

'Brutalism Among the Ladies': Modern Architecture at Somerville College, Oxford, 1947–67

by ALISTAIR FAIR

In 1945, Janet Vaughan, a distinguished haematologist, became Principal of Somerville College, Oxford, her Principalship lasting until her retirement in 1967. Described in her obituary as 'a woman of extraordinary vitality and not a little impatience', Vaughan — awarded the DBE in 1957 — played a key role in steering the college through a period of major change in British Higher Education.¹ Not least amongst the changes was a significant growth in the number of students at university across the country, which resulted in numerous, often high-profile, construction projects. Somerville, which had been founded in 1879 as the University of Oxford's second college for women, was not untouched by this development, and at Vaughan's retirement party, her colleague, the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Dorothy Hodgkin, referred to the several new buildings completed during the previous two decades.² The college's post-war building campaign had begun modestly with two small infill developments by Geddes Hyslop in 1948–50 and 1954–56. However, Hyslop was subsequently replaced by Philip Dowson of Ove Arup's practice, who was responsible for three rather larger projects. First was the 'Margery Fry and Elizabeth Nuffield Graduate House', designed in 1958–59 and completed in 1964. It formed part of a larger scheme with his Vaughan Building for sixty undergraduates, which opened in 1966 (Fig. 1). Dowson's third and final commission was the Wolfson Building of 1967. All three buildings made prominent use of unadorned concrete as a way to connote something of their structure. In this respect, the results were visually quite unlike Hyslop's brick neo-Georgian. In the case of the Wolfson Building, Nikolaus Pevsner referred to 'Brutalism among the ladies',³ implying that Dowson's architecture was something of an alien import in this environment.

This article uses the example of Somerville College in order to examine aspects of the modernization of British university architecture during the 1950s and 1960s. In so doing it adds to a growing body of literature on this topic — not least by looking at an example commissioned by women, for women — whilst also shedding new light on Somerville College's post-war architects.⁴ The article considers patronage as well as buildings, and comprises two halves. In the first, Dowson's appointment is reconstructed on the basis



Fig. 1. Somerville College, the Vaughan and Fry/Nuffield buildings, and the west end of the chapel (Thomas Photos, 1975. Reproduced with the permission of Oxfordshire County Council and the Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford)

of papers in the college's archive.⁵ The aim here is to augment and even disrupt existing accounts of the post-war universities by showing that Dowson's selection was not necessarily the conscious revolt against stylistic traditionalism that historians have seen in contemporaneous commissions elsewhere. Rather, the example of Somerville suggests that what might appear now to be distinct architectural choices could have been serendipitous or the consequences of other agendas, rather than an overt commitment to a particular architectural philosophy.

The second half of the article discusses the modernity of Dowson's buildings. There are several strands to the argument. For its architects, Somerville offered an initial context in which to explore issues which remained important in their subsequent practice, and Dowson later spoke of a 'line of development' (Table 1).⁶ The links related not only to construction and structure but also to the ways that architecture might embody and direct relationships between individuals and the wider community. Though not an uncommon theme at this time, this question had particular resonances in university architecture, and in 1968 a feature on Arup Associates' work in *Architectural Design* declared that the student bedroom was 'a problem in opposites', having to accommodate work and sleep, be a space for entertainment and retreat, and offer privacy within a communal environment.⁷ Meanwhile the concern of the college's Fellows (i.e. the academic staff) was principally the ways in which the buildings — and particularly the graduate house, a new building type — would be used by women who Vaughan hoped

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Building</i>	<i>Key features</i>
1958–59 (built 1963–66)	Somerville College, Oxford	Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings	Exposed concrete skeleton/ screen at upper three levels, set in front of windows
1960–63	Bracknell	Point Royal (102 flats for single people and childless couples)	Hexagonal tower on plinth. Reprised the external screen of the Somerville buildings with similar detailing (later altered)
1961–64	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (‘Leckhampton’ site, Grange Road)	George Thomson Building	More obviously a kit of pre-cast parts. Windows set back in a similar manner to the earlier Somerville buildings
1966–67	Somerville College, Oxford	Wolfson Building	Trabeated concrete frame. Bay windows now projecting through the frame
1968	Trinity Hall, Cambridge	Boulton House, Wychfield	Bay windows project through the frame as at Wolfson, Somerville, but with a sloping upper face
1970	University College, Oxford (site at junction of Woodstock and Staverton Roads)	‘Stavertonia’ residences	Cross-wall construction but with rooms expressed externally as projecting bays
1971–76	St John’s College, Oxford	Sir Thomas White Quadrangle	Major scheme with a concrete frame and stone infill panels

Table 1. *Arup Associates’ ‘line of development’*

would go on to play significant roles in the post-war world. The bedrooms and communal areas were thus not empty containers, ready to receive (and, perhaps, be personalized by) their occupants, but also had a role to play in shaping their residents’ current lives and future possibilities. In this respect they offer a distinct interpretation of the ‘modern interior’. Furthermore, as the conclusion suggests, they may also be

considered in terms of a new vernacular which, in being founded on a sense of polite taste, is not wholly divorced from Hyslop's neo-Georgian.

By arguing that Somerville's new architecture was multifaceted in its engagement with modernity and that this engagement may be conceived in different ways, the article seeks to avoid a simple 'modern/not modern' duality. It draws on attempts by historians in recent years to move beyond a visual or stylistic definition of Modernism by instead considering it as field of linked ideas and exploratory practices in which works of architecture form contributions to a discourse on modernity.⁸ In the case of Somerville, the issue was not simply architectural, but was also bound up with the role of women's education and the place of women in modern Britain and beyond.

'AS BRAVE AS SOMERVILLE': CONTEXT AND COMMISSION

After 1945, the numbers of men and women in Higher Education increased significantly, partly for egalitarian reasons but also because of a sense that Britain needed graduates — particularly in the sciences and engineering — if it was to compete on an increasingly technological world stage.⁹ Government provided not only growing levels of student support but also increased funding for construction via the University Grants Committee (UGC), which dictated cost limits for the projects that it supported but otherwise allowed institutions a relatively free architectural hand. Within this general context, Somerville College's building programme was shaped by two additional factors. First, there was a sense that the proportion of students 'living out' in private lodgings ought to be reduced.¹⁰ Second, there was also growing recognition that the significant imbalance between numbers of men and women at Oxford needed to be addressed; the number of women was limited by statute into the 1950s and comprised less than 20% of the total (compared with the still-low figure of 28% nationally).¹¹

While the universities were implicated in the modernization of Britain, during the 1950s the stylistic and conceptual conservatism of recent university buildings across the country attracted critical attention in the architectural press.¹² The issue was not new; for example, both Oxford and Cambridge had turned down Modernist schemes during the 1930s.¹³ By the late 1950s, however, there was evidence of change. In Oxford, Edward Maufe was replaced at St John's College by the Architects' Co-Partnership (ACP), whose 'Beehives' residences (1957–60) married the traditional arrangement of rooms accessed from staircases with a fashionably polygonal plan and elevations that displayed none of the overt historicism of Maufe's work.¹⁴ Brasenose College in 1959 commissioned a new building from Powell and Moya, famous for public housing in London and as designers of the 'Skylon' at the 1951 Festival of Britain. In Cambridge, Hugh Casson and Neville Conder were appointed in 1954 as planners of the university's new Sidgwick Site, proposing an informal, Picturesque layout infused with the *Architectural Review's* 'townscape' philosophy; their ideas contrasted with a rival Beaux-Arts scheme by Robert Atkinson.¹⁵ During 1956–57, Stephen Dykes Bower was dropped by Queens' College in favour of Basil Spence, designer of the new Coventry Cathedral.¹⁶ Meanwhile the appointment by Cambridge of Leslie Martin — co-designer of the Festival Hall — as Professor of Architecture in 1956 ensured that Modern architecture would for the next two decades dominate not only there but also across

the country, since Martin was frequently consulted by universities that were planning major work.¹⁷

This shift has often been presented as the result of advocacy by individuals and groups who struggled apparently heroically against the forces of conservatism.¹⁸ Leslie Martin, for example, in 1958 orchestrated the design competition for the new Churchill College at Cambridge to exclude traditionalists in spite of Winston Churchill's apparent wish for a building on the line of the Edwardian Baroque County Hall in London.¹⁹ In the same year, Martin steered the University of Leeds to a number of young, innovative architectural practices.²⁰ At St John's, Oxford, campaigning by a group of young academics — including the architectural historian Howard Colvin — is cited as an instrumental factor in the removal of Maufe. Meanwhile at Queens', Cambridge, student protests undermined Dykes Bower's position, not least when his architectural model was (as legend has it) thrown into the River Cam.²¹

At first glance, a similar story appears to play out at Somerville College in the replacement of Geddes Hyslop with Philip Dowson. Somerville is located north of Oxford city centre.²² Its nucleus is a villa of c. 1826, which had been taken over by the college upon its foundation in 1879. As numbers grew, this house was extended (Fig. 2). Subsequently several new buildings were constructed around the gardens to the west, some in an Arts and Crafts style akin to the houses being constructed nearby, others displaying a more formal brick Classicism. In the early 1930s, an assortment of cottages to the east was replaced by a new entrance quadrangle whose rubble-stone elevations and shingled roofs recalled the Cotswold vernacular. During that decade, the college

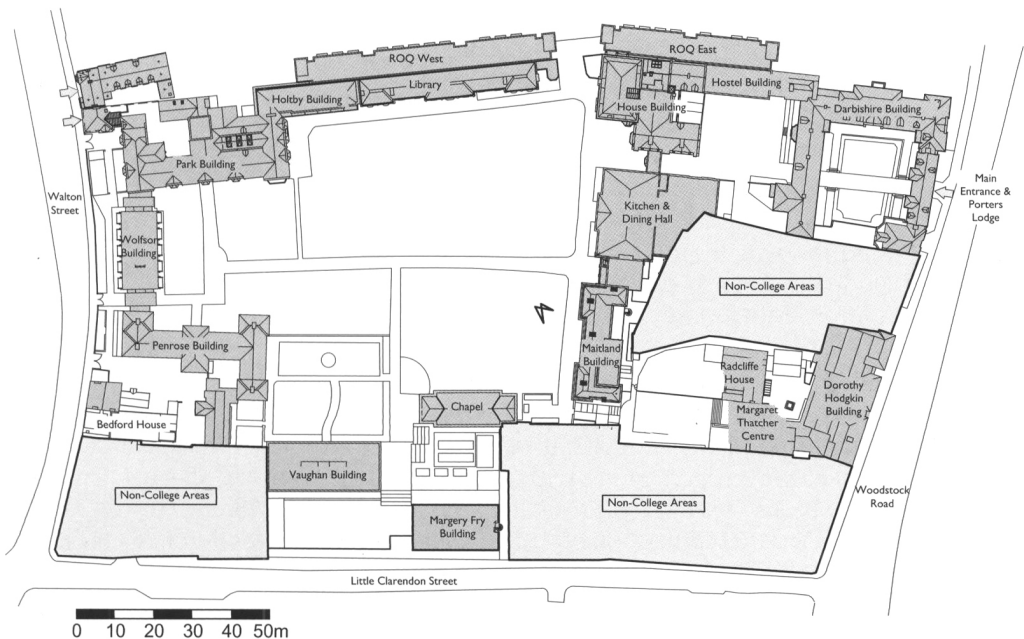


Fig. 2. Somerville College, site plan in 2012 (*The Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford*)

also began acquiring property to the south, fronting Little Clarendon Street, which was then a street of small houses and shops.²³ Hyslop first appears in the college records in 1947 as a possible architect, seemingly for this site,²⁴ but in the event plans were set aside.²⁵ Instead, Hyslop was asked to design two rather more modest buildings for different sites within the college. The first was named 'Hostel' (1950) while the second was an extension to the college library (now named 'Holtby', 1956) (Figs 3 and 4). In their appearance these buildings recalled the residential block that Hyslop had recently designed for King's College, Cambridge (1947–50) (Fig. 5).²⁶ Both the Somerville blocks featured red brick stripped-classical elevations, although the library extension was notable for its two-storey concrete arcade, set in front of a screen of reeded-glass panels. This feature clearly denoted the use of the lower floors of the building as a library bookstack in its contrast with the upper (residential) part of the building.

