“What an ugly building.” This succinct judgment, commonly enough expressed, has in its repetition underwritten a broad critique of architecture based in large part upon a presumed differentiation between public and professional points of view, between “what people think” and “what architects think.” This presumption, that architectural thinking proceeds along a path distinct from that of social thought more generally, reinforces the seemingly obvious conclusion that architecture as a social object is and ought to be subject to judgments fashioned by public figures and by social commentary. In Great Britain, where the architectural profession has during the hundreds of years of its existence certainly made efforts to engage persuasively with the public, the start of the twenty-first century was marked by some startling proposals to concede even more fully to the public the arbitration of architectural success and failure. The president of the Royal Institute of British Architects suggested the compilation of a Grade X list (so named to parallel the Grade I and Grade II lists of historic preservation) containing the “most vile” buildings of the preceding century, the “plain eyesores,” the “bad,” the “mediocre,” the “horrendous” buildings whose demolition should be actively encouraged, according to the public consensus from which the list would derive.¹ Channel 4 seized upon this proposal as the basis for a short television series called Demolition, in which twelve buildings selected by viewer vote were dramatically assessed by judges as candidates for destruction. Building Design magazine followed this lead in 2006 by establishing the Carbuncle Cup, annually awarded to the “ugliest building” built in the United Kingdom in the preceding year, chosen from a short list of “scars, blots, and eyesores” drawn from nominations submitted by the public.²
Expressed through a myriad of such epithets, ugliness has attached to architectural debates in Great Britain with notable but unremembered persistence over the past centuries. It has long been cast as the decisive element of judgments large and small. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens condemned the roof pitch of forty-five degrees as the “ugly angle”; a young and censorious William Morris declined to explore the Crystal Palace in 1851, having proclaimed it to be “wondrously ugly”; in 1793, the anonymous author of Drossiana in the *European Magazine* visited St. Paul's Cathedral and found Sir Christopher Wren's ornament “ugly and ill-judged.” Countless other examples lie within architectural histories, some trivial or short-lived, others influential and enduring; a few have employed the term approvingly, as a positive value within specific circumstances, but the vast majority of instances intend unambiguous derogation. Of course, opinion changes over time as one historical period reflects upon its predecessors, and unanimity of judgment is rarely if ever achieved. It is not the individual judgments, then, that are persistent, nor their validity. It is the category itself, ugliness, that has maintained a special pertinence within the social evaluation of architecture in Great Britain.

But what exactly is the nature of this pertinence? What are the roles of ugliness in architectural discourse, and what are its consequences in social debate? Invoking historical episodes of taste, style, and aesthetic judgment to better discern the social role of architecture, I pose these and another, rephrased question: not, how is architecture subject to societal judgment, but rather, how does architecture participate in societal judgment?

**Judgment**

The presumption that architectural thinking—the profession—and social thought—the public—exist apart from one another, at incommensurable distance, obscures the certainty that public and professional perspectives on architecture have been deeply intertwined in the evolution of a number of social practices; it elides the many circumstances through which architectural practices enjoin social thought more generally, outside of and often in advance of the decisions and events that produce individual buildings. My intention in this book is not to engage the question of ugliness as a matter of fact, offering confirmation or rebuttal of one or other particular accusation of ugliness. Nor do I propose to engage ugliness only as a matter of taste, describing instances of architecture in relation to contemporaneous opinion and mores. Instead, by abjuring the presumption that the gap between internal structures of disciplinary judgment and external modes of societal judgment is traversed only in the register of
taste, I investigate moments when architecture has contributed obliquely but concretely to the criteria and instruments of societal judgment even and especially when architecture has been construed as ugly and its social assimilation therefore resisted. Debates on ugliness, I believe, expose how architecture (not only buildings but more so the thoughts and motives and mechanisms that accompany them as architectural discourse) not simply served as an object of judgment but acted as a means for the solicitation and formulation of judgments, and how, in doing so, architecture participated in the production of devices and effects distributed through other registers of public life.

