Can we detect the English national identity through architecture during the 1920s and 1930s?

Hui-Hsiu Chuang
15th September 2005
Can we detect the English national identity through architecture during the 1920s and 1930s?

**Introduction**

In his recent contribution to the debates about English and British identities *The Making of English National Identity*, Krishan Kumar, a professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, writes that English national identity is an enigma, so elusive, and difficult to pin down, partly because of inseparability with British national identity, partly because of the intricate relation to other peoples: Scottish, Wales, and Irish. Although the history of Great Britain is understood as the history of four nations: England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in general, it has largely been considered as the English history. However as the conqueror of the ‘inner empire’ of Great Britain, the English repressed its own national consciousness, and imposed uniformity and equality on the contributions of the various parts of the Isles, while Scottish, Welsh, and Irish had constantly begun cultivating their national identities since the Middle Ages. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003]

Kumar continues to emphasis that in fact, “there is no native tradition of reflection on English national identity”. The problem of the English national identity is that it “can not be distinguished by its ‘contents’— its self-conceived differences”. It is common
enough for nations to develop a sense of themselves by a process of opposition and exclusion, for instance, Britain's distinctive contrasts with her neighbouring nations, in particular France. But in the case of England, it shows almost the opposite phenomenon. The identification is not made by exclusion and opposition, but inclusion and expansion, not inwardness but outwardness. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003: X]

Although English identity has been suppressed, it still can be observed through social and cultural changes over a certain period which gives rise to a new consciousness and forms the identification of the nation, as Liah Greenfeld, an American Sociologist, has suggested. [Greenfeld, Liah. 1992]

There are a number of significant social changes in the English history, for instance, the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century; two nations, England and Scotland, were separate kingdoms until united in 1601 under the king James VI of Scotland and I of England in seventeenth century; the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution, and two World Wars. This essay will concentrate on the national consciousness which was emerged in the interwar period.

During the twentieth century, England also experienced several social and cultural changes which caused radical shifts of ideas about Englishness and English national identity from indifference to its own national identity under the prosperous British
Empire era, to an urgent need to discover who they were, and where they were going
after the decline of the Empire removed the reason of repressing its identification of
Englishness, to finally the Cross of St George replacing the Union Jack as the
emblem of English national identity on important sport occasions. Among these
transitions, the interwar period, between the 1920s and 1930s, is the crucial moment
for developing Englishness.

After four years of fighting, British’s wealth was virtually all gone, though it had been
one of the richest countries of the world before the Great War. The empire had fallen,
the mission as a liberalizing and civilizing force to modernize the world was no longer
the main interest, but had been displaced by interval problems, particularly the
growing conflict between capital and labour, exemplified by the General Strike of
1926, and problems caused by the Great Depression. A serial of social, economic and
political reform movements with the aim of ‘Return to Order’ led to a heightening
class differences.

At the same time we see, in English society, a “privatisation of national life” in the
1920s and 1930s. Alison Light, who teaches in the English department at University
College London, has noticed, “a move away from formerly heroic and officially
masculine public rhetorics of national destiny and from a dynamic and missionary
view of the Victorian and Edwardian middle classes in ‘Great Britain’ to an

Englishness at once less imperial and more inward-looking, more domestic and more
private”. [Light, Alison. 1991:232] These changes did not only produce ideologies,
but was also reflected on architecture.

However, how can identities be represented by architecture? Ernesto Laclau, a
political theorist, points out, in his notable research *The Making of Political
Identities*, that political practices may be defined as the highly constitutive
dimensions of social practices, and give a fixed, stable and unified identity to the
others with the intention of concealing the very contingencies of these practices.

[Laclau, Ernesto. 1994]

However, even though the political practices are regarded as the very instituting
practices among the others, yet there is no one identity which is definitively
permanent and integrated. The constructive act of identification always fails owing to
supplements, instabilities, fragmentation and slippage because there are always
undesirable factors distorting and imposing on the objects which are by nature
precarious and contingent constructions. The act is in a repetitive path: encounter
other objects, then structure a new identity, and fail to confine the concept sufficiently,
and trigger a new act again. Therefore, the search of an ideal identity never ends in an
ideal object, but generates ‘substitutive objects’. Those objects can be Polity, Culture, Social Structure, History, Literature, as individual’s everyday life manner, and architecture.

There is a suggestion proposed by Mark Rakatansky, an assistant professor of architecture at Iowa State University, has suggested, that “The history of architecture is a history of substitutive objects, of surrogate objects and of stand-in objects.” For this reason, “There have been and continue to be architecture tendencies that embrace the attempt to develop stable, fixed, and unified identities” [Rakatansky, Mark. 1995:10] In other words, architecture has regularly been employed as surrogate for identities.

Nazi architecture is one of paradigms. It was an essential part of the Nazi’s party’s plan to create a cultural and spiritual rebirth in Germany. Hitler utilized the concept of political architecture to establish the Third Reich or Nazi Germany identity. He and his architects developed architecture in the neo-classical style, and erected edifices as propaganda of victory of the Nazi party. Because of his enthusiastic for the classical culture of the ancient Mediterranean and alleged the Greeks were the racial ancestors of the Germany, Nazi party could not isolate and politicize German antiquity as uniqueness since it succeeded to the classical antiquity. Therefore political symbols
was imported into the concept, and created a Nazi Germany identity which was based on a spurious racial ancestry, that Greeks and the Romans as the ancestors of Germany, which succeed the glory of the antiquity but unique. When Hitler aimed at creating a political national identity, he imported culture of ancient Romans and Greeks to legitimatise invasion as inheriting Roman Empire’s glory. Until he realised this could not make German as a unique nation, he then imported political symbol into the architecture to make be the one identity for Germany. This gives an explanation for why most identities are unstable, and produce other objects to fill the lack generated by failures. Although the search for a pure and definitive ideological expression may fail, it does not mean that there is no ideological component to architecture.

Moreover, Rakatansky has observed that “all architecture is social architecture. All architecture is political architecture.” [Rakatansky, Mark. 1995:13] As different programmes can inhabit the same space, the different institutional identities also can dwell in the same building. In other words, social forms of architecture may regard as either social or political institution in many circumstances depend on the performance of architecture. Consequently he then explains that the most significant forms of ideological identification in architecture are not the Big Symbols, such as the Classical Orders, the Flags, the Animals of Political Myth or the Medallions, but the
accrual of the *small symbol*, the small interpellative symbols: the ways in institutional
space that architecture organizes, hierarchizes [sic], and systematizes activities,
behaviours, orderings, visibilities, movement. [1995:10]

In contrast with the numerous studies of discovering the English national
consciousness by historians and sociologists, for instance, Linda Colley’s pioneering
study in the British identity though the history, Liah Greenfeld’s contribution to the
English identity from the religious point of view, George Orwell’s essays: *The Lion
and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*, and many others, there is no
satisfactory discussion of the relationship between English national consciousness and
architecture. Can we, following Rakatansky, see English architecture as the surrogate
of national identity? I will start with discussion of the features English national
identity. Next, I will discuss the national identity in relation to architecture in order to
examine whether there is any possibility we can discover national identity through
architecture. I shall then investigate if a unified sense of national identity can be
discovered from the conflict between modernism and traditionalism in the interwar
years, for this is a period when English architectural tradition was challenged by
modern architecture, a decidedly opposite style. Finally, two practical applications
which took place during the time will be examined. I have felt the need to confront all
these questions in order to provide not an answer but a way of thinking of English
national identity by means of architecture.

