Rebuilding the City of London in the age of global markets: a study of architectural discourse

Birkbeck, University of London

REBUILDING THE CITY OF LONDON IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL MARKETS: A STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

Stephen Rosser

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented within this thesis is solely my own except where explicitly acknowledged according to the standard academic referencing conventions.

Stephen Rosser

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with public discourse on the subject of architecture, as relating to four significant developments in the late-twentieth century City of London. It sets out from two reference-points: first, the 1980s deregulation of London's financial markets labelled 'Big Bang' and its consequences for the City's mode of operation and general culture; and second, the reshaping of the City's built environment, a process commencing in the Big Bang era and continuing into the new century. The thesis seeks both to explore the extent and nature of interaction between those two themes and to examine how far discussion of the City's new architecture reflects or, as the case may be, diverges from the generality of architectural discourse relevant to this period.

In only one of the case studies examined – Broadgate – does the discourse display an unambiguous relationship between the development project and the Big Bang City. In the other cases a connection between the two themes can be detected, but it emerges in more nuanced form, whether by way of purely circumstantial factors; perception of City finance and City architecture as existing in a state of tension; or extension of the City context into the contemporary political environment.

The four developments were major projects of the time and their reception reflected broader strands of contemporary architectural discourse. What distinguishes the response to these projects within the general body of discourse relating to late-twentieth century British architecture is partly one of degree, these cases presenting contemporary strands of debate in a notably complete or focussed way. Otherwise what most marks out the response to these projects is the fact of their location in the City of London, a setting which has remained wholly distinctive in character, function and history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been prepared under the supervision of Professor Mark Crinson and Professor Leslie Topp, whose wise and infinitely patient guidance I most gratefully acknowledge. No student could have been placed in more expert, committed and encouraging hands. I have benefitted too from the comments of my examiners, Professors Murray Fraser and Kester Rattenbury.

Neil Rosser has assisted with technical issues, while Lindsay Rosser rose to the challenge of maintaining the author's morale on a day-to-day basis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with public discourse relating to British architecture in the late-twentieth century. It examines the subject by reference to four case studies centred on major development projects undertaken in the City of London over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. The term 'discourse' is used here to encompass a wide range of published commentary and debate relating to the projects concerned, in other words, how they were described, explained, interpreted and argued over. The primary emphasis of the thesis is on material broadly contemporary with the case study projects themselves, that is, material dating from the period when they were in the process of planning or construction or were newly completed. A subsidiary objective, however, is to track the subsequent course of discussion and assess how the same projects were viewed and interpreted in retrospective commentary.

The study is concerned with the City of London's built environment at a particularly significant and much discussed phase in the City's recent history. The historian Graham Stewart wrote in his survey of Britain in the 1980s that 'only the Great Fire of London and the Blitz had brought swifter and more comprehensive change to the City's appearance than Big Bang.'[1] It is a claim that encapsulates the twin themes that provided the starting-point for the thesis. The first is the deregulation of London's financial markets in 1986, to which was attached the label 'Big Bang'. That event (together with the removal of exchange controls seven years previously) brought about a fundamental change in the working of the UK's financial services industry, transforming both the role and the character of the City of London and securing its position as one of the world's three principal financial centres. The second theme is the radical reshaping of the City's built environment which began to take effect during this period and which included (amongst many routine and largely unnoticed projects) a number of large, innovative and high-profile developments

[1] Graham Stewart, *Bang!: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p. 395.

involving some of the leading architectural practitioners of the day. This process of building and rebuilding London's financial hub spanned the final two decades of the twentieth century, continuing into the new millennium to produce the cluster of high-rise towers which now dominate the skyline of the City itself and its environs. Taken as a whole, the episode has been treated by commentators as among the significant strands in the development of British architecture over the past forty years.[2]

Background to the project

The origins of this thesis lie in an earlier research project on a group of late-twentieth century British architectural historians and critics that had come to be associated with the political right.[3] That project sought to locate the work of these writers within the contemporary political-cultural context and to explore the significance of political values in the formation of attitudes towards the built environment. It brought out the variety of genres within which relevant material could be found, ranging from academic literature through the professional press to weekly magazines and daily newspapers. In doing so it underlined too the extent to which contributions to architectural debate could be found within sources not directly concerned with the subject of architecture, particularly in that context those relating to politics and contemporary culture. The broad conclusion was that, while there was no case for viewing the writers whose work I had examined as constituting a coherent movement or presenting a homogeneous body of thought, it could nonetheless reasonably be argued that right-of-centre values and attitudes did represent a perceptible component within architectural criticism and historiography in the later twentieth century. Such values could be detected in, for example,

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[2] For a sample of literature relevant to this period see Jonathan Glancey, *New British Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989); Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaction, 2007), pp. 221-225; *City Architecture: Redesigning the City of London 1991-2011* (London: Emap Inform, 2011); Alec Forshaw, *New City: Contemporary Architecture in the City of London* (London: Merrell, 2014); Rowan Moore, *Slow Burn City: London in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Picador, 2016), pp. 53-59. Perhaps even more significant is the attention given to the subject by non-architectural commentators such as Graham Stewart, already cited; the London historian Jerry White; and the City historian David Kynaston.

[3] Stephen Rosser, 'A view from the right: Aspects of British architectural historiography in the late 20th century' (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Birkbeck, University of London, 2015.

literature on the history of the country house; in discussion relating to historic environment conservation; and above all in an increasingly pervasive hostility to architectural modernism and, as a prominent aspect of that, the debate concerning the perceived role of Nikolaus Pevsner as one of modernism's most influential proponents.

A number of the writers and themes considered in that earlier study will figure prominently in the present thesis. Thus the values of the political right are clearly discernible in discussion concerning modernist architecture and urbanism (again with the role of Pevsner a conspicuous feature); in the advocacy of a revival of classicism in building design; and in the movement dedicated to the conservation of historic fabric in the face of development pressures. Yet the last of these strands illustrates the complexity of the rightward-leaning dimension to architectural discourse, in that the case for building conservation was at odds with that strain on the political right which (particularly in the Thatcherite free market-oriented era) saw the promotion of new development and the lifting of planning restrictions as a positive good.

Out of my earlier research there emerged the notion of a more substantive study relating to the same period (the late-twentieth century) which would focus not on a predetermined group of specific writers but rather on a particular aspect of British architecture that generated a high volume of interest and discussion and, in consequence, an extensive body of published architectural discourse. Such a study would set out to examine the content and form of the literature relating to the chosen theme, putting the main emphasis on contemporary commentary but devoting some attention also to later historical assessment. The objective would be to explore the main strands of discussion and contestation emerging; to locate these within the wider context of contemporary debate, whether relating to the subject of architecture itself or to other issues, such as those arising from the political environment; and (with my earlier study in mind) to identify the principal contributors to the debate and discuss their background, their agendas, real or perceived, and their inter-connections. I was particularly keen to examine how architectural issues were viewed by commentators without a specialised interest in

the subject, or, if not that, by those with access to non-specialist forums of debate. I therefore envisaged that the study would direct its attention towards the mainstream media no less than the architectural press and other specialist sources.

I was drawn to the final two decades of the last century as the focus of the study by virtue of the fact that - as I hope this thesis may itself help to demonstrate - it was a period in which matters relating to architecture attracted a degree of attention across the media to the point where the subject could lay claim to have become part of the 'national conversation'. As will become evident in the course of the thesis, the well publicised intervention of Prince Charles has continued to be identified as a principal catalyst for the phenomenon. But I would point also to other factors as playing a part, notably the advent of the National Lottery as a facilitator of prestige cultural and millennial projects; the perceived value of major new buildings as a driver of urban regeneration (tagged the 'Bilbao effect'); architecture's place within the Blair government's cultural agenda and the associated creation of a new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment; and the conspicuous presence of 'celebrity' architectural practitioners within the media and politics. In short, contemporary architecture (especially though not exclusively in London) was news. So too was a cognate topic, the wider urban environment. Though the latter was hardly a new concern, it is the case that urban themes - deprivation, renaissance, quality, sustainability – come across as ever more conspicuous preoccupations for planners, politicians and commentators in these years.[4]

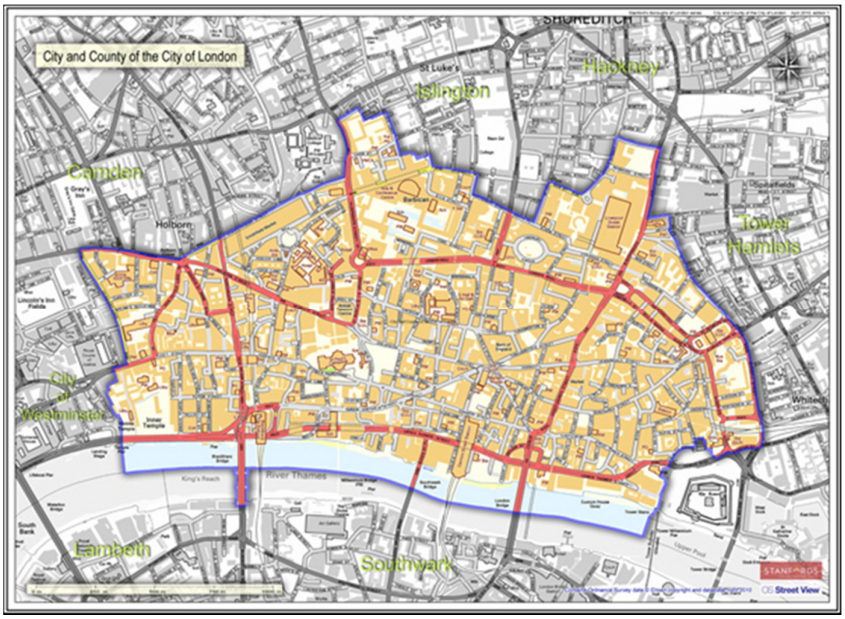
I identified the architectural development of the City of London as a suitable subject for an enquiry on the lines envisaged. It was not the only possible choice. The late twentieth century and early years of the millennium saw a number of major building programmes which stimulated extensive contemporary and retrospective discussion,

[4] The coverage of architecture in the media during the 1980s is the subject of a study extensively cited in this thesis: Kester Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Polytechnic, 1989: available via Ethos, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.305146. See also the same author's 'Naturally biased: Architecture in the UK national press', in Kester Rattenbury (editor), *This is not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 136-156. Graham Stewart describes architecture as becoming the subject of a 'violent cultural battleground' in this period: Stewart, *Bang!,* pp. 262-275**.**

both in the specifically architectural context and more widely, and which might also have served as the basis of an investigation of the kind I envisaged. Potential alternatives include, for example, cultural and millennial projects funded by the Lottery; large-scale urban regeneration schemes such as those at King's Cross, Paddington.

For a number of reasons, however, major projects taking place in the City seemed to lend themselves especially well to what I had in mind. They constituted a group of substantial and widely varied developments located within the defined and highly distinctive area of London that has continued to provide the main base of the UK's financial services sector. The study would, moreover, look at developments in the City within the highly significant context of the late-twentieth century and in particular the 1980s. The immediate focus would be on the 'Big Bang' event of 1986. This would, however, be set against a background in which, with a sharp reduction in the availability of major public sector commissions (reflective of a shrinking state and the increased importance of financial services as a major economic driver and social force), speculative office buildings and other commerce and finance-related projects had by this period come to account for a hugely significant proportion of architects' work. Such projects were accordingly attracting more interest and enthusiasm from journalists and other commentators (some of them practitioners in their own right and associated with developer and property interests) than had tended to be the case in the past.[5] The City seemed an apt choice too as a location with a uniquely rich historic environment – much of it the focus of earlier debate and controversy in its own right - with which new development must necessarily engage. A further factor in the choice was the potential opportunity it offered to explore (again with my earlier work in mind) the interaction between the world of architecture and those of finance, politics, contemporary culture and the media.

[5] Kester Rattenbury identifies as one of the principal themes within newspaper coverage of architecture the assumption - though one expressed for the most part only implicitly - that 'commercial development was desirable and important': Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, pp. 84-85. The changed attitude to commercial projects is also noted in Powers, *Britain*, p. 221.



1.1 The City of London: present-day administrative boundary outlined in blue. (Source: stanfords.co.uk.)

A potential objection to the choice of subject is the ambiguity of meaning attaching to 'the City'. The term has long served to denote, on the one hand, a specific geographical area of London – the traditional 'Square Mile' - and, on the other, the UK's finance and business community. It is a distinction that became ever more apparent in the closing years of the last century as the financial services industry increasingly moved outside the City's administrative boundaries either to immediately adjacent areas such as Shoreditch or Southwark or to other parts of London, most conspicuously the Canary Wharf development in the former Docklands area. There will be recurrent reference to that expansion in the course of this thesis. Nonetheless I framed the study on the premise that its scope could sensibly be confined to the City's boundaries (figure 1.1). Though in part a pragmatic decision, it has a logic to it in that, despite the changes in recent years, the City has preserved its distinctive topographical, historical and administrative identity, not least by virtue of the survival of its unique form of government in the shape of the City Corporation.[6] The area can therefore even today be legitimately viewed as a coherent entity.

[6] For a description see City of London Corporation, 'Our role in London', https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-city-of-london-corporation/our-role-in-london (accessed 2 November 2021).

Nature of the study and methodology adopted

At the centre of this thesis are four major City of London development projects broadly spanning the final two decades of the twentieth century. They are the development of a site adjacent to the Mansion House designated initially as 'Mansion House Square' and subsequently 'Number 1 Poultry'; the new headquarters building for Lloyd's of London; the redevelopment of Paternoster Square, adjacent to St. Paul's Cathedral; and the Broadgate project.[7] All of them were ambitious in scale and scope and all involved an architectural content of distinctive and in some cases innovative character. The concern here is not, however, with the developments themselves, notwithstanding their inherent interest and importance. Rather, it is with the reactions, debate and controversies that these developments provoked - in short, with what I refer to as the 'discourse' that surrounded them. The word 'discourse' is used throughout the thesis not in the Foucauldian sense but rather as a term encompassing a broad span of published commentary, debate and contestation surrounding the topic concerned, in this case a particular episode in the history of architecture.[8] Overall my project can be characterised as a study in how architecture is received by those with access to published forums of debate, whether that be a scholarly publication, the professional press or the mainstream news media.

As to the methodology adopted, the sources for the study extend across a broad spectrum of published material relating to the City's built environment in the relevant period. I considered the possibility of approaching surviving individuals who were involved in the projects and issues concerned. I rejected it, however, on the basis that such a process would be of its nature haphazard and that any information or opinion obtained in retrospective interview would weaken the emphasis the study seeks to place on the content of texts published in their historical moment. This is

[7] A fuller description of each project is provided later in this chapter.
[8] Discourse: 'the body of statements, analysis, opinions, etc., relating to a particular domain of intellectual or social activity, esp. as characterized by recurring themes, concepts, or values': *OED Online*, 2013 (accessed 2 February 2021).

therefore essentially a text-based exercise and one confined to published sources, though with occasional reference to unpublished material readily available in the public domain. I set out with no predetermined plan as to the categories of literature to be examined. My approach was rather to take each of the case study projects in turn and seek out as wide a range of relevant material, and from as wide a range of sources, as practicable. (In the case of newspapers, my search placed the main emphasis on titles offering an archive in digitised form.)

The search has in the event yielded a body of discourse which is substantial in volume and richly varied in form, content and provenance, a discourse that encompasses both a specialist and a generalist component. It embraces commentary and analysis emanating from professional and academic sources; promotional documents produced by developers and designers; and the views and rulings of public authorities and government ministers. It also includes, most importantly, the content of wider public debate as reflected in the contemporary mainstream news media (which in this era meant almost entirely print, with occasional incursions into broadcast) against a background in which architectural issues and controversies appeared to be attracting a notably high level of coverage in the broadsheet press. Taking part in this discourse is a large and varied cast of contributors. Unsurprisingly, the principal burden is borne by those with a demonstrable interest and expertise in the sphere of architecture and urban planning, whether as practitioners, specialist commentators, critics or historians. Their reports on and assessments of the projects can be found across a variety of settings - for example in the columns of daily newspapers as well as in the architectural press and scholarly publications. But the available material is supplemented by contributions from those whose primary interest lies outside the architectural field, for instance in matters relating to finance, commercial property, politics, urban geography and social studies. There is a space too for lay opinion or the view of 'the man in the street' – in other words, the view of those with no professional involvement or expertise in the field of architecture - as evidenced in

comments from building users, responses to public consultations and, most conspicuously and controversially, the views of the heir to the British throne.[9]

The study in context

The historical background

The redevelopment of the City of London over the last four decades obviously differs from the two earlier episodes to which it has been likened - the Great Fire and the Blitz of the Second World War – in that it was not the outcome of catastrophe. Nonetheless the very fact of such comparison[10] underlines the fact that the locale with which this study is concerned has a long and eventful history and one that has periodically involved debate and controversy relating to the built environment.[11]

The City's overall character continues even now to be determined in large part by the intricate network of narrow lanes, alleys and courts that originated in the medieval period (figure 1.2). That little physical fabric survives from that era is due in large part to the destruction wrought by the Great Fire of 1666. That event provided the spur to the first serious debate on the planning of the City, centred on ambitious proposals from Wren and others for redesigning the street layout on the geometrical model seen in continental Europe (figure 1.3).[12] That approach was rejected and the rebuilding process largely replicated the pre-Fire layout. Yet the notion of a rationally planned City returned three centuries later in the aftermath of the Blitz and it was present in the discourse concerning one of the projects

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[9] Commentators have noted the extent to which discussion of the built environment has increasingly merged with both other academic disciplines and a wide range of contemporary political and social issues. See for example Sam Wetherell, *Foundations: How the Built Environment Made Twentieth Century Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), pp. 6-7.

[10] In addition to the comment cited at the opening of the thesis see for example Alexi Ferster Marmot and John Worthington, 'Great Fire to Big Bang: Private and Public Designs on the City of London', *Built Environment*, 12.4 (1986), pp. 216-233; Maxwell Hutchinson, *The Prince of Wales: Right or Wrong?* (London: Faber, 1989), p. 26.

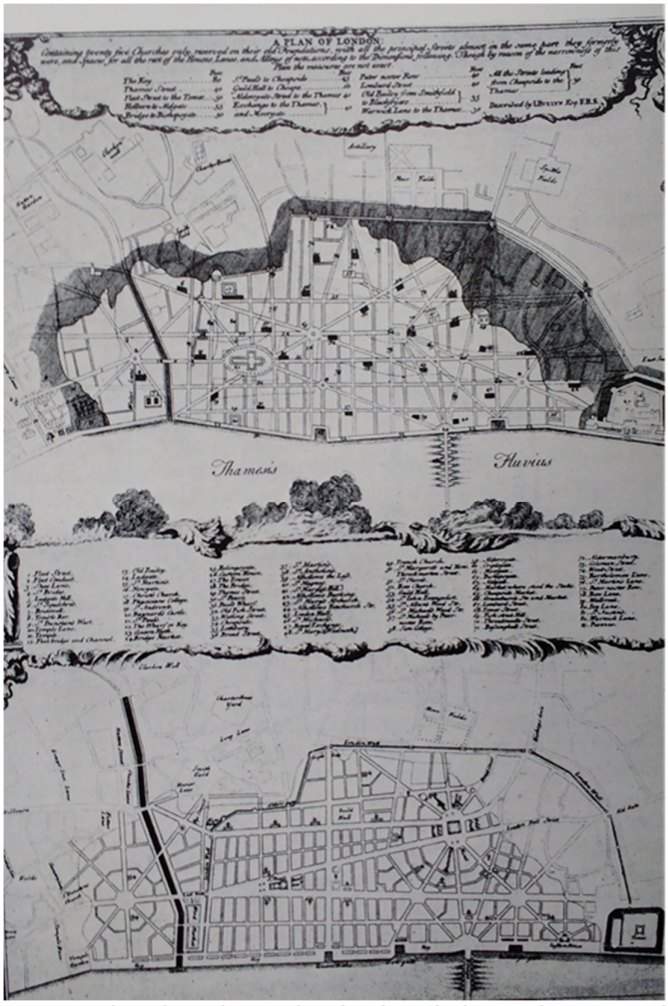
[11] Sources informing this section include in particular the extended historical narrative in C.H. Holden and W.G. Holford, *The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival* (London: Architectural Press, 1951), pp. 96-182 (ie the 'Holden-Holford' post-war City plan); and Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 66-141.

[12] Kerry Downes, *Christopher Wren: The Outstanding Career of Sir Christopher Wren* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), pp. 60-63; Lisa Jardine, *On a Grander Scale (*London: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 259-267; M.A.R. Cooper, *A More Beautiful City': Robert Hooke and the Rebuilding of London after the Great Fir*e (Stroud: Sutton, 2003).

examined in this study. The Fire's most prominent and enduring material legacy comprised the new St. Paul's Cathedral and a portfolio of parish churches, firmly established by the mid-twentieth century as key components of the historic City of London and prized both for their intrinsic architectural qualities and as defining features of the City skyline.[13]

1.2 The pre-Fire City of London. (Source: C.H. Holden and W.G. Holford, *The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival*, London: Architectural Press, 1951.)

[13] Paul Jeffrey, *The City Churches of Sir Christopher Wren* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996); Derek Kendall, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *The City of London Churches* (London: Collins & Brown, 1998); Andrew Saint, 'The reputation of St. Paul's', in Derek Keene, Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint, (editors), *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604-2004* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2004), pp. 451-463; Lucy Markham, 'The protection of views of St. Paul's Cathedral and its influence on the London landscape', *London Journal*, 33(3) (2008), pp. 271-287.



1.3 Post-Fire reconstruction plans by John Evelyn (top) and Christopher Wren. (Source: C.H. Holden and W.G. Holford, *The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival*, London: Architectural Press, 1951.)

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the City assuming its eventually all-encompassing role as London's specialised commercial area, the resident population sharply declining and the building stock progressively directed towards the needs of firms and commercial institutions. (figure 1.4)[14] Some major road improvements were made, one result of which was the complex intersection fronting the Bank of England (generally referred to as Bank Junction) which would form the backdrop to the Mansion House Square development considered in this thesis.[15] Railway

[14] John Summerson, 'The Victorian rebuilding of the City of London', *London Journal*, 3.2 ((November 1977), pp. 163-185.
[15] Daniel M. Abramson, *Building the Bank of England: Money, Architecture, Society, 1694-1942* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 154-155).

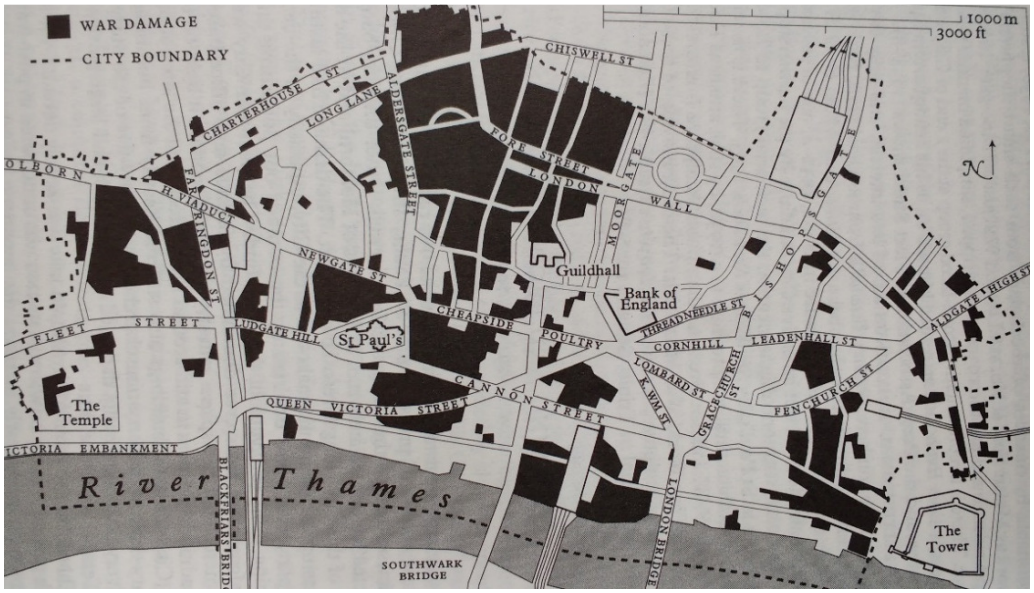
terminals were established, two of which, Broad Street and the adjacent Liverpool Street, took up an extensive area on the City's northern fringe which a century later would provide the site of the Broadgate development.[16]

1.4 Wyld's Plan of the City, 1842. (Source: C.H. Holden and W.G. Holford, *The City of London: A Record of Destruction and Survival*, London: Architectural Press, 1951.)

The characteristic building of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century City was the monumental *palazzo*-style bank or company headquarters, a significant example of which, Edwin Cooper's Lloyd's office, will feature in the chapter on the building that would replace it.[17] This period saw a contentious episode centred on the destruction of much of Soane's Bank of England building.[18] A much bigger and more complex debate took place during and after the Second World War concerning the reconstruction of a City which - by virtue of its proximity to London's docks as well its status as the nation's commercial centre – had been a principal target for enemy bombing (figure 1.5). This was the subject of a succession of plans, some of them proposing radical reconfiguration of the street layout on the model of the post-Fire reconstruction schemes.[19] The overall outcome was in the event relatively

[16] Alan Jackson, *London's Termini* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1971), pp. 96, 107-110.
[17] Iain S. Black, 'Rebuilding 'The Heart of the Empire': Bank headquarters in the City of London, 1919-1939', *Art History*, 22.4 (1999), pp. 593-618.
[18] Abramson, *Building the Bank of England*, pp. 205-228.
[19] The already cited Holden-Holford plan, commissioned by the City Corporation, was the most prominent contribution to the debate. See also Robert Thorne, 'The setting of St. Paul's cathedral in the twentieth century', *London Journal*, 16(2) (1991), pp. 117-128. Other relevant literature will be noted in the Paternoster Square chapter.

modest but some major projects went ahead, notably the London Wall and Paternoster Square developments, the latter to be considered as part of this study.[20] A still more ambitious venture of the period was the City Corporation's Barbican complex, which - together with the adjacent Golden Lane Estate, then only partly within the City - constituted the first, and so far only attempt to achieve a substantial increase in the Square Mile's resident population.[21]



1.5 Areas of Second World War bomb damage. (Source: Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London*, London: Penguin, 1997.)

Notwithstanding projects such as those just mentioned, the process of rebuilding the City in the post-war period mainly involved routine commercial office developments which attracted relatively little interest.[22] To the extent that they gave the City any attention, architectural critics bemoaned the continued preference for Portland stone and neoclassical language to the exclusion of modernist forms.[23] The City attracted

[20] Lionel Esher, *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England, 1940-1980* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1981), pp. 114-119; Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 254-259.
[21] Barnabas Calder*, Raw Concrete: The Beauty of Brutalism* (London: William Heinemann, 2016), pp. 85-119.
[22] See Amy Thomas, 'Prejudice and pragmatism: The commercial architect in the development of postwar London', *Grey Room*, 71 (2018), pp. 88-115.
[23] See for example Nikolaus Pevsner's complaint in *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster*, 2nd edition, revised (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), pp. 107-108. Similar sentiments could be noted in, for example, Ian Nairn, *Modern Buildings in London* (London: London Transport, 1964), p. 2; Esher, *A Broken Wave*, p. 111. For a retrospective view see Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, pp.

the attention of the conservation movement in the form of an unsuccessful campaign in 1962 to preserve the Coal Exchange, though (as will be discussed in this thesis) it was not until well into the following decade that conservationists began to take a more sustained interest in the Square Mile.[24] The 1960s and 1970s saw more the emergence of a firmer, if still cautious, commitment to modernism in the form of the City's first high-rise office blocks, including the Miesian Commercial Union (subsequently Aviva) tower, which will be referred to in this study, and culminating in Richard Seifert's NatWest Tower (figure 1.6).[25] The latter project, at the time the UK's tallest building, was completed at the start of the 1980s, the decade of Big Bang, and the key decade for the purpose of this study.

1.6 City skyline, c.1980. This illustration appeared in the Peter Palumbo's promotional book, *The Mansion House Square Scheme* (London: Number 1 Poultry Limited, 1981), to demonstrate the impact of the proposed Mies van der Rohe tower, an image of which was inserted.

127-128; Kenneth Powell, 'Building on the big bang', in *City Architecture: Redesigning the City of London, 1991-2011* (London: City Architecture Forum 2011), pp. 13-18 (p. 14); Elain Harwood, *Space, Hope and Brutalism*: *English architecture, 1945-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 387-388. Terence Heysham's 1950s Lloyd's building exemplified the favoured idiom.

[24] See David Lloyd and others, *Save the City: A Conservation Study of the City of London* (London: Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and others, 1976, republished with addendum 1979).

[25] See for example Esher, *A Broken Wave*, pp. 167-169.

The financial background: Big Bang and the 'new' City

What was 'Big Bang' and why was it significant?[26] The term itself refers to a specific event occurring on a specific day, 27 October 1986.[27] That was the date set for implementation of a package of measures relating to one of the City's core activities, the securities market or Stock Exchange. Designed to remove or relax longstanding restrictions on the trading of stocks and shares, the measures involved abolition of minimum fixed commissions on trading; the end of the separation between those who traded stocks and shares (jobbers) and those who advised investors (brokers); and the relaxation of rules on the foreign ownership of UK brokers. If the impression is of merely technical changes, the reality is that these measures revolutionised the trading of stocks and shares. Indeed 'financial revolution' has been a term regularly applied to the Big Bang process, echoing, if unconsciously, its use to describe reforms of the late seventeenth century that established the Bank of England, Stock Exchange and other City institutions.[28] The effect of the changes was to widen the scope for competition among traders; allow for mergers and takeovers, including the foreign acquisition of UK institutions; and provide for electronic share trading to replace the traditional face-to-face dealing on the floor of the Stock Exchange. Implemented on a single day to avoid destabilising the financial markets, the Big Bang reforms were preceded by another measure of what proved to be immense significance: the abolition of exchange controls, which the Thatcher government had brought forward in 1979, opening up the London securities market to international investors. Immediate responsibility for implementation of Big Bang lay with the City itself but there was a clear impetus

[26] The favoured practice from the outset was to use the term without the definite article and that usage is followed throughout this thesis.

[27] This section draws on a number of narratives on the City in the Big Bang era, of which the most comprehensive is in David Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4: A Club No More, 1945-2000* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), especially pp. 616-630, 682-698. A more concise overview is offered by Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization*: *Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), pp. 897-903. See also Virginia Preston, '"Big Bang": Chronology of events', *Contemporary British History*, 13.1 (1999), pp. 95-99; Richard Roberts and David Kynaston, *City State: How the Markets Came to Rule Our World* (London: Profile, 2001). For a more recent account see Iain Martin, *Crash, Bang, Wallop: The Inside Story of London's Big Bang and a Financial Revolution that Changed the World* (London: Sceptre, 2016).

[28] Henry Roseveare, *The Financial Revolution 1660-1760* (London: Longman, 1991).

from government, which saw the ending of restrictive practices and vested interests in the City as an aspect of its programme of deregulation.

The notion of the 'global' City of London was not a creation of Big Bang. The City's place as an international commercial centre dated back at least to the eighteenth century and assumed ever-increasing importance as a concomitant of London's status as an imperial capital. The decline that came with the loss of empire was offset by the City's capture in the 1960s of the rapidly emerging 'Eurodollar' market.[29] Nonetheless there is wide agreement that it was the reform package of 1986, in combination with the earlier ending of exchange controls, that underlay the City's transformation in the years leading up to the millennium. The outcome of the new freedoms and opportunities available under the post-Big Bang regime was an immediate boost in the international competitiveness of the City, notwithstanding a severe downturn in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The switch to electronic trading led to heavy investment in information technology and a hugely increased demand for a new type of office environment incorporating large open-plan dealing floors and advanced electronic services. The frenetic City dealing-room quickly became one of the characteristic images of the 1980s (figure 1.7).[30]

1.7 Traders on the London Stock Exchange post-Big Bang. (Source: *Observer*, 9 October 2011.)

[29] The term refers to the trade in dollar deposits held outside the United States: David Kynaston, *City of London: The History* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2011), pp. 440-441.
[30] Philip Stephens, *Politics and the Pound: The Conservatives' Struggle with Sterling* (London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 327.

An immediately visible feature of the Big Bang City was its enhanced international character. Though this was not in itself a novel phenomenon, the era saw British investment banks targetted for overseas takeover to an unprecedented degree and by the end of the century a succession of finance houses, many of them venerable names, had passed into foreign ownership.[31] Japanese and above all American banks, including leading US firms such as Morgan Stanley, Merrill Lynch and Goldman Sachs, became an increasingly powerful presence in London in the late 1980s and early 1990s.[32] It was, in the view of most observers, the American influence that lay behind the change in the City's way of life and culture that became apparent in this era, a phenomenon evident in a brisker work ethic, extended hours, reduced job security and, controversially, generous levels of remuneration. The longstanding image of the City as an old-fashioned, quintessentially British phenomenon akin to a gentleman's club quickly became obsolete.

