

enough knowledge to practice it well. Did you have someone who brought you along in this?

MR. GREENBERG: No. But before I went to Europe and then to the United States, I studied at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, a school whose leading light was Rex Martenson, who had been one of the first disciples of [the powerful Modernist] Le Corbusier. Along with two and a half years or three years of a Bauhaus approach to architecture, we also had two and a half years of rigorous Classical education. We studied the history of architecture by the comparative method, where you do measured drawings, to scale, of great buildings. So at the end of five and a half years of schooling, you had a vocabulary of 100 buildings which you knew by heart, by dimension. The great buildings of architectural history were mixed into one's architectural brain cells. We were exposed not only to the history of style but to the history of construction. We learned how Romans built their bridges, how medieval masons built their vaults, how lime and mortar were used in English buildings, and so on.

I kept asking myself, Why is it that the work of the past is so much richer and more urbane than our work today? The buildings of Le Corbusier are fabulous architecture. His buildings moved me in a very deep way, but I sensed there was something about his approach that was destructive.

TAE: Did this have to do with the Modernist tendency to make each building stand out from its surroundings rather than create coherent groupings and unified streetscapes?

MR. GREENBERG: As an architect, I was awed that for over a thousand years, architects and builders in London had added to the beauty of the city, whereas some of the new buildings I saw seemed to divorce themselves from their context and not play a part in this process of accretion. Contrast is a singularly limiting way to relate buildings to a city.

TAE: Do you see widespread use being made of Classicism or tradition today, particularly in civic buildings?

MR. GREENBERG: No. The federal government, the state public works departments, and cities' public works departments are peopled

CLASSICISM & POLITICS

BY FREDERICK TURNER

Before classicism can again occupy a central place in our lives, a monstrous libel must first be undone. Throughout much of the twentieth century, influential segments of the art world have accused classicism of opposing freedom—an allegation that continues to unjustly undermine classicism's influence.

A commonplace in the aesthetic education of my generation was the easy dismissal of contemporary classicist architecture as "fascist." Monumentality, symmetry, mass; the Classical vocabulary of column, arch, dome, and architrave; the use of dressed stone; the sculpted figure—these were, especially in combination, the signals for scoffing. If the offending architecture were safely old, it would be forgiven, but if built in our century it would be linked to Hitler and Mussolini.

The association of classicism with fascism and Nazism extended beyond architecture to Classical painting, music, verse, sculpture, theater, and dance. Even today poets who write in strict metrical form, painters who honor the ideals of harmony, firmness, and utility, actors and directors who tell a coherent story and provoke an audience's identification with sympathetic characters can be accused of crypto-fascist tendencies by avant-garde critics.

Hitler and Mussolini are claimed to be artistic conservatives who used the vocabulary of classicism, especially in architecture, to express their political ideology. Since the fascists rejected modernist art and persecuted those who practiced it, the logical conclusion was that artistic modernism stood for freedom of human expression, while traditional art meant the suppression of creative impulses and the destruction of personal liberty. Or so went the accusation.

This argument, despite some surface plausibility, is riddled with false assumptions. It is simply not true that the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini were conservative. Their policies were radical reversals of traditional relations in their societies. Hitler's party was called the National Socialist Workers' Party, and it is disingenuous to pretend that it did not mean what its name implies. Mussolini's early career and mental formation were those of a socialist, and his program of public works, central control over the means of production, and a national bureaucracy for the general welfare was not profoundly different from the policies of Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro, and Kim Il Sung. After five decades of leftist obfuscation and apologetics, it is at last becoming clear that fascism, socialism, and communism were but three competing branches of left-wing ideology. All three shared a suspicion of international banking, hereditary inequality, inherited family wealth, laissez-faire capitalism, individualism, ethnic otherness, and Jews. All three saw the collective social organism as the true unit of humanity. All three, claiming to be creating genuine equality, sought compulsory measures to encourage a sense of mass communion.

Certainly Hitler encouraged Albert Speer to create a new Classical architecture for the Third Reich. Mussolini, too, favored classicizing art and architecture. But as Leon Krier argues in his essay "An Architecture of Desire," Hitler's choice of style may have contradicted his revolution's spirit. The appropriate expression for an efficient totalitarian order, presided over by a planning bureaucracy, and predicated on reducing the individual to a cog in the machine, would surely have been Bauhaus or International Style. The fact that Hitler and his lieutenants preferred Classical art and architecture for themselves is no more significant than the fact that they preferred Cuban cigars and French wine: Classical art was the best quality art available. The corresponding fact that Hitler chose Classical art and architecture as an instrument of his propaganda proves only that as a P.R. man, he knew what he was doing: the Classical art vocabulary is the most expressive and persuasive yet created, and its beauty and

by architects who graduated from schools in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s and who know little, if anything, about Classical architecture or the larger role that architecture can play in embodying the fundamental ideals of a society and reminding people what those ideals are.

TAE: Are schools and magazines and journals becoming more receptive?

MR. GREENBERG: Yes, but not much. The curriculum at most architecture schools is unique for being so biased, for ignoring so many fundamental factors of nineteenth and twentieth century architecture—a level of bias that would be laughed out of any department of history or political science or English literature. On the positive side, there is a school in New York that teaches Classical architecture part-time, at night. At the University of Notre Dame, you can study Classical architecture and emerge as a competent Classical designer. Architectural magazines are a little more open to publishing Classical buildings than they were in the past. The most significant development, I think, is that there are probably 50 or 60 offices across the U.S. doing

this kind of work, whereas 20 years ago there were one or two or three.

TAE: What's needed for Classicism to really flower again?

