VII
Serious Follies

There is one place in Britain where you can sit on a toppled Roman altar to meditate, and listen to birdsong in a forum of ancient marble: Virginia Water in Surrey. Beside the placid lake are the colonnades of a ruined city. Approach closer and you find an old sign inscribed with admirable perfunctoriness:

These Ruins were erected on this site in 1827
by King George IV
having been imported in 1818
from the Roman city of Leptis Magna
near Tripoli in Libya
DANGER – KEEP OUT

Thirty-seven tall columns of marble and granite stand shivering in the damp valley, having exchanged the sun and sand of Africa for the damp moss of Surrey. They seem as unaccustomed to the ferns underfoot as we are to scorpions, as glum in their exile as the Blackamoor footmen who were so fashionable in European palaces of the time. Why did the columns of Leptis Magna come to Virginia Water?

They form the largest artificial ruin in Britain and, like that of the Elgin Marbles, their journey was motivated by a combination of cultivated taste, patriotism and political

opportunism. In theory, the ruins were a diplomatic gift from the Bashaw of Tripoli to the Prince Regent; in practice, consent was tickled from the Bashaw by the consul-general in Tripoli, a Colonel Warrington who was anxious to further his career. In 1816 he visited the site of the Roman city with its great Forum built by Emperor Septimius Severus in AD 200. With him were Captain Smyth, a naval officer, and Augustus Earle, an artist. Earle's water-colour in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle shows how the dunes of the Sahara had drifted over the city abandoned after the Vandals' invasion in the fifth century, and his notes recall how the fine, light sand had preserved the fragments perfectly.

Warrington was permitted to give to the Prince Regent whatever he could extract from the sand. Two years later thirty-seven of the forty columns, ten capitals, twenty-five pedestals, ten pieces of cornice, five inscribed slabs of sculpture and some fragments of sculpture arrived in England. The three tallest columns could not be fitted on board the ship, and were left lying on the beach at Leptis; they remain there today, prostrate and forlorn.

The ruins cluttered the forecourt of the British Museum for eight years; no one quite knew what to do with the Bashaw's tribute. Finally, it was suggested that they be re-erected as a 'folly' in the royal family's private estate at Virginia Water. The pieces were removed by the Royal Engineers, travelling on gun-carriages down Oxford Street, recently surfaced with the new 'tarmacadam', and on across Hounslow Heath. The king's architect Jeffrey Wyattville was faced with a disorderly pile of fragments from which he had to create a building. There are no design drawings, and

no doubt he improvised; there is a playful fragility in the assembly, as if tipsy giants had been playing with colossal Lego.

The obvious solution would have been to build a podium and position the thirty-seven columns as the peristyle of a temple. Wyattville was cleverer. First, he chose as his site a shallow valley running down to the water's edge and spanned by a brick road-bridge. Second, he created an architectural space – or, put another way, the experience of walking through a ruined city. From the landing-stage at the water's edge, where in 1828 the Prince Regent – now George IV, and so fat that he could only waddle – arrived to inspect the folly, we stroll between the two colonnades, under the bridge and into a semicircular temple. Wyattville

In 1827 the ruins of Leptis Magna, Libya, were re-erected in the gardens of King George IV at Virginia Water.

reserved the tallest marble columns for this climax; the Picturesque relied upon the sudden contrasts created by shadows, concealment and surprise.

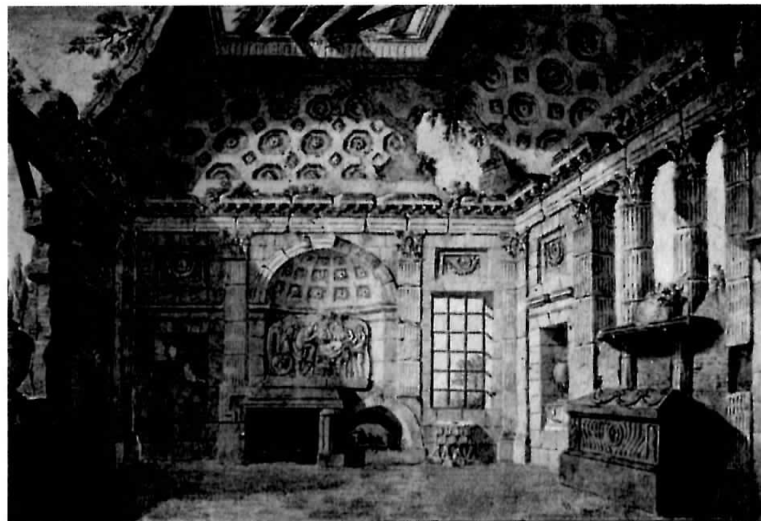
To frame the scene in the valley he erected walls of new, battered stone and embellished the brick road-bridge with a chipped cornice so that it assumed the appearance of an archway in a city wall. Strolling through the ferns we imagine that the valley has filled with the sediment of centuries, and wonder what treasures lie concealed below the damp earth. In fact, Wyattville lacked pedestals: twelve of the columns had come without their bases, because of the depth of the Libyan sands. He relied upon his audience to imagine what was missing: that is a rule of the game. A ruin is a dialogue between an incomplete reality and the imagination of the spectator; as they strolled between the colonnades his visitors would recall the Roman Forum, Ephesus, or Palmyra, each completing a picture of their own. His solution is masterly, perhaps more imaginative than the design of Leptis Magna itself.

The enthusiasm for erecting mock-classical ruins was at its strongest in France, Germany and Britain but the first were erected in Italy itself – perhaps surprisingly, given the quantity of real ones available. The earliest record is of a two-storey house in the Duke of Urbino's park at Pesaro of *c.*1530, designed by the architect Girolamo Genga. This has disappeared and the earliest surviving artificial ruin – under scaffolding at the time of writing – is a bridge by Bernini at the Palazzo Barberini in Rome. Two arches cross the moat between an ante-room in the palace and the garden. The first is built as if the keystone has slipped; the second has collapsed but a wooden drawbridge is lowered in its place.

The composition was meant to give a playful *frisson* to the guests of Cardinal Barberini, perhaps when strolling into the gardens after lunch. As a termination to the vista across the bridge he proposed to re-erect a Roman obelisk which lay fractured in the courtyard.