It is this transformed City - its trading processes revolutionised, its freedoms and opportunities expanded, its institutions and firms internationalised and its way of life and traditions upturned - that provided the immediate setting for the development projects with which this study is concerned. That the Big Bang reforms had a direct impact on the City's architecture is clear enough. Half the volume of the City's offices was rebuilt between 1985 and 1993.[33] As this thesis will explore, the new trading practices created a demand for office buildings of a size and internal layout that could accommodate the required large open-plan trading floors and computer terminals with their associated cabling and other services. The outcome was a distinctive commercial building-type that involved more emphasis on the horizontal dimension than the vertical. The high-rise tower was not at this stage a favoured model (though it would become one in the new millennium, as will be touched on in

[31] Andy Coupland, 'Every job an office job', in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 22-36 (p. 28); Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4*, pp. 771-772, 783-787.
[32] Around the turn of the century there were alleged to be more Japanese banks represented in London than in Tokyo and more US banks than in New York, though the claim would presumably have included establishments outside the Square Mile: Nick Buck, *Working Capital: Life and Labour in Contemporary London* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 111.
[33] Powers, *Britain*, p. 223.

the final chapter). Rather, the characteristic City office building of this era was the 'groundscraper' or 'atrium office block', a medium-rise, deep-plan block with services on the perimeter and a central atrium to bring light into the heart of the building.[34] This study will feature leading examples of the genre in the shape of the Stirling building erected on the Mansion House site and the blocks comprising the first phase of the Broadgate development. The vastly increased presence of American banks and bankers brought with it new expectations as to not only the design of offices but also the method and speed of their construction. A significant proportion of major building projects in the post-Big Bang City were indeed designed by leading US architectural practices, many of whom established permanent offices in London as a means of expanding their global reach. The American influence could be detected too (though it was not the only factor involved) in a heightened interest in the quality of the wider environment in which offices were placed and the facilities available to those working in them.[35]

All these themes will feature prominently in the course of this thesis, above all in the context of the Broadgate development. It will nonetheless quickly become evident that the architecture of the late-twentieth century City of London was not interpreted solely as a response the demands of a rapidly changing financial environment Numerous other factors were brought into the frame of debate and it is one of the objectives of the study to identify what these were.

The research background

This is not a project which builds on a substantial foundation of previous scholarly research work. Yet paradoxically, as a study of public discourse, it takes as its

[34] Stephanie Williams, 'The coming of the groundscrapers', in Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster (editors), *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 246-259; Historic England, *Post-Modern Architecture* (December 2017), p. 8, https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-post-modern-architecture/heag186-post-modern-architecture-iha (accessed 30 June 2022). Such buildings were not confined to the Square Mile, since one effect of the move away from face-to-face dealing was to reduce the importance attached to an office location close to the Stock Exchange and encourage businesses to seek more spacious locations elsewhere in the City or beyond, most obviously at Canary Wharf, which offers copious examples of the groundscraper.

[35] Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), especially pp. 420-421, 456-459.

research base what has proved to be a very large body of readily accessible literature relevant to the subject in question, namely a group of developments in the City of London. The material can be broken down into two broad categories. The primary focus of attention is on commentary which is broadly contemporary with the buildings concerned, in other words originating in the period during which they were in the process of planning or construction or were recently completed and therefore of the moment or 'news'. But a second area of interest is the literature that postdates the projects and in which they are being discussed from a retrospective vantage-point and within the context of a later period – in short, at the point where the projects had become part of history.

So far as the first category is concerned, it is fair to say that the subject of public discourse on the architectural issues of the day has aroused relatively little attention as a topic for systematic research. An important exception to this generalisation is the work of Kester Rattenbury on the coverage of architecture in the contemporary British national media, and in particular her already cited doctoral dissertation of 1989 which currently appears to remain the only study of its kind, certainly as far as the UK is concerned.[36] No subsequent research in this field seems as yet to have been undertaken, not least to move the story forward into the age of the internet and social media. Rattenbury's work, which examined, for instance, the role of Prince Charles and the inter-connection between architectural journalism and the conservation movement, is extensively cited in this study. But though reception within the media is certainly an important component in my own research, the focus of this study is not solely confined to the way in which these developments were discussed at the point where they were new and newsworthy. Rather, I wanted also to devote a degree of attention to the response to those same buildings when they were no longer in the news and could be treated as part of the history of the built environment. In encompassing this latter element of the discourse, the study's emphasis shifts away from the reactions of contemporary commentators and towards the considered assessment of historians, principally (though far from

[36] Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*; and Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased: Architecture in the UK national press'.

exclusively) historians of architecture.[37] In this respect the thesis assumes something of the character of a study of the development of architectural writing, examining, for example, the changes in the historic environment conservation narrative and the evolving reception of buildings which initially encountered fierce resistance and yet twenty years later were the subject of considered evaluation as candidates for the status of historic monuments.

As a field of academic research, the history of architectural writing has attracted only sporadic attention. David Watkin's *The Rise of Architectural History*, published in 1980, was for a long time the principal self-contained (if distinctly partisan and confined mainly to British and American writers) account of the development of the subject.[38] Recent years have seen the appearance of other studies, notably that of Andrew Leach, who adopts a more broadly based approach to the subject, taking account of developments in art history and other relevant disciplines.[39] The work of some individual architectural historians (particularly Nikolaus Pevsner) have received wide-ranging critical evaluation. Some specific studies can be found, especially on topics relating to mainland Europe.[40] In general, however, writing on the history of architecture has been considered only as an aspect of other topics, particularly matters of theory.[41] Certainly, apart from Rattenbury's work already referred to, there appears to have been little or no general assessment of very recent or current trends in the development of architectural writing which might help provide a

[37] The distinction is, however, far from clear-cut, not least because the study will cite many examples of architectural historians assuming the role of commentators on current or projected projects.
[38] David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (London: Architectural Press, 1980).
[39] Andrew Leach, *What is Architectural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010).
[40] See for example, Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, 'The architects' debate: Architectural discourse and the memory of Nazism in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1977–1997', *History and Memory*, 9.1/2 (1997), pp. 189-225; Deborah Ascher Barnstone, 'Style debates in early 20th-century German architectural discourse', *Architectural Histories*, 6.1 (2018), pp. 1–9.
[41] See for instance Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999); Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present: Inventing Architectural Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008). Mark Crinson and Richard J. Williams, *The Architecture of Art History: A Historiography* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019) examines the evolving relationship between architectural and art history. Relevant material can often be found in the introduction to substantive monographs on topics of architectural history or in occasional writings such as *Festschriften*, obituaries or biographical notes: see for example the recent volume honouring Adrian Forty: Iain Borden, Murray Fraser and Barbara Penner (editors), *Forty Ways to Think about Architecture: Architectural History and Theory Today* (West Sussex: Wiley, 2014).

context for my own thinking. Of the four cases examined, only the controversy surrounding the Mansion House project has received anything in the way of attention from earlier researchers, and that limited. For the rest, this study has been undertaken on the basis of a *tabula rasa*.

The discourse content

Emerging from my analysis of discussion concerning the City's architectural development are a number of distinct though inter-connected principal strands. The first of these has proved to be the theme which formed the initial spur to the study. It is the notion of the City's new buildings located within their time and place, that is, as projects situated within the distinctive locale of London's central business district and dating from the moment of Big Bang. Under this heading can be placed issues relating to the role of buildings within a global finance hub, the implications for the design and construction of offices, the increasingly potent American influence over the life and work of the City and the state of the capital's commercial property market, all of which topics are firmly embedded in the literature. But 'time and place' extends also to the UK's contemporary political environment - dominated in this period by the values and policies of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government - a thread which has turned out to be woven deeply into the material and one that re-emerges, if only implicitly, throughout the course of the study.

Allied to this theme can be discerned a second strand that reflects a broader and more historically oriented referencing of the City. This strand touches on the area's role and identity within London as a whole, opening up, for example, the issue of whether its function must inevitably be confined to that of a business district to the exclusion of a more 'normal' range of activities, and how the City interacts with the very different inner urban areas immediately outside its boundaries. There is discussion too of the City's significance for the UK as a nation, whether in its present-day role as a principal driver of the national economy, or over a much longer timescale as a focus of historical continuity and national identity. The latter dimension involves a strong emphasis on St. Paul's Cathedral and connects with a third strand of discussion: the relationship between the City's new development

projects and the outstandingly important historic environment in the midst of which they were undertaken. This is again a multi-faceted issue, highlighting the evolving nature of the conservation discourse, the radically changing role, character and priorities of the movement promoting the cause, the emerging challenge to the rhetoric of conservation and the claims of recent projects - exemplified by three out of the four cases discussed here - to preservation as buildings of historic or architectural interest.

A final strand of discussion centres on the City's new buildings and spaces themselves (proposed and executed) as major works of architecture and urbanism. A number of them involved large-scale developments on conspicuous and historically significant City sites and they reflected design concepts that spanned a wide spectrum of contemporary architectural form, offering examples of modernism, postmodernism and classical revival. It seems therefore inevitable not only that the City should feature in the ongoing debate concerning contemporary architectural values and language in the Britain of the late twentieth century but also that reception of the City's projects should reflect something of the uncertainty and dissension pervading that wider debate. The nature of the developments ensured that they featured also in the context of the increasing importance attached to urban policy, embracing such issues as the relationship between buildings and their setting, the quality of the urban environment and infrastructure and the need for more and better public realm.

Within these overarching discourse themes – the financial and political environment; the City's historic identity and present-day significance; and the contemporary architectural and urban context – there can be discerned a range of narrower but still significant issues. These include such varied topics as architectural patronage, individual and corporate, in the modern era; the contemporary property developer; the interaction between lay and expert opinion within planning and architectural discourse (an issue centred in particular on the views of Prince Charles); the role of architectural form in the formation (by design or accident) of a 'brand image' for an institution and indeed for an era. The material prompts awareness too of issues

concerning the presentation and promotion of major development proposals; the coverage of architectural issues in the media; and the leading participants and their individual agendas and inter-connections.

Key issues for the study

I framed a series of questions as the basis of the study. What were the main themes encompassed within the reception of the City's new buildings and spaces? To what extent does the discourse surrounding these projects touch on issues relating to the moment of Big Bang? In what way, if at all, were the architectural projects connected with the radically evolving financial context in which they were undertaken? Was the deregulation of financial markets, which reshaped the working and character of the City, seen as also influencing the form of the City's new buildings, and how far were the buildings therefore read as the material expression of the Big Bang City? How far did the architectural discourse extend beyond the immediate City context into other areas of contemporary discourse? And, to the extent that the financial context proves not to be the sole constituent of the discourse, what other themes are present? How far can discussion of new architecture in the City be related to and distinguished from the generality of architectural and planning discourse relating to the UK in the late twentieth century?

The case studies: an overview

The nature of the subject at the centre of this study – an episode in architectural history involving a number of free-standing projects, each substantially different from the others – pointed to the use of case studies as the basis of research. The core of the thesis accordingly comprises an analysis of the discourse relating to four of the most significant City development projects of the era, each of them the subject of a separate chapter. As indicated, the cases comprise the Mansion House site development, the Lloyd's building, Paternoster Square and Broadgate. All four projects were the subject of extensive discussion and contestation, both at the time nd subsequently, and two in particular became the focus of heated and sustained controversy.

The paragraphs that follow provide an introductory sketch of the four projects. I saw no clear-cut rationale on which to sequence the cases, given that the main burden of contemporary debate on all four extended across much of the 1980s and early 1990s, with a considerable degree of temporal overlap between them. Nonetheless the order chosen is broadly chronological, having regard in particular to the dates on which the first two projects had been initially conceived and the fact of work on the final two extending into the new century (in the Broadgate case by a very substantial margin). As will clearly emerge, at the centre of the debate surrounding all four of the developments is the subject of architectural and urban form. All four cases touch too on the subject of the historic built environment, namely how (and by whom) it should be defined and how much of it should be preserved. Those broad themes apart, each of the cases involves some if not most of the other strands summarised in the previous paragraphs and each can be identified with at least one of the major strands permeating the discourse as a whole.

The Mansion House project

The first case study is a project conceived and driven forward over a forty-year period by a single individual, the property developer Peter Palumbo. His vision involved the clearance of Victorian offices and shops from a prominent site at the heart of the City, adjacent to the Mansion House, to make way for an office tower and plaza designed by Mies van der Rohe. Though relatively uncontroversial when initially unveiled in 1968, the development was delayed until the 1980s, at which point the proposed Mies tower became the focus of fierce resistance centred principally on the conservation movement. Planning approval was eventually refused following a high-profile public enquiry, to which Palumbo's response was to commission a new scheme to a postmodern design by the James Stirling-Michael Wilford partnership. That proposal too met with strong opposition and was approved only at the end of a lengthy process involving both another public enquiry and judicial challenge. Yet within twenty years of the scheme's completion the prospect of major alteration stimulated a successful campaign for it to be given the protection of listing.

Much interest in the debate on the Mansion House project focussed on the issue of how its promoter, Peter Palumbo should be depicted – as a rapacious property tycoon on the conventional post-war model, a latter-day London entrepreneur-developer or a discerning private patron of modern architecture? So far as the development itself was concerned, the contrast between the generally favourable response to Mies's concept on its initial appearance and the opposition it provoked a decade and a half later was testimony to the extent to which the tide had by then turned against the 'international' modernism with which this architect was identified. When it came to the replacement scheme, the mixed reaction to the Stirling design seemed to exemplify the uncertainty and ambivalence which widely characterised the response to postmodernism. Yet inseparable from discussion of the new buildings was concern with what would be lost. This was a discourse permeated with the theme of the historic environment and one that foregrounded significant new dimensions of the subject. In particular, it exposed divergences of view on how much of the past society should seek to preserve and it shone a spotlight on the changing character of the conservation movement. The Mansion House case was at the forefront of the first attempt to articulate a pro-development challenge to the rhetoric of conservation, a theme which in turn engendered discussion of a perceived underlying Thatcherite political agenda and the attitude of government ministers. Finally, though this is not principally a study of architecture in the media, the Mansion House discourse provides an apt context in which to reflect on the various arenas in which architectural debate was taking place in this period and on prominent participants, notably the critic Martin Pawley among Palumbo's supporters and the historian and polemicist Gavin Stamp among the antagonists.

Lloyd's of London

The second case is the new building commissioned by the Corporation of Lloyd's - the world's leading insurance market and one of the City's longest established institutions - to serve as its headquarters and trading centre, replacing a 1920s neo-classical building that Lloyd's had outgrown. Commissioned in the late 1970s and completed in 1986, the new building was the first major UK work of Richard Rogers,

then known only as the figure responsible for the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Like that earlier project, Lloyd's was cast in the architectural form labelled 'late modernist' or, more usually, 'high tech', the latter term alluding to the exposed services, use of metal and glass and engineering imagery that characterised this approach to building design.

Situated in the network of narrow streets to the east of the Bank of England, the Lloyd's building made an immediate impact by virtue its scale and unconventional form and dramatic outline. These qualities, and the near-coincidence of its opening with the event of Big Bang, were enough to ensure that Lloyd's quickly became a building closely identified with the 'new' City, a connection that was soon expanded to render it an image for the entire era of Thatcherite politics. Yet this was actually a project dating from the very different world of the 1970s, a disjunction that was accompanied by other perceived ambiguities about the building. As interpreted by some commentators, for example, Lloyd's modernism was less uncompromising than it appeared. Again the theme of architectural patronage emerges from the discourse, but here the motivating factor was not the personal ambition of an individual, as in the Palumbo case, but rather the corporate interests of a large and prestigious organisation. Indeed, the relationship between the building and the client (and also with those using it in a daily basis) provided a pervasive strand of discussion. Commentators were intrigued that this venerable and tradition-conscious institution should choose to embrace an architectural design so radically different from anything seen previously in the City or indeed anywhere else in the UK. If, as was widely assumed, the original intention was for the building to serve as the 'brand image' for a modernised, forward-looking Lloyd's, there was rich irony in the fact that it came within a few years to serve as the emblem of an organisation in deep crisis. Nonetheless the building retained its significance as an instantly recognisable symbol of the contemporary City as a whole (as perceived by both admirers and detractors) until that role was taken over by Norman Foster's 'Gherkin' and other millennial office towers. In that context Lloyd's and Rogers together can be seen now as having achieved perhaps the first UK manifestation of a phenomenon that was to become firmly rooted in post-millennium architectural

discourse, the 'iconic' or 'signature' building designed by an internationally recognised 'celebrity' architect.

Paternoster Square

The third case centres on the redevelopment of the area immediately to the north of St. Paul's Cathedral designated 'Paternoster Square'. Though a commercial office project, the expectation was that the new development would include public space and amenities and conform to a signally higher standard of design than that of the much criticised mid-century scheme designed by the architect-planner William Holford which currently occupied the site. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of creating a worthy setting for the adjacent cathedral. Initiated in the year of Big Bang, the project was the subject of three separate schemes, each very different from the others and each generating sustained debate relating to the sensitivity and historical significance of the location. The development was eventually completed in 2003.

It is in the context of this project that there is most awareness of the City of London as a place with a long and rich history, one in which Big Bang and the new building projects coinciding with it represented yet another chapter. How the new Paternoster Square should relate to and reflect the context of history was the central theme of the debate that surrounded the project over the best part of two decades. Linked to it was the issue of the future City, encapsulated in the argument that here was a development that should offer more than just offices for bankers but should seek rather to re-establish the varied commercial activity, street life and even the residential component that had characterised the area in the past. History, as expressed in the celebrated City skyline and the dominating presence of St. Paul's, provided the basis of the much publicised intervention of Prince Charles, who cited the Paternoster development in support of his belief in the need for the balance of power in such cases away from the architectural establishment towards lay opinion.

The other major preoccupation of the discourse was architectural language and values. The general (though even then not universal) rejection of post-war

modernism as exemplified by the Holford scheme was not matched by anything approaching consensus on the form of its replacement. The future of Paternoster Square accordingly became a widely cited case in debate on the way forward for contemporary architecture and urban design, as the merits of contemporary modernism, postmodernism and 'new' classicism were placed under the spotlight as offering the right solution for this prestigious site. Prominent in this discourse were leading personalities in the movement promoting classicism, yielding insights into the nature of the movement and its political and cultural hinterland.

Broadgate

The final case is that of Broadgate, an unusually large multi-stage development on the City's northern fringe involving the regeneration of redundant railway land and the restoration and redesign of Liverpool Street station. Its scale notwithstanding, this was a project entirely undertaken by the private sector as a commercial enterprise. Moreover, though a speculative office development, Broadgate was distinguished by the provision within it of extensive public spaces, amenities for both office-workers and outsiders and an unusually rich collection of outdoor sculpture. The project spanned the 1980s and it presented a striking variety of architectural forms, primary responsibility for which rested initially with the UK practice of Arup Associates and subsequently the American firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM). The main phase was completed in 1991 but development continued to extend northwards over the next decade and into the new century, by which time several of the original buildings had been demolished or remodelled, despite calls for the complex to be accorded historic status and protected.

The reception of Broadgate in terms of its architectural content exposed once again the uncertainty and ambivalence among commentators in their reading of contemporary forms, a response tending to hostility where SOM's brand of postmodernism was concerned. More positive was the response to the development as an experiment in large-scale urban planning and regeneration, prompting reflection on its place within the historic continuum of London's development and its significance for the capital's present-day and future planning needs, and in particular

the requirement for quality public realm. The project's status as a private sector undertaking stimulated discussion of the role and reputation of the modern-day property developer as exemplified by the principal figure behind Broadgate, Stuart Lipton. But above all, of the four cases examined in this study, Broadgate was the development discussed most explicitly in relation to time and place. Here at last, the discourse seems to suggest, is the material expression of the City of London of the 1980s. Reception of the development thus involved reference to the type of office environment required in the era of deregulated markets and electronic trading (and essential to deter firms from abandoning the Square Mile in favour of the facilities offered at Canary Wharf and elsewhere); the pressures for the City's expansion beyond the traditional 'Square Mile' into fringe areas; Big Bang-era culture and lifestyle with its quintessential representative, the 'yuppie'; the City's perceived exclusiveness and divisiveness; and, perhaps the most pervasive theme of all, the Americanisation of the City, evidenced not only by the arrival of American banks and business culture but also by the increasing reliance on American construction techniques and engagement of leading US architectural practices such as SOM.

Thesis structure

As will be evident from the brief summaries, the four chosen case studies differ significantly in terms not only of their form but also of the specific circumstances in which they originated and to a degree the ideas and intentions that underlay them. What unites them is that they involved sites in the City of London; they were all projects of considerable ambition and of extended duration; and they all dated, broadly if by no means precisely, from the final two decades of the twentieth century. Crucially for this study, moreover, they were all exhaustively discussed and argued about, both while they were in progress and long after their eventual completion. In the four chapters that follow I set about a close examination of the discourse generated by each of the projects. The chapter summaries have given a broad indication of the strands of debate and contestation involved. In each of the chapters themselves, following an introduction tracing the course of the project concerned, I seek to capture those strands in high focus, drawing out commonalities and noting points where discussion interconnects and those where it diverges.

I seek in parallel – in what is the core component of this study – to locate the discourse within a broader context, searching out connections between both the overarching themes and specific issues identified here with the content of other discourses. Such connections are not far to seek and, as already observed, they encompass a wide spectrum of subjects, relating not only to architecture but also to urban planning, national politics, and aspects of contemporary culture and society. Most importantly in the context of this thesis, discussion of the new developments is rich in reference to the City itself, and the City, moreover, in two distinct guises: on the one hand, the historic core of London with a unique and enduring significance in relation to both the capital itself and the nation as a whole; and on the other the principal centre of Britain's financial services industry. (So well established indeed is the latter connection that 'the City' remains a universal shorthand for the sector, even as the underlying geographical rationale has weakened.) Thus, for example, the decade-long debate on the future of Paternoster Square delved deep into the area's history from the seventeenth century, if not earlier, while the Broadgate commentary involved heavy emphasis on the state of the present-day City. The Mansion House debate ventured into the contemporary political environment and the Lloyd's case focussed attention on the role of buildings as image-makers for the firm or institution concerned.

On the basis of this analysis of the discourse I revert in the final chapter to the issues outlined earlier and seek to draw out answers to the questions posed as to the perceived relationship between these new buildings and spaces and other topics of contemporary debate, most especially the changes taking place in the City while these four projects were becoming the focus of attention. What can we conclude concerning the interaction between discourse relating to the built environment and those relating to global finance, urbanism and neoliberal politics? Where can we locate reception of these projects in the context of wider architectural discourse at this period? Also in this last chapter I point to possible openings for further research and sketch an outline of one specific option which would develop organically out of the present study. This would involve examining the discourse concerning the

proliferation of high-rise towers that have appeared in or near the City of London since the turn of the new century and the consequent impact on the City's character and above all its skyline.

CHAPTER 2
BOLD VISION OR DESTRUCTIVE OBSESSION? PETER PALUMBO AND THE MANSION HOUSE PROJECT

Peter Palumbo was in his early twenties when in 1958 he persuaded his father, a successful property developer, to set about acquiring a prominent City site located within the angle formed by the convergence of Poultry and Queen Victoria Street and currently given over to an assortment of Victorian offices and shops. Immediately to the east lay the Mansion House and the major junction fronting the Bank of England (figures 2.1 and 2.2). Thus did the younger Palumbo embark upon the central preoccupation of his career and thereby initiate one of the most protracted and contentious episodes in modern British architectural history. Palumbo would eventually fulfil his ambition to achieve a major development on the City site. However, its form would be quite unlike that he originally envisaged, the 'glass box' modernism of Mies van der Rohe's Mansion House Square giving way to the postmodernism of James Stirling's No 1 Poultry. The project[42] would be completed only at the end of a forty-year process involving fifteen years of site assembly, two planning inquiries and extended judicial proceedings, all to the accompaniment of vigorous and often acrimonious commentary and argument in the media. That debate spanned both the Mies and Stirling phases of the project, and encompassed an extensive range of themes relating to the significance of the site; the chosen architects and the designs they presented; the case for new development as against preservation of the existing buildings; the evolving role and character of the movement promoting preservation; the involvement of Prince Charles in architectural discourse; and the supposed influence of a Thatcherite political agenda on the course of events. Many of these themes will emerge again to a greater or lesser degree in relation to the other three projects with which this study is concerned. What marks out the Mansion House discourse, however, is the dominating presence of one private individual, Peter Palumbo, variously cast as hero and villain – the ruthless and obsessive developer, the visionary urban planner, the

[42] Except where otherwise indicated, reference to the 'Mansion House project' covers both the Mies and Stirling phases.

munificent and tireless patron of modern architecture, the dedicated curator of great twentieth century monuments.

Nor did interest in the Mansion House project cease with its completion. Both the finished building and the story behind it have continued to feature prominently in the narrative on the development of British architecture in the later twentieth century, the evolution of the planning and heritage protection regimes and the growth of the conservation movement. Renewed interest was prompted by the listing of the Stirling building in 2016 and a major exhibition devoted to the entire project the following year.[43] In the academic sphere, the urban geographer Jane M. Jacobs used the Palumbo project as a case study in a thesis on the role of heritage values in the urban transformation of contemporary London and a subsequent study of conflict over urban space in First World Cities in the postcolonial age.[44] The architectural critic Kester Rattenbury discussed the project in the context of her work on the coverage of architecture in the mainstream news media.[45] More recently, the architectural historian Michela Rosso has analysed the controversy surrounding the Mies scheme, while Timothy Hyde explores issues arising from the status of both the Mies and Stirling designs as posthumous projects.[46] To date, however, no attempt appears to have been made to examine the debate over the course of the project as a whole.

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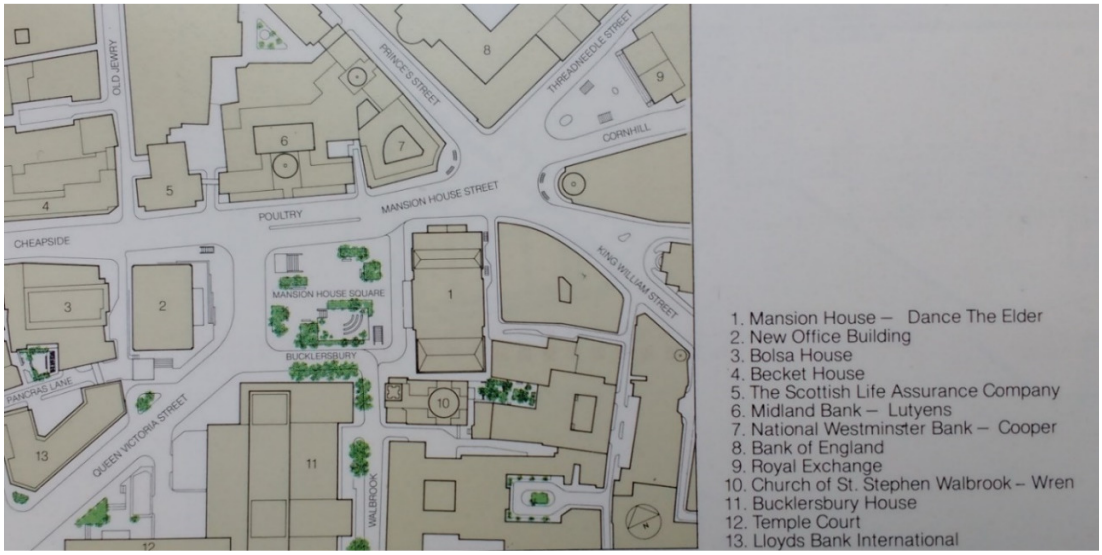
[43] 'Circling the Square: Mies van der Rohe and James Stirling', RIBA, 2017. An article by one of its curators provides a valuable narrative account of the project: Victoria Wilson, 'Circling the Square: Mies van der Rohe and James Stirling', *arq.urb*, 20 (September-December 2017), pp. 170-198.
[44] Jane M. Jacobs, *The Politics of the Past: Redevelopment in London* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1990); Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London: Routledge, 1996).
[45] Kester Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1989, Oxford Polytechnic, available via Ethos, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.305146; Kester Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased: Architecture in the UK national press', in Kester Rattenbury (editor), *This is not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 136-156.
[46] Michela Rosso, 'Heritage, populism and anti-modernism in the controversy of the Mansion House Square scheme', in Ákos Moravánszky and Torsten Lange (editors), *Re-Framing Identities: Architecture's Turn to History, 1970-1990* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017), pp. 227-243; Timothy Hyde, 'Signed, anonymous: The persona of the architect in the Mansion House debate', in Amanda Reeser Lawrence and Ana Miljački (editors), *Terms of Appropriation: Essays on Architectural Influence* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 13-23, and Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgement: On Architecture in the Public Eye* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 144-154.



2.1 Mansion House site plan. (Source: *The Mansion House Square Scheme*, London: Number 1 Poultry Limited, 1981.)

Following an outline of the project's history from conception to completion, this chapter will examine the main strands that extended across the Mansion House discourse from the late-1960s into the new century. For a conception initiated in the 1960s, it is perhaps no surprise that the subject of Big Bang and the late-twentieth century global City does not stand at the centre of this discourse, though it can be discerned in the background. The principal themes considered in the chapter are these: the multiple identities of Peter Palumbo; the response to the Mies plan on its initial appearance, the very different reaction provoked by its revival and the factors underlying this transformation; the heated controversy surrounding the merits of the site in its existing form, the protagonists involved and the attitudes and agendas attributed to them; the significance of this project in relation to Prince Charles's involvement in architectural discourse; the ambivalent reception of the Stirling scheme and the building's speedy emergence as a candidate for preservation as 'historic'; and the project's relationship – in both Mies and Stirling phases - with the contemporary political environment. A final section of the chapter will reflect on the various arenas, textual and visual, in which the debate was conducted and on the particular contribution of one participant prominent not only in this context but across the whole of this study - the historian and polemicist Gavin Stamp.

2.2 Mansion House site from Bank Junction, c.1984. (Source: Gavin Stamp, *Lost Victorian Britain*, London: Aurum, 2010.)

The project described

1958-1969: a Mies project for London

Peter Palumbo has himself described the train of events that led to the engagement of the German-American modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to undertake his only UK commission.[47] The origins lay in Palumbo's introduction to the work of Mies while in his teens, which left him with a sustained enthusiasm for the architect and prompted the notion of a Mies building on the site he and his father were assembling in the City of London. In 1962 Palumbo met the architect and invited him to produce a design. The commission was accepted and a scheme quickly materialised in the form of 'Mansion House Square', a large-scale development comprising a nineteen-storey office tower faced in bronze and glass on the model of New York's Seagram Building; a surrounding landscaped plaza; and an underground shopping concourse (figures 2.3 and 2.4). The concept exemplified the 'International Style' in its post-war American rendering, an idiom particularly associated with Mies. With the architect-planner William Holford engaged to work

[47] This paragraph is based principally on Peter Palumbo, 'Mies van der Rohe: Mansion House Square and the tower type: the client', *UIA International Architect,* no. 3 (1984), pp. 23-25; Roger Berthoud, The man who loves quality', *Illustrated London News*, March 1987, pp. 36-37; 'The spectre of Mies over London: Jack Self interviews Lord Palumbo', *032c Magazine*, posted 9 January 2017: https://032c.com/lord-peter-palumbo (accessed 2 May 2018).

alongside Mies on the spatial aspects of the scheme, a planning application was submitted to the City Corporation in June 1968.[48] The plans were put on public display and were reported to have attracted a substantial number of comments, the majority favourable. In May 1969 the Corporation approved the scheme in principle but withheld full consent pending the developer's securing possession of the entire site. Yet within a few weeks Mies was dead; if his Mansion House commission was to proceed, it would be as a posthumous one.

2.3 Mies van der Rohe: Mansion House Square, model, as illustrated in *The Mansion House Square Scheme* (London: Number 1 Poultry Limited, 1981).

[48] Holford died in 1975. His name featured prominently in early commentary and he was in some accounts identified as principal author of the design. His involvement was subsequently eclipsed as the scheme came to be ever more closely identified with Mies. Yet a relatively recent account could still speak of Mies being commissioned 'to work with Holford on the design': John Gold, *The Practice of Modernism: Modern Architects and Urban Transformation, 1954-1972* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 143.

2.4 Mies van der Rohe: Seagram Building, 1954-1958. (Source: author's photograph.)

1981-1985: the Mies scheme revived

Site assembly took over a decade to complete and not until the turn of 1982 was Palumbo in a position to submit a new planning application. With it were the listed building and conservation area consent applications now required consequent on the listing of eight of the existing Victorian buildings scheduled for demolition and the entire site's inclusion within the Bank conservation area. Following public consultation, the City Corporation in September 1982 reversed its earlier view and refused consent on the grounds that the scheme was inappropriate to the location. Palumbo's response was to appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment, opening the way for a public inquiry, which took place over eight weeks in the summer of 1984. Leading architectural practitioners, including Richard Rogers, Norman Foster and James Stirling, appeared in support of the development, while ranged against it were the City Corporation, the Greater London Council, and a range of conservation interests led by the recently formed 'SAVE Britain's Heritage'.

The confrontation generated extensive interest across the media, especially when the scheme became the subject of a widely publicised adverse comment from Prince Charles. In May 1985 the Environment Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, announced his decision to accept the inquiry inspector's recommendation and dismiss the appeal.