The aim of this investigation into architecture and ugliness is thus not to define ugliness in itself, but to expand contemporary debate on the instrumentality of aesthetic judgment. Though its aesthetic dimensions are foundational to the disciplinary self-understanding of architecture, and should therefore be authoritative aspects of its encounters and exchanges with social institutions, it is commonplace that criteria for judgment such as cost, practicality, or environmental impact today possess an authority as grounds for the social valuation of architecture significantly greater than that of aesthetic criteria. The interpretation of architecture in aesthetic terms very often reduces to the analysis of individual reception (by a user or a critic) or authorial intent (of an architect or a client), so that aesthetic interpretation and sociocultural analysis are set apart from one another, rendering opaque what it is that architecture does or judgment does in a given circumstance. What makes ugliness such an important category of judgment, however, is precisely its resistance to this segregation of the aesthetic register—for ugliness is properly conceived as an object’s excessive entanglement with the real contingencies of social life, as a hindrance to an object’s reduction to the purely aesthetic. With ugliness understood not as an aesthetic value but as a social judgment, exploring architectural ugliness brings to light an understanding of the social instrumentality of architecture, revealing its unacknowledged relationships to a variety of nonarchitectural protocols or structures in law, or science, or politics that organize social and political life.

Architectural arguments in Great Britain (the focus of this book, for reasons elaborated below) oriented around the judgment of ugliness have been conducted and received primarily in the register of style. In schematic terms, the formal codifications of neoclassicism beginning in the late eighteenth century, followed by the confrontation of the practitioners of that neoclassicism by the advocates of gothic revival; the aesthetic idiosyncrasies of the arts and crafts movement then set against the orthodoxies of both of these predecessors; then the self-conscious declarations of modernism, offered as a transcendence of style
but nevertheless subsumed within the frameworks of style; and finally, most recently, postmodernism and the latest return to neoclassicism—all these historical successions were approached and debated through frameworks of style. They were attached to other arguments, about representation, morality, technology, and other social concerns, but the aesthetic category in which they were contained, and in which they remain in debates today, was style. To the extent that style was considered to be a relative category, no longer tied to absolute values, it was paralleled in these debates by conceptions of taste, the capacity for individual discrimination and judgment of aesthetic materials. Taste and style, these have been the evaluative tools in the persistent British debates on architectural ugliness.

But again, the reader will not find in the argument that follows either affirmations or rebuttals of ugliness in the terms of taste or style. It is not my aim here to further sort stylistic classifications into opposing pairs, nor to engage with and add to the literary inventory of expressions of taste. The question here is not which architecture is ugly, but what are the consequences of judgments of ugliness in architecture. The particular object of attention is the structures of collectivity that become the medium for the translation of aesthetic judgment into other registers of social activity. Even limited to a single national context and to a historically coherent set of aesthetic debates, as in this book, societal judgment is of course made up of myriad disparate factors—customs and habits, physical environments, media, financial practices. The historical investigations in this book explore architecture's relation to societal judgment through the institutions and norms that formulate, contain, or propagate different conceptions of these factors and, by doing so, instrumentalize the aesthetic. Many of the chapters that follow reveal how architectural concerns became entangled with social questions whose resolution was pursued through legal mechanisms such as the interpretation of precedents, new common law conventions, parliamentary legislation, or legal abstractions. It was in these mechanisms that architectural thoughts and objects acted in a different register of social instrumentality, one in which aesthetic judgment was applied not only directly, as to a realized building, but indirectly through reports, opinions, and memos to the interpretation and legitimation of a broad range of social practices. Architecture thus participated in these structures, often obliquely but nevertheless with a notable consequentiality, and it is ugliness that must be granted the recognition of having been instrumental in these participations. The proof offered is not a singular or systematic aesthetic theory, nor a history of ugliness, but a series of demonstrations of the role of ugliness, and an attempt through these to outline a new understanding of architecture and ugliness, and answers to the question that directs this book: how,
Introduction

through aesthetic debates on ugliness, has architecture contributed to the construction of societal judgments?