**General survey of Englishness and English National Identity**

Generally speaking, national identity refers both to the distinctive features of the group, and to the individual’s sense of belonging to it. Two people may be separated by different personalities, religions, location or spoken language, but regard themselves and be seen by others as members of the same nation, because they shared certain characters, behaviours, responsibilities and thinking to other members of the same nation.

The nation is sometimes associated with ethnicity, but even people with the same ethnic origin many live in different nation-states or different ethnic origins may share the same political or cultural life. Kumar, therefore, argues that “ethnic identities, like political identities, are ‘part of contingent and ever-change legacy of shared memories and communal identification’. Culture, rather than ethnicity per se, is the fundamental ground of identity.” [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:26] And he takes Jews as one notable example. In French as well as in Britain, Germany and elsewhere in Europe in nineteenth century, Jews were able both to be ‘themselves’- ethnic Jews- and at the same time to participate widely in the economic, political and cultural life of their societies and became France, British, or German. From the cultural ground, each
nation develops a sense of itself by process of opposition and exclusion, that is, the
distinguishing 'contents'— its self-conceived differences and constructs a
counter-image of what they are is defined by what they are not. [2003:27-28]

This pattern is probably true for the making of French, British, or German national
identity, but can not entirely be applied to English. There are two things which make
Englishness an ambiguous state. First, as George Orwell says in *The Lion and the
Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*: “It is quite true that the so-called races of
Britain feel themselves to be very different from one another. A Scotsman, for
instance, does not thank you if you call him an Englishman. ... Even the differences
between north and south England loom large in our own eyes. But somehow these
differences fade away the moment that any two Britons are confronted by a European.
It is very rare to meet a foreigner, other than an American, who can distinguish
between English and Scots or even English and Irish.” [Orwell, George. 2001:259]

Although the differences exist among peoples in the Isles, the nuance is too subtle to
be conveyed to the foreigner.

Nevertheless, it is not only the problem for the outsider to distinguish between 'races
of Britain', but also for other peoples in the Isles to recognise the difference between
English and British. When I started to make a survey of English national identity, I
asked my Scottish friends if they thought British meant English, or these two had different meanings to them. They told me that in theory, they all knew British were different from English, but most of times they mingled these two nations unconsciously. That is, they do not think British are not English. This accounts for the riddle of English national identity. The confusion of others compounds the confusion of the minds of the 'races of Britain', and constructs an indefinite identity to English.

This may result partly from what Orwell has observed that in the patriotic thinking the vast majority of the English feel themselves to be a single nation- the kingdom of Great Britain. This attitude gives rise to repression of English identification, [2001:260] both in the minds of English and other peoples in the Isles.

It is this ambiguity which provides an aspiration for scholars to detect when the English nationalism actually began. For instance, Hans Kohn, a professor of contemporary European history, suggests that the awakening of a national consciousness in England came, in spite of the insular situation, later than on the continent. Only in the fourteenth century did the English language gradually spoken in law courts and in official life. Also the parliament began to hold its sessions in English. [Kohn, Hans. 1940:69] In other words, the English nationalism should begin with not earlier than the fourteenth century. This claim was soon refuted by R. M. Lumiansky (1913-1987), a professor of Humanity, by providing a passage of R. W.
Chambers’s research in *Man’s unconquerable Mind*, 1939 which says “Bede wrote the Ecclesiastical History before there was any English nation in existence. … He preferred to consider all the Germanic-speaking inhabitants of the British Isles … English.” and indicating that English nationalism must trace back to an earlier period as the seventh, not fourteenth century. [Lumiansky, R. M. 1941:249] Not only they but also many other historians and sociologists think the English national consciousness flourishing in either period, or if not then, the sixteenth, or the seventeenth, or the eighteenth. However, Kumar’s interpretation is comparatively late. What he had discovered is that it is not until the late nineteenth century, at the earliest, that he finds a clear concern with the question of it. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:Xl] No matter which period scholars hold to identify Englishness, concerns about identity arise from periods of social changes.

Why does Kumar think that the urgency of identification of English was emerged in the late nineteenth century? According to his research, before then, the English were engaged in social structure and political systems which implicated that they were parts of wider entities- Great Britain and the British Empire at the deepest level. Englishness and Britishness were so interfused as to be virtually indistinguishable. Moreover, the move from ‘England’ to ‘Britain’ and back again was frequent and common, they do not notice the confusion nor feel the need to explain it. Gradually
the English become so incurious and indifferent to their own nationalism. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003]

Then for the first time ever, the ‘moment of Englishness’, as Kumar named it, came, when new commercial rivals threatened Britain’s industrial supremacy and faith in the empire began to waver, and a degree of English self-consciousness begins to emerge. The English realized that they have to turn the mirror directly to themselves, to see who they are and where they may be going at this time. [Kumar, Krishan. 2003: 224,251] Although the wider entities- Great Britain, the British Empire- were collapsing, and English had awoken to the urgency of its own identity, there is evidence showing that Englishness was still in a good degree overlapped with Britishness. First, although the British Empire might arouse criticism from left-wingers, for the first half of the century, the Empire was still a central presence in the life of the English people. Then, the economy too reminded British. Imperialism and global rivalry knit the industrial part of British together even more tightly than before, and all regions need to share the vicissitude of this trade cycles, not only England. And even the BBC, formed in October 1922, is British; king’s Christmas speeches, national importance all announce from it to the country. Therefore, it is rather said that the English nationalism would take its form culturally rather than politically, or economically, or socially.
Then the desire for discovering the nationality accelerated after the Great War.

Because even though Britain won the Great War, as Kumar has observed, the society suffered from the trauma and tiredness following after the war. The English started to drop the mission of civilising the world, shared signs of increasing its intense desire for quietness and serenity. They turned their back on the squalor of urbanism and industrialism, and contemplated instead the ‘timeless’ life of the English countryside.

The nostalgia of rural life seized upon England. This longing for the country life was not only revolt against modernity, [Kumar, Krishan. 2003] but also allowed them to recall who they were, little Englanders “leaning on gates and looking across fields”, [Paxman, Jeremy. 1999: 151] finding relief and consolation in the countryside, and not ‘big Englanders’ who “want to go and boss everybody about all over the world” [Priestley, J. B. 1977: 389] They inveighed against “this machine age” that is killing the true England of “quiet places where there are still English meadows not yet taped out by the jerry builders”. [Giles, Judy and Middleton, Neil 1995:34] As a highly politicised nation, Englishness embrace their national identity through a cultural rather than a political thinking. Although after the Second World War, the Englishness was repressed again by Britishness deliberately by the government, it has grown again since.

