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YOUNGSBURY

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Youngsbury, almost unknown to art-historical literature, is a villa of striking appearance, originally more like a barn in Lombardy than a country house in Hertfordshire.¹ It stands 2½ miles north-north-east of Ware, in the parish of Standon, and is the principal house of a manor called Youngs.² The inscription 'DP 1745' cut in a string course refers to its builder, David Poole, and to the date of its construction, the former identified and the latter confirmed by Clutterbuck, the county historian.³ Arthur Young, twenty-six years later, wrote that it was 'built by Mr. Paine'.⁴

David Poole was a lawyer, originally from Liverpool. An earlier David Poole, probably his grandfather, was a merchant there and Town Bailiff in 1685; he built almshouses in Dale Street in 1688, and his house in Lord Street was licensed for dissenting worship in 1692.⁵ If the younger David Poole inherited these religious convictions, the plainness of Youngsbury reflects them. His father, Josiah Poole,⁶ Town Bailiff in 1707 and Mayor in 1718,⁷ was one of the leaders of a movement to break the government's control of Liverpool Corporation between 1729 and 1731;⁸ unsuccessful, he was ejected from the Council in 1731, with three others, including Thomas Bootle, MP and future Chancellor to Frederick, Prince of Wales.⁹ Josiah Poole evidently supported the Opposition.

David Poole, meanwhile, had been admitted to the Inner Temple on 17 March 1726.¹⁰ On 2 June 1741 he migrated to Lincoln's Inn,¹¹ and it was by that society that he was called to the Bar two days later.¹² Pupillage of fourteen years duration invites explanation, but it is possible that he had pursued

another career after his admission to the Inner Temple, and on his subsequent decision to return to the law he had been unable to find chambers there.¹³ It was evidently with the Inner Temple's consent that he transferred himself, for on that day the Bench Table agreed that he could have a certificate of his entry and his qualifications for transfer 'to another society'.¹⁴ In 1744, after three years at the Bar, he married Jane Bird, co-heiress since 1732 of the manor of Youngs. She had bought the quarter-shares of two of her sisters, Elizabeth Bird and Martha Jesson, in 1740, and in 1745 David Poole acquired the last quarter-share from the heirs of the fourth sister, Abigail Lilley, who had died c.1737.¹⁵ That was the year in which he built Youngsbury. Two years later, in 1747, he was created a Serjeant-at-law¹⁶ and became a member of Serjeant's Inn, Chancery Lane,¹⁷ of which he served as Treasurer from 1757 until his death. In 1757 he was appointed King's Serjeant.

Serjeant Poole died in 1762, and was buried in Bath Abbey.¹⁸ His widow and his son, Josiah, sold both manor and house to the Quaker banker David Barclay in 1768¹⁹ and Barclay 'very much improved and increased the mansion and estate'.²⁰ Capability Brown supplied a plan of proposals²¹, and Arthur Young's account suggests that the improvement and increase were confined to the landscape.²² Estate plans of 1768 and 1793, however, show that Barclay added a service wing at the north end of the house between those dates.²³ But a recently discovered photograph, dated 1876 (Fig.1), suggests that the south and east sides, at least, of Poole's house were unchanged.²⁴ Another photograph, probably taken



Figure 1. Youngsbury, Herts; from the south-west, 1876. *The Hon. Tony Savile.*



Figure 2. Youngsbury, Herts; from the south-east, 1896. *The Hon. Tony Savile.*



Figure 3. Youngsbury, Herts; staircase formerly at Chiswick House, Middlesex.

The Hon. Tony Savile.



Figure 4. Kirkstall Grange, Yorkshire. *Dr. Peter Leach.*

in 1896 (Fig. 2), illustrates alterations made in the previous twenty years.²⁵ The ground floor windows had been enlarged and fitted with plate glass sashes; a three-bay porch with a balustraded balcony had been added to the middle of the south elevation; and a one-storey extension had been pushed out at the south-west corner.²⁶ Interior photographs of this date show a central staircase, probably not Paine's, but doubtless replacing an original one in this location. In the 1950's, however, the staircase was replaced by one removed from Chiswick House (Fig. 3),²⁷ doubtless from one of the two wings added to Chiswick for the 5th Duke of Devonshire by John White in 1788–94.²⁸ At the same time the top storey of the Paine house was removed, and the pitched roof with its pedimented north and south terminations was replaced by a flat roof with a surrounding balustrade.