Histories and Theories of Ugliness

Despite its frequent and familiar application, the judgment of ugliness has been little examined in architectural history and theory as a rigorous category of architectural thought or experience. Especially with ugliness taken to be, as it will be here, a broad conceptual category filled with numerous cognates such as irregularity, discomfort, or impropriety, along with their many synonyms and affiliates, grasping a condition of ugliness with sufficient critical perspective to extrapolate explanatory frameworks has been a rare endeavor. Disciplines such as art history or literature that have taken up ugliness in categorical terms have, like architectural history, struggled to address a quality that seems to either dissolve into the subjective assessments of taste or, to the extent it is granted an objective existence, remain particular, attached to singular examples rather than generalities. For this reason, theoretical studies on ugliness often emphasize the mutability and imprecision of the category, which render expansive definitions superficial or vague. Either that, or such studies depend upon the subordinate relationship of ugliness to the category of beauty, a focus of much more sustained philosophical and historical attention. The relationship of the ugly and the beautiful has in fact been the pivotal concern for many aesthetic inquiries into ugliness, and while some construe the pair as opposites or as reciprocal inversions, a number of theorizations have proposed that these two aesthetic categories are independent of one another. My stance at the opening of this inquiry lies nearer the latter, refraining from seeing two rival outcomes in ugliness and beauty and speculating instead that these two aesthetic categories reference distinctively separate potentials within contested social contexts. Indeed, it should be clearly stated that ugliness is not the subject of this book but its critical tool, employed for the purpose of exploring the potentialities of aesthetic judgment in such contested social contexts.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, in a period when aesthetics was by definition directed toward the understanding of beauty, German philosopher Karl Rosenkranz published what remains the only attempt at a systematic aesthetic philosophy of ugliness. His Aesthetics of Ugliness was premised upon the need to examine—without displacing any prevailing orientation toward the pursuit of beauty—the actuality of ugliness. “There is no other science to which it could be assigned, and so it is right to speak of the aesthetics of ugliness. No one is amazed if biology also concerns itself with the concept of illness, ethics with that
of evil, legal science with injustice, or theology with the concept of sin.”

His treatise outlines the permutations of the “aesthetically ugly,” from the appearances of formlessness to the manifestations of incorrectness and the attributes of deformation. The list of qualities, symptoms, and synonyms of the ugly is extensive; disharmony, amorphism, disfiguration, crude, hideous, disgust, and many more words and phrases are needed to capture the multiple variations and nuances of ugliness. (In the chapters that follow ugliness will often be encountered obliquely, through analogues such as those captured by Rosenkranz’s taxonomy.) While overlaid with a nineteenth-century instinct for classification and systematization, Rosenkranz’s *Aesthetics of Ugliness* is assembled from particularities, from evidence and from example. He attends to the distinction between different modes of cultural production, focused upon art but addressing the possibilities of ugliness in adjacent fields. He suggests that the practical endeavors of some disciplines, such as architecture, may restrain the elasticity that produces ugliness. “Architecture, sculpture, and music are somewhat insulated against uglification by their technical means,” in Rosenkranz’s words, meaning that the need to resolve the demands of gravity, materiality, or economics encourages architecture toward a propriety that lies at a distance from ugliness. Though Rosenkranz is thinking of the pragmatics of building, the suggestion of architecture’s inescapable proximity to reality has theoretical importance, in that this proximity may also be a source of uglification.

