RICE UNIVERSITY

TOWARDS A QUALIFIED CLASSICISM

by

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SYNOPSIS

The intent of this thesis is to first, demonstrate that classicism remains valid as an underlying idea for the creation of architecture and second, that in order to exist in a meaningful and critical position, classicism must be 'qualified'. The term qualification is meant to describe the shift that has occurred in the nature of classicism since the Enlightenment. Classicism is no longer absolute and pure. The purity and unity of classical canon have been violated, compromised, and inverted since this time. A qualified classicism acknowledges this violation not through pastiche or image appropriation, but in a critical synthesis. There is no turning back to the times of the ancients, for modernism is now part of our architectural heritage as much as classicism is. However, classicism has been the basis for Western architecture for over 2,000 years— and at its heart lie principles which are timeless and permanent. Idealization, hierarchy, and centrality are among several principles that may form a solid basis for an architecture, regardless of style. These principles may be used as a syntax or datum, which may then be qualified by more relative and contemporary concerns.

The introduction to the paper establishes the validity of classicism and the need for qualification. The next two sections describe how Sir Edwin Lutyens and Le Corbusier approach the idea of a qualified classicism in their work. The examples used for each are the Viceroy’s Residence in New Delhi, and the Capitol complex at Chandigarh, respectively. They were chosen because of their unique proximity in time and place, and because they demonstrate that a qualified classicism can be approached from two poles; Lutyens from the normative and Corb from the relative.

In the conclusion, several points are set forth which delineate the characteristics for a qualified classicism.

The design project accompanying this thesis is a design for a city hall in College Station, Texas.
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I.

The use of classicism in recent architecture has become a major topic of debate. The range in opinions might be represented by the extreme conservatism of Alan Greenberg and Quinlan Terry to Charles Jencks' 'free-style' classicism to Peter Eisenman's virtual rejection of classicism. When classicism is used, it is frequently lacking in critical meaning and content. This paper is an investigation of how it may be used in such a way as to be critical and relevant in a context that emphasizes image over content.

Recent views of the history of architecture seem to gravitate about two poles: history as a continuous tradition descended from the Greeks and Romans; and history as a process of evolution, always in step with the times. Alan Colquhoun describes these views as 'normative' and 'relative', respectively. The normative realm deals with architecture as 'given truth'. The assumption is that the Greeks and the Romans provide the model for architecture, for their's was a 'golden age' of universal truths. The relative rejects the idea of a continuous tradition based on eternal truths and instead embodies a sense of progress and utopian vision; e.g. the new is superior to the old. Also, it deals with the specific, such as social concerns and context of time and place.

The use of classicism is seemingly caught between these approaches. It will be shown that classicism no longer occupies an absolute normative position and now must exist in a qualified form. Qualified classicism will be suggested as a means to transmit eternal values and at the same time acknowledge the reality of its current cultural context.

The paper will begin by establishing the validity of classicism and examining its ability to be legible, or comprehensible as a language. Works by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Le Corbusier will be utilized as the opposing ends in a spectrum of methods for using classicism. It is intended that between these two examples a third direction will be indicated for utilizing a qualified classicism.

To begin, however, an operative definition of classicism must be set down, for the word means many different things to different people. Classicism taken as a whole embraces many different styles and varies widely in the nature of its use. Thus, no attempt will be made here to be all-inclusive, and the focus will be on essentials. For the purposes of this investigation, classicism shall refer primarily to a set of ideas, rather than a style. Tripartion, harmonious relationship of parts, and the creation of a comprehensible whole are the essentials that identify classicism. Reference to the architecture of antiquity, however slight or vestigial, will also be included in the working definition,
for it is the syntax in the form of tectonic elements that articulate the essentials.

Underlying this definition is the assumption of qualities inherent to classicism that transcend style and time. Durability, utility, and the ability of the work to please the eye and mind may also be included as essentials. In particular, the use of light, massing, and geometry will be emphasized as basic elements in creating a qualified classicism. These elements are not exclusive to classicism, but they seem to naturally align themselves to it and give it a certain correctness— for classicism is an established tradition which already shows us to use the essentials of architecture.