Despite these changes the surviving architecture of Serjeant Poole's house is extremely distinctive – an absolutely plain rectangle of generous proportions with conspicuously widely spaced windows. Its only ornament is a continuous stone sill band and shallow blind arches relieving the central first-floor

window and flanking ground floor windows of the south elevation. Even without the photographic evidence, it suggests an architect who was sufficiently confident of his own skill and erudition to exercise provocative restraint. The photograph reveals a low attic storey with an even greater ratio of wall to window, a roof whose pedimented gables transform the rectangular plan into that of a primitive temple, and deeply overhanging eaves supported by pairs of exaggerated Ionic modillions, each pair itself paired with another pair either side of the window lintels.

No other English architect practising in 1745 designed houses whose entire width was spanned by a pediment.²⁹ Paine, however, designed six, besides Youngsbury, which is apparently the earliest. The others are an undated (and unexecuted) proposal for the wings of Nostell Priory, Yorkshire,³⁰ Milnsbridge Hall, Yorkshire, of c.1750,³¹ Ormsby Hall, Lincolnshire of 1750–56,³² Kirkstall Grange, Yorkshire, of 1752,³³ Serlby Hall, Nottinghamshire, of 1754–73,³⁴ and St Paul's Waldenbury, Hertfordshire, of 1767.³⁵ Kirkstall Grange and the wings of Nostell and Serlby are closest to Youngsbury; their pediments surmount three-bay elevations, while the pediments