For all the complexity of his analysis of ugliness, Rosenkranz remains bound to the primacy of the visual, with other senses subordinate even when they do make an appearance. More recent inquiries into ugliness have lessened the priority of the visual and used more expansive frameworks to capture an understanding of the consequentiality of ugliness in its social and cultural dimensions. Gretchen Henderson, as the title of her book *Ugliness: A Cultural History* indicates, proposes that ugliness can be examined from the perspective of its cultural influence, in its manifest appearances in the bodies, objects, moods, and words that compose the changing constellations of culture. Describing the considerable purchase that ugliness has gained upon the contemporary imagination, Henderson offers the insight that ugliness is marked by its “relational” character. She means by this term that ugliness exists as the encounter between something and its limit, or between something and its other, and more precisely as the transgression of their boundary of separation. The usefulness of Henderson’s conceptualization of ugliness lies in its insistence that the ugly be understood neither as an inherent quality nor as a singular subjective response but as the changeable relation between things, between people, or between people and things that constitutes the texture of culture. Taken further, Henderson’s thesis that ugliness is
a description of a relational state implies that there may be a specifically modern condition of ugliness, or perhaps even that ugliness itself is a condition of modernity: that despite its long history before modernity, it describes a particular inhabitation of the pervasive modern circumstances of differentiation and distantiation.

To the extent that Henderson engages with architectural matters, such as buildings and styles, she examines them as settings for the appearance of ugliness as these architectural objects become sites of cultural or social encounter. A theoretical exploration of ugliness centered more upon architectural thought, and certainly the most cited within architectural discourse, is Mark Cousins’s extended essay on “The Ugly.” Cousins’s approach to the question of the ugly also focusses upon the relational dimension, but with a more insistent emphasis upon the subjective or psychological perspective. While ugliness may be affiliated to architectural qualities, its manifestation and its importance is, for Cousins, as a subject’s encounter with an architectural object. This encounter, he insists, cannot be subsumed within an aesthetics, whose proper study he maintains to be beauty: “If ugliness is to become an object of inquiry, this inquiry will have to be conducted outside the scope of aesthetics.”

Ugliness exists not in the attributes of the object, but in the relation of subject and object. The present usefulness of Cousins’s argument on the ugly (in addition to its location within architectural theory) lies in his assertion that ugliness should be measured not as an absence or a negative—as in a lack of beauty—but as a presence, indeed often as an excess of presence. The ugly is the architecture that looms too large before its beholder, that is out of place. “The ugly object is an object which is experienced both as being there and as something that should not be there.”

The architectural historian John Macarthur has also contributed to the theoretical inquiry into ugliness through his analysis of the significance of disgust, as a sensation and in its depiction in the eighteenth-century English picturesque, especially as articulated by Uvedale Price. Disgust lies at a limit, as that which is “beyond the territory of art’s appropriating powers,” prompted by an ugliness made intolerable by deformity. Macarthur sees that the difficulty of ugliness, as an aesthetic matter, is to withdraw sufficiently from a real circumstance that would prompt disgust, to a figurative standpoint from which an object can be rendered through the art of the picturesque. The placement of ugliness between an excessive reality and a tempered aesthetic (in Macarthur’s framing), the excessive presence of ugly architecture (in Cousins’s framing), and the boundary transgressions of ugliness in cultural productions (in Henderson’s framing) all point back toward a critical aspect of Rosenkranz’s aesthetics of ugliness, toward a theoretical point upon which I rely. Rosenkranz assumes a reciprocity of ugliness and beauty,
with the ugly necessarily dependent upon the foil of beauty. Where beauty can aspire to, and can achieve, a condition of sufficiency or completeness in itself, the ugly, remaining bound to the measure of beauty, cannot. The two are not equals upon a scale; what differentiates them most sharply is that the ugly is “incapable of ... aesthetic self-reliance.” Rosenkranz argued that the ugly cannot proceed very far along a path toward abstraction, toward an autonomous essence, in the manner of beauty. Ugliness remains bound up with the real, the material actualities of the world, the realities of behavior and possibility that structure society.

