majority of them have superficially modernist exterior features such as asymmetrical openings, butterfly roofs, and angled or curved exterior canopies. Against the exuberant and extroverted modernism of their exteriors, Lara found that the plans of these houses were mostly very traditional, with room arrangements very much like earlier twentieth-century houses, or even those built in colonial times. Supplementing the formal analysis of the elevations and plans of these houses, Lara interviewed twenty-one householders, each of whom had been responsible for its construction and had been in continuous occupation since the house was built.

Belo Horizonte is famous in the history of twentieth-century architecture for the four buildings at Pampulha, on the edge of the city, built in the early 1940s to designs by Oscar Niemeyer—the Chapel of Saint Francis, the Casa do Baile, the late Club, and the Casino. A key question is the relationship between these works of high architecture and the houses surveyed by Lara, all of which were designed by their owners and their builders without the involvement of an architect. To the architectural profession, these houses are kitsch: they mimic architectural modernism, borrow its emblems, but lack the integrity or criticality of true modernist architecture. Lara’s purpose, however, is to take them seriously as cultural products with their own value, and to do so he designates them as “popular modernism.”

The interviews with the surviving original owners reveal that many had visited Pampulha before building their houses and were familiar with the phenomenon of Brazilian architectural modernism. But when it came to designing their own houses their procedure seems to have been to copy elements not from architecturally distinguished examples but from more ordinary nearby buildings, and to take ideas from friends and relations; there seems to have been no conscious intention to emulate authentic models of high architecture, neither actual buildings nor images published in magazines. In other words, the vogue for modernist architecture was generated spontaneously among the citizens of Belo Horizonte and not handed down to them from above.

Versions of popular modernism are common all over the world, and architectural history has always found them hard to study. Lacking architectural authorship or explicit intentions, they tend to be seen as no more than debased versions of the authentic; nor are they a true vernacular, since their origins so obviously do not lie within an enduring building tradition but are derived from high architecture. Lara’s aim is to find a way to study this debased form of building activity and to bring it within the fold of architectural history. His method, broadly speaking, is structuralist, in that he positions popular modernism within three different scales of cultural value—high versus low, periphery versus center, and modern versus traditional.

The theoretical possibilities suggested by the houses of Lara’s study are manifold. It could, for example, be productive to consider them in terms of Frankfurt school notions of culture and the discussions by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Walter Benjamin of style versus Fashion. Or, alternatively, they might lend themselves to Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony. It is slightly disappointing therefore to find that Lara chooses to locate his discussion entirely within architectural theory, ill-equipped as it is to deal with non-architectural building activity. In so far as architectural theory has been concerned with ordinary building, it has always been so in order to appropriate the “everyday” into high architecture: Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour’s study of Las Vegas, referred to by Lara, and their study of Levittown, are good examples of this. However, the Belo Horizonte case is the reverse; it is a matter of the appropriation by the everyday of elements of high architecture—and here architectural theory has little to offer. Lara mentions as an analogy the Los Angeles Case Study Houses, yet these, all designed by architects, are hardly relevant. A more appropriate analogy might have been the Los Angeles Dingbats mentioned by Reyner Banham in his Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies, but which Banham, too, was at a loss to know how to deal with.

Lara’s book is more successful in its other main theme, which is to throw light on the exceptional status of architectural modernism in Brazil. Unlike elsewhere, modernism in Brazil was not an act of rebellion against bourgeois culture, for there was no bourgeoisie against which to rebel. As Guilherme Wisnik has argued, Brazil’s problem was that it became modern too easily and as a result modernism was absorbed uncritically, becoming, as it still is today, the dominant orthodoxy. Brazil has, in a sense, no past—it is eternally modern. Seen in this context, the assimilation of modernism happened effortlessly and unquestioningly. The houses studied by Lara offer an especially vivid demonstration of this process, and the satisfaction and pleasure that the owners still take in their houses confirms the enduring acceptance of modernism.

Brazilian commentators have struggled to explain why their country never experienced postmodernism, and while Lara suggests that these houses might be seen as proto-postmodernist in their dissonant and emblematic use of modernist architectural features, they deserve attention most as evidence for the enthusiasm with which Brazilians embraced modernism and developed a singular version of it.

ADRIAN FORTY
University College London

Notes
called an “anti-monograph.” Maxwell uses Parthenay as a case-study to confront one of medieval art history’s cherished notions: that the Romanesque era was characterized only by rural landscapes dotted with remote monasteries and castles, leaving the first blush of urbanism to the Gothic period. Instead, Maxwell elucidates the urban aspects of eleventh- and twelfth-century Aquitaine, focusing principally on Parthenay’s many surviving churches. His book urges us to look more carefully at the material aspects of urbanism and the attendant demographic impact of architecture, with its necessary influx of masons, sculptors, and other craftsmen.