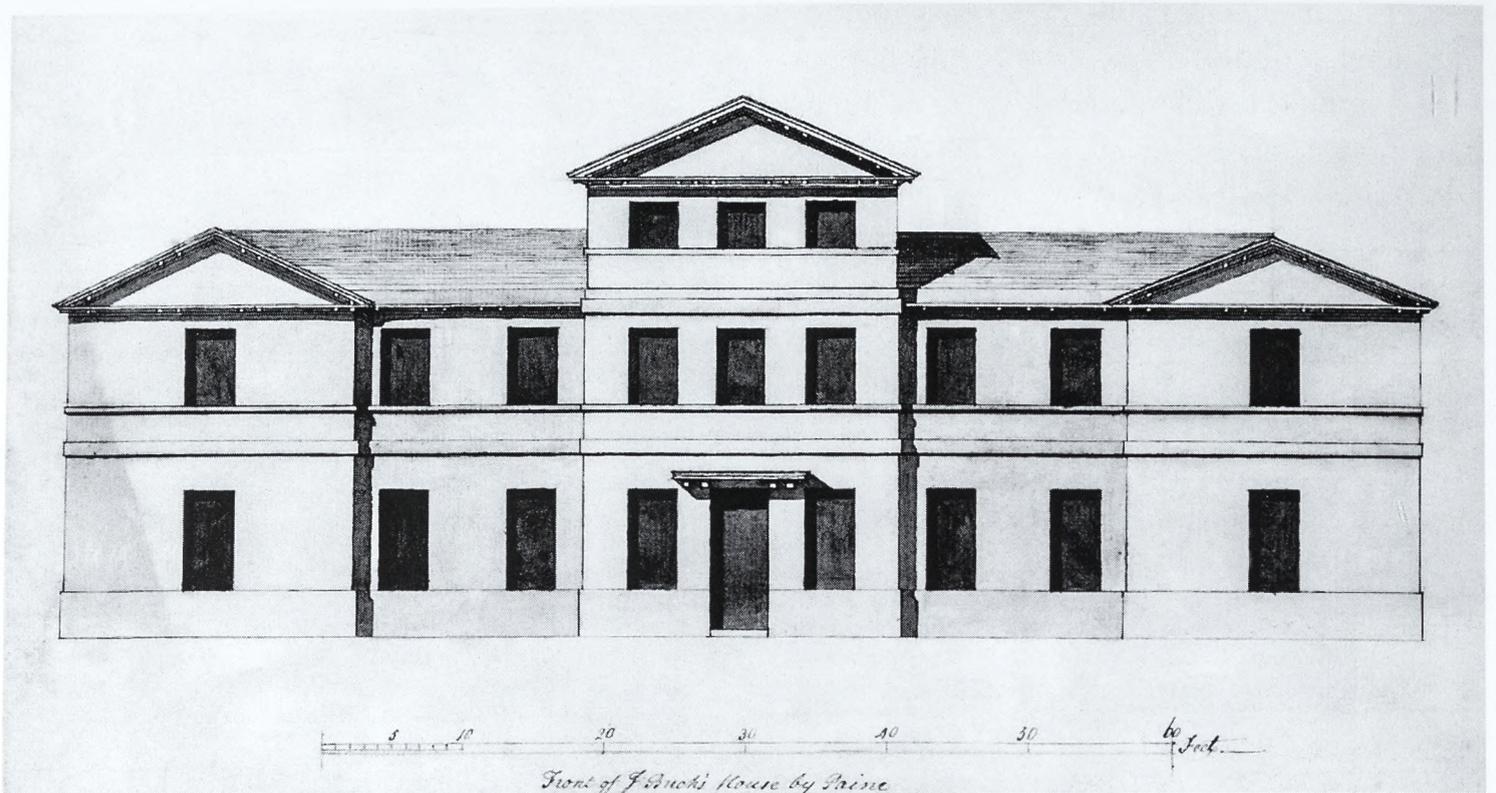


Figure 5. James Paine, proposed design for Town Hill House, Bradford, Yorkshire, c. 1764.
West Yorkshire Archive Service.

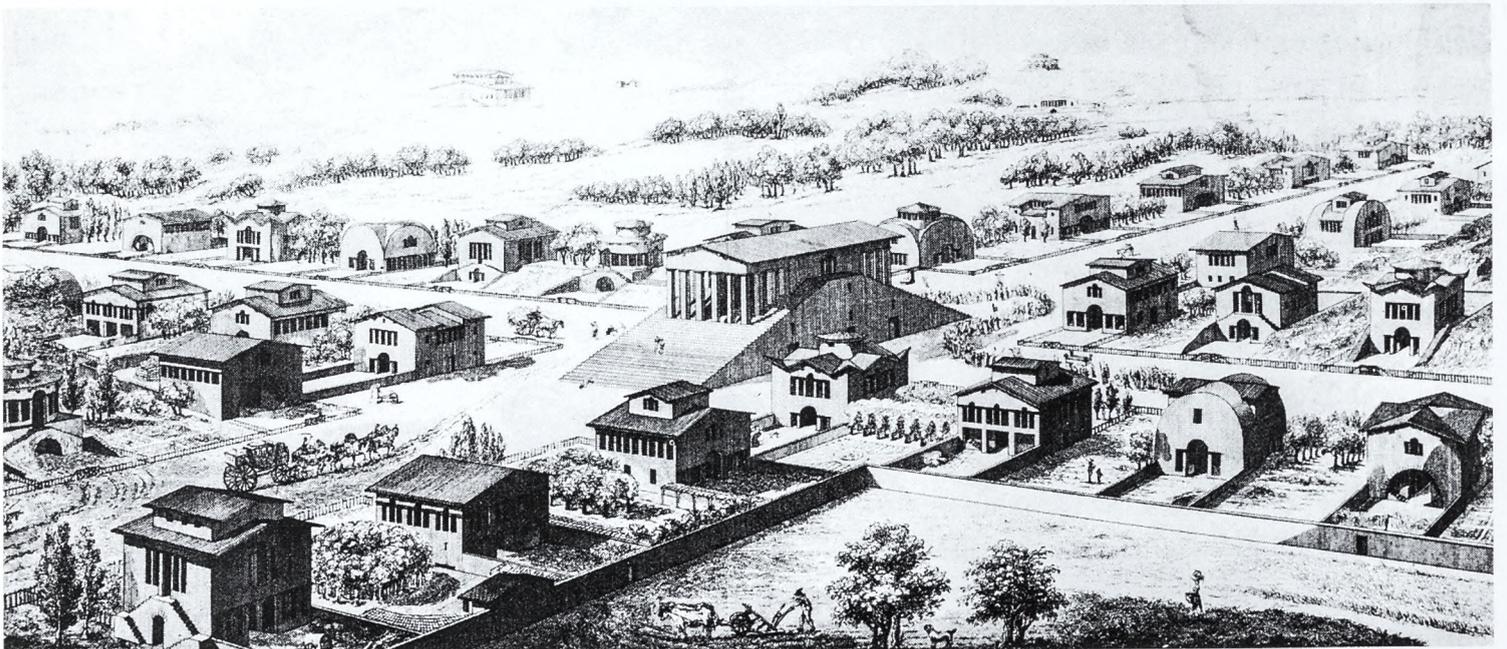


Figure 6. C-N Ledoux, proposal for village of Maupertuis. *Michel Gallet.*

of Milnsbridge and St Paul's Waldenbury surmount five-bay elevations and that of Ormsby Hall spans a more complicated elevation with a central canted bay, interpretable as either three- or five-bay. But, although all these houses have rectangular plans, only Kirkstall Grange has its pediments on the short sides, thus creating the temple illusion (Fig.4). Kirkstall Grange is the closest to Youngsbury but it has a more complex elevation, and its windows are architraved and pedimented. None of the other examples have the evidently conscious simplicity of Youngsbury, whose brick walls are, on the one hand, regularly chequered and fastidiously laid, and, on the other hand, entirely unadorned.