This entanglement with reality, or, put another way, the perception that ugliness is an excess of the real, provides a theoretical key in the present argument, prompting the use of ugliness as its critical tool to address the question of architecture’s participation in societal judgment. For it suggests that the inquiry into ugliness and architecture has in view two objects (one an aesthetic, the other a practice) that are defined in part by the inescapability of their ties to reality, the inability of either to be conceived as abstractions. More concretely, this insight leads to the proposition, again central here, that architectural ugliness must be explored not along a philosophical plane, but along the horizon that composes the difficult reality of architecture, which is not necessarily the material reality of buildings (though those may be included) but the realities of the norms, institutions, and standards of expectation that precede architecture. Ugliness in architecture may act perceptibly and consequentially upon these realities, and therefore it is reciprocally such actions that are foregrounded in those frequent instances when the judgment of ugliness is cast upon architecture.

A Debate on Ugliness, Reconstructed

Norms and institutions are social materials, and to see through them the consequentiality of ugliness requires a view toward a societal aesthetics—not, in other words, an aesthetic premised upon the encounter between one individual and some instance of architecture, represented in the thoughts and feelings of that individual, but rather an aesthetic that is the representation of a collective encounter. This collective encounter is what is embodied in norms and institutions. This book, by pursuing the intersection of society and aesthetics in what will be more specifically defined as a civic aesthetics, attempts to locate the inquiry into ugliness between the extremes of singularity and abstraction, with individual experience being the instance of the former and philosophical classifications an instance of the latter. In terms of architectural discourse, this betweenness is positioned between the extremes of taste (as individual or collective discretion) and style (as a classification that precedes
its objects, both of which are conventional and comprehensible aesthetic categories, but neither of which produce a sufficient understanding of the consequentiality of the judgment of ugliness.

The discussions of architectural ugliness examined in this book are therefore approached as an extended debate over aesthetics, with participants in any given moment responding to one another, but responding also to historical periods that precede their own. The account of this extended debate has a broad chronological span, but not with the aim of a systematic survey of ugliness. Instead, its scope serves to produce a historical field within which aesthetic judgments, contemporaneous ones as well as those separated in time, may be juxtaposed to discern more precisely their mechanisms of judgment and the manner in which they are fashioned by and for their social contexts. Making use of a longer perspective and distinguishing the particularities of a given moment from the longer arc of an aesthetic modernity has two benefits: it brings into view instrumental effects that occur alongside or even well after the precipitating moment of an architectural project, and it sets into relief the present historical moment, in which debates on ugliness have been collapsed into a general perception of the aesthetic register as a flattened, horizontal space unbound from social causes and effects.

Though this book acknowledges the linearity of history, it is deliberately constructed from discrete historical episodes, each defined by an implicit (or, in some, an explicit) claim of ugliness and by a contextual social field such as law, morality, health, or economy. With each foregrounding aesthetic judgment within a transforming or contested circumstance, these episodes are used to reconstruct a fitful debate over architectural ugliness that has periodically entered into the social and political institutions of Great Britain or, more specifically, of England. Though fitful, this debate possesses an unremarked measure of coherence, with participants on its different stages having narrower or broader concerns yet sharing in common themes of judgment such as the propriety of persons or objects, or the calculation of social benefit, or the evaluation of novelty. It is the peculiar composite of English civil society—ceremonial institutions of state, representative governance enacted through the malleable mechanisms of constitution and common law, the endorsement of scientific advance and commercial advance alongside an established religion—that renders it a setting for an equally distinct instrumentality of the aesthetic register, and therefore the setting for the argument that follows. Corollary to the composite nature of English civil society, though, is the episodic nature of the narrative presented here. Each episode, framed within its chapter, conveys particularities of an exchange between an aesthetic register and a social one in a concrete moment of historical change, an exchange that leads
toward the crystallization of new social mechanisms. It is this commonality that binds the episodes into a narrative, even as they explore different times and different corners of the constantly changing edifice of civil society.

