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# *Ugliness and Outrage*

## The Australian Townscape

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*The opening chapter of Robin Boyd's The Australian Ugliness (1960) makes no secret of the impetus of its ideas, nor does Boyd make any claims to the uniqueness of the phenomena contained in the book. Pointing to similar developments in the United States and England, Boyd cites two publications from the Architectural Review (AR) in the 1950s, which could be taken as comparable attempts to his own. The first was Christopher Tunnard's "Man-Made America" (December, 1950), the second Ian Nairn's "Outrage" (June, 1955). Both special editions were part of the AR's Townscape campaign begun in the 1930s, launched in name in 1949, and continuing until the mid-1970s. The Townscape movement aimed to reform modernist planning, but also ran a parallel critique highlighting the effects of modernisation on urban environments. This line of criticism had a strong lineage in Britain, Clough Williams-Ellis's England and the Octopus (1928), and the early works of John Betjeman being notable examples.*

*What Boyd could not have known in 1960, was that Australian Ugliness was something of a mid-point on the wave of books in the post-war period, which lamented the blight, sprawl, visual decay and degradation of post-war built environments, and which continued to appear with increasing frequency into the 1970s. In Australia, Boyd's literary approach in Australian Ugliness was joined by Donald Gazzard's highly visual Australian Outrage (1966), both of which drew heavily on Townscape's ideas, discourse and visual style. This paper examines Boyd's Australian Ugliness and Gazzard's Australian Outrage within this broader international context and against the longer history marked by comparable books published from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. In doing so, this paper investigates not only the impact of Townscape in Australia but also this particular strain of urban and architectural writing that seeks to highlight the ugliness and outrage of the built environment.*



Not only are London and our other great commercial cities mere masses of sordidness, filth, and squalor, embroidered with patches of pompous and vulgar hideousness, no less revolting to the eye and the mind when one knows what it means: not only have whole counties of England, and the heavens that hang over them, disappeared beneath a crust of unutterable grime, but the disease, which, to a visitor coming from the times of art, reason, and order, would seem to be a love of dirt and ugliness for its own sake, spreads all over the country, and every little market town seizes the opportunity to imitate, as far as it can, the majesty of the hell of London and Manchester. ... So then it comes to this, ... the very food on which both the greater and the lesser art subsists is being destroyed; the well of art is poisoned at its spring.<sup>1</sup>

1. See, William Morris, *Architecture Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers by William Morris* (London: Longmans, Greens and Company, 1902), 172–73.

Since William Morris delivered these lines in a lecture titled “Art Under Plutocracy” at Oxford in 1883, a steady stream of critique has emerged around the subject of our cities and their degeneracy. In the nineteenth century these concerns often focussed on hygiene, the role of art, or the social effects of squalid living conditions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the focus shifted towards the physical effects on places of natural and constructed significance, marked by the increased attention to conservation. After the 1939–45 war, another refinement of this genre of writing emerged in the form of a lament of the visual form of cities, responding to the emerging blight, decay and the general degradation of what became known as the built environment.<sup>2</sup>

2. Apart from this visual critique, this writing tradition includes the literature on conservation and preservation, which has not been the focus of this study. This visual critique is also distinct from the social or moral urban critique, which often, but not always, presented itself as a recurrent anti-urbanism. This too, is a familiar line of thinking as ugliness and outrage, focussing instead on the conditions of cities, their fundamental inhumanity, their alienating and destructive force. Such a lineage can be seen in works ranging from Frederick Engels *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), Ebenezer Howard and *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, (1898) Lewis Mumford and his called for regionalism in his landmark *The Culture of Cities* (1938) up to the British New Towns movement.

This discourse achieved broad resonance by the 1960s. Numerous authors took the negative effects of urbanisation, urban expansion and modernisation as the starting point for a broader criticism of post-war architecture and urbanism. In Australia, Robin Boyd’s *The Australian Ugliness* (1960)<sup>3</sup> and Donald Gazzard’s *Australian Outrage* (1966)<sup>4</sup> can be viewed in this light. Well-known international examples include Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev’s *Man-Made America* (1963)<sup>5</sup> and Peter Blake’s well-known *God’s Own Junkyard* (1964).<sup>6</sup> In combination, these books—along with others discussed below—constitute the foundational documents of post-war urban critique and postmodern urbanism.

3. Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1960).

4. Donald Gazzard, ed., *Australian Outrage. The Decay of a Visual Environment* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1966).

5. Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev, *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control? An Inquiry into Selected Problems of Design in the Urbanized Landscape* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963).

6. Peter Blake, *God’s Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America’s Landscape* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964).

Until recently, the foundational work of the Townscape campaign has rarely been taken into account in this scheme. By the end of the twentieth century, the memory of the body of work that

emerged from the *Architectural Review* (AR) in the 1940s and 1950s had faded, or was limited to the impressive illustrations by Gordon Cullen. A broader examination of the literature on the ugliness of the built environment and the outrage it inspired, suggests that it has been invoked for different ends, and, furthermore, that these differences have continued to be of significance to our understanding of the contemporary built environment.

## Townscape

As Morris' vitriolic account of nineteenth century English cities illustrates, the outrage at the ugliness of the built environment highlighted by Townscape in the 1940s and 1950s was not new. It was, however, chiefly reinvigorated by Townscape. Townscape was not launched in name until 1949 but its foundational moment was in the 1930s. The AR's editors and writers problematised the effects of inter-war expansion and modernisation in British cities, towns, and in countryside. In doing so, they drew on a tradition stretching back to Arthur Trystan Edwards (1884–1973) and Clough Williams-Ellis (1883–1978). Edwards' *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (1924)<sup>7</sup> had advocated a sympathetic approach to inserting new building into existing contexts, and Williams-Ellis' *England and the Octopus* (1928)<sup>8</sup> was biting and humorous critique of the perils of urban expansion—where the Octopus was none other than the city of London.

Williams-Ellis's work is of particular interest as it embodies the tipping point where pure conservationism turns into a fascination with—or least artistic stimulation by—the effects of modernisation and urbanisation. In 1937, Williams-Ellis edited *Britain and the Beast*, a collection of essays from prominent British intellectuals and writers pleading for a more sensitive handling of historical buildings, planning and scenery.<sup>9</sup> Williams-Ellis is remembered for his life's work on Portmeirion, the faux historic Welsh town modelled on an Italian seaside village. Begun in 1925, the design of Portmeirion displays an outspoken historicism and is a clear call to those groups who would later posit that the only sensible approach to dealing with contemporary building and planning issues was a return to the past—no doubt Prince Charles is among the many fans of Portmeirion, as his own faux-historical town Poundbury, and his well-known architectural lament *A Vision of Britain* (1989) would suggest.<sup>10</sup>

7. Arthur Trystan Edwards, *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture* (London: John Tiranti, 1924).

8. Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1928).

9. Clough Williams-Ellis, ed., *Britain and the Beast* (London: John Dent and Sons Ltd., 1937).

10. HRH, The Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain: A Personal View of Architecture* (London: Doubleday, 1989).



Townscape shares a common heritage in this 1930s moment. Partly, this has seen its legacy mistakenly grouped with reactionaries and culturally conservative movements. In 1929, and coinciding with the new editorship of Hubert de Cronin Hastings, the *AR* began a monthly column entitled “Rural and Urban England.”<sup>11</sup> These early articles used photographs to document particularly insensitive advertisements and buildings, much in the manner of Williams-Ellis. In 1931, John Betjeman, the poet and then assistant editor of the *AR*, began a series of articles that spotlighted the effects of urbanisation and modernisation in England, which began to reveal the divide between the conservative and progressive elements of Townscape. Betjeman’s attitude was anti-quarian but not revivalist.<sup>12</sup> In a 1932 article, he explained:

We have created a machine age and we should not be afraid of it, but rather become accustomed to it and control it.... Two hundred years ago England was a park dotted here and there with mellow towns; now it is a town dotted here and there with derelict parks.<sup>13</sup>