In 1956, the college's attention returned to the Little Clarendon Street site, for which Hyslop was asked to provide outline designs.²⁷ The scheme was to include accommodation for postgraduate students. Although a memo of c. 1952 had stated that 'it was not thought likely that the college would wish to build a house for graduates',²⁸ priorities shifted after Vaughan visited a sick Nepalese student in her lodgings, an event which revealed to her the poor conditions faced by postgraduates, especially those from overseas.²⁹ This was a novel move, for no other college had made such provision; in the event a joint Balliol/St Anne's project, though planned later, opened before Somerville's graduate house. Hyslop's initial plans (which seem to be lost) were discussed on 13 June 1956.³⁰ However, they were not positively received, reportedly on account of their planning and the inclusion of a large blank wall.³¹ The college decided to postpone matters until the purchase of various properties had been settled,³² while a proposed road-widening scheme also threatened the site.³³ In late 1957, it was reported that no decision had been made regarding the appointment of a new architect.³⁴ Indeed, the college had been careful to establish in February 1956 that it could obtain Hyslop's advice without committing to him.³⁵ Furthermore, a month later, Fellows were requested to suggest other architects for consideration.³⁶ Hyslop was not to return. In May 1958, the name of Philip Dowson appeared in the Governing Body minutes, and he was appointed that summer.³⁷

The replacement of Hyslop with Dowson was celebrated at the time as evidence of the wider trend towards more adventurous university patronage. In 1962, the Oxford University Design Society, a student body, published a slim volume on the city's post-war architecture, noting that 'a stylistic revolution in the treatment of university buildings has come about'.³⁸ It continued, 'it is important that all colleges choosing an architect should be as brave as Corpus Christi, St John's, and Somerville have been'.³⁹ Indeed, Somerville was given special praise for its choice: 'Somerville College has done well to introduce [Philip Dowson] to Oxford.' The college could therefore claim to be at the architectural cutting-edge,⁴⁰ along with its neighbour St Anne's College — another of the women's colleges — which was similarly lauded for commissioning Howell Killick Partridge and Amis (HKPA), the practice that was largely understood to have been the unofficial runner-up in the Churchill College competition.

Certainly, Dowson's expertise made him an interesting choice for a major university scheme. The description that was circulated to Somerville's Fellows in June 1958 noted that Ove Arup's practice was, distinctively, a firm of engineers which had taken on an

Fig. 3. Geddes Hyslop's first work for Somerville College, 'Hostel', completed in 1950 (Photo: author, 2011)



Fig. 4. The Library extension, now known as 'Holtby', completed to Hyslop's designs in 1956 (Photo: author, 2011)



Fig. 5. The Garden Hostel, King's College, Cambridge, by Geddes Hyslop, 1947–50 (Photo: author, 2012)



architect and that Dowson's 'experience of domestic architecture is probably relatively limited as yet'.⁴¹ Indeed, Dowson had been in professional practice for only six years. Having briefly studied Mathematics at Oxford before the outbreak of war in 1939, he subsequently switched to Cambridge and Architecture before completing his studies at

the Architectural Association, where his thesis explored the relationship between materials, construction methods and their architectural expression.⁴² Dowson joined Ove Arup and Partners in 1952. He later led several light industrial projects as well as designing a small house in Suffolk,⁴³ and he had developed particular interests in standardization, prefabrication and concrete construction. His background was, therefore, quite different from that of Hyslop — not least in his employment by a leading Modernist engineering practice — and Somerville's Fellows can have been in little doubt as to the type of architecture that they might get. However, we might question the extent to which Dowson's appointment really represented a rupture akin to ACP's appointment at St John's, first by looking at Hyslop's buildings in the light of recent scholarship on Modernism and second by examination of the archival evidence.

In recent years a revisionist understanding of architectural Modernism has been proposed by Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Hilde Heynen and others.⁴⁴ In this reading, architectural Modernism is not a specific style or set of visual tropes but rather a broad 'field' of ideas and practices that are informed by certain common cultural, social and sometimes political themes. It is a response to the process of modernization and the condition of modernity; in turn it seeks to shape that process and condition. Goldhagen's theory of Modernism-as-position-taking was motivated by her sense that many supposedly canonical works were actually rather unlike each other in formal terms. The crux of her argument is that architecture should be conceived as a discourse and that it thus represents a commentary on modernity, with which it might engage to a greater or lesser degree, and in different material and theoretical ways, but in which it is nonetheless implicated.

Following this reading, Hyslop's exploration of continuity — particularly after a world war and during a period of social change — might well be significant as an antidote to modernity in much the same way as the 'Gothic survival' of post-Reformation Oxbridge. Furthermore, his architecture was shaped by its temporal context in several ways. For example, the economic climate of the late 1940s and early 1950s imposed challenges. The initial intention to build on Little Clarendon Street had, as mentioned, been set aside; a letter of March 1948 mentioned that the chances of building seemed remote.⁴⁵ Construction even of the modest Hostel and Library buildings was dependent first on university approval and then on the granting of building licences, which is partly why the Library extension was designed in 1951 but not completed until 1956.⁴⁶ In the face of materials shortages, Hyslop had to retain part of an earlier structure within the Hostel building.⁴⁷ His selection of brick rather than stone, though matching its neighbours and encouraged by alumnae,⁴⁸ similarly reflected the availability of materials, as did the elimination of mouldings and detail from the elevations. Stripped Classicism thus had an ambiguous relationship with modernity: antithetical in its stylistic basis yet also implicated in its context. It was not simply modern by virtue of being unornamented, but was also a response to 'modern' conditions. The Library extension in fact also displays novel features, notably its two-storey concrete and stone arcade and screen of square 'glascrete' blocks, a chunkier version of the glazed walls of Pierre Chareau's *Maison de Verre* in Paris (1932). And although some rooms in Hostel had furnishings donated by alumnae, the rest featured contemporary items from Heal's catalogue which echoed the wartime Utility style in their Arts and Crafts simplicity and were described as 'the modern

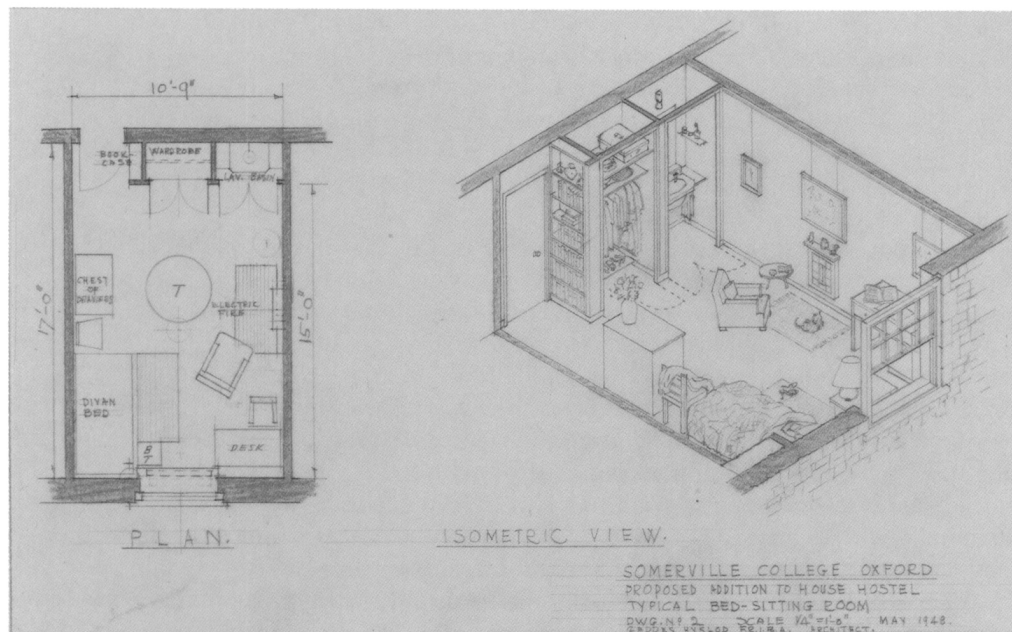


Fig. 6. Bedroom in the Hostel building as drawn by Hyslop (RIBA Drawings and Archives Collections)

kind of thing' (Fig. 6).⁴⁹ Indeed, with built-in sinks and, in the case of the bedrooms in the Library extension, integrated electric fires, they were among the most comfortable spaces that the college then possessed. No doubt the relatively high cost of the Heal's items added to this sense. The college's Fellow in Medieval History, Barbara Harvey, later recalled that the rooms were thought to be 'rather superior'.⁵⁰

Yet even though we might now suggest that Hyslop's work was 'modern' in various ways, or at least a material and stylistic response to contemporary conditions, it is also important to recognize the terms of the contemporary debate as it was formulated in the architectural press. Hyslop's buildings were certainly unlikely to curry favour with progressives on account of their stylistic basis,⁵¹ and in this respect the difference with Dowson is clear. Furthermore, it is perhaps revealing that even historians interested in traditionalism have passed over Hyslop in favour of others whose output was apparently more accomplished, such as Donald McMorran.⁵² It may well be that, by the mid-1950s, at least some at Somerville considered Hyslop pedestrian, but not in style-specific terms. Vaughan, despite appointing Hyslop in 1952 to design an outbuilding at her weekend home near Guildford, Plovers Field,⁵³ seems to have chosen her words carefully when in August 1955 she told the Vice-Chancellor of Southampton University that:

We are extremely well-satisfied with the work he has done for us. The completed building has proved satisfactory in every way and is, within the limits set by him, architecturally agreeable. [...] The fact that we have employed him for a second time I think speaks for itself.⁵⁴

Was there perhaps some degree of criticism in Vaughan's reference to 'the limits' set of himself by Hyslop? Certainly, the abolition of building licences in 1954 and the easing of

post-war austerity might have favoured a less 'limited' approach. Jane Hands, Somerville's Assistant Bursar from 1954 and later the Treasurer of the college,⁵⁵ recalled in 2011 that Hyslop was well thought-of but that, by 1956, the college sought a more 'upmarket' designer.⁵⁶ The term 'upmarket' dates from the early 1970s,⁵⁷ but is useful in suggesting that the college wished to spread its architectural wings. Certainly, Barbara Harvey suspected in reflecting on this period that Hyslop was dropped largely because what he proposed was 'a little dull'.⁵⁸

The surviving college records make it difficult to establish individuals' architectural preferences or to discern whether there were particular factions. The notes circulated after the interviews made little reference to style or even buildings, rather to temperament.⁵⁹ The long-list of names that emerged — which initially did not feature Dowson — was balanced.⁶⁰ It included both Maufe and the ACP, for example. Alongside ACP on the 'modern' side were Basil Spence, W.A. Henderson (formerly of the Hertfordshire County Council, famed for its recent school buildings),⁶¹ and the planner/architect Anthony Minoprio. Also mentioned were Powell and Moya, who would have been known to Vaughan through her work with the Oxford Regional Hospital Board because they were the designers of the new hospital at Swindon, though they ultimately declined to be considered, citing pressure of work — a common response for them at this time.⁶² More obviously indebted to the traditional architectural styles were Heather Hughes and John P. Lomax, a husband-and-wife team, who had worked in Oxford at Regent's Park College, and Donald McMorran, responsible for Cripps Hall at Nottingham. The subsequent shortlist comprised ACP, Hughes and Lomax, McMorran, and Hyslop.⁶³

No mention of Hyslop is made in the post-interview memo, but the name of Philip Dowson did now appear, having been added to the list at the late suggestion of Dorothy Hodgkin.⁶⁴ Hodgkin seems to have had some interest in architecture — she had, for example, sketched architectural forms during a trip to Spain in 1936.⁶⁵ However, her suggestion seems rather to have stemmed from the fact that the village in which her family home was situated, Geldeston, Norfolk, was also home to Dowson, and they were known to each other.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, she was reportedly also aware of his work,⁶⁷ although one of her colleagues recalls that what had impressed her was not Dowson's contemporary industrial buildings but rather his creation of a bus shelter within a small extension to the village public house in Geldeston,⁶⁸ a simple open-fronted structure with a pantiled roof. It is difficult to know whether it was this project, his industrial work, or perhaps his background with Arup which recommended him to the Fellows. Vaughan, who as Principal reportedly 'loved her new contact with the young',⁶⁹ may well simply have been excited by the prospect of a representative of a younger generation of designers. In any case, Dowson's initial proposals, made during the summer of 1958, were apparently 'traditional' in appearance and materials.⁷⁰ However, they soon evolved into something more visually and structurally radical, as the next sections of this article consider.

A VOCABULARY OF CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION

The Fry/Nuffield graduate building was opened in 1964 and the undergraduate block followed two years later, but the bulk of the design work on both was completed between

1958 and 1960; the delay in construction was caused by the need to raise the money to build. The exposed concrete skeleton that dominates views of these buildings can be understood in two ways. First, it reflected an interest on the part of Dowson and the Arup office in the possibilities of modern concrete construction, later explored further in the Wolfson building at Somerville and in other projects (Table 1). Second, it also acts symbolically, defining the place of the individual room (and its occupant) within the wider structure and community of the building and college. The next two sections of this article explore these essentially 'architectural' themes before we turn to the slightly different way in which the Somerville Fellows' interest in community played out.

