THE ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM OF ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of Ada Louise Huxtable's architectural criticism. Huxtable was the first full-time architecture critic on an American newspaper, and was recipient of the first Pulitzer Prize for distinguished criticism in 1970. There are three main objectives in this study: to analyze Huxtable's writing style, to illustrate how her criticism affected the everyday reader's attitudes toward architecture and the urban environment, and to provide a review of her career.

A brief literature review on this critic is provided. The method of study was to analyze Huxtable's work, found mainly in anthologies of her essays and in published interviews, to reveal her background and motives, writing style, message, legacy, and to provide a definition of good architectural criticism.

The conclusions of this study are that Huxtable was an integral force in the establishment of architectural criticism in the popular press, that she heightened the awareness of the public through her compelling writing style, and that she provided a benchmark for other architecture critics.

Suggestions for further study are also provided, including further study on critics who have been pioneers in their fields, and the influence of celebrity on architects and their designs.

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Thanks to Carol Holstead for her esteemed help on this project. Her belief in the importance of criticism made this work most enjoyable. Thanks to my parents for their endless faith in me. And lastly, thanks and love to my husband, Andrew, whose editing help and constant encouragement made this thesis a reality.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On a day in the late '50s, the publisher of the *New York Times*, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, is reported to have identified a deficiency in his paper of record. The *Times*, he said, spent too much time criticizing every "fourth-rate film or stage show that comes to town and doesn't last a week. But what about the permanent fixtures now going up all over this city that are going to last for decades?" Soon after bemoaning the *Times'* lack of voice, he found his remedy: Ada Louise Huxtable.[1]

Huxtable is the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist[2] whose architectural criticism graced—and in some cases scorched—the pages of the *Times* for two decades. She was the first full-time architecture critic on the *Times*,[3] and is generally credited with creating a new public awareness of architecture and the urban environment.

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[1]John B. Oakes, foreword to *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger*, by Ada Louise Huxtable (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986), 7.

[2] Huxtable was the second woman to win a Pulitzer at the *Times*, following Anne McCormick, who won her Pulitzer in 1937 for distinguished foreign correspondence. Nan Robertson, *The Girls in the Balcony* (New York: Random House, 1992), 18, 20.

[3] Huxtable is reported by Robertson, Critic Nancy Pear, and Huxtable herself to be the first full-time architecture critic on an American newspaper. This was verified by using the list of the 10 top U.S. newspapers from Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault, and Edwin Emery, *Introduction to Mass Communication*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 76-79, and referencing those papers' staffs in *Editor and Publisher 1963 International Yearbook*. No architecture critic was listed on any of the papers, which included the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the *Milwaukee Journal*, the

This thesis is a study of Huxtable's criticism in which I have three main objectives: to analyze her writing style, to illustrate how her criticism affected the everyday reader's attitudes toward architecture and the urban environment, and to provide a review of her career.

Huxtable said that good architecture can give us a sense of dignity, while bad architecture can destroy us.[4] In other words, people—even cities and societies[5]— are significantly affected by the buildings that surround them. Yet many people seem to prefer devoting their minimal surplus energy to preserving far-off endangered species rather than preserving the quality of their own urban environments. And while preserving the whales is noble, their own communities are becoming extinct. This unawareness, or complacency, has resulted in dead downtowns and uninspired and ubiquitous suburbs. It has resulted in a variety of social ills, including the lack of affordable and decent housing. Indeed, the importance of architectural criticism—and the watchdog—has long been underrated.

My personal interest in architecture began as a child in my mother's interior design firm. Surrounded by the architects who occupied the second floor of her shop, I developed a keen appreciation for the art. I also learned to love cities by traveling to Chicago, Toronto, and nearby Kansas

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Louisville Courier Journal, the *Chicago Daily News*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. The reason for Huxtable's omission is probably the abbreviated listing of staff the *Times* submitted. Most of the other papers' staffs were listed in detail. In 1966, the *Washington Post* claimed Wolf Von Eckardt as an architecture critic. His work is discussed in chapter three.

[4] Robert Campbell, "A Conversation With Ada Louise Huxtable: Part I," *Architectural Record*, April 1993, 43.

[5] Ada Louise Huxtable, *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986), 169.

City. The pulse of the neighborhoods in cities seemed to beat both quicker and smarter as compared to suburban environments I had observed.

After beginning graduate work in journalism, my interest in architecture was rewarded. In 1991, I worked in New York as an editorial intern for *Architectural Record*. It was the magazine's 100th anniversary that summer, and I spent many hours helping to accumulate critics' work from the past century as well as writing and copy editing current architectural critiques. I learned a great deal about the urban environment in New York and across the country. Thus, this thesis on Huxtable is a natural fit for me, as she represents two of my strong interests: journalism and architecture.

The power of Huxtable's writing, as well as the results it achieved, make for a complex and satisfying study. Yet despite her life-long contributions to both architectural awareness and journalism, very little has been written on this critic and her work. Besides a few scant biographies in books such as *Current Biographies*, and *Contemporary Authors*, there exist few sources on Huxtable's background, philosophy, motives, writing, and accomplishments. When asked to fill in the blanks, she respectfully declined my request for an interview, stating she prefers her work to speak for itself.

Despite this obstacle, I continued my work, focusing on what was available—for the most part, her books—many of which are compilations of essays from her years at the *Times*. The following is a list of Huxtable's books, in order of publication: *Pier Luigi Nervi* (1960); *Classic New York: Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance* (1964); *Will They Ever Finish*

Bruckner Boulevard? (1970); *Kicked a Building Lately?* (1976); *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered; The Search for a Skyscraper Style* (1984); and *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger* (1986).

I also found several key articles on Huxtable, including a series of interviews by *Boston Globe* architecture critic Robert Campbell, and passages in Nan Robertson's *The Girls in the Balcony*, which give more substantive information on Huxtable's upbringing. For the most part, however, I have concentrated on the hallmarks of Huxtable's style, the messages she invokes, and the results she achieved from her work.

The thesis is organized in six parts: The introduction is an explanation of the scope and objectives of the study. Chapter two focuses on Huxtable's background and career. Chapter three defines elements of good architectural criticism as evidenced by a wide range of writers. This definition also provides a reference point to Huxtable's work as comparison for those who have not had prior exposure to architectural criticism. Chapter four is an analysis of Huxtable's writing style, including mood, wit, structure, word choice, and devices. Chapter five highlights Huxtable's primary messages, including architectural awareness, preservation, invention, and future solutions. Chapter six projects the legacy of Huxtable as she and others perceive it.

CHAPTER 2

ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE: A SIGNIFICANT VOICE

More than anyone else, Ada Louise Huxtable has been credited as the journalist who created a new public awareness of the built environment. Her readers—who are as varied and numerous as the periodicals that feature her work—often come to her with little architectural experience in professional or scholarly arenas, and with few expectations for their own environments. Yet Huxtable has succeeded in opening her readers' eyes and minds to their shelters, and their places of work, worship, learning, and leisure.

She has won her readers with her engaging writing, which first began reaching mass audiences through the *New York Times* in 1963.[6] As a Pulitzer Prize-winning critic, she sought to raise her readers' level of awareness about the buildings that surrounded them and to influence political and social groups on preservation and environmental protection issues. She defined her role as an architecture critic as differing from criticism in any other field. The architecture critic, she said,

> hopes that something may testify to his efforts. He hopes that he may have taught someone to see. He would like to feel that there is just a chance that he may have changed some degree of practice, helped effect some shift in philosophical base, revised the climate of thought and

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[6] Nancy Pear, "Ada Louise Huxtable," *Contemporary Authors*, ed. Hal May, (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1987) 120: 178.

> feeling to some small extent or influenced public awareness to the point where the world those few years later may be a bit more in the image of the kind of life and environment for which he has fought his battle. He expects no miracles but he is an optimist with some fairly tough beliefs. In architecture and urbanism those beliefs must be based on history, art and humanism. They must have strong ties to modern sociology and technology. And they must be grounded in a knowledge of the past for the shifting present and the uncertain future.[7]

Huxtable's urban philosophy was influenced by her childhood experiences in New York City, where her creative and original expression was encouraged by her learned and somewhat eccentric family. Ada Louise Huxtable was born on March 14, 1921, in Manhattan. She was christened Ada "after two grandmothers and Louise after her father, Michael Louis Landman, a physician specializing in internal medicine and immunology."[8] John Canaday, a *New York Times* art critic, remembered Ada Louise's mother, Leah Rosenthal, as a beautiful woman who was "a walking candy box."[9] Huxtable could have been describing herself when she once called her mother "an intensely visual woman with an impeccable eye and an abhorrence of anything fake."[10] Her mother would have approved of a 1992 *New York Review of Books* article in which Huxtable analyzes the perversion of the phrase "authentic reproduction."[11]

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[7] Huxtable, 13.

[8] Nan Robertson, *The Girls in the Balcony* (New York: Random House, 1992), 127.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Robertson, 128.

[11] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Inventing American Reality," *New York Review of Books*, 3 December 1992, 24.