**Architecture and Identity**
Yuswadi Saliya, a professor of architecture, identifies Architecture a men-made or man *chosen* spatial entity, with an adaptation in mind. And design is a deliberate and purposeful act. Consequently architecture is a work of design. By designing buildings, a certain degree of consciousness is involved in the process. However, how much degree is involved may differ among cultures because it is culture-bound, and is the question for architects. On the other hand, “Identity… is the result of self-conscious way of thinking, of separation between man and nature, an ontological one. Identity in this sense… becomes a human *need*: it has unbelievably transformed itself into a *necessity*.” And he questions if we need ‘identity’. He believes that architecture is a part of culture because of consciousness involved, but it is a mistake to take identity as a point of entry for discussing architecture, because it is just its by-product which will come after architecture is formed. [Saliya, Yuswadi. 1986:32] However, identity is not only a tool to separate man from nature, but also a sensation of belonging to a defining group by noting differences with other groups or cultures. Therefore, we do need identity to determine differences from others. Moreover, architecture is one of instruments to represent culture. Although, indisputably, identity happens after subject is created, it is necessary to determine and argue as a whole.

What part of architecture corresponds to the issue of identity? In Chris Abel’s book *Architecture and identity*; he proposes that “The emergent interest in architectural
identities is likewise premised on the assumption that architecture has a specific

essence, the understanding of which is essential both to the discourse and practise of
the field.” [Abel, Chris. 1997: 147] However, this is open to question, for if as Charles
Jencks claims that “architecture is irreducibly plural... an unstable hybrid based partly
on codes external to itself”, [Jencks, Charles. 1980: 72] how can it have an essence?

That is, the formation of the building combines with several practices, such as
engineering, sociology, politics, environmental psychology, and so forth. They all
affect the outcome. It will lead to a misunderstanding of the content of architecture if
we only discuss the essence of it.

Abel recognizes that how we choose between two positions, either to accept that
architecture has its central purpose, or to reject this position and regard architecture as
a composite of varied contents, affects not only the interpretation of architecture, but
also the attitude toward those factors which form it. It is an argument about essence or
compound of architecture as a form of human culture. He, therefore, suggests that
since architecture can be treated as a communication system, the choice might be
similar to the choice of theories of language, and uses of the language analogy in
architecture supports “the contention that the essence of architecture as a
cultural-form has especially to do with the formation of personal, social and cultural
identities.” [Abel, Chris. 1997: 148] However, as Umberto Eco claims that every
individual speaker has autonomy in using their dialect to create their own messages for circumstances. [Eco, Umberto 1980:39] This also implies that the compound of architecture as a human cultural form is constructed by various factors. There is no universal, as the essence, but relative principle defining identities depending on what situation and factors it engages.

What is, then, the relation between architecture and national identity? Can we discover national identity by means of architecture? Abel suggests that “hybrid forms of architecture tell us more about the general nature of the relations between built and social form, than do the relatively purer architectural forms we commonly refer to as typical of a given architectural language or style.” [Abel, Chris. 1997: 156] Malaysian architecture at the British colonial period is an exemplar. When Britain colonised Malaysia in the later nineteenth century, British colonists endeavoured to recreate familiar environments in alien locations in order to retain a part of their identity via architecture. Under the process of relocation from homeland to an alien milieu, architecture was undergoing a significant transformation to adapt to the local climate and customs. After relocation processes, buildings are clearly not the homeland style which they brought in for preserving their identity, but a hybrid form which only exists in Malaysia, and becomes a part of its identity. That is, the transformation involved as a result of an interaction between different cultural forms, or ‘forms of
life*. Subsequently he proposes that the proper and most useful definition of cultural identity will arise out of a fuller understanding and appreciation of the creative processes of cultural interaction, not out of some kind of pre-selection of the supposedly more pure elements of original and national culture, and regards architecture as representing the product of a creative process of cultural interaction. Whenever two or more vital cultures meet and produce their hybrid offspring a new identity emerges. [Abel, Chris. 1997]

**Polemic between traditionalist and modernist in the 1920s and 1930s**

During the Twenties, Several countries which had not been involved in the struggle of First World War developed the first wave of modernism, such Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark. Britain, shattered by the War, looked to them for the new order of society and architecture, and soon they were introduced in. In the beginning of the movement, they were influential on British architecture. The *Architectural Review* constantly commented on modern Dutch and Swedish architecture. F.R. Yerbury, an architectural photographer, even went to these counties frequently, photographed modernist buildings, and published on several journals and books. Those all became channels for young architects to study modern architecture. It was the first wave of the British Modern Movement. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:7]
Then, a second wave followed at the end of the twenties inspired by Le Corbusier,
Walter Gropius, Mies van de Rohe, and Erich Mendelsohn. This impact jolted British
architects, and the differences between modernists and traditionalists were
increasingly notable since the Great War had produced deep chasm between the
generation who had caused the War (conveniently represented by the reactionary
Reginald Blomfield) and those too young to have been involved in it (almost all of the
‘Modern Movement’ architects and writers), as Gavin Stamp has defined. [Stamp,
Gavin. 1979:7] It might be as Anthony Jackson observes that England did not change
“its concept of national responsibility”, [Jackson, Anthony 1965:97] or as Sir
Reginald Blomfield expresses “that the ‘New Architecture’ is essentially Continental
in its origin and inspiration, and it claims as a merit that it is cosmopolitan. As an
Englishmen and proud of his country, I detest and despise cosmopolitanism.”
[Blomfield, Reginald, Sir. 1933: 124] Fierce resistance had already shaded the
development the Modern Movement. Even the most important architectural journal,
the Architectural Review, only turned partly to modern architecture.

On the one hand, since the first modernist building, ‘New Way’, a house designed by
Peter Behrens in Northampton, was built in 1926, one after another, more modernist
buildings were erected. Architects followed examples of the Continent modernism to
design what they thought was the modernist building. However, most works “showed
no consistent quality. ... it is evident from the published designs ... that what was really lacking was not only opportunity but proficiency. [Jackson, Anthony. 1965: 99]

Then the condition changed in 1933 when the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) was formed. "As practice on the Continent was menaced by Fascism, the MARS group members encouraged their foreign colleagues to emigrate to England" [1965: 102] Settling in England, they started having partnerships with British architects: Erich Mendelsohn partnered with Serge Chermayeff, Walter Gropius and Marcel Lajos Breuer formed a partnership with Maxwell Fry, and Berthold Lubetkin founded Tecton with six British architects a year before the MARS. This provided English modernists great opportunities to emulate modernistic masters' achievement closely.