By November 1958, the basic massing of the Little Clarendon Street scheme had been decided, with the graduate building tight against the pavement and the undergraduate block set back from the street.⁷¹ A staggered arrangement was suggested, with rooms in sub-blocks set half a storey up or down from the neighbouring unit and accessed via staircases, giving a sawtooth-like roofline and elevations that stepped forwards and backwards (Fig. 7). In February 1959, Dowson reported that he proposed to use concrete. Brick would, he now felt, be wrong for such tall buildings.⁷² He also suggested that concrete had various advantages over brick, not least that it would weather well and would keep water away from the building.⁷³ We might add the speed of construction implied by the use of pre-cast concrete, critical in an academic setting where prolonged disruption and noise are undesirable (and perhaps particularly important in a women's college where there may then have been some concern at the prospect of a prolonged influx of male labourers).⁷⁴ In May, it was reported that the staggered 'mezzanine' plan had been abandoned in favour of corridors at the centre of the buildings giving access to rooms for twenty-four graduates and forty-eight undergraduates.⁷⁵ Presumably the economies of the simpler plan and section account for the change as the staggered arrangement implied a greater number of staircases (a layout that was in any case more commonly associated with the men's colleges). The revised concept was accepted, and in November images of the model appeared in the architectural press (Fig. 8).⁷⁶ The massing of the two blocks shown in these photographs is essentially what was subsequently built, with both buildings set on a paved podium elevated at first-floor level. The graduate block retained its position on the street edge, while the undergraduate block was pulled back into the college site. Below the podium was a covered car park, and there was also a row of shops facing Little Clarendon Street, their fronts set behind an arcade.

The delays to the undergraduate block meant that the internal planning of the built design was a little different from that proposed in the 1959 model. In particular, the positions of the Fellows' flats and undergraduate common room were revised, and a penthouse suite came and went.⁷⁷ An extra floor was added,⁷⁸ meaning that the three floors of bedrooms now sat above two levels of common rooms, Fellows' accommodation, and a double-height music room, one of these lower levels being below the podium. In addition, the capacity of the building was increased. Spurred on by the Robbins Report of 1963, which not only accelerated the expansion of Britain's universities but also called specifically for greater opportunities for women in Higher Education, Vaughan suggested that, if the bedroom size were reduced, more rooms could be fitted into the proposed building envelope.⁷⁹ The architects confirmed the feasibility of the

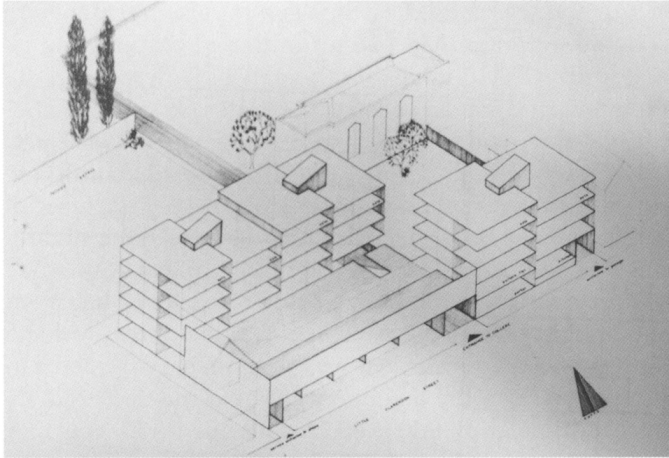


Fig. 7. Early version of the Little Clarendon Street development showing the buildings in their final position but broken down into staggered sub-blocks (The Principal and Fellows of Somerville College, Oxford)

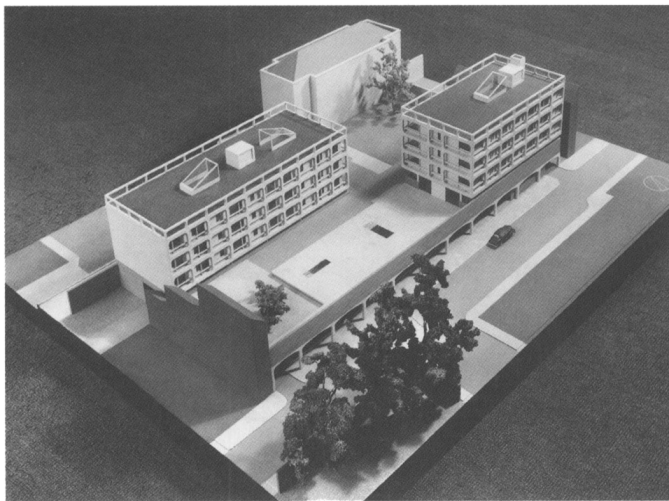


Fig. 8. Model of the Little Clarendon Street development as of 1958 (Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection)

idea,⁸⁰ and in April 1964 the plans were revised to provide sixty rooms rather than the forty-eight originally intended (Fig. 9).⁸¹ The UGC had already indicated its willingness to provide a grant to Somerville and, armed with the revised design, the college made an approach. With the plans being ready for construction and the reduced bedroom size now nearing the UGC's standard cost limit of £1,000 per room, funding was readily obtained.⁸² Indeed, the greater number of rooms meant an increased grant, because UGC funding was related to the number of bedroom units.

Dowson's suggestion of concrete construction manifested itself as a grid that projects forward around one foot beyond the bedroom windows and external walls. It creates a regular rhythm of openings with curved corners (Fig. 10). The slightly recessed lower part of the building was faced more simply in brown brick, with this material being carried onto the podium as paving. The arched openings of the Little Clarendon Street arcade suggest the possible influence of Le Corbusier's recent *Maisons Jaoul* in their

juxtaposition of concrete and brick,⁸³ while the immediate source of the skeleton idea was apparently an image of an Anatolian farmhouse which was framed on Dowson's office wall and which featured a timber structure providing walkways in front of its elevations.⁸⁴

The expression of structure was to become a key concern for Arup Associates. Dowson suggested that concrete construction needed to find its own vocabulary in order to connote the way that it was made;⁸⁵ as he put it, 'buildings [...] are constructed things — they are not made of cheese'.⁸⁶ Such views reflect a long tradition of constructional rationalism and the belief in construction as a controlling aspect of form, evident not least in the gridded structures of the pre-war Italian Rationalists or the work of Otto Wagner.⁸⁷ In the case of Dowson's two Little Clarendon Street buildings, the initial intention was to use concrete cast *in situ*. This form of construction would be signified in the way that the concrete grid of the upper part of the building reads as a single entity; it is not made from an obvious 'kit of parts'. (Interestingly, the curved corners of these openings find a parallel in the unbuilt offices designed by Alison and Peter Smithson for Arup in 1956.⁸⁸) In reality, pre-cast concrete components were ultimately used, with the joints being carefully hidden. However, Dowson's design for Somerville's

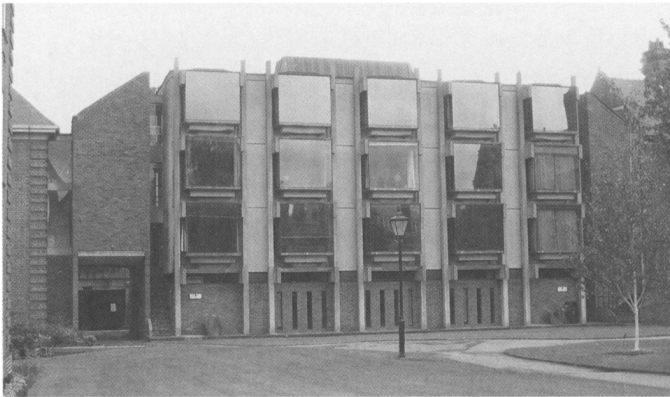


Fig. 11. *The Wolfson Building at Somerville College, Oxford, completed in 1967. (Photo: author, 2012) An extension has since been added at ground level*

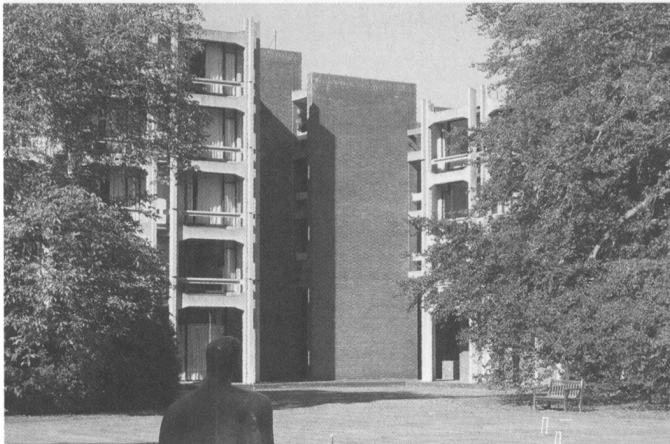


Fig. 12. *The George Thomson Building, Arup Associates' building for Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, completed in 1961 (Photo: author, 2011)*

Wolfson Building signified its use of prefabricated structural elements more explicitly. Between two Louis Kahn-esque brick towers containing staircases, bathrooms and kitchens, it reads as a trabeated system of horizontal and vertical beams, an obvious kit of parts (Fig. 11). In this respect, it resembled more closely the graduate building that Dowson designed for Corpus Christi, Cambridge, in 1961–62 (Fig. 12), as well as Arup Associates' work at Trinity Hall, Cambridge (1967–69), St John's College, Oxford (1976, Fig. 13), and their laboratories and faculty buildings at the universities of Birmingham (1963–66) and Cambridge (1967–74).⁸⁹

In the case of Somerville's Wolfson Building, the exposed concrete beams of the frame set up a vertical datum. The ground floor is slightly recessed behind the frame with (as originally completed) narrow slit windows set in brick.⁹⁰ The completely glazed bay windows of the three floors above punch through the frame. During the day, the bay windows reflect their surroundings, softening the presence of the building at the end of the garden. At night, they offer views into those rooms that are illuminated. There is a certain ambiguity about this balance of translucency and reflectiveness that contrasts with the direct solidity of the concrete frame. The projecting beams and bay windows, and the reflections seen in the windows themselves, were conceived to create interest in oblique views along Walton Street to the west of the college.⁹¹ The gridded openings of the Little Clarendon Street elevation can be understood similarly, avoiding the monolithic sense that might result from an unrelieved flat wall on this scale.⁹²

Dowson argued that one drawback of framed construction was the typical thinness of (non-structural) infill walls between, in front of, or behind structural columns and beams. In his view, a greater degree of modulation between interior and exterior was desirable, akin to the thick walls of traditional buildings and their splayed window / door openings. Thus the skeletal frame of the Fry / Nuffield and Vaughan buildings acted to 'layer' or frame views out and in, being set in front of the windows with a prominent horizontal beam running across the opening itself (Fig. 14). (This issue was also explored by Dowson's contemporary John Partridge at nearby St Anne's College, leading there to windows set behind deep balconies in an attempt to achieve the depth of load-bearing walls.⁹³) The idea was particularly pertinent in the Little Clarendon Street buildings at

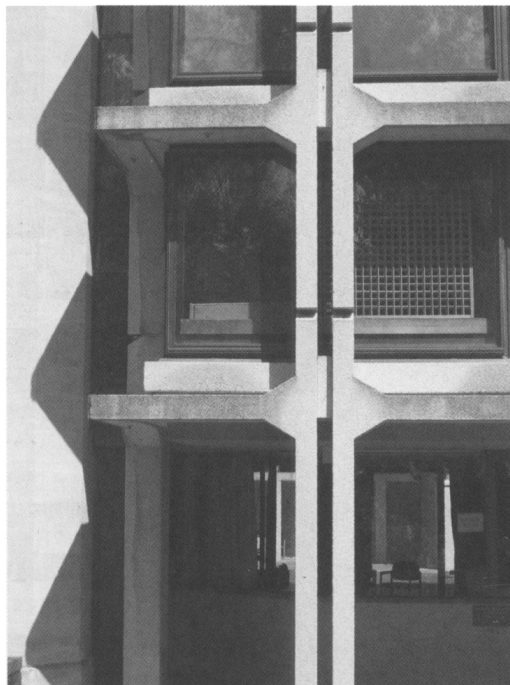


Fig. 13. *Sir Thomas White Quadrangle, St John's College, Oxford (Arup Associates, 1976), detail of elevation (Photo: author, 2011)*