Such patrons consciously saw themselves as turning the wheel of resurgence: Rome reborn. A rejected design for the Trevi Fountain in 1730 proposed to decorate the wall behind the fountain with a painted scene of the ruined aqueduct of the Acqua Virgo from Tivoli. The comparison of this backdrop to the gushing fountain in the foreground would have celebrated the Popes' achievements in restoring the supply of water to Rome. Thus, a ruin is placed in juxtaposition with a new building in order to tell a story, a dynamic version of 'before' and 'after'.

Rome's most beguiling artificial ruin is under lock and key, guarded by the nuns at the Convent of Santa Clara at Sta Trinità dei Monti. It is a monk's cell painted in the 1760s in *trompe-l'oeil* by the French artist Charles-Louis Clérisseau in order to represent the interior of a ruined temple. For a very long time this room was known only by the design drawings and it was assumed to have disappeared, but in the 1960s it was discovered intact by the art historians John Fleming and Thomas McCormick. The convent is reached by climbing the Spanish Steps, and entering the cloister to the side of the famous twin-towered façade of Sta Trinità dei Monti. Keys jangling in the silence, a nun leads a visitor through endless shuttered corridors, with a slow patter which is both proud and coy. At last, a plain metal door opens into the 'Ruin Room'. I had studied the design drawing at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the



Design for the Ruin Room at Sta Trinità dei Monti, Rome, by Charles-Louis Clérisseau, *c.*1766, decorated in *trompe l'oeil*, imitating a Roman temple which had become the residence of a Christian hermit.

cell was a fraction of the size this perspective view suggested, but the *trompe-l'oeil* on the walls was as fresh and colourful as in the original water-colour. Today an electric light-bulb dangles from a ceiling in which painted rotting planks split to reveal a blue sky; a bright red parrot perches on a beam. We are standing inside a Roman temple, and see countryside between the columns. The abandoned *cella* has become the home of a Christian hermit, his furniture improvised from the crumbling fragments. As Legrand described:

> the vaults and several portions of the wall have fallen apart and are held up by rotten scaffolding which seems

> to allow the sun to shine through . . . the [fireplace] is a mixture of diverse fragments, the desk a damaged antique sarcophagus, the tables and chairs, a fragment of cornice and inverted capital respectively. Even the dog, faithful guardian of this new style of furniture, is shown lodged in the debris of an arched niche.

The room was made for Father LeSueur, a monk who was also a mathematician of distinction. One *trompe-l'oeil* book is lettered NEWTON on its spine. This was his bedroom and study and we can only speculate as to why he chose to live in ruins; was it, I wonder, a reminder that his scientific studies were only a particle of dust in God's scheme? The artist Charles-Louis Clérisseau was a professional 'ruinist', the author of more than a thousand drawings of ruins. Many of these were *capricci* – playful assemblages of real fragments – and many a record of actual locations. Although he aspired to be an architect his temperament was too unstable, and he completed few commissions. He was used as a ruins consultant, advising on interiors and garden follies. Talking to him was like opening the door of an ancient tomb and breathing the ancient odour, as the art historian Winckelmann noted. 'I very much hope . . . that the noxious modern air that you are going to breathe does not invade your new productions', he wrote when Clérisseau departed Rome for Sala, near Venice, where he had been commissioned to design a garden in the style of an emperor's ruined villa for the Abbé Farsetti. There would be a private amphitheatre, a house-cum-museum for the client, and a Roman road lined with tombs and sarcophagi. Beside this new Appian Way would be a canal crossed by an ornamental

bridge, and the abbé's vista would be terminated with a monument 100 feet high. This would have been the most impressive folly in Europe, but after a prototype 15 feet high had been carved in cork Clérisseau buckled at the immensity of the task and escaped to France.

Clérisseau captivated the British students who came to Rome in the 1750s, including the two who would become the great rivals of their generation: Robert Adam and William Chambers. Adam captured the imagination of London society with his dazzling Pompeian interiors, helped by his cynical exploitation of Clérisseau's expertise. The ruinist, he told his brother, could be persuaded to follow him to Britain for just £150 to £200 a year: 'Though a French man he has no Allegria or Company, nor no thoughts of Eclat or Ambition. Thus though sensible of his own Merit (which is infinite) yet he may be managed like a lap dog.' William Chambers, by contrast, was a friendlier man than Adam, kindlier to his assistants, and in his old age fond of singing Swedish love-songs at Royal Academy dinners. He tutored George III in architecture and designed Somerset House for civil servants but his outward appearance of neo-classical correctitude concealed a subversive imagination. Chambers played the ruins game better than the more fashionable Adam, and three of his designs were the most daring experiments of their time.

Swedish by birth, Chambers had travelled to China and studied as an architect in Paris. He befriended the French students also on scholarship at the Académie Française and sketched the city's ruins on excursions with painters and sculptors. This interaction with other disciplines was a humbling but liberating experience for a professional

architect, for Chambers quickly learned that the lucid, rational solutions of the design studio are only the first chapter in the story of the building. Legrand described how at the announcement of any new excavation the young students at the Académie would run to the site, and 'when the workers in marble came to search the debris for something to make a base, a bust, a vase, and disarranged the picturesque disorder of the fragments, our two antiquaries called these *barbarian incursions into their realm*'.

A few months after Chambers arrived in the city in 1751 news came of the sudden death of Frederick, Prince of Wales. Chambers designed a mausoleum to commemorate him in the gardens of the Prince's palace at Kew. There was little chance of the design ever being built, but he put pencil to parchment in the same way that a poet might write a eulogy. The concept of a mausoleum in a landscape was a revival of the Roman practice of burying dead citizens outside the city walls, as exemplified by the Appian Way. *Siste Viator*, the inscriptions command: pause, traveller, and reflect on the virtues of the occupants. Later, Chambers was to propose the erection of the tombs of British heroes along the Bayswater Road.