1985-1998: the Stirling version

In rejecting the Mies scheme Jenkin indicated that he 'did not rule out development of the site if there were acceptable proposals for replacing the existing buildings', which were not of 'such overriding importance that their preservation should outweigh all other considerations'.[49] These words were seen as clear encouragement to Palumbo to come back with an alternative scheme and the developer accordingly turned to the James Stirling-Michael Wilford partnership to prepare one. Designated 'No 1 Poultry', the new scheme was of the low-rise 'groundscraper' type favoured by the post-Big Bang City and comprised a mix of offices, shops and public space. A new consent application was submitted in June 1986 and again the application was refused, now on the grounds of the potential impact on the character of the surrounding area and view of St. Paul's, together with the loss of listed buildings.[50] The result was another appeal and another inquiry, which ran for a month in 1988 and once more set the architectural establishment against the Corporation and conservation interests.[51] Again there was a hostile comment from Prince Charles. This time, however, the inspector recommended in favour of Palumbo and in June 1989 the Environment Secretary, now Nicholas Ridley, announced that the development could go ahead.

Palumbo then faced a further obstacle in the form of a legal challenge to Ridley's decision mounted by SAVE, which was eventually dismissed by the House of Lords in early 1991. A street closure inquiry, archaeological investigation and the impact of

[49] Words quoted in many sources, for example John Delafons, *Politics and Preservation* (London: E. and F.N. Spon, 1997), p. 172.
[50] Two designs were initially submitted, one involving retention of the Mappin and Webb building, the other full site clearance. in the event only the second was pursued.
[51] The conservation forces now included English Heritage, which was established in 1983 to exercise a range of functions relating to the historic environment in England and which inherited the conservation responsibilities of the Greater London Council on the latter's abolition in 1986.

recession combined to delay construction until 1994. By this point Stirling's scheme too was a posthumous one, for the architect had died in 1992, leaving Wilford to see the project through to its completion in 1998. Less than twenty years later it was accorded Grade II* listed status.

Peter Palumbo: inheritance and identity

Oliver Marriott, author of the principal account of the post-war commercial property industry, described it as the beneficiary of 'one of the most profitable booms ever known', in the course of which a 'relatively large number of individuals became extremely rich'. Marriott identified one of these as Rudolph Palumbo, who had built up a successful property business before the war and been particularly associated with the controversial demolition of the eighteenth-century Norfolk House in London's West End.[52] Resuming his activities after the war, he was responsible for a number of major office developments in the capital and especially the City.[53] Marriott depicted Palumbo as publicity-shy and it is therefore no accident that he remained less well known than other leading developers of the post-war period such as Joe Levy, Jack Cotton and Harry Hyams. Rudolph's name nonetheless features prominently in the Mansion House context, since it was the successful business and ample financial resources inherited by his son, Peter, that were seen as enabling the latter to embark on the project and remain committed to it over four decades. Some commentators, moreover, looked beyond this factual observation to accord Rudolph a more explicitly loaded place in the narrative, describing him as 'shadowy', 'obsessively secretive' and 'the notorious developer' responsible for the loss of

[52] The loss of Norfolk House was among the cases prompting the formation of the Georgian Group: Gavin Stamp, 'How we celebrated the Coronation: The formation and early years of the Georgian Group', *Georgian Group Journal*, XX (2012), pp. 1-21 (p. 11).

[53] Oliver Marriott, *The Property Boom* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967), pp. 1-2, 68. For a more recent portrayal of the prominent developers in the context of their era see Richard Davenport-Hines, *An English Affair: Sex, Class and Power in the Age of Profumo* (London: Harper Press, 2013), pp. 149-173. One of Rudolph's largest developments was St. Swithin's House, situated close by the Mansion House site, described as 'tall, heavy and inert': Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 598. The block was demolished in 2008 to make way for Norman Foster's Walbrook development.

Norfolk House.[54] For Gavin Stamp he was the epitome of the greedy speculative property developer, a type comparable with an equally reviled species of the post-war era, the slum landlord personified by Peter Rachman.[55] The purpose of such references was clear enough. Though the younger Palumbo was patently not of that earlier generation, there was an evident intention among some opponents of his project to connect the ambitions of the son with the record of the father, whether by depiction of Peter as seeking to emulate Rudolph or, alternatively, as hoping to expiate the latter's alleged misdeeds.[56]

So far as Peter himself is concerned, his status as the individual owner and developer of a prestige City site was, as the journalist Shirley Green noted, unusual by the 1980s, when land ownership in the Square Mile had become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the City Corporation, livery companies or financial institutions and when major developments were for the most part undertaken on a corporate basis.[57] Nonetheless, given his family background and the nature of his project – an ambitious development scheme on a cleared site - Palumbo was for some commentators a buccaneering property tycoon in the mould of those who had already put their imprint on the centre of London and other cities since the war. It was a reading which played well with conservationist opponents of the scheme in a context where the destructive effect of post-war redevelopment had become an established refrain within the conservation narrative. Hence Gavin Stamp's warning that approval of the Mies plan would herald 'a return to …. an era inextricably associated with the built achievements of Messrs Hyams, Samuel, Clore, Levy and Cotton'.[58] Even a more sympathetic commentator such as Deyan Sudjic could

[54] Deyan Sudjic, 'The cuckoo in Wren's nest', *Sunday Times*, 14 February 1982, p. 19; Laurence Marks, 'Palumbo's tower of trouble', *Observer*, 12 May 1985, p. 9; Gavin Stamp, 'A monument to the dead', *Spectator*, 12 May 1984, pp. 10-12.
[55] Gavin Stamp, 'I was Lord Kitchener's valet or, how the VicSoc saved London', *Twentieth Century Architecture, no. 6* (2002), pp. 130-144 (142-143).
[56] Stamp, 'A monument to the dead', *Spectator*, 12 May 1984, pp. 10-12; Jules Lubbock, 'Spades and shovels', *New Statesman*, 4 May 1984, p. 34.
[57] Shirley Green, *Who Owns London?* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), pp. 59-60.
[58] Gavin Stamp, 'Save London from Palumbo', *Spectator*, 4 May 1985, pp. 18-19.

compare the Mansion House scheme with Jack Cotton's controversial (and abortive) plan for the redevelopment of Piccadilly Circus.[59]

2.5 Peter Palumbo with the Mansion House Square model. (Source: Lord (Peter) Palumbo personal website.)

The image of Palumbo as classic property tycoon had to compete, however, with a number of other readings. A commentator firmly opposed to the Mies scheme was nonetheless impressed by the sheer ambition of its promoter, who seemed to be reviving the tradition of the London entrepreneur-developer of an earlier age, exemplified by Nicholas Barbon and Thomas Cubitt, figures responsible for, respectively, Georgian Bloomsbury and Victorian Belgravia.[60] Yet for his own part Palumbo showed no inclination to align himself with the speculative developer of any era. He saw his role as that of radical urban master planner (figure 2.5). For him Mies's Mansion House Square was not just another large-scale speculative City office development. Rather it was a creative urban intervention which would bring substantial public benefit in the form of extensive landscaped space, modern shopping facilities, improved traffic and pedestrian circulation, a long overdue stage-set for ceremonial events and new views of important buildings. The model Palumbo offered was not the profit-driven ventures of Cotton and Clore or of Barbon and Cubitt but earlier exercises in rational City planning, specifically the schemes for

[59] Sudjic, 'The cuckoo in Wren's nest', *Sunday Times*, 14 February 1982, p. 19.
[60] Matthew Saunders, contribution to *The Mansion House Square Scheme: Stop It* (London: SAVE Britain's Heritage, 1982), pages unnumbered.

a grid-based redesign following the Great Fire, or the William Holford-Charles Holden plan for the post-war City.[61]

Such claimed antecedents (and given the reported involvement of William Holford in the early stages of the project) might well allow Mies's scheme to be read as a belated example of the post-war comprehensive urban development, a concept which will be further examined in the Paternoster Square context. However, Mansion House Square was not an undertaking for which responsibility lay with a public authority or corporate body. Rather, here was an ambitious planning intervention conceived, directed and (crucially) financed by a single private individual, an undertaking for which it is hard to identify any modern-day parallel, at least in a UK context. It is noticeable that for some commentators - particularly the more sympathetic ones, doubtless keen to counter the ruthless speculator reading - Palumbo was a figure to be characterised not as a developer or project client but rather as a 'patron', an unusual term in the context of late twentieth century architecture and one suggestive of an earlier age. It can be read as conveying a clear sense of personal ownership of the project concerned, an ownership grounded in discerning artistic judgement. To the extent that 'patron' has continued to occur in the context of modern architecture, it has tended to be in the realm of country houses and, more rarely in the UK, privately sponsored cultural institutions.[62] Yet for the journalist Martin Pawley, one of Mies's keenest advocates both in his writing and at the public inquiry, Palumbo's willingness to invest so much of his wealth and time on the project marked him out as a 'true patron of architecture'.[63] This image was enhanced by Palumbo's appointment as chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, which prompted discussion of his interests across the arts generally and his

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[61] *The Mansion House Square Scheme* (London: Number 1 Poultry Limited, 1981), pp. 1,16.
[62] See for example John Martin Robinson, *The Latest Country Houses* (London, Bodley Head, 1984), p. 6; David Watkin, *The Classical Country House: From the Archives of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press, 2010), p. 16. Norman Foster said of the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts that its architecture was 'inseparable from the enlightenment and driving force of the patrons behind it': 'Meeting the Sainsburys', in David Jenkins, *On Foster… Foster On* (Munich: Prestel, 2000), pp. 710-711. See also the reference to Phyllis Lambert below.
[63] Martin Pawley, 'Of Mies and men's inspiration', *Guardian,* 13 August 1984, p. 9; Martin Pawley, 'Raising Merrie England', *Guardian*, 27 December 1989, p. 21. See also Stephen Gardiner, 'Mies in the London jungle', *Spectator*, 1 November 1968, p. 21; Lanning Roper letter, *Country Life*, 29 April 1982, p. 1210; J.M. Richards, 'Stirling in Poultry', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 1989, p. 746.

stated belief in the virtue of private patronage, of which his own commitment to the City project was cited as a prime example.[64] Palumbo for his part seemed comfortable with the role of patron, endorsing a description of himself as a 'throwback to the eighteenth century' and voicing an ambition to match the achievement of France's President Mitterrand, whose personally driven programme of *grands travaux* was then at its height.[65]

Linked to the patron motif, and also prominent in comment on the Arts Council appointment, was the image of Palumbo in the role of architectural connoisseur assembling a personal portfolio of modernist buildings he admired. This again seemed to play well with those favourably disposed towards Palumbo's enterprise. It was noted that a celebrated work of Mies, the Farnsworth House in Illinois, had so impressed Palumbo that he purchased it, subsequently expanding his architectural 'collection' to include an apartment in one of Mies's Lake Shore Drive blocks in Chicago, Frank Lloyd Wright's Kentuck Knob and Le Corbusier's Maisons Jaoul.[66] Nor was ownership of these properties dismissed as merely the expression of a rich man's acquisition instinct. Palumbo was seen as having appointed himself, as it were, curator of a gallery of modern architecture, seeking not only to possess the buildings but to restore them - he was recorded as spending $1 million on repairs and improvements to the Farnsworth House - and preserve them for the enjoyment of others. It was an attitude, the critic Stephen Gardiner suggested, common enough in the case of paintings (which Palumbo collected in quantity) but rare in the field of architecture.[67] Especially telling in the present context is Phyllis Lambert's description of Palumbo's acquisitions. Lambert was another figure widely

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[64] See for example Andrew Billen, 'A modernist in art and funding', *The Times*, 8 September 1988, p. 3; 'Godfather for the arts', *Observer*, 11 September 1988, p. 13. A further high-profile example of Palumbo's patronage was his twenty-year campaign to place a Henry Moore-carved altar in the Wren church of St. Stephen Walbrook, a display of determination comparable with that devoted to the cause of Mies and Stirling: Martin Wainwright, 'Court leaves purists legless', *Guardian*, 18 February 1987, p. 2.

[65] Andrew Sinclair, *The Need to Give: The Patrons and the Art*s (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1990), p. 188; 'Builder of dreams or monuments?', *Independent*, 4 December 1993, p. 16.

[66] Martin Pawley, 'A new man with old problems', *Guardian*, 24 March 1989, p.30; Paula Deitz, 'The keeper of 3 architectural icons', *New York Times*, 28 December 1989, p. C1(L).

[67] Stephen Gardiner, 'Palumbo's palaces', *Observer Magazine*, 1 July 1990, pp. 22-27; Maritz Vandenberg, *The Farnsworth House* (London: Phaidon, 2003), p. 2.

characterised as an architectural 'patron' and indeed one inviting comparison with Palumbo in her devotion to Mies and her sustained commitment to the realisation of his Seagram building design. Clearly an admirer of Palumbo and evidently seeing no reason to distinguish between the 'patron' and 'collector' aspects of his identity, Lambert extended the catalogue of his personal portfolio to include an additional item, the Mansion House project.[68]

Mansion House Square phase one: the Mies scheme launched

'Battle is now joined', proclaimed the *Architects' Journal* , 'between architects, developers, the GLC, the City of London and the Royal Fine Art Commission whether Mies van der Rohe's 290 foot high tower in glass and bronze should be allowed to rear its cool and predictable head over the city'.[69] In fact the firm impression emerging from the discourse is that at this first stage of the Mansion House saga there was no such battle. On the contrary, contemporary reaction to the initial appearance of Mies's design comes across as strikingly modest in scale and subdued in tone, certainly in comparison with the confrontation it would provoke a decade and a half later. The *Journal's* anticipation of fierce argument over Mies can be juxtaposed with the remarkable lack of interest shown by the *Architectural Review*, whose coverage at this point was limited to a brief report and illustration under the 'Marginalia' heading - and this in an issue which included a full assessment of Mies's newly completed Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and an interview with the architect.[70]

Discussion of the proposal was confined to the architectural press and specialist correspondents in the mainstream media, though with reference to lay opinion as evidenced by the reported response to the public exhibition.[71] The overall view was firmly positive. Though by the late 1960s the hegemony of architectural modernism

[68] Phyllis Lambert, 'Love in the Time Of the WTC', *Log*, No. 2 (Spring 2004), pp. 31-38 (p. 33). On Lambert herself see Phyllis Lambert, *Building Seagram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) and in particular Barry Bergdoll's description of Lambert at p. ix.
[69] 'Mies comes to town', *Architects' Journal*, 9 October 1968, p. 766.
[70] 'Marginalia', *Architectural Review*, December 1968, p. 462.
[71] The exhibition attracted 30,000 visitors, 3,000 of whom offered comments, the majority favourable: Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe: a Critical Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 361.

was already coming under challenge, architectural commentators remained predominantly modernist in outlook and they were at one in condemning the conservative language that characterised much of the City's post-war architecture – an idiom that Nikolaus Pevsner had summed up ten years earlier as 'a style of timidity, of playing safe, of introducing just enough of the C20 to avoid being ridiculous'.[72] Against this background the prospect of London at last acquiring a major building designed by one of the principal figures of the Modern Movement was greeted with enthusiasm.[73] Perhaps the only cause for surprise is the absence from the commentary of any cross-reference to another major City project then nearing completion, namely the Commercial Union tower, a design widely remarked on as unequivocally Miesian in character and directly comparable with the Seagram Building (figure 2.6).[74] Perhaps the significance this building might otherwise have had among Mies admirers had faded with the emerging prospect of a work from the master's own hand.

[72] Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 104. In his 1962 revision of the text Pevsner would write, in an observation directed mainly at the City, that 'the neo-classical, neo-Georgian spectre is even now not yet laid': Nicholas Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster*, 2nd edition, revised (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p.108. That comment survived into the volume's 1973 revision: Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster*, 3rd edition, revised by Bridget Cherry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 111.

[73] See for example Gardiner, 'Mies in the London jungle', *Spectator*, 1 November 1968, p. 21; Tim Rock, 'Waiting for our Mies', *Observer*, 20 October 1968, p. 28. Walter Gropius is part-credited with a single house in Chelsea and a subsequently reworked design for a Mayfair block. The UK lacks an example of Le Corbusier's work.

[74] Michael Manser, 'Hanging floors in the sky, EC3', *Observer*, 30 August 1964, p. 23; Michael Manser, 'Higher pleasures', *Observer*, 18 January 1970, p. 31. For Pevsner the building 'gets closer to [Mies's] immaculate purity than any other building in London': Pevsner and Cherry, p. 254.

2.6 Gollins, Melvin, Ward: Commercial Union (later Aviva) Tower, 1963-1969. (Source: architecture.com.)

All that said, approval for the Mies scheme was not even at this stage unanimous. Anticipating the subsequent confrontation over the project (and more recent debate on the appropriateness of building high in the City) doubts were expressed by the Greater London Council and Royal Fine Art Commission as to the building's height and consequent impact on views towards St. Paul's. The Commission's concerns were predictable, since it had already made clear that, while not against tall buildings as such, it would challenge projects with a potential adverse impact on their setting, particularly when that involved a monument of national importance such as St. Paul's.[75] It was a policy that explained why the Commission's strictures on the Mies scheme were not replicated in the case of the much taller but more distantly located National Westminster tower.[76] Perhaps less expected was the similar objection voiced by a figure still then seen as in the mainstream architectural establishment and a modernist: Frederick Gibberd, who pronounced the tower's

[75] Robert Bargery, *Design Champion: The Twentieth Century Royal Fine Art Commission, 1924-1999* (London: Royal Fine Art Commission Trust, 2019), pp. 44-45. Two Commissioners – William Holford and John Summerson – supported the scheme.
[76] Judy Hillman, 'Backing for 600 ft building', *Observer*, 27 July 1969, p. 2; Bargery, *Design Champion*, p. 45.

height and impact on the surroundings as a 'disaster'.[77] But in fact Gibberd's stance would lend support to a recent depiction of the architect as standing outside the modernist mainstream by this stage of his career and dismissed by younger practitioners as a marginal figure.[78]

When it came to the Mies tower's setting, as opposed to the building itself, reactions diverged to reflect alternative approaches to the planning of the contemporary City. On one side there was approval for the new space created by Mies's plaza and the full view now permitted of Wren's St. Stephen Walbrook, Lutyens's Midland Bank and the flank of the Mansion House. 'The jungle has been cut down: a piece of real town planning has been done', was the verdict of the architect and critic Stephen Gardiner.[79] It was a comment consistent with the view that the City of London was in urgent need of an injection of rational planning to cut through the tangle of medieval streets, open up spaces, facilitate movement and improve the business environment. The thinking was essentially modernist, though it was a distinctively British brand of modernism, firmly rooted in the picturesque tradition (which will be discussed more fully in relation to Paternoster Square). Pevsner had written a decade earlier of the need for coherent planning as the key to the achievement of a high-quality built environment in the City, recalling the failure to take the opportunity offered by the proposed post-Fire redesign and more recently to implement the Holden-Holford post-war scheme - both of which, as already noted, Palumbo invoked as a precedent for his own project - and pointing to the encouraging examples of the Barbican and Holford's Paternoster scheme.[80] Yet this was not, even in the 1960s, a uniformly accepted view. For the journalist Tim Rock the wider setting of Mies's building constituted a major defect in the overall concept. Enthusiastic enough for the tower itself ('unquestionably …. the most distinguished

[77] Frederick Gibberd, letter, *The Times*, 1 February 1969, p. 11.
[78] Christine Huo Lan Manley, *Frederick Gibberd* (Swindon: Historic England, 2017), pp. xii, 111.
[79] Gardiner, 'Mies in the London jungle', *Spectator*, 1 November 1968, p. 21. The writer was a modernist, though not an uncritical one.
[80] Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster* (1957), p. 105. Pevsner was nonetheless clear that new planning schemes must be consonant with the streetscape and picturesque character of the historic City. I have discovered no Pevsner comment on the Mies Mansion House project.

modern building in the City'), Rock nonetheless anticipated objections that would later be central to the case against the Mies scheme as a whole. The plaza, he believed, would be alien to the character of the City streetscape and, far from opening up pleasing vistas, the new space would expose aspects of the surroundings better be left obscured, including the Mansion House's 'weak' western flank and the 'third-rate, brash, crude post-war developers' architecture' exemplified by the adjacent Bucklersbury House. For Rock the ideal solution was to retain the existing 'quirky Victorian triangular building' and allow the Mies building to reveal itself as 'an uplifting surprise element, rather than as a self-conscious stage set-piece'.[81]

2.7 John Belcher: Mappin and Webb building, Poultry, as depicted on the cover of SAVE's campaign booklet, *Let Poultry Live Again* (London: Save Britain's Heritage, 1988).

Rock's 'quirky Victorian' building was the neo-Gothic block of shops and offices occupying the acute angle at the junction of Poultry and Queen Victoria Street, designed by John Belcher and dubbed the 'Mappin and Webb' building (figure 2.7). Given the totemic significance this feature of Palumbo's site would assume in the arguments of the 1980s, the casual nature of this reference points up how little concern for the existing Victorian fabric featured in the project's initial reception.

[81] Rock, 'Waiting for our Mies', *Observer*, 20 October 1968, p. 28.

Aside from Rock's passing comment, I have failed to find any evidence of interest at this stage in the buildings that would be sacrificed to make way for the Mies scheme, still less of any pressure for their retention. Clearly the loss of existing buildings was not seen by the City Corporation as a reason to withhold in-principle approval. Still more striking is the absence of any protest from the organised voice of conservation. SAVE Britain's Heritage, which would make the running in the later debate, was not yet established, while the existing amenity societies appear to have taken no notice of the redevelopment proposal. Especially noteworthy is the apparent indifference of the Victorian Society (a decade old and with a number of conservation successes to its credit), its reports for 1968 and 1969 making no mention of the buildings on the Mansion House site as among the cases meriting concern. Did this silence reflect a view that a melange of mid-Victorian shops and offices was of insufficient importance to be worth seeking to preserve, or alternatively that any such effort would be futile? Certainly the main thrust of the Society's activity during the later 1960s was directed towards high-profile cases such as St Pancras station and hotel and the Government offices in Whitehall, prestige buildings of conspicuous scale and indisputable architectural ambition, concerning which a preservation case could be convincingly constructed.[82] Though its outlook was expanding to include a wider range of building types, the emphasis at this stage of its development remained on the incontrovertible 'monuments' to the exclusion of examples of more modest scale or character.

A similar attitude was indeed apparent more widely. Nineteenth-century buildings were listed only on a narrowly selective basis. The notions of historic townscape and what was termed 'group value' – issues that featured prominently in the later Mansion House discourse - found formal expression only in 1967 with the provision for conservation area designation. Nor was the City of London yet seen as a priority for attention in this context, despite the campaigns to save a few individual buildings such as the Coal Exchange. A brief Victorian Society report on the City presented the conservation case only in the most hesitant terms, acknowledging the need for

[82] For a review of the Society's early history see Gavin Stamp, 'What did we do for the Victorians?', in Rosemary Hill and others (editors), *Studies in Victorian Art and Design*, 2 (2010), pp. 7-26.

continuing large-scale development and urging only that 'the better….pieces of Victorian and Edwardian architecture are kept where possible' and that 'the unique quality of the specifically City townscapes is, as far as possible, perpetuated where development takes place'.[83] Not until 1971 did the City Corporation designate its first conservation areas.

Mansion House Square phase two: the Mies scheme in a changed world

The generally appreciative reception of Palumbo's project in 1968 and the apparent indifference to the prospective loss of existing historic fabric were replaced by a very different response when the proposal reappeared thirteen years later. Two related factors - both well established by the end of the 1970s - underlay this transformation. One was the general reaction against everything summed up as 'modernism' in both individual building design and urban planning.[84] The other was the increasing centrality of conservation values in architectural discourse and the growing influence of the movement promoting those values.

Enhanced interest in the protection of the historic built environment and associated expansion of the movement devoted to that cause was one strand within a rapidly developing concern for environmental issues generally. Key indicators of this new mood included a series of well publicised campaigns in defence of historic urban areas under threat such as the centre of Bath, a clutch of polemical books deploring the destruction of the built heritage, the designation of 1975 as European Architectural Heritage Year and – especially significant in the present context – the launch of a new pressure group under the title 'SAVE Britain's Heritage'.[85] The

[83] *Victorian Society Annual*, 1968-69, pp. 17-18.
[84] See the accounts in for example Alan Powers, *Britain: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion, 2007), chapter 5; Gold, *The Practice of Modernism*, chapter 12.
[85] See Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation: Antiquity to Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2013), particularly pp. 350-355; Gavin Stamp, 'The art of keeping one jump ahead: Conservation societies in the twentieth century', in Michael Hunter (editor), *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1996), pp. 77-98; Alan Powers, 'The heroic period of conservation', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 7 (2004), pp. 8-18; John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 61-80. For SAVE, see Kenneth Powell, 'SAVE and the Seventies', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, 7 (2004), pp. 147-156; Marcus Binney, *Save Britain's Heritage 1975-2005: Thirty Years of Campaigning* (London: Scala, 2005).

values and rhetoric of conservation were, moreover, evolving. Nineteenth-century architecture was becoming firmly established as a specific focus of concern, now with greater enthusiasm for the protection of Victorian fabric in general, as opposed to a few outstanding examples.[86] Additional legal protection had come in the form of major changes to the listed building regime, with a resurvey of historic urban centres particularly threatened by redevelopment and revision of the listing criteria to include buildings of value within a group of special historic interest.[87] These developments found clear expression in relation to the City of London. If the City had not been a major issue for conservationists at the time of the Mansion House scheme's debut, attitudes had changed fundamentally within a decade. Concern at the loss of buildings and streetscape in the City featured prominently in polemics such as those just mentioned, while 1976 saw the publication of *Save the City*, an amenity society audit of the Square Mile's historic environment. This substantial document pointed to the 'exceptional townscape value' of the Mansion House site as a whole, as well as the architectural quality of its individual components. It therefore urged both that Palumbo's redevelopment should not be revived and that the site be included within the Bank conservation area.[88] The City Corporation's own planning policies placed new emphasis on protection of the historic environment and a programme of conservation area designation.[89] Thus it was that, by the time a new planning application for Palumbo's scheme came forward, Mappin and Webb and several other buildings scheduled for demolition had been listed and the entire site was subject to conservation area control.

It was against this background that attitudes to the revived scheme were formed. No longer was discussion of Mies's design confined to a handful of modernist architectural commentators. No longer was there a benign view from the planning

[86] Mark Girouard. 'The evolving taste for Victorian architecture', *Apollo*, February 1973, pp. 127-137; see also issues of *Victorian Society Annual* for this period.
[87] Historic England, 'About the list', https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/about-the-list (accessed 2 May 2018).
[88] David Lloyd and others, *Save the City: A Conservation Study of the City of London* (London: Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and others, 1976, republished with addendum 1979), p. 46. The conservation area centred on the Bank intersection and encompassed the surrounding streets and alleys.
[89] *Conservation Areas in the City of London* (London: City of London, Department of Planning, 1994).

authority. And, crucially, no longer was the fate of the existing buildings on the site a matter of indifference. Palumbo's development was now to became the subject of 'perhaps the most significant set-piece architectural battle since the war'.[90] That comment referred specifically to the planning appeal inquiry. The inquiry, however, represented only the central component of the wider and longer confrontation between those wanting to see Mies's conception realised and those determined to block it, a confrontation fought out in the broadsheet (and to a degree the tabloid) press and on the television screen no less than in the formal proceedings in the City's Guildhall.[91] The conflict was presented as essentially between, on the one side, adherents of architectural modernism who continued to relish the prospect of London gaining a major work by one of its outstanding exponents; and, on the other, those committed to the cause of historic environment conservation who, unsympathetic to modernism on principle, rejected the case for the destruction of existing buildings and streetscape required by Palumbo's scheme. Such a characterisation is broadly valid, though to take the analysis no further is to ignore the nuances in the arguments advanced on each side and the fact that the position taken by some participants in the debate was the reverse of what might have been expected.

The positive critical reception accorded to the Mies design on its initial appearance reflected a continuing faith in modernism as the progressive, forward-looking language of architecture. By the time of the project's relaunch that view was certainly still heard, not least from Peter Palumbo himself, for whom Mies's scheme represented an 'act of confidence in the future'.[92] Stephen Gardiner, cited earlier, remained enthusiastic, describing the concept as 'daring' and bringing 'polish, excitement and gaiety to this depressing corner of the City'.[93] Among the scheme's most prominent advocates was the then RIBA President Michael Manser, a

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[90] Bryan Appleyard, 'Architecture at the barricades', *The Times*, 30 April 1984, p. 9.
[91] Given the centrality of the inquiry in the debate, much of the wider commentary was inevitably prompted by evidence, written or oral, presented. Though inquiry documents are accessible in public archives, they did not in themselves form part of the general discourse and are not therefore a primary focus for attention here.
[92] *The Mansion House Square Scheme* , pp. 2-3.
[93] Stephen Gardiner, 'Mighty Mies', *Guardian*, 10 June 1984 p. 21.

committed modernist seen as working in the Miesian tradition.[94] Manser saw the scheme as part of the necessary and long overdue modernisation of the City of London, asserting the need for new buildings to accommodate the technology-based activities of City businesses and accusing opponents of seeking to block 'change and progress.' Echoing Palumbo's own words, he urged approval as a 'vote of confidence for the future'.[95] That said, it is noticeable that, though a *Times* editorial commended the scheme as appropriate to the City's 'functional revolution'[96], there was little attempt to relate Mies's conception (now twenty years old) to the impending Big Bang changes.

Yet, in contrast to 1968, advocacy of the scheme as a necessary and overdue expression of modernity was up against a clear counter-narrative. This project, its opponents argued, had nothing to do with notions of progress and the future. Mies was dead and so was the form of architecture his design exemplified. To proceed with the scheme would therefore be to impose on the City nothing less than an anachronism. For the journalist Simon Jenkins, established as a leading conservationist voice in the broadsheet press, the Mies scheme 'had all the hallmarks of a discredited building period'.[97] 'How can the construction of a tower designed in the 1960s possibly be a "gesture of confidence in the future of the City"?', asked SAVE's Sophie Andreae.[98] Such sentiments were predictable enough when coming from within conservationists, for whom hostility to Miesian modernism was little short of an article of faith. More unexpected were the reservations of those who might well have been cast as modernist proselytisers. Years earlier the prominent architectural writer James Richards, a figure closely associated with the Modern Movement, had written of Mies's 'sophisticated urban style' and 'subtlety of

[94] See Peter Murray, 'Miesian modernist', *C20*, 2017, no 1, pp. 16-21.
[95] Michael Manser, letter, *The Times*, 1 May 1985, p. 17. The claimed need for a new building programme was challenged even within the City itself, most significantly by the Corporation, whose 1984 draft local plan embodied the view (later modified) that the Square Mile's economic interests would be best served by preservation of its historic environment. See also Christopher Fildes, 'Why the City does not support Mansion House Square', *Spectator*, 11 May 1985, p.19, and letters, *The Times*, 4 May 1985, p. 9 and 7 May 1985, p. 13.
[96] 'Plumping for Palumbo', *The Times*, 6 May 1985, p. 11.
[97] Simon Jenkins, 'Life after Palumbo', *Sunday Times*, 26 May 1985, p. 16.
[98] 'Mansion House plan', *The Times*, 29 April 1985, p. 13.

proportion', yet he now dismissed the architect's London design as 'simply too late, a throw-back to an architectural episode that had already passed'.[99] Richards was writing after the scheme's demise, but a similar view could be heard at the very moment of the Mies plan's relaunch. The American critic Paul Goldberger has written extensively about the Modern Movement and described the buildings of Mies as 'among the richest works of architecture ever created'.[100] Nonetheless he could in 1981 acknowledge that the International Style 'glass box' had become outmoded, pointing particularly (against the background of the 1970s oil crises) to its inefficiency in energy terms. A sign of the times, noted Goldberger, was the interest Skidmore, Owings and Merrill – the practice hitherto most closely identified with the corporate 'Miesian box' – were showing in the work of younger architects identified with what was by now labelled the postmodern idiom.[101] Philip Johnson's AT&T building, going up just as the merits of Mies's London design were under debate, is widely seen as indicative of the new era. Whether Palumbo was aware of Goldberger's assessment is unclear, but he would certainly have known of Johnson's own opinion. Protégé of Mies and his collaborator on the Seagram Building, Johnson had nonetheless broken with both Mies personally and with the International Style, which, he was later to declare, 'had a longer life……than ever it deserved'.[102] It was evidently on this basis that Johnson was prepared to add his voice to the opposition to Palumbo, declaring it 'a bad idea for one of the greatest architects in the 20th century to be represented in what may be the greatest city in the 20th century by a posthumous and unimportant piece of architecture…..Both Mies and London deserve better monuments'.[103]

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[99] Richards, Stirling in Poultry', *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 July 1989, p. 746. The comment was consistent with Richards's disillusion in later years at the impact of modernism on urban fabric and his consequent involvement in the conservation movement: Gavin Stamp, 'Sir James Richards', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (2004) (accessed 17 July 2018). For Richards's earlier remark see his *Modern Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 110.
[100] Paul Goldberger, 'House proud', *New Yorker*, 2 July 2001, pp. 76-80 (p. 76).
[101] Paul Goldberger, *The Skyscraper* (New York: Knopf, 1981), pp. 139-140.
[102] Philip Johnson, new foreword to Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: W Norton, 1995), p. 15. For Johnson's changing attitude to Mies see Schulze and Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe*, pp. 338-339.
[103] Letter to Gavin Stamp, 16 May 1984, reproduced both at the time and subsequently. The text is included in Catherine Croft, 'Missing masterpiece?' *C20*, 2017 No 1, pp. 32-37.