A lifetime New Yorker, Huxtable grew up in a Beaux-Arts building at 89th street and Central Park West. Its name—the St. Urbain—could not have been more fitting. Huxtable has been an urban advocate and a self-proclaimed lover of cities her whole life.[12] She once told Robert Campbell, architecture critic of the *Boston Globe*, that hers was a lonely—yet happy—childhood.

> I was that special New York thing—I don't think it exists anywhere else—the child as loner, taking advantage of everything that the city has to offer, and being very content and very happy in that aloneness . . . It was a different city, it was a safer city. As a very young person I was allowed to go across town to the Metropolitan Museum. Everything was free. To a young person of intense curiosity who loved all these things, it was all there and it was all available. It never occurred to me that there were people who didn't have it, who didn't grow up this way.[13]

Dr. Landman's love of art and literature influenced his daughter. His hobby was writing plays. His first, called *Pride of Race*, was about interracial marriage, and it shocked audiences when performed in pre-1920 New York. He died when Ada Louise was eleven years old.[14]

Huxtable attended public schools in New York. She edited the school newspaper at Wadleigh High School, Manhattan's high school of music and art,[15] although she once said, "Did I think of a journalism career? Never, not for a moment."[16]

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[12] Charles Moritz, ed., *Current Biography Yearbook 1973* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1974), 196.

[13] Robert Campbell, "A Conversation with Ada Louise Huxtable: Part II," *Architectural Record*, May 1993, 41.

[14] Robertson, 128.

While all her friends attended Ivy League schools, she chose to further her education in New York at Hunter College. It was at Hunter that Huxtable began to develop her inimitable writing style, which suffered the criticism of her professors—one of whom once told her to give up writing since she refused to comply with strict rules as to how her short stories should be structured.[17] But she persevered, and in 1941, Huxtable received an undergraduate degree in art, magna cum laude. She then took a position at Bloomingdale's in the furniture department, after winning the store's interior decorating contest.[18]

In the fall of 1941, she sold a chest of drawers for $49.95 to Leonard Garth Huxtable, a successful industrial designer. He asked her to dinner, but Ada Louise took him home first to meet her mother. They were engaged within a month. The Huxtables married just days shy of Ada Louise's 21st birthday in 1942. Her mother had to sign the marriage application, since Ada Louise had not quite reached the age of consent.[19]

Garth Huxtable went on to develop a distinguished career in the field of industrial design. He won distinction for a wide range of products, from tools for Sears to a café for the Metropolitan Opera to the china, and glassware still used at the Four Seasons. Theirs was a marriage of shared interests, philosophies, and cooperative efforts to support each other's

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[15] Moritz, 196.

[16] Robertson, 125.

[17] Ibid, 128.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid, 129.

careers. Garth took photos for Ada Louise's books. He encouraged her as she researched and wrote, evidenced by her frequent mentions of him and dedications in her books. They never had children. They had been married forty-seven years when Garth Huxtable died in 1989.[20]

Soon after the two were married in 1942, Ada Louise Huxtable began graduate study at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. Her interest in Italian nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture prompted a thesis proposal on the subject, which was rejected. She decided she would have to find another outlet for her interest and left without graduating.[21] In spite of that disappointment in graduate school, her research came to fruition in the early 1950s, when she won a Fulbright Fellowship to further her Italian studies. From her work in Italy, she later completed her first book, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, a monograph on the life and works of the Italian architect and engineer, published in 1960.[22]

Salvaging her early work for a book demonstrates Huxtable's persistence and the value she places on research. She wrote about her personal joy in research in the introduction to *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered*: "The insights come when the facts all come together; they are the wonderful reward for the sifting and searching of first-hand material—a process that has its own pleasures in unexpected discoveries and uncharted trips through time."[23]

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[20] Ibid, 129-130.

[21] Moritz, 196.

[22] Pear, 179.

In 1946, she became the Museum of Modern Art's assistant curator of architecture and design. She held the position through 1950, until she left with her Fulbright award to study in Italy. After returning home, she began freelance writing, contributing both to architectural magazines and others.[24]

1958 was a turning point in her career. Nan Robertson, who documented that era of the *New York Times* in her book *The Girls in the Balcony*, wrote that Aline Bernstein, an architecture reporter on the paper, introduced Huxtable to the intimidating editor Lester Markel.

> "I knew his reputation," Ada Louise said. "He was the king and the terror of the *Times*. I walked into his office, which appeared to be ninety feet long, with his desk at the other end." Now, Ada Louise may be small, but she has two fierce black eyes in that head of hers. Markel took one look at her and said, "What are you planning to do—hit me over the head with your book or your umbrella?" Round one for Ada Louise and the beginning of her career at the *Times*.[25]

She began contributing occasional articles to the *Times* Sunday magazine. She spent the rest of her time on freelance work, research, and writing, as well as on her book *Pier Luigi Nervi.*

After completing *Pier Luigi Nervi,* Huxtable took on a scholarly, six-volume series on the architecture of New York, which, she believed, would "'open the way to a more general appreciation of a wider range of the city's architecture, and to the kind of preservation that will make the

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[23] Ada Louise Huxtable, *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 5.

[24] Moritz, 196.

[25] Robertson, 129

past a proper part of the present and the future.'"[26] But instead of six volumes, she had time to write only one. *Classic New York* is a charming walking tour of Manhattan's historic buildings in styles ranging from Georgian to Greek.[27] In the preface, she explains her reasons for compiling the series:

> This is an effort to document the architecture of the city comprehensively (and view) the sum total of the buildings: the city's special flavor that derives from its architectural potpourri more than from the individual monument. This is "cityscape," and the quality, interest and variety of the New York cityscape, as well as the preservation of that quality, are my first concerns.[28]

By the time *Classic New York* was published in 1964, Huxtable was already functioning as the *New York Times'* first full-time architecture critic.[29] Nan Robertson writes that Iphigene Sulzberger, the only child of *Times* patriarch Adolph Ochs, wanted an architecture critic—and had Huxtable coaxed into the newspaper business. The assistant managing editor at the time, Clifton Daniel, had seen Huxtable's columns in the *Times* Sunday magazine, and he began to try to persuade her to join the paper on a daily basis. The paper's part-time critic, Aline Bernstein, a friend of Huxtable's, was quitting her job to marry architect Eero Saarinen and felt that her marriage would preclude her covering architecture

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[26] Pear, 179.

[27] Ada Louise Huxtable, *Classic New York: Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964).

[28] Huxtable, *Classic New York*, vii.

[29] Pear, 179.

without a conflict of interest.[30] This is how Robertson finishes the story of the *Times'* courtship of Huxtable:

> She (Aline Bernstein) recommended Huxtable. Daniel called her in. At first she turned him down, saying daily journalism would disrupt her private life. Daniel looked elsewhere, assiduously, but in his own words, 'I couldn't find anyone better than she was.' The second time he asked her, she said yes.[31]

Later, Pear reported that

> Huxtable could not ignore the enormous impact that newspaper writing could have in promoting viable urban architecture. "It's nonsense just to write scholarly papers for other scholars," she said in an interview for *House Beautiful.* "I'm not selling pretty or ugly buildings. I'm dealing with the environment."[32]

"Self-doubt and low self-esteem do not figure in (Huxtable's) psychological makeup," according to Robertson.[33] Yet Huxtable was not entirely comfortable at the outset of her new profession:

> There was no way to fit me into the journalistic framework. I was *sui generis.* I was like a creature from the moon. I had been trained as an historian, I had worked mostly for museums and specialized magazines. But I gained respect on the *Times* very quickly. I very quickly learned the trade. I had an excellent nose for news.[34]

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[30] Robertson, 126-127.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Pear, 179.

[33] Robertson, 127.

[34] Ibid.

And with that, she began the period of her life in which she made her greatest contribution to both the public's awareness of architecture and the future of the built environment. Her illustrious career with the *Times* spanned almost twenty years, a decade of which she served on the editorial board. She thought of herself as a work-a-day gadfly, hovering about city hall as well as doomed historical buildings all over the city: "What I really want to say in assembling these pieces is that, like Kilroy, Huxtable was here. They are a record of a continuing professional passion, of an occasional mitigating triumph in a job of unending frustration, a testament to involvement and, it is hoped, evidence of a vision."[35]

She wrote two books while at the *Times*. The first, *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*, a collection of her *Times'* columns, was published in 1970. This was the same year she received the first Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Criticism.[36] Critic Nancy Pear writes of *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*:

> well over half of the columns rail against speculative building, mindless design, and destruction of architectural treasures; in those years hers was a solitary voice in a wilderness of city administrators, accountants, and architects who sacrificed urban vitality to vote returns, balance sheets, and minimum standards.[37]

Her other book during her *Times* period was *Kicked a Building Lately?*, published in 1976. By this time, not only had most major

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[35] Huxtable, *Goodbye History*, 15.

[36] Pear, 179.