The narrative of the book focuses upon London, but the story begins in the provincial city of Bath, in the early eighteenth century. The first chapter initiates the historical arc with aspects of the architectural career of the architect John Wood the Elder, eccentric even among an unconventional cohort of architect peers and political figures in the early eighteenth century. Responsible for the first planned improvements of the city of Bath, technical investigations of the building process, and a highly imaginative and contentious interpretation of the trilithons of Stonehenge, Wood in his career epitomized the continuity of aesthetics with three particular themes explored in the book: persona, materiality, and the institutions of civil society. Wood's son, an architect and assistant to his father, was himself a member of a peculiar eighteenth-century institution, an Ugly Club, a social club that celebrated the physical ugliness of its membership, a curious fact pursued in the chapter to expand the implications of Wood's architecture and aesthetic theories and to introduce the collective dimension of societal judgment and aesthetics. This chapter sets out the constitutive elements of the formulation of a civic aesthetics in Wood's formulation of attachments between the aesthetic dimension of architecture, and the social, historical, and economic endeavors in which he participated.

This initial chapter is followed by three grouped chapters, independent in their topics but chronologically sequential, all revolving around the significance of materiality. Chapter 2 reveals a century-long process through which judgments about ugliness linked to transforming perceptions of the industrial metropolis. It begins in the 1830s with the case of the stonework of the newly rebuilt Houses of Parliament in London. Initial worries about finding stones that would be aesthetically suitable and physically durable were drastically increased when the new stonework showed premature signs of decay. The industrial atmosphere of the city was to blame, and the recognition that this atmosphere of smog and soot produced an effect of ugliness prompted several courses of action. Some were aesthetic—new theories of architectural styles to suit a polluted atmosphere, for example; some were legislative—such as the evolution of nuisance laws to cope with the newly recognized inseparability of individual buildings in a city shaped by its atmosphere. The integral relationship of these seemingly unrelated paths of action is the primary focus of this chapter as it reveals how aesthetic debate on the ugliness of the industrial city incorporated the judgmental matters of representational regimes into those of enduring legal formulations.
Chapter 3 focuses upon the collective nature of societal judgments by addressing the forms and materiality of the contentious architectural aesthetics of brutalism. Over a thirty-year period, the uncompromising concrete forms of brutalism became the characteristic backdrop of the policies and politics of the postwar city and the welfare state. The “stonework”—poured and precast concrete—of the brutalist architecture favored by city councils and institutions confronted not simply individual subjects, but rather a collective subjectivity that had been instantiated in customs, conventions, and institutional embodiments. This chapter explores this collective subjectivity in the form of the metropolitan citizen, using the legal convention of the “man on the omnibus,” or the reasonable person, to conceptualize the modern metropolis as a space of expectation and interpreting the judgment of ugliness as the disconcerting of civic spaces of collective expectation.

Chapter 4 explores the possibility that the judgment of ugliness marks out a conflict between the prerogatives of architecture and those of governing institutions. The particular case here is the controversial alteration of a seventeenth-century church designed by Sir Christopher Wren through the 1986 addition of an altar designed by Henry Moore. The perceived incongruity between the neoclassical architecture of the church and the modern form of the sculpted altar was characterized in terms of ugliness. But this chapter reveals that this judgment was only the most recent dispute about the significance of the very concept of congruity, a concept formulated in nineteenth-century debates on church architecture and recapitulated in the rise of preservation movements in the later twentieth century. Drawing together questions of materiality (the fact that the altar was made of stone was central to the debate) and institutional prerogative (much of the debate occurred within the ecclesiastical courts of the Church of England), this chapter connects the aesthetic judgment of ugliness to the conflicting intentions of preservation.

The second part of the book consists of an additional three chapters, once again independent in their topics but disposed chronologically and linked together by a common theme. This theme is personhood, in its manifestations from the individual architect to the profession to the public, elucidated through episodes that span from the late eighteenth century to the present day.