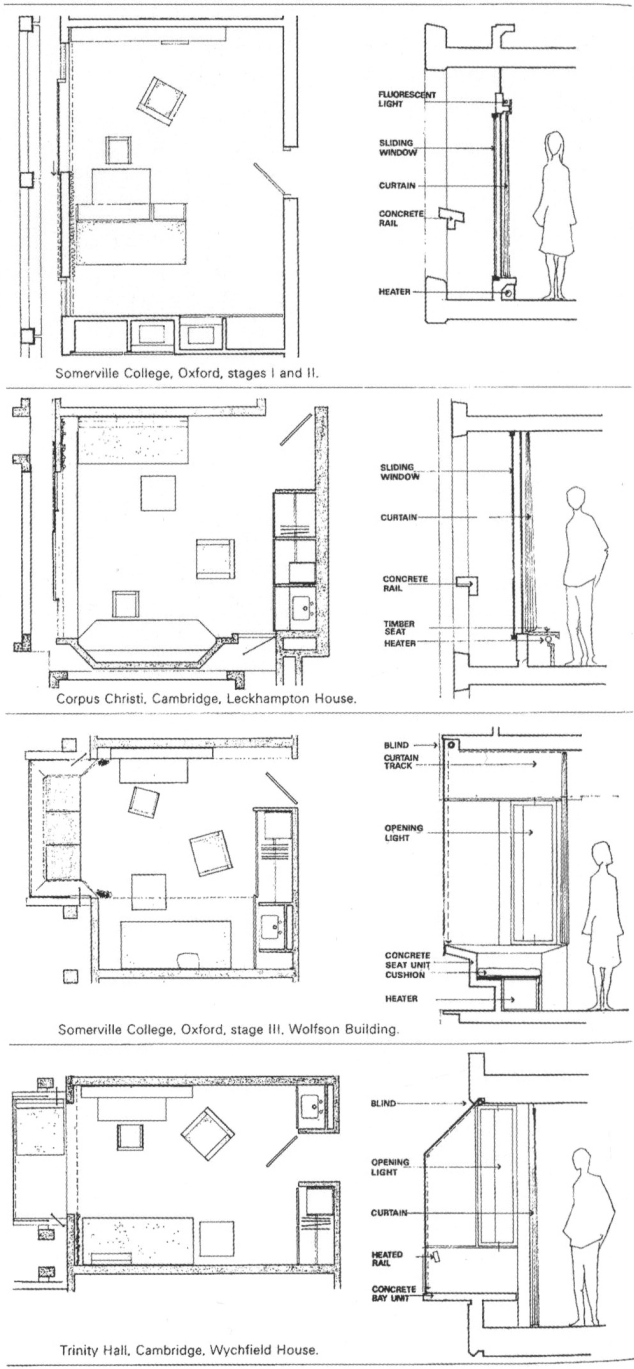


Fig. 14. 'Layered' elevations in Arup Associates' work (Arup)

Somerville (and at Corpus Christi's Leckhampton site in Cambridge) in view of Dowson's wish to use full-height glazing. It was suggested that the set-back mitigated against the sense of vertigo that could otherwise be induced. In the case of the Wolfson building, meanwhile, the transitional zone was brought into the room by the bay window seat.

The large areas of glass were intended to create a visual relationship between the room and the world beyond and thus to counter any sense of isolation.⁹⁴ At the same time, the structural frame and the set-back glazing served to shield the window to some extent, offering a degree of privacy and thus raising a question: how the room could offer shelter to the individual whilst also making links with the wider community? And how was this question understood by the architects and by their clients?

COMPOUND AND COMMUNAL BUILDINGS

In his study of Arup Associates' work, Michael Brawne likened the external expression of the individual room within the skeletal frame of many of the practice's university buildings to John Summerson's analysis of the Gothic.⁹⁵ For Summerson, the arched *aedicule* functioned as the element from which cathedrals were made at a variety of scales from niche to arcade. Meanwhile discussions of the extent to which buildings might express externally their 'cellular' internal arrangement have a long pedigree. Writing in the 1690s, Roger North discussed 'compound' buildings in which serried rows of identical windows 'speak [of] littleness within'; that is, the windows reveal the presence of repeated small spaces.⁹⁶ At Christopher Wren's Chelsea Hospital (1682), the pensioners' cells were understood to be parts of the whole, embodying the way in which Robert Hooke in 1675 borrowed the architectural term 'cell' for the divisions he saw in cork viewed under a microscope.⁹⁷

The potential of architecture to shape and articulate communities was a fundamental concern in post-war university design. For example, Robert Proctor has shown how Gillespie Kidd and Coia (GKC)'s designs for The Lawns, a series of residences at the University of Hull (1961–68), may be read not only in terms of their adherence to policy and the tenor of contemporary reports but also the (utopian) urban discourses, revolving around social contact, which were prevalent during this period amongst members of Team X, the avant-garde group of architects.⁹⁸ These concerns, which affected a range of building types,⁹⁹ reflected Team X's wider rejection of functionalist city planning as it had been propounded by CIAM (the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne); the ideas were stimulated in part by photographic and sociological studies of working-class life, not least in the East End of London. The significance of these debates within the university sphere was that for some architects, such as Richard Sheppard and Ralph Erskine, student housing was simply 'housing' like any other.¹⁰⁰ While pragmatic concerns dominated in many cases,¹⁰¹ university commissions at times offered opportunities to experiment in urbanism, the campus acting as proxy for the city.¹⁰² For example, the principles of 'neighbourhood planning' as a means of facilitating social contact and identity at a sub-urban level,¹⁰³ familiar from post-war urbanism, were translated to examples including the University of York (masterplanned by RMJM [Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall], 1962).¹⁰⁴

The example of Somerville College in some ways conforms to this interpretation and in some ways extends it. First, the Little Clarendon Street buildings were composed as a fragment of cityscape in their podium-top location, which echoed contemporary multi-level city planning by relegating cars and servicing to the lower level below a pedestrian deck. In addition, Dowson suggested that the articulation of the internal spaces on the external elevations served ‘the social purpose of identifying the part within the whole and so creating a sense of “belonging”’.¹⁰⁵ As executed, the increased number of rooms in the Vaughan building — sixty rather than forty-eight — meant that the (unaltered) gridded pattern of openings on the elevations corresponded exactly to the rooms behind, unlike the graduate building where each room occupies either one-and-a-half or two bays of the grid. As a result, the position of the individual room within the whole block is significantly clearer than would otherwise have been the case. The frame is a literal representation of the contents, rather than a metaphor for them. Something similar is evident in the bay windows of the Wolfson Building, where each projecting bay typically corresponds to a single room (admittedly some of the Fellows’ rooms occupy two bays). Furthermore, windows did not simply serve to represent communities, but could also create connections. We have already noted Dowson’s intention that large windows would act to counter any sense of isolation by means of generous views out. Whereas the Little Clarendon Street buildings featured set-back glazing, the Wolfson building’s large projecting bays seem rather less conducive to privacy, not least because the window seat potentially places residents on full view. In practice, a blind was fitted from the outset, giving the occupant control over the extent to which they wished to see and be seen.

In addition, a sense of community was suggested by spatial means, as at Hull and elsewhere. The sawtooth arrangement seen in the initial designs for the Little Clarendon Street blocks anticipates GKC’s mezzanine landing communal spaces at Hull. Although not executed in the Little Clarendon Street buildings, it led Dowson to place bathrooms and kitchens at half-landing level in the Wolfson Building and also, at Cambridge, in Leckhampton (1964). Pragmatism surely drove this decision, because facilities could be shared between floors more effectively, while there are echoes of Louis Kahn’s separation of ‘served’ and ‘servant’ accommodation (the bedrooms in the main building, the facilities in the side towers), but the result can also be interpreted as allowing residents of adjacent floors to have a greater degree of contact.

Communal living was also promoted through the provision of generous social spaces. In this respect, the Somerville examples allow us to deepen our understanding of the impact of ideas of community on university architecture, because from the college’s perspective it was not so much the spatial arrangement of these rooms that mattered as much as the ways that they were to be used (Fig. 15). The graduate house was for all the college’s postgraduate students, not simply those in residence. It was to act as a hub, drawing in and assimilating those who did not live on site. The building was provided with its own street entrance, a notable feature given that access to the college was otherwise via more traditional gates. From an early stage, it was hoped that residents would neither eat in the kitchen nor take meals on trays to their rooms.¹⁰⁶ In addition to the common room, there was a dining room in which graduates could entertain, originally intended to be linked to a kitchen by a serving hatch with drawers beneath, a

Fig. 15. Middle (i.e. Graduates') Common Room in the Fry/Nuffield building, Somerville College (Photo by Colin Westwood, 1964. Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection)



peculiarly suburban touch.¹⁰⁷ Similarly genteel was the provision of a Spode dinner service in 'Flemish green', including 'meat [dinner] plates', bowls for soup or puddings, tea plates, coffee cups and saucers.¹⁰⁸ These spaces were conceived to house the daily rituals through which a communal identity might be forged. It was, for example, decided that coffee would be available in the dining room at certain times each day, with provision being made for up to sixty to be served after lunch and dinner.¹⁰⁹ There was something of the social experiment in all this. Dowson stated in 1966 that:

a house will always remain for me one of the most fascinating and exacting design problems — a controlled experiment, a laboratory where we can be closest to our main subject. Given a site, how can an architect enrich the lives of those who are going to make it their home? How can a vital relationship be established between the environment and the way of life, which is at the heart of it all?¹¹⁰

Dowson was speaking of residential architecture more generally, but his word choice anticipates Dorothy Hodgkin's later reference to the Fry/Nuffield building as 'Janet Vaughan's happiest experiment, the very beautiful graduate house',¹¹¹ a formulation that was entirely apposite given Vaughan's scientific background.

The particular attention paid by Somerville to the rhythms of graduate life reflect the novelty of the postgraduate building as an architectural type, and the fact that its inhabitants, aged at least twenty-one, would not be the college's direct legal responsibility in the same way as its undergraduates, who, until 1969, were below the age of majority and for whom the college thus stood *in loco parentis*. Hence the separate entrance to the graduate building, which made it clear that Somerville's postgraduate students were not subject to the same degree of supervision by the college's porters (the gatekeepers, on duty at the main entrance) as the undergraduates,¹¹² though by the mid-1960s there was also evidence of a progressive attitude to the younger students. In 1964,

Somerville was the first college in Oxford to issue gate keys to those who wished to stay out late, while the introduction of meal rebates gave undergraduates some freedom to organize their own dining arrangements.¹¹³ Dowson's undergraduate block thus included some of the same facilities as the graduate house. While its residents were reported to have expressed little wish to have facilities for baking, they were keen that their new common room would have bookcases, space for 'china' (perhaps generically, meaning cups and plates, rather than the Spode dinner service of the graduates), and a facility to keep food warm.¹¹⁴ Later, Vaughan wrote to Dowson of the value of the new common room as 'the only place in college that will enable the undergraduates to have a dinner party,' a wish that was, she reported, strongly felt.¹¹⁵

Janet Vaughan — an 'unregenerate elitist'¹¹⁶ — believed that the purpose of the graduate house was to house the leaders of the future.¹¹⁷ Where the undergraduates were concerned, too, Barbara Harvey and Louise Johnson have noted that, while Vaughan took an 'intense interest' in examination results, 'she never identified excellence with academic achievement: a fine career mattered more than a good degree'.¹¹⁸ During their time at Somerville, members of the college would acquire the skills necessary to take leading positions not only through their studies, but also as a result of the behaviours, contacts and networks that might be formed at the same time. Vaughan's attitude encapsulated the terms in which the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has discussed the formation of 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu argued that children are taught to appreciate certain forms of cultural production and are thus guided to their appropriate social position.¹¹⁹ While he suggested that social background shapes cultural practices and preferences, he also allowed a role for education. The degree to which education would be an influence, however, would vary:

The relative weight of home background and of formal education (the effectiveness and duration of which are closely dependent on social origin) varies according to the extent to which the different cultural practices are recognised and taught by the educational system, and the influence of social origin is strongest — other things being equal — in 'extra-curricular' and avant-garde culture.¹²⁰

Higher education was specifically implicated in this process. He commented:

it is written into the tacit definition of the academic qualification *formally* guaranteeing a specific competence (like an engineering diploma) that it *really* guarantees possession of a 'general culture' whose breadth is proportionate to the prestige of the qualification ...¹²¹

In referring to 'prestige' qualifications, Bourdieu was thinking of the elite French *grands écoles*, but the idea is surely applicable to Oxford, and especially to postgraduate students given that they were few in number in the early 1960s.