The ability of the classical language to act as a datum upon which variations can be played out is also of great value. This assumes that classicism remains a valid form of expression— that it retains the ability to act as a sign or symbol. This also assumes legibility, or how well the observer can ‘read’ the ideas symbolized.

To establish the validity of classicism, one must first demonstrate that it is a living language. This depends on how one defines classicism. Here it has been defined loosely as a set of ideas, or an approach to design. Peter Eisenman defines it very narrowly as the architecture of the Greeks and Romans only; thus he claims that classicism is now a dead language:

Renaissance buildings on the other hand and all buildings after them that pretended to be "architecture" received their value by representing an already valued architecture. 2

The assumption made here is that when classicism is removed from the context of its original existence, it becomes value-less. The Renaissance may be seen not as a break from original meaning, but as the point where a cosmology was overlaid on the existing language, thereby enriching it. The growth and development of classicism from the early Greeks to the Hellenistic and Roman periods somewhat parallels the growth from the Renaissance to Mannerism and the Baroque. This shows a certain continuity in the development and growth of classicism, despite the Renaissance.

The many layers of meaning and richness acquired by a continuously developing language can be recalled to advantage in using classicism. This is not to imply an unbroken tradition in the normative view, but indicates that certain qualities and associations of classicism can still be relevant.

For example the outdoor sculpture gallery in Stirling’s
Staatsgalerie can be associated with the rotunda in the Altes museum, Hadrian’s maritime theatre, or even the Pantheon. In each case, the space in question evolved in a context and circumstances differing from the others, but they can all be suggested in one example by the associations and precedents that are collectively recognized as classicism.

The validity of classicism is affirmed by its ability to accept works as different as the Pantheon and the Staatsgalerie. Growth and change is demonstrated by major architects through history. The work of Palladio shows new combinations of established elements and new building typologies. The Basilica in Vicenza demonstrates the use engaged columns and arches to articulate a collanade. His churches in Venice show the invention of superimposing temple facades to solve the problem of expressing the nave and side aisles. His villas became typological models for architects even into the twentieth century. While he was highly innovative, Palladio also was a scholar of ancient monuments and remained true to basic principles. Adolph Loos echoed this when he said "But everytime architecture strays from its model...the great architect appears to bring it back to antiquity."

To make classical architecture to look like that of the Greeks and Romans is not the point, however. Loos is referring to classicism as a set of ideas and as a way to approach design. One must be aware of the intent and origins of classicism before an attempt to alter or work within it is made. This is very important in the use of transformations and precedents. To simply return to the past without qualifying it results in a dead language. Works that appropriate directly without transformation such as the UH School of Architecture, the Getty Museum, and the Nashville Parthenon have a lifeless quality about them. They remain purely within the normative realm and bear little relationship to contemporary concerns. A transformation can inform a work with such concerns while still retaining an underpinning of classicism. The act of transformation affirms the ideas inherent in classicism by bringing them into a new context intact. In the Staatsgalerie, one finds an unpinning in idea and form. The u-shaped gallery block and central sculpture rotunda are often cited as a transformation of Schinkel’s Altes museum. The rotunda itself may have precedents ranging from the Pantheon to the council chamber of the Assembly at Chandigarh. All these parts assume a unique new form as they are confronted by Stirling’s use of the free plan, functional planning, and modernist elements. By transforming his sources, Stirling acknowledges that classicism has begun to assume a new role where the purely
normative must confronted by the relative and timely to affirm the values in classicism which cannot be stripped by time.

The legibility of classicism may be seen in two primary forms. Universal associations which are of the normative realm, and specific associations which are of the relative. Universal associations are timeless and traditional. The golden age of the Greeks, class and wealth, and sculptural beauty are among the connotations that have become so well embedded that they seem automatic. This is classicism's link to the past, when severed completely, results in a superficial and arbitrary language. But when this facet of classicism takes over a work, it becomes a museum piece. One of the strengths of classicism is that is its able to retain these universal associations and accept specific ones at the same time.