As Berthold Lubetkin has argued, Britain was far from the Modern Movement, "intellectual and political developments". Here the Modern Movement was truly foreign. He "commented that the country was fifty years behind Europe in its architectural maturity, and set about importing Modernism into Britain." [Bowman, Graeme. 2001] Now all émigré architects were actively establishing their careers in England. First, "as much as any traditionalist, the young modernists turned to family
ties and social relations for their first commission.” [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 28] then expanded their practices gradually to all types of buildings.

As members of the MARS, these partnerships were acts of homage, and put the Bauhaus theory into practice. While Connell, Ward, and Lucas were almost Dutch in their constructivism, Lubetkin had reached the same obsession with style as Le Corbusier. Apart from these, “the English group produced simple, clean buildings”. Although the buildings were unpretentious, and unprovocative, [Jackson, Anthony. 1965:102] the intention of “no longer indulging in forms borrowed from earlier period” was determined. [Zucker, Pual. 1965:102]

Stanley Casson, a fellow at New College, had expressed this phenomenon was caused by the attitude that artists in the interwar period have all decided to start afresh upon their work without necessarily considering that the past had any validity to control them. “They see how essential all the art of the past is to their inspiration. But they insist on regarding it a past and done with, as a steeping stone, of a ‘footprint in the sands of time,’ or as any of those sad transitory things which so delighted the utterly static culture of the last century.” [Casson, Stanley. 1930:123] Unlike Casson, Marcel Breuer even proclaims this attitude radically that “for us the attempt to build in a national tradition or an old-world style would be inadequate and insincere. To pride
oneself on such things is bad symptom. For the modern world has no tradition for its eight-hour day, its electric light, … or for any of its technical methods.” [Breuer, Marcel. 1935:134] No matter which attitude they had to the tradition, both provoked English conventionality to defend itself. For modernists, as Berthold Lubetkin had said, “fighting for each innovation represents an enormous amount of creative energy. Each step on the road to progress is struggle against conservatism and prejudice”.

[Lubetkin, Berthold. 1937:29], but traditionalists and their allies thought that they “defended their homes and professional domain from the invasion by ‘alien architects’”, [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 25] who were going to destroy their well-established tradition.

Sir Reginald Blomfield was a leading figure in “the ‘traditionalist versus modernist’ debate”, [Fellows, Richard. 1985:146] and “a perfect- and necessary- gift to the Modern Movement”. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:8]In 1934 he even published his well-known book ‘Modenismus’, and criticised contemporary arts, such as architecture, painting, sculpture, and music. Blomfield’s objections to the ‘new architecture’ were based on his background as an Edwardian architect, and he believed that any nation’s architecture must reflect its heritage and temperament. He argues that one can not dissociate ourselves from the past, whether they want to or not, because beauty was governed by criteria established over the centuries and stretching
back to the foundations of civilisation. [Fellows, Richard. 1985] When the
‘Modernismists’ were claiming that beauty and inspiration were to be found in all
sorts of things that were not previously considered as having any aesthetic merit, he
asks that how architectural works can be judged as succeed or failed, the aesthetic not
based on any recognisable architectural precedent.

On the other hand, he admits that “Art of course cannot stand still. The conditions of
life and its demands inevitably change, and the extraordinary developments of applied
science in the last fifty years have introduced elements that have to be reckoned with
in the design of buildings.” We have central heating, motor roads, and filling stations,
but there should have no change in “instincts and traditions which are ingrained in our
people even if not consciously realized.” [Blomfield, Reginald. 1934:52-53]

Abandoning tradition would annihilate the aesthetic of architecture. Osbert Lancaster
also corresponds Sir Blomfield’s viewpoint in his “entertaining instructive surveys of
English architecture and interior design”. [Watkin, David. 1979:89] In ‘Progress at
Pelvis Bay’, he writes “While it is undoubtedly tragic to think of a fine old house as
Pelvis Towers passing out of the hands of those have owned them for countless
generations, the necessity for progress and development cannot be denied, and
although there were many who regretted the passing of the old ivy-covered walls and
quaint mullions of the seat of the Cinqbois, few who are acquainted with the
cocktail-bar, the squash courts, the eighteen-hole golf-course and other delights of

"La Provençale." as the clubhouse is now called, will be found to admit that the
change is altogether for the worse." [Lancaster, Osbert. 1936:14] It implies that in the
necessity for progress, when the tradition is substituted by the modern, the situation
does not go best as the modernist have promised. Instead, it goes worse because all
the traditional values and aesthetic have gone in this replacement.

The modernists were not only accused by abandoning of the past. They also argue that
most architects who practiced modern architecture were aliens, and the modern
architecture they had brought was a foreign style which caused for concern that would
harm the existed built environment. It can not be denied that although they settled in
and practiced their profession in England, they did not have any knowledge of
England at all. As Gavin Stamp has observed, the failure of so many modern
buildings, and then rapid visual deterioration, was evidence that few of them had any
real experience or knowledge of English conditions and, inevitably, no interest in the
traditional English concern with harmony in a landscape. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:20] In

'Progress at Pelvis Bay', we also see that Lancaster has the same concern by jesting
the council’s policy in Pelvis Bay. "A striking tribute to the council’s policy of
insisting on the erection of dwellings with an individual character of their own and
turning a deaf ear to all those cranks and so-called Modernists who are so constantly
urging the merits of vast stream-lined, undecorated blocks of flats or rather tenements. … Do they realize when they try to foist these continental barracks on us, that English is the only language that has a word for ‘home’?” [Lancaster, Osbert. 1936:48-49] Even Christopher Hussey criticises “advanced Modern Movement architects for their totalitarian insistence on their own style as the only possible style on all occasions, and for their lack of sensitivity to local conditions.” [Watkin, David. 1979:88]

The polemic made traditionalism and modernism into two extremes. However, as Hélène Lipstadt observes, during the time some traditionalists had accepted that the root of modern architecture was in Britain through studies from Germany. “Looking backward, the concern of traditionalists, and looking forward, the duty of modernists, emerged from the centenary years as if laminated together.” [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 24] In 1928, one year after Le Corbusier’s Vers une architecture was translated into English, many traditionalists architects realised Britain prominence in the history of modern architecture and established it with the help of German scholarship. This viewpoint was soon jointed by modernists as well. Forerunners such as William Morris, and Charles Mackintosh who once were enemies in England now were to be revered. Traditionalists and modernists united their interest in a search of root for origins that were entirely British. [1983: 24] and claimed the legitimacy of modernism
in English tradition. As Lionel Cuffe mentions that “The Continent, since the beginning of the century, has, on other hand, developed the principles which Morris started. In England, where were the pioneers, we are now the last. Perhaps if we realized that in following Morris we were following our example, we would have another opportunity for patting ourselves on the back and thanking God, rightly this time, for the old ways and old country.” [Cuffe, Lionel. 1931:151]

Nikolaus Pevsner also indicates that “England’s activity in the preparation of the Modern Movement came to an end during less than ten years after Morris’s death. The initiative now passed to the Continent and the United States, and, after a short intermediate period, Germany became the centre of progress.” [Pevsner, Nikolaus. 1936: 29] Therefore, many might think Le Corbusier is one of the most important pioneers in the Modern Movement. In fact, “Le Corbusier scarcely belongs to a book dealing with pre-war matters; and, though he has tired in his writings to make himself appear one of the pioneers, he was not among the first comers. ... The historian must emphasise this point, because Le Corbusier, partly owing to his magnificent artistic imagination and partly to a certain showmanship, had been taken for one of the creators of the Modern Movement.” [1936:177] Although Pevsner was not the first historian argued that the root of the Modern Movement was British, but his argument reversed traditionalists’ contention; alien style became home-grown tradition, and
traditionalists emerge as pioneers.