Johnson's reference to the scheme in the role of monument (if in his view an unworthy one) points towards another strand in the discourse. Mansion House Square might well be characterised as not only the work of a dead architect but also the embodiment of an outmoded form but if so there was a valid case to be made for it as a commemoration of both the man and the form. Palumbo himself, for all his emphasis on the new, seems to have had a retrospective significance in mind when he described his project as 'taking its place as part of the nation's architectural heritage' as a 'last testament' of Mies and Holford.[104] He would in due course attach a similar 'memorial' function to the Stirling scheme, commending it as 'part of Jim Stirling's legacy… it's important for his memory'.[105] Here evidently is Palumbo in his role of architectural collector-curator, albeit with the focus now not on his personal portfolio but on the notion of a national showcase of architecture, a resource which he himself was seeking to enrich by the addition of a Mies building, or in the event Stirling's.[106] But the 'memorial' motif was deployed to negative effect too. For the journalist and active conservationist Colin Amery, if Mansion House Square was a memorial, then it was one 'to now defunct ideas of the 1930s'.[107] Stamp entitled one his most excoriating pieces on the scheme 'A monument to the dead', asserting that 'in terms of the obligatory destruction of old urban fabric there is precious little to choose between [Mies's] megalomania and that of, say, Albert Speer. Mansion House Square will be a monument to totalitarianism: in this case financial rather than political'.[108] Stamp's hand was unmistakeable too in an article comparing the Mies scheme with Mussolini's clearance of unplanned streets in Rome to make way

[104] *The Mansion House Square Scheme*, pp. 2-3.
[105] Martin Van der Weyer, 'An unfulfilled eccentric', *Spectator*, 23 October 1993, pp. 17-18.
[106] The notion has latterly been appropriated by English Heritage, which describes itself as responsible for the 'National Heritage Collection' of buildings and sites.
[107] Colin Amery, 'The wrong building in the wrong place', *Financial Times*, 30 April 1984, p. 12.
[108] Stamp, 'A monument to the dead', *Spectator*, 12 May 1984, pp. 10-12. However combative the language, it is unlikely to have been unconsidered, for similar sentiments appear elsewhere in Stamp's writing; Le Corbusier for example he described as exemplifying 'all the destructive forces of the twentieth century .....collectivism, totalitarianism and megalomania': Gavin Stamp, 'The consequences of Le Corbusier', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 March 1987, p. 15. The juxtaposition of architectural modernism and totalitarian political systems (of both left and right) was a recurrent theme not only for this writer but within the anti-modernist narrative overall.

for a new triumphal approach to St Peter's. The piece bore the heading 'Non monumentum'.[109]

Militant conservationists

'The victim of a great set-piece battle between the bedraggled forces of orthodox modern architecture, and the newly militant conservation establishment', was Deyan Sudjic's verdict on the rejection of the Mies Mansion House Square scheme.[110] The promotion of architectural modernism and defence of the historic environment had not always been seen as irreconcilable causes, as demonstrated by, for example, the active involvement of Alison and Peter Smithson in the campaign to preserve the Euston Arch and the presence of such figures as Nikolaus Pevsner, James Richards and Robert Furneaux Jordan among early supporters of the Victorian Society.[111] Nonetheless any such affinity seemed long past by the time of the Mansion House Square debate, which cast modernist ideology as a principal factor in the threatened destruction of historic fabric. What is striking in the present context are the terms in which the dialectic was characterised, of which Sudjic's comment provides a prime example. His language would have seemed well-nigh incomprehensible in 1968, when reception of Mies's conception was broadly positive and a conservation-oriented case against it all but invisible. A decade and a half later the scheme was up against a resistance dominated by the rhetoric of conservation. Sudjic's imagery was replicated in other commentary depicting advocates of Miesian modernism as representing the past and on the defensive in the face of a confident and sophisticated conservation movement. Stamp saw the presence of an 'ageing architectural establishment' among the scheme's backers as aptly symbolising what he regarded as the outmoded language of modernism, an observation presumably directed at Colin Wilson (then aged 62), Berthold Lubetkin (82) and John

[109] Editorial, 'Non monumentum', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 January 1982, p. 14.
[110] Deyan Sudjic, 'Invest in Stirling', *Sunday Times*, 18 May 1986, p. 54.
[111] Alison and Peter Smithson, *The Euston Arch and the Growth of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). John Pendlebury observes that both the Modern Movement and early conservation movement were moralistic in tone, sharing principles such as the stress on authenticity and honesty of expression, and truth to structure and materials: Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus*, p. 22.

Summerson (79).[112] There are perhaps resonances here of contemporary media references to the 'ageing leadership' of the Soviet Union and other eastern European Communist regimes in what proved to be the final years before their collapse. A similar if more surprising image was offered by Martin Pawley, who, committed modernist and Palumbo-supporter though he was, acknowledged that the 'parade of modern apologists at the public inquiry ….. looked like nothing so much as the collection of Nazi war criminals ….at Nuremberg' and that their case came across as uncertain and defensive, with no hint of modernist triumphalism. Noting the age and gender differences between each side at the inquiry, Pawley found a 'dreadful irony in the defence of modern architecture by octogenarians in wheelchairs and the defence of Victorian architecture by young persons not above giggling', concluding that 'today the past is invincible'.[113]

Kester Rattenbury, examining the coverage of contemporary architecture in the national media at this period, observed that, while Palumbo, with wealth, political connections and backing from leading architects, might have been expected to have every advantage in the debate, it was in the event his conservationist opponents (especially following the intervention of Prince Charles) who came across as having the upper hand.[114] Certainly, commentators sympathetic to Palumbo were taken aback by the assertiveness of the opposition. Most assertive was SAVE, which had consciously positioned itself as a new kind of conservation body - not a classic 'amenity society' but a pressure group with an emphasis on high-profile campaigning, a polemical style and a populist (rather than academic or antiquarian) ethos, an approach summed up by its journalist-founder, Marcus Binney, as involving 'good punchy copy, statistics and a juicy quote'.[115] For the architect

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[112] Stamp, 'A monument to the dead', *Spectator*, 12 May 1984, pp. 10-12.
[113] Pawley, 'Of Mies and men's inspiration', *Guardian,* 13 August 1984, p. 9. The comment prompted a robust response from Jules Lubbock, for whom it was confirmation that 'male chauvinism lies at the root of the destructive aspects of modern architecture…. Miesians are "grown men", conservationists are "giggling women"': Jules Lubbock, 'Yin quest', *New Statesman*, 24 August 1984, p. 27.
[114] Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, pp. 261-263.
[115] Jacobs, *The Politics of the Past*, pp. 78-81; Marcus Binney, *Save Britain's Heritage 1975-2005* (London: Scala, 2005), p. 15; Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, pp. 244-246. In both ethos and methods SAVE was a product of its time, the 1970s being a rich decade for the emergence of new 'activist' pressure groups, particularly in the environmental sector: Christopher Rootes,

Bernard Kaukas the Mansion House debate represented further evidence that 'there is no such thing as a reasonable conservationist. He or she is of the extreme militant tendency'.[116] Such language may not have been widely replicated, even among the scheme's supporters, though allegations of an opposition campaign to discredit both Palumbo and Mies personally might have seemed to lend credence to Kaukas's view.[117] Nonetheless 'militant' was also Sudjic's term, while others described SAVE's opposition as 'ruthless' or 'ferocious' - hardly words that could have characterised the conservationist response in 1968.[118] SAVE was, moreover, distinctive at this period in insisting that building conservation and economic arguments, far from being mutually incompatible, pointed in the same direction. As a body originating in the era of environmentalism and the oil crisis, SAVE emphasised the case for restoring and reusing historic buildings as an aspect of responsible resource conservation.[119] Seeking to translate the principle into practice, it commissioned Terry Farrell to develop an alternative scheme demonstrating the potential for retention and refurbishment of the existing Victorian buildings.[120]

As several commentators discerned, a significant component of the case made for Palumbo's project was that, apart from its merit in architectural terms, it represented a test-case for the increasingly voiced contention that 'conservation has gone too

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'Environmentalism', in Nick Crowson et al, *NGOs in Contemporary Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 201-221 (pp. 207-211).

[116] Response to Simon Jenkins, 'The conservationist as politician', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 32 (1984), pp. 722-731. Kaukas was not an uncompromising modernist and, as an architect at British Rail, had been closely involved in the preservation of important railway buildings. 'Militant tendency' alluded to the contemporary far-left element within the Labour Party.

[117] Further discussed below.

[118] Martin Pawley comment in *The Battle for Mansion House Square*, BBC1, 17 May 1985; Appleyard, 'Architecture at the barricades', *The Times*, 30 April 1984, p. 9.

[119] Marcus Binney and Max Hanna, *Preservation Pays* (London: SAVE, 1978), ix; Marcus Binney and Marianne Watson-Smyth, *The SAVE Britain's Heritage Action Guide* (London: Collins and Brown, 1991), pp. 2-8. Within a few years the economic case for conservation would become more widely promoted and an important strand of government heritage policy: see for example *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994), paragraph 1.4, https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/142838.pdf (accessed 22 December 2021).

[120] Palumbo himself was said to have conceded that on strictly commercial criteria refurbishment of the existing buildings would have been a more attractive option than the Mies project: Jenkins, 'Life after Palumbo', *Sunday Times*, 26 May 1985, p. 16. The Farrell design was revived by English Heritage as an alternative to the Stirling scheme.

far'.[121] The architectural profession, observed Simon Jenkins, was promoting the argument that, following its uninterrupted expansion through the 1960s and 1970s, the conservation movement had placed itself in a position of undue influence over the development process and that the balance must be redressed.[122] In the background was the developing debate concerning the place of what was increasingly being referred to as 'heritage' in contemporary British culture and its perceived adverse consequences: an unhealthy nostalgia for the past, resistance to necessary modernisation and an anti-business ethos.[123] These were all concerns that would resonate in Thatcherite political circles, as will emerge later. Jenkins identified Michael Manser as driving this campaign and indeed Manser could be seen characterising the conservationist opposition to Palumbo as exemplifying the movement's role as one of the 'prevention-based industries…..people in all fields dedicated to the malign complacency of keeping things exactly as they are and preventing change and progress.'[124] The sentiment was echoed by Palumbo who, reflecting on the rejection of Mies, complained of an 'unhealthy obsession with the past which is putting off the necessity to live in the future'.[125] Again the narrative involved no specific reference to the impending changes in the City, but they can be reasonably be assumed to have been at least a background consideration.

A more focussed complaint concerned the nature of what the conservationists were seeking to protect. 'Are we now always to regard Victorian buildings, listed or in a conservation area, as sacrosanct?', asked Bernard Kaukas.[126] A full decade earlier Mark Girouard had come close to answering 'yes', as he reviewed the rapid expansion of interest in nineteenth-century architecture not only on the part of specialists but also among the public at large, a phenomenon he saw as bearing a direct relationship to dissatisfaction with modern architecture. However, so strong

[121] See for example Lubbock, 'Spades and shovels', *New Statesman*, 4 May 1984, p. 34.
[122] Jenkins, 'The conservationist as politician', p. 723.
[123] The debate gained currency with the appearance of Martin Wiener's *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) at the start of the decade and Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry*: *Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987) towards the end.
[124] Michael Manser, letter, *The Times*, 1 May 1985, p. 17.
[125] Bryan Appleyard, 'Mr Palumbo goes back to square one', *The Times*, 10 June 1985, p. 8.
[126] Jenkins, 'The conservationist as politician', p. 728.

was the swing of opinion 'in favour of all things Victorian' that even Girouard (already a prominent figure within the conservation movement) expressed unease at the prospect of 'too many Victorian buildings being preserved with too little discrimination as to their quality.'[127] In fact those campaigning to preserve the buildings threatened by the Mies scheme referred less to their individual merits (save for the Mappin and Webb building, admired for its detailing and its designer's skill in handling the awkward site) than to their 'group value', meaning their role as components of an architectural ensemble and as a significant feature of the wider townscape. But for those not in sympathy the conservationist position must have seemed to bear out all too clearly the accuracy of Girouard's earlier prediction. To them it appeared that resistance to the loss of existing buildings on the site was informed by a belief in the need to preserve all Victorian fabric simply because of its date of origin, without distinction as to what was outstanding and what was merely competent.

If 'conservation has gone too far' was a refrain coming principally from modernist practitioners, the same complaint was heard from a less obvious and more intriguing source in the person of John Summerson, one of the best known and respected architectural historians of the day. His wholehearted support for the project emerged in a comment applauding the Mies design and dismissing the buildings it would replace as amounting to no more than 'a moderately interesting museum of mid-Victorian architecture'.[128] He went on to give evidence on behalf of Palumbo at the inquiry, reiterating his view that the existing buildings – a 'mildly interesting job-lot of Victoriana', as he later put it[129] – were not of a quality to justify preservation. Summerson's interventions attracted considerable attention at the time and they have continued to be cited as evidence of Summerson's ambivalent attitude to

[127] Girouard, 'The evolving taste for Victorian architecture', p. 134.
[128] John Summerson, letter, *The Times*, 5 March 1982, p. 13. Summerson's language here matched anything heard from, for example, Michael Manser, his attitude perhaps summed up by the inverted commas around 'listed'.
[129] John Summerson, 'City corner house', *Observer*, 21 June 1987, p. 20.

historic architecture, and particularly that of the Victorian era.[130] His comments on the scheme may well have surprised conservationists who recalled his involvement in the establishment of the Victorian Society (while perhaps overlooking his sympathetic if complex engagement with modernism) and who accordingly branded him 'traitor to the cause'.[131] But Summerson's view was entirely consistent with his concern at what he was to describe as the 'artificial inflation of Victorian values' and consequent 'slack and uncritical acceptance of any building which speaks with a recognisable Victorian accent'.[132] In Gavin Stamp's view, the veteran historian retained what had become an outdated attitude to the historic environment, confining his interest to 'masterpieces' and having little time for the view that protection criteria should encompass a wider range of building types on grounds of either representativeness or potential usefulness. Summerson, noted Stamp, was 'appalled by SAVE …. for trying — he believes — to keep almost anything'.[133]

Following the Mies scheme's defeat, Simon Jenkins offered a rather different slant on the whole debate, suggesting that:

> the issue was …..never between conservation and development but between two styles of conservation: Palumbo's wish to re-create a 1960s tower which never existed and his critics' preference for the site as it is.[134]

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[130] Michela Rosso, 'An open space at the constricted centre of the City: Summerson and the artificial inflation of Victorian values', in Frank Salmon (editor), *Summerson and Hitchcock: Centenary Essays on Architectural Historiography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 155-170 (157).
[131] See Timothy Mowl, *Stylistic Cold Wars: Betjeman Versus Pevsner* (London: John Murray, 2000), pp. 148-149. For Summerson's relationship with modernism, see Alan Powers, 'John Summerson and modernism', in Louise Campbell (editor), *Twentieth Century Architecture and its Histories* (London: Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 2000), pp 153-176.
[132] Cited in Frank Salmon, '"Those damned Victorians!" John Summerson's changing vision of the Victorians', in Rosemary Hill and others (editors), *Victorians Revalued, Studies in Victorian Architecture and Design*, 2 (2010), pp. 75-90 (pp. 85-86). 'Victorian values' was a term associated with Margaret Thatcher, which may well have presented a further problem for Summerson, whose politics inclined to the left: Peter Mandler, 'John Summerson', in Peter Mandler and Susan Pedersen (editors), *After the Victorians: Private Conscience and Public Duty in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge 1994), pp. 229-246.
[133] Gavin Stamp, 'The last Whig', *Spectator*, 6 April 1985, pp. 12-13.
[134] Jenkins, 'Life after Palumbo', *Sunday Times*, 26 May 1985, p. 16.

Certainly, to the extent that the case for Mies was advanced on the basis of a need to memorialise a dead architect and a language acknowledged (even by some 0f its admirers) to be of the past, it follows that, had it been built, Mansion House Square could have laid immediate claim to 'heritage' status as a monument of 'International Style' modernism. As such it might even have ended up as the object of a preservation campaign no less forceful than that mounted on behalf of the buildings it had replaced. It is indeed now confidently asserted that Mies's building would be listed, probably at Grade I.[135] From this perspective to depict the debate as a straightforward confrontation between past and present, historic and 'modernist', or conservation and development may well leave the observer pondering where the boundary between the two sides actually lay. What did 'conservation' and 'historic' mean in the Mansion House context? Who was the more committed conservationist - Stamp defending Belcher's work or Palumbo promoting the memory of Mies? Here was a shifting of terms and values of which there was perhaps a developing awareness at the very point of Mies's defeat in London. Already by the end of the 1980s moves were in hand to secure formal recognition for key Modern Movement buildings as historic monuments, a campaign embodied in the establishment of the international organisation Docomomo, a UK branch of which was quickly set up with the benefit of substantial financial support from none other than Peter Palumbo.[136]

The role of Prince Charles

The opinions and activities of Prince Charles constituted one of the leading strands in architectural discourse during the 1980s and 1990s. Paternoster Square will provide the principal context for examination of the Prince's role. Nonetheless the Mansion House scheme was another major London case in which he became involved and it is therefore impossible to exclude him from attention here.

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[135] Catherine Croft, 'Missing masterpiece?', *C20*, 2017, no 1, pp. 32-37 (37); Richard Rogers, *A Place for All People* (Edinburgh: Canongate 2017), p. 195. It is, however, notable that the Miesian Commercial Union (now Aviva) Tower has been refused listing.

[136] Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, p. 433. For Docomomo UK, see the organisation's webpage 'Our history', https://www.docomomo.uk/our-history (accessed 8 August 2018). In 1987 the Government removed the 1939 ceiling on listing buildings and introduced the 'thirty year rule' whereby any building over thirty years could be considered for listing, with a 'ten-year rule' applicable in the case a building of outstanding interest and under threat.

'Though not quite so widely quoted as his 'monstrous carbuncle' label for the projected National Gallery extension, Prince Charles's comment on the Mies Mansion House Square scheme, included in his controversial RIBA speech of 1984, was enough to ensure that the Palumbo project was drawn into the debate surrounding the Prince's views. The speech was entitled 'The way people live' and its main theme was one central to the Prince's engagement with architecture: the interests of 'ordinary people' and 'the community'. It was the theme underlying his support for the 'community architecture' movement, his commitment to the Poundbury development and his challenge to what he saw as the elitist attitude of professional planners and architects. The Prince's reference to the Mies scheme sat squarely within that context:

> I can't help thinking how much more worthwhile it would be if a community approach could have been used in the Mansion House Square project. It would be a tragedy if the character and skyline of our capital city were to be further ruined and St. Paul's dwarfed by yet another giant glass stump, better suited to downtown Chicago than the City of London.[137]

Given that the comment concerned a locale distinctive for the absence of a resident population, it must be assumed that the notion of a 'community approach' extended beyond any immediate local interest to encompass another of the Prince's preoccupations, the City of London's historic role as an expression of the nation's identity, a role encapsulated in the presence, and more importantly the image, of St. Paul's Cathedral.[138] The emblematic significance of the City (like that of Trafalgar Square, the subject of the succeeding passage in the speech) thus prompted the Prince to deplore what he saw as the destructive impact of post-war development on

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[137] Speech at the Anniversary Dinner, RIBA, 30 May 1984 in Charles, Prince of Wales, *Speeches and Articles 1968-2012*, volume 1 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 319-322 (321). 'Downtown Chicago' was presumably a conscious allusion to Mies's work there, although the project's most direct antecedent was seen as located in New York.

[138] Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 11-17.

its appearance, and especially its skyline, an impact which he presumably saw as inimical to the interests of the 'community' in its widest sense, in other words, the nation. Here was a refrain at the heart of the Prince's agenda, one to which he would revert in subsequent speeches, in his *Vision of Britain* book and film and in the context of Paternoster Square.[139] It should be noted too that 'community architecture' was the subject of another speech the following year, in which the Prince pointedly cited Mies's assertion that 'the individual is losing significance; his destiny is no longer what interests us'. The comment exemplified all that he found objectionable in the outlook of architects and planners: 'the denial of the individual and thus the destruction of his natural community'.[140] There was this time no reference to Mansion House Square (the decision on which was still awaited) but it can be assumed that the fear of Miesian attitudes finding expression at the heart of the City remained in the Prince's mind.

The RIBA speech was made while the Mies appeal inquiry was taking place and therefore prompted discussion, both at the time and subsequently, as to whether the Prince's views influenced the eventual outcome. Charles Jencks noted that the audience included Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin and reported the latter's private reaction to the 'carbuncle' and 'glass stump' remarks as 'that's two decisions I don't have to make'. For Jencks this was confirmation that the Prince was effectively subverting a supposedly open public process.[141] It was a charge that would also be levelled against the Prince in the Paternoster context and it prompted the architectural profession to mount a campaign, led by Richard Rogers, to counter the Prince's interventions in respect of high-profile projects on the grounds that, within the framework of a constitutional monarchy, such action was inherently

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[139] Charles, Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain* (London: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 46-74. For discussion of the Prince's interest in architecture in the context of his other preoccupations see David Lorimer, *Radical Prince: The Practical Vision of the Prince of Wales* (Edinburgh: Floris 2003), pp. 270-285.
[140] Speech to the Institute of Directors, 26 February 1985, Charles, *Speeches and Articles*, p. 324. The Mies quote came from a 1924 article, 'Architecture and the times': Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1953), pp. 191-192. The Prince may have sourced the comment from David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 90, 107 footnote, where it is cited as indicative of a totalitarian dimension to modernism.
[141] Charles Jencks, Ethics and Prince Charles', in A.C. Papadakis (editor), *Prince Charles and the Architectural Debate* (London: Academy Editions, 1989), pp. 24-29 (p. 25).

undemocratic.[142] The pivotal effect of the Prince's comment remains even now embedded within the Mansion House narrative.[143] Yet Palumbo, looking back, seems to regard the Prince's comments as unhelpful but not ultimately decisive.[144] As Stamp observed, the RIBA speech had come at a point when the inquiry had already been sitting for a month and the case against the scheme well prepared. While recalling objectors' appeal to Prince Charles to intervene because of the suspicion that the Government was set on approving the proposal for political reasons, Stamp accepted that the fear had proved groundless and concluded that the Prince's role had been, at most, to confirm Patrick Jenkin's acceptance of the inspector's recommendation to refuse Palumbo's appeal.[145]

The theology of the New Right

The Mies scheme public inquiry process – from 1982 to1985 - spanned the period which historians have generally regarded as the peak years of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government.[146] It was against this background, and with the debate on the proposal at its most feverish as the inquiry decision was awaited, that assertions were made concerning the existence of a political dimension to the project.

Thatcher herself evinced no particularly developed interest in the subject of architecture.[147] However, while making no secret of her distaste for modernism as exemplified by post-war planning, she was recorded as expressing admiration of the 'shimmering post war corporate towers' she had seen in American cities.[148] Such

[142] Richard Rogers, 'Pulling down the Prince', The Times, 3 July 1989, pp. 10-11.
[143] Hugh Pearman, 'London's lost modernist masterpiece: How Prince Charles killed Mies van der Rohe's "glass stump" proposal for Mansion House Square', *Spectator*, 25 February 2017, p. 42.
[144] The spectre of Mies over London: Jack Self interviews Lord Palumbo'.
[145] Gavin Stamp, letter, *London Review of Books*, 6 March 2014, p. 4; Gavin Stamp, 'Two proposals by two very different architects', *Apollo*, May 2017, pp. 32-33.
[146] See for example Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: the Authorized Biography*, volume 2 (London: Allen Lane, 2015).
[147] Persuaded to read David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture*, Mrs Thatcher 'said she found it hard going': Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: the Authorised Biography, volume 1* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 347.
[148] For Thatcher's view of post-war planning see Conservative Party Conference Speech, October 1987, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106941

buildings may well have been in mind when she visited the Department of the Environment to inspect plans of the Mies development, on which a ministerial decision was still awaited.[149] For the journalist Laurence Marks the visit confirmed the suspicion among opponents that the project had 'become entangled in the theology of the New Right', with Thatcher 'determined to make it a test-case for her belief in the economic benefits of freer property development'. The Prime Minister was alarmed, claimed Marks, by 'growing complaints that business expansion is being seriously disrupted by the conservation lobby'.[150] Thatcher's interest in the Palumbo scheme was taken as just one of several indicators of government concern at the constraints which the planning and conservation regimes appeared to be imposing on the development process. For Marks the most ominous of these was a report by the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), a prominent neoliberal think-tank with close links to Thatcher, criticising the City Corporation's draft local plan as unduly weighted towards conservation and against the interests of developers.[151] The CPS report was just one of around 1500 formal representations against the plan. Also responding was Palumbo, who - notwithstanding his own architectural collector-curator role and his reference to the Mies scheme as enriching 'the nation's architectural heritage' - predicted that the plan 'would reduce the world's leading commercial centre to little more than a museum of mildly interesting buildings'.[152] As for the government itself, relaxation of national planning controls in the interests of promoting development was undoubtedly an objective of the government, although in fact, as the planner John Pendlebury observes, the existing historic

(accessed 1 August 2018). For the comment on US buildings see Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 422.

[149] Thatcher acknowledged the visit and her interest in the scheme, while confirming that the decision would remain the Environment Secretary's responsibility: Official Report, House of Commons, 14 May 1985, column 168.

[150] Marks, 'Palumbo's tower of trouble', *Observer*, 12 May 1985, p. 9.

[151] Laurence Marks, 'Last-ditch bid to stop St. Paul's tower block', *Observer*, 28 April 1984, p. 3; Centre for Policy Studies, *Comments on 'The City of London draft local plan'* (March 1985), pp. 36-42, http://www.cps.org.uk/publications/comments-on-the-city-of-london-draft-local-plan (accessed 28 March 2018). On the CPS background see Andrew Denham and Mark Garnett, British Think-tanks and the Climate of Opinion (London: UCL Press, 1998), pp. 117-150.

[152] 'Commerce blows a gale on draft plan', *Planning*, 8 February 1985, p. 9. The emphasis on conservation was much reduced in the final version of the plan, a result principally of the City's fear of the competition threatened by Canary Wharf.

environment protection regime remained in place, with indeed some strengthening.[153]

In this setting, and with responsibility for the decision on Palumbo's project resting with a Conservative minister, the perception of a political agenda became for opponents a matter of unease. Others joined Marks in pointing to the CPS report, Stamp claiming that its publication had been deliberately timed to assist Palumbo's cause.[154] A parallel was drawn between Thatcher's role in the Mansion House case and that of Harold Macmillan in an earlier and for conservationists no less momentous episode, the destruction of the Euston Arch, each case involving the personal intervention by a Prime Minister in the face of preservation campaign that appeared contrary to government priorities - for Macmillan Britain's modernisation, for Thatcher promotion of private enterprise. As in 1962, suggested the critic Charles Knevitt, the issue was about more than one building; whatever the decision on the Mies project, 'it will dramatically affect the way architecture and planning are perceived and practised for the foreseeable future'.[155]

While supporters of Palumbo's project may have been sympathetic enough to the objective of promoting development, it is hard to identify any who could be closely associated with Thatcher personally or with New Right politics. In general architectural practitioners appeared to have continued to lean to the left, despite their dependency on private sector commissions in this era.[156] On the other hand, Palumbo for his part was portrayed in the media as part of the contemporary political establishment and he himself made no secret of his affiliation to the

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[153] Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus*,. 91. See also Peter J. Larkham and Heather Barrett, 'Conservation of the built environment under the Conservatives', in Philip Allmendinger and Huw Thomas, *Urban Planning and the British New Right* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 53-86. These authors point to the inherent tensions in Conservative attitudes towards conservation: on the one side an instinctive respect for history (and in this era for 'Victorian values') and the need to safeguard the remains of the past, on the other a New Right preoccupation with the free market and removal of state regulation. See other essays in this volume for the overall planning background.
[154] Stamp, 'Save London from Palumbo', *Spectator*, 4 May 1985, pp. 18-19.
[155] Charles Knevitt, 'Say no to this Mies museum piece', *The Times*, 29 April 1985, p. 12. See also letter from Sophie Andreae, Chairman of SAVE, *The Times*, 29 April 1985, p. 13.
[156] Merlin Fulcher, 'The Thatcher years: Architects reflect on the legacy of the Iron Lady', *Architects' Journal*, online edition 11 April 2013 (accessed 8 December 2020).

Conservative Party and closeness to Margaret Thatcher personally, acknowledging her responsibility for both his Arts Council appointment and peerage.[157] Stamp (in his guise as *Private Eye's* 'Piloti') depicted Palumbo as 'the sort of dynamic, thrusting self-made businessman with the progressive, enterprising outlook [Thatcher] admires'.[158] A Thatcher biographer confirmed that Palumbo was among her 'favourite millionaires', suggesting that, having 'tried hard' to clear the way for his development, she appointed him Arts Council Chairman as compensation for her failure.[159] Whether or not this is so, the fact remains that she did fail. Opponents' fear of the Mies scheme securing approval on the basis of an impetus from the New Right proved in the event to be groundless.

The Stirling scheme, however, did go ahead. It did so, moreover, against the background of a clear hint from Environment Secretary Jenkin that an alternative proposal might well prove more acceptable than had Mies. The contemporary political environment accordingly remained a strand in the later phase of the Mansion House discourse. 'This battle has never just been about architecture; it has also been about power and money', wrote Gavin Stamp, convinced that approval for No 1 Poultry, like Palumbo's Arts Council role, represented a reward for a loyal Thatcherite and generous contributor to party funds. Stamp identified a further political factor in Stirling's relationship by marriage to Cabinet Minister Geoffrey Howe.[160] Writing a few months after the Poultry decision, Stamp described the Thatcher government, and Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley in particular, as 'malevolently hostile to conservation'.[161] Certainly, Ridley was known as both a loyal Thatcherite and a minister whose declared interests leaned more towards the interests of development than conservation, whether of the built or natural heritage.

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[157] Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, p. 261; Palumbo personal website, http://lordpeterpalumbo.com/biography.html (accessed 11 August 2018).
[158] 'Nooks and corners', *Private Eye*, 17 May 1985, p. 9. Palumbo was thus aligned with such buccaneering figures of the era as Arnold Weinstock and Rupert Murdoch. In reality, suggested Stamp, 'he is more of a dilettante, using inherited wealth to pursue an obsession'.
[159] John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher, 2: The Iron Lady* (London: Cape, 2003), p. 416.
[160] Gavin Stamp, 'No knock-down argument', *Spectator*, 17 June 1989, pp. 16-17. Stirling's biographer indicates a close relationship between the two families but records no discussion about Poultry or any other project: Mark Girouard, *Big Jim: The Life and Work of James Stirling* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998), pp. 181-182, 265.
[161] Gavin Stamp, 'Another vision of Britain', *Spectator*, 13 January 1990, pp. 8-12.

Besides outraging conservationists with a less than sympathetic attitude towards one of their central concerns, the fate of historic houses, Ridley had suggested that the historic environment regime did not sit comfortably with the Government's commitment to the promotion of individual freedom and reduced bureaucracy, voicing his fear that:

> sometime in the next century the entire country will be designated under some conservation order or another. The people actually living there will be smothered with bureaucratic instructions limiting their freedom.[162]

In such a context it can scarcely have come as a surprise to the scheme's opponents that Ridley was content to accept his inspector's conclusion that the quality of Stirling's design was such as to outweigh the loss of the listed Victorian buildings. It was nonetheless an outcome that dismayed conservationist opinion not only on account of the defeat it involved at Poultry but because of the fear that the presumption in favour of listed building preservation supposedly enshrined in existing Government planning policy could be overridden in any case where a developer claimed to offer a new scheme of architectural merit.[163] The decision continued to reverberate across planning discourse. Subsequent Government guidance to the effect that claims for the architectural merits of replacement buildings could not themselves justify the demolition of a listed building was cited as the 'conservationists' revenge' for their defeat at Palumbo's hands.[164]

'Not a Mies tower, nor a Farrell refurbishment, but a piece of Stirling Post-Modernism'

With these words *Architects' Journal* summed up the outcome of the decade-long contestation on the Mansion House site.[165] Less than a year elapsed between the

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[162] Quoted in Larkham and Barrett, 'Conservation of the built environment under the Conservatives', pp. 56-57.
[163] Mark Girouard, 'Ridley's charter for the obliteration of history', *The Times,* 10 June 1989, p. 10; 'An unlovely monument', *The Times*, 2 March 1991, p. 13 (unmistakably the hand of editor Simon Jenkins).
[164] Delafons, *Politics and Preservation*, p. 171.
[165] 'The thirty years war', *Architects' Journal*, 6 March 1991, p. 5.

rejection of Mies and the emergence of a substitute proposal. The course of events surrounding the Stirling-Wilford design involved in large part a replay of that already experienced, the different conclusion notwithstanding: published proposal, refusal of consent, appeal, inquiry, year-long delay, Ministerial decision. Again prominent figures from the architectural establishment engaged in debate with conservationists on the merits of the new scheme as against those of the existing buildings. Again the debate included a forthright comment from Prince Charles and concern at the perceived attitude of government ministers.[166] However, the development eventually completed on the site was in stark contrast to the Mies project, despite Stirling's support for the latter (figure 2.8). Like the earlier plan, the new scheme represented a substantial work of urban design, including shops, a restaurant and public space in addition to offices. But in place of Mies's slab-block and open plaza, Stirling offered what was generally summed up as a postmodern conception on a monumental scale, rich in detail, colour and historical allusion and displaying clear affinities with the partnership's other recent work, notably the Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart.[167] Also in contrast to the Mies plan, the new scheme was seen also to exemplify one of the key qualities of postmodern planning - awareness of context. The existing street plan was largely preserved and the design made reference to Lutyens's Midland Bank across the road and Hawksmoor's St. Mary Woolnoth on the far side of Bank Junction.[168] There was too in the curved frontage at the apex an arguable reference back to the Mappin and Webb building.