Focusing on the eleventh century as a period of urban development, of course, is not a new idea, having its roots in the writings of Georges Duby, Pierre Lavedan, Robert Fossier, and others. Maxwell draws upon these historical traditions and upon the work of Henri Lefebvre to define urbanism as a process. He presents Parthenay as a site of near perpetual construction, and thus as a palimpsest to be read. He sees urban sites as topographic concentrations of buildings, but also as loci for social and political practices. Maxwell sees the monuments not simply as reflections of urban growth, nor as material expressions of economic or political forces, but as active agents in the construction of meaningful social and political relationships. Parthenay is especially well-suited to this enquiry, given its status as one of the newly founded castral towns of the early eleventh century and the remarkable preservation of so many of its Romanesque buildings.

Maxwell argues that the new, monumental urban structures and their sculptural programs gave material expression at Parthenay to developing notions of urban place. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the concept of “town” was contested and was itself in the process of being constructed in dialogue with creators and consumers of architecture across the Romanesque landscape of Aquitaine. Urbanness was thus a distinguishing mark that conferred status upon spaces and the people who constructed and inhabited them. Maxwell contrasts the historical criteria for urban status (markets, extramural boroughs, trades, and certain legal rights) with the visual and physical components (towers, walls, density of structures), and notes rightly that art historians need to take greater account of the visual record in their analyses of urbanism. It was not only the presence of urban architectural elements, but the process of continual construction that was valued as a marker of urbanism. Maxwell also explores the ways in which urban imagery on coins and seals and in poetic descriptions participated in the argument for urban status. This aspect was particularly important at the newly-founded Parthenay, where an appeal to venerable antique origins was not possible.

Maxwell’s book is organized chronologically, following the history of Parthenay’s growth from a small castle settlement in the early eleventh century to a commercial and political center by the early thirteenth. Chapter one provides an introduction to Parthenay’s plan and the distribution of towns in Aquitaine ca. 1000. Chapter two gives a survey of the archaeological and documentary evidence for the settlement of Parthenay as it emerged out of the medieval forest in the eleventh century, and compares it to other towns in Aquitaine. Maxwell points out the ways in which the walls of these new towns were not only important functionally but also symbolically. He also explores the impressive (though now-destroyed) church of Saint-Sépulchre, the largest round church in western Europe to commemorate the Holy Sepulcher. Maxwell notes how this new church “sanctified” the town. It not only allowed the faithful to emulate the interactions with the sacred geography of Golgotha it also influenced their negotiation with the altered geography of their own town.

In the third chapter Maxwell surveys the rapid pace of construction in Parthenay ca. 1100. This chapter constitutes a noticeable change of tone as Maxwell employs more standard art historical description of the extant eleventh-century churches and their sculpture. In chapter four, Maxwell turns to the early twelfth-century development of the town. He returns to his urban focus, tracing the ways in which the town acquired status as a political, economic, and craft center. He argues that the presence of construction conferred urban status on Parthenay and, in turn, impelled the local nobility to appropriate images of these constructions in their seals and coinage. Here the author and Penn State Press are to be commended, for the images of seals and coins are given as much prominence as those of the architecture. Figure 114, of the seal of Pontoise, for example, is more than a quarter-page color image, allowing the reader to appreciate the detail.

In chapter five, Maxwell widens the discussion by looking in some detail at how the seigneurial families of Parthenay harnessed imagery, genealogies, and legends to craft personal and corporate identities. The sixth chapter extends this analysis by examining the representations of the Heavenly Jerusalem in manuscripts and sculpture. Maxwell notes the ambivalent attitudes clerics held for urban spaces, seeing towns as loci for vice as well as reflections of Jerusalem. He then examines in detail the façade sculpture of the church of Notre Dame de la Coulère. This church held a privileged place in the history of the town. Perhaps funded by the ruling family as their comital chapel, it continued to occupy a prominent place in Parthenay’s castle. Chapter seven leads us into the thirteenth century. The period from 1170 to 1220 saw continued construction of religious establishments and the remodeling of the castle. Maxwell notes, however, that the character of construction in Parthenay changed in important ways. Much of the new building during this period was devoted to charitable works, such as leprosaria. A more consistent approach to defensive strategies also led to a new uniformity in castle design in the region. In this period, Aquitaine also saw an increased centralization of seigneurial territories, focused on the domains of Parthenay, Thouars, Lusignan and Mauléon.