Indeed the polemic between traditionalists and modernist in the interwar period is a polemic for the legitimacy of modern architecture in England. “Historians sympathetic to the traditionalist and anxious to revise the disequilibrium introduce by purely heroic accounts of the British Modern Movement, have described it as the design of foreigners and colonials, ignorant of the English tradition, and incapable of building anything but white cubes for eccentric and socially marginal private clients”, [Lipstadt, Hélène. 1983: 29] when many thought modern architecture was an inextricable tendency in the modern twentieth century. However, when one reviews the English architectural history, they can see that the history is repeated. In eighteenth century, when the Baroque style was brought into England by Nicholas Hawksmoor, it was enormous resistance as well. In Cyril Bruyn Andrews’s article ‘A diarist’s view of architecture’ in the Architectural review, he describes that “his [John Byng, afterwards fifth Viscount Torrington] attitude was very similar to those who today are resisting very different but equally drastic foreign innovation in architecture. There is the same battle between tradition and change. And in many other parts of the diaries we find curiously close parallels to what is happening in other directions today.” [Andrews, Cyril Bruyn. 1934:125] The conditions are akin. The traditionalist shifts their attitude from resisting the foreign innovation in the first place, then
making a compromise with it, to finally emerge into English tradition. This is, the
English modern architecture may be eclecticism. And the debate between
traditionalist and modernist is not as Lipstadt has suggested that locked in struggle in
the sadly polarised decade, but the process to make real English modern architecture.

Application I: Joseph Emberton (1889-1956)

Joseph Emberton was born in Audley, Staffordshire. It is an ancient village which has
a Norman castle, and a medieval church where he was baptised. At the age of
seventeen, he was articled to a local architects firm, and started his apprenticeship.
Twenty-two years old, he came to London for the scholarship to the Kensington
College of Art. In the college, he met an influential figure, W. R. Lethaby, a professor
of Ornament and Design. Lethaby was sympathetic to the aims of William Morris, but
with a positive attitude towards machine art, “he proposed to use machinery itself in
the struggle to reimpose the excellence of craftsmanship which had been destroyed by
the misuse of the machine- a homeopathic remedy for design.” [Ind, Rosemary.

1983:10] Although Emberton claims that he never received a single fundamental idea
for those two years in the College, he would seem to have been predisposed to
welcome such views. [Reilly, C. H. 1931] After leaving the College, he worked at the
firm of Trehearne and Norman as the first professional job. At work, he met Sir John
Burnet, and Thames Tait who had designed the Kodak House. Sir John Burnet had a good knowledge of the Chicago School and the works of Louis Sullivan and the Parisian Beaux Art training and Thames Tait’s had a real enthusiasm for Dutch modern architecture. All of these contributed Emberton a turning point of career because this was opportunity for him to combine the traditional skills he learned form the apprenticeship and the college, and modern design methods. [Ind, Rosemary. 1983]

After the Great War, he decided to be architect. As Rosemary Ind, a tutor in Modern Architecture and Design at the Open University, has observed, Emberton thought “he would give the architecture of our own say a ‘new logic’. It should be in his hands the means of interpreting the law of nature rather than the manners of mankind. Of the reliability of the latter the war had provide him with sufficient evidence.” [Ind, Rosemary. 1983: 13] Then he opened his own office in 1926. Before opening, he went to the Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in the previous year. For a short period, this visit had repercussions in Emberton’s work, such as Austin Reed’s lift gates in Regent Street, and the façade of Madelon Chaumet hat shop in Berkeley Street. However, “After his flirtation with Paris ’25 styling, his work changed direction.” [Ind, Rosemary. 1983: 19], and achieved several important modernist buildings, such as Olympia, 1929, the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club, 1931, Simpson’s
of Piccadilly, 1935, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, 1935, and His Master’s Voice shop, 1939.

The Royal Corinthian Yacht Club was the project which won Emberton an international reputation by exhibiting it in the first exhibition of Modern Architecture in New York. “It is white-skinned, three-storey building with narrow horizontal clerestory windows, sits on a concrete platform supported on stilts in the water, and on the river wall behind”, as Ind describes. [Ind, Rosemary. 1983:23] This building is “the closest he came to the manner of Le Corbusier”: pure cubical building with horizontal window form one side to another. [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:15] However, because concrete was an affordable material, for the tight budget, Emberton design a steel-framed structure, carried on reinforced-concrete piles with 4 1/2 in. hollow bricks walls which caused restriction on the interior spaces and the fenestration in the stair well. One might think the Club is a modernistic building which modified the modern notion to English conditions. However, after examining his later works, we will find that it is an expedient for a tight budget rather than a hybrid form of English modern architecture which arises from transformation for adapting to the local climate and customs. In some measure, the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club is imitating the modern architecture more than transforming it for English circumstance.
Simpson’s of Piccadilly might be Emberton’s most well-known design. Although it simply consists of horizontal bands of windows in a large frame, it is well make and stylish modernist building. Moreover, after Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Emberton acquainted more with coloured light and the application of the canopy. He applied these two skills and the lettering which he had been used on several earlier works in Simpson’s and makes it a certain distinction. Consequently, it is thought by many to be his master piece. This building was designed to showcase the clothing of the innovative manufacturer DAKS Simpson in West End of London. Emberton used a steel framed structure again after the Royal Yacht Club, but this time with a difference. He appointed the structural engineer who designed the structure of Mendelsohn and Chermayeff’s De la Warr Pavilion to design the structure of Simpson’s. It was a great beginning to have the first welded steel frame in London.

Compared with the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club project, Emberton used all kinds of material more mature and skilful. Strong vertical bands of Portland Stone and bronze give various shade and shadow during day and night, black granite clad on the ground façade with a bans of show-windows on the both side of the entrance door provide a reliable image of the shop, the concave, non-reflective glass in the windows, a patent registered in the mid Thirties, prevent reflections form spoiling the view, and most significant application: the inspired use of coloured light: “there neon tubes, red, blue
and green, run in a moulded-bronze channel above each window strip” [Ind, Rosemary. 1983:31], with a selection of different colour for different seasons, sales and other purposes. All these characteristic features do not only give this project a sophisticated simplicity, but also achieved Emberton a distinctive, skilful and individual architecture style which regrettably might have nothing to do with English modern architectural style or the style of other masters.