[166] The Prince's view of Stirling's design ('like an old 1930s wireless') was only one component of his dissatisfaction. Besides challenging the destruction of historic buildings, he saw the new scheme as exemplifying an objectionable aspect of planning procedure whereby a developer refused consent was free to submit successive new proposals until opponents were worn down by the effort and expense of continued resistance: Speech at the Corporation of London Planning and Communication Committee Annual Dinner, 1 December 1987, Charles, *Speeches and Articles*, pp. 337-343 (p. 340).
[167] For a general description see Historic England list entry, 'No 1 Poultry': https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1428881 (accessed 3 April 2018).
[168] Despite Stirling's declared admiration Hawksmoor, Michael Wilford has suggested that any direct reference to the church was unintended: Owen Hopkins, *From the Shadows: The Architecture and Afterlife of Nicholas Hawksmoor* (London: Reaktion, 2015), p. 255.

2.8 James Stirling and Michael Wilford: No 1 Poultry, 1994-1998. (Source: Twentieth Century Society.)

'It might just be a masterpiece' was the widely quoted comment attached to the inspector's recommendation in favour of the scheme, echoing a prediction that Palumbo had already expressed more assuredly (with 'might' replaced by 'will') to Stirling in private.[169] In the event the new design was the subject of controversy scarcely less heated than that surrounding Mies. As before, the basic fault-line was between the architectural establishment and the conservation movement, which seemed now to regard retention of the existing Victorian block as the ultimate test of its strength. The news of Stirling's commission was welcomed by critics and practitioners and their reaction to his design was on the whole favourable. It was, for Deyan Sudjic, 'subtle architecture, a mixture of historical motifs and precedents applied with a knowing hand'.[170] Colin Amery urged the Corporation to give immediate approval to Stirling's 'distinguished and mature' design.[171] Wilson, Rogers and Foster came forward once more to speak for the scheme at the inquiry.

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[169] Quoted in Girouard, *Big Jim*, p. 238.
[170] Sudjic, 'Invest in Stirling', *Sunday Times*, 18 May 1986, p. 54.
[171] Colin Amery, 'Civilised changes for Mansion House Square', *Financial Times*, 19 May 1986, p. 17. Two years later Amery, appointed to English Heritage's London Advisory Committee, had turned about and was pressing for Stirling's scheme to be abandoned in favour of restoration of the existing buildings: Colin Amery, 'Stirling work in Liverpool and London', *Financial Times*, 23 May 1988, p. 13.

Summerson again declared his support, though more cautiously than in the case of Mies.[172] That said, endorsement even from the establishment was not universal. For some still committed to modernism, Stirling's adoption of postmodernist language presented a problem. Berthold Lubetkin, veteran of the Modern Movement, had supported Palumbo at the Mies inquiry but he was no friend of postmodernism and considered the Stirling design as 'opportunistic'.[173] If the octogenarian Lubetkin could be dismissed as a figure from the past, a more central participant in the debate was Martin Pawley, for whom Stirling's design came as a deep disappointment, 'a pale shadow of the grand posthumous civic enterprise' offered by Mies.[174] The suspicion among opponents that Rogers and others were backing Stirling only in furtherance of the profession's 'conservation has gone too far' campaign was subsequently corroborated by Stirling's biographer Mark Girouard, who confirmed that in fact most of his ostensible supporters disliked the design.[175]

The completed development met with a reception that ranged across a spectrum of admiration, hostility, ambivalence and perplexity. The notion of a Stirling 'turn' to postmodernism was rejected by the architect himself and has continued to be debated.[176] Nonetheless it was the term widely applied to his later work and the mixed reception of No 1 Poultry (like that of the earlier Clore Gallery) can be taken as indicative of the uncertainty that even sympathetic commentators felt at the apparent willingness of Stirling, responsible for some of the celebrated modernist

[172] John Summerson, 'City corner house', *Observer*, 21 June 1987, p. 20. Admiration for the 'dazzling variety of compositional devices' was tempered by doubt as to 'whether anyone will like it in 50 years'. A contemporary review of the Clore Gallery confirmed Summerson's uncertainty as to how seriously Stirling's postmodernism should be taken: John Summerson, 'Vitruvius ridens', *Architectural Review*, June 1987, pp. 45-46.
[173] Quoted in 'A graceful figure with holes', *Independent*, 10 September1988, p. 16. See John Allan, *Berthold Lubetkin: Architecture and the Tradition of Progress* (London: Artifice, 2012), pp. 572-573 for Lubetkin's attitude to postmodernism and p. 574 for his involvement in the Mies inquiry. Yet another project undertaken by Palumbo in the cause of the Modern Movement was his financial support for the restoration of Lubetkin's penguin pool at London Zoo.
[174] Martin Pawley, 'Mischief at Mansion House', *Guardian* 16 May 1988, p. 23.
[175] Jules Lubbock, 'As flies to wanton boys', *New Statesman*, 13 May 1988, pp. 40-41; Girouard, *Big Jim*, p. 241.
[176] Mark Girouard, 'Sir James Frazer Stirling', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (2004) (accessed 14 September 2018).

buildings in post-war Britain, to espouse postmodernism.[177] (The acceptance of a purely commercial commission by an architect long associated with public and institutional projects may have prompted further unease.) In the background was the general reaction against postmodernism evident by the later 1980s.[178] It is notable that even Palumbo, on the verge of finally achieving approval for Stirling's design, could write of postmodernism that it was 'merely a fad…. When we consider buildings conceived in this spirit we see generally how shallow they are'.[179] As noted earlier, the scheme was seen by Palumbo as a prospective memorial to its architect. In the event it seemed to attract more attention as a memorial to the whole phenomenon of British postmodernist architecture in the UK, now seen as a short-lived fashion of the 1980s and outdated by the time Stirling's conception was realised.[180]

Interest in Stirling appeared to decline in the period immediately after his early death, the historian and theorist Claire Zimmerman suggesting that he had been 'relegated to the sort of anonymity reserved for those who are not only deceased but also, it seems, outmoded'.[181] Yet in 2015 No 1 Poultry (like Lloyd's and Broadgate) became a further case in the developing discourse concerning the claims of buildings of recent origin to 'historic' status. This included projects that conservationists had themselves fought hard to prevent; indeed in the Poultry case the protracted controversy attaching to the site was itself was acknowledged as contributing to the historic interest.[182] With proposals emerging to alter the principal

[177] Amanda Reeser Lawrence concludes her recent study with the view that Stirling remained a committed modernist throughout his career and that his use of historical references should be read as an aspect of his modernist principles: *James Stirling, Revisionary Modernist*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 204-205.
[178] See E.M. Farrelly, 'The new spirit', *Architectural Review*, August 1986, pp. 7-12; and, for a retrospective view, Powers, *Britain*, p. 218.
[179] Peter Palumbo, 'The preservation of modern architecture', *Architecture Today*, 11 September 1990), p. 8.
[180] Jonathan Glancey, I came. Eyesore. I conquered', *Guardian*, 29 September 1997, p. B6; Kenneth Allinson and Victoria Thornton, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), p. 42. For a more recent and objective discussion of the building in the postmodern context see Wilson, 'Circling the Square', pp. 194-195.
[181] Claire Zimmerman, 'James Stirling Reassembled', *AA Files*, 56 (2007), pp. 30-41. Recent years have seen the appearance of several new studies, notably Lawrence's which detects (pp. 19-20) a renewal of interest in the architect.
[182] Twentieth Century Society, listing application, 1 Poultry,

façades, the Twentieth Century Society successfully campaigned for the building to be listed, even though it could not yet satisfy the thirty-year benchmark normally required.[183] Again the memorial trope was invoked; the building was the 'last significant work' of a British architect of international standing. It was also 'arguably the most important example of "post-modernist" architecture in Britain'. Thus postmodernism – whatever the uncertainty and ambivalence that continued to attach to the style (implicit perhaps in the Society's use of inverted commas) - was now part of history and both it and the creator of No 1 Poultry required their monument.

Theatres of discourse

In the field of architectural discourse, the debate surrounding the Mansion House development stands out not only for its duration and intensity but also for the range of arenas, verbal and visual, in which it was played out. I therefore take the opportunity in the final section of this chapter to reflect briefly on that topic. (Some of what is said in the following paragraphs, however, is relevant in relation to other contentious cases and indeed the Paternoster Square chapter would have provided an equally apt place for a discussion on these lines.)

At the core of the discourse were the formal processes involved in the proposal's passage through the planning regime and subsequently the courts. These processes provided the basis for much of the wider discussion, which extended across not only mainstream and specialist press (the former reporting the Mies inquiry proceedings on an almost daily basis) but also the medium of broadcasting. The leading component of the latter was a 60-minute television documentary, *The Battle for Mansion House Square*, broadcast in May 1985, the timing presumably consciously chosen in the expectation of an imminent Ministerial decision on the Mies scheme.[184]

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https://www.c20society.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Listing-Application-for-1-Poultry-FINAL.pdf (accessed 4 December 2020).

[183] The Government's initial refusal to list the building was reversed after a successful legal challenge by the Society – the second occasion of which the site had been the subject of legal proceedings.

[184] *The Battle for Mansion House Square*, BBC1, 17 May 1985. The controversy was presumably also covered in day-to-day broadcast news content.

Despite a veteran broadcaster's claim that 'you can't do architecture on television'[185], the built environment had not been neglected by the medium and some programmes (such as those involving Ian Nairn) had not avoided controversy. Perhaps not by coincidence, shortly after the Mansion House programme the BBC aired a series tracking the shift away from modernist planning and architecture after the initial enthusiasm of the post-war years. Nonetheless an extended documentary concerning a current and controversial case remained unusual. As the title indicates, the subject was presented in terms of a confrontation between proponents of modernism and conservationists, the participants - Summerson, Pawley, Rogers, GLC and Victorian Society representatives, along with Palumbo himself - rehearsing arguments already set out in print or at the inquiry.[186] In fact the programme might well have been seen as the inquiry process played out on the screen, which may explain a reviewer's complaint of contributions that seemed unconvincingly polite and detached.[187]

However, by far the most important forum of open discourse was provided by the print media. Kester Rattenbury has pointed to the Palumbo case as revealing the extent to which discussion of architecture in the press at this time was dominated by a coterie of writers actively involved in the conservation movement and particularly SAVE, a body founded and run by journalists and one adept at media-handling. Such writers - Rattenbury instances Clive Aslet, Colin Amery and Gavin Stamp - produced copy in their own right which also served as material for other commentators, with the result that 'what looked like a national consensus [in favour of conservation] ……was in fact the organised opinions of a very small group of people'.[188] In the Mansion House debate, suggests Rattenbury, it was left to Martin Pawley to present the pro-development case. This was perhaps to downplay the role of Stephen Gardiner, Deyan Sudjic and others noted here as sympathetic to the

[185] Huw Weldon, quoted in Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', p. 139.
[186] Palumbo's appearances in the programme were set against the backdrop of the Wren church of St. Stephen Walbrook (of which Palumbo was churchwarden) and the adjacent neo-Georgian house which served as his office. Both settings strike a note of incongruity in relation to the modernist project the developer was promoting.
[187] 'Don't bank on it', *The Listener*, 9 May 1985, p. 30.
[188] Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', p. 142.

project, quite apart from Palumbo's own advocacy. But Pawley undoubtedly maintained a high profile, both in the specialist press (as editor of *Building Design*) and mainstream journalism (as the *Guardian's* architecture correspondent). He can therefore perhaps be regarded as both the leading voice of modernism in the debate and the principal champion of Palumbo (though his loyalty was severely tested in the Stirling phase). In Pawley's reading, far from being the rapacious tycoon, the Mansion House scheme promoter is not only the enlightened patron but one engaged in a heroic struggle - 'a quest against the odds, against the vagaries of fashion, against the numbing opposition of bureaucracy, against the finality of death itself'.[189]

If Pawley could claim to have taken the lead in presenting the case for the development, there can be no doubt as to the most conspicuous figure on the opposition side. Indeed so pervasive is Gavin Stamp's presence, both in his own right and as a source for other commentators, and so trenchant the content of his writing that the discourse can seem at times to assume the character of a personal confrontation between him and Palumbo.[190] Stamp combined the roles of journalist and scholar with that of militant conservation campaigner (though not one especially associated with SAVE) and it was clearly the latter role which informed his commentary on the Palumbo project. Stamp's was an established name in architectural journalism by the end of the 1970s and he was well placed to engage with the Mansion House saga as it unfolded over the subsequent decade. It was a subject that brought together virtually every cause which Stamp espoused: rejection of the ideology and rhetoric of the Modern Movement; preservation of Victorian fabric; aversion to property developers; and suspicion of 'celebrity' architects.[191]

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[189] Pawley, 'Of Mies and men's inspiration', *Guardian,* 13 August 1984, p. 9.
[190] An impression reinforced by the survival of a private letter from Stamp to Palumbo urging him to abandon the Stirling scheme: London Metropolitan Archives, LMA/4441/01/053/B/004.
[191] Stamp's architectural sympathies were nonetheless not entirely predictable, as evidenced on one side by admiration for the distinctly Corbusian work of the Scottish partnership Gillespie Kidd and Coia and on the other by distaste for the classicism of Quinlan Terry: Gavin Stamp, 'The Myth of Gillespie Kidd and Coia', *Architectural Heritage*, 11/1 (2000), pp. 68-79; Gavin Stamp, 'Easy Lookin' Classicism', *Spectator*, 19 February 1994, pp. 34-36. Indeed antipathy to contemporary classicism prompted Stamp to concede that 'perhaps [Pevsner] was right all along in that, yes, there really is a *Zeitgeist*': Gavin Stamp, 'The curse of Palladio', *Apollo*, November 1994, pp. 108-109.

Palumbo's political affiliations are likely to have been a further issue; despite the Young Fogey image and a long association with the *Daily Telegraph* and *Spectator*, Stamp did not stand unequivocally on the political right and he certainly had no enthusiasm for market-driven Thatcherite conservatism or for the contemporary City of London.[192] Here were the factors motivating what can only be described as the crusade which Stamp sustained for a decade and more against the Mansion House development. The campaign took on a distinctly personal character as Stamp probed Palumbo's family background and motivation, often in conspicuously forceful terms, as this chapter has shown.

Stamp's view was also evident in his writing under the heading of *Private Eye's* 'Piloti'. This introduces a minor but noticeable aspect of media discourse: unsubstantiated, anecdotal and personality-oriented copy best characterised as 'gossip'.[193] The present subject was one readily lending itself to such treatment given that it so clearly centred on the role of a single individual and indeed the principal focus of attention was the figure of Palumbo. The fact that he was clearly wealthy and well-connected provided both the encouragement and the material for the gossip, particularly in the tabloid press. His status as a property developer may have provided a further stimulus, the industry's leading personalities having in the past regularly achieved celebrity status in the tabloids. Thus for instance recurrent reference to the Mansion House project appeared in the *Daily Mail* in the context of the promoter's private life, often under the byline of the paper's noted columnist, Nigel Dempster.[194]

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[192] Clive Aslet, 'Gavin Stamp', *New Criterion*, 36.7 (2018), pp. 77-80. David Watkin and Roger Scruton were the only prominent architectural commentators of the day who might have claim to the designation of 'Thatcherite'. Yet Watkin gave evidence against Mies at the inquiry. Scruton dismissed the scheme as 'nightmarish' ('Keep this Monster in its Grave', *The Times*, 1 May 1984, p. 12) but seems otherwise not to have engaged with the subject.

[193] The significance of gossip in historical and literary studies has attracted some interest in recent years. See for example Joseph Epstein, *Gossip: The Untrivial Pursuit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

[194] See for instance, 'The public and private face of Mr Palumbo', *Daily Mail*, 23 May 1985, p. 18, which contrasted the Mies tower with Palumbo's classical-style country house.

Stamp's 'Piloti' coverage of the Mansion House controversy included reference not only to Palumbo's donations to the Conservative Party but also to his alleged expenditure on public relations, lawyers and hospitality to journalists and public inquiry witnesses.[195] The implied suggestion here of less than scrupulous practice must be read as a further strand in Stamp's campaign against Palumbo's project. The previously mentioned references by Stamp and others to the 'shady' Rudolph served a similar purpose. Gossip of a more explicitly malign kind took the form of the assertions attributed to Palumbo's opponents concerning his foreign background and alleged unsavoury overseas connections.[196] Though such comment was relayed mainly at second-hand and might be dismissed as peripheral, it is undeniable that chauvinistic sentiment constituted a perceptible strain within anti-modernist opinion as a whole; it can be seen too in references to Mies's German origins (or in a separate discourse to Pevsner's émigré status). This aspect of the discourse extended to the project itself, the posthumous status of both designs encouraging the expression of scepticism as to their authenticity. The historian John Harris, a leading opponent, pointed to the apparent absence of any original drawings as a ground for questioning whether the design could in fact be attributed to Mies personally, a consideration he presumably saw as further undermining the claims made by advocates concerning the scheme's significance as an important example of the architect's work. Stirling's death prompted Stamp to voice a similar suspicion in the case of his design too.[197]

The arguments around the project (along with subsequent discourse) involved images as well as words. Palumbo's promotional book on the Mies scheme was lavishly illustrated with a series of photomontage images commissioned from the architectural photographer John Donat and centring on a model of the complete

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[195] See for example, 17 May 1985, p. 9. See also Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, p. 230.
[196] Appleyard, 'Mr Palumbo goes back to square one', *The Times*, 10 June 1985, p. 8; Sutherland Lyall, 'Palumbo in limbo', *New Society*, 22 April 1982, pp. 140-141.
[197] Letters, *Financial Times*, 30 April 1982, p. 19; 5 May 1982, p.21; Stamp, 'Two proposals by two very different architects', *Apollo*, May 2017, pp. 32-33. Harris's suspicion concerning Mies was promptly dismissed by Peter Carter, in charge of the project after Mies's death. See Hyde, 'Signed, anonymous' for a discussion of the impact of the successive schemes' posthumous status on their interpretation.

scheme.[198] The aim was evidently to present Mies's modernist conception in the most compelling way possible, the setting airy, uncluttered and lightly populated and the complete design suffused with soft light (figure 2.3). The same imagery was used in some of the press coverage (particularly by sympathetic commentators) and similar treatment featured in the documentary, prompting a reviewer to note the success of the 'ingenious visuals' in creating the illusion that the tower would blend in with its surroundings.[199] Juxtaposed with Palumbo's vision of the future was his view of the current state of the site, conveyed by a tableau of black and white photographs depicting traffic clogged streets, congested pavements and dark buildings (figure 2.9).[200] The intended message could hardly have been clearer.

[198] Justine Sambrook, 'John Donat: Photomontages', *RIBA Journal*, February 2017, p. 90. The project is described as establishing Donat's reputation as a practitioner of montage photography.
[199] John Naughton, television review, *The Listener*, 23 May 1985, p. 40.
[200] *The Mansion House Square Scheme*, pp. 14, 22-23.

2.9 Mansion House Square: 'Present context'. (Source: *The Mansion House Square Scheme*, London: Number 1 Poultry Limited, 1981.)

Another of Donat's photomontages (figure 2.10) presented a westward view over the Mansion House and adjacent buildings, immediately behind which was placed Mies's projected tower and plaza. This image was not included in the promotional book but nonetheless featured in the wider discourse on the scheme, especially in the context of adverse comment. How the image came to be appropriated by Palumbo's critics is not immediately clear, but it is easy to see why it appealed to them, since the impression created was of Mies's tower projecting aggressively from its setting, the verticality, sharp-edged silhouette and dark tone in glaring contrast with the classical form and white Portland stone of its neighbours.[201]

[201] See for example John Harris, 'London's square peg', *Country Life*, 8 July 1982, pp. 98-100; Stamp, 'Two proposals by two very different architects', *Apollo*, May 2017, pp. 32-33.

2.10 View of Mansion House junction with projected Mies tower. (Source: *Apollo*, May 2017.)

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the debate surrounding Peter Palumbo's Mansion House project and sought to identify the factors underlying its forty-year duration and the heated controversy it aroused over the latter part of that period. At the core of the debate was the subject of built form, the departure point being one individual's admiration for the architecture of the Modern Movement and ambition to realise the design of a leading exponent on a prominent site in London. My analysis suggests that in the event advocacy of a Mies-designed scheme straddled two distinct lines of argument: on one side its modernity and relevance to present-day circumstances; on the other its significance as an appropriate memorial to both a revered architect and a form that even admirers acknowledged as having passed into history. The case against Mies was based on the conviction that the modernist approach to built form and urban planning had been misconceived from the outset and was now wholly discredited. When it came to Stirling, general acclaim for the work of an outstanding practitioner was tempered by an ambivalent if not hostile response to the language of postmodernism and to Stirling's late-career adoption of it. In this case too there emerges the notion of the building as a memorial to its creator and a monument to a

short-lived and controversial architectural phenomenon that had finally run out of steam.

Controversy over the merits of the proposed new development was paralleled by extensive debate as to the qualities of the site in its existing form. The Mansion House project, I have argued, proved to be a test-case as to, firstly, current attitudes towards the protection of both individual historic buildings and their wider context; and, secondly, the impact of a conservation movement that was rapidly evolving in its character and approach, with a new emphasis on high-profile campaigning, media management and readiness to recourse to the courts. But I have sought to show too how for their part the project's supporters challenged the conservationist position with the contention that the pendulum had swung too far in favour of the historic environment to the detriment of essential new development (an argument playing especially well with the contemporary political right); that the demand for protection was insufficiently discriminating, especially where Victorian examples were concerned; and that the conservation movement had become too powerful and aggressive in its methods.

The Mansion House controversy was at its height in the years when the City of London was embarking on the process of transformation centred on the event of Big Bang. Despite this, I have found that discussion of the project within that explicit context has proved to be a negligible component of the narrative. Certainly, Palumbo and others argued for the Mies plan by reference to the need for modern office space in the contemporary City. However, that argument, I have noted, was not only rejected by those concerned to preserve the existing buildings (renovated as necessary to fulfil present-day needs) but was viewed as suspect even by some City interests. Indeed any Big Bang connection was bound to seem questionable in relation to a conception originating two decades earlier and speaking an architectural language increasingly seen, even by admirers, as of the past. A relationship between architectural form and the contemporary City was more plausible in the case of Stirling's 'groundscraper' design, though even in this phase

of the debate attention continued to focus principally on the new scheme's external form and on the case for and against preservation of the existing fabric.

More conspicuous in the commentary than the financial background, I have argued, is the attention devoted to the project's relationship with the contemporary Thatcherite political context. Such connection was explicable, given Palumbo's declared political affiliations and his personal association with Margaret Thatcher, together with the known views of the minister who finally approved the project, Nicholas Ridley. However, it can be said to have depended as much on circumstantial as on material evidence. Thatcher herself seems to have expressed no enthusiasm for either the Mies or Stirling schemes. Nor was the project specifically mentioned in the supposedly significant Centre for Policy Studies report. Attention to this issue was confined to Palumbo's opponents (mainly Gavin Stamp) and might perhaps be seen as revealing less about the project as such than about attitudes within conservation circles towards Thatcher and her brand of conservatism.

Ultimately, what is most evident from the analysis, I have found, is the extent to which discussion of the Mansion House scheme revolves around single theme of the person of Peter Palumbo. Given his background, many opponents of the project sought to cast its promoter as the ambitious speculative developer in the mould of an earlier generation of ruthless property tycoons exemplified by his own father, Rudolph. With such figures irredeemably low in public esteem, it is hardly surprising that this characterisation was not one Palumbo himself or his apologists were keen to adopt, even where defending his enterprise as a necessary part of the process of modernising the City. Alternative identities and roles accordingly emerged, and were to a degree acknowledged by otherwise unsympathetic commentators – Palumbo as the visionary urban planner, the dedicated collector and restorer of modernist architectural icons, above all the enlightened patron commissioning major new works from the practitioners he admired. In short, I would argue, the dominant feature of the Mansion House discourse is the attention bestowed – by supporters and opponents alike – on the background, personality and

motivation of the singular figure who conceived the notion of an exceptional work of architecture in the heart of the City of London and who faithfully adhered to it through four decades in an instance of private architectural patronage rare if not unique in late-twentieth century Britain.

CHAPTER 3
THE CITY'S FIRST SIGNATURE BUILDING? LLOYD'S OF LONDON

On 19 November 1986, just over three weeks after 'Big Bang' day, the Queen formally opened the building commissioned to serve as the new headquarters of Lloyd's of London, the world's leading insurance market and one of the City's most venerable and prestigious institutions. The building was very different from the one it replaced, a neo-classical work of the 1920s which Lloyd's had outgrown. Designed by the Richard Rogers Partnership, the new building became the most widely known example in the UK of the architectural form generally referred to as 'high tech' modernism. The royal opening marked the culmination of a project spanning the best part of a decade, the commission having been awarded to Rogers in 1978 and construction having been in progress since 1981. Despite its earlier origin, and despite the absence of any direct connection with the Stock Exchange, the Lloyd's building proved in the event to be a project closely identified with the transformed City of the 1980s and particularly the key moment of Big Bang. It was an association clearly encouraged by the near-coincidence of the building's opening with the full implementation of the stock market reforms. However, a more fundamental factor appeared to lie in a perception that 'high tech' architecture perfectly expressed the new world of the City, a world in which liberalised markets, electronic trading and information technology seemed to generate an atmosphere of relentless excitement and hyperactivity far removed from the relaxed ways that had traditionally characterised life in the Square Mile.

The Lloyd's building can reasonably be counted as among the most widely recognised and discussed British architectural projects of the 1980s. During construction and on completion the building received coverage in both the architectural press and the mainstream media to a degree almost certainly unmatched by any other individual new building put up in the City of London during the post-war period. Nor did interest fade with the passage of time, for the building's prominence as a news item – focussed initially on its radical design and then on its technical defects and the adverse reaction of users – was in due course

superseded by its significance as a symbol of its time and place and as a metaphor for Lloyd's itself in a traumatic phase in the institution's history. And all the while the building has continued to be discussed by critics and historians as one of the key milestones in the development of modern British architecture, a status acknowledged by the accolade of grade I listing in 2011.

The extensive literature relating to Lloyd's (to which the architect himself contributed significantly) leaves no doubt as to the immediate impact made by the building or the continued importance attached to it throughout its forty-year history. Yet this is a notably nuanced discourse that reveals considerable variation in the response to the building and the interpretations placed on it. It is on the one hand seen as welcome injection of modernism into a hitherto chronically unadventurous architectural culture and on the other as an alien concept foisted on London by the architectural elite. It appears in one context as expressing an unequivocal belief in modernism on the part of the client but in another as revealing the ambivalence of an institution whose modernist commitment was in reality superficial and whose conservative values eventually reasserted themselves. Its architectural form has prompted a rich variety of readings: an uncompromisingly contemporary concept but one bristling with references to architectural history and prompting description of a kind that might not be expected in relation to contemporary modernism; a design apparently at odds with the City's established architectural aesthetic, yet one in a considered relationship with its surroundings; a building with an assertively public face enclosing a very private world. It is accorded a role in the troubled history of the institution responsible for it, but with divergence of opinion as to what precisely the role involved. And while it was interpreted, virtually from the point of completion, as the material expression of not only the 'new' City itself but also of Britain in the 1980s and in particular the policies of the Thatcher government, there was again a variety of views as to how such connections should be characterised. In short, Lloyd's emerges from the discourse as a more complex and ambiguous building than might at first sight have seemed the case.

In this chapter I consider how the building came to lend itself to so rich an interpretation, examining the following specific elements and themes present in the discourse: the initial reaction to the project in relation to the consequent loss of Lloyd's existing building; attitudes to the project in the context of its most conspicuous antecedent, the Pompidou Centre; the project's status as a prestige commission custom-designed for a unique commercial institution; the meanings attached to features of the building which seemed to contradict its image as an uncompromisingly contemporary work of architecture; the rich diversity of the readings on the architectural idiom itself and on its relationship with the urban context; the response to the building, especially as presented by the media, among those engaged with it on a day-to-day basis; the paradox of a building that projected a strong public presence whilst yet enclosing a very private world; and the various roles accorded to the building in the accounts of the near-collapse of Lloyd's.

Most importantly in terms of this study, I will examine how a building project initiated in the 1970s to meet the distinctive needs of a historic institution became the most widely recognised emblem of not only Big Bang and the emerging 'new' City but also of the era as a whole and in particular its defining feature, the Thatcher government.

The project described

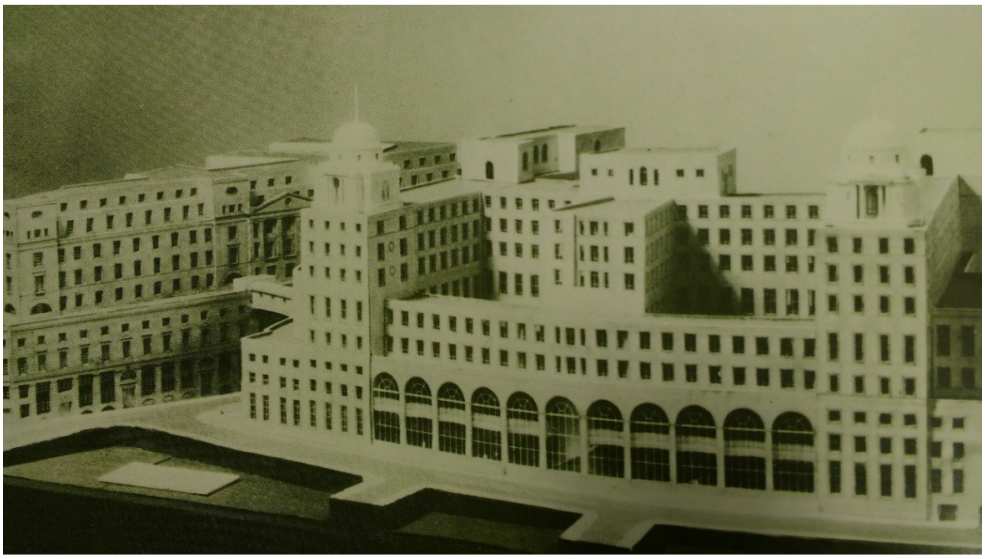
In awarding Richard Rogers the commission to design its new headquarters, the Corporation of Lloyd's was embarking on its third major building project in fifty years.[1] All were undertaken for essentially the same reason: to meet the need for additional space to accommodate expansion of the institution's business. It was with the building designed by Edwin Cooper and completed in 1928 (figure 3.1) that Lloyd's first established its presence on the site at the junction of Leadenhall Street and Lime Street which would subsequently be occupied by Rogers's building. For a century and more prior to that date the institution had been housed within the Royal

[1] Or the fourth if new administrative offices at Chatham, designed by Arups in the early 1970s, are included. For an account of previous Lloyd's building projects see Vanessa Harding and Priscilla Metcalf, *Lloyd's at Home* (Colchester: Corporation of Lloyd's, 1986).

Exchange and the Cooper building constituted its first purpose-designed office, at the centre of which was placed the heart of Lloyd's business, the underwriting floor, traditionally labelled the 'Room'.[2] Cooper was an architect much favoured at this time for major commercial and civic buildings and Lloyd's was one of several examples of his monumental classical style to be seen within the City.[3] Yet by the post-war period Cooper's building was failing to keep pace with Lloyd's requirements, prompting the institution to commission a substantial annexe into which it could expand (and to which the Room would be relocated). Completed in 1958 to a design by Terence Heysham, a pupil of Cooper, the new building was in the pared down classical style widely adopted for City offices in this period (figure 3.2). Twenty years on Lloyd's had yet again outgrown the available space, despite extensive alterations to both the Cooper and Heysham buildings. It was the Corporation's determination at this point to seek a longer-term solution to its requirements that led to the demolition of Cooper's building (save for one component, discussed below) and its replacement by Rogers's high tech conception.

3.1 Edwin Cooper: Lloyd's building, 1925-28. (Source: dailybritain.wordpress.com.)

[2] P.M. Stratton, 'Lloyd's', *Architectural Review*, June 1928, pp. 223-239.
[3] Others included the National and Provincial Bank, Princes Street; offices for Spillers, St Mary Axe; and – most prominent of all – the Port of London Authority building on Tower Hill. See Alan Powers. 'Corinthian epics: The architecture of Sir Edwin Cooper', *Thirties Society Journal*, no. 2 (1982), pp. 13-19. Cooper's Lloyd's building secured grade II listing in 1972.