Developing from these experiences, Betjeman wrote *Ghastly Good Taste, or, A Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (1933).<sup>14</sup> Minus the pomp, this book can be seen as a forerunner to Boyd’s *Australian Ugliness*—both in its historical and satirical intentions—and represents the touchstone of Betjeman’s eccentric and witty architectural writing.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the 1940s, the split between the nostalgia and revivalism of conservationist groups, and Townscape’s advocacy of moderate modernism and compromised town planning, widened. By the 1950s Townscape’s message had become a matter of some public urgency, and began to dominate the pages of the *AR*, which was the movement’s mouthpiece and hub for the numerous contributors. Gordon Cullen’s memorable illustrations, his urban studies and design projects from the 1940s onwards became synonymous with Townscape. Later, Kenneth Browne’s voluminous output from the 1950s onwards served to cement Townscape’s on-going role in public debate on the built environment. But it was Ian Nairn, a twenty-five year old ex-airforce pilot with no formal architectural or planning education, who soon rewarded his new benefactors by producing some of the most influential polemical pieces of the post-war period.

Nairn’s major works “Outrage” (June 1955)<sup>16</sup> and its follow-up, “Counter-Attack” (December 1956)<sup>17</sup> mark the beginning of a

11. Robert Elwall, “‘How to Like Everything’: Townscape and Photography,” *Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (2012), 672–74.

12. John Betjeman, “The Death of Modernism,” *Architectural Review* (hereafter *AR*) 70 (December 1931): 161; “The Passing of the Village,” *AR* 72 (September 1932): 89–93; “Leeds: A City of Contrasts,” *AR* 74 (October 1933): 129–38.

13. Betjeman, “The Passing of the Village,” 93.

14. John Betjeman, *Ghastly Good Taste: Or, a Depressing Story of the Rise and Fall of English Architecture* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1933).

15. See also, John Betjeman, “The Seeing Eye or How to Like Everything,” *AR* 86, (July–December 1939): 201–4; “Nonconformist Architecture,” *AR* 88, (July–December 1940): 160–74.

16. Ian Nairn, ed., *Outrage* (London: Architectural Review, 1955).

17. Ian Nairn, ed., *Counter Attack* (London: Architectural Press, 1957).

paradigm of built environment writing that, on the one hand, targeted the objects of Morris' nineteenth century fury, but on the other hand, (and in contrast to the revivalism of Portmeirion), followed Betjeman's call for the mastery of modernisation, seeking instead to transform the mess of the everyday into the new materials of design. Specifically, Nairn's work focussed on sprawl and the visual and physical pollution that rapid and ad-hoc urbanisation has brought about. Using a car and his flying skills, he documented places which evidenced the process of vulgar modernisation: electricity pylons and telegraph wires, signage, advertising billboards, street furniture, lighting, road markings, badly hacked-up trees, coarse tasteless buildings and insensitive infrastructure. Today, Nairn's observations seem commonplace, but in the 1950s Nairn termed this phenomenon 'Subtopia':

the doom of an England reduced to universal Subtopia, a mean and middle state, neither town nor country, an even spread of abandoned aerodromes and fake rusticity, wire fences, traffic roundabouts, gratuitous notice-boards, car-parks and Things in Fields. It is a morbid condition which spread both ways from suburbia, out into the country, and back into the devitalized hearts of towns, so that the most sublime backgrounds, urban or rural, English or foreign, are now to be seen only over a foreground of casual and unconsidered equipment, litter and lettered admonitions—Subtopia is the world of universal low-density mess.<sup>18</sup>

18. Nairn "Outrage," 363.

Nairn was the editor of "Outrage," but Hastings' editorial influence was never far away. Earlier, in August 1948, an anonymous editorial (most likely by Hastings) termed the *AR*'s subject of interest, "the submerged third"; the third of the built environment that had escaped the attention of design professionals but which needed to be brought back within the fold: floorscapes, roofscapes, wirescapes etc. Much later Hastings developed another term, SLOAP, to describe this same phenomenon, which stood for the Space Left Over After Planning.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, the *AR* supported by its parent publishing house the Architectural Press (AP), became the mainline of the English speaking world's fascination with the issue. In December 1950, Christopher Tunnard, a regular contributor to the *AR* in the 1930s, edited a special edition, titled "Man-Made America."<sup>19</sup> After relocating to the US, Tunnard published *The City of Man* (1953) with the AP, as a plea for a more human approach to urban planning and design.<sup>20</sup> Landscape