[37] Ibid.

metropolitan newspapers hired full-time architecture critics, but landmark conservation organizations were widespread. This book was decidedly more optimistic about the direction of American architectural design, and about the preservation of historic landmarks, than her first compilation.[38]

After being named a MacArthur Fellow in 1981, Huxtable left her position on the *New York Times* and immersed herself in writing and lecturing around the country. In 1982 she was a Hitchcock Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. From her lectures came another book, published in 1984, *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style.*

In 1986, Huxtable produced two books of essays: *Architecture Anyone?* and *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger.* The latter was the anthology that, according to Pear, "most clearly delineates the evolution of urban design in America."[39]

Huxtable's philosophy concerning architecture and the importance of architectural awareness centers on the individual and his relationship to the environment. The conduit for her philosophy is her electric writing style. Through it, Huxtable has been able to draw people to her criticism from all backgrounds, social circles, economic strata, and cultural traditions. She has captured many of her readers through her particularly compelling use of vocabulary, analogy, and metaphor. She knew that in order to teach people what their architectural entitlements were, she had to capture their attention. She gave them what they wanted: compelling

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

writing that incorporated nuances of gossip, slang, pop culture, and intrigue. The more people read her articles, the more they listened and the more they learned:

> See the 116-year-old historic house. See it being knocked down. See the hamburger stand in its place. Pow. America, of thee I sing; sweet land of Burger King.
>
> The house was Mapleside, built solidly of sandstone with the classical graces characteristic of the mid-19th century. It stood in Madison, Wisconsin, until it was bought and demolished by the hamburger chain, which professed to be ignorant of the building's aesthetic and historical worth. Last-minute attempts by preservationists to raise $100,000 to save it failed. Goodbye history, hello hamburger. From historic home to "home of the whopper" with a swing of the wrecker's ball.[40]

Her often scathing commentary was as amusing to New York as it was mortifying to the architects of the buildings she demolished with her words. For example, she was merciless in her disapproval of Edward Durell Stone's Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.:

> To say that everything else about a landmark structure of this stupefying size is irrelevant is nonsense. The emperor, unfortunately, is wearing clothes. And the world is looking . . . May all the performing arts flourish. Because the building is a national tragedy. It is a cross between a concrete candy box and a marble sarcophagus in which the art of architecture lies buried.[41]

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[40] Huxtable, *Goodbye History*, 62, 63.

[41] Ada Louise Huxtable, *Kicked a Building Lately?* (New York: Quadrangle/ The New York Times Book Company, 1976), 4, 5.

She felt a duty to share architecture with the people who used it and the people who created it, writing in a non-technical, interesting, approachable way. But Huxtable not only believed that architecture should be scrutinized by the public and not just academics, she thought people deserved better architecture than they were getting. She told *Boston Globe* architecture critic Robert Campbell that people just didn't realize they were "entitled to places that go beyond decency—and many of them are below even that level. Places where you can be enriched and grow and feel your own sense of self-worth developing. Architecture can help all that."[42]

She once said "there is no art as impermanent as architecture."[43] Her career, spent studying that impermanence, has produced an unparalleled record of what she termed "delights and disasters."[44] Looking back at her work while compiling a collection of articles for a book, she commented:

> It is a cheerful thought that (these columns) still read with some relevance, immediacy and even urgency. When I began writing I did not think in long terms; I was usually responding to today's crisis rather than considering tomorrow's perspective. I noted that the newspaper critic's work was of little lasting value, that traditionally today's words were good for wrapping tomorrow's fish. How gratifying to find that these articles make a coherent body of commentary, with a consistent philosophy, through which significant developments in planning and preservation, and even more significant developments in consciousness and judgment, can be traced and understood. It turns out to be, in fact, a kind of history—allying the event with values and

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[42] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part I," 44.

[43] Huxtable, *Will they Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 232.

[44] Huxtable, *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger: An Anthology of Architectural Delights and Disasters.*

attitudes. It can also be read as a nonstop drama, complete with heroes and villains and tragic chorus; there just is never any ending.[45]

[45] Ibid., 9, 10.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING ARCHITECTURAL CRITIQUE

A vaulted ceiling, an unusual staircase, a clerestory window—these and other physical qualities of a building come to mind upon hearing the word "architecture."

And while visual elements captivate from an aesthetic perspective, living or working in a building rends the exterior design and ornament secondary to factors like comfort, efficiency, building costs and energy consumption.

Thus, in fusing these separate ideals—function and design—architectural criticism, in its simplest form, provides a succinct surrogate view of a structure for readers who may never actually experience it. Reviews are often built around an architectural checklist that includes the basics of design, materials, style, location, community needs, cost, and historical placement.[46]

This checklist is evident in Benjamin Forgey's article "Redemptive Architecture."[47] In describing the new St. Mary's Catholic Church, built on

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[46]William Wayne Caudill, FAIA, William Merriweather Pena, FAIA, and Paul Kennon, FAIA, *Architecture and You* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1978), Table of Contents.

[47] Benjamin Forgey, "Redemptive Architecture: Two Churches, With Divine Settings," *Washington Post*, 21 December 1991, sec. F, p. 1.

the site of the seventeenth-century conversion of an Indian chief, Forgey praises its historical respect and its relationship to an adjacent, older church. He writes, "One can hardly pay a higher tribute to a new work of architecture than to say it improves everything around it."

But his article does not simply describe a charming building. Forgey takes into serious consideration the most important quality of architecture—that it "evokes a response which fulfills physical, emotional, and intellectual needs, effecting an enjoyable interaction between the person and the building."[48]

However, there is more to architectural criticism than interests the eye. Ada Louise Huxtable wrote: "Critics are not by nature existentialists; if they accepted things as they are, they would be in some other business. But only mock philosophers pretend to provide answers for the questions they raise; the purpose is to provoke thought and the possibility of solutions."[49]

Indeed, it is by provoking thought that Huxtable has succeeded in "consciousness-raising"— a style of criticism that offers stronger analysis of how architecture affects everyday lives. And although critics may argue that the primary goal of the architectural review is the delineation of space, form, and style, the better writers raise the very consciousness—and conscience—of their readers; they elevate their awareness of the relationship between themselves and their architectural environment.

The following examples illustrate Huxtable's definition of consciousness-raising criticism by providing key elements of reflection—

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[48] Caudill, Pena, and Kennon, 9.

[49] Huxtable, *Goodbye History,* 15.

reflections on lessons from the architectural past, American culture, personal space, and the relationship between architecture and a community's needs. The elements in these sample critiques are not exclusive—Huxtable's personal messages are detailed in chapter four. Various critics' works are used here to provide a solid base of work for understanding the components of an excellent critique.

As noted, knowledge of the past is one of Huxtable's key components of good architectural criticism. For her, the city itself is "a receptacle of history through its buildings, and the autonomous strength with which such buildings establish and retain their particular sense of place."[50] The following two articles evaluate architecture in our modern society through knowledge of the past.

"Living Smaller," by *Atlantic Monthly* contributor Witold Rybczynski, skillfully nudges the reader to assess his lifestyle by reviewing his space requirements:

> It is a measure of the growth of consumerism that one of the things that immediately dates a house of the 1920's is how little storage space it has. In the 1920's a bedroom cupboard three feet wide was considered sufficient; today most bedrooms have a wall-to-wall closet, and master bedrooms are incomplete if they do not have an extended walk-in-closet, often grandiloquently called a dressing room. There may be fewer people in the American house of the nineties [considering divorce rates and the upswing in single-person households], but there are a lot more things.[51]

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[50] Ibid., 12.

[51] Witold Rybczynski, "Living Smaller," *Atlantic Monthly* , February 1991, 68-69.

Rybczynski detects an unpalatable greed for space in our society, making our suburbs palatial estates for the elite, and our cities sites of rampant squalor for the poor. American lifestyle currently mandates an unspoken code of privacy—one lives in a large home, shares a street with strangers, drives to work in isolation, shops at a suburban strip mall, and curls up in front of the television at night. However, Rybczynski ventures that there are certain distinct advantages to living in smaller, closer urban quarters: they would be accessible to most people, due to their lower price; shops and entertainment, also integrated, could be reached on foot; people would have less money and housework tied up in large homes; ethnic diversity would be recognized as normal, instead of frightening.[52]

Although "to some extent the expanding American house reflects a crude, bigger-is-better mentality,"[53] Rybczynski sees some hope for affordable, adaptable, urban housing. He describes the breakthrough proposal of John Habraken, who in 1961 published a plan dubbed "support-infill." In it, Habraken

> called for support structures to be built by contractors and for the infill, which includes interior partitions, bathrooms, kitchens, closets, and sometimes even exterior walls, to be bought separately by the occupant, much as furniture is bought—to suit the buyer's personal taste and pocketbook.[54]

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[52] Ibid., 77.

[53] Ibid., 69.

[54] Ibid., 78.

At the time Habraken was formulating his plan, a significant problem was that infill products—movable walls, adaptable plumbing, ready-to-install moldings and storage—were not readily available.[55]

Rybczynski's architectural criticism succeeds by citing fact about historical eras, contrasting them with today's era of burgeoning consumerism, and offering a plausible solution. The reader is urged to think critically about the architectural requirements for his personal lifestyle, as well as the lesson American society has taught him concerning his environment and even his social psychology (i.e., decline of neighborliness, increase in violence). And such consciousness-raising is the best that architectural criticism can hope for.