This remarkably austere treatment was not unique in Paine's work. It can also be seen on another previously unpublished drawing, of Town Hill House, Bradford, Yorkshire (Fig.5), designed for John Buck in 1764–8.³⁶ On an entirely different plan³⁷ Paine employed the same ornamental techniques – no architraves, but continuous sills (with the addition of plat bands), and overhanging eaves with paired modillions; seen in profile, the modillions of the central pediment are evidently Ionic, as at Youngsbury, and elsewhere apparently Tuscan. As at Youngsbury, the modillions are paired either side of windows, and in the central block they are grouped in threes above the piers between windows. And at Cowick Hall, Yorkshire, a house which he altered in 1752–60, Paine grouped the modillions in pairs directly above giant pilasters.³⁸ If the modillions represented rafter ends, the weight of the rafters would thus fall either side of the weak points. If Paine believed that this real or illusory expression of the structural behaviour of the building was desirable he may have been aware of the Abbé de Cordemoy's *Nouveau Traité de toute l'architecture*, published in 1706, the first of a series of Enlightened treatises advocating a 'rational' correspondence between ornament and structure.³⁹ Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture*, published in 1755, much indebted to the next of

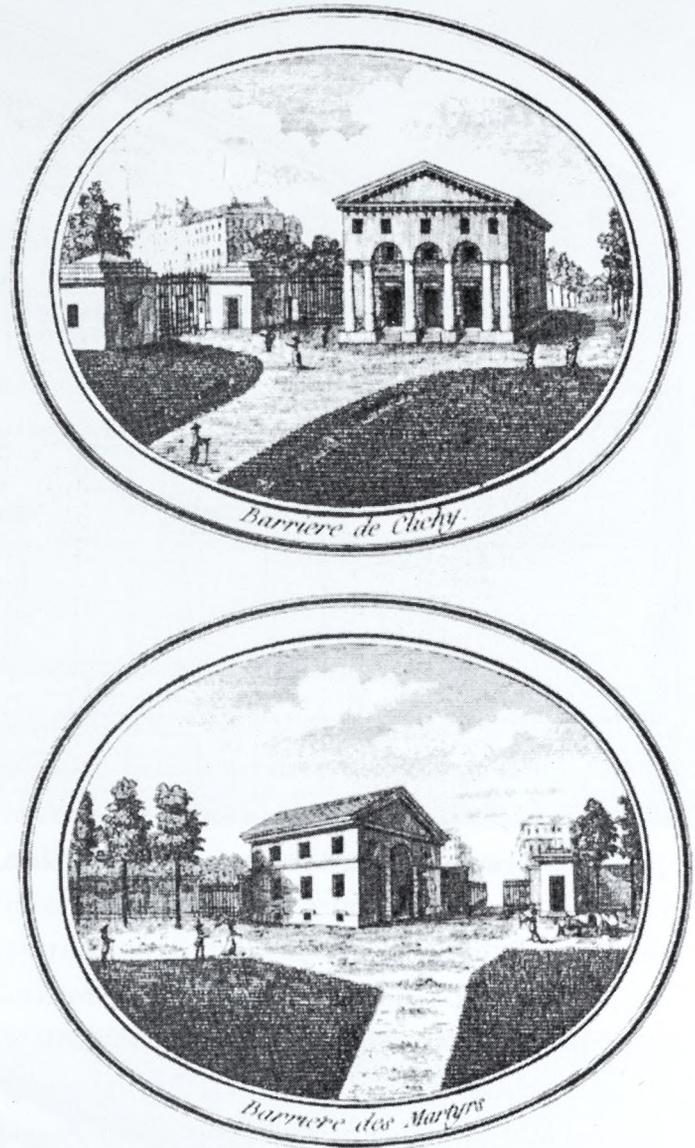


Figure 7. C-N Ledoux, Barrière de Clichy and Barrière des Martyrs, Paris. *Michel Gallet*.