19. Christopher Tunnard, ed., "Man Made America," special issue, *AR* 108, no. 648 (Dec 1950): 338–414.

20. Christopher Tunnard, *The City of Man* (London: Architectural Press, 1953).



architect Sylvia Crowe contributed a series of articles in the *AR* on the effects of urbanisation and published two notable books on the subject with the AP: *Tomorrow's Landscape* (1956),<sup>21</sup> and *The Landscape of Roads* (1960).<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Beazley's appropriately named, *Design and Detail of the Space between Buildings* (1960),<sup>23</sup> dealt with one of Townscape's enduring preoccupations, and in 1965, Lionel Brett, another early Townscape contributor, published his own ode to blight, again with the AP, with *Landscape in Distress* (1965).<sup>24</sup>

Towards the end of the 1950s interest in such questions expanded beyond Britain, as *The Australian Ugliness* and *Australian Outrage* are testimony.<sup>25</sup> In the United States, J. B. Jackson's editorial work in the 1950s journal *Landscape* can be seen as a parallel fascination with the deleterious effects of modernisation. Like Hastings' Townscape, Jackson's point was not restricted the admonition of vulgar commercialism, but extended its mastery, and, like his British counterparts, he proposed a more catholic and synthetic approach to the emerging car-based landscape of 1950s USA.<sup>26</sup> Jane Jacobs' landmark *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), although more social in nature, is clearly a lament of the impoverishment of urban areas.<sup>27</sup> Previously, Jacobs had collaborated with both Gordon Cullen and Ian Nairn on their ground-breaking essay "Downtown is for People" which combines Townscape's post-war visual critique, with Jacobs' social reform agenda; a message wholly familiar to the readers of both the *AR* and *Architectural Forum* magazines by the end of the 1950s.<sup>28</sup> Nairn continued on the lines originally laid down in "Outrage" with two books in the 1960s: *Your England Revisited* (1964),<sup>29</sup> and *The American Landscape. A Critical View* (1965).<sup>30</sup> The latter appeared one year after as the most famous book of this type, Peter Blake's *God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape*, (1964), and is virtually identical in its scope and style.<sup>31</sup>

## Townscape in Australia

Robin Boyd first published *The Australian Ugliness* in 1960. Since then, the book has been revised and reissued several times, undergoing numerous alterations, both major and minor in nature. The recent 2010 reprint edition has again raised the book into the national consciousness, the many positive reviews underscoring the book's success over the decades making it perhaps Boyd's most popular work.<sup>32</sup>

21. Sylvia Crowe, *Tomorrow's Landscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1956).

22. Sylvia Crowe, *The Landscape of Roads* (London: Architectural Press, 1960).

23. Elisabeth Beazley, *Design and Detail of the Space between Buildings* (London: Architectural Press, 1960).

24. Lionel Brett, *Landscape in Distress* (London: Architectural Press, 1965).

25. For an early example of Australian literature on the emergent road culture, see: Edna Walling, *The Australian Roadside* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1952). Thanks to Philip Goad for this reference.

26. Erik Ghenuiu, "The Resurgence of Visual Urbanism in the American Architectural Discourse, 1954–1972," *Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (October 2012), 798.

27. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

28. Jane Jacobs, Gordon Cullen, and Ian Nairn, "Downtown Is for People," in *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Inc., 1958), 157–84.

29. Ian Nairn, *Your England Revisited* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).

30. Ian Nairn, *The American Landscape. A Critical View* (New York: Random House, 1965).

31. A recent article by Gillian Darley shows Nairn's book was researched in a road-trip from late-1959 to early-1960, within research grant from the Rockefeller Foundation with the working title of "Townscape USA". Gillian Darley, "Ian Nairn and Jane Jacobs, the Lessons from Britain and America," *Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (October 2012), 741.

32. Selected reviews include: Christos Tsiolkas, "What the Architect Saw," *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 27, 2010; Paul Hogben, review of *The Australian Ugliness* 50th Anniversary Edition, *Fabrications* 22, no. 2 (December 2012), 278–80.