In a unique innovation, Chambers made a second drawing in which he imagined how the structure might appear as a ruin in years to come, with fir-trees rooted in the fissures of its shattered dome. The drawing has puzzled scholars. Is its ruinous condition simply a device to reveal the cross-section? Was it intended to be built as a ruin, or was Chambers simply speculating on the effects of decay on a solid structure? Perhaps there was also a moral message.

Admirers of the antique saw the survival of ancient mausoleums as illustrating the triumph of virtue over Time, and so Chambers proclaimed that Prince Fred would take his place alongside the heroes of antiquity. And by the same token, his own design was worthy of joining the ruins of Rome.

When Chambers returned to Britain an important early patron was Frederick's widow, Princess Augusta, whose gardens at Kew were later to become the Botanical Gardens. He embellished Kew with ornamental follies, of which the pagoda is the most celebrated. They included an archway built as a viaduct to carry people and cattle over the princess's private footpath; built in 1759, this was perhaps the earliest artificial ruin to be built in the classical style in Britain. In Chambers's own words:

> My intention was to imitate Roman antiquity, built of brick, with an incrustation of stone . . . The north front is confined between rocks, overgrown with briars and other wild plants, and topped with thickets, amongst which are seen several columns, and other fragments of buildings, and at a little distance beyond the arch is seen an antique statue of a Muse.

The arch survives today but is bald of these charms, with the Muse under lock and key in a museum. Fortunately, the scented glade of Chambers's imagination is preserved in a painting by Richard Wilson, an artist best known for his views of Italian landscapes. Wilson abetted his friend's deception: in the canvas the sky has a Mediterranean luminosity, and a Grand Tourist sketches in the shadow of a

The Ruined Arch in Kew Gardens by Richard Wilson, *c.*1761–2. This arch in imitation of the 'Roman antiquity' was a viaduct in the private estate of Augusta, widow of the Prince of Wales. It still stands in the Botanical Gardens.

cypress. Indeed, until 1948 the painting was thought to be a view taken in the Borghese Gardens.

But Chambers's most ironic illustration is a design for the interior of a villa at Roehampton, seen in a drawing which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Parksted was built for the Earl of Bessborough and intended to be glimpsed across Richmond Park as if it were an antique temple in a grove of trees. A basement room displayed Bessborough's collection of china, and its vaulted ceiling was to be painted with a *trompe-l'oeil* pergola, a design based on the decoration of a Roman tomb. But there was a second level of *trompe-l'oeil*: the design drawing was itself an illusion,

pretending to be a piece of paper which had been ripped in two. The device flattered Bessborough's recollections of his own Grand Tour to Italy: fingering the drawing he must have felt that he was recovering some fragment of antiquity.

What could be more 'postmodernist' than this drawing? If Sterne's *Tristam Shandy* prefigures the postmodernist novel, then Chambers's drawings predate every ironic trick in American postmodernist architecture of the 1990s – except one: Wonderworks in Orlando, Florida. This Museum of Natural Phenomena was designed by architect Terry Nicholson to resemble a courthouse from the Bahamas which has been picked up by a hurricane and dropped, upside-down, on to a citrus-packing warehouse in downtown Orlando. Designed in the neo-Palladian colonial

Wonderworks: The Museum of Natural Phenomena, in Orlando, Florida.

style, the courthouse is literally upside-down, with palm-trees dangling from the sky. The pediment shatters the pavement like a meteorite and visitors enter through a fissure in the masonry to stroll over the ceilings. The Rev. William Gilpin had declared in one of his Picturesque guidebooks of the 1770s that a country house in the symmetrical, boxy Palladian style could only be transformed into a Picturesque object by seizing a mallet and battering one half into a pile of rubble. He had never seen a hurricane.

In the eighteenth century the boldest experiments with classical ruins were in Germany, where the rulers of rival principalities competed in lavishness in the design of palaces, churches, gardens and garden follies. In 1730 Prince-Bishop Damian Hugo von Schonborn of Speyer built a hermitage in the garden of his palace at Waghausel in the form of a dilapidated wooden roof on stone columns, the ceiling painted in 'hermit fashion' in the manner of Clérisseau's ruin room. At Bayreuth the Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth created a series of cells in the woods in which members of the court would live the lives of Carthusian monks. In 1735 he gave the gardens to his wife Wilhelmine, who added a ruinous amphitheatre for the performance of open-air opera. She was the sister of Frederick the Great, who created the remarkable *ruinenberg* at his palace of Sanssouci in 1748. The summit of a hill was levelled to form a shallow circular amphitheatre, across which a triple-storeyed arcade of the Colosseum faced a circular Doric temple, a row of Ionic columns and a rugged obelisk.

An extravagant response to Gilpin's suggestion of how to transform Palladian formality into Picturesque disorder was a design commissioned in 1791 by Prince Wilhelm I of

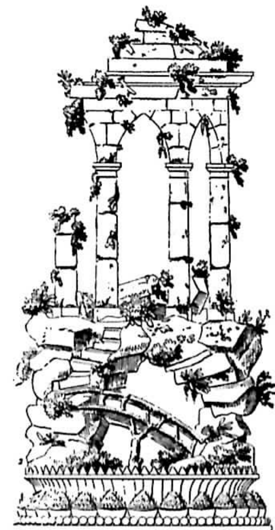
Hesse-Kassel, imagining the transformation of the central block of his newly built neo-classical Schloss Wilhelmslöhe into a romantic ruin. Was this just a visual amusement, or did the fantasy of demolishing portico, staircase and halls of state indicate some desperate desire to escape the duty of government? The design remained on paper, but the prince commissioned the same architect to build a ruinous mock-medieval castle in the depths of his hunting park. The crumbling curtain walls of Schloss Löwenburg suggested that the castle had been abandoned, but concealed behind the parapets was a suite of apartments decorated in a style that appealed to the prince's fantasy of himself as a knight of the Middle Ages. This was his private love nest, where he and his favourite mistress escaped the ceremony of court. The Löwenburg is a happy echo of Henry II and Rosamund Clifford at Woodstock, and also the perfect illustration of how a garden ruin played the role of *alter ego* to the palace of state in the principalities of eighteenth-century Germany.

