strained in splashing out on a fibreglass and bongo wood entrance ‘feature’. As the Heritage industry constantly points out, historical authenticity is unimportant, the great thing with old buildings is to enjoy the excitement of our vivid history.

The brick or stonework of the façade of your property can be transformed by cleaning and repointing. Whether brick or stone, the most approved method of cleaning is industrial sand-blasting. This has the great advantage of not only taking off the dirt but the whole surface of the original material, thus giving an exciting new texture like Ryvita biscuits. In the case of London stock brick, which was traditionally toned down with soot-wash, sand-blasting gives the brickwork an unusual bright yellow colour. Where the old work has been patched recently with pinker bricks cleaning makes the whole surface look like a slice of Battenburg cake, a surface of stick-on crazy-patterned plastic stonework the colour of dog biscuits. This type of treatment is particularly appropriate in smaller Georgian towns like Richmond in Yorkshire where the proximity to real stone makes the artificial of the substitute much more enjoyable to the trained eye.

Having dealt with the walls, there is still the roof to be considered. Of course you can replace the old graded slates with more regular machine-made asbestos substitutes. But while you are at work up there why not make use of the space and convert the roof into an extra room or two? Any jobbing loft-conversion company can do a really good transformation, with a big dormer picture window in the front for the views, or even better, a recessed roof-terrace with sliding aluminium-framed patio doors. It is best to give any roof extension a flat top so as to mark it out as an addition in the style of our time. While you are at it take down the chimneys to save future maintenance. With central heating, you will never need to use them again, and in any case you will have stripped out all the fireplaces as part of the upgrading of the interior to meet ‘modern standards’.

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A ROMANTIC
MANIFESTO

Miss Lucinda Tyrrell explains why she dresses up in funny clothes

THE average Romantic is female, well-educated, and somewhere between 18 and 45. She is female for what are called ‘historical reasons’. The Romantic movement is said to have been born, or at any rate gestated, in an Oxford women’s college which did not at that time admit men.

The Romantic inhabits an imaginative world, which, perhaps, women feel freer to do in these days. She genuinely finds the modern world mad and impossible to take seriously and sees her own Romantic bubble as an oasis of sanity. When people accuse her of turning her back upon reality one imagines her (if she is even to answer at all) gesturing disdainfully at the modern world and saying: ‘You mean that?’

Her clothes are what one first remarks about her, but, though they may be striking, it is the way she bears them that really marks her out as a Romantic. Whether she wears crinolines or Thirties chic, or one of the ‘neo-hyphen’ or eclectic styles, she wears them with utter self-consciousness and completeness. It is this self-consciousness, this completeness, both in dress and in manner, which distinguishes the Romantic from other modern types and indicates that she is essentially not modern. The Sloane Ranger will wear jeans under a Savile-Row overcoat for ‘counterpoint’. The Vogue will wear workman’s boots under lacy Victorian petticoats. The Young Fogy will wear the coat of a pinstripe suit with grey flannels and a fawn cardigan. The Romantic sees all these things as modern — a word which needs no further comment as a term of dismissal.

‘Modern’ in a case like this carries with it an implication of coarseness. The modern person is afraid to do the thing properly; afraid of falling into self-parody — that is, of doing it too completely. He has to supply the inverted commas in what the Romantic would consider a caddishly unsuitable manner, just to prove to the onlookers that he is, at root, one of them; that he too knows that one does not really do these things these days.

The Romantic is not one of them, and she (or he) does really do these things — and what are ‘these days’ anyway? One does not believe one has heard of them. The two keynotes of modern dressing are casualness and individuality. Even when these are not enforced too rigidly, it is de rigueur that the modern dresser should look at ease and himself. Neither of these things is much admired by the Romantic. The phrase ‘natural and unaffected’ is often used by Romans to mean that someone is modern and boring. A Romantic should be affected and not too natural. This is not to say that she lacks ease or confidence; on the contrary, a Romantic is one to whom affectation comes naturally.

The Romantic would never, of course, wear Victorian or any other underwear as outerwear. It would be far too modern and predictably eccentric. ‘Neurotic’ is a word she might use for this type of dressing, meaning that it springs from the fragmented and unregulated consciousness.

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UNHOLY CITY: NEW JERUSALEM

Gavin Stamp surveys the sad state of the most sacred city

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