Chapter 5 reveals the origins of the commonplace assumption that aesthetic criticism may address works of architecture (and other aesthetic productions) as social objects independent from their creators. Prior to the evolution of specific aspects of English libel law, common understanding held that a work of art was the embodiment of its creator, and to improperly criticize the former was to illegally impugn the latter. Through a series of libel cases heard around the turn of the nineteenth century,
including well-publicized cases in which the architect Sir John Soane sued critics who decried the ugliness of his buildings, the modern formulation emerged whereby criticism of aesthetic matters was exempted from libel claims. The conflicted relation of libel law and aesthetic practice has, however, been periodically renewed, in James Whistler’s 1877 libel suit against John Ruskin, in later concerns about the legal timidity and therefore the ineffectuality of architectural criticism, and most recently in a lawsuit brought by the architect Zaha Hadid against the architectural writer Martin Filler. This chapter describes the role of judgments of ugliness within this transformative process, and shows also how the process itself has served to consolidate concepts of an architect’s persona.

Chapter 6 takes the profession of architecture as its central topic. With the parallel emergence of modern conceptions of individuality and celebrity on the one hand, and modern organizations of corporate architectural practice on the other, the concept of the architect as a corporate person has come to assume a greater and more nuanced importance. In aesthetic judgments, in legal proceedings, and in historical valuations, the person of the architect very often stands in for complicated disciplinary motives and institutional routines. This chapter begins with the conflation of the process of professionalization and the critique of the mediocrity of architecture in the late nineteenth century, and then carries this perception of the Victorian city into an analysis of the drawn-out episode of the development of the Mansion House area of London. From the 1960s to the 1990s, proposed redevelopments—first a tower designed by Mies van der Rohe, and then a smaller building designed by James Stirling—were strongly opposed by representatives of preservation groups and civic organizations who viewed the development as an unacceptable aesthetic degradation of the city. In this sequence of events and in accompanying legal inquiries, the authorial (and professional) standing of the architect served as a focal point for the judgment of aesthetic propriety, or, as opponents argued, lack of propriety.

The final chapter in the group extends the consideration of personhood to an institutional embodiment of the state, in the form of the public and also in the person of a future constitutional monarch, the Prince of Wales. For the past thirty years, Prince Charles has been an outspoken proponent of neoclassical, traditional, and vernacular architecture in both urban and rural contexts. His has been the most prominent voice in a broadly antimodernist turn in the aesthetics of architecture that commenced in the 1980s with the ugliness of a century of modern architecture as its rallying point, yet the prince himself has been insistent that his voice is a direct expression of public opinion and popular sentiment set against a professional opposition. This chapter explores the postmodern turn in England and examines some of the arguments that accompanied it as
signaling a novel stage in the construction of societal judgment. It looks at controversial civic projects such as the National Gallery extension and contentious real estate speculations such as Chelsea Barracks to discern the relationship between aesthetic judgments and the neoliberal state. By examining the extraconstitutional role played by Prince Charles along with the functional role of the public inquiry (a statutory component of the planning process in Great Britain) as a venue for disputing aesthetic judgment, the chapter reveals the way in which contemporary claims about ugliness are contributing to the refashioning of the state's participation in cultural production.

By its conclusion, the book has arrived at the present day, in the midst of strident arguments about the ugliness of architecture. These arguments, however, have a history, a long history, whose explication reveals a very different understanding of architecture's role, and potential role, in society. Once the judgment of ugliness is understood not as a simple matter of taste but as a manifestation of social and political conflict that is diffused through different modes of cultural production, it becomes possible to see that the aesthetics of architecture have a consequence beyond the compass of individual buildings and at times even entirely separate from buildings. Once the judgment of ugliness can be seen beyond the defining calculus of style, then the aesthetic sphere, construed in terms of a civic aesthetics, can also be evaluated and experienced through the mechanisms of judgment as much as through the judgments themselves. In the narrative that follows, the reader should anticipate not a summary definition of ugliness but an exploration of the consequences that follow from implicit and explicit judgments of ugliness, and the potentials that develop with these consequences. With these potentials brought into view, it may be possible—still without disregarding or endorsing the proprieties or degradations of any specific building or architectural critique—to understand ugliness as the signal of transition in moments of transformative change, as the boundary mark between the constraints of one configuration of social mechanisms and the permissions of another.