The most magical artificial ruin in eighteenth-century Europe was the theatre built in the garden of the Lazienski Palace in Warsaw by Stanislaus Augustus, the King of Poland. Beside the lake was a semicircular amphitheatre with twenty tiers of seating. The stage was on the island, and encircled by trees so that the idyllic scene of antiquity was invisible to anyone but the theatre audience. The design of the proscenium was based upon that excavated at Herculaneum, and a bricolage of Corinthian columns receded into the woodland. The theatre was inaugurated in 1791 with a performance of the ballet *Cleopatra*, no doubt chosen to suit the scenery. With lamps suspended from the trees, and the dancers in their robes ferried to the island, the

scene must have been as seductive as a tableau painted by Claude or Watteau. That evening was a blissful climax to the cult of the ruin in eighteenth-century Europe.

Stanislaus Augustus believed that art could create an identity for his troubled nation, but two years later Poland was invaded by Russia and Prussia, partitioned, and wiped from the map of Europe. The last King of Poland died in exile in St Petersburg, and his people endured two decades of bloodshed caused by revolution and foreign wars. In the years which followed, how many of the audience wished that – like sailors swimming to join the mermaids – they had crossed the water and entered forever the magical illusion of Arcadia?

There was a tragic finale to the cult of the ruin in France also. Gardens in the Picturesque, English style had become a fashionable mania in the two decades before the Revolution of 1789, and their folly-ruins came to symbolise, in turn, the decadence of the rulers, the failed hopes of the Enlightenment philosophers, and the brutality of the Revolutionaries. The flakiness of the *ancien régime* was exemplified by the gâteaux in the form of classical ruins which were served to the royal family by the great chef Antoine Carême, or by the Picturesque imitation farm which was created for Marie-Antoinette beside a lake in the grounds of Versailles. When she and her ladies-in-waiting grew bored of the ritual of court they played at being shepherdesses in an idle mockery of the toils of agricultural life. Aristocrats and financiers joined the royal family in lavishing fortunes on creating *jardins anglais* at their châteaux around Paris. The Comte d'Albion married a financier's daughter and built such a full catalogue of follies



Design by Antoine Carême for a cake served to the French royal family. Carême's interest in architecture was such that he presented a plan for the reconstruction of St Petersburg to Czar Alexander I.

at his château of Franconville that in three years he was bankrupt and divorced: a Temple of the Muses, a hermitage, funerary monuments, a Devil's Bridge, a column in honour of Mirabeau, a grotto dedicated to Edward Young (the author of *Night Thoughts*), the god Pan, two rustic huts, a windmill, a pond and a fisherman's house, a shepherd's hut, an obelisk, a pyramid, and an island dedicated to a Dutch doctor named Boerhave.

The French were fonder of philosophical inscriptions than the English. The most philosophical of gardens was Ermenonville where the Marquis de Girardin threw down the walls of his rectangular, formal garden and erected more

than fifty symbolic follies in Arcadian countryside. Girardin had toured English gardens but he was also a disciple of Rousseau, devoutly following his belief in the instinctive goodness of Nature. He raised his children according to the lessons of the novel *Emile*, and built a replica of the philosopher's mountain hut. Rousseau died in Girardin's care in 1778, and was buried at Ermenonville in a neo-Roman sarcophagus on an island of poplars. He was the first man to be buried in a garden since antiquity, but so popular did this cult become that the garden soon became an Elysian Fields of sarcophagi. There is even the tomb of a deranged English disciple who swam across to Rousseau's grave and there blew his brains out.

On the hill overlooking the lake stood a circular temple which at first sight appeared to be a ruin but was, in fact, only half-built. The 'Temple of Philosophy' had the names of six thinkers inscribed on its six columns – Newton, Descartes, William Penn, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire – and symbolised the Marquis's hope that the Enlightenment was a work-in-progress, its topping-out still to come. The scene of lake, sarcophagus, poplars and temple was created by the landscape painter Hubert Robert, who was perhaps the principal figure in the Picturesque taste of the court. According to a friend, Robert was 'neither an architect, nor a gardener, he is a poet and a painter, who composes landscapes'. 'Robert (Hubert) called Robert des Ruines, painter' was written on his death certificate in 1808. His career during the Revolution shows the cruel final twist in the tale of the Picturesque – and how by dramatic irony the unfinished Temple of Philosophy became a real ruin.

Robert had arrived as an art student in Rome in 1754, at

the age of twenty-one, and remained there for eleven years for, as he wrote on one drawing, ROMA QUANTA FUIT / IPSA RUINA DOCET. ('The ruins themselves teach us how great Rome was.') When he and his friend Fragonard made an excursion to Hadrian's villa at Tivoli they scratched their names into the plasterwork, as Chateaubriand had seen, and the sketches they made in crayon are some of the most exquisite drawings of ruins ever committed to paper. On his return to France he exhibited the first of hundreds of ruinscapes at the Paris Salon in 1767 and was hailed by Denis Diderot as a new voice of *vanitas*. 'The ideas aroused within me by ruins are lofty', wrote Diderot in his review of the exhibition. 'Everything vanishes, everything perishes, everything passes away; the world alone remains, time alone continues. How old this world is! I walk between these two eternities. . . . What is my ephemeral existence compared to that of this crumbling stone?'

The philosopher was soon disillusioned by his protégé's liveliness: 'He wants to earn ten *louis* in a morning; he is lavish, his wife is chic.' In a succession of canvases his contemporaries saw the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, the Roman structure which was the model for the Temple of Philosophy at Ermenonville, change its form in a blur of inventive variations: the circular structure was domed, thatched, then open to the sky; its columns were Doric, Ionic and Corinthian; it was placed on a cliff or a lake, and then became a hovel for beggars, a refuge for bandits, a windmill, and the bubbling source of a spring at which peasants wash their rags. . . . Robert painted with astonishing rapidity and facility. He was a warm-hearted and lovable man, who never shared Diderot's interest in the

metaphysical meaning of ruins. To him, the depiction of mouldering grandeur was a means to pay for a new silk dress for his wife for that evening's ball.