Specific associations result from a particular historical or cultural context. Here the language is conciously adopted towards an end. This may occur as a style, a building type, or even an element in the language. Classicism has negative connotations in Germany, where memories of the Nazis still persist. In the United States, most would tend to identify classicism as representing the federal government, as embodied by the mall in Washington D.C.. Building types, such as 'palace' are usually tied to a primary example, such as Versailles or the Louvre. Other types, such as the temple, have become associated with a use. The American small-town county courthouse has become associated with the temple form. A building element, such a dome may come to represent a whole building or institution. The U.S. Capitol is certainly known by its dome, and it even may be seen as a symbol of the government as a whole.

The use of classicism requires a balance of the universal and the specific. This balance can make a work more relevant to its time and place and simultaneously evoke a sense of history. This balance cannot be a simple melding of opposites — it must rise above triviality to become a basis for critical meaning.

Critical meaning in classicism centers on the creation or denial of unity, for unity its highest ideal. All the underlying relationships of taxis, genera, and symmetry aim at the creation of a coherent whole. It is not the order and rationality of the system that is meaningful in itself, but the ideal world view that they represent. This world view is embodied in the symbol of the Vitruvian man — a humanistic
world view where man, nature, and the universe were united in a coherent cosmology. Today we have lost touch with a consistent cosmology to serve as a basis for an architecture. The ideal of classical unity has become displaced since the Enlightenment and is handed down in a fragmented form. Yet, classicism still persists. To try to recover it in its original form is to ignore over 2000 years of history. But there are components of the classical canon worth recovering. This must be done through a classicism of qualified unity.

Alexander Tzonis identifies three forms of compromised unity: appropriation, fragmentation, and synthesis. Appropriation goes beyond qualification to complete compromise, for there is no critical attitude — only a hollow image that cannot sustain meaning. Fragmentation has critical potential, as it denies the possibility of using classicism whole in a canonical form. However, fragmentation can degenerate into appropriation, as many recent post-modern projects show. The classical fragments of the Piazza d’Italia in New Orleans are unconvincing in this way. The neon and stainless steel fail to generate a critical dialogue with the columns, pedestals, architraves, and arches. Although it is witty and picturesque, it lacks the genuine synthesis that could raise it above the level of pastiche.

Synthesis, as opposed to appropriation and fragmentation, is an ideal vehicle for qualified classicism, for it goes beyond simple juxtaposition or imagery. Within synthesis is contained the central concept of classicism: unity. By qualifying classicism, one acknowledges that the architecture of antiquity cannot be reconstituted. The role of classicism in creating ‘a world within the world’ has been challenged by the non-classical. The free plan, flowing space, planar elements, and asymmetry can be synthesized with classicism in a new unity that can be critical of the role of both. The following examination of works by Lutyens and LeCorbusier will show forms of qualified classicism which remain true to essentials but also deal effectively with their context of place and time in a critical manner.
Both Sir Edwin Lutyens and LeCorbusier demonstrate the use of a qualified classicism in the Viceroy’s residence in New Delhi and the Capitol complex at Chandigarh, respectively. Each approaches classicism differently—Corb from his unique brand of modernism and Lutyens from the traditional vernacular of his country houses. The intent of using two such disparate architects is to show that a balanced qualified classicism is possible in the twentieth century from either the normative or the relative position.

While Lutyens is most well known for his country houses, his larger public buildings, starting from about the turn of the century, display a conscious shift to classicism. The Viceroy’s house in New Delhi most clearly demonstrates his embracing of classicism and his skill in using it. It is likely that Lutyens saw himself as an inheritor of a grand tradition:

In Architecture Palladio is the game!! It is so big few appreciate it now and it requires considerable training to value and realize it... To the average man it is dry bones, but under the mind of a Wren it glows and the stiff material becomes as plaster clay. 5

Lutyens accepted classicism as a viable form of expression and affirmed it as a living tradition by following Palladio’s example of creativity within an established tradition. In doing this he also demonstrates a return to humanism as described by Robert Byron:

....in every rib and molding, in every block of stone he has revealed and given life that perfectly balanced sanity and proportion which is the distilled essence of beauty, and which Europe calls the humanist ideal. 6