3.2 Terence Heysham: Lloyd's building, 1950-58, model. (Source: Vanessa Harding and Priscilla Metcalf, *Lloyd's at Home*, Colchester: Corporation of Lloyd's, 1986.)

At the time of his selection for the Lloyd's commission in 1978, Rogers's name was principally associated with just one other building, and that an overseas one: the recently completed Pompidou Centre in Paris. The process whereby the Rogers Partnership was chosen for the London project did not constitute a conventional design competition, since Lloyd's did not feel able to translate its requirements into a detailed brief. The solution adopted was one emerging from discussion with the RIBA President, Gordon Graham, and involved an invitation to six practices to propose not a specific design for the project but an overall design strategy for the Corporation. It was at Graham's suggestion that Rogers (at the time without work) was included on the list.[4] A prime objective for the project was to achieve a building with sufficient flexibility to accommodate future changes in the scale and nature of the institution's business.[5] The proposal that Rogers's team offered, however radical

[4] Besides Rogers, the list comprised Foster Associates, Arup Associates and three overseas-based practices: I M Pei; Webb Zarafa Menkes Housden; and the French firm Serete.

[5] Unique Lloyd's specification may have been, but it was framed against the background of increasing emphasis on flexibility in office planning generally. See Francis Duffy, *The Changing Workplace*

it seemed, was eventually judged to have most convincingly embodied Lloyd's requirements and the commission was accordingly awarded to his practice.[6] The design for Lloyd's as it eventually emerged centred around a single large internal atrium space with glazed, lattice-framed walls, open balconies and a glass barrel-vaulted roof. Here was a new version of that essential component of the building, the Room. The desire to maximise this space, and to build in the required flexibility for future expansion (or indeed for contraction in the event of electronics reducing the demand for floorspace) underlay the most remarked upon feature of the design - the external positioning of all services such as glass lifts, staircases, pipes and power conduits, with six prominent perimeter towers and fixed cranes creating a dramatic silhouette.

The design was published for consultation in June 1979. Outline planning permission was secured the following September and final approval in May 1981, construction then commencing immediately. The building was ready for occupation in May 1986. Described as 'the biggest private commission in London since the end of the war'[7], it had cost £165 million (approximately £410 million in 2020 prices). It had been eight years in conception and development but the impact of the new Lloyd's on completion was immediate and powerful, Rogers's design attracting acclaim as a worthy successor to St. Paul's and Soane's Bank of England in its enrichment of the City's architectural fabric (figures 3.3 and 3.4).

(London: Phaidon, 1992); and, with particular reference to the City, Amy Thomas, 'The political economy of flexibility: Deregulation and the transformation of Corporate Space in the Postwar City of London', in K. Cupers and others (editors), *Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformations from 1960 to the Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), pp. 127-150.

[6] The summary of the selection process is based principally on the accounts in Godfrey Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London: A Reputation at Risk* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), pp. 294-300; Bryan Appleyard, *Richard Rogers: a Biography* (London: Faber, 1986), pp. 235-241; Ken Powell, *Lloyd's Building* (London: Phaidon, 1994), pp. 12-17.

[7] Quoted in Loïse Lenne, 'The premises of the event', *FORMakademisk*, 6.4 (2013), pp. 1-27 (p. 3).

3.3 Richard Rogers Partnership: Lloyd's building, 1981-1986. (Source: Lloyd's of London website.)

Cooper and the conservationists

Unveiling of the new Lloyd's building in 1979 certainly did not escape notice.[8] Nonetheless, for a building that would become one of the most recognised and discussed British architectural projects of the period, the absence of extensive discussion of the proposed design on its initial unveiling and during the planning process might now seem surprising. There is in retrospect no certain explanation for the apparent indifference, but it might well be taken as an indicator that major new building designs, even one as novel and substantial as the Lloyd's building and

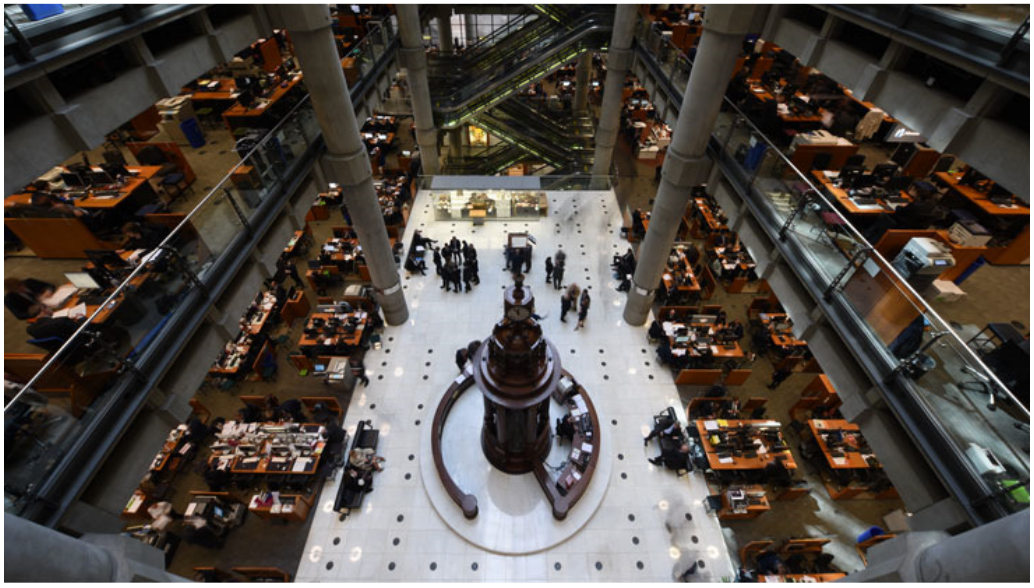
[8] See for example John Grigsby, 'Lloyd's will change City skyline with £45m HQ', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 June 1979, p. 8. Remarkably, the project received no mention at all in the *Architectural Review*.

involving a site in the heart of the City, did not at this stage arouse the degree of public interest and controversy that they would begin to attract in the following decade.

To the extent that the Lloyd's scheme did give rise to any debate at this stage, it was limited and related more to the existing Edwin Cooper building than to the proposed replacement. It was concern at the prospective destruction of Cooper's building that prompted a flurry of discussion in the national press, initiated by Marcus Binney, chairman of the recently established SAVE Britain's Heritage. Binney argued that there was no need for the new project since the existing building was fully capable of adaptation and refurbishment to meet Lloyd's need for more and better space.[9] The assertion was countered by RIBA President Gordon Graham, in what may well have been the first public statement in favour of the Rogers scheme. Without reference to his own involvement in the selection process, Graham expressed confidence that 'a major new City building of real distinction can result'.[10]

[9] Marcus Binney, 'Bringing down Lloyd's', *Financial Times*, 27 December 1978, p. 9. Also deploring the loss of Cooper ('one of the last great classical monuments in England'), the journalist Clive Aslet touched on the new building, claiming that the choice of Rogers as architect had been made solely for reasons of prestige (presumably on the basis of the Pompidou precedent) and voicing concern at the likely energy consumption implied by the design: 'Will the bell toll for Lloyd's?', *Country Life*, 25 January 1979, pp. 231-233. See also Binney's further letters, *Financial Times*, 29 January 1979, p. 17 and 8 February 1979, p. 25.

[10] Gordon Graham, letter, *Financial Times*, 15 January 1979, p. 15.



3.4 Lloyd's building, underwriting floor (the 'Room'). (Source: Lloyd's of London website.)

This brief exchange apart - and despite SAVE's later expressions of regret at the destruction of the old Lloyd's building[11] - the proposed replacement of Cooper's neo-classicism with an architectural statement of apparently uncompromising modernity prompted little adverse reaction from the organised conservation movement or indeed more widely. The retention of Cooper's monumental arched portal as a screen within the Leadenhall Street frontage of the new building, apparently as a symbol of the continuity of the Lloyd's tradition, may conceivably have had some influence on attitudes to the project.[12] Nonetheless the episode is revealing as to contemporary attitudes and priorities within the conservation movement. Despite the presence and influence achieved by the movement over the course of the 1970s, early twentieth century commercial architecture of the kind exemplified by the existing Lloyd's headquarters was not yet fully established as a focus of sustained concern. The Cooper building's listed status notwithstanding, the recent amenity society publication, *Save the City*, had dismissed it as 'conventional', declaring the

[11] Oliver Leigh Wood et al, *From Splendour to Banality: The Rebuilding of the City of London 1945-1983* (London: SAVE Britain's Heritage, 1983), p. 50.
[12] A further reason for the portal's retention was doubtless its status as a war memorial. Other features moved to the new building included the celebrated Lutine Bell and Robert Adam's 'Great Room' (discussed below).

1950s Heysham building 'much more interesting'.[13] With the formation of the Thirties Society in 1979 architecture of the Cooper era gained a conservation body with a remit to speak in its defence; indeed regret that the existing bodies had not fought hard enough to preserve the old Lloyd's building was later cited as the catalyst for the establishment of the new society.[14] However, whatever feelings conservationists may have had about the loss of Cooper's building, they were not translated into firm views on - still less explicit opposition to - the very different form of building intended to take its place. For all his earlier public protestations over the fate of the Cooper building, Marcus Binney is quoted by Rogers's biographer as privately assuring the architect that he considered the new design 'novel and exciting'.[15] That view may have been shared (again privately) by at least some fellow-conservationists.[16] Comparison with the immediate outcry with which the conservation movement greeted the Mies Mansion House scheme two years later is unavoidable. Modernist commentators who admired Lloyd's conceded that, had it come forward for approval in the pro-conservation climate of the early to mid-1980s, it would have experienced a much harder passage.[17] Yet within twenty years of the building's completion, opinion had swung back. The Twentieth Century Society, was clear that, had its predecessor, the Thirties Society, been in existence, it would have campaigned to save the Cooper building. Nonetheless the successor body had no hesitation about endorsing the case for the preservation of what had replaced it.[18]

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[13] David Lloyd at al, *Save the City: A Conservation Study of the City of London* (London: Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and others, 1976, republished with addendum 1979), pp. 101, 103.
[14] Alan Powers and Gavin Stamp, 'The Twentieth Century Society: A brief history', *Twentieth Century Architecture*, no. 7 (2004), pp. 158-160.
[15] Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, pp. 244-245. Publicly, however, Binney continued to lament the loss of Cooper: Marcus Binney, *Our Vanishing Heritage* (London: Arlington 1984), p. 145.
[16] The present study is concerned with public discourse. Nonetheless it may be noted from City Corporation files (London Metropolitan Archives, file LMA/4460/01/42/009) that the national amenity societies had direct discussions with both Lloyd's and the design team and that overall they took a benign view of the project.
[17] Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, p. 41; Deyan Sudjic, *The Architecture of Richard Rogers* (London: Fourth Estate, 1994), p. 72.
[18] Eva Branscome, 'Listing for Lloyds?', Twentieth Century Society Casework, January 2007, http://www.c20society.org.uk/casework/listing-for-lloyds (accessed 11 December 2020).

Another Pompidou?

The architectural form characterised as 'high tech' is widely regarded, the architect and architectural writer Murray Fraser observes, as 'the most distinctive British contribution to global architecture over the past three decades'.[19] Certainly, though high tech rapidly became an international phenomenon, it was one perceived as led by British practices.[20] Yet in the early 1980s, when the planned new building for Lloyd's was beginning to arouse interest, the UK itself could offer relatively few examples of architecture of the type. Aside from a handful of industrial buildings (notably Rogers's Inmos factory in South Wales), only two completed projects, both the work of Norman Foster, could be said to have been widely noticed and discussed, at least outside specialist circles: the Willis Faber Dumas offices at Ipswich and, more especially, the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia. Neither, however, could match Lloyd's in either scale or immediate visual impact, nor could their locations compare with a high-profile site in the heart of the City of London.[21] A still more substantial high tech project of Foster's was under construction over almost exactly the same period as Lloyd's, this too, as it happened, commissioned by a long established international financial institution. But the new headquarters of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank Corporation was located on the far side of the world and appears to have received only limited attention in the UK, and that essentially confined to specialist commentators.[22]

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[19] Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 321.

[20] Other descriptors of the form have been 'structural expressionism' and 'productivism'. 'High tech' was not a term with which practitioners associated with it felt comfortable, especially when it was characterised as a 'style': Colin Davies *High Tech Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 6. For general accounts of the form see Davies, pp. 6-21; Charles Jencks, *The New Moderns: From Late to Neo-modernism* (London: Academy Editions, 1990), pp. 93-103; Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), pp. 300-305; and (with particular attention to the US dimension of the subject) Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, chapter 5.

[21] See for example *Architectural Review*, September 1975, pp. 132-154 on Willis Faber; and Stephen Gardiner, 'Three cheers', *Observer*, 16 April 1978, p. 27 on the Sainsbury Centre. For a retrospective account of the latter see Witold Rybczynski, *The Biography of a Building: How Robert Sainsbury and Norman Foster Built a Great Museum* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011).

[22] See for example Martin Pawley, 'Final fling in the imperial twilight', Guardian, 8 April 1985, p. 11; Charles Knevitt, 'A steel cathedral for the high priests of banking', *The Times*, 3 July 1985, p. 12. The building was nonetheless the subject of a substantial monograph published not long after completion:

While there may have been no readily identifiable British antecedent for Lloyd's, there was nonetheless one existing building relatively close at hand with which it could be readily identified: the Pompidou Centre in Paris, designed by Rogers (in partnership with Renzo Piano) and at the time by far the most widely known example of the architect's work.[23] Here was by far the most prominent expression of high tech form yet seen: a major public project at the centre of French cultural life and the focus of controversy, both within and beyond France itself, over its location at the heart of historic Paris, its massive scale and what was seen as its unconventional (if not wilfully eccentric) design concept (figure 3.5).[24] The Pompidou Centre was thus the principal reference point underpinning early responses to the prospect of a Rogers building in the centre of London. But the precedent was viewed in different ways. For some the association with Pompidou was a cause of suspicion and apprehension, not least among some of those immediately involved at Lloyd's, who are quoted as seeking assurance during the selection process that, if the commission were to be given to Rogers, the building he delivered would *not* be on the model of that in Paris.[25] (The assurance was given.) Nonetheless, once the design became public and the project proceeded, an unsympathetic commentator such as Gavin Stamp, implacably hostile to high tech (and to Rogers particularly) was quick to couple Lloyd's with the Pompidou Centre as together exemplifying all that he found objectionable about architecture in this form.[26] On the other hand, the Pompidou precedent was seized on with enthusiasm

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Stephanie Williams*, Hongkong Bank: The Building of Norman Foster's Masterpiece* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989).

[23] Rogers was at the time hardly considered a UK architect, a perception encouraged by his part-Italian background and connections, besides his association with the high-profile French project: Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*, p.296.

[24] Nathan Silver, *The Making of Beaubourg: A Building Biography of the Centre Pompidou, Paris* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994) , pp. 173-176. Rogers recollects that, at the building's opening, 'there was not a single positive story in either the French or British press': Richard Rogers with Richard Brown, *A Place for All People: Life, Architecture and the Fair Society* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2017), p. 109.

[25] Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, p. 241; Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, pp. 13-14.

[26] Gavin Stamp, 'An architectural controversy', *Spectator,* 11 September 1982, pp. 12-13. For Stamp's assessment of the completed project see 'Unmissable, unmistakable and unlovely', *Daily Telegraph*, 24 September 1986, p. 14. That this critic remained obdurate in his view of high tech and most of Rogers's work is apparent in his final article: 'Behind the façade', *Prospect*, January 2018, pp. 65-67.

by those seeing the Lloyd's project as an indication that London was at last prepared to cast off its chronic architectural conservatism – especially evident in the City - and relishing the prospect of the capital at last acquiring a major building of radical design to match the example to be seen in Paris.[27] 'The excitement of the Pompidou Centre can be felt again by going to Lime Street', was a comment in the *Architectural Review's* extensive coverage of the completed project.[28]

3.5 Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano: Centre Pompidou, Paris. (Source: Francesco Dal Co, *Centre Pompidou: Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, and the Making of a Modern Monument*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.)

Yet, as one commentator noted, the Pompidou Centre was 'a public, cultural supermarket and Lloyd's a private supermarket of commerce and finance'.[29] In other words, Rogers's two buildings were very different in nature and function. The London project involved the creation of a prestigious headquarters for one of the principal agencies of international finance, a private institution seen as standing at the heart of the British establishment and with a reputation for secrecy and social exclusivity. As such it was the very antithesis of the Pompidou Centre, a politically–driven *grand projet* with origins in the unrest of May 1968 and a key role in both the

[27] See for example one of the earliest assessments of the published design: Deyan Sudjic, 'Lloyd's of London goes for inside out', *Guardian*, 16 June 1979, p. 11.
[28] Max Fordham, 'Excitement of services', *Architectural Review*, October 1986, pp. 84-87.
[29] Charles Knevitt, 'Lloyd's 21st century coffee house', *The Times*, 23 December 1985, p. 8.

regeneration of Paris and the promotion of contemporary French culture. The political nature of the Centre had indeed been readily embraced by the chosen architects, their original competition submission characterising it as 'a place for all people….the poor and the rich….. a project driven by social and political responsibility' – sentiments clearly reflective of Rogers's position on the political left but hardly applicable in the case of Lloyd's.[30] It was perhaps such political undertones as well as the form of the Pompidou Centre which prompted the apprehension within Lloyd's already mentioned.

Building and client

Had the building discussed in this chapter been a speculative office development, its name might have been chosen on the basis of location ('Leadenhall Tower' perhaps), historical resonance ('Undershaft House'[31]) or developer's whim. Had the project been undertaken a decade later, the choice might have reflected the contemporary taste for an unadorned functional label such as 'Number One Lime Street'.[32] From the outset, however, and at all times subsequently, the building has been identified simply as 'the Lloyd's building', or just 'Lloyd's', a designation which encapsulates an immensely important aspect of the project. This was an architecturally ambitious development specifically designed to meet the distinctive requirements of a unique commercial institution. It is hard to identify another architectural major commission within the private sector in which a direct relationship between the needs of the client-user and the building design was so fundamental. That relationship constitutes a leading strand in the Lloyd's discourse.

Central to the building's reception, especially in the early stages, was the theme of the apparent disconnect between, on the one hand, the audaciousness of the

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[30] Rogers, *A Place for All People*, pp. 7-8. For the origins of the Pompidou Centre see Silver, pp. 1-4; Annette Fierro, *The Glass State: The Technology of the Spectacle: Paris, 1981-1998* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 69-72; Francesco Dal Co, *Centre Pompidou: Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, and the Making of a Modern Monument* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 1-13. For Rogers's politics see Rogers, *A Place for All People*, particularly pp. 155-167.

[31] See Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), p. 671.

[32] Had the practice of attaching informal tags to distinctive new buildings been in vogue in the 1980s, 'the oil rig' or 'percolator' would presumably have been among the suggestions in the Lloyd's case.

architectural form and, on the other, the commissioning client's longstanding reputation as the epitome of tradition, permanence and prudence. How could it be, asked Godfrey Hodgson, author of one of several accounts of Lloyd's recent history, that what was seen as a 'stuffy, conservative British institution' had opted for 'the least cautious of architects, and for his least cautious design'.[33] It was a question that continued to intrigue commentators. The various narratives on the project agree that Rogers's team performed well in the selection process and was judged to have best understood the institution's strategic requirements, above all the need for a building of flexibility, an issue to which Rogers had already shown himself alert in the Paris context.[34] Nonetheless the choice of an architect without a portfolio of significant UK commissions and associated only with a single controversial overseas project seemed on the face of it an unexpectedly bold step. Discussion of Lloyd's motivation therefore extended well beyond the purely practical considerations.

One possible explanation was seen as rooted in the very nature of Lloyd's business. Here was an institution whose *raison d'être* was founded on the concept of risk and Rogers's apparently ground-breaking design seemed aptly to express that concept.[35] It was a connection which Lloyd's itself seemed ready to endorse. 'If it is controversial, let it never be said that Lloyd's cannot take a risk', the Corporation's Chairman was quoted as asserting at the building's opening.[36] Certainly, whatever the initial concerns about a building that resembled the Pompidou Centre, the originality of the design as completed and the impact it created seemed to have become a matter of pride for Lloyd's. Readiness to take a risk could hardly have explained the choice of either Cooper or Heysham for the Corporation's previous major building projects.[37] However, Hodgson observed that by the time Lloyd's was

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[33] Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*, p. 299.
[34] The architects' plan for the Pompidou Centre had referred to the need for the design 'to change and adapt, in answer to technical or client needs': quoted in Deyan Sudjic, *Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling: New Directions in British Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 24.
[35] Margareta Pagano, 'Livening up the Lime St skyline', *Guardian*, 9 August 1983, p. 19; Joseph Lelyveld, 'Amid bowler hats, a building fit for risk-takers', *New York Times*, 7 July 1986, p. A2.
[36] Quoted in 'In the tower of City power', *The Times*, 10 June 1988, p. 33.
[37] Heysham's building had been dismissed by Pevsner as 'depressingly out of touch with its date': Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 222, note.

ready to embark on yet another project, the image of a cautious, tradition-bound institution was no longer borne out by the reality; its membership had quadrupled, its constitution had been reformed and women were now admitted to the trading floor. Willingness to contemplate a radical new form of architecture seemed a further, and in this case public, expression of the modernising process, even at the risk of courting controversy.[38]

Commentators in general seemed to be in no doubt that this was indeed a project intended to make a statement about the institution that had commissioned it. Well before the completion of Rogers's building, the critic Peter Buchanan had pointed to the both the Lloyd's and Hongkong projects as evidence of high tech's particular appeal to organisational clients who relished - and wanted to associate themselves with - the image it conveyed of 'the thoroughbred, coolly superior, refined and efficient'. It was, suggested Buchanan, 'the perfect corporate *style*'.[39] Such thinking may well have had resonance within the Corporation. Kenneth Powell notes a consensus at senior levels within Lloyd's on the need for a 'distinctive building with a strong "image" of quality'.[40] The Corporation's Chairman declared the completed building 'an exciting contrast to so much boring modern architecture in this modern City'.[41] The use of buildings as a medium for the projection of corporate identity and image was hardly new and was well established in the case of banks and other financial institutions.[42] Edwin Cooper's building for Lloyd's could itself be cited as an outstanding example of architecture used in this way, its monumental, richly detailed classicism a confident and statement of corporate success but also of institutional security and permanence.[43] The impression emerging across the commentary on the Rogers building is that it too was intended to function as a 'brand-image' for Lloyd's but in this case one with a rather different message. The references to

[38] Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*, p. 392.
[39] Peter Buchanan, 'High-Tech: Another British thoroughbred, *Architectural Review*, July 1983, pp. 15-19 (p. 18).
[40] Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, p. 12.
[41] '£165m HQ for Lloyd's is opened', *The Times*, 19 November 19, 1986, p. 24.
[42] John Booker, *Temples of Mammon: The Architecture of Banking* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).
[43] Stratton, 'Lloyd's', *Architectural Review*, June 1928, pp. 223-239.

excitement, distinctiveness and strength of image suggest that the choice of design now rested less on concern to reassert Lloyd's traditional values than to present a new and powerful statement of a kind that the more conventional modern architecture favoured by other City institutions would not provide. One can even speculate that there was an intention (though I have found no evidence of its being articulated at the time) that what was often referred to as the building's 'inside out' design concept would itself be interpreted as indicative of an institution of honesty and transparency. Certainly 'honesty of expression' was identified as one of the defining features of high tech, Rogers himself observing of the Lloyd's design that 'nothing is hidden, everything is expressed'.[44] For the City historian David Kynaston, referring later to complaints in the 1930s about the deception involved in the encasing of a new steel-framed bank building in monumental stone, it was only with Lloyd's that 'the City acquired its first truly honest major building'.[45]

Considerations such as those just described may well account for Lloyd's rejection of the 'glass tower' modernism which had been the favoured idiom for major City office projects during the later 1960s and 1970s and which was perhaps the 'boring modern architecture' the Corporation's Chairman had in mind.[46] It would also explain the notably international flavour of the list of practices invited to take part in the selection process and the omission of Fitzroy Robinson, Seifert, Sheppard Robson and other practices with a high-profile in the City at this time.

Certainly Hodgson's narrative, apparently based on access to sources within both Lloyd's and the design team, presents those involved as thinking from the outset about the impact the new building would make. Their concern, Hodgson suggests, was to create 'perhaps the most important building that would go up in the City of London in the 1980s'.[47] The implication seems clear: Lloyd's saw itself as embarking

[44] Sudjic, *Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling*, p. 180. See also Davies, *High Tech Architecture*, p. 6.
[45] David Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 3: Illusions of Gold, 1914-1945* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), p. 265.
[46] John Worthington, 'Beyond the City limits', *Designers' Journal*, September 1986, pp. 40-47 (p. 40).
[47] Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*, p. 295.

on a venture that was more than simply a response to practical needs. Rather it wanted the institution's new headquarters to be a building of acknowledged importance, one that would be noticed and talked about. As suggested in a later account (written against the background of the troubles besetting the institution in the 1990s), Lloyd's 'wanted a "world class building" and in Rogers' bold concept they had one that would push an image of Lloyd's to the forefront as never before'.[48] In short, Lloyd's was looking for a building that would be – to use a word that was not then in common parlance, still less the cliché it would become – 'iconic'.[49] A similar impulse had motivated the NatWest Bank's directors, who hoped that their Richard Seifert-designed tower, situated not far from Lloyd's, would be tallest building not only the UK (as it was for ten years) but across the world.[50] In the case of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank project, the client is described as demanding not only a building of outstanding quality but also 'a work of art'.[51] I have found no evidence of that term being used in relation to Lloyd's but the sentiment is one likely to have been understood and shared.

Modernism compromised?

The dominant narrative on Lloyd's was that of an enlightened client boldly committing itself to what the American cultural critic Michael Rustin summed up as 'one of the most intransigent modern buildings ever to be constructed in [London]'.[52] Yet it did not escape notice that there were aspects of the concept as it emerged which seemed to call for some qualification of such a reading. Though the word 'postmodern' hardly occurs in this discourse (reflecting no doubt a continuing

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[48] Jonathan Mantle, *For Whom the Bell Tolls: The Lessons of Lloyd's of London* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992), pp. 69-70.

[49] It is difficult to establish when 'iconic' was first attached to 'building' or indeed what specific building was so described. Charles Jencks considers the New York Guggenheim Museum the first iconic building: *The Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2005), p. 28. See also Leslie Sklair, *The Icon Project* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), chapter 1.

[50] Dominic Bradbury, *Richard Seifert: British Brutalist Architect* (London: Lund Humphries, 2020), p. 166.

[51] Charles Jencks, *Architecture Today* (London: Academy Editions, 1988) , p. 342, note 11. See also D.J. Huppatz, 'Globalizing corporate identity in Hong Kong: Rebranding two banks', *Journal of Design History*, 18.4 (2005), pp. 357-370.

[52] Michael Rustin, 'Postmodernism and antimodernism in contemporary British architecture', *Assemblage* No 8 (February 1989), pp. 88-103 (p. 101).

uncertainty about how to position high tech in relation to postmodernism), commentators noted the presence of features which appeared to abandon the high tech idiom in favour of devices suggestive of the rhetoric of postmodernism, the peak era of which in the UK broadly coincided with the planning and construction of Lloyd's. Such features might be viewed as no more than decorative trimmings, but the fact remains that they were noted and that conclusions were drawn as to what they said about the values embodied in the building. One was what might be characterised as Lloyd's 'heirlooms', namely Cooper's neoclassical portal already mentioned together with a number of other retained elements from earlier buildings: the canopied rostrum housing the celebrated Lutine Bell; the galleried library; and above all the complete Robert Adam 'Great Room', originating in the eighteenth century Bowood House and now reconstructed within a free-standing concrete box projecting through two floors of the new building (figures 3.6 and 3.7). The last of these was described by Rogers as a free-standing 'jewel casket', a metaphor that invited comparison with other cases involving the retention of an 'inner sanctum' inside a modernist design, notably the relocated Censors' Room in Denys Lasdun's Royal College of Physicians.[53] Views differed as to how such features should be interpreted within the otherwise rigorous late-modernist context. Powell, who would later write of Lloyd's that 'no new City building of the post-war era has so fearlessly rejected the compromise of historical pastiche', described the retained features of the building in his monograph without any substantive comment.[54] The architect and critic Francis Duffy seems to have regarded the reconstructed Adam room as a legitimate postmodern flourish, providing a 'total and ironic contrast' which if anything enriched the overall conception.[55] More recently, Historic England's listing

[53] Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, p. 261. The parallel with the Lasdun case is not exact. While the Censors' Room had long-term historical significance for the College, the Adam room was not of comparable consequence for Lloyd's; it had been acquired only in the 1950s for installation in the Heysham building but turned out not to fit. The King's Library 'tower' inside the British Library might be considered another loose analogy.

[54] Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, p. 24. For 'no new City building …..', see Kenneth Powell, 'Lloyd's Building', in John McKean (editor), *Pioneering British 'High-tech'* (London: Phaidon 1999), pages unnumbered.

[55] Francis Duffy, 'Between the diagram and the detail', *Architects' Journal*, 22 October 1986, pp. 117-124 (p. 117).

assessment commended the retained features as a successful integration of the 'traditions and fabric' of earlier Lloyd's buildings into the new context.[56]

3.6 Lloyd's building, retained portal from the Cooper building. (Source: author's photograph.)

[56] Historic England, list entry: 'Lloyd's building'. https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1405493 (accessed 21 August 2017). In 2015 Historic England assumed responsibilities hitherto exercised by English Heritage relating to the designation and preservation of the historic environment.

3.7 Lloyd's building, the Adam 'Great Room'. (Source: Wikimedia Commons.)

Other reactions were less positive, not so much out of concern over stylistic inconsistency in itself as because of what the historical resonances seemed to reveal about Lloyd's. Rogers himself referred to the Adam room as indicative of 'the inherent tension between a truly conservative institution and a modern building'.[57] However, for the cultural historian and critic Peter Conrad, the Lloyd's building was fundamentally a deception. For this writer, while 'nothing could be more sleekly contemporary than Richard Rogers's great robot', yet 'it must go through the weary charade of pretending to be ancient', a pretence exemplified by the Cooper portal, the panelled library and 'strangest, and yet truest of all… the uprooted, renovated folly which hangs at the top of the building', namely the Adam Room. Conrad seemed to see the disjunction between exterior and interior as a metaphor for Lloyd's, the post-Big Bang City and contemporary Britain as a whole: 'now it's run not by the lovable fuddy-duddies of yore but by a pack of wolves. Lloyd's sums up the imposture'.[58] Conrad's reading of the building will feature again this chapter. In a more recent assessment the architectural journalist Owen Hatherley was similarly alienated by the retained elements. For this commentator, positioned on the radical left and suspicious of Rogers for his association with New Labour[59], the Adam Room's existence at the heart of the new building signified the preservation of

[57] Rogers, *A Place for All People*, p. 189.
[58] Peter Conrad, 'Thatcher's monuments: Cardboard city', *Observer Magazine*, 23 April 1989, pp. 36-38.
[59] Owen Hatherley, *Red Metropolis: Socialism and the Government of London* (London: Repeater, 2020), p. 157. For this author's view of New Labour's impact on various aspects of life in the UK see Owen Hatherley, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London: Verso, 2010), pp. vii-xix.

Lloyd's traditional ethic and culture beneath the cloak of modernity. 'In here', asserted Hatherley, 'Lloyd's of London are the same organization that grew from the slave trade….They play at modernization, but they always keep this place in reserve, are always able to return to it.'[60] This trope was further encouraged by Lloyd's rejection, in the face of Rogers's resistance, of Eva Jiřičná's modernist décor scheme for the areas reserved for senior personnel in favour of what Powell described as 'lots of marble and heavy reproduction furniture', a feature that seemed 'like a bad dream….. Surely this can't really be happening – in a Richard Rogers building?'[61] Again the issue was read as revealing something about Lloyd's, the preference for conventional garb exemplifying an elite attitude that 'modern architecture is for other people; tradition for oneself'.[62] For Ken Allinson, architect and author of successive guides to the capital's contemporary architecture, the décor issue was confirmation that Lloyd's remained at heart a 'rapacious, capitalist City institution with deeply conservative instincts', its values 'profoundly at odds with those of the left-wing, egalitarian architects fresh from completion of a *grand projet* in Paris' (and therefore by implication values to which Rogers appeared to have sold out).[63]

An architecture of ambiguities

The bulk of the Lloyd's discourse was predicated on the basis that it involved a building design of self-evident and, within its locational context, unprecedented modernity. Nonetheless the early response to the building's architectural form revealed a willingness to probe beyond that single characterisation, yielding a broad range of readings. Certainly, Lloyd's was widely described as the quintessence of futuristic high-tech design, with copious references to space shuttle or oil-rig forms. Yet it was also seen as presenting a historically-aware, allusive design, bearing the

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[60] Owen Hatherley, *A New Kind of Bleak: Journeys through Urban Britain* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 352-353.
[61] Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, p, 40. For décor episode see Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, pp. 260-264. Lloyd's acknowledged a conflict between Rogers's concept and their own references: Lloyd's, *Serving the World: The New Lloyd's Building* (London: Lloyd's List, 1986), p. 33-34.
[62] 'Dulwich vulgarity', *Spectator*, 10 August 1985, p. 5 The anonymous writer saw a similar attitude underlying Margaret Thatcher's support for (some) modernist projects while choosing a neo-Georgian residence for herself.
[63] Ken Allinson, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 5th edition (London: Architectural Press, 2009), p. 47.

imprint of past architectural forms seemingly remote from the vocabulary and ethos of modernism. For some commentators it was an assertively non-contextual building and for others (not least Rogers himself) it involved a concept standing in a considered relationship with its surroundings, its form the outcome of meticulous attention to lines of approach and to near and distant perspectives.