It required a revolution to introduce dark undertones to Robert's ruins. Robert was imprisoned in the Terror, implicated by the presence of his pictures in every salon of the *ancien régime*. Even in gaol he painted and painted, alternating between sombre studies of prisoners condemned to the guillotine and escapist fantasies of Arcadia. Materials were short, and still surviving in the Musée Carnavalet are several examples of prison crockery painted with ruins, waterfalls and shepherds. When he was released in July 1794, he found that Paris was suddenly littered with brand-new ruins of palaces and churches plundered and desecrated. The Russian envoy noted the irony in a letter to Catherine the Great: 'One must presume that Robert must find himself like a *coq en pâte* [in clover]. . . . On each side that he turns he finds his genre supreme, and the most beautiful and the most fresh ruins in the world.' However, Robert's priority was to paint the heroic events of the Revolution in order to win favour with the regime: he recorded the Bastille being demolished; the coffins of the French kings being exhumed from the crypt of the Abbey of Saint-Denis in order to celebrate the first anniversary of the abolition of monarchy; the ceremonial procession of the urn containing Rousseau's ashes from the garden at Ermenonville to the new, secular temple of the Pantheon in Paris. He succeeded, and a year after his release was appointed to the Committee superintending the conversion of this royal palace into a museum showing the royal collection of art and antiquities. It is impossible to know the

true feelings of this old and impoverished man whose world had been turned upside down, and it is only the famous view of the *Louvre in Ruins* which gives us an inkling of his inner confusion. At the Paris Salon of 1796 Robert exhibited a design showing the remodelling of the Grand Galerie which runs parallel to the banks of the Seine into a top-lit picture gallery of apparently endless length. Its pendant projected the same view in ruins. An artist is drawing the statue of Apollo while peasants burn picture-frames for fuel. Every detail of this composition – the vault in fragments, the vegetation, artists sharing the ruin with peasants – was

Imaginary View of the Grand Galerie of the Louvre in Ruins by Hubert Robert, 1796. This futuristic view is the first example of an artist imagining how an existing structure might appear after a future cataclysm.

transferred from his Roman scenes in order to represent the future of Paris. In the rubble were three masterpieces, each intact: the Apollo Belvedere, with the bust of Raphael at its feet, and a 'Slave' by Michelangelo. In times of turmoil the immortality of art seemed the only certainty.

Robert was the first artist to paint an existing building in ruins. This unprecedented image may have been influenced by the Comte de Volney's *Les Ruines, ou Méditation sur les révolutions des empires*, published in Paris in 1791. Volney was a deputy in the National Assembly that had been formed

Frontispiece to *Les Ruines* by the Comte de Volney (1791), engraved by Martini.

in 1789, and a leading intellectual light of the Revolution. As a young traveller he had written the archaeological study *Voyage en Syrie* and he began *Les Ruines* by recalling a solitary evening in the magnificent desolation of Palmyra: '*Je vous salue, ruines solitaires, tombeaux saints, murs silencieux!*' Seated on a hillside, he surveyed the vast ruins on the valley floor and imagined Palmyra in its prime as the great entrepôt of desert traders during the Roman Empire. 'Where are they now, the ramparts of Nineveh, the walls of Babylon, the fleets of Tyre?' And what will happen on the 'banks of the Seine, of the Thames, of the Zyder-zee'? His soliloquy on the cruelty of Time and the inevitability of ruin is silenced by a genie who appears from the ruins and commands an end to such sentimental clichés. Ruin is not an inevitable cycle in Nature, the spirit explains, nor is it a law of God. Ruin is the consequence of human pride, greed and stupidity. It was not Nature or God or Time which laid waste to Palmyra but man, and man alone. The genie whirls Volney high into the sky to show him how the surface of the globe is scarred by war, plunder and exploitation. The French Revolution is the opportunity for the enlightenment of mankind and its creation of a universal, prosperous peace. Volney's epiphany in Palmyra was a prologue to his manifesto for a 'general assembly of the nations' governed by 'a pyramid of natural law'. Whatever his views on Volney's political agenda, Robert's fantasy of the Louvre might have been suggested by the writer's image of ruins on the banks of the River Seine.

The cruellest inversion of the *ancien régime*'s pleasure in follies was *Le Jardin Elysée des Monuments Français*, a subject Robert painted four times. This was an assemblage

of funerary monuments salvaged by Alexandre Lenoir from churches and châteaux after their vandalisation by the Revolutionaries and placed inside the cloisters and gardens of the redundant convent of the Petits-Augustins. They included the tombs from the abbey of Saint-Denis, where the French kings had been buried since the Middle Ages. Lenoir placed the monuments between trees in the style of Ermenonville, intending the effect of '*la douce mélancolie qui parle à l'âme sensible*' ('the sweet melancholy which speaks to the sensitive soul'). In the manner of a capriccio by Clérisseau – or of William Stukeley's garden hermitage – each of the monuments in the Elysian garden was, in fact, a Picturesque assembly of fragments from various sources. But all the charms of eighteenth-century taste could not obscure the tragic implications of ruins. Indeed, the Royalist Chateaubriand was later to write: 'I cannot better depict society in 1789 and 1790 than by likening it to the collection of ruins and tombs of all ages heaped pell-mell, after the Terror, in the cloisters of the Petits-Augustins.'

In 1818 a *divorcée* named Mme Hugo came to live in an apartment on the third floor of No. 18 rue des Petits-Augustins, a house created inside the shell of the convent. Her son Victor was eighteen years old, and already displaying a precocious brilliance as a poet. Although he was to die the hero of Europe's workers, the young Victor Hugo was a fervent and vocal supporter of the restored Bourbons. His brother Abel was also a Royalist, and published his political theories in a book named *Les Tombeaux de Saint-Denis*, its central image the cruel Elysium visible from their windows.

An elderly visitor who frequently climbed the stairs of No. 18 was a cousin of Mme Hugo, the Comte de Volney. Two decades of bloodshed, destruction and darkness had followed the bright new dawn in which he wrote his *Les Ruines*. As he had once looked down on Palmyra, now he looked down on this silent garden of ruins with the young Victor Hugo at his side. What did Volney's genie say now? Perhaps Hugo's poem, 'Before the Arc de Triomphe' is a last echo of that evening in Palmyra. It is a vision of Paris in years to come:

> When the banks where the water breaks on sonorous bridges
> Are covered once again with the murmuring reeds . . .
> When the Seine flows on over obstacles of stone
> Eroding some old dome which has tumbled into its stream . . .