*The Australian Ugliness* draws attention to the particularities of Australian design, its place in an international context, and the poverty of the urban landscape. Boyd provides a social and cultural history for Australian architecture—albeit a caustic one—much in the manner of his other books, *Australia's Home* (1952) and *The Walls Around Us* (1962). Boyd's wry introduction of "Featurism," which he defined as "the subordination of the essential whole and the accentuation of selected separate features,"<sup>33</sup> attracted much of the focus in book reviews.<sup>34</sup> While Boyd's book is not focussed on cities exclusively, it clearly participates the genre of writing about cities and urbanisation that focus on the ugliness of, and outrage at what Boyd referred to as the "visual Australian background".<sup>35</sup> With regard to Sydney, Boyd pointed out:

The Australian Ugliness is bigger and better here ... The ugliness ... falls into to two categories: accepted and unintentional. Australia's accepted recognized ugliness is no more than the normal blight which afflicts growing communities, especially, rich, young, industrialized, growing communities. Part of it is the blight of age ... Another part is the blight of expediency: trees uprooted to save diverting a few yards of drain, the ill-considered and uncoordinated assortment of posts, hydrants, bins, transformer, benches, guards, traffic signs, tram standards, a hundred other necessary public appliances, and neons, placards, stickers, posters, slogans—all bundled together like an incompetently-rolled swag with loops and tangles of overhead wires. This kind of mess, as made by any progressive community, sometimes is done unconsciously, without thought or care ... It is unfortunate, but it is not tragic.

Unintentional ugliness, on the other hand, has an element of tragedy, because it comes from better visual intentions. It is the ugliness that starts in the spark of revolt against the depressing litter of the artificial environment and ends in an over-dressed, over-coloured, overbearing display of features.<sup>36</sup>

The many similarities between *The Australian Ugliness* and *Townscape* are striking. Indeed, the bases of Boyd's Featurism evokes a similar origin to Hastings' call for a comprehensive *picture* of planning, within which, the miscellany thrown up by modernisation could assume their rightful place. "English cities," wrote Hastings in 1944,

33. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness* (1963 ed.), 21.

34. See Philip Goad's bibliography, including book reviews of *The Australian Ugliness*: Goad, *The Architect as Critic* (Melbourne: RMIT, 1992), 78.

35. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness*, 13.

36. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness*, 38–9.



will always be an extraordinary hotchpotch of competing elements; ... the visual problem is to coax these competitors into a larger harmony. Yet surely it clear by now that the real as opposed to the ideal city, far from being all crystal towers and tennis courts, will be a thing of infinite variety, where for instance the Victorian dolls-house must be politely encouraged to lie down with Mr. Frederick Gibberd's flats.<sup>37</sup>

37. Hubert de Cronin Hastings, "Exterior Furnishing or Sharawadgi: The Art of Making Urban Landscape," *AR* 95, no. 565 (January 1944): 5.

Boyd made no secret of the impetus of the ideas in *The Australian Ugliness*, nor did he make any claims to the uniqueness of the phenomena to Australian conditions, citing both Tunnard and Nairn as precedents.<sup>38</sup> Boyd wrote regularly for the *AR* over a period spanning from 1951 to 1970, and was presumably apprised of the *AR*'s chief editor Hubert de Cronin Hastings' mission.<sup>39</sup> The 1963 Penguin reprint edition of *The Australian Ugliness* carried a foreword by Betjeman, whose 1933 *Ghastly Good Taste*, at least to this author, appears to be a comparable endeavour. This same 1963 edition also added photographic plates to Boyd's own hand-drawn illustrations, many of which are more than a little reminiscent of those of Osbert Lancaster, Cullen or Browne.

38. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness*, 39, 40.

39. Philip Goad, "Robin Boyd and the Art of Writing Architecture." In *Semi-Detached: Writing, Representation, and Criticism in Architecture*, ed. Naomi Stead (Melbourne: Uro Media, 2012), 191.

In the 1963 edition, Boyd remarked the changes to design culture in Australia since *The Australian Ugliness*' first printing: "In optimistic moments" he wrote "one can almost detect a slow overall increase in awareness of the visual blight and an undetermined sort of public wish to some of the wires underground and to see the introduction of some kind of deterrents to vandalism."<sup>40</sup>

40. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness*, 15.