As a humanist Lutyens accepts architecture as an art, with the highest tradition of that art being classicism. In this sense, he is one of those 'great architects' described by Loos who brings architecture back to antiquity. But he does not work in an archeological manner. Lutyens keeps classicism alive by dealing with it in a manner "...unconscious of all but essentials." 7 He returns to antiquity not in terms of style, but in the way he designs. He utilizes classicism as a broad framework to attack elementary issues such as the the effects of light and shadow and the composition of masses. At first glance, the Viceroy’s house is pure Palladian classicism composed of a dome, arched portals, collanades, and a grand flight of steps, all symmetrically disposed across the expansive elevation. On closer inspection
though, one finds that there are a considerable number of Indian motifs and elements. The fact that the blade-like chujja cornice and chattri pavilions on the parapet fit in so comfortably points to the ability of the classical language to accommodate and adapt. It was Lutyens intention to adapt to the environment. The shade and rain cover provided by the chujja demonstrate his desire to "build as an Englishman dressed for the climate." 8

Details such as the column capitals show his classicism to very pliable. At a distance, they appear to be perhaps corinthian, but they are actually an original creation of three corrugated bands surmounted by four bells at the corners. The bells are very appropriate for they are important symbols in hindu worship. 9 Lutyens retained the normative arrangement of the column and its capital, but he nods to the cultural context by articulating the capital in terms of a specific symbol.

Transformation and use of precedent are important in qualified classicism. In the Viceroy’s house traces of many sources exist. In plan, there is resemblance to Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard. The central space, forward projecting wings, and large courts to the side are common features. The collanades of the main elevation recall the East front of the Louvre. The composition of this elevation also strongly recalls the U.S. Capitol in structure and massing. Another more basic source for the plan may be Lutyens own country houses. As Alan Greenberg has pointed out, the arrangement of functions and their connections is similar. 10 None of these possible sources dominates though, for whatever was used as precedent has become absorbed in Lutyens own vocabulary.

On a more specific level, he adapts elements of the classical syntax - ‘essential’ forms of sort- but he recasts them in new ways that give the work life and originality. The columns of the main entry are spaced slightly unevenly, giving the facade a subtle rhythm. The traditional cornice becomes an Indian chujja, emphasizing the horizontal quality of the work with deep shadow. The plinth is made of a red stone that contrasts to the cream stone above. Not only does this tie the building to the environment, but visually lets the building ‘float’ eerily when viewed from a distance. Openings are set very deep, and appear more as patterns of dark shapes than windows. Perhaps the most important individual element is the dome, which becomes a symbol of the entire building. Specific precedents may be found in St. Pauls, St. Peters, the Pantheon, or even the U.S. capitol. Whatever his source, the important fact is that Lutyens transformed it into a work of his own. It is unlike any other classical dome, but it still has the essence of history about
it. Surface articulation such as columns, ribbing, and mouldings are reduced to a minimum here. As a result, the spare geometric forms convey a universality which evokes monuments of the past as well as the Indian context.

By qualifying classical canon, Lutyens created an architecture of increased legibility. The universal associations still remain and they are intensified by the austere, geometric quality of the work. It has the monumental quality of ancient Roman works. It certainly looks like a palace and reminds one that classicism was once the realm of the wealthy and powerful. Even as a sheer sculptural form, the building has drama.

As strong as the universal qualities of the work are, important specific issues are legible as well. Ideally, Lutyens seemed to be symbolizing the synthesis of Indian and English cultures. The Indian motifs and elements described woven into the classical matrix tend to leave the view with such an impression. But knowing of the British domination of India, the use of classicism may be viewed as a tool of the conquerers to diffuse their culture and proclaim their rule. Despite such authoritarian overtones, universal values dominate and allow the work to be appreciated for itself: "Beauty is infallible and confers a measure of right upon its creators, whatever their sins." 11

This association of classicism with the British Empire has within it a more basic element that gives the work strength and clarity—its overt monumentality. This quality allows the Viceroy’s house to clearly communicate its function as the seat of the ruler. The elements of the classical syntax such as the dome and colonnades present the image of a building type, the palace, which is commonly associated with government functions.