Thus the spaces provided for coffee-drinking and dinner parties as well as work could be considered not only to facilitate a particular lifestyle in the present but also to shape the future prospects of their inhabitants. These ideas were not unique to Somerville. The Niblett Report on the design of student residences suggested in 1957 that 'life in hall turns schoolboys into adults, prepared to take their part in the community'.¹²² Lord Robbins, meanwhile, noted in 1963 that the university was a forge in which to create 'cultivated men and women',¹²³ while Basil Spence spoke of 'help[ing] them over the fence into manhood and womanhood'.¹²⁴ As the *Architectural Review* implied when giving

the caption 'new men in their new setting' to an image of students at Sheffield,¹²⁵ architecture was central to this process, for it was in lecture halls, laboratories and residences that Lord Robbins's 'cultivated men and women' would be created. However, the transformative potential of Higher Education was infused with a particular flavour at Somerville. As a scientist who actively continued her laboratory work alongside her duties as Principal,¹²⁶ Janet Vaughan would have been particularly aware of the faith in advanced science and technology (and economic/social modernization) of the Labour Leader, Harold Wilson, who in 1963 famously spoke of 'the Britain that is to be forged in the white heat of this revolution'. By 1967, the year of Vaughan's retirement, a notable 40% of Somerville undergraduates were studying science or mathematics, and, while Vaughan was 'excited by scholarship in any field of studies', the expanded Fellowship featured a significant number of scientists (in 1945 there had been just one).¹²⁷ Thus the role of the college was not simply to act as a kind of finishing school. Rather, not only in general terms but particularly by training scientists, it would play a very real role in creating women equipped to take part in shaping a rapidly changing country, much as Vaughan herself had done through her research (which included pioneering work on pernicious anaemia) and her life as what she termed a 'statutory woman', a member of numerous committees at university and national level. In such circumstances, one might conclude that Dowson, a designer hitherto known for his industrial structures, almost emblemized the role of science and technology in shaping modern Britain.

MODERN INDIVIDUALS, MODERN INTERIORS

While ideas of community, both literal and metaphorical, were thus important, Somerville's Building Committee also recorded after a meeting with graduate students in 1959 that 'after three or four years of communal living, the desire for privacy was very strong'.¹²⁸ Dowson suggested that 'one [...] has to reconcile two basic problems — that of providing living space as part of a community and yet create a sense of privacy, essential for study'.¹²⁹ Hence, as we have seen, the need to balance connection (the full-height glazing) with privacy (the concrete frame as screening device). Dowson returned to this theme when he stated in 1966 that:

We have to provide a framework within which this organism of individuals can evolve. It will be as varied as the people that compose it, it can be no single thing, or series of things — certainly no monument. To live, it must encompass a host of activities, but ultimately it must have a wider identity of its own.¹³⁰

Though he was speaking of Arup's university architecture generally, these ideas find early expression in Somerville's buildings. Indeed, the idea of a framework is literally evident in the gridded elevations of the two Little Clarendon Street blocks.

While in the Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings the frame shields the residents from onlookers, the entire idea of the elevation revolves around the notion that there are individuals within, and not only through the repeated pattern of identical openings. Indeed, the original arrangement of the windows and lighting meant that, as originally completed, the pattern of occupation was visible on the elevation, especially at night. The glazing is divided by a horizontal beam. The narrow section of window above the beam rises to the ceiling, which continues externally within the framed opening. Dowson

suggested that the view of the ceiling continuing beyond the room allowed the interior space to dissolve into the external environment and psychologically made the room feel larger (Fig. 16).¹³¹ Because the upper section is uncurtained, the effect at night is of an elevation with a pattern of illuminated rectangles that changed according to whether rooms were occupied and their occupants were awake. Until refurbishment in 2001, a fluorescent tube was located on upper side of the dividing beam, making the pattern of occupation even more visible (Fig. 14). Something similar happens in the Wolfson Building, whose bay windows house large window seats. The elevations are animated by residents sitting in their windows, working or entertaining, both during the day and at night, and the building's inhabitants thus become a significant part of the external experience of the building. The result is not so extreme as Berthold Lubetkin's proposed post-war housing at Peterlee new town, in which a basic structural frame was to accommodate varied elevational panels to suit the occupant's taste.¹³² However, it recognizes the individual to a greater degree than Arne Jacobsen's contemporaneous St Catherine's College, Oxford, where the architect was insistent that all curtains should be drawn to exactly the same degree when the building was photographed.¹³³

In effect, Dowson's buildings' elevations literally can be read as communicating the pattern of occupancy, each being 'as varied as the people that compose it'. Dowson suggested in 1966 that 'at base, architecture is people'.¹³⁴ His comment that the result would be 'no monument' is therefore potentially significant, because it evoked the 1940s and 1950s debate about the extent to which a new approach to monumentality might enrich Modern architecture, restoring to it some kind of representational or symbolic purpose without using the traditional styles or suggesting the kind of overblown monumentality that might be associated with totalitarian regimes.¹³⁵ University architecture was in some sense an inherently 'monumental' type. It was, at least until the advent in the twentieth century of the UGC, often the result of benefactions, with



Fig. 16. Bedroom in the Fry/Nuffield building (Photo by Colin Westwood, 1964. Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection)

the patron (or at least a dedicatee) commemorated the building's name. Somerville's post-war commissions were no exception. The graduate house was named after both Margery Fry, penal reformer and Principal of the college at the end of the 1920s, and Elizabeth Nuffield, the wife of the principal donor, Lord Nuffield; Lady Nuffield had a particular interest in women's education. Dowson's third building reflected the grant made for its construction by the Wolfson Foundation.

An important proponent of 'modern monumentality' was Sigfried Giedion, who suggested that, in the New Monumentality, people would 'play as important a role as the spectacle itself' in 'a unity of the architectural background, the people, and the symbols conveyed by the spectacle'.¹³⁶ Dowson's elevations, presenting a shifting canvas that reflected the patterns of occupancy, certainly suggest this idea, though we should be wary of taking this analysis too far, because, mention of monumentality aside, Dowson's work resisted abstract theory in favour of a more tangible engagement with structure and materials. There is a parallel with GKC's *The Lawns* at Hull. Their design appears to reflect the influence of late CIAM and Team X philosophy, but such concerns appear not to have been the architects' primary intention, and in fact one of the designers (Isi Metzstein) later denied all Team X influence.¹³⁷

A further, though admittedly limited, dialogue between individuals and building played out within the bedrooms themselves. Writing in the *Architectural Review's* 1963 special issue on universities, Michael Brawne commented that student rooms had to balance 'fixity and placemaking'.¹³⁸ *Architectural Design* similarly underscored 'allowance for self-expression' as a consistent theme in Dowson's work.¹³⁹ Dowson later summarized his approach by suggesting that architecture should 'provide for mass needs without crushing them'.¹⁴⁰ He commented that 'the present generation of students takes a far greater interest in their rooms than they did in my day.'¹⁴¹ The graduate block at Somerville, like the Leckhampton building at Cambridge, was provided with furniture that could be rearranged, albeit in limited ways.¹⁴² Bookcase/desk units could define a sleeping alcove or be located along one of the walls to create an open bed-sitting room. Although the smaller rooms in the Wolfson and Vaughan buildings were more clearly fixed in terms of functional zones (with, in Wolfson, the bed on one wall with a lower ceiling above, the desk opposite, clothes and washbasin in cupboards on the third wall beside the door, and the window seat making the fourth wall), John Donat's published photographs show the extent to which inhabitants personalized their environments with their possessions (Fig. 17), offering a welcome counterpoint to the uninhabited nature of much architectural photography.

The importance of an aesthetic of occupation in Modern university architecture is demonstrated by the work of Alison and Peter Smithson ten years later at another of Oxford's women's colleges, St Hilda's. Of their design, the Smithsons wrote that:

to prevent the girls being too 'exposed' [...] there is a separate external screen of timber members, which we hope will cut down the glare, obviate any sense of insecurity and prevent the casual eye from too easily breaking the 'skin' of the building.¹⁴³

Also notable is the extent to which this building was conceived to 'invit[e] the occupiers into the game of architecture' in that the 'overlay or lattice form[s] part of, or supplement, longer-lasting structures and suggest the possibility of design contributions to their



Fig. 17. Bedroom in the Wolfson Building (Photo by John Donat, 1967, © Arup. Used with permission)

inhabitants'.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, for the Smithsons, 'the ideal house is that which one can make one's own without changing anything'; it would allow interpretation 'without itself being changed'.¹⁴⁵ *Architectural Design's* review of the St Hilda's building suggested the influence of Alison Smithson's writing on Beatrix Potter's interiors, in which 'objects and utensils in daily use are conveniently located [...] and are all the decorations the "simple" spaces need [...] the basic necessities [are] raised to a poetic level: the simple life well done'.¹⁴⁶ One should not overstate this parallel, but there are certainly links between the Smithsons and Ove Arup's engineering practice. They had earlier collaborated on the Hunstanton School (1949–54), while the Smithsons had designed a house for the leading Arup engineer Derek Sugden in 1956 as well as the unbuilt Arup offices of the same year.¹⁴⁷ The Sugden house manifests the same interest in the 'simple life well done'.¹⁴⁸

What is significant about the potential for users to personalize their living spaces is that it suggests a further reading of the building as an expression of modernity. The transformative quality of the university resonates with Hilde Heynen's argument that 'to be modern [...] means to participate in a quest for betterment of oneself and one's environment, leaving behind the certainties of the past'.¹⁴⁹ In this context, being at university — becoming a 'cultivated' man or, especially, woman — could be viewed as a modern act in itself, not least as Higher Education expanded to feed the wider modernization of Britain. We have already noted that architecture supplied the setting for this transformation, but we can now extend that idea. For Heynen, the 'modern interior' exists as an essentially neutral environment that facilitates fast-paced modern life, finding its ultimate expression in the hotel bedroom, appropriated on a temporary basis.¹⁵⁰ But the student bedroom is perhaps a still better example, being 'appropriated' for a longer but still limited period and offering greater scope for personalization by allowing the inhabitant to import and display their possessions. As an example, indeed, it suggests that the one-way nature of the modern interior as implied by Heynen's formulation might profitably be revised, for, as we have seen, the expression of individuality that Dowson's buildings facilitated was balanced by an interest in engendering community, through spatial arrangement, visual metaphors, and the patterns of life that the college sought to orchestrate.

CONCLUSIONS: A (POLITE) ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

Pevsner's assessment of the Wolfson Building — 'Brutalism among the ladies' — identified the significant visual and structural contrasts that distinguished Arup Associates' buildings from their predecessors at Somerville College. This article has, however, suggested that the appointment of Dowson in Hyslop's place, though hard to reconstruct, seems not to have been the calculated rejection of stylistic tradition that might be supposed. Furthermore, it is possible to interpret the modernity of Dowson's buildings in multiple ways, in part a reflection of the varying agendas of the protagonists in this account: by reading them as 'modern monuments'; by considering the extent to which — architecturally and functionally — they mediated between individuals and communities in ways that represent wider debates and influences; by examining how they offered individuals scope for self-expression whilst also directing and shaping the experience of their use; and by seeing them as potentially representative of a scientific/technological view of modern Britain on the part of Janet Vaughan and her colleagues. The 'modern interior' that resulted was thus not an anonymous container; rather, it was also shaped and adapted by its occupants. And the rhythms and patterns of living envisaged were, in intention at least, potentially as significant as the architectural setting.