Notes

The place of publication is London, unless otherwise stated.

I *Who Killed Daisy Miller?*
Michiel Sweerts is one of the most enigmatic and admired Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, the subject of several studies by Rolf Kultzen. Born in Brussels in 1618, his training as an artist remains a mystery but by 1646 he was recorded as living in Rome; on his return from Brussels in 1656 he opened a life-drawing academy and at the same time began to reveal his religious fanaticism; it is this, I imagine, which explains the painting in the Rijksmuseum. Sweerts joined a party of Catholic missionaries travelling through Syria to the Far East, and he died in Goa in 1664.

For the disappearance of classical Rome, the *disabitato*, and the appearance of the ruins to Christian pilgrims in the early Middle Ages, see Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312–1308* (New Jersey, 1980). Rodolfo Lanciani (1847–1929) drew his conclusions in *The Destruction of Ancient Rome* (1906) and his letters to the fine arts journal *The Athenaeum* were published as *Notes from Rome*, edited by Anthony L. Cubberley (British School at Rome, 1988). These are the best eye-witness accounts of excavation in the years after unification; Lanciani was one of the leading archaeologists of the period, but had an eye to the

Picturesque beauties which have since disappeared. *The Eagle and the Spade* by Ronald Ridley (Cambridge, 1992) is a vivid study of the first systematic excavations in the Forum, those made during the Napoleonic occupation of Rome from 1809–14. Ridley (p. 141) describes the French plan of 1812 to turn the Forum into an 'English garden', referred to in Chapter Six.

For a narrative of visitors' reactions to the Colosseum in visitors' eyes, see Peter Quenell, *The Colosseum* (London and New York, 1973), which also includes an anthology of their descriptions; for a study of its design, G. Cozzo, *The Colosseum* (Rome, 1971).

Among the biographies of Edgar Allan Poe the best analysis of the poem 'The Coliseum' and its relationship to *Politian* and *MS Found in a Bottle* is Kenneth Silverman (*Edgar Allan Poe*, 1992), pp. 92, 115. The letter to a friend relating to 'man's advance towards perfection' written in 1844 is quoted in Jeffrey Meyers, *Edgar A. Poe* (1992), p. 293, as are D. H. Lawrence's observations on the author. Meyers discusses the background to *Politian* (p. 77), extracts from which Poe published after his appointment as editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in December 1835.

Chateaubriand published the final volume of *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* in 1850, and it was translated into English by Alexander Teixera de Mattos in 1902 (Freemantle).

Alex Scobie's definitive book *Hitler's State Architecture* (Philadelphia, 1990) studies all aspects of the dictator's interest in classical architecture, and reveals his obsession with ruins.

Doré's image of the New Zealander appeared in *London*, a book of his views of the modern city published in 1872 and accompanied by text by Blanchard Ferrold. The metaphor was conceived by Thomas Macaulay in his review of Von Ranke's *History of the Papacy* published in *The Edinburgh Review*, October 1840.

II *A Perverse Pleasure*

For the aqueducts, see *The Waters of Rome* by H. V. Morton (1966). Beckford's descriptions of Rome are in *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*, a travel book which he published in 1779 but soon after suppressed; Robert Gemmett edited a version (New Jersey, 1971).

III *Haunted Houses*

The poem of the soldier's return is translated by Arthur Waley in *170 Chinese Poems* (London, 1923). Several of the poems chosen by Waley have ruins as their subject and he notes that by the T'ang dynasty (618–905 AD) the re-visiting of a ruined city or old home is an established literary trope.

Emily Ruete, Princess Salme of Zanzibar and Oman, wrote her *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* in German; a translation was recently published by the eccentric and wonderful Gallery bookshop in Stone Town, Zanzibar.

The best study of Byron at Newstead aside from Leslie Marchand's standard biography of 1971 is the catalogue edited by Haidee Jackson for the exhibition held at Newstead Abbey in 1998, 'Ruinous Perfection'.

IV *Ephesus without an Umbrella*

Richard Holmes's study of the Baths of Caracalla and

Prometheus Unbound is in *Shelley: The Pursuit* (1974), pp. 489–509.

Flaubert's letter on Thebes was written to Louis Bouilhet on 2 June 1850 and is published in *Selected Letters*, ed. Geoffrey Wall (Harmondsworth, 1997), p. 149.

The rebuilding of Noto is the subject of an excellent book by Stephen Tobriner (1982).

The Roman Journals of Ferdinand Gregorovius (1821–91) were translated into English by Mrs Gustavus Hamilton in 1911.

V *An Exemplary Frailty*

The relationship between architectural decay and human mortality is analysed by Dr Roger Bowdler in 'A Sad Prospect to the Soul' in *The Cult of the Ruin*, the Proceedings of the Georgian Group Symposium of 1998 (2001: to be published). The discussion of the seventeenth century is based on Bowdler's work.

The Tate's picture of Hadleigh Castle is a full-size sketch, and the final version which he exhibited at the Royal Academy is in the Paul Mellon Center for British Art, Connecticut. The episode is described in *The Later Paintings and Drawings of John Constable* by Graham Reynolds (Yale, 1984), pp. 199–202. The castle is on the Thames shore, near Southend-on-Sea.

For Walter Scott and Williamina Forbes I paraphrase A. N. Wilson, *A Life of Walter Scott* (1996 edn.), pp. 60–64.

VI *Time's Shipwreck*

Goths and Vandals by M. S. Briggs (1952) remains the best overview on how attitudes to medieval buildings have

changed in the centuries since their Dissolution, and is particularly vivid on the sixteenth century; he quotes the letter from Lewes.