Lutyens uses classicism very much in its traditional manner, in that he remains within the vocabulary of the language to attain the creation of unity. He uses normative means to attain universal principles. By retaining the recognizable elements of classicism, Lutyens makes his building legible as a metaphorical representation of the synthesis of British and Indian cultures.

It is much more than the exterior appearance that defines this work as classical, for it is classical in conception as well as execution. Lutyens achieves unity primarily through the use of geometry. Virtually all is subordinated to geometric order from the site plan down to details.
In plan, the large scale order is very clear. As large and complex as the building is, the plan is immediately comprehensible as a single entity defining a near-square form. The Durbar Hall, though not large in plan, hierarchically dominates the mass of rectangles with its round shape. Each of the four main facades presents a symmetrical appearance. However, within this highly ordered structure, the plan begins to break down into unique episodes that contradict the order and axial structure.

Here, Lutyens most clearly demonstrates his use of qualified classicism. Circulation is highly ordered about the Durbar Hall, but soon it becomes independent of the order implied by axes and structure. One will find that the circulation surrounding the staircase court is assymmetrically placed and seems to snake around the state ball room, state dining room, and the Viceroy's staircase. In each of the four wings, circulation takes a course that seems to be determined more by the placement of spaces, such as bedrooms, loggias, and sitting rooms, than by symmetry or axial relationships. There appears to be a concern for functional requirements, as seen by the fact that virtually every hallway outside the central core of the building is single loaded, with a loggia, court, or windows on one side to provide light. The disparity in the size and shape of rooms, such as the ball room, ball room loggia, and dining room also may reflect functional concerns for the program. The classical beaux-arts superstructure seems to be overlaid with a kind of free plan that challenges it. There is a constant tension that is created where the plan oscillates between function and form.

Lutyens obviously enjoyed the process of accommodating such a complex program to a preconceived form: "It is fun designing a building to fit within a defined cube," 12 His wit may also be seen in the denial of expectations. Enormous amounts of space are given over to staircases and circulation. The North and South main staircases rival the largest rooms in the house in size and are quite surprising in their large scale. Where one would expect to find a series of large rooms behind the East facade, there are simply loggias that mask the North and South courtyards. In plan reaching one's destination denies expectations of arrival, for there seems to be an myriad of transitional spaces and anterooms. The distinction between path and destination becomes blurred and ambiguous. This may be an attempt to create discontinuity on Lutyen's part, as a way of dissociating the inside of the work from the exterior shell. These 'qualifications' also bring up critical issues which underlie the visual and formal aspects of the work.

By working within the tradition, he is able to create an architecture that aspires to the normative realm— but the
twists he puts on it prevent it from being canonical or totally unified. Lutyens has used normative classicism as a stepping stone to a different kind of architecture, which seeks a return to essentials without totally abandoning the classical language. By compromising pure classical unity, the possibility of using the canon intact is denied, and perhaps rightly so. The disruption of the order may be seen as a metaphor for the increasingly diminished power of the British Empire. It is ironic that this work was completed in 1931, when modernism was sweeping the world. In such a context, the qualified classicism acknowledges its own changing role in the need to confront modernism. Perhaps Lutyens' distortions were an attempt to keep the language of classicism alive in face of the demise of the tradition. Whatever his motivations, the fact that qualified classicism resulted in such a powerful work validates its use within an established tradition.
For LeCorbusier, classicism is an underlying theme everpresent in his work. It is never used overtly as a means of representation, but it is subsumed within his personal vocabulary of form. The Assembly and High Court buildings at Chandigarh initially appear to have no relationship to classicism at all, for they are usually historically classified as examples of high modernism. Classicism does not appear here as recognizable elements, such as the orders. Instead it is utilized as a cryptic syntax. Corb affirms the validity of classicism not by what he does within the language but by what he does to it. Essentially, he inverts and transforms classicism into a personal vocabulary through his ‘five points. Pilotis, the roof garden, the free plan, the elongated window and the free facade all have counterparts in the classical language. Von Moos attributes the five points to Corb’s use of concrete construction, which permitted such innovation. 13 This may be true, but on the metaphorical level it demonstrates Corb’s knowledge of classicism -- he had to understand the language before he could alter it so profoundly.

