[[42]](#footnote-42) The architect was a health specialist and was responsible for progress in issues pertaining to public health such as sanitation, ventilation, lighting, damp courses, size and proportions of dwellings.[[43]](#footnote-43) By comparing the work of architects to the newly established Ministry of Health, Dawnay and Sons were aligning architects with the concerns and priorities of the post-war society.

They were also pointing to the fact that architects (and Dawnay and Sons themselves) were increasingly involved in the work of government departments, most prominent among them Raymond Unwin who had been appointed chief architect of the Ministry of Health’s Housing Division.[[44]](#footnote-44) Dawnay and Sons had municipal connections; before his death in 1919 the company founder Archibald Davis Dawnay was Major of Wandsworth (1908-1919) and throughout the 1920s the company secured contracts with the government’s Office of Works, most notably the Wood Street telephone exchange completed in 1929.

The language of the advertorials cast architects and architecture in the light of national identity, citizenship and civic responsibility. In ‘The Architect and History,’ architecture was described as a measure of the debt nations owe to one another and that without architecture, civilisation and culture ‘would have been lower.’[[45]](#footnote-45) The language of nations allied together and of citizens serving the nation ran through all fifteen announcements, and borrowed from the language of the League of Nations, which was founded in January 1920. In the eighth advertorial, for instance, titled ‘Architecture and Citizenship’, architecture was described as a civic possession that created civic pride. Dawnay and Sons explained that the public recognition of architects and interest in architecture was in the national and global interest. In the final advertorial, they labelled the architect a public servant, whose important contribution should be recognised as such.

The Dawnay and Sons advertorials conflated the business interests of the construction company, the business interests of architects and civic importance of the ‘education’ of the public. Dawnay and Sons were blurring of the line between commercial and civic imperatives for public engagement with architecture. The advertorials were defining a way of writing about architecture that was based on interpreting, and thus promoting, the work of architects for a public readership. This type of architectural criticism had the dual task of promoting architects and educating the public. In the vein of the DIA and its antecedents in nineteenth-century design reform, the Dawnay and Sons advertorials approached the aesthetic and architectural education of the public in commercial terms, as an endeavour to produce more and better consumers for architecture.

The advertorials were an exploration of ways in which to present the work and expertise of architects to the public. The approach quickly began to move from the advertising pages of the *AR* onto its editorial pages as the magazine became increasingly concerned with setting the tone and content of writing about architecture for a public readership.

W.G. Newton, as editor of the *AR*, took up Lethaby’s call for the public to look at and judge the architecture surrounding them but Newton asked, what were the criteria for this judgement and how should it be arbitrated? Through these questions, Newton manoeuvred the *AR* into the position of mediator between the architectural profession and the public.

**Who is to judge? The responsibility of criticism.**

The June 1922 issue of the *AR* opened with an editorial titled ‘Taste in Architecture’ by W.G. Newton.[[46]](#footnote-46) It was ‘rare indeed’, Newton stated, to find ‘architectural taste among cultivated people.’[[47]](#footnote-47) These otherwise ‘cultivated people’ were not ‘without interests or opinions’ and were forthcoming with their opinions on literature, music or drama but they were hesitant and diffident in their thoughts about architecture. The problem was that people judged architecture according to their ‘individual preferences’, they did not use ‘principles of judgement.’[[48]](#footnote-48) This gulf of knowledge, language and perspective between architects and laymen – their different means and methods of judging architecture – resulted in a situation in which:

What the architect admires the layman dislikes. What the layman thinks wonderful, mysterious, the architect criticises as being not architecture but a masquerade of art.[[49]](#footnote-49)

Newton’s editorial puzzled over who was at fault in perpetuating this situation – whose judgement should be trusted, public or professional? He asked whether ‘the architect’ was ‘really speaking with authority or… expounding an esoteric and hardly intelligible tradition? Who is going to judge?’

The answer was the critic. Critics were needed to bridge the divide between architects and the cultivated laymen concerned with architecture. Newton condemned existing architectural criticism in architectural papers, which relied only on the expert criteria and was unintelligible to the layman; and he criticised the broader media for not discussing architecture at all. He wrote:

It is time that serious papers and reviews opened their pages to real architectural criticism, a criticism of plan and treatment with a full and sympathetic understanding of the problem to be solved. They have their critics of play and novel, poem and symphony, picture and statue; and the result is that people can talk and think intelligently about these subjects. Until there is some such machinery for the fusion and interplay of ideas and opinions on what has been called the Mistress Art, there must be in an exaggerated form this question of the diverse standpoint of layman and specialist, and architecture must remain, to its own undoing, what it seems to be now, a cult of almost Egyptian mystery.’[[50]](#footnote-50)