MR. GREENBERG: What it needs is a President of the United States who knows about and is interested in architecture. I don't want to exaggerate this, but the welfare of architecture in the U.S. has, to a large extent, reflected the interest of a great President. Washington designed Mount Vernon and was very interested in architecture. Jefferson was maybe our greatest architect ever. Madison was interested in architecture. For these people, the architecture of Washington, D.C., and the Capitol, and the public buildings was very important. Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt were very interested. So were Coolidge, and Hoover, which is how the Federal Triangle came into being.

I think a President who is interested in architecture could make a big difference.



grandeur would be the most effective disguise for the regime's crushing regimentation and savage horrors.

The closer one looks at the classicism = fascism equation, the more fantastic it becomes. Mussolini took a while before he abandoned his modernist *razionalismo Italiano* (which nicely expressed the spirit of the machine-gun by which his armies subdued Ethiopia) and adopted a more classical look, using it to appeal to the humanity and self-sacrifice of the Italian people. Communist art and architecture in the Soviet Union went through exactly the same correction, from the modernist constructivism that truly expressed the spirit of the Gulag, to the triumph of classical idiom, putting a humane facade on an inhuman regime.

If classicism were the ideology of history's villains, we would not find a modern classicism blossoming in the first half of the century in the world's most enlightened, free, and democratic nations. A splendid renaissance of Classical architecture took place in the Scandinavian countries, in Austria, and in France. There was a flowering of Classical forms in architecture, music, literature, and other arts in the U.S., especially in the 1930s.

Rather than accept the fallacy that classicism is inherently illiberal and reactionary, a historian could argue that the perennial association of Classical style with Greek democracy, Roman republicanism, Renaissance humanism, and Enlightenment intellectual liberation makes it the appropriate vehicle for the political ideals of liberty and the consent of the governed. The marvelous organic rhythm by which Classical forms integrate fine detail and large intermediate forms into the grand compositional lines of the whole—an art with an infinity of possible variations—is an apt way of representing democracy's talent for reconciling individuality, intermediate institutions of civil society, and the general public interest.

By contrast, the frequently harsh innovations of modernist art, which reject the mysterious practices of tradition, suggest that modernism is in fact the appropriate expression of the totali-

tarian state. Political conservatism is not the enemy of freedom—revolutions that overturn tradition tend to result in states that are more, not less, oppressive than their predecessors. The more radically a revolution seeks to change the existing order, the more tyrannical and coercive the regime that follows. The English Civil War of 1640 that overthrew Charles Stuart created the dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. The English then sensibly carried out a conservative counter-revolution, restoring the monarchy and ushering in three centuries of gradual and prosperous transition to democratic liberty.

At the level of individual artists, the "classicism = fascism" equation falls even further into disrepute. There is evidence that many modernist artists enthusiastically courted Nazi, fascist, and communist regimes. The modern free-verse poet Ezra Pound toadied to Mussolini. Bauhaus artists sought commissions in Nazi Germany until they got discouraged by the cold reception. In 1932, Italian modernists staged a triumphant "Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution."

Meanwhile, Toscanini, the giant of Classical music, defied Mussolini and fled to America. Thomas Mann, perhaps the most artistically conservative novelist of his time, did likewise. The only English-speaking poet who foresaw the "rough beast" of totalitarian terror and gave it its true name was the conservative classicist William Butler Yeats.

Of course there were heroic modernist artists and writers who opposed twentieth-century totalitarianism, and classicists and traditionalists who supported totalitarianism. I do not intend to simply exchange one set of libel victims for another. But I do wish to dissolve the subtle moral and political righteousness that still attends modernist and now postmodernist art. The new emerging classicism of our era should not be burdened by the malicious notion that it is connected to the forces of evil.

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THE DEAD POET

A TRUE-LIFE CLASH BETWEEN LETHAL MODERNISM AND CLASSIC ART

By Frederick Turner

Zsuzsanna Ozsváth and I have been spending the last few years translating the poetry of Miklós Radnóti, the great Hungarian poet who died in the Holocaust. In her introduction to our translation, Zsuzsi describes his last days:

From 1940-1944, Radnóti was called up three times for slave labor. Worked to exhaustion in minefields, sugar plants, and ammunition factories during his first two call-ups, he was taken to the copper mines of Bor in Yugoslavia during the last. In the middle of September 1944, however, under the pressure of the Russian forces and the Yugoslav partisans, the Germans had to evacuate the Balkans. Radnóti's squad was force-marched back to Hungary, to be transferred from there to German slave-labor camps. But cold weather, exhaustion, hunger, and savage massacres decimated the marching column: out of the 3,600 men moved from Bor, only 800 crossed the Hungarian border. Marched on through western Hungary in November, Radnóti started to lose his strength. His feet covered with wounds, he could walk no longer. It was probably on the eighth of November that the squad arrived at a town near Győr and spent the night at a brickyard. Next day, three noncommissioned officers of the Hungarian Armed Forces separated Radnóti and 21 other emaciated and exhausted men from the marching column. Borrowing two carts in which they crowded the sick Jews, the guards made two attempts to rid themselves of the group: they took it first to a hospital, then to a school that housed refugees. But neither had room. Then the soldiers took the group to the dam near the town of Abda. The Jews were made to get out and ordered to dig a ditch. When they finished their work, the guards shot them one by one into the ditch, among them one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century.

Radnóti's last volume of poetry, *Foamy Sky*, was published posthumously in 1946, a volume which did not yet contain the last five poems. Only after Radnóti's body was exhumed were these five poems found, inscribed in the small pocket notebook that he had purchased in Yugoslavia. Two years passed before *Foamy Sky* was republished, this time complete. Since then, Radnóti's work has been republished many times in Hungary, becoming part of that nation's cultural achievement and receiving ever-growing appreciation.