Hyslop's architectural career essentially ended in the early 1960s,¹⁵¹ but the Somerville College commissions represented a fundamental shift in typology and context for Dowson, whose subsequent work with Arup Associates explored further the relationships between architecture and its users, and permanency and fixity. The expression of post-and-beam concrete construction remained a characteristic of Arup Associates' projects into the 1970s, extending beyond the 'line of development' that connected the practice's university residences. Meanwhile, the deployment of a 'tartan grid' in the firm's later industrial projects provided flexibility in plan, section and elevation, quite different from the limited possibilities of furniture rearrangement at Somerville. (One hopes that their later residential projects were able to resolve the acoustic problems that quickly became apparent at Somerville and which continue to plague the Vaughan Building in particular.¹⁵²)

Whereas Somerville College's earlier buildings had effectively imported aspects of established, often domestic styles, such as Arts and Crafts North Oxford, Cotswold market towns, or, in Hyslop's case, Bloomsbury terraces, the Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings arguably represented an attempt to find what might be considered a new vernacular which could be exported back to the city. Adrian Forty has succinctly outlined the long-established vernacular uses of concrete and argued that concrete construction can be seen as both modern and not modern; in doing so, he noted the way in which a number of Italian designers and critics in the 1930s, including the editor of *Casabella*, Giuseppe Pagano, saw the vernacular as something that was not opposed to the avant-garde but which rather formed 'a way of framing a new syntax free of academicism'.¹⁵³ Judi Loach has also discussed the appeals made to the vernacular made by the pre- and post-war Italian Rationalists, arguing not least that the vernacular was itself seen as rational because it had been proven, over time, to fit the needs (climatic, etc.) of the local context.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, Forty has suggested that Dowson's Sir Thomas White Quadrangle at St John's, Oxford (1976), where a concrete frame structure is coupled with

elevations of stone and glass, has much in common with 1950s Italian practice.¹⁵⁵ Thus the Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings might be considered not only as an important foundation for Arup Associates' subsequent work but also as a suggestion of an architectural approach with wider applicability — almost a new Classicism, perhaps. Indeed the Fry/Nuffield building seems almost to project beyond the college curtilage (Fig. 18),¹⁵⁶ peeping above the arcade and wall as if reaching out to demonstrate the possibilities of Dowson's vocabulary in the urban context in a way that contrasts with the introverted nature of Somerville's earlier main frontage (by Percy Morley Horder, 1933–34). It is notable that the next application of this architectural approach by Dowson and his colleagues was in the Point Royal flats at Bracknell (1960–63), while the initial design for Corpus Christi's Leckhampton development in Cambridge proposed tower blocks of seven and eight storeys, almost like a reduced version of Point Royal.¹⁵⁷ Of course, all these projects were residential, and, as we have seen, parallels were certainly drawn in this period between university residences and housing more generally, but the same ideas reappear in Arup Associates' Cambridge and Birmingham university laboratories, and there is thus a clear sense of an approach that might be used for various building types.

In drawing conclusions about Somerville's patronage, Jane Hands' suggestion that the college's concern was to secure an 'upmarket' designer (rather than, by implication, to commit explicitly to avant-garde Modernism) is potentially significant. As we have noted, the word 'upmarket' dates from the 1970s. The contemporary adjective might well have been 'smart', a term that could be construed negatively, implying transient fashion rather than serious-mindedness.¹⁵⁸ The distinctions made during the twentieth century



Fig. 18. *Little Clarendon Street, Oxford, in 1964, with the Fry/Nuffield building on the left (Photo: Colin Westwood. Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection)*

between 'Modern' and 'moderne' (or modernistic) architecture are well known,¹⁵⁹ with the latter being presented by advocates of the former approach not only as inferior but also safer. As Joe Mordaunt Crook neatly put it, 'when Modern went modernistic, it became respectable', encapsulating 'fashion rather than function, stylistics rather than ergonomics'.¹⁶⁰ David Dunster, writing about the Smithsons, went further when he highlighted 'good taste' as the antithesis of avant-garde Modernism.¹⁶¹ But, as Mark Crinson and William Whyte have recently pointed out, clients do not necessarily think in terms of the kinds of fine-grain architectural distinctions and theories that historians and designers typically work with.¹⁶² Fashion, and a more abstract sense of 'keeping up', may well be important.¹⁶³

Pierre Bourdieu's theories are helpful in developing these ideas. Bourdieu suggested that taste was not innate but rather was socially constructed.¹⁶⁴ Individuals' choices in this model are indicative of their social class and are governed not only by their economic resources but also their 'cultural capital', that is, their education, professional and social networks. In this reading, patronage is an act of conscious social positioning, and so Somerville's selection of Dowson might be interpreted as evidence of a wish to say something about the college within the city's built fabric. To understand what this statement might be, some history is helpful. Margaret Birney Vickery has discussed the early architectural history of the women's college as a building type, suggesting that there was initially a deliberate move to secure their precarious position, by creating a distinctive environment that would complement rather than challenge the men's foundations by avoiding the Gothic and Classical styles for a more eclectic, domestically inspired approach.¹⁶⁵ Somerville's main entrance, for example, comprises a simple arch in an almost wholly unrelieved stone wall which, as we have noted, leads into a courtyard that draws on Cotswold tradition. And although Somerville's library was by Basil Champneys and its entrance quadrangle had been designed by Morley Horder, the majority of the college's buildings were by architects who are now less well-known beyond specialized studies: H.W. Moore, Edmund Fisher, and Courtney Theobald. By the 1950s, however, the position of the women's foundations at Oxford was secure, and they were given the status of full colleges in 1957. In these circumstances, increased architectural ambition might not only reflect the improving post-war economy (and the attendant possibilities for more lavish construction) but could also embody something of the college's Fellows' aspirations and the college's new security and status within the university.

In such an interpretation, Dowson's buildings represent a forward-looking college; as we have seen, they attracted the approval of the student members of the University's Design Society. At the same time, they avoided extremes. They lack the primitive surfaces of Le Corbusier's post-war work, or the reinterpretation of that work by, for example, James Stirling and James Gowan at Ham Common (1956) or Colin St John Wilson in the extension to the School of Architecture at Cambridge (1959). They do not have the sculptural massiveness of Denys Lasdun's contemporaneous buildings (such as the University of East Anglia, developed from 1962). They do not take obsessive delight in industrial materials in the manner of the Smithsons' Hunstanton School (1954). One might say that they remained relatively 'polite'. A similar trend is evident elsewhere. For example, in 1960, before St Anne's College settled on HKPA, it met with the Span

Development Company,¹⁶⁶ which had been established to provide middle-class suburban housing and whose estates, designed by Eric Lyons, were the epitome of 'smart' Modern living. Meanwhile, Basil Spence's University of Sussex (1962) drew in its concrete arches and brick surfaces on Le Corbusier's *Maisons Jaoul*, but without the primitive finishes of that building.¹⁶⁷ Dowson, for his part educated at Oxford, Cambridge and the Architectural Association, was himself a reassuringly urbane presence — even a 'polite' one — and might accordingly be considered an 'upmarket' designer.

Pierre Bourdieu saw in middle-class patronage a certain cultural 'anxiety', a desire to demonstrate knowledge of culture.¹⁶⁸ His view of such 'anxiety' was negative, suggesting misplaced reverence: a belief that something demonstrates cultural sensibilities when in reality it does no such thing. (Hilda Ogden's infamous living-room 'muriel' [mural] in late 1970s episodes of the television soap opera *Coronation Street* comes to mind.) It could potentially be concluded that Somerville's buildings represented Bourdieu's cultural anxiety: they aimed at modernity, but lacked the edginess of the avant-garde. Certainly, some projects of the period, such as Cripps Court at Selwyn College, Cambridge, by Cartwright, Woollatt and Partners (1966–68), which replaced a proposal by James Stirling and James Gowan and lacked the flair of other Cripps-funded buildings, missed the mark spectacularly.¹⁶⁹ But might such politeness result in at least some cases from something other than haplessness or ill-informed choices on the part of patron and designer? On one level, it could have been an entirely pragmatic decision. Like other women's foundations at Oxford and Cambridge, Somerville's financial endowment was small, making fundraising for new buildings essential. Although in the event the Vaughan building was funded by the UGC, whose approach was relatively 'hands-off' in terms of architectural style or approach,¹⁷⁰ such funding was not the original intention. One might speculate that an excessively avant-garde approach to new architecture could have discouraged potential donors. For example, Lord Nuffield only came forward as benefactor of the Fry/Nuffield building at a late stage, after Dowson's appointment.¹⁷¹ He was certainly no fan of Modern architecture, having been instrumental in demanding the transformation into a Cotswold vernacular of Austen Harrison's original neo-Byzantine designs for Nuffield College in the late 1940s.¹⁷² (Not all potential private donors were fixed in their architectural tastes, however, as the example of the Wolfson Foundation demonstrates. Between 1960 and 1967 it supported projects including Raymond Erith's overtly Classical work at Lady Margaret Hall (1963–66) and accommodation by HKPA at St Anne's (1960), as well as Dowson's third Somerville building.¹⁷³)

At the same time, it is worth noting that Janet Vaughan linked what she termed 'elegance' with the purpose of these buildings. Reflecting in her memoirs on their design, she noted that the graduate house, in particular, had 'a certain elegance that we felt was an integral part of the education that Oxford should offer to women who in the future would be important to the good government of so many countries'.¹⁷⁴ Architecture in this reading has a didactic role, with the college's buildings forming the cultural tastes of women who themselves might later be major architectural patrons. Pevsner, however, went further in seeing this 'elegance' as inherently gendered. Whereas he considered the 'Brutalism' of the Wolfson Building as something that had been unleashed 'among the ladies' (and his choice of the word 'ladies' is surely significant), he thought the earlier

Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings were 'a much more elegant job', and by implication all the more appropriate for that.¹⁷⁵ When discussing the Cambridge women's colleges, he saw the influence of HKPA's projecting window bays in Newnham College's Strachey Building (by Lyster and Grillet, 1966), but noted, seemingly approvingly, that they projected 'more gently' at Newnham.¹⁷⁶ He also suggested — in an argument that now feels somewhat patronizing — that Chamberlin Powell and Bon's work at New Hall, Cambridge (now Murray Edwards College) represented a feminized Brutalism on account of its 'easy beauty', grey-white finishes and curvaceous forms, which he contrasted with the 'hardness' of New Hall's neighbour, Churchill College, designed for men.¹⁷⁷ It is difficult to disconnect this assessment from his opinion that New Hall's buildings were problematic for their abstracted allusions to architectural history, the implication being they represented an inferior Modernism in theoretical terms, but one which was nonetheless acceptable and appropriate in the context of a women's college.

While acknowledging Pevsner's view as evidence of a contemporary position, several counter-arguments can be made. First, one might question the extent to which Dowson's Wolfson Building was a significantly more 'Brutal' structure than the earlier buildings. Of course, Brutalism is a difficult, diffuse label, encompassing various ideas from material honesty to an interest in community. Wolfson is certainly more direct in its expression of structure and striking in its large bay windows, but, as has been noted, it is nonetheless rather understated and in its reformulation of established ideas of trabeated construction was perhaps even more conventional than the earlier Arup structures with their unbroken grids of rounded openings. It is arguably more productive to see the Wolfson Building as an evolution of the construction of Dowson's earlier work and its idea of architecture as layered framework. Second, Pevsner in fact approved of HKPA's work at St Anne's, Oxford,¹⁷⁸ which rather complicates his view of what might be appropriate for a women's college. In addition, while Vaughan's conception of 'elegance' invoked the gender of the buildings' occupants, she stopped short of making 'elegance' a specifically feminine quality. Indeed, Barbara Harvey, reflecting on Somerville in the late 1950s, did not think that considerations of gender consciously informed the college's architectural decisions in any symbolic way, and Dowson thought much the same.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps most significantly, just as Hyslop's work at Somerville was not far removed from his earlier building for men at King's, Dowson's 'line of development' saw the application of this architectural approach not only to university projects for both men and women but also beyond, which suggests that any attempt to reduce it to gender is problematic. Any sense that a certain kind of Brutalism might be the preserve of women's institutions is also countered by Spence's approach at Sussex, which again was co-educational. Spence refined Corbusian precedent for his own reasons and to suit his perceptions of what might be appropriate for a new university, in much the same way as more primitive renderings of the Jaoul idiom appeared in the work of Wilson, Stirling and Gowan.

A further argument relates politeness to context. Lord Esher later confessed of his own building for Exeter College on Broad Street, Oxford, that the strength of the *genius loci* had given him 'stage fright'.¹⁸⁰ While the stylistic variety of the city's architecture promoted diversity in the present and could be used to justify boldness, was there not also an argument for a more modest approach that respected, rather than competed with,

its setting? Dowson's initial concerns at Somerville, as has been noted, were the materials and massing of the existing college buildings. Even though he abandoned brick and tile for concrete, there is still a sense of the college's earlier buildings — including those by Hyslop — in the overall disposition of the new architecture. Dowson's elevations are made up of a regular series of openings, evoking the 'compound' nature of the earlier buildings; the lower floors are recessed (like the loggias on many of the college's older buildings); the projecting concrete screen of the Fry/Nuffield and Vaughan buildings reads as the inversion of the internal window reveals of the older, traditionally built structures; the bay windows of the Wolfson Building echo the oriels of H.W. Moore's adjacent 'West' building (now known as 'Park'). The connections might seem even stronger if we accept Dowson's work in Forty's terms as an attempt to create a new vernacular — a new Classicism, even. And, while Jane Hands' suggestion that Dowson was an 'upmarket' designer was intended to distinguish him from Hyslop, the latter's work was hardly downmarket. As we have seen, Hyslop adopted a smart if nonetheless unadventurous neo-Georgian style; internally, the smartness of the buildings was particularly evident in the rooms furnished in contemporary/Utility style from Heal's — the epitome of solid good taste and moral value, and certainly not cheap. His concrete arcade and glazed screen nodded to the language and materials of architectural modernity, but not in an alarming way. Furthermore, just as Dowson cut an urbane figure, Hyslop was a representative of the pre-war Bloomsbury scene. In essence, similar sensibilities about restraint and contextualism seem to be at work. There is perhaps a wider story in twentieth-century architecture to explore, one which does not denigrate good taste as the antithesis of interesting architecture but instead examines its architectural consequences and, potentially, consistencies across a range of styles.