Newton was demanding a type of criticism that could explain and interpret architecture for the layman and could educate them in how to look at and how to judge architecture. A form of criticism that would equip the public to properly judge architecture. Newton was casting criticism as a means of explaining the work of architects, making it accessible and undoing a tyranny of taste that had limited the layman’s understanding and appreciation of architecture. In the same way as the Dawnay and Sons advertorials , Newton was aligning the commercial interests of architect’s promoting their expertise with the civic interests of educating the public for the cultural good of the nation. Newton explained that architecture was more than individual houses; that the building of public buildings is a public concern and the public currently did not feel enfranchised to discuss architecture. Just as the DIA had tasked the media with guiding the public in issues of design and architecture, Newton was arguing that critics should intervene to educate the public in how to judge architecture.

The *AR* was not alone in this call for enfranchising and engaging architectural criticism. In the same year as Newton’s editorial on taste and judgement in architecture, J.C. Squire, editor of the *London Mercury*, established The Architecture Club, with the express aim ‘to enlarge the public appreciation of good architecture and the allied arts.’[[51]](#footnote-51) The idea for the group was said to have originated from a conversation between Squire and the architect Oswald P. Milne who argued that ‘if architecture was to take its right place of importance in the modern world [architects] must tell people what they were doing and thinking both in the press and elsewhere.’[[52]](#footnote-52) The group was made up of ‘architects, writers and laymen’, people generally concerned with raising the cultural standards of Britain and of creating opportunities to promote ‘the best work of to-day’.[[53]](#footnote-53)

In August 1922 the AJ featured a two-page article about the new club. The *AJ* started by describing the current problem facing architecture, with details that echoed Newton’s editorial in the *AR* two months before; namely that the public lacked interest in or understanding of architecture. This lack of engagement was dangerous, the *AJ* explained, because ‘we get the kind of building that we as a community demand and deserve… it is only as the general public demands fine buildings, that we shall get dignified and worthy towns.’[[54]](#footnote-54) The poor condition of Britain’s architecture at the time, the AJ insisted, was not due to a lack of skill or willingness among architects but because of a lack of knowledge and engagement among the public. The solution was to ‘educate the public or the private owners or public bodies who control and commission building to have the strong desire for the knowledge of how to judge the best thing.’[[55]](#footnote-55) The *AJ*, like the *AR* and the Dawnay and Sons advertorials before it, were arguing that the press should be striving to cultivate a public that was capable of judging architecture. The tool with which to cultivate this public judgement, was architectural criticism.

This was where The Architecture Club was going to intervene. They aimed to create ‘a public opinion about architecture – an architectural atmosphere – by promoting the description and criticism of architecture in the press and by holding exhibitions of modern work.’[[56]](#footnote-56) The Club was said to be based on the Architecture League in New York and the circumstances of architecture in that city were what Squire and his colleagues were aiming to achieve in Britain; a situation in which

Every intelligent citizen knows the names of the architects and what buildings they have designed. Architecture is a common topic of conversation and the commercial magnates have realized that fine architecture is a commercial asset.[[57]](#footnote-57)

The Architecture Club was founded in the same year that the British Broadcasting Company was set up; initially a government-imposed obligation on a group of wireless manufacturers, in 1926 it would become the semi-public institution of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).[[58]](#footnote-58) The organisation embodied the combination of commercial concern and civic interests and the company pursued the duel aim of educating and entertaining its audiences. BBC programming discussed architecture from the beginning. The promotional and educational potential of mass broadcasting were increasingly recognised and businessmen and professionals, such as architects, were eager to experiment with these potentials. The activities of The Architecture Club and the beginnings of the BBC, as well as the writing in the architectural press, signalled a new type of culture in which critics and journalists mediated expertise and culture to a broader audience.[[59]](#footnote-59)

In 1924, W.G. Newton returned to the issue of architectural criticism. He wrote a series of articles in the *AR* entitled ‘The Bases of Criticism’. The series opened with Newton decrying the current tone and content of discussions of architecture in the popular press. He noted a recent article in the *Times Literary Supplement* in which the author accused modern architecture of becoming ‘subject to vanity.’[[60]](#footnote-60) Newton condemned this type of coverage, which did not engage with the complexity of architectural practice. Criticism should, he said:

Day after day, or month after month, say a little good about good things, and make each reader feel a little indignant, and also a little personally responsible for obviously bad things, then we shall feel that things are on the right lines.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The job of architectural criticism in this sense was not to critique the work of architects based on the taste of the critic, but to engage the public’s judgment or ‘conscience.’ Newton described how the press should be after:

The conscience of the citizen at large, so that he will at the lowest be intolerant of such planning muddles as the approach to Victoria Station… and that he may perhaps be so moved to open his eyes that he will help us, whose business it is to make new things about the country, to a better understanding of what we do.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Newton was describing the press, which Lethaby had also described in his speech for the DIA, as a tool to promote the work and expertise of architects and to cultivate a public that were engaged with architecture. In this context, the architectural profession had to provide a clear language for architectural criticism that would clarify the terms of criticism for other journalists and critics. Newton’s Bases of Criticism articles covered ‘expression of plan’, ‘expression of structure’, ‘style’, ‘paint and stucco’, ‘wealth of nations’, ‘golden treasures’ and aimed to clarify the terms of architectural criteria on which architecture could be judged.

The fifth article in the Bases of Criticism series returned to the question of taste. Newton warned against architects’ complacency even with the growing attention paid to architecture. He warned that while it might feel like the ‘propaganda is doing its work’ and the public’s taste was changing – ‘ more and more they like the things we like’ – there was still a long way to go until the public’s criteria for judging architecture aligned sufficiently with the expectations of architects.[[63]](#footnote-63) Newton argued that the vast majority of people still wanted ‘prettiness’, which meant decoration and ornament. The problem was that people were still focussed on details – as he had argued in the 1922 article. The aim of criticism therefore should be to persuade people that architecture is not prettiness, but a broader ‘handling of a material problem’ in a manner that satisfied the practical and emotional side of man.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Newton was still concerned by the disjuncture between architects and laymen and their judgement of architecture, he lamented, ‘why do we think good and right what our fellow citizen cannot sympathize with? Why does our gorge rise at the prettiness which they aim at and love?’[[65]](#footnote-65) In his caution over the effectiveness of its work so far, Newton still saw criticism as the means of bridging this gulf of ‘us’ and ‘them’, between architects and the public. Having started as the overt advertising and commercial branding in the Dawnay and Sons advertorials, Newton’s writings signalled that the promotion of architects’ expertise was now firmly the task of journalists and critics.

**The *AJ* Survey of Criticism and The *AR* Supplement**

Although by 1922 the *AR* were articulating a clear position on what criticism was and what it should do, there was by no means a consensus among the profession; the topic of the form and function of criticism was hotly debated. In 1926, the range of opinions on the subject were captured in a survey conducted by the *AJ*. The magazine sent out 300 questionnaires to members of the architectural profession. The responses were reported in two articles in May 1926 by the *AJ*’s editor, Christian Barman. Barman had joined the *AJ* in 1925, he had previously edited the journal of the Society of Architects and moved in circles with DIA members such as Jack Pritchard. Together with Hubert De Cronin Hastings, Christian Barman’s time at The Architectural Press was pivotal in the shift toward architectural criticism for an architectural public.

The main question in the *AJ*’s 1926 criticism survey, was whether architects should criticise each other’s work (anonymously or under their own names) in either the technical or the public press. 221 respondents were in favour of this type of criticism in the technical press, 187 in favour of it in the public press.[[66]](#footnote-66) Importantly, among those against criticism in any form was Mervyn McCartney, former editor of the *AR*, which explained the magazine’s shift towards criticism from 1921 onwards, after McCartney retired. In response to follow up questions asking whether that criticism should be praise or censure, 214 saw no distinction and 220 voted against limiting criticism to eulogising buildings (and avoiding critiquing their faults). While the survey returned an overwhelming majority in favour of architect’s critiquing each other’s work in public, the detail of the responses, which Barman explored in his two extended articles, revealed a more nuanced picture of varying definitions of architectural criticism and its purpose. Those who objected to architectural criticism in any form (47 respondents) were concerned for the solidarity and dignity of the profession. Barman acknowledged that ‘the public can have no confidence in experts who are continually wrangling amongst themselves.’[[67]](#footnote-67)

Other objections included the impossibility of perfection and an ‘unfriendly feeling’ among the profession. Even among those who supported architectural criticism there were questions over whether criticism should be paid and the professional etiquette that would govern it. There was a feeling that critics should be guided by their duty to the profession. Barman contended that the dignity and welfare of the profession would be served by criticism that aimed to ‘raise the profession in the public esteem.’[[68]](#footnote-68)