Apart from these two projects, there is some other his works need to be mentioned. First building is a house built in Weybridge for Mrs Ian Anderson in 1926. It is designed as a long rectangle with a drawn-forward porch. [Ind, Rosemary. 1983:15] Curves thatch, pebble walls and a chimney which is given prominence on the front elevation are in Arts and crafts manner. Next one is his most sensational work: “the new streamliner horizontal façade to the Olympia exhibition hall, which looks as if it of concrete but is actually of brick and plaster.” [Stamp, Gavin. 1979:15] This project also establishes him as a Modernist, although he would try to escape the label. However, it is not an original piece which can show “English temperament” [Blomfield, Reginald. 1934:12]. Then, the His Master’s Voice shop in Oxford Street is similar to Simpson’s of Piccadilly, but with tiny windows surrounded by glass bricks which result from the internal function, and the day light was used instead of electric coloured light. In spite of these, most ideas borrowing from Simpson’s remained the
same which only give the project a strong Emberton character but less elegant. Last
building is Audley house for his sister. It is a two-storey house which states
Emberton’s predilections in timber and Dutch De Stijl detailing.

Is Emberton a modern architect or English modern architect? And what is the belief
of English modern architects? Before the Thirties when the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier
influence came to England, he was already at work, and well acquainted with the most
advanced work on the Continent and the United States. He flirted with Paris ’25
styling for few years, and then soon changed the direction to modern architecture. He
tried to escape form this label but had a romantic attitude towards modern architecture:
logic, reason, and efficiency. He thinks “that a building is as a machine to work in, or
to live in, as these are for transport. These have all produced beautiful- or, at least,
satisfactory- forms, without much thought having been given to aesthetic. In many
cases the quality of beauty is directly related to efficiency.” [Emberton, Joseph.
1933:130] Nevertheless, as Stamp has observed, Emberton does not only “clearly
designed his machine with aesthetic considerations in mind. He was concerned with
style”, [Stamp, Gavin 1979:5] he but also moved among styles: modern, Arts and craft,
traditional and so forth, revealing from his works.

The Thirties was represented by buildings in a variety of styles, many influence by
Continental and American Expressionism. Architects worked in different styles often for very good reasons. Even modern architects who began with impeccable Modern Movement careers turn out to have designed buildings in various modernistic styles. [Stamp, Gavin 1979:7] However, for English modern architects, they did not only shift from one modernistic style to another, but to traditional styles. It is not due to stylistic confusion, but to their philosophy towards architecture and to accommodating different building types. As Jackson points out, the English traditional architects are individualists, and believed in laisser-faire. [Jackson, Anthony. 1965:103] Their attitude towards architecture is different to architects from the Continent who might insist upon one style. For many English architects, they actually cooperated with both. This might result in what Jackson has observed that they are “lack of ideological intensity”. [Jackson, Anthony 1970:25] However, can we judge them by this criterion? This would not be fair to criticise them by this criterion. Furthermore, they received the training mainly from apprenticeship or at the college: formal and conservative. Then when they began their professional career, the Modern movement had been in fashion. Modern and tradition were impacting their career. They did not give up one for another since they had good skills to design buildings in both styles. Instead they were shifting between two schools, such as F. R. S. Yorke (1906-1962), Oliver Hill (1887-1968), and Emberton, in order to satisfy a range of
building types which might be in favour of certain styles. This is, moving between
two might be the attitude most English architects’ have towards the modern
architecture. They did not want to be forced into taking sides, they were prepared to
admired what their regarded as true English modern architecture where it appeared,
and they did not yet create it, they were seeking it from both schools. So was

Emberton.

**Application II: the Hornsey Town Hall complex (1933-1935)**

The Hornsey Town Hall is located in Crouch End. It was a small village until the mid-
nineteenth century, but had been developed into the major shopping centre for an
expanding urban district by the next century. Before the Town Hall was built, there
was a council office in Southwood Lane, Highgate, completed in 1868, administering
some aspects of the life of three detached settlements: Hornsey Crouch End and
Highgate. The council office, which mainly dealt with the business in Highgate, soon
became inadequate, since Hornsey population was growing rapidly during 1880. For
this swift growing suburb, Hornsey needed a new hall for its own business. Then a
competition was advertised subsequently in 1929.

In October 1933, the result was announced; a New Zealander Reginald Uren won the
competition over other 217 participators. “Instead of a regular competition with
classical portico ..., Uren proposed a boldly massed asymmetrical group ingeniously adapted to the awkward site hemmed in by back garden walls. The building is set back as far as possible to give the approach some dignity; its dual function is clearly expressed". [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:8] This is, the Uren's layout and design articulate the civic functions- of administration and as a public meeting space of the Hornsey Town Hall successfully and appropriately. The building as completed was later awarded the bronze medal of the Royal Institute of British Architects for the best London Building erected during the three years ending in December 1935. [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:9] Shortly the Town Hall was joined with the buildings of the adjacent gas and electricity showrooms, and became an integrated and unique combination in the site; "the three 'centres of power and energy'- Gas, Electricity and Local Government- were at the hub of borough with strong aspirations to be modern and progressive." [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:12] On the one hand, Uren brought an architectural hierarchical strategy- setting the Town Hall back from the noisy street- into the plan to construct a focal centre to the community. On the other, it "produces a physical manifestation of a modern and progressive suburban community, defining itself against London at large." [Campkin, Ben. 2000: 3]

Strictly speaking, the character of the Hornsey Town Hall had been formed initially by the competition's requirement. The brief for the Town Hall was specific about what
the building should be like in reference to its overall form. It says that the town hall should be ‘dignified’ in character and ‘should rely on good proportions and a fitting architectural setting rather than on elaborate decoration and detail which is not desired. [Cherry, Bridget. 1988: 20] This implies that in the design of Town Hall, the effect of overall setting should outweigh those of sophisticated detail. Intriguingly, as an institutional building, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), also launched a competition for its headquarters in Thirties, gave important criteria to different aspects: the “evidence of imaginative handling of plan, structure and material, and for a due sense, in the external and internal aspects of the building, of the dignity and significance to the national life of the profession of architecture.” [Richardson, Margaret. 1979:61] Although both competitions laid stress on ‘dignity’, the assessors the RIBA sought a building which can convey it effectively; by contrast, in the Hornsey Town Hall, the impression of a fitting architectural setting was more essential than the representation of a single building. In a sense, the requirement disengages itself from a conventional idea that the building should perform a principal role in a project. Instead, the entire plan becomes the significant criteria and represents ‘dignity in character’ with the community. It is consistent with modern architectural thought in Thirties, as Jackson has observed, that the problem for urban planning seemed political, for the principles of English socialism were in accord with
those of architecture. The conservatives believed in individualism, while the socialists advocated collaboration. [Jackson, Anthony. 1965:103] In modern architecture, as in the competition requirement, architects were advised to regard buildings as elements in a social environment not only a work of art.