Donald Gazzard's edited book, *Australian Outrage: The Decay of a Visual Environment* of 1966, originating from a 1964 exhibition, proved Boyd's optimism correct.<sup>41</sup> The exhibition and book presented a barrage of hard-hitting images of Australia's built environment, and draws on Nairn's work both in name and concept. Like Boyd, Gazzard made no pretence of the originality of *Australian Outrage*, listing all the books named above as precedents.<sup>42</sup> In many ways, Gazzard's book was the visual corollary to Boyd's more literary and historically astute book; to use a Townscape analogy, Gazzard was more Cullen to Boyd's Nairn.

41. The exhibition was held in Sydney in 1964 at Farmer's Blaxland Gallery, Sydney.

42. Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, vi. In a telephone interview with the author (January 29, 2013), Gazzard pointed out that Townscape had been a "big influence" on him and his motivation to do the original exhibition. Gazzard had lived in London from 1954 to 1958 and had first hand and local awareness of the *AR*'s activities as they unfolded.

Gazzard thought that a large part of the problem portrayed in *Australian Outrage* stemmed from "the lack of co-ordination between all the bits and pieces" that make up the contemporary urban scene.<sup>43</sup> Moving closer to Townscape's comprehensive design of the built environment (including the so-called Submerged Third), Gazzard noted, "At the moment it isn't anyone's specific responsibility to co-ordinate all these elements

43. Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, 10.

44. Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, 11.

45. Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, 10

46. Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, 18.

47. Donald Gazzard, *Sydneysider: An Optimistic Life in Architecture* (Boorowna: Watermark Press, 2006), 53.

48. John Button, ed., *Look Here! Considering the Australian Environment* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968).

49. See, Robin Boyd, "ABC Television Series. Part III. The Changing Face of Australian Cities, 6:30pm September 21, 1961," *Transition* 38 (1992): 153; *The Walls around Us* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1962): 65–6. See also Robin Boyd, "The Nineteen-Sixties in Focus," In, *Look Here! Considering the Australian Environment*, ed. John Button (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1968), 33–45.

50. Hastings, "Exterior Furnishing," 6–7.

of our visual environment.<sup>744</sup> The similarities between *Australian Outrage* and many Townscape publications are too numerous to discuss in any detail—in Gazzard's own admission, the book is clearly derivative. Significantly, Gazzard shared Townscape's well-founded concern with the outcomes of their outrage and the impending measures aimed to correct it. On the one hand, Gazzard was wary of cosmetic cures by what he termed "civic beautification," such as "flowers in pots fastened to lamps."<sup>745</sup> On the other hand, he, like the AR circle, railed against the nostalgia for the past, and the revivalism it called for.<sup>46</sup>

This wider distinction between Townscape and other culturally conservative postwar developments is important, as all too often the movement is heaped together with groups advocating the kind of facile urban beautification and revivalism which its founders sought so ardently to overturn. In his memoirs, Gazzard thought that his book "did have some influence ... for a while I was in demand from councils to tell them what they were doing wrong."<sup>747</sup> Other books were published in Australia that continued the lines of enquiry begun by Boyd and Gazzard, such as *Look Here! Considering the Australian Environment* (1968).<sup>48</sup> Boyd went on in other writings to reiterate the positions he originally took up in *The Australian Ugliness*, and a closer reading of them is instructive of his nuanced attitudes.<sup>49</sup>

As much as the discovery by Gazzard and Boyd of the inseparability of their own position from that of Townscape, what seems more significant about both the movement itself and the polemics advocated by its various followers, was that urban blight and ugliness was not an end in itself, but a battle-cry, a summons to engage more closely with the built environment. For other groups the problem of urban decline suggested reactionary solutions—character control and urban beautification projects, as suggested by Williams-Ellis and practised by most municipal councils, New Urbanists, Prince Charles and his followers. In contrast, Townscape's proponents saw ugliness, sprawl and blight as symptomatic of the general collapse of the design professions' ability to engage with real-world problems. Hastings summarised the situation in his 1944 "Exterior Furnishing" as being a three-way battle between, the anti-urbanism of the garden city movement, the revivalism of the British architectural establishment, and the utopianism of international modernism, who Hastings referred to as the "bauhausians."<sup>750</sup> "Exterior Furnishing," wrote Hastings, "is sympathetic to all three; ... it lends itself to compromise, which is



the English form of synthesis.”<sup>51</sup> Hastings later invented the role of “visual planner” to coordinate this change, a recommendation echoed soon afterwards by Gazzard.