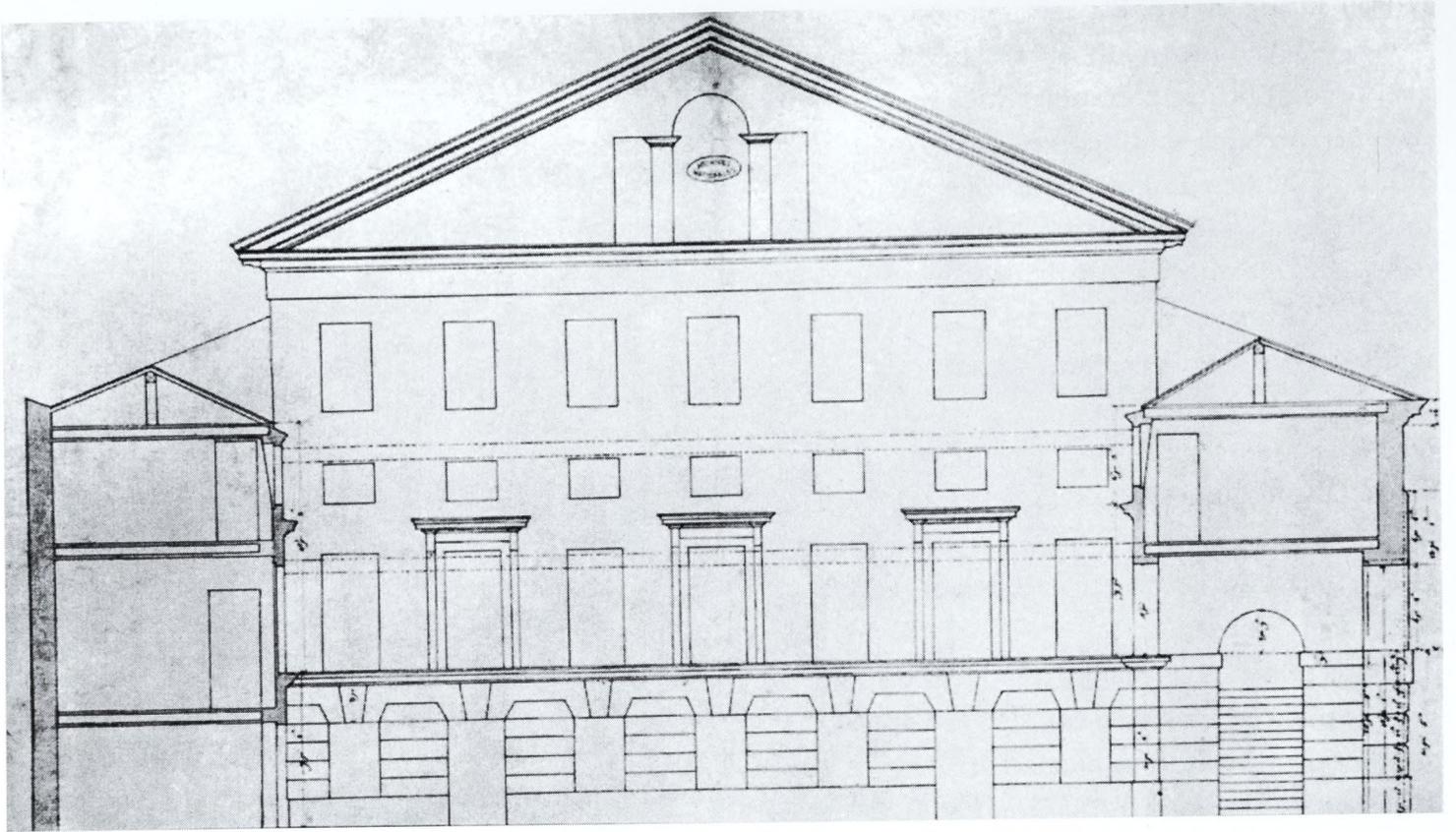


Figure 8. C-N Ledoux, proposed street elevation of house for J-B Hosten, Paris. *Michel Gallet.*

