



Eating the ocean

Geoff O'Brien

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industry. The buildings represent historic and socio-economic changes in the UK before and after the Second World War. Harwood acknowledges that many were considered outright 'ugly' a couple of decades ago. The rush for listing buildings barely 30 years old is explained as their outgrown use already (such as factories, telephone exchanges and telegraph), and the state of dilapidation of others in spite of being iconic of their times. The reason is partly in the material employed. Concrete has an official life of at most, 70 years. It will be difficult to keep concrete buildings in a state of preservation after another twenty years. Once water seeps into reinforced concrete, the torque steel reinforcement bars rust and their bond with the reinforcement is lost, making the structure unsafe. Many listed buildings will eventually have to be demolished. But it is books like this which will keep alive the saga of the Modern Movement and its ideals and the significant changes in architecture since the Industrial Revolution and the World Wars.

The collection just falls short of being a complete encyclopaedia of British architecture of the period, because the author, by her own admission, has left out some of the well documented buildings and mentions them only in passing. There are no architectural drawings of buildings, only single photographs. Perhaps Historic England has a more developed archive of buildings of the period.

The index on architects is comprehensive, and easy to search. I found a lapse though on Sir Herbert Baker. Although mentioned in the index as referred to on p. 355, he is not mentioned at all. The size of the book (285 × 245mm × 50 mm thick) makes it very difficult to handle. This is perhaps its biggest drawback. It could have been produced as two volumes.

The book has value as a precedent, and should encourage other countries to explore through their contemporary architecture, their own course in nation building.

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Eating the ocean, by Elspeth Probyn, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2016, vii + 192 pp., £19.99 (paperback), ISBN 9780822362357

When I first saw the cover of this book I assumed that this would be a kind of polemic against the horrors of our treatment of the oceans and the creatures that live in them. This book does discuss all that, but is more profound than citing our impacts. Probyn covers what she terms 'entanglements'; by this she means 'human-fish entanglements'. Although some may say they do not eat fish, Probyn points that 25% of the global catch ends up in strange places such as food for pigs and poultry, fish oil supplements, and strangely as food for fish. Some may not eat fish directly but you cannot escape contact with the world of fish. Probyn is an academic. The book

is beautifully written but for some it may be a little inaccessible. Probyn becomes involved in researching for her book and travels to many parts and even swims with Bluefin Tuna.

The book comprises an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction Probyn explains why she wants to 'queer the ocean'. Probyn is frank about her sexuality. The real reason for her interest in gender in human-fish relationships is that traditionally the role of women has been ignored. Women as researchers, fishwives, fishers and oyster growers are deeply embedded in fisheries. Probyn quotes Bara Neis (p. 18) who states that gender relations permeate fisheries at every level. Probyn argues that in the human world there are many forms of interaction with the environment and each other and that complexity also exists in the oceans. Probyn wants us to learn from the history of human-fish entanglements.

Chapter one covers 'the seeming indifference' of the oceans to human beings even though we are fascinated, at times, by them. It is an alien environment requiring visits using specialist equipment. But the deep oceans are virtually inaccessible. I understand that we know more about the surface of the moon than we do of the deep oceans. Probyn argues that over-fishing and illegal fishing are degrading many ocean environments and threatening a number of species. In this chapter Probyn addresses the issues of sustainability. I agree that this term is much contested and is used by many in the fishing industry as a form of 'greenspeak'. Probyn argues that we need to build a new kind of looking at the oceans that recognises the often rocky relationships among people, fish and oceans.

Chapter 2 looks at oysters. Oysters do seem to divide opinion – you either love them or hate them. I love them. Oysters have been part of the human diet throughout history. The Romans were the first to farm oysters. An oyster filters fifty gallons of seawater per day and eats the phytoplankton and removes dirt and nitrogen pollution. They provide a great service in keeping sea water clean and healthy. The importance of oysters is being increasingly recognised and there have been major improvements in oyster farming. Probyn visits Loch Fyne in Scotland and Cowell in Australia and describes how oyster farming has rejuvenated communities and encouraged research into farming different kinds of oysters. This is a lovely chapter on entanglements and it shows how a key stone species such as the oyster has both social and environmental benefits. Probyn notes, 'when "I eat an oyster," it also becomes clear that "an oyster eats me."' Some may find this kind of argument a little difficult. My only disappointment was that I did not have a plate of oysters by my side when reading this chapter.