Nonetheless, even if we conclude that the styles of Somerville's buildings thus reflected architectural, social and educational concerns that proceeded to some extent independent of gender, the fact remains that the college's buildings were implicated in women's education. Bourdieu proposed that gender acts like a clef in music as a 'modifier' of circumstances.¹⁸¹ At Somerville this modifier was applied to architectural vocabularies — Brutalist and neo-Georgian — which in other contexts could serve other purposes. In this respect, it was the purpose of these buildings that was critical. *Architectural Design* invoked Virginia Woolf in titling Dowson's article 'A Room of One's Own'. Woolf had decried the inability of women to break into the world of writing without somewhere to live and the means to support themselves. In accommodating and contributing to the formation of women intended by Vaughan and her colleagues to be future leaders in government, academia, industry, teaching and business, in a re-formed Britain and beyond, Somerville's new buildings at least partly answered Woolf's call. This, as much as their appearance or materials, was the expression of their modernity.

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NOTES

- 1 Barbara Harvey and Louise Johnson, 'Obituary: Dame Janet Vaughan', *The Independent*, 12 January 1993, online at www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-dame-janet-vaughan-1478124.html (accessed on 7 April 2014): 'in most of the changes occurring in Somerville during the previous 22 years, and all the really important ones, Vaughan had been the prime mover'.
- 2 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.c.5642, C. 178, Notes of a talk given by Dorothy Hodgkin on the retirement of Janet Vaughan, 1967.
- 3 Nikolaus Pevsner and Jennifer Sherwood, *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 252.
- 4 Arup Associates' work was surveyed in Michael Brawne's *Arup Associates: the Biography of an Architectural Practice* (London, 1983). Hyslop, meanwhile, has been almost entirely overlooked by historians, though see Nicholas Ray, 'Cambridge Composition', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 6.1 (Spring 2002), pp. 33–48.
- 5 The college's archive preserves key committee papers, correspondence and drawings. Arup Associates also has an extensive archive, but the papers relating to the Somerville projects are related to construction and date from 1962 and afterwards (Information from Kate Harper, Arup Associates' archivist, February 2014).
- 6 Philip Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', *Architectural Design*, 38 (1968), pp. 164–72 (p. 164).
- 7 Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 164.
- 8 E.g. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, 'Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64.2 (June 2005), pp. 144–67; Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: a Critique* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1–40.
- 9 Louise Campbell, 'Building on the Backs: Basil Spence, Queens' College, Cambridge, and University Architecture at Mid-Century', *Architectural History*, 54 (2011), pp. 383–407 (p. 383 for student numbers and policy). The key document was the 'Barlow Report', i.e. the *Report on Scientific Manpower* (Cmd. 6824) (London, 1946).
- 10 Oxford, Somerville College archives [hereafter 'SCA'], Minutes of Council, 1 June 1948; Keith Thomas, 'College Life, 1945–70', in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vii, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Harrison (Oxford, 1994), pp. 189–216 (p. 192).
- 11 SCA, Minutes of Council, 12 June 1946; Janet Howarth, 'Women', in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vii, *The Twentieth Century*, ed. Brian Harrison (Oxford, 1994), pp. 346–75 (p. 355). The quota was removed in 1956: see Pauline Adams, *Somerville for Women: an Oxford College, 1879–1993* (Oxford, 1996), p. 272.
- 12 E.g. J.M. Richards, 'Recent Building in Oxford and Cambridge', *Architectural Review*, 112.668 (June 1952), pp. 73–79; Lionel Brett, 'Universities Today', *Architectural Review*, 122.729 (October 1957), pp. 240–51. See also Editorial, 'British Universities, 2', *Architects' Journal*, 127.3281 (9 January 1958), p. 37. One might note that stylistically conservative buildings could be innovative in other ways: the novel 'plastic theory' structure of Easton and Robertson's Engineering Department at Cambridge (1952), for example.
- 13 Alan Powers, 'Conservative Attitudes: Walter Gropius in Cambridge and Maxwell Fry in Oxford', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 11 (2013), pp. 66–81; Howard Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (New Haven and London, 1983), p. 161.
- 14 Geoffrey Tyack, *Modern Architecture in an Oxford College: St John's College, 1945–2005* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 22–27.
- 15 Alistair Fair, 'The Ideal Campus: the Sidgwick Site, Cambridge', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 11 (2013), pp. 102–21.

- 16 Campbell, 'Building on the Backs', pp. 383–405.
- 17 William Whyte, 'The Modernist Moment at the University of Leeds', *Historical Journal*, 51.1 (2006), pp. 169–93 (p. 176).
- 18 Campbell, 'Building on the Backs', p. 385 and n. 16.
- 19 Mark Goldie, *Corbusier Comes to Cambridge: Post-War Architecture and the Competition to Build Churchill College* (Cambridge, 2007).
- 20 Whyte, 'Modernist Moment', pp. 177–78.
- 21 Campbell, 'Building on the Backs', p. 387.
- 22 The principal history of the college is Adams, *Somerville for Women*.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 182; SCA, folder of correspondence with University College, November 1947–May 1953; Council minutes, 17 February 1954; Paper, n.d., 'Long term future development of the College', filed with Informal Council minutes; Paper, 'College development plans', January 1953, filed with minutes of Informal Council; minutes of Informal Council, 16 January 1951 and 20 January 1953.
- 24 SCA, Building Programme file, letters from Geddes Hyslop to Janet Vaughan, 14 May 1947 and 23 June 1947. For the other architects considered, see correspondence of December 1947 to Thomas Worthington, J. Birkett and Thomas Rayson, filed in a box marked 'Hostel'. See also correspondence with Frederick Gibberd of 2 and 3 February 1948, in the same 'Hostel' box. Gibberd was working elsewhere in the university at this time: Oxford University Drama Commission, *Report of the Oxford University Drama Commission* (Oxford, 1948).
- 25 SCA, Hostel box, letter of 12 March 1948 to Thomas Rayson.
- 26 Hyslop's appointment at King's owed much to his Bloomsbury connections, not least his friendship with King's Fellow George 'Dadie' Rylands, who was a member of the Building Committee. See Cambridge, King's College Archive, KCCG/5/1/4/15, minute of 12 October 1946 for the committee membership; also, in the same archive, GHWR/5/246, a photograph showing Hyslop, Rylands, Mortimer, Eardley Knolleys, Janet Bacon, Edward Bates, Anne Barnes, on a Hellenic cruise, 1928. His pre-war practice had concerned large houses in the country, and presumably his move into education reflected the lack of such work in the post-war years.
- 27 SCA, Council minutes, 15 February 1956 and 23 May 1956; London, RIBA Drawings and Archives Collections, RIBA/HyG, Box 14, invoice of 19 November 1956, which relates to 'proposed building Little College Street [sic], Principal's House, Sanatorium. Fee for professional services rendered, preparation of sketch designs and approximate estimate of cost £125'.
- 28 SCA, Paper, 'Long Term future development of the college' [c. 1952].
- 29 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 271. See also Thomas, 'College Life', pp. 210–11.
- 30 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 13 June 1956.
- 31 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 13 June 1956 and 17 October 1956.
- 32 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 24 October 1956.
- 33 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 273.
- 34 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 4 December 1957.
- 35 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 15 February 1956.
- 36 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 7 March 1956.
- 37 SCA, minutes of an 'Extraordinary meeting of Informal Council', 14 May 1958.
- 38 Oxford University Design Society, *New Oxford: a Guide to the Modern City* (Oxford, 1962), n.p.
- 39 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 40 That women have often been particularly innovative in their architectural patronage and interests is evident from Alice T. Friedman's *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (New Haven and London, 2007).
- 41 SCA, uncat., memo by Mary Proudfoot, 18 June 1958.
- 42 Philip Dowson, interviewed by author on 5 September 2011; Tim Sturgis [Arup Associates' project architect], interviewed by author on 26 October 2011.
- 43 Brawne, *Arup Associates*, pp. 36–39, 167–69.
- 44 See n. 8 above.
- 45 SCA, Hostel box, letter to Thomas Rayson, 12 March 1948.
- 46 SCA, Library/Holtby box, letter from the College Treasurer to Hyslop, 9 July 1951, and notes on the design by Hyslop of 15 October 1951. The scheme was also made possible by a 1952 bequest: see Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 272.
- 47 London, RIBA Drawings and Archives Collections, PA972/2/5 and 972/2/6, drawings by Hyslop of Hostel building, 1948–49.
- 48 SCA, Hostel box, letter from E. Evans to Hyslop, 22 July 1948.
- 49 SCA, Hostel box, memo of 1 November 1950.

- 50 Barbara Harvey, pers. comm., 21 August 2011.
- 51 See, e.g., Philip Booth and Nicholas Taylor, *Cambridge New Architecture* (London, 1970), p. 160.
- 52 See, e.g., Edward Denison, *McMorran and Whitby* (London, 2009); William Fawcett, 'Post-War Traditionalists in Oxford and Cambridge', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 11 (2013), pp. 82–97.
- 53 London, RIBA Drawings and Archives Collections, RIBA/HyG box 14, invoices of 15 April 1954, 2 July 1954; also PA970/9, drawing, May 1952.
- 54 SCA, folder marked 'Building Fund', letter from Janet Vaughan to D.G. James, Southampton University, 8 August 1955.
- 55 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 260.
- 56 Jane Hands, interviewed by author on 5 August 2011.
- 57 Oxford English Dictionary, online at <http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=upmarket> (accessed on 27 January 2014).
- 58 Barbara Harvey, pers. comm., 21 August 2011.
- 59 SCA, memo by Mary Proudfoot, 18 June 1958.
- 60 SCA, Council minutes, 12 March 1958, and papers circulated to Council of the same date.
- 61 See e.g. 'Hampden Secondary School', *Architectural Design*, 21.9 (September 1951), pp. 265–75.
- 62 SCA, Council minutes, 12 March 1958, and papers circulated to Council of the same date. Other projects for which Powell and Moya also declined to be considered included: in Oxford, St Anne's College; in Cambridge, Corpus Christi's Leckhampton graduate development at Cambridge, Robinson College, and the History Faculty.
- 63 SCA, Council minutes, 12 March 1958, and papers circulated to Council of the same date.
- 64 SCA, minutes of an 'Extraordinary meeting of Informal Council', 14 May 1958.
- 65 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS.Eng.c.5581, A.189 and A.191, documents relating to Hodgkin's trip to Spain.
- 66 Harvey, pers. comm.; Hands, interviewed by author; Dowson, interviewed by author.
- 67 Hands, interviewed by author.
- 68 Dowson, interviewed by author; Hands, interviewed by author.
- 69 Harvey and Johnson, 'Obituary: Dame Janet Vaughan'.
- 70 Dowson, interviewed by author.
- 71 SCA, 'Ove Arup' blue folder, 3 November 1958.
- 72 SCA, folder of Building Committee minutes within box marked 'Building Programme 1947–69', notes of meeting with Dowson, Vaughan, Treasurer, February 1959.
- 73 SCA, folder of Building Committee minutes within box marked 'Building Programme 1947–69', meeting of 28 April 1959.
- 74 Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 172; Dowson, interviewed by author.
- 75 SCA, copy of Arup Report, 26 May 1959.
- 76 'Extension to Somerville College, Oxford', *Architects' Journal*, 130.3369 (12 November 1959), pp. 495–96.
- 77 SCA, minutes of Council, 27 May 1959.
- 78 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 28 February 1961 and 20 April 1961.
- 79 SCA, box marked 'Little Clarendon Street Stages I, II', memorandum by Janet Vaughan, 12 November 1963.
- 80 SCA, box marked 'Little Clarendon Street Stages I, II', letter from Tim Sturgis to Janet Vaughan, 13 November 1963.
- 81 SCA, Ordinary Council/Governing Body minute book, 22 January 1964.
- 82 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 274; Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 172.
- 83 Geoffrey Tyack, *Oxford: an Architectural Guide* (Oxford, 1998), p. 318.
- 84 Brawne, *Arup Associates*, pp. 47, 167.
- 85 Dowson, interviewed by author.
- 86 Philip Dowson, 'Architects' Approach to Architecture', *RIBA Journal*, 73.3 (March 1966), pp. 105–15 (p. 109).
- 87 Brawne, *Arup Associates*, p. 14.
- 88 This design is illustrated in Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *The Shift* (London, 1982), p. 97.
- 89 For the Cambridge New Museums Site by Arup Associates, see Barnabas Calder, 'Representing Science: the Architecture of the New Museums Site, Cambridge, 1952–71', *Twentieth-Century Architecture*, 11 (2013), pp. 166–79.
- 90 In 2013, the building was remodelled by Niall McLaughlin Architects. A single-storey extension was added on the garden side and the fenestration of the west side of the ground floor was altered.
- 91 Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 166.
- 92 For a critical view of New College's Sacher Building, which presented an unbroken wall to Longwall Street,

