governmental acts, the vernacular, planning laws, mass housing, the malnutrition of the suburbs and investments in the technical/industrial sphere. Le Corbusier in the 1920s, Russian disurbanists in the 1930s and Richard Rogers today try to affect this order through new images. The order is not so strong, and even seemingly minor events have been able to change it. They only appear small in my diagram because their creative influence has not been excessive. In terms of volume of work they have been overshadowed.

The evolutionary tree also shows a minor surprise: the way the dominant is constantly attracted back to stripped Classicism, a degree-zero Modernism. Although they are very different, Lincoln Center in New York, and 50 other cultural centres in America during the '60s, are in this blood line, as is the Modern Classicism of Robert Stern and Demetri Porphyris. The Corporate Modernism of both, and even Richard Meier, is a way to go away from 'strange attractor'. Why? The corporate forces of production and patronage favour an impersonal, abstract, semi-classical object. Giedion's notion of the 'rolling taste' is usually pulled towards the attractor basin.

But mainstream culture is not always located on this axis. Several important exceptions were when Expressionism, the Bauhaus, and the Heroic Period dominated for a few years in the '20s, or Post-Modernism did in the early '80s, or Art Nouveau and National Romanticism did at the start of the century. Hector Guimard in Paris, Horta in Belgium, Mackintosh in Glasgow, Eliel Saarinen and Lars Sonck in Helsinki, and my favourite architect, Antoni Gaudi, in Barcelona – all became momentary leaders of a major public architecture, if only for three or four years.

Gaudi a standard

Here is a pivot on which my bias shows through the evolutionary tree. Nikolaus Pevsner dismissed most of these movements as 'transitory fashions' and for Giedion, except for the Heroic Period, they were not 'constituent facts'. One remembers how Modernist historians, like revisionist Communists air-brushing Trotsky out of photographs, liked to clean up uncomfortable facts. Interpretation and judgement are obviously dished out的历史ically. My conclusion is that for placing Antonio Gaudi the best architect of the century, even ahead of Le Corbusier, does not rest on his influence, city planning or the Gracia area, but on his brilliance at turning city building and structure into a high art. No other architect managed to get craftsmen, artists and even patrons working together on such a large and complete scale. His works remain the standard of integrating all the arts at the highest creative and symbolic level. The reason his work has such creative depth is that he took a long time – which other twentieth-century architects did not allow themselves – to innovate at all levels. His architecture exploits all sorts of new structural types – such as the hyperbolic paraboloid; if not for the very first time, then for the most monumental time. He makes such forms his own by giving them a forceful and poetic expression. Moreover he bonds structural rationalism to expressive ends. For instance, where the Italian engineer Nervi makes an ordered art from chronological lines of force in his concrete ceiling, Gaudi takes the same force and makes them dynamic – like the straining muscles of an athlete pushing against each other. Concrete becomes animated, humorous, related to our body and moods. Beyond this, in buildings such as the Casa Batllò, he uses technological and structural innovations for symbolic, and political, ends – to present the sufferings of the Catalans under the dragon of Castle. Structural and material rationalism are always means to a larger intention, and it is this overall meaning that gives his work the greatest symbolic depth. It combines up and down the scales, from the everyday and local to the cosmic. By comparison the work of Mies and Aalto is too abstract, Le Corbusier and Wright too cut off from the language of the street. Eisenman too cerebral, Gehry too formalistic.

To say Gaudi was the architect of the century, however, reveals my partiality towards artistic and symbolic architecture, values that other critics, such as Ken Frampton, do not necessarily share. In an Art News lecture in London in 1974, I was shocked to hear Jamil Gusmão of Mark Flanders say that 'Gaudi is just a strange type of architect'. But Philip Johnson used to dismiss Frank Lloyd Wright as the 'greatest architect of the nineteenth century'. The evolutionary tree is uncertain, to make such egregious dismissals, as Pevsner, Giedion, Frampton and Johnson are happy to dismiss, more difficult. Or at least make them feel uncomfortable.

In reality, however, the high placement of Gaudi is a contentious claim that needs more defense than I can offer here. Those who view the perfecting of architectural technique might prefer Mies, Kahn or Norman Foster as the architect of the century. Those who value theory and education might favour Gropius at the Bauhaus or Eisenman because of his design and writing; those who prefer to understand humanity might put Aalto in this role. Many contenders for the top positions are apparent in the weighing I have done. Those who view the development as a series of constant improvements over 'transitory facts', most critics and historians of twentieth-century architecture would accept this view of the 500 and the most of the relatively weak. They would rage over the details but, because it is constructed as a composite Portrait of what they have written, it is not very contentious. Perhaps I have not exaggerated the recent Biomorphic School (because I think it still is relevant) but a provocative aspect of this diagram is how conventional it is. We are surprised to find such a tumultuous century as conventional in style and stereotyped as was Modernism really invented to mass-produce opinion and culture on a global scale – what ever happened to its creativity and individuality?

When we look back at the nineteenth century, with superiority, we laugh at the Salon and the conformation of an Academy and taste that could elevate Bouguereau and Lord Leighton to such heights. Will the twenty-first century be any kinder to the Brit Pack of Damien Hirst and other sensations sanctioned by the Royal Academy? or the 10,000 followers of Andy Warhol? One of the most pleasant aspects of a change in century, and millennium, is that it forces such thoughts of quality and perspective into view. On 1 January 2000 all the most avant-garde artists and Modernists became old hat. The twentieth century is over; interpretation begins!

1 The 1st Century. Over. Evolutionary Tree of Twentieth Century Architects. This stippled diagram is intended to review the major architects of the first half of the century, up to 1945: Mies, Breuer, Taut, Eiermann, etc. In the diagram, a number 1 indicates the starting point of the first generation. The arrows show the direction of development. Each architect is identified by a brief comment on his work. The major buildings of the first half of the century are sketched in with a series of numbers, starting with 1. This is the major building of the architect, in order of importance. The number of the generation indicates the number of architectural groups in the second half of the century: 1 the first generation, 2 the second generation, etc. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development. The arrows show the direction of development.