It would be tedious to list all the examples from which I tried to construct a composite, but I would mention a few. John Aislabie of Studley Royal also built a house overlooking the ruins of Waverley Abbey, Surrey, which he landscaped, and he collaborated with John Vanbrugh on the campaign to save the Holbein Arch on Whitehall (see C. Woodward, 'A Pre-History of Conservation', in *Transactions of the Society for Studies in the Conservation of Historic Buildings*, 1995). Rev. William Gilpin found the gable ends of Tintern Abbey too 'regular' and suggested that a 'mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?) might be of service in fracturing them'. This was not done, although the stone pulpitum across the nave was removed in the nineteenth century in order to open the vista. The only examples of the smashing of window tracery in order to enhance a vista are at Guisborough Priory and Kenilworth Castle: see Joe Mordaunt Crook's introduction to the reprint (Leicester, 1970) of Charles Lock Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival*, 1872. Examples of the re-erection of Gothic ruins are at Shobdon in Herefordshire, and the removal of pieces of Netley Abbey to Cranbury Park in Hampshire (see C. Woodward, 'Ruins as Follies', *Country Life*, 8 October 1998).

Great Romantic Ruins of England and Wales by Brian Bailey (New York, 1984) is a gazetteer of historic ruins of all types, including abbeys, illustrated with excellent photographs by his wife Rita. For a thorough study of twentieth-century attitudes to the preservation of ruins by archaeologists, see Gill Chitty, 'A Prospect of Ruins' in

Transactions of the Society for Studies in the History of Conservation, 1993, pp. 43–60.

There are many books on eighteenth-century gardens but the most eloquent and incisive overviews are *The Picturesque* by David Watkin (1982) and Mavis Batey and David Lambert, *The English Garden Tour* (1990). Watkin explains the fictive way of seeing, Batey and Lambert the visitors' participation in its delights.

Sir John Vanbrugh's letter is transcribed in *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, ed. Geoffrey Webb (1928), pp. 29–30. For a brief account of the Woodstock Manor episode, see *The Work of John Vanbrugh* by Geoffrey Beard (1986), pp. 37–50.

There is a literary analysis of John Dyer and a succinct biography in Belinda Humphrey, *John Dyer* (Cardiff, 1980). *Grongar Hill* was reprinted by Stourton Press in 1983 with illustrations by John Piper.

The best single studies of individual ruins are of the folly at Fawley Court by Geoffrey Tyack (*Country Life*, 20 April 1989) and by David Adshead, 'The Design and Building of the Gothic Folly at Wimpole, Cambridgeshire' in *The Burlington Magazine*, February 1998, pp. 76–83. The suggestion that the latter castle was built to celebrate the fall of a 'Gothic' political order was made by David Stewart in *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of America* (1997).

The Rev. Clubbe as antiquarian and wit is the subject of 'John Clubbe and the Antiquities of Wheatfield' by Alison Shell in *The Book Trade and its Customers 1450–1900*, ed. Arnold Hunt (Winchester, 1997). Stuart Piggott wrote the biography of William Stukeley (2nd edn., 1985).

Bacon's metaphor of 'Time's Shipwreck' is in *Advancement of Learning*, II, section 1. The metaphor is that of Vossius in *De philologia liber*, 'Antiquities are the remains of ancient times, similar to the debris of a shipwreck'.

For the Jealous Wall at Belvedere see the chapter on 'Ruins and Eye-Catchers' in *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland* by James Howley (New Haven, 1993), and *Titles* by Leo Daley (1981), pp. 42–67, for an accurate account of the scandal.

VII *Serious Follies*

Virginia Water is studied in Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks at Windsor* (New Haven and London, 1997), pp. 457–61, and the most detailed study of the stones from the archaeological point of view is by G. E. Chambers, 'The "Ruins" at Virginia Water' in the *Journal of the Berkshire Archaeological Society*, 1953–4.

The catalogue of an exhibition, *Visions of Ruin*, which I curated at Sir John Soane's Museum in 1999, with essays by David Watkin, Helen Dorey and myself, studied English 'follies' in greater detail.

The artificial ruin in the Duke of Urbino's park at Pesaro – long vanished – is described and illustrated in Antonio Pinelli and Orietta Rossi, *Genga Architetto* (Rome, 1971), pp. 246–51. The unexecuted project of *c.*1730 for the backdrop to the Trevi Fountain is recorded in a drawing in the Kunstbibliothek, Berlin, reproduced in Bruce Boucher, *Italian Baroque Sculpture* (1998), p. 107.

The ruin room at Sta Trinità dei Monti is on pp. 103–12 of Thomas McCormick's monograph on the artist, *Charles-*

Louis Clérisseau and the Genesis of Neo-Classicism (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1990).

William Chambers was the subject of a monograph by John Harris (London, 1970), and the mausoleum for the Prince of Wales and the Kew Gardens are discussed on pp. 23–4 and 32–9.

For German follies, including Schloss Löwenburg, see Günter Hartmann, *Die Ruine im Landschaftsgarten* (Worms, 1981).

The late Jean de Cayeux was the authority on Hubert Robert, on whom there is no good study in English; his daughter Mme Roland Michel has the archive at her gallery in Paris and is the continuing expert on dating his pictures. De Cayeux's biography (1989) is published by Fayard, and in 1987 he studied Robert's complex role in the design and recording of Picturesque gardens in *Hubert Robert et les Jardins* (Editions Herscher), a book which also describes Ermenonville and illustrates the garden of the Petits-Augustin. The Musée de Valence has a great holding of Robert's work, and in 1989 they studied his enigmatic response to the Revolution: *Hubert Robert et la Révolution* (Valence, 1989). Marie-Catherine Sahut curated the exhibition *Le Louvre du Hubert Robert* (Paris, 1979), which is the definitive discussion of the 'Louvre in Ruins' pictures. Mlle Stephanie Thuilliez is writing a PhD on Robert at the Sorbonne which will explore these ideas further, as in her article 'La poétique de la variété: les ruines et la terre' in *Bulletin de l'Association des Historiens de l'Art Italien* (Paris, 1996). Diderot's review of the Salon of 1767 is published in Diderot, *Salons*, ed. Jean Seznec and Jean Adhemar (Oxford, 1963), pp. 228–9. I am grateful to Janine Barrier

of the Sorbonne for her introductions to French *ruinistes* at a memorable dinner in Paris.