In Chapter 3 Probyn decides to swim with blue tuna and endangered fish. The Bluefin can reach speeds of 50 miles per hour (Probyn was not harmed in her swim with the Bluefin) and travel great distances in the southern ocean. There is an irony here. At the end of the Second World War the Allies encourage the Japanese to fish for Bluefin, despite this fish not being a part of their diet. They also encouraged whale hunting. In both cases this was to overcome post-war food shortages. Today the Bluefin is being hunted to extinction. Quotas have been established, but they are too high to allow the sustainable recovery of the Bluefin and the quotas are exceeded by illegal methods. Attempts at farming Bluefin are not fully established. Probyn does point out that most Bluefin go to Japan, and believes that the Japanese are wholly responsible for the state of the Bluefin. Much of it is exported to sushi bars throughout the world. There is a parallel to the international drugs market. Demand for cocaine in North America and Europe is fuelling the drugs business in Ecuador. Probyn implies that we should look at our behaviour.

Chapter 4 deals with one of my favourite fishes – the herring. This chapter does not deal exclusively with the herring, but also frames the argument for women and fishing. The herring, termed 'Silver Darlings', provided employment for women as the herring fleet moved up the east coast of the UK. The fleets followed the fish and the women, who processed the fish, followed the fleets. The 'quines', as these women were known, undertook the processing of the herring for sale or preservation. Women played a prominent role in the herring business and created a unique social culture based on their roles. This no longer exists as the herring, like the cod

on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland have suffered population collapse. The collapse of the Grand Banks led to the loss of 50,000 jobs. Men, it is argued, became feminised as they had to take up employment opportunities that traditionally had been regarded as women's work. The same happened with the collapse of the coal industry in the UK. This is a really good chapter that offers real insight into the role of women in fishing.

Chapter 5 has its focus on little fish namely the anchovy, sardine and the menhaden. Probyn points out that they are oily and rich in Omega 3. Some 25% of these little fish are processed to make oil, pig and poultry feed and food for fish. The International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Association classifies little fish as 'industrial grade forage fish'. Probyn also discusses fish farms. Modern fish farms – that supply more than half of all seafood produced for human consumption, and whose environmental reputation Probyn is at pains to rehabilitate – are in fact a much better way of feeding humanity, especially if Integrated Marine Trophic Aquaculture systems are widely adapted. These systems incorporate species from different trophic or nutritional levels. Essentially the waste from one species becomes inputs (fertilizers food and energy) for another species. To give the system balance, organic wastes are extracted by filter feeders (shell-fish) and seaweed extracts inorganic wastes. Detritivores (bottom feeders) such as sea cucumbers extract other wastes. This chapter has a sense of optimism. Probyn describes the conservationist Patricia Majluf's successful campaign to persuade her fellow Peruvians to start eating Peru's plentiful catch of anchovies – most is sent for processing. Majluf's campaign was especially effective among the poor. Instead of going off to Chinese processing plants to feed bigger fish, the anchovies were eaten at home, with domestic consumption rising from 10,000 tons in 2006 to 190,000 tons in 2010.

Probyn concludes her book with some reflection whilst in the Sydney Fish Market. A smelly place, she says, but bustling with people from many parts of the world. Probyn concludes that it is our relationship or entanglement with the oceans that we need to consider. She argues that some species, like the little fish, should be eaten as opposed to being processed for other uses such as animal feed. Millions of people work with the sea. 'Try to eat the ocean better,' and 'Try to eat with the ocean.' Sage advice. In other words, not so much use of fish for cattle feed.

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It is well-argued and Probyn bases her judgement on sound research. I hope a philanthropist, one with a love of the sea, buys lots of copies of the book and sends them to all politicians who have a role in marine and fishing policy, to the many bodies that represent the fishing industries across the globe, the fishing companies, and to as many individual fishing boats as possible.

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Finite media: environmental implications of digital technologies, by Sean Cubitt, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2017, vii +244 pp., US\$23.95 (paperback), ISBN 9780822362920

In the introduction, the author posits that the problems we face are driven by overproduction as opposed to overconsumption. Yet it does appear that considerable effort is being made for us to