Inevitably, much of the interest attaching to Lloyd's centred on its status as a key exemplar of high tech form. From the outset of the project, virtually all reaction involved emphasis on the sheer originality of the design concept, the prominence of glass and stainless steel, the exposed services and the apparent affinities with contemporary engineering structures, whether in the North Sea or in space. There was much discussion of the place of both high tech in general and this specific example in particular within the evolution of modernism, with extensive reference to Rogers's known interests and enthusiasms: British nineteenth century engineering structures; Italian Futurism; the buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright; Pierre Chareau's Maison de Verre; Louis Kahn's concept of 'served' and 'servant' spaces; and (an influence especially noted in relation to high tech form generally and Rogers's work specifically) the unbuilt projects of Archigram and Cedric Price.[64] But alongside reception of the design as the expression of things contemporary, there was extensive comment on its nature as an unmistakeably referential building rich in allusion to the forms of earlier eras. An immediate connection was made with the engineering achievements of the previous century. Paxton's Crystal Palace provided an obvious precursor of the glass barrel-vault over the Lloyd's atrium (figure 3.8). Yet a perhaps more apposite reference-point for that feature was identified in the nearby Leadenhall Market, not only a glazed barrel-vaulted structure but one fulfilling a historic City trading function (in the 1980s still the sale of fresh produce) at once comparable with, yet very different from, that of Lloyd's itself (figure 3.9).[65]

[64] See for example the various contributions to the special issues of *Architectural Review* (October 1986) and *Architects' Journal* (22 and 19 October 1986) marking the project's completion. See also Reyner Banham, 'Archigram', *Oxford Art Online* (2003) (accessed 17 June 2022).
[65] Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, p. 249; Historic England, list entry, 'Lloyd's building'.

3.8 Lloyd's building, atrium (Source: Dezeen.com.)

3.9 Horace Jones: Leadenhall Market (Source: *Time Out*.)

An alternative frame of historical reference was found in a less immediately obvious source: the architectural form broadly encompassed by the label 'Gothic'. Allusions to Gothic form appeared early in the discourse and it has remained an enduring motif, though one giving rise to a variety of readings. One rested on the structural interpretation of Gothic form ultimately deriving from the work of Viollet-le-Duc and identified as a direct antecedent for Rogers's high tech modernism. Thus for an early commentator on Lloyd's the Gothic quality arose from a form which was 'open-ended….. seemingly incomplete, construction ceasing when accommodation is

sufficient. As with Gothic, [both Lloyd's and the Pompidou Centre] celebrate structure (and servicing) by displaying it conspicuously on the outside'.[66] There was too a perceived affinity between Rogers's meticulous attention to detail and the similarly obsessive detailing seen in the work of medieval masons.[67] For others the relevance of Gothic lay in its picturesque forms, a connection suggested by the building's profile, in particular the apparently fragmented roofline and the turret-like perimeter service towers (figure 3.10). Analogies were drawn with the fortified towers of medieval Italy and G E Street's Gothic Revival Law Courts, the latter a specific reference-point acknowledged by Rogers himself both in relation to Lloyd's and elsewhere (figure 3.11).[68] In some contexts the apparent affinities with the Gothic church seemed to encourage a quasi-postmodern interpretation, in which the external fittings, fixed service cranes and vault of the atrium (or 'nave') were apparently read not as functional components of the design but simply as expressive devices whose interest lay in the historical associations conveyed.[69] One such suggested association was with the image of the great church still under construction; Francis Duffy pointed to the specific example of Gaudí's seemingly ever-incomplete Sagrada Familia.[70] For Charles Jencks the unfinished cathedral-like outline of Lloyd's offered 'a bold drama that would have stunned, perhaps delighted, Abbot Suger'.[71] This was presumably an allusion to Erwin Panofsky's portrait of Suger as instigator of a radically new architectural language for his church at St.-Denis.

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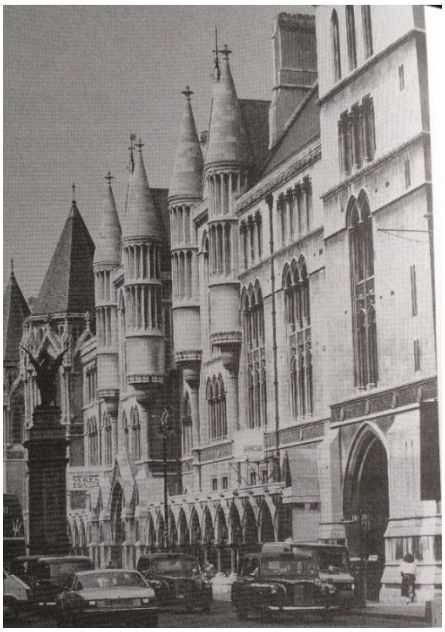
[66] Peter Buchanan, 'Foster/Rogers: High-Tech: Classical/Gothic', *Architectural Review*, May 1981, pp. 265-267; Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, p. 269. The connection was endorsed by Rogers by way of juxtaposed photographs of the Pompidou Centre's steel framework and a flying buttress at Notre Dame: Richard Rogers*, Architecture: A Modern View* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), p. 36.
[67] Duffy, 'Between the diagram and the detail', *Architects' Journal*, 22 October 1986, p. 117.
[68] Rogers, *A Place for All People*, pp. 190-191. See also for example Colin Amery, 'Lloyd's Leads the Architectural Revival', *Financial Times*, 7 March 1980; p. 16; Sudjic, *Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling*, p.45.
[69] The American critic Paul Goldberger went so far as to claim that 'all of those pipes and tubes and exterior glass elevators and freestanding service towers are there for visual effect, not for practical necessity', an assertion which Rogers would presumably have firmly rejected: 'New Lloyd's in the City of London'*, New York Times*, 14 April 1987, p. 18.
[70] Deborah K. Dietsch, 'Lloyd's of London', *Architectural Record*, 174.13 (1986), pp. 104-117; Duffy, *The Changing Workplace*, p.187. The widely reproduced nineteenth-century images of the part-completed Cologne cathedral may also have been in mind, though I have found no explicit reference to them.
[71] Charles Jencks, *Architecture Today* (London: Academy Editions, 1993), p. 27.

3.10 Lloyd's building, elevation. (Source: Dezeen.com.)



3.11 G E Street: Royal Courts of Justice, as illustrated in Richard Rogers and Mark Fisher, *A New London*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992, between pp. 36 and 37.)

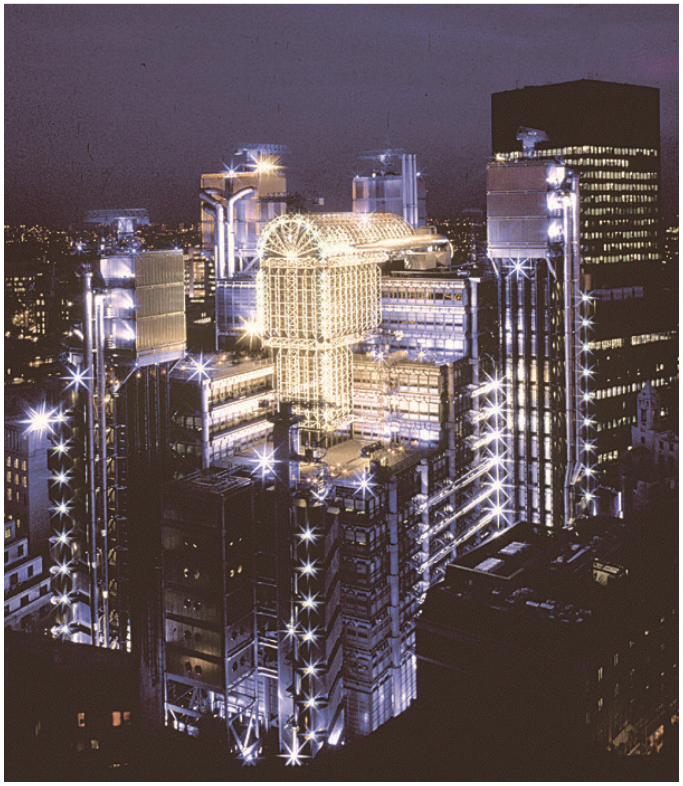
One can indeed speculate as whether that Jencks has noted Panofsky's reference to St-Denis as Suger's 'destructively creative enterprise' and is viewing the apparent open-endedness of the Lloyd's design concept in a similar light.[72]

Perhaps not by coincidence, a building whose form was the subject of such richly allusive interpretation seemed to encourage writing of a character that might not

[72] Erwin Panofsky, Introduction, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 27

normally be associated with the subject of modernist architecture. Rogers himself described his ambition for the project as being 'to create poetry out of basic enclosure'.[73] It was a notion that might have originated in his own response to the industrial structures encountered on his first visit to the US, which, though 'they were the undiluted and unornamented essence of functional expression ……they could also be visually exciting and even romantic, lit up at night or shrouded in smoke'.[74] He may perhaps therefore have understood and welcomed reactions to his own work that were strikingly lyrical in character, one recent critic referring for example to the effect of sunlight penetrating through the glass roof into the vast atrium and the 'dreamy subaqueous atmosphere' created in the lower levels.[75] Readings of the building in this vein are especially evident in descriptions of the building at night, when, as Simon Bradley described it, 'the glass blue walls glimmer enigmatically, the outer parts glow with blue, amber and white light'.[76]
Nocturnal views have also featured prominently in the visual imagery of Lloyd's (figure 3.12).

[73] Quoted in Powell, *Lloyd's Building*, p. 44.
[74] Rogers, *A Place for all People*, p. 55.
[75] Nicolai Ouroussoff, 'Translating spaces: Exploring Rogers's architectural language', in *Richard Rogers: Inside Out* (London: Royal Academy of Arts: 2013), pp. 65-84 (p. 74).
[76] Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 314.



3.12 Lloyd's building, night view. (Source: *Time Out*.)

Was it the originality and unexpectedness of the new building, inserted into an environment where the prevailing architectural character was one of (as it seemed to most) uniform predictability, that encouraged reception in such terms, even in later years and even (indeed particularly) from architectural *cognoscenti*? Certainly one sees no comparable language applied to, for examples, the nearby NatWest building. Such poetic flights of fancy extended even to the practitioners involved in the project. An unnamed *Economist* correspondent was struck by a senior member of the design team's lyrical reference to 'a wall which, as the night chill falls, fluffs up its feathers and turning white on its north face and blue on the south, closes its eyes….. to turn 12% silver just after dawn'. That an architectural professional should describe his own newly completed high tech project in such terms apparently astonished the correspondent: 'this from a man working for an architect whose buildings ….. are supposed to be the *ne plus ultra* in high-tech ugliness'.[77]

[77] 'People who live in glass houses', *Economist*, 15 November 1986, pp. 107-108.

Lloyd's and its context

There was considerable debate too about the building's relationship with its immediate surroundings, which comprised the dense medieval street network in the eastern sector of the City. On one reading it was self-evident that there was no such relationship. 'Uncompromisingly non-contextual' was one early verdict on Rogers's design.[78] For Colin Davies, Lloyd's responded to the 'irregularities [of its site] only in a limited way', exemplifying his view that 'urbanistic concerns….are not a major element in the High Tech philosophy'.[79] Davies's book appeared in 1988 and, significantly, interpreted the increasing interest that both Rogers and Norman Foster were by then taking in the subject of urban design as indicating that 'high tech is running out of steam'.[80]

To read Lloyd's as a building at odds with its setting was doubtless an inevitable reaction to an architectural form unlike anything previously seen in the City of London. 'A building that could only be called extreme', declared Deyan Sudjic looking back, 'had been smuggled into the heart of a city that was, at least in architectural terms, the most culturally conservative in Europe'.[81] Sudjic evidently welcomed the disjunction. A similarly positive gloss appeared in a later source, Historic England's listing assessment, which paradoxically rated the 'wonderfully incongruous backdrop' which Lloyd's presents to the historic buildings around it as itself constituting a factor in its 'group value'.[82] For other commentators, however, Lloyd's was a building that could show a very active relationship with its context, despite the obvious incongruity in terms of architectural vocabulary.[83] The starting point must be Rogers's own comments, which leave little doubt as to the extent to which (contrary to Davies's suggestion above) the conception evolved out of his own analysis of the building's interaction with both the space immediately around it and

[78] 'New Lloyd's Building', *Architectural Design*, 54. 3/4 (1984), p. 65. Rustin's 'intransigent' comment cited above might well be read as a reference to the building's interaction with the wider context.
[79] Davies, *High Tech Architecture*, pp. 13-14.
[80] Davies, *High Tech Architecture*, p. 20.
[81] Sudjic, *The Architecture of Richard Rogers*, p. 27.
[82] Historic England, list entry, 'Lloyd's building'.
[83] As Rogers has observed, the Lloyd's building now stands in a setting very different from that for which it was designed: Hugh Pearman, 'The big cheese', *Sunday Times*, 14 April 2014, p. 20. Nonetheless the surrounding street pattern remains unchanged.

the wider townscape. 'Lloyds's', reflected the architect looking back after three decades, 'was designed to respect and converse with its neighbours.'[84] The lines of approach to the building and the impact of its outline in views both near and distant thus emerge as an immensely important influence on the design, as evident from a description Rogers presented while the project was still at the planning stage, a vision cast in strikingly picturesque terms and worth quoting in full:

> As one approaches along the narrow city streets, views of the building gradually unfold, revealing spaces and quiet areas related to the pedestrian scale, in contrast to the vertical towers, the free-standing structural framework, clipped-on meeting rooms, translucent walls, the terraces, and the glazed roof. The fact that one approaches the building on the diagonal implies that the vertical towers fill the site, so that the spaces in between will be a surprise (compare with G E Street's Law Courts). The intention is to link the somewhat over-simplified 20th century towers with the richer, more varied architecture of the past, in a process of reasserting the close-woven fabric of the historic city. In this respect, the urban context was a key form generator.[85]

Rogers's exposition was widely echoed, often literally. If Davies saw the Lloyd's building as a token of the high tech practitioner's indifference to urban context, Sudjic (despite his comment just cited) saw it as demonstrating the opposite: that 'Rogers's touch is surest when he is dealing with urban concerns'.[86] The architect and critic John Worthington contrasted the completed Lloyd's with the nearby Commercial Union building 'rising sleekly from its plaza', the former preserving the massing of the existing streetscape, the latter reflecting the Modern Movement's

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[84] Rogers, *A Place for All People*, p. 191.

[85] 'Richard Rogers and Partners. Architecture and the program: Lloyd's of London', *International Architect*, 1.3 (1980), pp. 25–39 (pp. 32-33). Rogers reiterated the sentiments on several occasions. His vision is well illustrated by the acutely angled view of the Law Courts (figure 3.11) included in his *New London* book.

[86] Sudjic*, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling*, p. 189. Here Goldberger, in the article cited above, seems entirely in tune with the architect's intentions when he comments that Lloyd's 'has a degree of richness and complexity that integrates it into the urban setting and this is the key to its success as an urban building'.

instinct to break it up and present new work within cleared space.[87] In sum, however provocatively 'modern' this new arrival in the City may on the face of it have seemed, this project's place within the wider urban context emerged (not least in the mind of its designer) as an issue scarcely less significant than in the case of the Paternoster Square development to be discussed in the next chapter.

The interaction between individual buildings and the wider urban environment – along with reference to past architectural forms and preoccupation with the created 'image' or 'effect' of a building – were concerns closely identified with postmodernism, the values of which remained in the ascendant in the Lloyd's era. (The project's completion coincided closely with the selection of the Venturi design for the National Gallery extension.) One can therefore perhaps speculate as to whether the focus placed on urban context in relation to this outstanding exemplar of high tech form were indicative of a desire to rescue the concern for urban issues from postmodernism and reconnect it to modernist tradition. Certainly, while Rogers himself kept his distance from postmodernism and indeed would continue firmly to adhere to modernist values, urbanism would become an increasingly significant aspect of the architect's work and stand at the centre of his prominent (and often controversial) role in public and political discourse in the 1990s and beyond.

Building and users

As a broad generalisation, architectural discourse has tended to place considerably more emphasis on matters to do with the design of buildings and their significance within the development of architecture than on how they actually perform over time and how they are seen by those experiencing them on a daily basis. (As evidence one might point to two examples encompassed within the scope of this study: the *Morality and Architecture* debate, discussed in the chapter on Paternoster Square, and the discourse surrounding the views of Prince Charles.) Nonetheless some attention has been devoted since at least the 1970s to the alleged failings of modern buildings in terms of such matters as water penetration or temperature control.

[87] John Worthington, 'Beyond the City limits', p. 40.

Within the UK, public sector housing has remained a particular target for criticism and a few individual projects in other sectors have become *causes célèbres* by virtue of their technical defects; notable examples were James Stirling's trio of university buildings at Leicester, Cambridge and Oxford.[88] Recent commentary has increasingly concerned itself with building performance in energy consumption and climate change terms.[89]

As this chapter has sought to show, Lloyd's has remained the subject of inexhaustible interest as a concept of building design and a milestone in modern British architectural history. Yet in the event the project proved to a further case in which a major new building provoked discussion in respect of its day-to-day performance. Less than a decade after the building's opening the American environmentalist Stewart Brand published *How Buildings Learn*, a polemical work by the American environmentalist Stewart Brand on the subject of building durability and adaptability, in the original edition of which the Lloyd's experience featured prominently. For Brand, Lloyd's provided a classic case – the Pompidou Centre was another – of a visually spectacular, technologically advanced and prodigiously expensive building proving unsatisfactory in terms of ongoing management and maintenance, notwithstanding the much vaunted flexibility of the design.[90] That this discussion was to be found only in the first edition of Brand's book was not accidental, for the author's claims were challenged by Rogers's lawyers and all

[88] The inadequacies of the Cambridge History Faculty Building from the user perspective were the subject of a widely cited early article by Gavin Stamp: 'Stirling's worth: The History Faculty Building', *Cambridge Review*, 30 January 1976, pp. 77-82. See also Igea Troiani '"Stirling's worth": Architectural quality and the Florey building, Oxford', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 11.3/4 (2007), pp. 291 – 299. Troiani nonetheless notes the limited impact of client and user dissatisfaction on Stirling's standing as an architect of outstanding importance; indeed all three university buildings are listed Grade II*.

[89] See particularly the work of Barnabas Calder, most recently *Architecture: From Prehistory to Climate Emergency* (London: Pelican, 2021).

[90] Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens After They're Built* (New York: Viking, 1994), pp. 57-8, 112-113, 175. Brand has been far from alone in pointing to maintenance problems (and resulting high operational and repair costs) associated with high tech buildings. see for instance comments by the classical architect Robert Adam: *The Globalisation of Modern Architecture: The Impact of Politics, Economics and Social Change on Architecture and Urban Design Since 1990* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 63-64. Foster's Sainsbury Centre is another high-profile example of the form noted as displaying operational defects at an early stage: Rybczynski, *The Biography of a Building*, pp. 159-160.

reference to the Lloyd's building was removed from subsequent editions.[91] Yet by the time Brand's book appeared the building's performance failings had become a continuing refrain for the media. Within five years of its opening the press – mainstream as well as specialist - was reporting the appearance of serious defects in the form of water ingress through the roof and premature corrosion of the external pipework. Given the salience of the exposed services on the building's exterior, it is hardly surprising that the failings in this respect were reported with particular relish. So too was the protracted legal action that Lloyd's was compelled to initiate against the architects and other parties for recovery of the costs involved.[92]

A distinctive (and at the time unusual) feature of the commentary on the building once in use was the attention given to reactions among those experiencing it on a daily basis. Within its coverage of the opening and for a period thereafter, the media reported the views of underwriters and brokers, the effect of which was to generate a strand of lay commentary running parallel to that of architectural specialists. Much of what was said consisted simply of personal responses to the building's design, the spectrum ranging from aversion ('atrocious') through bewilderment ('a funny sort of building') to admiration ('brilliant'). But the building was judged too on the basis of its success as a working environment for one of the nation's principal financial institutions. On this score the verdict came across as for the most part unfavourable, with complaints that the interior was dark, poorly ventilated and – crucially - slowing down Lloyd's business. An underwriter with many years' experience of the 'good old building' talked of the 'Stygian gloom' of his new workplace, the difficulty of moving around it and the maintenance problems already emerging. 'Most of the brokers – and most of the other visitors as well - absolutely loathe the building', reported the speaker.[93] 'Offices that are just too

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[91] Jim McClellan, 'Architect designs the future', *Guardian*, 3 July 1997, p. B10. For an account of the dispute see Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 98-99.
[92] 'Lloyd's threatens legal action to stop the rot', *Guardian*, 5 October 1995, p. 4; 'Lloyd's pipe dream is rusty, and leaks', *Observer*, 1 June 1997, p. 31. A settlement of £12 million was eventually agreed: 'Rogers pays for Lloyd's pipes', *Guardian*, 8 July 1998, p. 3.
[93] 'Working in a steel-framed goldfish bowl', *Financial Times*, 18 August 1986, p. 9. For this individual the inadequate lift provision was currently compounded by the fact that 'one of the lifts is taking Richard Rogers and a party of architects and journalists up and down'.

clever by half' was the headline of an piece by a prominent journalist of the period, which cited the Lloyd's building as exemplifying the disjunction between, on the one hand, the acclaim accorded to the advanced architectural form chosen for some commercial buildings and, on the other, the negative response of those required to work in them. A Lloyd's member was quoted as describing Rogers's response to complaints about the internal design of the building: 'all he would say in response to our detailed complaints is, "You don't understand Modern Architecture". He clearly doesn't understand our business, nor is he interested'.[94] Even a critic as favourably disposed towards the project as Martin Pawley felt obliged to report a robust confrontation between Rogers and an aggrieved Lloyd's member.[95] Here then was a version of the 'architectural establishment versus the lay public' theme which was central to the Prince Charles-related discourse, as will be explored more fully in the Paternoster Square context.

It was not long before commentary on the new building was able to draw on a more authoritative source of evidence of users' views in the form of a MORI opinion survey commissioned by the Lloyd's Corporation itself. Evaluation of buildings from a lay or 'consumer' perspective was not a complete novelty; for example, debate on controversial housing projects had often included reference to a survey of residents' views. It had not, however, been a noticeable practice in the field of commercial buildings and it is certainly difficult to identify a precedent for the engagement of leading market research agency to undertake a systematic survey of user attitudes to a building project.[96] It is not clear why Lloyd's took the initiative when it did – a

[94] Mira Bar-Hillel, 'Offices that are just too clever by half', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 October 1990, p. A1. The architect strongly denied the comment attributed to him, asserting that all the matters complained about originated in decisions taken by the client: Richard Rogers, letter, *Sunday Telegraph*, 21 October 1990, p. 26. The notion of 'clever' (that is, high tech) buildings was accorded satirical treatment in Philip Kerr's science-fiction novel *Gridiron* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1995).
[95] Martin Pawley, 'The architecture of Lloyd's is like modern poetry', *Guardian*, 30 June 1986, p. 11.
[96] Architecture would in due course become a more frequent topic for public opinion surveys of varying nature and quality. Such surveys (often media-driven) have reflected an increasing emphasis on lay attitudes to architecture, and especially modern forms. Later MORI work in the field included surveys for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment on public perceptions of contemporary architects (2002) and for New London Architecture on attitudes towards high rise buildings in the capital (2014). A 2011 *Guardian*-commissioned poll revealed Lloyd's building as 'the nation's favourite from the 1980s': *Guardian*, online edition, 3 August 2011 (accessed 8 December 2021).

mere twelve months after the building's formal opening – but underwriter dissatisfaction of the kind already voiced in the media was presumably a principal factor. Nor is it clear now whether the survey findings were formally published by Lloyd's or were leaked to the media (which might be taken as a sign of internal dissension surrounding the building). What is certain is that the headline finding – that three-quarters of those working in the new building considered it a less favourable working environment than the previous building – became a major talking-point for commentators, as did Lloyd's reported intention to commission interior designers (by-passing Rogers) to address the problems identified.[97] The sympathetic Pawley sought to put a more favourable gloss on the poll findings, reporting that the majority of underwriters and brokers thought the building adequate for their needs and suggesting that any failings derived from Lloyd's brief rather than the architect's response to it.[98] Overwhelmingly, however, the story was presented as a negative one and it is not hard to see why. Here was a high-profile building in an uncompromisingly modern idiom which had been acclaimed in specialist circle; the MORI survey virtually coincided with a *Financial Times* award, the citation of which had not only praised the architectural concept but explicitly commended the 'good working environment' it provided.[99] Yet the reality appeared to be that the building had proved unsatisfactory in operation and unpopular with those experiencing it on a daily basis.

The issue almost certainly gained further momentum from the profile Richard Rogers had by the mid-1980s achieved as the best known personality in contemporary British architecture. Described as a figure enjoying 'film star status', Rogers was already a conspicuous presence in national and world media and well on the way to attaining the prominent and influential position he would occupy by the end of the

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[97] The main complaints reported as emerging were 'speed of lifts, eating and entertaining facilities, ventilation and air conditioning and the lack of unity of the four principal insurance markets': 'Workers seek a new look to Lloyd's of London', *The Times*, 4 December 1987, p.1; 'The seal of disapproval for Lloyd's of London building', *Financial Times*, 4 December 1987, p.48.

[98] '71% of the underwriters and brokers questioned think that the building can meet their needs': Martin Pawley, 'Retreat from the future', *Guardian*, 28 December 1987, p. 8.

[99] Colin Amery, 'The Lloyd's building tops the bill', *Financial Times*, 30 November 1987, p. 21. The building was also the subject of a Civic Trust award in the same year. The remarkable speed of the building's fall from grace was noted by Martin Pawley in the article cited in the previous footnote.

century not only within architectural world, as the earliest UK representative of the international 'starchitect' phenomenon, but in public life and discourse more generally.[100] Rogers had, moreover, clearly identified himself as an unapologetic exponent of architectural modernism at a time when its merits were the subject of extensive media debate, fuelled by Prince Charles's well publicised interventions, and he was closely associated with a succession of controversial (if in his case abortive) London projects, including the National Gallery extension and associated redesign of Trafalgar Square, the Coin Street redevelopment and the Paternoster Square scheme.[101] The year of the Lloyd's building's completion saw a major exhibition on his work, together with that of Foster and Stirling, at the Royal Academy and the publication of a full-length biography, a rare accolade for a living and still relatively young architect.[102] Against this background, it seems entirely predictable that press commentators were happy to draw attention (perhaps with a degree of *Schadenfreude*) to a Rogers project which appeared to have run into trouble.

If the operational issues making newspaper headlines were those of concern to the underwriters and brokers trading on the floor of Lloyd's, a less conspicuous area of discourse looked at the building from a different perspective, namely that of the support staff involved in the operation of Lloyd's business or maintenance of the building itself. It was a theme explored by Jos Boys, an architectural theorist with a particular interest in the gender, class, race and disability aspects of building design,

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[100] 'The modern architect as pop star', *Observer*, 10 February 1985, p. 7; Appleyard, *Richard Rogers*, pp. 329-334. Rogers's commitments included membership of the Tate Gallery's board of trustees, of which he was chairman from 1984 to 1988, and later the vice-chairmanship of the Arts Council. He was knighted in 1991. His involvement in political discourse and later close relationship with the Blair government, especially in the area of urban regeneration, would become a focus of controversy. The architect's own résumé of his political and cultural activities is in Rogers, *A Place for all People*, pp. 156-159.

[101] It was claimed that, though the Prince's criticism the National Gallery project were directed at the favoured Ahrends, Burton and Koralek proposal, his intended target was Rogers' high-tech scheme: Charles Jencks, 'Ethics and Prince Charles', in A.C. Papadakis (editor), *Prince Charles and the Architectural Debate* (London: Academy Editions, 1989), pp. 24-29 (p. 27). The Prince does not appear to have publicly commented on the Lloyd's building, though that did not prevent one journalist linking the MORI poll with the Prince's views on the adverse impact of modern planning and architecture on the City skyline: 'Workers seek a new look to Lloyd's of London'.

[102] 'New Architecture: Foster, Rogers, Stirling': Royal Academy of Arts Exhibition, 1986. Sudjic, *Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, James Stirling*, cited above, served as a companion to the exhibition. The biography is the already cited work by Bryan Appleyard.

who offered a distinctive contribution to the *Architects' Journal's* otherwise overwhelmingly laudatory coverage of the newly completed project. Taking her cue from the distinction between 'served' and 'servant' spaces which Rogers had presented as the theoretical basis of his design concept (especially the external service towers)[103], Boys deplored what she characterised as Lloyd's 'depressingly old fashioned attitude to the non-professional workforce', a term not explicitly defined but apparently meant to include the administrative and maintenance staff employed directly by Lloyd's to support the activities of the independent underwriters and brokers. For Boys, the 'servant' spaces allocated to the support staff were reminiscent of the 'servants' quarters' of a Victorian country-house - 'an ugly warren of interminable blank corridors ……bleak windowless locker rooms with second-hand chairs and a mere box of a mess room'. Those responsible for maintaining the building were depicted by Boys as faring particularly badly, as a consequence of the architects' failure to provide lift access to the roof in the interests of maintaining 'an elegant roofline', thereby forcing maintenance staff to rely on a narrow external staircase.[104] Though Boys described her piece as a 'feminist critique to the very male world of Lloyd's', the main impression is of a class-based analysis, since the group with which she was concerned would have been seen as standing well down in the Lloyd's hierarchy.

Boys's critique seems not to have been taken up by other commentators at the time but the issue briefly re-emerged in a later comment on the building by the American critic Diane Ghirardo, another writer with an interest in the social dimension of the built environment. Noting the space to which maintenance staff were consigned - 'mean, bare, nasty rooms and corridors below ground level, bereft even of natural light' - Ghirardo offered her own explanation: 'not surprisingly, neither architect nor client seemed to care much about them'.[105] Both this reading and that of Boys imply

[103] The principle derived from the work of the US architect Louis Kahn, a powerful influence for Rogers and other high tech practitioners. See for example Rogers, *A Place for all People*, p. 49.
[104] Jos Boys, 'Grown men's games', *Architects' Journal*, 22 October 1986, pp. 107-9. As the author's radical feminist interest in architecture was already established, the editor was presumably anticipating a provocative contribution.
[105] Diane Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), p. 219. Ghirardo and Boys may well have noted Lloyd's celebratory book marking the building's completion,

a position on the left of politics and are indicative perhaps of the left's disenchantment with an architectural modernism which appeared to have severed its longstanding connection with progressive political programmes and to be expressing the values and hierarchies of global capitalism. They may suggest too a desire to call into question Rogers's own proclaimed left-leaning credentials.

Public face, private world

As suggested at the start of this chapter, it is not easy to identify any late twentieth century British building that could match the immediate impact made by the new Lloyd's office or one that lodged itself more quickly into public consciousness. A French commentator notes that in the two years following its completion the building was the subject of over fifty articles in British or French architectural magazines.[106] Interest extended, however, well beyond the ranks of connoisseurs. In the years immediately after the building's opening up to two thousand visitors per day were reported to be taking the opportunity to view the building's interior, an achievement cited by Rogers and others as demonstrating the public's enthusiasm for contemporary architecture.[107] When participating in the Open House London event (a practice discontinued by Lloyd's in recent years), it remained among the most popular destinations. It was therefore something of an irony that a new building with so strong a public presence should be home to an old and very private institution with a well established reputation for secrecy and social exclusivity. 'For over a hundred years, Lloyd's has been consciously a closed society, exclusive and secretive', wrote Godfrey Hodgson.[108] This writer, as noted earlier, saw the new building as contributing to a process of opening up the institution but others appeared unconvinced. There was regret that the original plans for the ground floor to remain part of the public realm with public access and street level shops (connecting with Lloyd's 'historic traditions as a coffee house', as Rogers hoped)

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which makes no reference to the Corporation's support staff, as confirmation of their view: Lloyd's, *Serving the World*.

[106] Loïse Lenne, 'The premises of the event', p.1.

[107] Richard Rogers, 'Belief in the future is rooted in memory of the past, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 136 (1988), pp. 873-884 (p. 880).

[108] Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*, p. 300.

were not in the event fully realised.[109] Further disappointment came with the closure of the internal public viewing gallery in response to the threat of terrorism. Kenneth Powell was thus left with the feeling (perhaps with the quasi-medieval service towers in mind) that 'if anything the inward-looking character of the interior, a fortress of insurance, confirmed its essentially "private" nature' enclosing 'a very private world'.[110] In recent years some prominent City buildings have offered varying degree of public access, security concerns notwithstanding, and indeed the inclusion of internal 'public realm' has been a feature of some recent major City office developments (notably the Rafael Viñoly 'Walkie Talkie' building). Lloyd's, however, remains at the time of writing firmly closed.