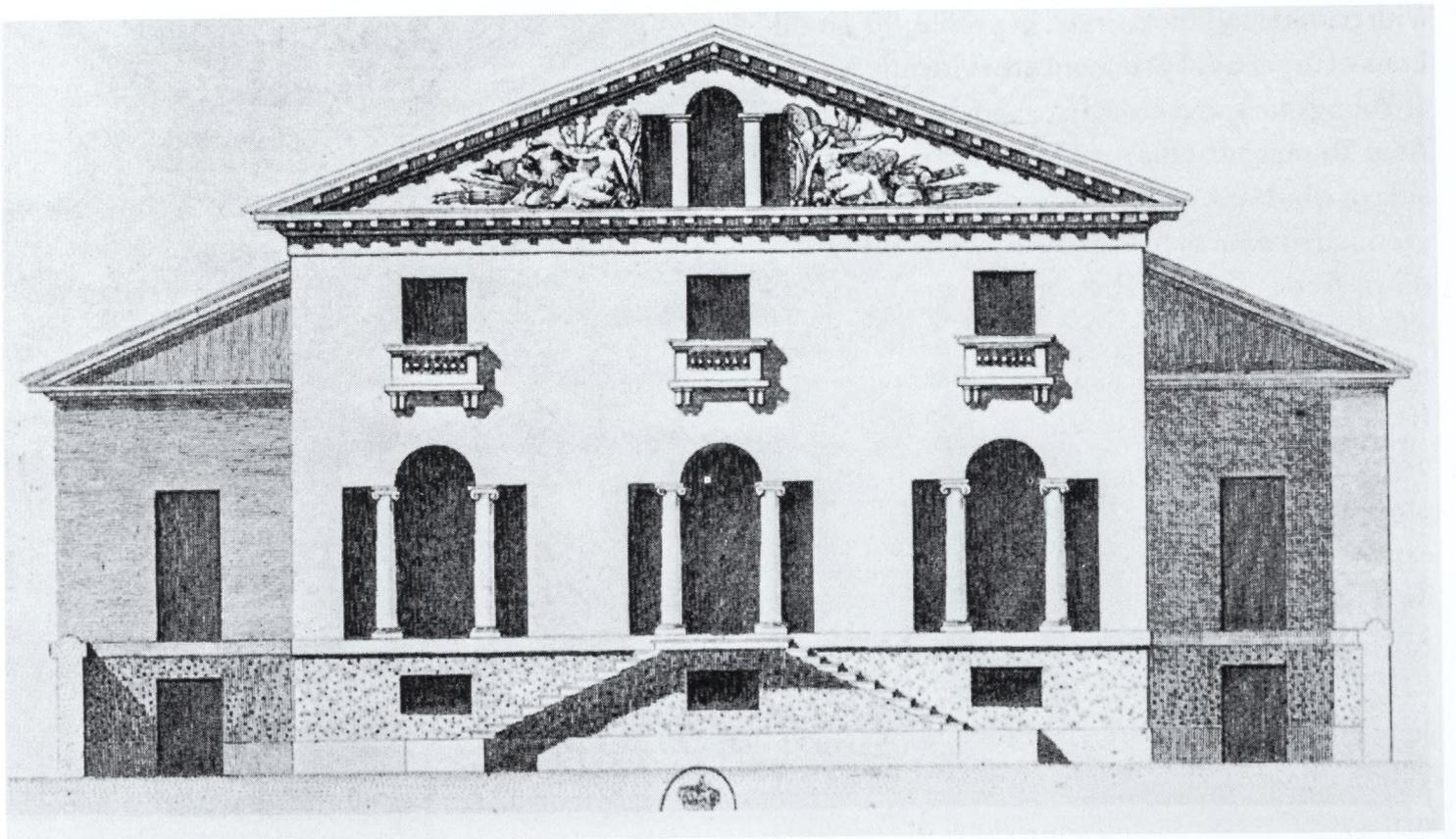


Figure 9. C-N Ledoux, garden elevation of house for J-B Hosten, Paris. *Michel Gallet.*

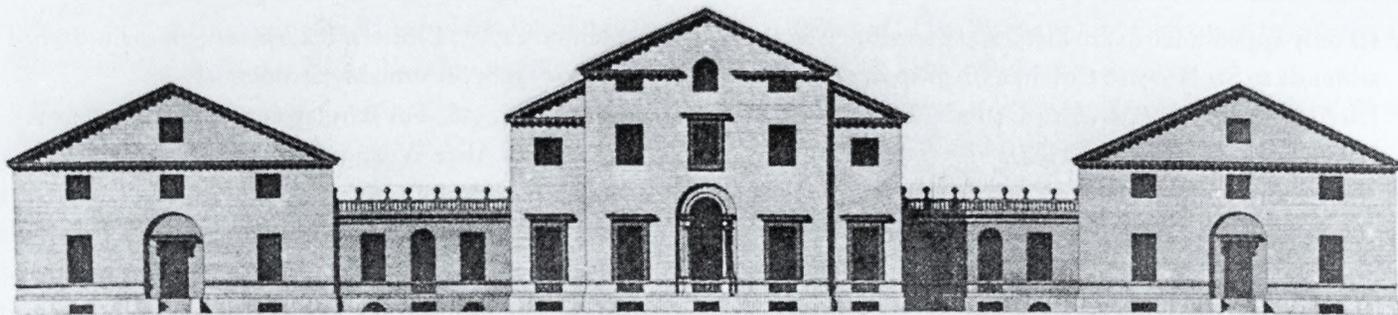


Figure 10. James Paine, Serlby Hall, Nottinghamshire.