Seemingly, the requirement was not satisfied in Uren’s winning design in some measure. He set the Town Hall back from the late Victorian style street as far as possible and apart it from the setting. By this approach, the Town Hall retreats for its social content, forms itself a focal point in the site, and acts as a definite centre. This architectural hierarchical gesture gives the Town Hall a serene, dignified impression, and creates a town square “which increases the sense of the building’s separation from the shops, and especially from the ornate Topsfield and the contemporary clock tower of 1895, by F. G. Knight.” [Campkin, Ben. 2000: 3] Nevertheless, as Raymond Unwin commends, in pioneering study ‘Town planning in Practice’, that the grouping of public buildings in central places or square, emphasising the need for definite centres; not just in cities, but in their component districts and suburbs as well. [Raymond, Unwin. 1909:176-234] This is, although Uren set the Town Hall back for the street and apart it from the setting. It declares a centre the community’s autonomy against London at large. This is to say the Hornsey Town Hall is a rational development of traditional urban planning in response to modern notions of architectural response to
the society.

As we have discussed, the Thirties is a contrastive and controversial decade. The fierce confrontation between traditionalists and modernists produced the problem of style which beset architects. However, as Stamp observers, “much individuals or groups insisted upon one style—whether Georgian or modern—as the only possible architectural expression of the age, in the Thirties as in Edward VII’s reign, a hierarchy of style according to building type seems to have operated. For public buildings, a Classical manner, Roman or Stripped, or Hilversum or Stockholm, was desirable. … The more vulgar styles—modernistic or moderne or whatever—were used for more commercial buildings or for buildings requiring extravagance and display.” [Stamp, Gavin 1979:15] Although the classical style was much in favour of public buildings, there were some who could not abandon the classical manner or accept modern style wholly supported eclectic modernistic style such as Stripped, or Hilversum, or Stockholm.

Among those, “Dudok’s modernism was also accepted for public utilities, such as schools or hospitals … which were one of the concrete manifestations of the social consciousness of the period.” [Stamp, Gavin 1979:15] Because, as Lewis Mumford has commented of Dudok’s architecture, “he has shown us how to do justice to the
new forces at our disposal, in science, in technics, in practical life, without losing hold on deeper needs. This is true architecture of humanism, capable of finding the answer to every mode of architectural construction.” [Dudok, Willem Marinus. 1954: 55] In the decade when architecture was in the conflict between new and old, he found an answer for deeper human needs in architecture. We can easy to see why so many English architects follow his work as a prototype for civic buildings which always deal with of the problems that a community face on a day-to-day basis.

As Bridget Cherry, an architectural writer, says Dudok’s architecture is too “the quieter modern style… the principle of letting form follow function was combined with classically inspired proportions and simple details, while plain surfaces were made interesting by carefully brickwork.” [Cherry, Bridget 1995: 7] And its ‘quiet style’ which was considered appropriate to a municipal building had also influenced several London town halls, such as Greenwich Town Hall (1939) by Clifford Culpin, Wembley Town Hall (1935-40) by Clifford Strange, and E Berry Webber’s Hammersmith Town Hall (1938-39). Obviously this style had a formative influence on Uren’s design for Hornsey Town Hall as well with an austere, sober and friendly quality.

However, he did not just transfer Dudok’s architecture into the Hornsey Town Hall,
but combined it with English classical decoration, sculpture. Although elaborate
decoration and detail were not desired in the requirement, and also as Cherry notes
although “architectural sculpture had been a familiar accompaniment to buildings in
the classical tradition. The most extreme modern architects not only rejected
traditional classical proportions and vocabulary, but considered that almost any form
of ornament was unnecessary”, Uren did not restricted himself in this modern
conception, on the contrary, he followed a tradition set by a number of progressive
contemporary English buildings, which had incorporated caved work by notable
sculpture, such as the London Transport Headquarters, designed by Charles Holden in
1927, the BBC Headquarters, designed by G Val Meyer in 1932, and the Shakespeare
Memorial Theatre, designed by Elizabeth Scott in 1932. [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:10],
and designed a noticeable sculptures and ornamental metalwork as an important
feature for the Town Hall. As Cherry observes, “The austerity of this brick tradition is
leavened by the carved stone lintel by the sculptor A. J. Ayres, and by ornamental
metalwork.” [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:8] In addition, Margaret Richardson, an
architectural writer, mentions that “the idea of using applied decoration to build up the
symbolism of a building was much used [in Thirties].” The BBC headquarters has
exterior groups of sculpture symbolising the ‘invisible sprit of the air’, and India
House has Asoka columns skied on corbels carrying the lintel over the entrance- India
symbols of Empire. [Richardson, Margaret 1979:68] While the “self-indulgent”

[Cherry, Bridget. 1995:6] Knight’s Clock Tower stand at the corner of the busy last
Victorian Street, the Town Hall’s sculptural decoration illustrate a symbol of “civic
art”. [Campkin, Ben 2000:7]

It is difficult to define the general characteristics of the competition designs, as there
is not one design available. It could be envisaged from an approach, from other
competitions at the time. Once again the RIBA headquarters competition in 1931
provides a good indication. Richardson notes “from what survive one can judge that
the majority are classical compromises. …Only a very few… are fully-fledged
classical, using the orders. Again a handful… are ‘modern’, progressive…”

[Richardson, Margaret 1979:64] This reveals that most architects in Thirties were
seeking eclecticism, a compromise between English traditionalism and Continent
modernism. On the other hand, Hornsey was a community which a combination of a
prosperous suburb with the Victorian shopping centre and of a borough with strong
aspirations to be modern and progressive. [Cherry, Bridget. 1995:12] Therefore, the
assessors of the Hornsey Town Hall may not choose a plan which could only transfer
Continent modernism without any consideration for English tradition, or which
followed the self-indulgent classical tradition without any progressive thinking, but a
plan which could merge two thoughts and generate a proper building which represent
Hornsey. As Ben Compkin suggests that “the right combination of progressiveness and traditionalism would be essential in representing an authority governing a ‘booming’ community.” [Compkin, Ben 2000:8] And the Hornsey Town Hall displayed symbolism.

**Conclusion**

As Kumar argues, “In all parts of the world, national identity historically has been a matter for scholars, intellectuals, artists and statesmen, who in their different ways have sought to shape it… It is no just some affair of the ‘superstructure’, of ideological posturing. It leads to visions and definitions which may be all we have when we need them- in a time of conflict or crisis, for instance.” [Kumar, Krishan. 2003:252-253] It was as clear in England at the interwar period. Before the time, in order to ensure that uniformity and quality could across the all ‘inner’ Empire- the Great Britain, English repressed their own national consciousness. While other nations, Scottish, for instance, began forming their national identity, English was proud of being British. They were incurious even indifferent who they really were. Not until grand social changes occurred: the winder entities- ‘inner’ and British Empires were collapsing politically and economically, did national consciousness arise. They then differentiating themselves from British, and found themselves being
pleased to be ‘Little Englanders’ who were sober, moderate, and longing for a peaceful country life, and dislike of bossy, loud-voiced ‘Big Englanders’.