Despite his rhetoric in support of the ‘spirit of the times’ and the ‘engineer’s aesthetic’ in Towards a New Architecture, Corb remains rooted in classical principles and precedent. His sketches reveal these sources. 14 His sketches of temples on the Acropolis and at Delphi show his interest in how the Greeks framed views with buildings and how they placed temples in relation to the landscape. His sketches of Islamic mosques appear with the word "Silhouettes!!" 15 Peter Serenyi has suggested the origin of the vaulted roof of the High Court as being the Basilica of Maxentius, which Corb had sketched 50 years earlier. 16 The main elevation of the Assembly appears to be a highly transformed version of a temple portico, the columns becoming perforated walls, and the pediment mutating into an enormous gutter-like roof. Even more distant precedents may be suggested by the roof-scape of the assembly. The pyramid and hyperboloid seem to hint at domes of major governmental buildings such as the U.S. Capitol, or perhaps works at New Delhi, which he had visited.

Whatever his sources really are, he does not allow them to exist in their original form. He makes them work by transforming them into his own language. The monumental entry of the High Court, for example could not work with regular columns. Corb had to create his own organic-form pillar to solve the problem. His vocabulary of form seems hermetic and highly personal, but in reality he aspired to use it to make universal qualities legible. In Towards a New Architecture he
defines architecture:

"Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light.... cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage." 17

His discussion of the Parthenon in this text reveals his concern not with the architectural language of classicism, but with the platonic and universal attributes within it; he treats classicism as an idea as opposed to a style. A caption below a figure of the Parthenon reads:

Here is something to arouse emotion. We are in the inexorable realm of the mechanical. There are no symbols attached to these forms; they provoke definite sensations; there is no need of a key in order to understand them. Brutality, intensity, the utmost sweetness, delicacy, and great strength. 18

These words seem to describe his work at Chandigarh as well as they describe the Parthenon. This concern for elementary form and emotion speaks of the universal values which Corb derives from classicism. This may also be seen in his Purist paintings of the 1920's. Purism may be viewed as a return to calming order after the chaos of the First World War. In a typical Purist work, objects are depicted whole (not fragmented as in Cubism) in silhouette or isometric projection, in a composition carefully controlled by modules and regulating lines. In these paintings, Corb appeals to universal properties that are essential to classicism; order and unity:

The highest delectation of the human mind is the perception of order and the greatest human satisfaction is the feeling of collaboration or participation in this order. 19

In the same essay from which this is taken, Corb and Ozenfant describe two orders of sensation. Primary sensations are a universal response to form and secondary sensations are those which derive from a specific culture. 20 These 'secondary' sensations provided for Corb a means to make his work legible in specific and relative terms. He does this in reference to Indian culture, the climate, and political aspirations.

The use of concrete has an affinity to the culture, for it is similar in concept to native mud villages in the use
of a natural, monolithic material. There are also similarities in Corb’s use of organic forms and the rounded forms in these villages.

In his sketchbooks, he makes reference to the eighteenth-century Jaipur observatory in Delhi: "the astronomical instruments of Delhi...They point the way: bind men to the cosmos." 20 The roofscape of the Assembly suggests these instruments.

In broad terms, Corb saw a link between his work and Indian society in terms of a respect for nature and life. He also emulated the native’s response to the harsh environment.

All of the structures in the capitol complex at Chandigarh display Corb’s signature sunbreakers. Although he used them in colder climates where the sun is not a pressing problem, their use here is an appropriate environmental response. The large roofs and entry portals also serve to create shade. The open portico of the assembly and the portal of the High Court ease the transition from the blinding sun into what are sometimes dark interiors.

The political intent of these buildings was to embody the spirit of the new independant government under Nehru. The bold forms of these works and the great distance that separates them in the city suggest this independence. The originality of the forms may be seen as an attempt to articulate a concious break from the foreign dominance of the past. Peter Serenyi points out that the form of the council chamber, which resembles the cooling tower of a power plant, may be a concious symbol of the nation’s aspersions to technology. 21 It is probable that this symbolism was intentional, for a sketch of the cooling towers of a power plant appears on the same sheet as a sketch of the Assembly with a similar form. 22

In creating specific references, Corb departs furthest from classicism, as he enter the realm of the private invention or appropriation of form.