these treatises, Père Laugier's *Essai sur l'Architecture*, published in 1753, is usually credited with being the first English publication to demonstrate knowledge of this ideology,⁴⁰ and Chambers's *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture* published in 1759, with being the first English publication to illustrate it.⁴¹ But Youngsbury was built ten years earlier than the earliest of these books. Is it therefore the first reflection of French 'rationalist' theory in England? If so, it is frustrating not to know what commended this ideology to Serjeant Poole, but the Dissenting (probably Unitarian) convictions of his family, if demonstrable, may be part of the explanation.

Theory apart, its appearance is also anachronistic, more suggestive of the 1780's than the 1740's. Indeed its closest resemblance, apart from Kirkstall Grange, is to the houses in Ledoux's proposed village of Maupertuis (Fig.6)⁴² or to his *Barrière des Martyrs* (Fig.7).⁴³ This might be a coincidence, were it the only building by Paine which is reflected in a design of Ledoux's. But Ledoux's proposed house for J-B Hosten of 1792 has one elevation (to the street) entirely spanned by a seven-bay wide pediment in Paine's manner (Fig.8), and another (to the garden) (Fig.9) apparently indebted to Paine's Serlby Hall.⁴⁴ In 1789 Paine, although

established as a country gentleman in Surrey, retired to France 'in circumstances which have never been satisfactorily explained'.⁴⁵ He is unlikely to have done so without acquaintanceship there, and in fact the subscribers to the book which he wrote in 1767 included the sculptor Guillaume Coustou, and a 'Monsieur Viallet, Inspector of the Bridges and Highways in the Province of Champagne'.⁴⁶ It is possible that French acquaintances might have introduced him to Ledoux, or alerted Ledoux to Paine's published work. Youngsbury, however, is not among the latter; it has never been illustrated before.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 Its only appearance in art-historical literature is in the addenda to Sir Howard Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, New Haven and London, 1995, 1138.
- 2 The Victoria History of the Counties of England, *Hertfordshire* (hereafter VCH), III, London, 1912, 358.
- 3 Robert Clutterbuck, *The history and antiquities of the county of Hertford*, III, London, 1827, 231.
- 4 Arthur Young, *The Farmer's Tour through the east of England*, London, II, 241.
- 5 Sir James A. Picton, *City of Liverpool. Selections from the Municipal Archives and Records*, Liverpool, 1883, 266, 281, 290, 291, 318, 331.
- 6 London, Inner Temple, Archives, ADM/4/4 ('David Poole gent. son and heir apparent of Josiah Poole of Leverpoole in the county of Lancaster esq.').
- 7 James Touzeau, *The Rise and Progress of Liverpool from 1551 to 1835*, Liverpool, 1910, 426–27.
- 8 *Idem*; Romney Sedgwick, *The House of Commons 1715–1754*, I, London, 1970, 270–72.
- 9 Sedgwick, *op. cit.*, 473–74. Bootle was also the builder of Lathom House to the designs of James Leoni [Richard Hewlings, 'James Leoni,' in R Brown (ed.), *The Architectural Outsiders*, London, 1985, 210–11.
- 10 London, Inner Temple, Archives, ADM/4/4.
- 11 *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, Admissions Register*, I, London, 1896, 422.
- 12 *Ibid.*, *Black Books*, III, London, 1899, 324.
- 13 According to Ms. Clare Rider, archivist of the Inner Temple, pupillages of this length were not uncommon, but usually for the reason given here.
- 14 R.A. Roberts (ed.), *A Calender of the Inner Temple Records*, IV, London, 1933, 430.
- 15 VCH, III, 357.
- 16 J.H. Baker, *The Order of Serjeants at Law*, London, 1984, 531, for this and the successive information. Serjeants were senior barristers, superior to King's Counsel; they were organised in an order, like an order of chivalry, which was dissolved in 1877.
- 17 There were two Serjeants' Inns, one in Chancery Lane and one in Fleet Street; they amalgamated in 1758 [David M Walker, *The Oxford Companion to Law*, Oxford, 1980, 1133].