English national identity was now put on public agenda, and shaping by different social groups in the debate, architecture, for example, since the history is a history of surrogate objects, as Rakatansky has identified. This claim is based on that architecture is a compound form of human culture which defines identities depending on various factors. Then, it can be seen that from the general nature relation between built and social form, hybrid forms of architecture can tell us more than pure architectural forms. And the most significant forms of ideological identification in architecture, as Rakatansky has suggested, are not the ‘Big Symbols’, but the accrual of the ‘small symbol’: the ways in institutional space that architecture organizes activities.

Meanwhile, if we want to observe what English national identity was formed at interwar period through architecture, the controversy over English modernism might provide a vital sign. In the Twenties, two schools had begun their battles. On the one hand, Albert Richardson, who was a partisan of classical revival, took over the *Architect’s Journal* in 1919, and published a number of historical studies of English architects. [Watkin, David. 1979:84] On the other, the *architectural Review*
continually introduced modern Dutch and Swedish architecture into England. Then the polemic grew bitter when the MARS invited émigré architects to settle in England. Two groups attacked one another’s legitimacy from various aspects. At the time, Pevener, an émigré historian, turn the polemic into intriguing direction: the traditionalists emerge as pioneers, and make English architects feel at home in modern architecture.

However, no matter how the polemic was going, history, as always, was repeated itself. English architects, as before, would find their own style from the foreign innovation, and emerged into their tradition. And this polemic is dialectical debate for the making of English modern architecture.

From the first application, we can see that in his mind, Emberton was a traditionalist influenced by the modern movement. He moved between two schools and practiced both successfully. This is might be odd to the Continental architects who insist upon one style, and think that is ‘lack of ideological intensity’. However, it is ordinary to English architects at the time. For him and others, taking sides is not the only condition to form English modern architecture, seeking it between two was the best way to form it. Emberton, as others, might not yet create English modern architecture, but he found a way to form it.
The second application is different case. Architect, Reginald Uren, was born and had his architectural training in New Zealand, then came to England in 1930. But when designing the Hornsey Town Hall, he knew how to balance the Continental modernism with English traditionalism. The Town Hall is set back from noisy to obtain a calm dignity, decorated with carved stone lintel and ornamental metalwork to express ‘civic art’, and designed as a democratic space from all residents. It illustrates that Hornsey is a Victorian style suburb with a modern spirit. This proves that Uren did not just transfer a modern architecture to an English community, but transform it to suit local circumstances. Moreover, this implies that it is not necessary to be English to design English modernistic buildings, but crucial to be an architect who knows how it is essential in representing a ‘booming’ community in the right combination of progressiveness and traditionalism.

In conclusion, after studying the historical and case studies, we found that national identity is not a single consciousness. There is no one answer which can reach a consensus, especially English identity. It was arose in a very short period, and frequently confused with British. However, “English identity will to some extent be shaped by the various success of different groups in the debate” [Kumar, Krishen 2003:253], but need more time, so as in Architecture. We might find some institutes or houses exhibiting some features of English modern architecture, the Hornsey Town
Hall, for instance, but we can not declare that we have it because they are a few and have unstable quality. However, one thing is certain; English architects were in progress to create national identity through architecture at the interwar period.
Figure 1.
Do they realize when they try to foist these continental barracks on us, that English is the only language that has a word for 'home'?" from Osbert Lancaster's *Progress at Pelvis Bay*, Page 48

Figure 2.
Diagonal windows of service stair Photograph form Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 56
The fenestration in the stair well is restricted by the structure.
Figure 3.

Simpson’s of Piccadilly. Photograph from Rosemary Ind’s *Emberton*, 72

All these characteristic features do not only give this project a sophisticated simplicity.

---

Figure 4

House built in Weybridge for Mrs Ian Anderson in 1926. Photograph from Rosemary Ind’s *Emberton*, 23

Curves thatch, pebble walls and a chimney which is given prominence on the front elevation are in Arts and crafts manner.
Figure 5.
New Empire Hall, Olympia in 1930. Photograph from Rosemary Ind's Emberton, 41
This project establishes Emberton as a Modernist.

Figure 6.
The His Master's Voice shop in Oxford Street in 1939. Photograph from Rosemary Ind's Emberton, 89
It is similar project to Simpson's of Piccadilly.
Figure 7.
Audley house for his sister in 1939. Photograph from Rosemary Ind's *Emberton*, 91
This building states Emberton's predilections in timber and Dutch De Stijl detailing.

Figure 8.
The Hornsey Town Hall, c. 1947 Photograph form postcard Hornsey Collection No.21.
It produces a physical manifestation of a modern and progressive suburban community, defining itself against London at large.

Figure 9.
Crouch End Broadway c. 1905. Photograph from postcard Hornsey Collection No.18.
The ornate Topsfield and the contemporary clock tower of 1895, by F. G. Knight
Bibliography


Cuffe, Lionel. (1931) *William Morris.*

Amsterdam: G. van Saane

New York: Wiley.

London: A. Zwemmer Ltd.

Delft: Faculty of Architecture.

Fulcher, James. (1997). *Did British Society Change Character in the 1920s or the 1980s.*


Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University press.


London: Scolar Press.


London: Architectural Press

New York: Wiley.


London: Seven Dials.


Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[Accessed 15 July 2005]

Kumar, Kumar. (2001) *Sociology and the Englishness of English Social Theory.*
Sociological Theory, Vol. 19, No. 1. page 41-64.

London: Verso.

Lancaster, Osbert. (1936) *Progress as Pelvis Bay*
Norwich: John Murray Ltd.

Lancaster, Osbert. (1939) *Homes Sweet Homes*
London: John Murray Ltd.

Lancaster, Osbert. (1938) *Pillar to Post*
London: John Murray Ltd.


In: Davison, Peter. ed. *Orwell's England*


London: Faber and Faber Limited.


Building, August.

[Online]. London. Available from:
http://www.dkrenton.co.uk/research/cppaper.html.
[Accessed 03 July 2005]

Richardson, Margaret. (1979) *The RIBA Building In Britain in the Thirties* 


Singapore: Concept Media Ltd.

Stamp, Gavin. (1979) *Introduction In Britain in the Thirties*  

Chaney, Edward ed. *English architecture, public and private: essays for Kerry 
Downes*.  

*Translated from the Italian by Robert Erich Wolf*  
London: Faber and Faber Limited.

*Translated from the Italian by Robert Erich Wolf*  
London: Faber and Faber Limited.

Unwin, Raymond. (1909). *Town planning in Practice: an introduction to the art of 
designing cities and suburbs*.  
London: Bern.

Assemblage, No. 22, Page 6-49.

Wurster, Catherine Bauer. (1965). *The Social Front of Modern Architecture in the 
1930s*.  


Zucker, Paul. (1951). *The Paradox of Architectural Theories at the Beginning of the 
"Modern Movement"*.  