The questionnaire demonstrated a swell of support for the sort of criticism that acted as ‘interpreter’ for the public, which aimed to bolster public knowledge and engagement with architecture. In his second article reflecting on the responses to the criticism questionnaire, Berman noted that ‘this theory of criticism, in which the critic is regarded as an appreciative interpreter has gained many adherents of late’.[[69]](#footnote-69) Support for this ‘interpretative’ criticism rested on what Barman called the ‘national aspect,’ which referred to the public esteem and knowledge of both the profession and of architecture. Cowles Voysey summed up this perspective in his list the uses of criticism:

1. It helps to form a unified and generally accepted standard of judgement.
2. It stimulates public interest in architecture.
3. It gives architect and layman a sound knowledge of the principles of art.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Oswald P. Milne, echoed these points in his opinion that an important function of criticism should be ‘to get the public to realize the value of employing a competent architect rather than no architect at all.’[[71]](#footnote-71) Howard Robertson wrote that ‘in my opinion writing by architects on their subject is one of the best methods of interesting the public and eventually improving public taste’.[[72]](#footnote-72) This was the sort of criticism that W.G. Newton had been calling for in his editorials in the *AR*.

Sir Edwin Lutyens argued that ‘laymen possessed of the necessary architectural knowledge’ would produce ‘better, more impartial and more salutary criticism’ than architects themselves.[[73]](#footnote-73) Newton favoured critics like C.H. Reilly, whom he praised for writing in a manner that ‘will chime with the outlook of the ordinary citizen.’[[74]](#footnote-74) Reilly, who was a trained architect and head of the Liverpool School of Architecture, but no longer particularly active in practice, was for Newton, the ideal critic. He was knowledgeable but not in competition with fellow architects, he was an expert with a perspective and a language that could pique the interest of the public while maintaining the integrity of the subject. Whether it was delivered by architect-critics or knowledgeable laymen, the purpose of criticism was to interpret the work of architects and cultivate a public capable and willing to judge architecture.

This returned to the theme of judgement, which had been central to W.G. Newton’s writing in the *AR*. Berman quoted Eric Hayman who wrote that ‘criticism is neither praise nor censure but judgment.’[[75]](#footnote-75) This somewhat opaque statement was further explained by Mr H.V. Lanchester who said that criticism ‘need not involve the distinction of praise or censure, for it may be based on the interpretation of needs and the attitude of mind towards architectural developments.’[[76]](#footnote-76) Judgement in this sense meant an understanding of architecture, an appreciation of the reason for something rather than a designation of it being good or bad.

The *AR* was not adverse to publicly criticising architecture, but more often they favoured this form of interpretive criticism. In May 1926, the same month that Berman’s final report on the criticism inquiry was in the *AJ*, W.G. Newton was joined as editor of the *AR* by Hubert De Cronin Hastings. Son of Percy Hastings, De Cronin Hastings also became joint-chairman of The Architectural Press. Hastings had inherited his father’s concern for the commercial as well as the artistic agenda of the magazine. He was responsible for the *AR* Supplement, which was at the back of the magazine and contained the sections ‘Craftsmanship’, which showcased recent examples of designed objects and crafts, ‘Views and Reviews’, the reviews section and ‘A London Diary’ a news and comment section.

Under Hasting’s editorship the Supplement became the experimental space in the *AR*, exploring new styles of photography, graphics and layout and new types of writing. The first issue of Hasting’s supplement opened with a series titled ‘The Modern Movement in Continental Decoration’, in the Craftsmanship section.[[77]](#footnote-77) It was written by Phillip Morton Shand under the pseudonym ‘Silhouette’. Shand was not an architect, he was a journalist and author who had published widely on food and wine in the early 1920s. Influenced by the Architecture Club, he had become interested in writing about architecture and had published articles in *Architecture* and in the AJ before working at the *AR*. He was the epitome of the knowledgeable layman whom Lutyens had earlier described.

The first article of Shand’s series in the Supplement was called ‘The Evolution of the Ensemblier’ and it explored the influence of the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Moderne on interior design. In particular, Shand explored the role of the ‘Ensemblier’ who was a sort of design consultant that mediated between the client and craftsperson or designer. Shand’s article set the tone for the Supplement with its focus on how modernism had developed different forms of expertise and was shifting the relationships between professionals and their public clients.