In a book so carefully devoted to social process and geographic context, there are some surprising omissions. First, the people are somewhat elusive. Maxwell calls his approach an “anthropology of urbanism” (7), but the rich demographic changes of a new town with its influx of masons and merchants, and the competing personalities of clerics and seculars are not always given their due. Further, the non-eclesiastical architecture of houses, bridges, markets, roads, and mills (that might be thought to be particularly apt signifiers of urban status) are relatively underplayed and under-illustrated. Certainly many of these monuments survive less fully than the churches, but addi-
tional mapping and attention would have provided a more complete picture of Parthenay as a functioning town. It is also notable that greater attention is not given to the role played by monasteries in settling, cultivating, and populating the landscape. Parthenay’s monastic bourgs are discussed, but again it is the churches that are highlighted. Monastic populations, like their secular counterparts (and often in collaboration with them), contributed to urban development and to settlement. All across Europe, monks were seen to work closely with secular patrons in the conversion of arable land at the edge of the forest. Many orders deliberately served and exploited urban parish populations as well as more remote suburban and rural dependencies. Much of Maxwell’s description of Parthenay’s architecture is focused upon the church alone (and on the decorative sculptures of church façades and capitals) rather than on the larger monastic settlement, omitting discussion of most claustral and service buildings, as well as dependent parishes, farms, and other properties. Finally, archaeological evidence is used, but not made prominent. Although Maxwell points to the layered aspect of the phases of urban construction (11), he largely ignores the stratigraphic evidence of urban archaeology that would have provided a sympathetic method. Such an approach is offered in Yves Esquieu’s recent book on French towns. Finally, it is surprising that the opportunity to produce new surveyed plans of the extant architecture of Parthenay was not taken.

Despite my wish that this book engage more fully with the material culture of urbanism beyond Parthenay’s churches, it makes an important statement about the relationship of Romanesque to Gothic, and provides a magisterial survey of Parthenay’s extant architecture and sculpture. It encourages us to reengage with the important questions about the rise of towns in Europe. The book is handsomely produced with excellent graphics and phased plans of Parthenay and the region. The Art of Medieval Urbanism will be the definitive statement on Parthenay and on visual approaches to urbanism, and will serve scholars and students well for years to come.

Sheila Bonde
Brown University

Notes

Andrew Saint

Architect and Engineer: A Study in Sibling Rivalry

Andrew Saint’s Architect and Engineer is a major contribution to the sociology of building practices in America, Britain, and France since about 1660. It should be noted at the outset that this roughly 500-page book is really a polemic against the cultural capital of the modern architect as artist, using the engineer as a foil. Its main audience will be empirically grounded historians in various fields, who will happily mine its vast erudition for decades. Saint’s text should also be studied closely by theoretically minded academics concerned with the social construction of culture and class—although the latter word is mostly absent from this book. In short, Architect and Engineer is a landmark reference book that provides the raw material for many future studies.

One of Saint’s enduring contributions to the field of architectural history is to insist on portraying the untidy realities of how built structures get built. His scholarship is grounded in a close reading of primary source material more typically used in social and labor history than in the study of architecture. In Architect and Engineer, the cumulative impact of deploying this methodology is an assault on the architect as a coherent social actor, sustained across time, national tradition, building material, and type. And for Saint, coming to terms with this messy reality is the point: “Once we enter into what happens when a structure is really assembled in any age, we find designing and making, architecture and engineering, art and science muddled up together so constantly and utterly that a once-and-for-all process of dissociation . . . appears implausible” (492).

Saint’s method is to provide a “nobler chronicle of building practice” (493). And indeed as a chronicle Architect and Engineer is almost encyclopedic in its consideration of the “how” and the “what.” The rarer passages analyzing the “why” are less convincing, and thus some of the book’s various parts may prove more valuable to scholars than the whole. In some respects, Architect and Engineer could be seen as an extended application of Raymond Williams’s classic Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (1976) to the fluid terms “architect” and “engineer.” There is a similar passion at work as well in the implied dream of writing a unified history of building based on the lived knowledge of skilled workers. One might suggest this book is less a study of sibling rivalry (Saint’s subtitle) than a study of class rivalry.

Architect and Engineer is a lively read filled with Saint’s distinctive and novelistic interest in every personality and in telling detail. In his rather recent obituary on Philip Johnson in The Guardian (29 January 2005), Saint elicited much comment for his candid and biting social history of the architect. This is the same curiosity that Saint brings to this detailed study of a vast cast of players in the building trades of three countries over the span of more than three hundred years. Know the man; know the work. And it is fascinating stuff. Saint recounts the stories of real individuals of diverse origins and motivations, struggling day by day to find places for themselves on the playing field of the built environment.

For example, in his discussion of Adler and Sullivan (197–202) Saint provides ample details about each man’s thoughts on engineering versus architecture and on the strengths and weaknesses each came to accept in himself. Sullivan’s pursuit of a marriage between art and building is chronicled with a richly illustrated discussion of his buildings of the 1890s. Saint concludes that Sullivan’s “high philosophy doomed the architect to splendid isolation” and “appealed over the heads of the building