For the Hugos at No. 18 Rue des Petits-Augustins see Graham Robb, *Victor Hugo* (1997).

VIII *Self-portrait in Ruins*

See *Visions of Ruin* (1999), which includes 'Crude Hints Towards a History of My House' transcribed and interpreted by Helen Dorey. Daniel Abramson's discussion of the 'Bank in Ruins' is in his PhD thesis on *The Building of the Bank of England 1731–1833* (Harvard, 1993), pp. 425–9. For more on the tomb and its relationship to posterity, see the article by R. Bowdler and C. Woodward in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1999).

IX *The Ozymandias complex*

For Thomas Coryate and his *Crudities* see Michael Strachan, *Thomas Coryate* (Oxford, 1982). Like Macaulay (1953), Strachan discusses the confusion between Priam's Troy and Alexandria Troias, a misunderstanding which continued into the nineteenth century owing to the impreciseness of ancient geographers such as Strabo and the absence of any visible remains at the real site. Julian (332–63) visited Troy before he became Emperor, and his description of Troy is in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, translated by Wilmer Cave Wright (Cambridge and London, 1990).

The continuing potency of religious imagery in eighteenth-century England is demonstrated by Terry Friedman in 'The Eighteenth-century Disaster Print' in *Proceedings of the Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1996), in which he discusses how the

destruction of churches by fire or structural collapse was interpreted by reference to the Bible. The revival of Apocalyptic imagery during the French Revolution is explored in David Bindman, 'The English Apocalypse' in *The Apocalypse*, ed. Frances Carey (1990), the catalogue to the British Museum exhibition.

For John Martin's imaginary reconstruction of Babylon see Henrietta McCall, 'Rediscovery and Aftermath' from *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 184–213.

H. G. Schenk, 'The Mind of the European Romantics' (1966, pp. 30–45) discusses the foreboding of future ruin in post-Waterloo Europe, and it is he who argues that 'it would seem that the spirit of foreboding has never been so widespread' at that period. Wetzel's vision of goblins was in *Magischer Spiegel* of 1806, while the remarks of the Bavarian scholar Schlichtegroll (p. 32) on Iceland were recorded by Atterbom. Professor David Skilton has suggested in correspondence that we can plot a correlation between political unrest and imagery of ruin throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain, and will publish this in due course.

The relationship between the Temples of Modern and Ancient Virtue at Stowe and Joseph Addison's dream was revealed by George Clarke in 'Grecian Taste and Gothic Virtue' in *Apollo* (1973), pp. 568–9. For Charlemont on the Acropolis, see the *Travels of Lord Charlemont in Greece and Turkey, 1749*, ed. W. B. Stanford and E. J. Finopoulos (1984), pp. 134–5. His biography is by Cynthia O'Connor (Cork, 1999).

Horace Walpole's letter to Horace Mann, his correspondent in Florence, was written on 24 November 1774.

For Gibbon, see Harold Bond, *The Literary Art of Edward Gibbon* (Oxford, 1960). Ralph Willett, FSA, published *A Description of the Library at Merly in the County of Dorset* (1785); it was Tim Knox who drew attention to the lost peculiarity (*Apollo*, July 2000).

In the catalogue to his controversial exhibition of Richard Wilson at the Tate Gallery (1982), pp. 217–18, David Solkin argued that the artist's Arcadian landscapes were commissioned by conservative landowners who wished to show that ruin was the inevitable consequence of an increase in trade and 'Luxury'. This is true, although one would add that mercantilists such as Ralph Willett also used the same ruins to illustrate their contrary arguments.

As regards America: see Matthew Baigell, *Thomas Cole* (New York, 1981) who proposes the idea of an American School of Catastrophe, represented by the preachers Lyman and Bigelow and Cole's friend William Cullen Bryant whose poems 'The Ages' and 'The Earth' alluded to America's destruction. Cole's thoughts on *The Course of Empire* are recorded in Louis Legrand Noble's nineteenth-century biography, reprinted by the Harvard Press in 1964. Cole never painted New York, a telling point made in a recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum which examined New York's conception of itself as an imperial city: *Art and the Empire Setting*. The catalogue is edited by Catherine Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York, 2000).

Nicholas Biddle's journal was published as *Nicholas Biddle in Greece*, ed. R. A. McNeal (Philadelphia, 1993).

Mussolini's self-projection of himself as a classical hero is discussed in 'Rome Reclaims Its Empire' by Tim Benton in *Art and Power* (1996), pp. 120–39.

X *Dust in the Air Suspended*

The story of the Millennium Cross for Dresden was told by Christopher Kenworthy in the *Telegraph*, 28 November 1998. Michael McMahon's visit to Oradour is in the *Telegraph*, 3 June 2000.

David Fraser Jenkins explains Piper's war in his superb catalogue to the exhibition at the Imperial War Museum: *John Piper: The Forties* (2000). Fraser Jenkins also wrote the catalogue to the 1984 exhibition on Piper at the Tate. Piper's essay 'Pleasing Decay' was in *Buildings and Prospects* (1948).

The final chapter of *Ruins* by Michael Felmingham and Rigby Graham (1972) has very good material on the wartime and post-war period.

Dennis Creffield's paintings of Orford Ness were published in a catalogue to the Connaught Brown exhibition in 1995, with an introduction by Jeremy Musson.

XI *The Novelist, the Fisherman and the Prince*

There are two biographies of Rose Macaulay, by her relation Constance Babington Smith (1972) and by Jane Emery (1991). Babington Smith printed the short story 'Miss Anstruther's Letters' for the first time, and chose extracts from *Pleasure of Ruins* for a book of photographs by Roloff Beny (1964).

David Gilmour has written a biography of Lampedusa which is intelligent, witty, and quite perfect (*The Last Leopard*, 1988). *The Siren* and *Places of My Infancy*, translated by Archibald Colquhoun, were published in *Two Stories and a Memory* (1962).

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For Michael and Isabel Briggs

In Ruins

Christopher Woodward

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For I know some will say, why does he treat us to descriptions of weeds, and make us hobble after him over broken stones, decayed buildings, and old rubbish?

Preface to *A Journey into Greece*
by George Wheeler (1682)

In Ruins