

Figure 2.18 Art Nouveau façade, Prague

Figure 2.19 Villa by T. C. Hine, Park Estate, Nottingham



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The decorated street is not confined to those occupied or built by the more affluent citizens. Britain has a wealth of nineteenth-century working class streets finely decorated with the ubiquitous bay window and with polychromatic patterned brickwork. Large parts of British cities are devoted to the suburban street where buildings and their landscape jointly create decorative complexity without, in the best examples, disarray. Although all suburbs are not of the quality of the Park Estate in Nottingham, it nevertheless exhibits many of the attributes associated with the suburban street.

The Park Estate is a unique housing area to the west of Nottingham city centre which was developed by the fifth Duke of Newcastle in the mid-nineteenth century. The fourth Duke had initiated the development of a residential estate in the parkland of the castle in 1827 but abandoned his plans



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after rioters had burned the Castle in 1831 (Brand, 1992). Retrospectively this was fortuitous as the 1827 plan by Peter Fredrick Robinson proposed a contextually insensitive rectangular grid for the area, a crescent-shaped hillside running down from the Castle. A few houses had already been built on the crest of the hill in a Regency style which emphasized the windows by white stucco borders and the entrances by elaborate pilasters or columns. Although the edges of the Park Estate had been substantially built by 1856, the roads of the Park Estate were laid out according to Hine and Evan's 1861 plan (Gadbury, 1989). Hine (1814-99), a very restrained and accomplished architect, was influenced by John Nash. The road layout is centred on a pair of circuses - Lincoln Circus and Newcastle Circus. The axial roads leading out from the circuses cut the elliptical roads surrounding the circuses.

The roads are not sufficiently well-defined spatially to be termed streets and their decorative qualities derive from the location along them of individually designed villas. This layout, combined with the rather steep terrain, was able to give a high degree of privacy to the moderately large villas designed for the emerging industrialists and professionals of Nottingham. The villas with large gardens were surrounded by high walls, often with quite elaborate detailing including coloured brick courses and shaped bricks for top courses. Inside the Park Estate most of the houses were brick with some stucco and a few Italianate buildings on the higher levels. Hine used brick with some Tudor elements - mainly in the upper levels - and turrets in corners to embellish his buildings. The lower levels of the houses were hidden behind garden walls and shrubs, it made sense, therefore, to decorate the upper levels where the rich ornament could be appreciated by the passer-by. Turrets and elaborate details made each house unique and expressed the wealth of its owner (Figures 2.19 and 2.20).

The houses of Nottingham's other leading Victorian architect, Watson Fothergill (1841-1928), are immediately recognizable by the elaborate Gothic details incorporated on the upper levels. Turrets are used to accentuate the massing and decorate the visual scene for pedestrians as well as expressing the wealth of the owners. Fothergill's designs for the Park Estate are more restrained than many of his designs elsewhere in Nottingham, but they still incorporate elaborate sculptured details around the windows and doors.

The decorative pleasure of the Park Estate derives from the diversity, contrast and juxtaposition of highly individualistic buildings, an environment created by the 'one-up-manship' of the middle classes. The contrast is suitably epitomized by the comparison of Hine's many broadly similar villas with the fewer, but more extravagant, villas designed by Watson Fothergill. What prevents the Park Estate from descending into visual chaos is the unifying effect achieved by the trees and planting,



2.20

Figure 2.20 Detail of doorway, Park Estate, Nottingham

the formality of the regular layout of villas on ample plots, the limited range of building materials (stone, brick, timber and tile) and the brief time span of the estate's development, which ensured the relative coherence of the area while also permitting a startling diversity. The end result is a visually rewarding collage held together by landscape.

MULTI-FUNCTION STREETS

Not all streets can be neatly categorized according to functional type. Some streets such as those of the Lace Market, Nottingham, have changed during the progress of time, while some such as the main street in Saltaire, Yorkshire were designed with many functions in mind. The main street in Saltaire is residential, contains the main commercial area of the town and also the main civic buildings. If