The universal and specific aspects of these works may seem to run together, especially when the entire work is executed in a single material. The ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ associations seem to exist simultaneously in some forms, such as the elements of the roofscape, or the portico of the Assembly. The abstract nature of such forms allows them to be interpreted very broadly from the specific to the universal. The portico sustains such readings as a gutter, a transformed classical portico, a great canopy, or even bull horns (when seen on-end). These various interpretations and precedents exist in the new context Corb has created for them, and thus, they acquire new forms of association. They become what Tzonis describes as ‘thing-signs’. 23 This provides for the creation of a legible architecture outside the conventions of the representational elements of classicism.
But in the conception of his work Corb remains a classicist. Again, his sketches speak for him. The buildings at Chandigarh appear as wholly formed works in their initial stages. The constituent parts, however, are developed independently. The council chamber of the Assembly appeared in Corb's sketches from the beginning, but as work progressed, it became articulated as a piece inserted into the hypostyle hall. Corb conceives of his works as wholes, but his working method pulls them apart into a series of pieces. Taken together, these pieces create a collective whole. In the Assembly, one might use the analogy of a small city to describe this collective whole. This is a qualified whole though, for the building still reads as a series of parts. This contrast is a sign of Corb's ability to qualify classicism with anti-classism: conceived as classical wholes, his works become articulated as a series of crypto-classical pieces which are placed in anti-classical relationships. Pieces such as the two chambers and the office blocks are whole unto themselves, but they are juxtaposed in asymmetrical, non-proportional relationships which may be described as anti-classical.

He re-invents classicism in his own terms through this design process. In his ideology, one finds him transcribing Renaissance thought into his own format. In *Towards a New Architecture* he describes the Parthenon as a product of the mind:

> Clear statement, the giving of living unity to the work, the giving it a fundamental attitude and character; all this is a pure creation of the mind. 24

Corb's use of regulating lines and development of the modular and modular man provide him with a rejuvenated cosmology to serve as an intellectual base for his architecture. He does not apply this directly in his work though. He juxtaposes the classical and the non-classical in a critical synthesis. This confrontation goes beyond a formal visual synthesis to become functional and metaphorical in purpose. A confrontation of world views occurs—the normative and the relative. Corb challenges the potency of classical principles with his inversion of the language. What remains is an affirmation of those principles, now informed by twentieth-century programmatic and functional requirements. This confrontation results not in an compromise of the two views, but in a third view that confirms the value of a qualified classicism. The resulting works are classical in their use of essentials—light and dark, massing, and geometry. The Assembly and the High Court have a monumental, eternal appearance about them; they embody strength, utility, and stimulate the mind as well as the eye. It is these eternal
qualities which seem to dominate, for Corb has created a new unity out of qualifying the normative to the point where it becomes unique.

IV.

It has been shown that both Lutyens and Le Corbusier deal with classicism in a qualified manner, but each in their own way.

Lutyens chose to remain within the traditional discipline of classicism, despite the widespread growth of the International style at the time. Most likely, he had no other alternative, for the vernacular of his country houses would be inappropriate for a Viceregal palace. But Lutyens did seem to recognize the deadening academicism that had crept in Beaux-arts classicism. He responds to the problem of a highly complex program with contradictory placement of spaces and circulation that qualify the axial superstructure. The Exterior shell allows a proper representation of the British Empire by remaining visible 'classical'; while the interior responds to the modern problems of vehicular and pedestrian circulation and distribution of services.

Le Corbusier by contrast disposes with the semantic, rhetorical elements of classicism and inverts the syntax to create a personal language of form. Although not outwardly appearing to embody classicism, his work at Chandigarh uses classicism as a set of ideas and an approach to design. His conception of buildings, the use of precedents, and his ideology demonstrate this. Corb qualifies his classicism by confronting it with the non-classical to create a new unity through synthesis. In a way, he re-invent classical principles through qualification, while Lutyens qualifies an already-existing tradition. Lutyens worked from the outside-in, as he used classicism as representation. Corb worked from the inside out, using classicism as syntax and structure.