51. Hastings, “Exterior Furnishing,” 7.

## The Boyd Ultimatum

While there is little question of Gazzard’s motivations or intentions in *Australian Outrage*—Boyd’s position is somewhat more complicated. If Townscape practiced a new way of viewing the mess of modern society—turning “Outrage” as it were into “Counter-Attack”—can we assume Boyd really wanted to participate in such a practice? In the revised introduction to the 1968 edition of *The Australian Ugliness*, Boyd again makes reference to the foundational moment of his interest in ugliness, and others developments that had emerged in the interim.

I warn you now: this whole thing is old hat. It was old hat when it was first published seven years ago and it is old hat now, but for different reasons. Its staleness was due to the fact that various English architects had discovered the ugliness of the technological age years earlier and had been writing about it and drawing it in the *Architectural Review* and elsewhere. It is old-fashioned now because the war against ugliness has become a cause which has wide support, especially among artistic conservatives, and when any cause gets as respectable as that it draws reaction out of the shadows to gibe at it. At this moment.... urban, technological, and mass squalor is in: ugliness au go go. It is, some say, a sort of Pop Art. For example, when a few architects in New South Wales published the latest broadside against non-design, called *Australian Outrage*, the critic Max Harris called them old fogies and found the photographs ravishing. “Vulgarism,” he wrote in *The Australian*, “is the very life force and dynamic of an affluent urban free-enterprise society. ... We have to incorporate outrage into our aesthetic. We can’t stem the irresistible cultural tide, but we can change our aesthetic.”<sup>52</sup>

52. Boyd, *Australian Ugliness* (1968 ed.), 12–13.

It is not clear from this passage if Boyd agrees with Harris’ proposition.<sup>53</sup> In other articles, Boyd’s tone suggests he was not overly enthusiastic about ugliness au go go.<sup>54</sup> Boyd’s work on the directions of post-war international modernism suggest there was more of Hastings’ “bauhausian” in Boyd than the moderate, compromised and synthetic visual planner which Hastings’

53. Max Harris, “Vulgarism – Price of Affluence,” *Australian*, May 23, 1966.

54. See Boyd, “The Nineteen-Sixties,” 34. Philip Goad points to Boyd’s Fishbowl Restaurant of 1969 as lending weight to Boyd’s equivocation on “pop” architecture.

55. See Robin Boyd, *The Puzzle of Architecture* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne Press, 1965).

dreamed of.<sup>55</sup> But with the value of hindsight, what is clear is that Harris' 1966 prediction could not have been more right. Published four years later, and drawing on the tradition of J.B. Jackson from the 1950s, *Learning from Las Vegas* took Blake's Junkyard (quite literally in the form of a duck) and turned it into the stuff of cutting-edge architecture and urban critique.<sup>56</sup> Scrolling forward another two decades to the mid-1990s, Rem Koolhaas' led an explosion of Asian urban-expansion fetishism with his attendant "Generic City" and "Junkspace", where we find another iteration of the ugliness and outrage phenomenon, inflected for productive rather than reactionary ends.<sup>57</sup> If Townscape in the 1950s and Ugliness and Outrage in the 1960s all needed to insist on the degenerate nature of urbanisation and modernisation, by the 1970s, within progressive circles, this thinly veiled disgust could turn to open delight; a delight which has continued, in some circles, to the present.<sup>58</sup>

56. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972).

57. See Koolhaas' essay "Generic City" in Rem Koolhaas et al., *S,M,L,XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995); "Junkspace," *Architecture and Urbanism* (May 2000); Rem Koolhaas et al., *Great Leap Forward* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Design School, 2001).

58. Recent manifestations of this type are found in Alan Berger's, *Drosscape: Wasting Land in Urban America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006). Also the urban-despair voyeurism of Owen Hatherley, *The New Ruins of Great Britain* (London: Verso, 2010).

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