- 18 *The Publications of the Harleian Society. Registers*, XXVIII, 1901, 450, gives his date of burial as 4 Nov 1762; his monumental inscription in Bath Abbey gives his date of death as 29 October 1762; his will [London, Public Record Office, PRO 11/883, sig.28] was proved on 13 January 1763; Clutterbuck, *op. cit.*, gives his date of death as 1758, presumably erroneously.
- 19 VCH, *op. cit.*, 358. For Barclay, see Lt. Col. Hubert F. Barclay and Alice Wilson-Fox, *A History of the Barclay Family*, III, London, 1934, 243–47. He was a member of the Clapham Sect, and emancipated all the slaves on his estate in Jamaica. He spent £1,500 starting a House of Industry at Youngsbury. Service accommodation north of the house may have been built by him. He left his fortune, which included the Anchor Brewery at Southwark, bought from Henry Thrale, to his only daughter, Agatha, married to Richard Gurney, another Quaker banker.
- 20 Clutterbuck, *loc. cit.*.
- 21 Dorothy Stroud, *Capability Brown*, London, 1975, 245, plate 35B; the plan is at Youngsbury.
- 22 Young, *loc. cit.*, wrote 'In the vale, which winds at the bottom of the hill, Mr. Barclay has cut a large river, that enriches his project greatly, and gives the whole scene a liveliness which (however pleasing) it could not otherwise possess.' Young wrote nothing about the house save that it was 'a plain neat edifice', although it may be objected that his interests were more agricultural than architectural.
- 23 Hertford, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, A2830 and A2831.
- 24 Photograph in the possession of the Hon. Tony Savile.
- 25 *Idem*.
- 26 In 1793 Youngsbury had been bought by William Cunliffe Shaw, a mortgagee, who sold it in 1796 to David Giles, Governor of the Bank of England in that same year, and it belonged to Giles's descendants in 1912. These were Giles's son, also David Giles, MP for St Albans (1809) and Sheriff (1816), from 1800 to 1831; the latter's nephew, Benjamin Giles King, from 1831 to 1840; King's sister, Louisa, widow of Sir Christopher Adler, Lord Chief Justice of Bengal (1823), from 1840 to 1857; her son, Christopher William Puller, from 1857 to 1864; his son, Arthur Giles Giles-Puller, from 1864 to 1885; his brother, the Rev. Charles Giles Puller, vicar of Standon, from 1885 to some time before 1912; his son, Christopher Bernard Giles-Puller, thereafter [VCH, *op. cit.*, 358].
- 27 Information from Mr Savile.
- 28 London, Royal Institute of British Architects, Drawings Collection, John White's Account Book; Richard Hewlings, *Chiswick House and Gardens*, London, (2nd ed.) 1991, 52.

- 29 Colen Campbell did so, but he died in 1729. Dr Peter Leach makes the point that one of Campbell's designs was the starting point for Paine's versions of this feature [Peter Leach, *James Paine*, London, 1988, 59–60].
- 30 *Ibid.*, 203.
- 31 *Ibid.*, plate 24.
- 32 *Ibid.*, plates 22 and 23.
- 33 *Ibid.*, plate 28.
- 34 *Ibid.*, plates 30 and 31.
- 35 *Ibid.*, plate 70.
- 36 Bradford, West Yorkshire Archive Service, 85 D90/21; Richard Hewlings, review of *James Paine* by Peter Leach, *Burlington Magazine*, CXXXIII, August 1991, 553.
- 37 Bradford, *loc. cit.*, 85 D90/22; *Burlington Magazine loc. cit.*, fig. 66.
- 38 Leach, *op. cit.*, plate 25.
- 39 R D Middleton, 'The Abbé de Cordemoy and the Graeco-Gothic Ideal: a prelude to romantic classicism', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxv, 1962, 278–320; *ibid.*, xxvi, 90–123.
- 40 Eileen Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556–1785*, Cambridge, 1990, 282–83.
- 41 Robin Middleton, 'Chambers, W. 'A Treatise on Civil Architecture' London 1759,' in John Harris and Michael Snodin (eds.), *Sir William Chambers Architect to George III*, New Haven and London, 1996, 70–1.
- 42 Michael Gallet, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux 1736–1806*, Paris, 1980, 38.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 153.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 211, 212.
- 45 Colvin, *op. cit.*, 723.
- 46 Leach, *op. cit.*, 26.