Another article that criticizes the swift evolution of the architectural environment is Ada Louise Huxtable's story of a New York woman interested in architecture:

> There is a New York lady who had a Tuscan father and an English mother and has been married to an American and watching New York architecture for most of 50 years. She has seen the old buildings go down and the new buildings go up. Observing a typical apartment house rising on York Avenue recently she asked a workman, in Italian, "How do you build them so fast?" "Senza rispetto," he replied, "without respect."[56]

In seventy-five words, Huxtable illustrates how she has kept the public's attention for more than thirty years—by virtue of her story telling, which raises the reader's social and architectural consciousness.

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Huxtable, *Goodbye History*, 25.

Architecture critics are concerned about a society that not only does not respect the past, but one that also wants to escape the present. A curious architectural trend in today's culture is what Huxtable calls the "theming of America"[57]:

> I can't analyze historically or philosophically, why—particularly in the American public—there has been an increasing reluctance to deal with what I'd call reality—in other words, the real physical world. Why we prefer to invent environments. Whether it is a result of disliking our lives and our worlds enough to make us want to dwell in fantasy worlds. And we have people who obligingly provide them—some of the preservationists, the Disney Company. I don't know whether that is it, or whether it's just that it's such a well-marketed product and we're in a consumer society, and entertainment is number one.[58]

Architecture mirrors American culture; thus, to successfully critique architecture is to critique American culture. Huxtable does both, bringing her reader to a deeper awareness of the disturbing trends of escapism and "invented environments."

Brendan Gill also wrote about the "Disneyization" of our environments in his *New Yorker* architecture column, bemoaning the "disconcertingly clownish look (that) has become characteristic of the design of many private and public buildings from coast to coast."[59]

Even more disconcerting, the clownishness is celebrated in the work of the most sought-after architects in the world, including Stanley Tigerman's garage with the classic touring-car radiator grille facade and

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[57] Huxtable, "Inventing American Reality," 25.

[58] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part II," 41.

[59] Brendan Gill, "Disneyitis," *The New Yorker*, 29 April 1991, 96.

house in the shape of a penis, Frank Gehry's fish-shaped restaurant, and Michael Graves' city bureau in Portland with baroque ribbons appliquéed to each of its sides.[60]

Not only is this "boyish prankishness" getting old, but Gill asserts that the underlying problem is that jokes in architecture are rarely funny.[61] Gill surmises that the reason for building a fantasy must be "a growing and perhaps largely unexamined lack of conviction. At those stressful moments when we feel uncertain of how to act, the temptation to make a joke is almost irresistible."[62]

Robert Campbell, architecture critic for the *Boston Globe*, has also examined the phenomenon of "themed entertainment," the cult of Disney, and its architectural effects:

> I'm not so sure people really go to Disney World because they prefer simulation. What people want to do at Disney World is get behind the scenes. And getting behind the scenes is moving from the world of simulation to a world where real work is being done—even though that work is the work of simulation. The last theme park they opened at Disney World is the MGM Studios, where the whole point is to get you behind the scenes. So now what was the work of simulation has become the simulation of the work of simulation . . . [63]

These pieces are meaningful because they analyze a societal element of our lives to which we have become quite accustomed and presume

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[60] Ibid., 97.

[61] Ibid., 99.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Campbell, 41-42.

harmless—Disney. Delving into the *why* rather than the *what* of Michael Graves' Disney Dolphin Hotel elevates the reader's level of cultural awareness through architectural evaluation.

Another example of revealing architectural criticism is understanding the psychology of one's own space—not only knowing what kind of space works well, but what kind of space *feels* well, too. This type of critical evaluation is found in the article "Breathing Room," by Julie V. Iovine. In it, the writer describes moving into a new apartment in which the rooms directly connect to the living room without a hall. The writer whimpers "the entire apartment is laid out before you on a hardwood platter. There's no unfolding, no mystery. Modern architects call that honest; they're the ones who invented the open plan to promote the notion that life laid bare is somehow more efficient."[64]

Iovine did not merely follow the checklist approach to architectural criticism—giving the specifications of the unit, the number of windows, the location of the load-bearing wall—but introduced the reader to the psychological value of connectors between rooms (Iovine quotes the study that proves it). The result is an understanding and renewed appreciation of personal space. The article ends lithely: "My old apartment was small. In the bedroom, you could hear the dishwasher at the other end. Yet, I always enjoyed traipsing down the hall—past a hole-in-the-wall bedroom, through motes of sunlight, only to emerge 20 paces later, ready to face the world."[65]

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[64] Julie V. Iovine, "Breathing Room," *New York Times Magazine*, 7 November 1993, sec. 6, p. 57.

[65] Ibid.

From personal to public environment, the last example of good architectural criticism addresses the relationship between architecture and a community's needs.

In a revealing architectural criticism, *Los Angeles Times* critic James Rainey profiles Tom Layman, the founding architect of the mini-mall, the building that has "remade—some would say scarred—the face of Los Angeles."[66] Alas, the whole country has been suburbanized with mini-malls' "ubiquitous yogurt shops, dry cleaners and nail parlors," which Rainey is quick to assert, "are a sensible adaptation to the fast-paced life in Los Angeles."[67]

Layman says he simply made a good business decision: "I knew I had to find a niche that wasn't already taken up by a lot of other people. I chose smaller retail tenants."[68] The "critics complain that the centers pander to the native car culture and discourage walking in a city that has already found too many reasons not to get out from behind the wheel,"[69] as well as encouraging loiterers and crime. Here again, this criticism goes beyond the structure to discuss the connection between the building and the city, raising significant social issues.

The previous examples challenge the reader not only to aesthetically evaluate architecture, but to realize that architecture can

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[66] James Rainey, "Father of the Mini-Mall Takes Pride in Offspring," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 December 1991, sec. B, p. 1.

[67] Ibid., 1,5.

[68] Ibid., 5.

[69] Ibid.

exemplify a disrespect for history, social pressure, rising consumerism and isolationism, escapism, requirements for personal space, and community needs. Most of these trends in American society are unattractive yet real and unyielding, according to today's critics. Huxtable says:

> Instead of dealing in the pleasant esoterica of aesthetics, (a critic) finds (herself) at querulous and sometimes tiresome odds with ignorance, bureaucracy, cupidity and political and personal opportunism. One becomes a scold, and that can be deadly. Without redeeming wit, this kind of criticism can also be a bore. With shifting climates and conditions, it can soon seem jejune.[70]

But even with socially significant criticism, architectural reviews are insignificant without readers. Readers of architectural criticism in the popular press are a diverse group, with different backgrounds and professions, unlike the architectural trade press, which speaks almost exclusively to architects and reports entirely on structure and design. In fact, consumers of architectural criticism in the popular press have as many different definitions of architecture as reasons for reading it:

> One person thinks of architecture as a specific building; another thinks of architecture as all buildings; another considers architecture as a magical additive that somehow raises the quality of a building from banal to excellent; another thinks of architecture as the "spirit of a building"; another says architecture is a style—some kind of sauce that is poured over the building to give it a historical or modern flavor.[71]

The popular press is the ideal vehicle to sort out the many ideas about architecture and raise readers' levels of awareness of their

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[70] Huxtable, *Goodbye History,* 15.

[71] Caudill, Pena, and Kennon, 10.

environments. The technical language and art-speak used in the trade press would be out of place in everyday magazines and newspapers. Compare, for example, the previous criticisms from popular magazines with this passage from *Architectural Record* on the completion of the Julliard School.

> Solving the structural, mechanical, acoustical and theater engineering problems posed by the organization of elements in this building called for all the skill and ingenuity at the command of the architects and their consultants. Rooms which on a larger site would normally be widely separated for acoustical reasons are stacked above each other, overlap or nestle side by side. The column-free larger halls which in most performing arts complexes are composed as separate elements under their own long-span roofs, are here framed to carry eccentric loads from the complicated spaces on the floors above. Minimum clearances due to the height restriction made the coordination of structural elements, mechanical ductwork and stage equipment a challenging problem.[72]

But placing architectural criticism in a popular magazines does not assure readership. Even seemingly accessible popular magazines such as *Architectural Digest* are not read by all Americans affected by architecture, and it is a non-technical magazine, emphasizing interior spaces as well as exteriors. It is, rather, the *popular press*—the newspapers, the style and literary magazines—that can take on the color and angle of its readers while describing architecture. *The New Yorker* can describe architecture in a literary way, *Mother Earth News* can address architecture from an environmental perspective. *Emerge* can relate news on housing projects that affect the social challenges of inner cities.

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[72]Mildred F. Schmertz, "The Julliard School," *Architectural Record*, January 1970, 121.

Often, the social issue addressed in architectural reviews is enough to command the reader's attention. Other times, the reader is drawn into the article by the title or art. The creativity of architectural review titles in the popular press is impressive. Magazines intentionally avoid using architectural terminology in titles, using instead themes and terms from popular culture to attract readers. *Time* magazine, for example, used the title "Look, Mickey, No Kitsch!"[73] to report on the popularity of Disney architecture. The same subject in *The New Yorker* received the title "Disneyitis" to project Brendan Gill's view that Disney architecture is our culture's infectious disease.[74] *Forbes* magazine chose a "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" ploy to feature the new homes of multibillionaires Bill Gates and Paul Allen—"Mr. Gates and Mr. Allen build their dream houses".[75]

Architectural reviews also entice readers by their strong design packages with attractive photographs. These packages provide relief amidst the often more troubling pages of the newspaper, and have a curious effect of rendering the inanimate topic inviting, while delivering a meaningful social message.