The experiments with writing in the Supplement continued with Arthur Trystan Edwards’ series, ‘What the Building Said’. This series had first appeared in 1925 in *Architecture*, the journal of the Society of Architects edited by Berman. Hastings took it up for the AR and began publishing it in his second issue of the Supplement in June 1926. Trystan Edwards, a protégé of Reilly’s at Liverpool, had made early forays into journalism and criticism followed by service in the Housing Division of the Ministry of Health under Raymond Unwin. By the early 1920s he was an established voice in architecture and ‘civic design.’ His 1924 book *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* had established his particular form of criticism that conflated the art of manners’ and the ‘art of architecture’.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Neal Shasore has explored how in *Good and Bad Manners*, Trystan Edwards presented the language of good manners and of architectural politeness as the appropriate language of architectural criticism.[[79]](#footnote-79) It was this type of writing that he used for ‘What the Building Said’ in the *AR*. The articles were narrated conversations between buildings in London’s West End. For instance, the first instalment in the *AR* was called ‘Overheard in Regent Street.’[[80]](#footnote-80) This article had the Swan and Edgars Shop (described as an example of Regency Architecture) talking to the New Criterion building the Piccadilly hotel and Vigo House. Trystan Edwards was condemning these new buildings, which were replacing Nash’s original Regent Street designs, for their lack of architectural manners and this was expressed in the impolite tone and argumentative language of the exchanges that he narrated. For instance, this exchange between Vigo house, the Carrington and the new Quadrant:

At the moment of my arrival Vigo House was indulging in the pastime of explaining to its neighbours who it was and who they were, making rather odious comparisons.

“Please understand” said the new double domed structure, “that I am the only really modern building in Regent Street. I represent the last word in architectural design. Just look at my domes. Who has ever seen domes like that before? That is what I call originality. Whereas my predecessor only had one dome to form the focal point of the vista looking down the Quadrant, I have been generous and have provided two domes.”

“Are there two vistas now then?” piped Carrington’s the little Regency building opposite, “or are you thinking more of your own symmetry than of the composition of the street?” “Vista indeed” said the new Quadrant, “I with my little turret am the chief point of interest here.[[81]](#footnote-81)

These imaginary conversations between buildings were a way of presenting Trystan Edwards’s arguments about urbanity and architectural politeness in a manner that was engaging and intelligible to a lay readership. The ‘layman’ was also employed as a figure in criticism to ventriloquise the opinions of the critic. This series in the *AR* was serving two functions – one as an experiment in how to engage public readers with the issues of urban design and architectural manners and secondly, as a model for new, engaging and accessible ways that architects and critics could write about architectural topics for lay readers.

Both Morton Shand’s and Trystan Edwards’s series continued for several months as Hastings continued to shape the *AR* Supplement into a pioneering space for modern architecture and interpretive criticism in the magazine. In 1927 Hastings took over editorship of the AR from W.G. Newton, after which the style and tone of the Supplement began to spread into the rest of the magazine. Through their editorship of the *AR* and the *AJ*, Hastings and Berman answered W.G. Newton’s question of ‘who was to judge’ architecture: it would be the critics and journalists they commissioned to fill the columns of their magazines. The promotional agenda of the Dawnay and Sons announcements had evolved into the editorial agenda of the magazine; promoting the architectural profession was now a key function of the *AR*.

The Architectural Press, with owners who were attuned to the concerns of advertising (Hasting and Regan families), its historical links to the reforming agendas of the Arts and Crafts movement and the DIA, and its editors who were keen to embrace the new functions of journalism and criticism (W.G. Newton, Christian Berman and Hubert De Cronin Hastings), was particularly well equipped to adapt to the new context of architecture after the war. As such, the AR and the AJ evolved into sites for the promotion of the architectural profession. The particular form of ‘interpretive criticism’ that they pioneered in the 1920s became a defining characteristic of architectural journalism by the 1930s. This meant more broadly that these architectural magazines and other media organisations including the BBC and the work of The Architecture Club, were now bridging the gap between the profession and its publics.

In 1948, Hugh Casson, who was by that time one of the editors of the *AR*, described the three functions of the architectural magazine as being:

To record contemporary buildings as they are built and to provide the raw material of architectural history.

To provide technical information for the use of practising architects - thus acting as a loose-leaf reference book which is constantly brought up to date.

To provide space for the literary discussion of architecture and the allied arts.[[82]](#footnote-82)

However, the fourth function that Casson does not mention, was to publicise and promote the work and expertise of architects to the broader architectural public. This

interpretive criticism continued as editorial policy for the next two decades. Although Casson did not acknowledge it, the other editors were aware of the magazine’s role in engaging the public in issues of architecture. In 1947 they articulated the *AR*’s place alongside the BBC and Penguin publishers as a media outlet explaining architecture and culture to the broader public audience:

The Review has been alone in supplying undiluted ‘Third Programme’ for half a century, without asking for or without getting a single round of applause (like that given to BBC after just 13 weeks).[[83]](#footnote-83)

Architectural criticism as a means of defining, interpreting and promoting architect’s skills and cultivating a market from their services, was now an integral function of the magazine.

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