One may ask if classicism must be qualified, then why use it at all? Both architects have answered this by demonstrating the potency of classicism as a vehicle for design and representation of ideas. Lutyens accepted Indian elements into his vocabulary and showed the ability of the language to accept change. Classicism also serves as an a-priori system of design for him, establishing a firm ground upon which to solve problems of program and context.

Classicism remained potent for Corb as a well of sources
and as a basis for his inversion. He saw the value of confronting classicism and anti-classicism to create an architecture that is not a simple compromise of the normative and relative.

Taken as a whole, the examples used here suggest an alternative to the extremes of the relative and the normative. Both architects rely on classicism as a set of ideas, and essentials are accepted as integral to their work. Regardless of the style of each man’s work, both embody durability, utility, and offer a challenging aesthetic experience. Most importantly, they both qualify their use of classicism in terms of contemporary programs and functions.

The following points elaborate the concerns involved in using a compromised classicism today. These points are not meant to be a formula, for they do not dictate a style. Instead they are intended as guideposts to assist in establishing an architecture of content, rather than one of image.

1. A qualified classicism retains a basis in the normative realm, as certain principles essential to classicism such as tripartition, harmony of parts, and the creation of a comprehensible whole provide a means for critical synthesis. Also, the ability of the classical language to be legible at the universal and specific levels affirms its value in representation of ideas.

2. Qualified classicism is achieved through critical synthesis of classical principles and non-classical principles. The intent of this synthesis is not an equilateral compromise, but to re-evaluate the place of classicism in a post-modern culture. This critical intent should produce a tension between the whole and the parts, between the relative and the normative, and between classicism and anti-classicism.

3. A qualified classicism represents a return to eternal qualities such as durability, utility, and the ability to stimulate the eye and the mind. These exist to affirm the qualities necessary in all architecture that will withstand the confrontation of the normative and relative views.

4. A qualified classicism seeks to be representational without resorting to excessive use of semantic and rhetorical elements. Representation is sought in the use of precedent, type, and the use of classicism as a syntax.
V. Notes

1. Colquhoun, p. 11
2. Eisenman, p.156
3. Rossi in Loos, p. 13
4. Tzonis and Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture*, part 3
5. London, Lutyens to Herbert Baker, Feb 15, 1903,
   Cobham, Herbert Baker Collection quoted in Irving,
   p.7
6. Byron, p.30
7. Irving, p. 7
8. Ibid. p.7
9. Ibid. p.12
10. Greenberg, p.133
11. Byron, p.8
12. Irving, p. 12
13. Von Moos, p. 69-70
16. Serenyi, "Timeless...", p.66-69
17. LeCorbusier, *Towards...*, p.29
18. Ibid. p. 211
19. LeCorbusier and Ozenfant, p.73
20. Ibid. p.61
21. LeCorbusier, *Sketchbooks*, vol 2, sketch #329,
   book E18
22. Serenyi, "Timeless...",p.70
23. Graves, p. 10
24. Tzonis and Lefaivre, "Syncretism and the Critical...",
   p. 7
25. LeCorbusier, *Towards a New...*, p.214
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The problems of designing a city hall and demonstrating a thesis are not necessarily compatible. It was discovered during the design process that the building design began to stray from the written thesis. This is only natural, as writing and drawing are very different forms of investigation, and each tended to produce conflicting results. Toward the end of the design project, an attempt was made to tie the building back to the thesis through the use of more overtly classicised elements in the plan and massing. The jury response centered on concern that the building was too much of the past and did not recognize the twentieth century. This was a valid criticism, but I felt that the jury did not fully consider more specific contextual issues, such as the monumental building adjacent to the site, and the agricultural nature of the region. The most cogent criticism of the building was that the issue of classicism was attacked head-on. I felt that this was a fair assessment. Classicism is a very broad topic and it was discovered that any critical discussion must first be narrowed to very specific issues. The written thesis was not entirely successful in this respect, and the design project may have benefitted from clearer statement of issues at the onset of the project.

I also feel that a more neutral building program would have been more conducive to the issue of classicism. The problem of designing a city hall brings its own baggage, which in this case, prevented the clearest resolution of the problem.