The location of the review in the publication varies—some magazines, such as *Time*, feature an occasional *design* department, while large newspapers often have an architecture column featured weekly. The

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[73] Kurt Andersen, "Look Mickey, No Kitsch!" *Time*, 29 July 1991, 66-69.

[74] Gill, 96.

[75] Julie Pitta, "Mr. Gates and Mr. Allen build their dream houses," *Forbes*, 19 October 1992, 40-43.

beauty of consciousness-raising architectural criticism is that it does not necessitate a fixed location. As social and environmental issues become important, architectural reviews addressing such issues can be inserted almost anywhere—as features in magazines, in metropolitan newspaper sections, area reports, and business pages. Once the reader's interest is piqued, however, it is the responsible critic who delivers more than a checklist of architectural elements.

However, an abundance of good architectural criticism does not guarantee a reader's enlightenment. How a reader considers the relationship between himself and his architectural environment is *learned* through the practice of noticing the structures that shelter him. As his architectural appreciation develops, so will his conviction that the built environment of a city, region or country reveals social, cultural and environmental factors that are fundamental to understanding his own life. That readers fail to see their own relationship to the built environment as significant is extremely frustrating for the architectural critic. Robert Campbell, *Boston Globe* architecture critic, in a conversation with Ada Louise Huxtable, once asked her what role an architecture critic really served. "You're not a consumer guide," he said. "Nobody consumes new buildings the way they do movies or restaurants or art exhibits. So what's the rationale?" Huxtable responded:

> I think just the opposite. I think this is the ultimate consumerism. I think we are so subject to architecture. I think it has such an influence on us, both conscious and unconscious. I think it colors our days and our lives. It affects our attitudes toward our work and our environment. It can give us a sense of dignity and well being. It can

destroy us. I think it's the most influential of all arts. I think this is an enormous responsibility of the critic.[76]

[76] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part I," 43.

CHAPTER 4

WRITING STYLE: THE SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

Just as an intriguing façade of a building draws a visitor in for a closer look, her writing style dresses Ada Louise Huxtable's message, making it inviting, powerful, and memorable.

Huxtable's writing style is what captures readers' attention and drives her consciousness-raising message home. Often an intricately woven lattice that holds a piece together, Huxtable's style can evoke a mood, like sarcasm or pretended naiveté; a theme of literature or art; a construct of contemporary culture, or a carefully chosen pattern of words that impress the reader. Most apparent is her reliance on wit, drama, and urgency to make her voice heard.

John B. Oakes writes in his introduction to *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger* that "Architectural and urban planning criticism had to be drawn out of the esoteric closets to which it had been largely confined."[77] Huxtable did this at a time when major papers seldom had an architecture critic on staff. Her sense of personal duty in alerting the public to destructive changes being pursued by big business helped her "quickly distinguish her articles with a witty style that often used catch words and slogans to barb urban offenders."[78]

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[77] Oakes, 7.

[78] Pear, 179.

Other critics of her time, including Wolf Von Eckardt, who was the *Washington Post*'s architecture critic beginning in 1966, had a dryer style and a somewhat broader scope. His column was titled "Cityscape," yet he delved into matters of city government and graphic design. The following is an excerpt from Von Eckardt's article, "Other Cities Than Washington Gasping for Home Rule":

> Mayor John V. Lindsay was not joking the other day when he demanded more home rule for New York and other American cities. What he seemed to say is that we don't need "black power" or "white power" but more municipal power to solve the problems of the cities.
>
> Only Washington, of course, is arbitrarily governed by Congress, which treats the ninth largest city in the country as an ill-humored truant officer treats a juvenile delinquent. But other cities, too, are badly handicapped by state legislatures and Federal agencies in their struggle for survival. And that, some people begin to suspect, is a part of the crisis of the cities.[79]

Huxtable's, on the other hand, is a "spoonful of sugar" philosophy. Readers might not willingly swallow architectural criticism, so Huxtable draws them in with witty and inventive leads. An article, "Goodbye History Hello Hamburger," in which she expresses her disappointment in the fast decisions to raze historic structures in the 1970s, illustrates her technique. It begins, "See the 116-year-old historic house. See it being knocked down. See the hamburger stand in its place. pow. America, of thee I sing; sweet land of Burger King."

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[79] Wolf Von Eckardt, "Other Cities Than Washington Gasping for Home Rule," *Washington Post*, 16 October 1966, sec. G, p. 9.

She goes on to describe the loss—a house called Mapleside in Madison, Wisconsin—and the result of the preservationists' failures: "Goodbye history, hello hamburger. From historic home to 'home of the whopper' with a swing of the wrecker's ball."[80]

This habitual use of drama and urgency in the lead was a reaction to events Huxtable saw and reported as crises. But her creativity is not restricted to the lead; she displays her wit throughout the essay.

She closes *Goodbye History Hello Hamburger* with two more examples of our modern day progress: the near losses of the Dutch Reformed Church in Newburgh, New York, and the 1837 Greek Revival General Worth Hotel in Hudson, New York. Satisfied that she has proved her point about the fast demolition of buildings in the name of fast food, she sums it up splendidly:

> America the beautiful,
> Let me sing of thee;
> Burger King and Dairy Queen
> From sea to shining sea.

In this example Huxtable uses both a pop icon and a venerated hymn by melding fast food with *America the Beautiful.* Some may claim disrespect, but Huxtable would likely argue that her disrespect does not exceed that of the burger business.

Besides drama and urgency, Huxtable's leads are full of everyday allusions that appeal to average readers. One such example is in the article "The Art of Expediency."

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[80] Huxtable, *Goodbye History,* 63.

There used to be a newspaper game called "What's wrong with this picture?" It was a cartoon in which there were a number of things wrong, from doors without handles and upside-down windows to pictures with mismatched halves hidden in the wallpaper. It was a world of cockeyed domesticity, antimacassared and cozily askew. The game was to find and list all the errors, or deviations from the norm.

What's wrong with this picture? The ruins of Penn Station in the Secaucus Meadows and a new subway entrance in its replacement building are not quite so simple to analyze. To begin with, what they show is the norm, in a world far from cozy and quite askew. They pose disturbing questions and touch problems that go to the core of a culture in which destruction and regeneration, art and nihilism, are becoming indistinguishable. But they say a great deal about how things are, and why, in the world that man is building for himself today.[81]

This intriguing lead juxtaposes a cozy memory with the haunting image of the classical sculptures discarded and broken in a New Jersey field. Huxtable has found a potent parallel in the pair of images.

The use of literary allusion is another effective element of Huxtable's style. In the following example, Huxtable shows her opposition to foolish preservation tactics and playfully—and quite skillfully—uses allusion to illustrate her point:

The following item was not invented by some gifted pixie mentality; it is from *Preservation News,* published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust would not put you on. We quote:

Babe Ruth's birthplace and a few neighboring properties were recently purchased by the city of Baltimore for $1,850. The home of one of baseball's immortals is located on Emory Street, a narrow alley of humble row houses. The Mayor's Committee for the Preservation of Babe Ruth's Birthplace is now debating whether to leave the house at

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[81] Ibid., 51-52.

its present location or to move it and the neighboring houses to a site adjoining Memorial Stadium, to be part of the Babe Ruth Plaza. Vandalism in the present neighborhood has prompted the committee to resolve "to restore the house at its present location only if environmental amenities are found to be reasonable." The inaccessibility of Emory Street is also cited as a reason to move the house elsewhere. However Emory Street is too narrow to move the house intact and dismantling would be the only solution.

It reads exactly as if Lewis Carroll wrote it.

"Leave the house where it is," said the Red Queen. "I can't," said Alice. "it's inaccessible and there's vandalism." "Then get some environmental amenities," said the Red Queen, "and be quick about it." "What are environmental amenities?" asked Alice. "Don't ask foolish questions; just move the house," said the Red Queen. "But the street is too narrow," said Alice. "Nonsense," said the Red Queen, "don't you know anything? Take the house apart and put it back together again. And move the rest of the houses with it." "Poor things," said Alice. "Where to?" "To the Memorial Stadium, naturally," said the Red Queen, "and call it Babe Ruth Plaza." "Couldn't we just leave it?" asked Alice. "If you do," said the Red Queen, "you will have to take out the other houses and put up a sign, 'No Ball Playing Allowed.'" "Mightn't 'Ballplayers Welcome' be better?" said Alice.

Alas, it is not straight out of *Through the Looking Glass*; it is straight out of life. And if it sounds like parody, that is exactly what much of the preservation movement has become. It is game playing. The game as it is played—by a strict set of rules—is to seal off historic buildings from the contemporary environment in a vacuum of assiduous make-believe.[82]

The use of Carrollesque dialogue amplifies the absurdity of the situation: a dismantled shack extracted from its environment, reconstructed, and placed in a hallowed, sanitized, empty space where no self-respecting ball player would step within a mile.

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[82] Ibid., 60.