- see Joe Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to Postmodernism* (London, 1989), p. 265, which memorably suggested that the architect, David Roberts, was 'blinded by non-visual dogma'.
- 93 John Partridge, interviewed by author, 29 July 2011.
- 94 Dowson, interviewed by author; Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 164.
- 95 Brawne, *Arup Associates*, p. 65; John Summerson, 'Heavenly Mansions: an Interpretation of Gothic', in *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (London, 1949), pp. 1–29.
- 96 Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture 1615–1815* (New Haven and London, 2002), pp. 34–35.
- 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.
- 98 Robert Proctor, 'Social Structures: Gillespie, Kidd & Coia's Halls of Residence at the University of Hull', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 67.1 (March 2008), pp. 106–29.
- 99 Robert Proctor, 'Churches for a Changing Liturgy: Gillespie Kidd and Coia and the Second Vatican Council', *Architectural History*, 45 (2005), pp. 291–322 (p. 293).
- 100 Hilary Gelson, 'Living in College', *The Times*, 20 March 1969; John McKean, 'Do University Students Need Special Housing', *RIBA Journal*, 82.10 (October 1975), pp. 9–20.
- 101 E.g. the University of Lancaster: Stefan Muthesius, *The Post-War University: Utopianist Campus and College* (New Haven and London, 2000).
- 102 Le Corbusier quoted by Muthesius, *Post-War University*, p. 89; also see Lionel Brett, 'Universities Today', *Architectural Review*, 122.729 (October 1957), pp. 241–52 (p. 242).
- 103 Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London, 2002), pp. 160–64. The idea had various roots, including inter-war North America and Ferdinand Tönnies' 'Community and Civil Society'; see, e.g., Andrew Higgott, *Mediating Modernisms: Architectural Cultures in Britain* (London, 2007), p. 58.
- 104 Muthesius, *Post-War University*, pp. 128–38.
- 105 Brawne, *Arup Associates*, p. 66.
- 106 SCA, minutes of Informal Council, 12 November 1958.
- 107 SCA, minutes of Building Committee, 28 April 1959.
- 108 SCA, minutes of Building Committee, 20 February 1964.
- 109 SCA, minutes of Building Committee, 25 February 1963.
- 110 Dowson, 'Architects' Approach', p. 105.
- 111 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng.c.5642, C. 178, notes of a talk given by Dorothy Hodgkin on the retirement of Janet Vaughan, 1967.
- 112 SCA, 'Somerville College Report, 1964', pp. 26–27: the MCR President reported that the building was 'unique in that there are no rules'.
- 113 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, pp. 313–14.
- 114 SCA, folder marked 'Building Committee correspondence', notes of consultation with students, 30.4.[60/61].
- 115 SCA, folder marked 'Building Committee correspondence', letter from Janet Vaughan to Philip Dowson, 26 November 1965.
- 116 Adams, *Somerville for Women*, p. 270.
- 117 SCA, Janet Vaughan, 'Jogging Along — Or, a Doctor Looks Back', unpublished MS, n.p.: 'women who in the future would be important to the good government of so many countries'.
- 118 Harvey and Johnson, 'Obituary: Dame Janet Vaughan'.
- 119 For a useful summary, see Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (Abingdon, 2002), pp. 138–39.
- 120 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London, 2010), p. xxiv.
- 121 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 122 Muthesius, *Post-War University*, p. 76.
- 123 Committee on Higher Education, 'Higher Education: report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins', Cmnd. 2154 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), pp. 6–7.
- 124 John McKean, 'Do University Students Need Special Housing?', *RIBA Journal*, 82.10 (October 1975), pp. 9–20.
- 125 'The Universities Build', *Architectural Review*, 134.800 (October 1963), pp. 231–32.
- 126 Harvey and Johnson note in 'Obituary: Dame Janet Vaughan' that she spent the greater part of each day

in the laboratory, invariably responding to reports that she had missed callers to her college office with the question, 'do they think I sit there knitting?'

127 Ibid.

128 SCA, minutes of Building Committee, 27 January 1959.

129 Gelson, 'Living in College', p. 15.

130 Dowson, 'Architects' Approach', p. 114.

131 Dowson, interviewed by author.

132 John Allan, *Berthold Lubetkin: Architecture and the Tradition of Progress* (London, 1992), p. 490.

133 N. Keith Scott, 'Appraisal of St Catherine's', *Architect and Building News*, 226 (14 October 1964), pp. 721–22 (p. 721).

134 Dowson, 'Architects' Approach', p. 105.

135 See, e.g., John Summerson, 'The Mischievous Analogy', in *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (London, 1949), pp. 195–218 (pp. 202–03). The key texts include Josep Lluís Sert, Fernand Léger and Sigfried Giedion, 'Nine Points on Monumentality', in *Architecture, You and Me: the Diary of a Development*, ed. Sigfried Giedion (Cambridge, MA, 1958), pp. 48–51. For the impact on public buildings, see Alistair Fair, "'A New Image of the Living Theatre": the Genesis and Design of the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, 1948–58', *Architectural History*, 54 (2011), pp. 347–82 (pp. 372–76); also Jessica Holland and Iain Jackson, 'A Monument to Humanism: Pilkington Brothers' Headquarters (1955–65) by Fry, Drew and Partners', *Architectural History*, 56 (2013), pp. 343–86.

136 Sigfried Giedion, 'The Need for a New Monumentality', in *Architecture, You and Me: the Diary of a Development*, ed. Sigfried Giedion (Cambridge, MA, 1958), pp. 25–39 (see pp. 31 and 37).

137 Proctor, 'Social Structures', p. 120. Metzstein's architectural partner, Andy MacMillan, was more willing to admit to Team X influence.

138 Michael Brawne, 'Approaches to Student Living', *Architectural Review*, 134.800 (October 1963), pp. 289–98 (p. 293).

139 Dowson, 'A Room of One's Own', p. 164.

140 Dowson, 'Architects' Approach', p. 105.

141 Gelson, 'Living in College', p. 15.

142 'Graduate Building: Somerville College, Oxford', *Architectural Review*, 137.816 (February 1965), pp. 111–13 (p. 112).

143 'Proposed Extension to St Hilda's College, Oxford University', *Architectural Design*, 38 (October 1968), pp. 479–80 (p. 480).

144 Smithson and Smithson, *The Shift*, pp. 73, 67.

145 Quoted in Helena Webster, 'Modernism Without Rhetoric', in *Modernism Without Rhetoric: the Architecture of Alison and Peter Smithson*, ed. Helena Webster (London, 1997), p. 90.

146 'The Pursuit of Ordinarity', *Architectural Design*, 41 (February 1971), pp. 78–85 (p. 84).

147 Smithson and Smithson, *The Shift*, p. 97.

148 'House at Watford, Herts.', *Architectural Review*, 122.728 (September 1957), pp. 194–97 (p. 196: the kitchen cabinet (glazed to display its contents) is described as 'deliberately simple' to create a 'homely atmosphere'.

149 Hilde Heynen, 'Modernity and Domesticity: Tensions and Contradictions', in *Negotiating Domesticity: Spatial Productions of Gender in Modern Architecture*, ed. Hilde Heynen and Gülsüm Baydar (London, 2005), pp. 1–20 (p. 10).

150 Heynen, 'Modernity and Domesticity', p. 20.

151 See, e.g., RIBA Drawings and Archives Collections, RIBA/HyG Box 1 for work at All Saints, Orpington, to 1963, and boxes 5–8 for work at Greenlands Staff College between 1947 and 1967.

152 SCA, minutes of Building Committee, 25 November 1966, and Council minutes, 16 February 1966 and 24 May 1967.

153 Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: a Material History* (London, Reaktion, 2012), p. 30.

154 Judi Loach, lecture to DoCoMoMo UK, 'Italian Rationalists: Pre and Post-war Development in Northern Italy', London, spring 2012.

155 Forty, *Concrete and Culture*, p. 50.

156 This development was not universally welcomed: see James Stevens Curl, *The Erosion of Oxford* (Oxford, 1977), p. 66.

157 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College archives, New Building Committee minutes, 2 March 1962.

158 See, e.g., Clive Fenton's discussion of the Ravelston Garden ('Jenners') flats in Edinburgh of 1936: 'There is, however, avoidance of such embellishments as machine age motifs, attenuated classical derivations, or the

- geometric decorations that architects used to interest a fashionable “smart” clientele.’ Clive B. Fenton, ‘Appleton’s Architects: Building the University of Edinburgh’ (doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002), p. 102.
- 159 Elizabeth Darling, ‘Institutionalizing English Modernism, 1924–33: From the Vers Group to MARS’, *Architectural History*, 55 (2012), pp. 299–320 (p. 301).
- 160 Crook, *Dilemma of Style*, p. 252.
- 161 David Dunster, introduction to Smithson and Smithson, *The Shift*, p. 7.
- 162 Mark Crinson, *Stirling and Gowan: Architecture from Austerity to Affluence* (New Haven and London, 2012), p. 70; William Whyte, ‘“A Pastiche or a Packing Case”? Building in Twentieth-Century Oxford and Cambridge’, *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 11 (2013), pp. 16–29 (p. 25).
- 163 Whyte, ‘Modernist Moment’, pp. 192–93.
- 164 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. xxiv.
- 165 Margaret Birney Vickery, *Buildings for Bluestockings: the Architecture and Social History of Women’s Colleges in Late-Victorian England* (Newark and London, 1999).
- 166 Oxford, St Anne’s College Archives, Governing Body minutes, memo from Mary Ogilvie entitled ‘Future Development of the Site’, 1 January 1960, and minute of 14 January 1960. Span’s projects were designed by Eric Lyons, who later competed in the design competition for Robinson College, Cambridge, in 1974: see Otto Saumarez Smith, ‘Robinson College and the Twilight of a Collegiate Modernism’, *Architectural History*, 55 (2012), pp. 369–402 (p. 380).
- 167 Louise Campbell, ‘Towards a New University’, in *Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects*, ed. Louise Campbell, Miles Glendinning and Jane Thomas (London, 2012), pp. 157–71.
- 168 Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, p. 144.
- 169 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire* (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 198.
- 170 E.g. A.E.L. Parnis, Assistant Secretary to the UGC, wrote to R.E. Macpherson at Cambridge suggesting possible architects for the History Faculty building in August 1962. He stressed the list, which ranged stylistically from Trevor Dannatt to Raymond Erith, was a personal one, but clearly its range would not cause any problems for the UGC. See Cambridge, University Archives, FB780/20, letter from A.E.L. Parnis to R.E. Macpherson, 17 August 1962.
- 171 SCA, Council minutes, 15 November 1961.
- 172 Howard Colvin, *Unbuilt Oxford* (New Haven and London, 1983), pp. 166–77. His lack of enthusiasm for contemporary design stretched also to the cars produced by his company, Morris Motors; he likened Alec Issigonis’ design for the Morris Minor of 1948 to a ‘poached egg’. See Paul Skilleter, *Morris Minor: the World’s Supreme Small Car* (London, 1981), p. 41.
- 173 John M. Robinson, ‘Lady Margaret Hall’, unpublished report, 2006, at http://public.oxford.gov.uk/online-applications/files/741036F50DD01755B14EC25D4DE78696/pdf/06_01796_FUL-HISTORIC_BUILDINGS_CONSULTATION_-_PART_1_3-617420.pdf (accessed on 13 February 2014). See also the Wolfson Foundation’s booklet, ‘The Wolfson Foundation: a Historical Perspective, 1955–2005’, at <http://www.wolfson.org.uk/about-us/history/> (accessed on 28 March 2014), pp. 6 and 34.
- 174 SCA, Vaughan, ‘Jogging Along’, n.p.
- 175 Pevsner and Sherwood, *Oxfordshire*, p. 252.
- 176 Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire*, p. 196.
- 177 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 178 Pevsner and Sherwood, *Oxfordshire*, p. 238.
- 179 Harvey, pers. comm.; Dowson, interviewed by author.
- 180 Tyack, *Oxford*, pp. 325–26.
- 181 Beate Kraus, ‘Gender, Sociological Theory, and Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23 2006, pp. 119–30 (p. 121).