What has been labeled as Huxtable's biting and accusatory prose, as evidenced above, is often directed toward American pop culture. Huxtable is firmly rooted in reality, and knows that we cannot return to bygone lifestyles. She appreciates much of the evolution of society—in fact, she upholds Modernism as "one of the great creative periods and great sea changes like the Renaissance . . . one of the great movements of history."[83] However, she rails against the destruction of our significant architectural past, and she can't tolerate "the new American landscape made of plastic pretensions and false dreams."[84] She illustrates this frequent theme by example. The following demonstrates her ability to draw powerful parallels between abundance and blandness, modern upgrades and poor quality, nostalgia and tawdriness:

> The unfulfilled promise is the American way of life, from the oversize restaurant menu suggesting farm-fresh succulence and delivering dreary precooked fare, to the die-stamped motel with its celebrated plumbing that is already beginning to fail and synthetic Elizabethan pubs with Styrofoam beams and food.[85]

Huxtable has often written about the "die-stamped motel with its celebrated plumbing" to set a mood for describing the inadequacy of environments. She views the modern motel/hotel as the ultimate example of what is wrong with much contemporary architecture; sameness advertised as warm and inviting.

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[83] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part I," 43.

[84] Huxtable, *Kicked a Building*, 20.

[85] Ibid.

> And yet I never approach a trip requiring an overnight's stay without a sinking heart. It's not that I won't be reasonably comfortable—basic things like beds and baths and ice and Coke machines are the preoccupation of the American "hospitality" industry—it's that I will be so depressed. It is not the impersonality or anonymity of a hotel room, which is not always an unwelcome thing. It is that one is forced into a banal, standardized, multi-billion-dollar world of bad colors, bad fabrics, bad prints, bad pictures, bad furniture, bad lamps, bad ice-buckets, and bad wastebaskets of such totally uniform and cheap consistency of taste and manufacture that borax or camp would be an exhilarating change of pace.
>
> All this is arranged in identical, predictable layouts smelling of stale smoke and air-conditioned at a temperature suggesting preservation of the dead no matter what the climate outside. Like the roads leading to airports everywhere, you never really know where you are. It is complete loss of identity—both personal and place. Ask any psychiatrist about that.[86]

But for all her strengths, Huxtable tends to deviate into a type of signature showmanship—she can get so caught up creating fabulous word patterns and metaphors that readers may be distracted by her intense pursuit of sound and rhythm:

> What is being built represents the culmination of a twentieth-century revolution in structure and design based on profound philosophical considerations and technical miracles that should have produced, by any reasoning, one of the greatest periods in the history of the building art.
>
> But a look around shows a distorted dream, a travesty of purpose, an abandonment of principles, a jazzy slide down the primrose path of fads, publicity, structural sensationalism, muzzy romanticism and dubious art for art's sake that has led to a vicious decline in architectural values and a corruption of architectural purpose. It has

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[86] Ibid., 20-21.

also led to some of the worst and most offensive building ever produced.[87]

Here is another example of a word patternization that draws more attention to the similes than the meaning:

> It is not, like so much of today's large-scale construction, a handy commercial package, a shiny wraparound envelope, a packing case, a box of cards, a trick with mirrors. It does not look like a cigar lighter, a vending machine, a nutmeg grater. It is a building in the true, classic sense: a complete design in which technology, function and esthetics are conceived and executed integrally for its purpose. As its architect, Eero Saarinen, wanted, this is a building to be looked at above the bottom fifty feet, to be comprehended as a whole. [88]

Not only is Huxtable's prose at times excessively patterned, it can also be esoteric. Even though she once said, "It's nonsense just to write scholarly papers for other scholars,"[89] there appear notions, words, whole chains of thought, in fact, that seem to be so distanced from the world of the average reader, it's as if she were talking about the Venusian environment instead of Fifth Avenue.

On January 26, 1969, Huxtable's essay in the *New York Times* was titled "The Case for Chaos." The piece discusses the movement among some sociologists and urban planners to "deal with the chaotic environment in constructive and even creative ways by admitting its conflicts, analyzing its components and recognizing the purposes they

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[87] Huxtable, *Bruckner Boulevard,* 175.

[88] Ibid., 98.

[89] Pear, 179.

serve and the contributions they make to our way of life."[90] She goes on to explain:

> Chaos may even contain an order of its own, we are told. It is an order of "inclusion" and "the difficult whole" rather than an order of "exclusion," or "rejection," which has been the teaching and operation of modern architecture to date. It offers a pluralistic esthetic of "both and" rather than the selective "either-or" decisions enforced by orthodox architectural theory.[91]

In addition, Huxtable's word choices are sometimes elitist. Some of her casually offered phrases include: Roman tepidarium, [92] catenary curves,[93] Hogarthian energy[94]—and two already mentioned—antimacassared[95] world and Ruskinian Gothic remnant.[96] It's possible to

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[90] Huxtable, *Bruckner Boulevard*, 185.

[91] Ibid., 185-186.

[92] Ibid., 214. Defined in *Le Petit Larousse Illustré*, 1993 ed. s.v. "tepidarium," as a room in the Roman baths where a tepid temperature was maintained. This is a good example of Huxtable's esoteric quality because I was able to find a definition only in a French dictionary. It was noted as an antiquated term.

[93] Ibid. Defined in *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, rev. ed. (1987), s.v. "catenary," as the curve made by a flexible cord or chain hanging freely between two points of suspension not necessarily of the same height.

[94] Ibid., 218. This is a reference to the work of painter William Hogarth (1697-1764) who, according to Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey, eds., *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 8th ed. (San Diego: Harcout Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 784-785, satirized the contemporary English life with great animation.

[95] Huxtable, *Goodbye History*, 51. Defined in *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, rev. ed. (1987), s.v. "antimacassared," as a covering to protect the back of an upholstered chair or sofa from dirty marks.

[96] Huxtable, *Kicked a Building*, 14. According to *Compton's Encyclopedia Online Edition*, s.v. "Architecture, Neoclassicism, Picturesque and Gothic Revival," John Ruskin is "the art critic who contrasted the structural honesty of Gothic architecture with the manipulations and concealments of structure practiced by Renaissance architects. Ruskin's writings, notably *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1853)

find words and phrases of this caliber in almost any article by Huxtable, although the overall tone of her writing is quite straightforward—even slangy.

The casualness of a piece can actually be a thin disguise for Huxtable's sarcasm, which she often displays when discussing preservation and reconstruction. In "Old Town Blues,"[97] she looks at St. Paul de Vence, France, with a pretended naiveté that delivers a biting and humorous editorial on how American city planners and reconstructionists might look at the peaceful French town.

The message—that unchecked modernization and blind preservation of our own urban landscapes foil our search for more livable cities—is delivered here in the framework of a stylized piece that can only be read one way: tongue in cheek. Many of Huxtable's hallmarks of style are employed in this piece: mood, wit, carefully chosen word patterns, and a device—this time a false naiveté—that is the skeleton for the piece.

Huxtable's pieces are as changeable as the author's attitude. She can be angry, funny, high brow, elegant or brutally frank. Yet, she has crafted her style as the dressing for her message, which is honed to appeal to a broad base of readers with little experience or expectations of architecture. She will be remembered for her messages and the general awareness she aroused in people regarding their environments. But the stories she used, the scenarios she borrowed from literature, art, and contemporary culture

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in which he defended truthfulness of structure and richness of ornament in natural forms, were enormously influential. Their effect was reinforced by that of (an) . . . Anglican . . . movement, (that) inspired Gothic-revival churches in England and America."

[97] Huxtable, *Bruckner Boulevard*, 256-260.

may also serve as food for historians and scholars in the future who wish to study a diverse and challenging art form and author.

CHAPTER 5

ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE'S MESSAGE AND PHILOSOPHY

Huxtable is a critic with a lifetime's repertoire of work concerning different building types, cities, and urban issues, yet her diverse topics are held together by several key ideas. Architectural awareness, the right to good architecture, the fight for preservation of historic sites, invention of the architectural past, and the possibilities of the built future are all concepts she has used to fuel her work. She has said these ideas make up a "coherent body of commentary, with a consistent philosophy, through which significant developments in planning and preservation, and even more significant developments in consciousness and judgment, can be traced and understood."[98] Perhaps, most of all, her work is a "record of a continuing professional passion."[99]

Generating architectural awareness has been a major goal of Huxtable's from the day she joined the staff of the *New York Times* in 1963. Later, as she reflected on the critic's role, she wrote that a critic hopes "that he may have taught someone to see . . . influenced public awareness to the point where the world those few years later may be a bit more in the

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[98] Huxtable, *Goodbye History,* 9-10.

[99] Ibid., 15.

image of the kind of life and environment for which he has fought his battles."[100]

And even though she joked that a critic writing for the daily press recognizes that "today's words are for wrapping tomorrow's fish,"[101] her work has had a lasting influence on readers' perspectives—not only on the buildings they live in, but the way they interact with the structures as well.

One example of this architectural awareness is "Waiting Rooms," written for the *Times* in March, 1981.[102] Here Huxtable explores not only the personality of various waiting rooms, but also the psychology of waiting. Waiting, she says, can be either a constructive activity, or "an uneasy vegetative state," filled with "an extraordinary range of emotions, anticipation, apprehension, aggravation, dread, or despair, and the cessation of feeling known as alienation or anomie."[103] These effects are felt in a variety of decors appropriate to what is awaited, including power-wait corporate settings, "spuriously cheerful" doctors offices, and rudely neglected government offices. Whatever the surrounding, Huxtable maintains that in the void of anticipation, attention is

> fixated . . . on the details of our surroundings. The sofa that never, in repeated visits, lines up with the mirror above it, the lamps with crooked shades, become exaggerated irritants, and dusty bunches of

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[100] Ibid., 13.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ada Louise Huxtable, *Architecture Anyone?* (New York: Random House, 1986), 304-308.

[103] Ibid.

dried flowers and coat hooks that suggest peculiar perversions take up permanent unwanted residence in our minds.[104]

When taken to a higher level of awareness, even a quotidian event like waiting can be a fascinating look at human nature.

Huxtable believed that people, even in the most mundane of situations, were entitled to an uplifting environment. Most of all, she was committed to the idea of each person's right to live and work in decently designed structures. She told Robert Campbell of the *Boston Globe*:

> People have entitlements for everything . . . They know every entitlement, no matter how outrageous. But they do not know their entitlements to architecture and the environment. They have them and they should expect them. They're entitled to places that go beyond decency—and many of them are below even that level. Places where you can be enriched and grow and feel your own sense of self-worth developing. Architecture can help all that.[105]

An example of a building that Huxtable believes gives the community what it deserves both in esthetics and utility is The Arts for Living Center, a building in the Henry Street Settlement of New York's Lower East Side.[106] Huxtable asserts its "successful integration of the two requirements—one very much tied to the life of society and the other a timeless requirement of the art of architecture—is a complex and rewarding achievement."[107]

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[104] Ibid., 304-305.

[105] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part I," 44.

[106] Huxtable, *Kicked a Building,* 126.

[107] Ibid.

She describes the building, designed by Lo-Yi Chan, as housing "an extensive performing and visual arts program of highly professional standards that serves all elements of the community from children to the elderly."[108]

The new building graces an area renowned for its tradition of social assistance to immigrants and the community, and Huxtable commends the opportunity the Center provides for the neighborhood to animate and bring together its people. "The Center is actually a basic shell for people and their products,"[109] she wrote. Huxtable has faith in a good building's ability to muster the fellowship in a community and improve life for its inhabitants.

The Henry Street Settlement, she says, is a "disadvantaged, multi-cultural community,"[110] and the $2.5 million budget for the new Center was spent on an open design that would inspire those in it, rather than on superficial ornamentation to hide shoddy design.

> The shell holds many multi-purpose rooms adaptable to changing needs. Arranged in five levels around the entrance arc, all of these performance, meeting, and instructional areas are related constantly to it, either through large areas of glass on the ground floor, or smaller, sometimes eccentrically positioned windows above.[111]

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[108] Ibid., 126-127.

[109] Ibid., 128.

[110] Ibid., 126.

[111] Ibid., 128.

As always, Huxtable relates a structure to its surroundings, and in the Center, she finds a jewel in a most appropriate setting. She recommends that her readers visit the original Henry Street Settlement buildings, "for a fine demonstration of cultural continuity."[112] It is evident that she views the new Center as a continuation of custom, of fellowship, and good buildings.

Good buildings are often old buildings, and Huxtable's writings on preservation are among the most recognized and respected of her work. Senator Daniel P. Moynahan, in a preface to Huxtable's book *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*, wrote that Huxtable views buildings as existing "in space, but also in time, and the more powerful perspective will typically be found along the latter dimension."[113]

She believes the mesh of buildings from bygone eras results in a cityscape that is both fulfilling and inspiring to urbanites. She is a city-dweller who finds visual relief from the skyscrapers in the French Renaissance or Beaux Arts styles of the early twentieth century. She crusaded tirelessly against the destruction of important historical buildings and the demolition of neighborhoods with a significant cultural past. She rallied against remaking "historic attractions" into structures lacking vitality and context, and she tried to warn the public about important pieces of the city's past that were being eradicated for sheer

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[112] Ibid., 129.

[113] Daniel P. Moynahan, foreword to *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?*, by Ada Louise Huxtable (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), xvi.

commercialism. She became the enemy of the opportunistic New York real estate brokers and developers.

One example that reveals Huxtable's passion for preservation is "The Temptation of St. Bartholomew's," written for the *Times* in October, 1980. It concerns the well-known New York historic landmark of St. Bartholomew's church on Park Avenue. The church, which sits at the corner of Fiftieth Street and Park Avenue, is "virtually the only open space left on an almost solidly corporate Park Avenue in midtown."[114] Its gardens provide respite from the whirring of the city. With its community house, the church has an L-shape and offers its visitors "an architecture of agreeable human dimensions, against the backdrop of skyscrapers beyond."[115]

When the church was approached by real estate brokers with an $100 million offer for the valuable piece of land on which it sits, church officials found themselves in a quandary.[116] At first, the offer seemed worth considering. "In these days of shrinking congregations and growing deficits, $100 million is an attractive sum."[117]

After reviewing their options, church officials decided they could do without the community house and garden, but vowed to protect the church itself, recognizing it as not only a spiritual gathering place, but also an important historic site, containing irreplaceable art and craftsmanship.

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[114] Huxtable, *Architecture, Anyone?* 153-154.

[115] Ibid., 155.

[116] Ibid., 152.

[117] Ibid.

Huxtable was angered by the thoughtlessness of church board members toward their fellow New Yorkers:

> That the beauty of the St. Bartholomew block contributes to the welfare of the city and all of its inhabitants are not part of the reckoning. The close link between the spirit and the environment is denied. False and irrelevant equations are made between dealing in real estate and dealing with poverty. Although the quality of the church's art and architecture is well known, the serenity and public availability of its sun-filled and flowering garden in the congested commercial heart of the city are a less acknowledged contribution to all the people of New York. Only in a culture where commercial values have vanquished spiritual values would such a church and its setting not be considered a legacy beyond price from the past to the present and the future.[118]

She wrote that the plans to sell a portion of the property would leave "the truncated church like a jewel without a setting."[119] Indeed, more than ten years before, in 1968, she seemed to foresee St. Bart's dilemma when she wrote, "Unless enough instances of the old city are integrated with new construction," she wrote, "there will be no real urban continuity or economic reality. We will simply have acquired an occasional embalmed architectural freak."[120]

Huxtable has spent much of her career discussing historic preservation, but during the last decade, she has elevated that discussion to a specific concept that has been the base for much of her writing, including a yet unreleased book. This concept is architectural "invention." Invention, Huxtable believes, takes form in two ways—and both of them

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[118] Ibid., 154.

[119] Ibid., 155.

[120] Huxtable, *Goodbye History*, 117.

are despicable. Inventing the past means fabricating the architectural past by restoring (or re-creating) something old, thus making inauthentic things seem authentic. An example of this is Colonial Williamsburg. The other side of the coin is invention of the present. Huxtable relates this type of make-believe to the current fad of "Disneyesque" design, which finds itself at home in the fantastic works of Disney's favorite "architectural Mouseketeers,"[121] Michael Graves, Frank Gehry, and Robert A.M. Stern.

For Huxtable, re-invention of the past in architecture—like Colonial Williamsburg—within the context of a "themed" site is an unequaled architectural blasphemy. Although many would say that Williamsburg is an educational and tasteful recreation of an important era, Huxtable ranks it as kitsch at best. As for the educational factor, she writes: " . . . these 're-creations' . . . devalue what they teach; the intrinsic qualities of the real place are transformed and falsified."[122]

The transformation of these historic attractions places "an emphasis on surface gloss, on pastiche, . . . on tenuous symbolism and synthetically created environments."[123] To make matters worse, in Huxtable's view, valuable, newer buildings are mercilessly obliterated to keep the site "authentic-looking." In the case of Williamsburg, any structure built after 1770 was torn down:

> Seven hundred and thirty-one buildings were removed . . . eighty-one were renovated, and 413 were rebuilt on the original sites. Pre-

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[121] Huxtable, "Inventing American Reality," 27.

[122] Ibid., 24.

[123] Ibid.

> restoration photographs show later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings of local styles. They were real, of course, but inappropriate to the cut-off date, and had to be bulldozed or moved.[124]

The proposition of Disney-like architecture, which seems more and more the norm these days, is just as disturbing to Huxtable. While the majority of the public seems to applaud the slickness of the make-believe, Huxtable abhors it, likening Disneyland to Williamsburg:

> What they have in common is their suspension of disbelief, the expertise of their illusion, and their promotion of a skillfully edited, engineered, and marketed version of a chosen place, or theme . . . (At Disneyland) Swiss and Polynesian villages coexist at a friendly, reduced scale and in close proximity.[125]

Huxtable has spent considerable time studying the work of Graves, Gehry and Stern. While their "wishful thinking" architectural monuments have been erected around the world, Huxtable manages only a singular compliment:

> There is no denying the skill of the artifice involved; the impeccable planning and organization, the inventive technology, the masterful marketing, and the assured understanding of popular tastes and pleasures. But if one can admire the technical ingenuity and theatrical expertise that is responsible for the success of these places, how should one take the praise from the design community that has raised Disneyland to cult status? I part company with those architects who see the theme park a the new Pop Holy Grail.[126]

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124 Ibid.

125 Ibid., 25.

126 Ibid., 27.

Brendan Gill, architecture critic of the *New Yorker*, shares Huxtable's opinions:

> We disneyize America at our peril, because an innocent, decorous, iced-tea wholesomeness isn't prominent among our national characteristics, and never has been. The pretense to wholesomeness practiced by our Victorian ancestors caused them to be denounced by later generations for their hypocrisy. The Disney wholesomeness invites a new hypocrisy to ride piggyback upon the old. More and more frequently, public buildings as well as private ones bear the stamp of toyland.[127]

Although Huxtable has spent much of her career staunchly defending historical landmarks and studying the recreation of history, she has not closed her eyes to contemporary design, which, oddly enough, today means classical design. [128] Huxtable allows that certain architects, including Charles Moore and Michael Graves,[129] can manipulate classicism into "something very unexpected, and very unsettling at times, used in totally individual and personal ways."[130]

Through her career, Huxtable also has been interested in innovative and fledgling movements that represent *possibility* in design. One of these movements was Megastructure. Megastructure was a disconcerting melange of uncomfortable hulky design and smooth modern functionality. The idea was one giant building, with many

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[127] Gill, 97.

[128] Huxtable, *Architecture Anyone?*, 8-10.

[129] Ibid., 10.

[130] Ibid.

parts.[131] The radicals of the 60's entertained the principles of megastructure, most likely as a means to the experimental communal living of the time. It was a short-lived concept—"embraced by the architectural avant-garde in the 1960's and adopted by the establishment in the 70s, and declared officially dead in 1976 by the critic and historian Reyner Banham in his succinctly titled book *Megastructure—Urban Futures of the Recent Past.*"[132]

Since a megastructure can seem oppressive, hulking and brutal, it is interesting that the idea behind the movement was emancipation. Huxtable described it this way:

> (Megastructure) is an idea of infinite flexibility and extensibility; it was to be a free, liberated architecture capable of open-ended change and adjustment to match the popular and permissive ideas of those who were "restructuring" society at that time. But it also fitted the architect's eternal utopian search for a kind of physical order that could be imposed by design on the chaos of living. Both notions invite skepticism.[133]

Huxtable finds much to admire in the Alexandra Road housing project, in London: the creative use of a difficult site, the interior appointments of the small apartments, and the integration of "commercial units, administrative and other facilities, and public space."[134]

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[131] Ibid., 231.

[132] Ibid., 232-233.

[133] Ibid., 231-232.

[134] Ibid., 234.

It seems that prohibitive cost was the main disadvantage associated with megastructure, but overall "it strikes the visitor as a sensible and attractive solution to accommodating a lot of people on a difficult site."[135] Huxtable appreciates the Alexandra Road project for the human dimension afforded by stepped balconies, which, "softened by greens and flowers in the planting troughs that are part of the design, are set back on each floor as they rise from the street level. This feature guarantees some light and privacy . . . "[136] She argues that the possibly overwhelming visual weight of poured-in-place concrete block is "ameliorated by the curve of the street and the buildings—a deflection from the straight line that manages to suggest intimacy rather than infinity."[137]

The possibility of future design is an evident passion in Huxtable's work. Her varied studies of contemporary movements including modernism, post modernism, and the skyscraper—all for which she holds respect—are part of her continuous crusade for better buildings. Positioning herself as the watchdog of the evolution of design, she has declared the late twentieth century to spawn the most innovative architectural ideas ever seen.

> The rules are gone; without them, the basic elements are being reconstructed. Architecture is literally being taken apart and put back together again. Purpose and plan, setting and structure, space and skin, the part and the whole, solid and void, transparency and solidity,

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[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 235.

[137] Ibid.

expression and suppression, perception and meaning, are all subject to reinterpretation.[138]

[138] Huxtable, "Inventing American Reality," 28.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Anatole France, the nineteenth-century French novelist, said that a critic is someone who reports on his adventures among masterpieces.[139] Huxtable sees herself as more than this. The legacy of Ada Louise Huxtable is, in her words, "a universal consciousness-raising, an awakening awareness of the components, and the effects, of what and how we build, a recognition of far-reaching aesthetic and environmental values."[140] Some may call the writer arrogant. She credits the cultural climate for effecting part of the job, but she obviously believes her work influenced the revolution of heightened public awareness of architecture. And it did. She reminds readers in the preface to her book, *Architecture, Anyone?*:

> Obviously, I have enjoyed the work, and I have also enjoyed the rewards. I was alone when I started—the first and only full-time architecture critic in the American press—a fact that is generally forgotten along with *The Times'* brave gamble on establishing the position, based on the belief that the quality of the built world mattered at a time when environment was still only a dictionary word. Now there are cover stories and full-color treatments of buildings and architects and state-of-the-art articles in the weekly news journals. Architecture has taken its hyped-up place on the world stage of celebrity journalism, and developers have discovered the market value of designer labels. There are legions, or battalions, of critics and would-be critics, with vision ranging from the flyspeck to the apocalyptic, in

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[139] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part I," 44.

[140] Huxtable, *Architecture, Anyone?*, xv.

fashionable pursuit of architectural answers to questions that purport to address the hot topics of art and life. To them I say, with feeling, lots of luck.[141]

Although Huxtable's work inspired the complacent public to look up from the sidewalk, writing for the *New York Times* may have limited her ability to reach the average reader.[142] Huxtable views herself as writing for the layperson, but readers of the *Times*, who are highly educated,[143] want an abundance of government and cultural news, and include professionals directly responsible for the urban environment, differ significantly from the average newspaper reader, who is most interested in retail store ads, local government news, school news, classified ads, advertising inserts, and sports.[144] While her writing is engaging, the esoteric quality of many of Huxtable's pieces limits their accessibility.

The exclusive nature of Huxtable's style may also be a result of her background as an art historian and her lack of experience as a newspaper writer. As the first full-time architecture critic working on a newspaper, she was thrust into daily journalism with no one to compare herself to,

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[141] Ibid., xiv.

[142]Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault, and Edwin Emery, *Introduction to Mass Communication*, 9th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 129, cites that the *Times* is not written for a mass audience, but rather for readers interested in international developments, government, and cultural news.

[143] The research department at the *Times* stated in a telephone interview on March 31, 1995 that a 1994 Simmons study reveals the national Sunday *Times'* readers to be 183% more likely than the average American adult to have a college degree.

[144] A National Newspaper Association study of community newspapers revealed that while the audience is predominantly college-educated, interests focus on local and sporting news, rather than national, international, and cultural affairs. (Cowles/SIMBA Media Daily Online 7/18/94)

nor to model herself after. The academic nuances in her architectural critiques may be viewed in the future as part of the transition from a previously scholarly genre of criticism to one designed for mass consumption.

But even if Huxtable's own writing did not reach average readers, her influence ultimately did. Her work sparked many editors, including those at smaller dailies across the country and the major weekly newsmagazines, to feature pieces on architecture. A larger national cross-section of readers is now exposed to architecture because of her work. What's more, as a result of Huxtable's criticism, valuable buildings have been spared, and numerous landmark preservation organizations have been created. Laypeople now are more actively involved than ever before in the shaping of their built environments.

Furthermore, as the pioneer in her field, Huxtable gave novice architecture critics a benchmark to measure their own work against. And she says that the change in the public's attitude toward the environment has created an even greater need for critics to "raise their voices and use their abilities to identify the issues and keep some standards of art and decency operative in the design and construction process."[145]

The bold new direction that architecture is heading makes critics' vigilance especially important. As the turn of the millennium nears, Huxtable sees architecture entering a significant new era. "Architecture,"

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[145] Huxtable, *Architecture, Anyone?*, xvi.

according to Huxtable, "is literally being taken apart and put back together again."[146] She writes:

> I would argue that this is one of the most dramatic, challenging, innovative, and important moments in contemporary architecture. Released from bondage to both modernism and classicism, into a world of expanding perceptions and ideas, this work seeks answers beyond ideas, a style beyond "styles." What we are seeing is the basic reinterpretation and restructuring of architecture for our time.[147]

One avenue for further study is the effect of celebrity on today's architects and their work. As a comparison, in the late nineteenth century when the famed firm of McKim, Mead and White was practicing, news did not travel as quickly and architecture was not the glamorized and extremely profitable profession it is now for large, national and international firms. But in the twentieth century the trade is very different. The marketing of entertainment-inspired architecture—born from what Huxtable terms "the tremendous cult of Disney"[148] —and the popularity of architects who have not only influenced our cityscapes, but our furniture, flatware, linens, and tea kettles seen everywhere from Wal-Mart to Soho boutiques, are a new phenomenon. How celebrity influences tastes in art, entertainment, products, and structures merits study to determine whether the standard and consistency of quality in the built environment are compromised by sophisticated marketing.

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[146] Huxtable, "Inventing American Reality," 28.

[147] Ibid., 28-29.

[148] Campbell, "A Conversation: Part II," 40.

Finally, further study on individual critics and the contributions made in their respective fields, such as drama, art, and dance, may help dispel the misunderstandings some people have toward the role of criticism. Critics who are pioneers in their fields—such as Huxtable—deserve scrutiny, if only to provide a pattern for the novice critic seeking his own path.

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