The building and the trauma of Lloyd's

The Lloyd's building's role as an expression of the identity and image of the commissioning client has already been examined. It is therefore ironic that the spectacular new building was brought into use at a point when Lloyd's was on the verge of becoming a deeply troubled institution. As a consequence of huge claims arising from a succession of natural disasters and other events[111], together with the impact of management failures, inadequate regulation and doubtful if not unequivocally fraudulent business practices, Lloyd's was by the early 1990s facing financial losses on an unprecedented scale, leaving its reputation severely tainted and its very existence under threat. Particular attention was focussed on the plight of the 'Names' – individual external investors committed to underwriting the losses, many of whom suffered financial ruin as a result. Not until the millennium, following a radical restructuring, did it become clear that the institution had weathered the crisis and would survive.

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[109] Patrick Hannay, 'A tale of two architectures', *Architects' Journal*, 29 October 1986, pp. 29-39 (p, 34). For 'historic traditions' see 'Richard Rogers and Partners: New headquarters for Lloyd's', *RIBA Transactions* 7, 4.1 (1984-85), pp. 44-53 (p. 45).

[110] Kenneth Powell, *Richard Rogers* (Zürich: Artemis, 1994), p. 14 and Powell, *Lloyd's Building* (1994), p. 45. The 1960s *Economist* building might be seen as a distant antecedent to the extent that it included accommodation for that most exclusive institution, Boodle's Club.

[111] In addition to severe weather events and earthquakes occurring during the 1980s, a heavy demand on Lloyd's funds arose from the 1988 Piper Alpha oil rig fire, thus adding a further ironic twist to the narrative by virtue of the recurrent comparison made between the Corporation's new building and oil industry installations: Adam Raphael, *Ultimate Risk: The Inside Story of the Lloyd's Catastrophe* (London: Bantam Press, 1994), pp. 173-174.

The literature covering the fortunes of Lloyd's through this period bristles with reference, visual as well as verbal, to the new building.[112] But while there was evidently a view that this strikingly novel work of architecture must somehow feature in the narrative of a long established institution facing existential problems, there was less accord as to the actual part it could best play. One reading cast the building in the role that Lloyd's clearly preferred: a statement of confidence that, whatever the present difficulties, the institution could continue to look forward to an auspicious future, the radical design signifying an organisation determined to transform itself to meet the demands of a new era.[113] Yet even as the project reached completion, there were indications of its assuming a more negative significance in relation to the client's situation. The accolade of a royal opening for the prestigious new project was juxtaposed in the press with Lloyd's current involvement in a major financial scandal and a government inquiry into the treatment of 'Names'.[114] The *Guardian's* John Cunningham saw the service pipes and other external features of the building as 'punk jewellery' aptly symbolising an institution that had abandoned its traditional values and espoused the culture of unrestrained greed characteristic of the Thatcher era.[115] With the onset of the 1990s, when the gravity of Lloyd's situation was becoming ever clearer, the building which might earlier have seemed a bold affirmation of confidence looked now like a statement of hubris and hollow triumphalism on the part of a failing institution:

> The Lloyd's building was commissioned to be modern, forward-looking, technically advanced – to represent all that was best in modern underwriting. Now it appears with ironic effect on television business programmes, behind Names who want out. The success of the design as architecture makes matters worse.[116]

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[112] The principal accounts are Hodgson, *Lloyd's of London*; Mantle, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Raphael, *Ultimate Risk*; Andrew Duguid, *On the Brink: How a Crisis Transformed Lloyd's* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[113] Duguid, *On the Brink*, p. 2.
[114] 'Accolade for Lloyd's', *The Times*, 20 September 1986, p. 23.
[115] John Cunningham, 'Names of the game', *Guardian*, 21 July 1990, p. A12.
[116] Peter Campbell, 'The wearer as much as the flock', *London Review of Books*, 9 April 1992, pp. 19-20.

Jonathan Mantle's account of the Lloyd's crisis saw the institution's failings epitomised by the building's emerging performance defects, especially its leaking glass room and the resulting 'mops and buckets … placed on the marble floor of The Room'.[117] For Stewart Brand (a severe critic, as noted earlier), the original decision to proceed with the new building might itself have contributed to Lloyd's problems. Quoting an anonymous opinion that 'to an experienced board member, when you see a business getting a big new building, it's a bad sign', Brand pointed to Lloyd's catastrophic losses and severe capital shortage in the late eighties and early nineties and suggested that 'judicious scenario planning might have headed off the extravagant building project'.[118] Roger Scruton, implacable opponent of modernism, castigated Lloyd's external members for failing to take the Corporation's commitment to a 'hideous, costly and endlessly cost-absorbing building' as a warning that 'their money was no longer in safe hands'.[119]

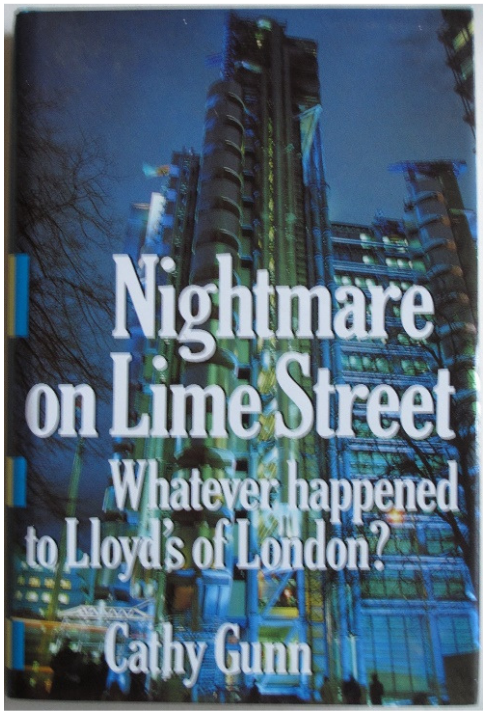
In Andrew Duguid's recent account of the Lloyd's crisis, the building maintains a presence throughout the narrative as 'a symbol of the institution during the crisis years'. The author presents the original decision to commission it as reflecting Lloyd's 'supreme self-confidence' and the eventual royal opening as taking place at a point when 'all seemed well…..There had been scandals, but they were being dealt with'.[120] However, once the precariousness of Lloyd's situation, and in particular the serious implications for individual members, emerged, the new building ceased to be simply a source of controversy and became a 'focus of much wrath'.[121] Yet Duguid also gives the building a positive role in the story, as an asset allowing Lloyd's to pass the test of its solvency and then, in the later 1990s, to be sold as a piece of real estate (to a German property company) and leased back to help pay for a settlement offer.[122] At the very end of the story, reconstruction having at last

[117] Mantle, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, p. 238.
[118] Brand, *How Buildings Learn*, p. 183, n.5.
[119] Roger Scruton, 'Hail Quinlan Terry'*, Spectator*, 8 April 2006, p. 24.
[120] Duguid, *On the Brink*, p. 2.
[121] Duguid, *On the Brink*, p. 28.
[122] Duguid, *On the Brink*, p. 30.

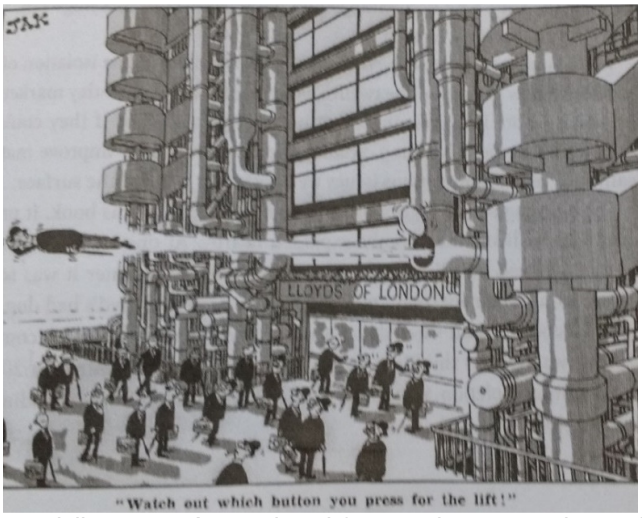
enabled Lloyd's to come through its crisis, Rogers's conception of the Room makes a final appearance as the setting for another visit by the Queen to mark the 325th anniversary of the 'remarkably resilient' institution.[123]

Lloyd's has always been regarded as a photogenic building (especially so for as long as it overtopped the surrounding buildings by a substantial margin) and it is no surprise that commentators on the architecture have taken every opportunity to enhance their text with copious and often highly dramatic illustrations. Within the various accounts of the institution's history through the later 1980s and 1990s, photographic images of the building's distinctive form are deployed for general scene-setting or mood-creating purposes (figure 3.13) or to point up the narrative at key junctures. Imagery is also called on to inject a lighter touch. The novel and instantly recognisable outline of the building encouraged its representation in the form of caricature drawing and satirical cartoons. Though examples of treatment in this vein can in fact be seen across the discourse as a whole, their presence (whether reproduced from earlier sources or newly commissioned) in the context of descriptions of Lloyd's fluctuating fortunes is especially conspicuous (figure 3.14).

[123] Duguid, *On the Brink*, p. 314.



3.13 Cover illustration, Cathy Gunn, *Nightmare on Lime Street* (London: Smith Gryphon, 1992).



3.14 Cartoon by Dave Gaskill, c.1986. (Reproduced from Andrew Duguid, *On the Brink: How a Crisis Transformed Lloyd's*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.)

Icon of the age: Lloyd's, Big Bang and Thatcherism

This chapter opened with a reference to the near-coincidence of the Lloyd's building's formal opening with 'Big Bang' day. Deregulation of the London securities market had no direct bearing on the business of the institution itself, though the building included many of the technical innovations associated with the Big Bang

era,[124] and indeed it anticipated, in its large glass-roofed central space, the atrium office design. Even so, a visiting journalist was struck by how old-fashioned the face-to-face transactions on the floor of the Room seemed in comparison with the remote electronic-based dealing in securities now permitted under the deregulated regime.[125] Yet despite this, and project's origin in the very different environment of the 1970s, Lloyd's new headquarters came almost instantly to be viewed as the embodiment of not only Big Bang as a specific event but of the newly transformed practices and culture of the UK's financial sector as a whole. And because this transformation was viewed (if often over-simplistically) as a process driven by the Thatcher government, the Lloyd's building assumed by extension the role of emblem of the distinct brand of neo-liberal politics characterised as 'Thatcherism'.

The City historian David Kynaston was later to observe that 'the single building that came to symbolise the new City had nothing at all to do with Big Bang'.[126] Nonetheless contemporary commentators found it hard to resist forging a connection between the ending of the City's outmoded working practices and rejection of its traditional style of architecture. In place of the secure, inward-looking, elite-dominated mode of transacting business within the Square Mile, there had suddenly arrived a more open, exciting and risk-seeking ethic. To match it there appeared a new and adventurous architecture that seemed to have a closer affinity with heavy industry than with the world of neo-classical columns and Portland stone so long associated with the City establishment. The new regulatory regime may have applied only to the operation of the securities market, but it was Lloyd's building that seemed perfectly to capture the moment, as one commentator on the newly opened building enthusiastically observed:

> Suddenly, with the "Big Bang" in the City, its amazing form exactly expresses the hour. Its neighbours – The Bank, solid and reassuring, the other banks,

[124] Duffy, *The Changing Workplace*, p. 182.
[125] Martyn Harris, 'Lloyd's high-risk rise', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 November 1986, p. 19.
[126] David Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4: A Club No More, 1945-2000* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2001), p. 699.

> impersonal "leave it to us" behind their tinted curtain walls – reflect the past, when things seemed safe. Like it or not – here is the new reality – anything goes. The cut and thrust of modern finance sculpturally expressed in terms of the butcher's chops, entrails and all. The constant state of uncertainty, mirrored by box-like shapes precariously balanced sky-high, the rise and fall of fortunes, by the incessant up and down movement of high-speed wall-climber lifts.[127]

It was an association that endured. Martin Pawley, looking back at the building's first decade, was in no doubt that it had already established itself in 'the national psyche'; 'flashed up on a television screen it instantly symbolises "Big Bang" in the City, "Big Trouble" in the insurance business, and "Big Ego", all in one go'.[128] For Owen Hatherley, writing in the new century, it remained 'a huge metallic embodiment of the Big Bang, a Thatcherite machine for underwriting in'.[129] Yet at the same time, as the critic Tom Dyckhoff recalls, the image of the Lloyd's building had unhappy connotations for an older generation of traders who felt threatened by the advent of a new world of 'powerful, lightning-quick flows of capital' and a 'new, more aggressive, more showy breed [of traders]….for my godfather, the Lloyd's Building represented this sudden transformation of his life'.[130]

If Lloyd's quickly emerged as the architectural embodiment of the 'new' City, it was but a short step (as evident from Hatherley's comment above) to extending the building's emblematic role to encompass the era as a whole and in particular its principal defining element, the government of Margaret Thatcher. It was an ironic outcome for a project whose designer was clearly identified as standing on the left of the political spectrum. In fact, despite its completion at a point widely

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[127] Kenneth Browne, letter, *Architectural Review*, November 1986, p. 6. Browne was an architect and former townscape editor of that journal. His enthusiasm at the dramatic impact of Lloyd's within its immediate surroundings was nonetheless qualified by a fear that such architecture would prove a 'nightmare' if replicated over a wider area.
[128] Martin Pawley, 'Through the round window', *Observer*, 12 June 1994, p. C7.
[129] Hatherley, *A New Kind of Bleak*, p. 349.
[130] Tom Dyckhoff, *The Age of Spectacle: Adventures in Architecture and the 21st-Century City* (London: Random House, 2017), p. 5.

characterised as the high water-mark of Thatcherism, there is no objective justification for attaching a contemporary political agenda to building which had been conceived nearly a decade earlier while a Labour government remained in office. As for Thatcher herself, she appears to have shown no more than limited interest in the affairs of Lloyd's and none at all in its new building.[131] If the Thatcher government has to be represented in architectural terms, then the leading candidates would be Broadgate (as will be discussed in the chapter concerned) or, still more convincingly, the Canary Wharf project, which was underpinned by the Government's urban regeneration policies and with which Thatcher herself was directly involved.[132] Nonetheless, Graham Stewart, historian of 1980s Britain, is in no doubt that 'if any structure in Thatcher's Britain might be singled out as the icon of the age, the Lloyd's Building was surely it'.[133] For the cultural theorist Florian Cord, is that 'the building's external architecture bears witness to the arrival of the age of networks, flows, circuits and acceleration ushered in the Iron Lady's implementation of key neoliberal policies such as deregulation, privatisation, liberalisation and free trade'.[134]

Such observations date from some three decades after the Thatcher era, but in fact the image of the building on the cover of a contemporary left-slanting critique of Thatcherism indicates that it was a connection established from an early stage (figure 3.15). For the most part the association was indeed made from a position of hostility, open or implied, to Thatcherite politics.[135] Cunningham's comment quoted

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[131] Thatcher was reported to be distressed by the scandals affecting Lloyd's in the early 1980s: Margaret Reid, 'Mrs Thatcher and the City', in Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon (editors), *The Thatcher Effect* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 49-63 (p. 51).
[132] Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 460-462.
[133] Graham Stewart, *Bang!: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p. 266.
[134] Florian Cord, 'Capital/rebel city: London 2012 and the struggle for hegemony, in Oliver van Knebel Doeberitz and Ralf Schneider (editors), *London Post-2010 in British Literature and Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 39-56 (pp. 43-44).
[135] Not, however, invariably so. From his perspective on the right, Roger Scruton regarded Lloyd's as not only an example of the modernist architecture he detested but also a signifier of the loss of traditional City values and the advent of a new business culture in which 'everything is fun': 'After modernism'*, City Journal*, Spring 2000, https://www.city-journal.org/html/after-modernism-11801.html (accessed 21 August 2017).

earlier pointed to Lloyd's as expressing the culture of greed the Thatcher government was thought to have engendered. That notion was presented in

3.15 Cover illustration, Bob Jessop and others, *Thatcherism*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

unequivocally polemical terms in the already cited essay by Peter Conrad, which was published while Thatcher was still in power. Conrad's subject was the economic and social inequality to be found in the UK of the late-1980s, as evidence of which he juxtaposed two of what he designated as 'Thatcher's monuments'. One was Lloyd's, signature building for the new City. The other was the 'cardboard city' for the homeless which had sprung up by Waterloo Bridge, a location from which Lloyd's:

> looks luridly, beautifully improbable, and so it is: the symbol of a society where wealth no longer derives from work but is conjured of the air by electronic abracadabra. ….. To the east you look at a spider's web of steel and glass.

> Down below you find a city of cardboard, inhabited by those whose risks no one thinks it worthwhile to insure…….Their impromptu shelters seem to imitate the whimsies of Richard Rogers, whose building can afford to joke about its own flimsiness.[136]

Looking back two decades later, Owen Hatherley discerned a considerably more nuanced political connection, the widely noted affinity between the high tech design and the apparatus of heavy industry recalling the oil boom 'that kept Thatcherism secure in its confrontation with the unions'. Perhaps Lloyd's, he speculated, represented 'some kind of unacknowledged appeasement of the gods of industry, paying tribute to it as the same time it was being destroyed'.[137]

Conclusion

It seems unimaginable that the new Lloyd's building could have failed to arouse immediate attention, given what it was, where it was and for whom it was intended. Here was the most conspicuous example of high tech architecture yet seen in the UK, a project conceived on a grand scale, placed at in the heart of the City of London, cast in a form which stood in stark contrast to that of its surroundings and custom-designed for the one of the City's most august institutions, the Corporation of Lloyd's. This chapter has sought to describe how the building quickly acquired additional layers of significance as a standard-bearer for the City's belated but eventually enthusiastic espousal of architectural modernism, and as an early example of the consciously conceived 'signature' or 'iconic' building, paving the way for the crop of millennial buildings which became a principal image for the Square Mile in the new century (a phenomenon further touched on in the final chapter of the thesis). Interest was reignited in 2011 when Lloyd's became the youngest ever building to achieve Grade I listed status, an exceptional accolade for a work then only twenty-five years old.

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[136] Conrad, 'Thatcher's monuments', *Observer Magazine*, 23 April 1989, p.38. Lloyd's is no longer visible from Conrad's viewing point.
[137] Hatherley, *A New Kind of Bleak*, pp. 348-352.

Notwithstanding the view of Lloyd's as architecture of uncompromisingly contemporary modernity, I have sought to show that the building proved in the event to generate a nuanced and complex discourse, encompassing a rich variety of readings as to the nature of its architectural form, its interaction with the surroundings and its relationship with not only the commissioning client but also the individuals experiencing it on a daily basis.

The chapter has noted how discussion of the building itself included extensive reference to the figure of its designer, Richard Rogers. The period of the building's construction and inauguration coincided with the architect's involvement in other high-profile projects and his emergence as both the most widely known living British architect and the first UK international 'starchitect'. These were the years too in which Rogers was becoming increasingly prominent not only as the leading spokesman of his profession – notably in the controversy surrounding Prince Charles – but as a regular participant in general public discourse. Further attention focused on the fact of an architect identified with the political left (and eventual involvement in the work of the 1997 Labour government) accepting a commission from a commercial client at the heart of the British establishment.

Alongside these themes, I have noted the extensive reference to the Lloyd's building's perceived relationship with the City at the moment of Big Bang and with the political environment in the peak years of Thatcherite conservatism. The project originated in an earlier era and had no direct connection with the Big Bang reforms. Nor did it reflect another significant development in the City of the 1980s – exemplified by the Broadgate development - the increasingly conspicuous presence of American institutions and, allied to it, American architectural taste. How then is the persistent reading of Lloyd's as emblematic of the City's transformation to be explained? The near-coincidence of the building's completion and formal opening can no doubt be seen to have played a circumstantial role. But the principal factor, I would argue, must surely be found in the nature of the building. Situated at the epicentre of the traditional Square Mile, hard by the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange, the new Lloyd's was yet a building that looked like no others in this

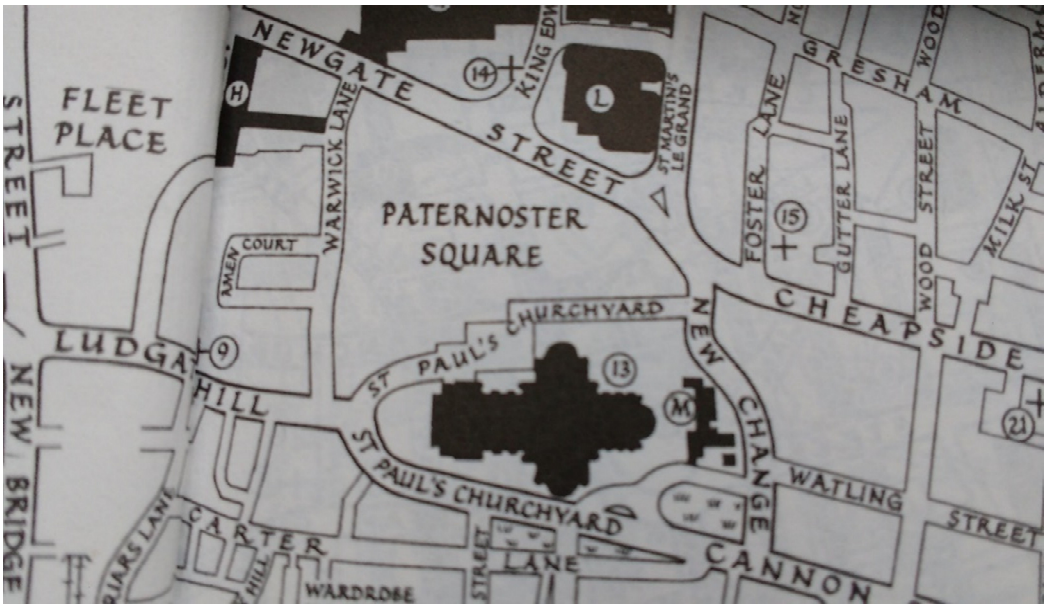
environment. Here was a structure that seemed to encapsulate the very essence of a new City of London, one whose futuristic and mechanistic design a perfect representation of the transformed character and atmosphere of the City. The steel, glass, service pipes and cranes, the movement of the lifts outside and escalators inside, the night-time luminosity all invited interpretation as the material expression of the freed-up markets, high-speed flows, instant communication and round-the-clock activity that seemed to define the new world of international finance.[138] However fortuitous the connection may in reality have been, Lloyd's did indeed seem a building purposely designed (in the earlier cited words of Kenneth Browne[139]) to 'match the hour'.

[138] A view encapsulated by the reaction of Peter Conrad: 'Thatcher's monuments', *Observer Magazine*, 23 April 1989, pp. 36-38.
[139] Letter from Kenneth Browne, *Architectural Review*, November 1986, p. 6.

CHAPTER 4

THE BURDEN OF HISTORY, THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEXT: PATERNOSTER SQUARE

The subject of this chapter is the redevelopment of a wedge-shaped parcel of land on the northern flank of St. Paul's Cathedral, identified as 'Paternoster Square' (figure 4.1). Initiated in 1986, the project evolved through a succession of controversial design schemes and only at the end of the following decade was a proposal finally approved. The development was completed in 2003. This was therefore a narrative spanning seventeen years and one with an outcome substantially different from that originally envisaged. Yet throughout the period and subsequently, discussion of Paternoster Square continued to centre around a single overarching theme: the development's place in a setting of unique significance arising from the site's history and its relationship with St. Paul's.



4.1 Outline of the Paternoster site prior to redevelopment. (Source: Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner,
London 1: The City of London, London: Penguin, 1997.)

At one level Paternoster Square was just one of the many City developments undertaken in the post-Big Bang era for the purpose of replacing outdated office blocks with new accommodation of a size and quality capable of meeting

contemporary needs. What distinguished this project from others and made it the focus of especially intense scrutiny over a decade and more was its location, immediately adjacent to the building that was both the City's premier historic monument and an outstandingly important national icon. More than any of the other cases examined in this study – more even the Mansion House project, the historic and strategic location of which was widely noted – at Paternoster Square the fundamental frame of reference was context. The Paternoster discourse proved to involvr relatively little attention to the project's place in the Big Bang City. The overriding preoccupation was rather with the project against the backdrop of the historic City of London as it had evolved from the medieval era through the landmarks of the Great Fire and Blitz to post-war reconstruction, with St. Paul's Cathedral as an enduring presence. The key issue, both for those putting forward the successive schemes for the Paternoster site and for those reacting to them, was how the development would engage with this unique context of history and topography. Thus, was this to be an exercise in the creation of something entirely new? Or was it a chance to realise unfulfilled visions from the past? Or was it the moment to recover what had had been lost, especially as a result of wartime destruction and the post-war renewal? Could the process of recovery encompass not just physical fabric but also the way of life and atmosphere with which it had been associated? How did the successive proposals relate to the cathedral? How did they read the character of both the building itself and its environment and the way they were experienced?

The outcome of such deliberation is a discourse somewhat different in character from that connected with the other cases discussed in this study. This is a literature permeated with reference to history, one touching on the evolution of the site and its surroundings, the design of St. Paul's and the successive plans for the reshaping of the area put forward in the seventeenth century and then in the post-war period. Participants on all sides of the Paternoster debate could be observed taking the long view and demonstrating an understanding of the history and topography of the City and its cathedral. Texts (especially those emanating from the promoters of the successive schemes) were liberally supplemented by plans and images of the site in

earlier eras. Particularly close attention was directed towards the most recent phase of the site's history, centred on William Holford's mid-century redevelopment scheme, which survived pending replacement by the new project. Reference to Holford for the most part reflected the general and by then long established reaction against post-war modernist urban development, though some dissenting voices were could be heard, anticipating the later softening of attitudes towards the planning and architecture of that period. A notable presence in this context is the figure of Nikolaus Pevsner, whose persistent advocacy of Holford's scheme had the effect of drawing the Paternoster discourse into the still continuing controversy concerning Pevsner's perceived influence in relation to mid-twentieth-century British architecture.

A still more visible presence is that of Prince Charles. His active involvement in late-twentieth century architectural discourse has been well documented and analysed. Nonetheless his profile in the Paternoster context (even more conspicuous than in the Mansion House case) was such as to place a stronger than ever spotlight on his role and open up a number of specific issues: the extent to which he was articulating already familiar concerns; his impact in terms of media and wider public interest in the built environment; and his claimed role as representative of lay opinion confronting the architectural establishment.

The Prince's distinctive views on the Paternoster site pervaded the protracted debate over the architectural form and aesthetic of the new development, widely characterised as a matter of 'style'. The debate seemed to encapsulate much of the contemporary wider uncertainty over the direction in which architecture should develop, as interest in postmodernism faded and modernist values sought to reassert themselves - an uncertainty reflected in the arguments presented for and against the successive plans and then in the ambivalent reception of the completed scheme. Overall, however, it was the advocacy of a classical solution for Paternoster Square that aroused the most attention in the 'style' context, prompting argument around the principle and practice of resorting to classical form for the contemporary

built environment and underlining the distinctive nature and culture of the movement promoting classicism.

This chapter accordingly examines the discourse on Paternoster Square in the context of the historical importance of the site and the surroundings; the interaction with the initial reaction to the Holford scheme and its subsequent standing; the role of Prince Charles's in relation to media and public engagement with architectural and planning issues; the place of Paternoster Square within the continuing preoccupation with 'style'; and its significance in respect of the movement associated with contemporary classicism.

The project described

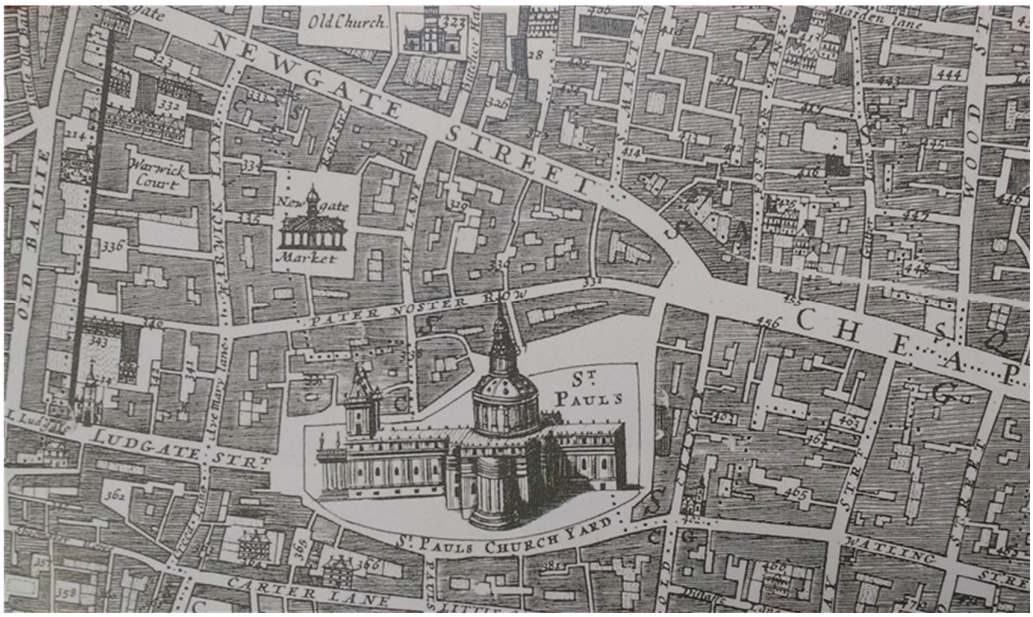
Origins

The space to which the name 'Paternoster Square' was attached emerged as part of the medieval network of streets and alleys surrounding St. Paul's Cathedral.[1] The area was predominantly commercial with a particular emphasis on businesses connected with the life of the cathedral and had by the sixteenth century become the centre of the printing and publishing industries, an association that continued until the Second World War. The central open space accommodated the City's meat market.

Following the Great Fire, which destroyed the entire area around St. Paul's besides the cathedral itself, Christopher Wren and others produced plans for wholesale redesign of the City on a geometrical basis involving broad avenues, radial streets and vistas towards major buildings and intersections (see figure 1.3). The medieval

[1] Principal sources for this section include: Georgian Group, *Aspiring Visions: A Planning History of the St. Paul's Area from 1666 to the Present Day* (Lavenham: Lavenham Press, 1988); Robert Thorne, 'The setting of St. Paul's cathedral in the twentieth century', *London Journal*, 16(2) (1991), pp. 117-128; *Paternoster Square: The Masterplan* (London: Paternoster Associates, 1990); Nicola Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster* (London: Wordsearch, 2003); Simon Bradley, 'The precinct and setting of St. Paul's from the nineteenth century', in Derek Keene, Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint, (editors), *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604-2004* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2004), pp. 439-450. For a history of the area around the cathedral, and in particular its role as the centre of publishing and bookselling, see Margaret Willes, *In the Shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

streetscape would be swept away, leaving Wren's new cathedral to stand in an open piazza. In the event that vision was rejected and rebuilding proceeded on the basis of the pre-Fire layout (figure 4.2).[2] Also unrealised was a separate proposal attributed to Nicholas Hawksmoor for a colonnaded precinct around the cathedral, within which would have stood a circular domed building, probably an intended baptistery.[3]



4.2 St. Paul's and environs, Morgan Map, 1683. (Source: Nicola Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, London: Wordsearch, 2003.)

Post-Blitz replanning

Over the following centuries the townscape around St. Paul's changed as the City's role and character evolved, with the loss of a resident population and, in the twentieth century, the increasingly dominant presence of financial services. The central space, vacated by the market, was formally named Paternoster Square. Nonetheless the overall street layout remained intact and the locality continued to accommodate commercial activity (particularly publishers' warehousing and book distribution) and a range of shops. All this changed after bombing in 1940

[2] Kerry Downes, *Christopher Wren* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), pp. 60-63. The notion of a rationally planned setting for the cathedral re-emerged at the end of the following century in an unexecuted plan prepared by George Dance the Younger: Penelope Hunting, *St. Paul's Vista* (London: Lep Group, 1988), pp. 67-68.
[3] Kerry Downes, *Hawksmoor* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1970), pp. 88-90.

destroyed most of the area, though the cathedral itself survived. Devastation was especially complete on the Paternoster side, with most of the offices and warehousing wiped out. This time simple reconstruction of what had been lost was not contemplated. The destruction was seen as the opportunity to achieve an overdue renewal of the whole area and to do so in a way which would enhance the setting of St. Paul's, now the symbol of national defiance in the face of tyranny. With this in view there appeared a succession of ambitious plans. The first was the work of a Royal Academy committee chaired by Sir Edwin Lutyens, which proposed, on the model of Wren's abortive design, a monumental setting for St. Paul's, with a surrounding piazza, a processional approach to the west front and an ensemble of new buildings in the classical style (figure 4.3).[4] This was followed by the strategic plan for the post-war City produced by the architect-planners Charles Holden and William Holford, which likewise proposed an open setting for the cathedral, together with a processional approach from the river and redevelopment on the northern side.[5] A contrasting proposal came from the *Architectural Review*, involving a consciously informal layout with an asymmetrical formation of slab office blocks.[6] These and other schemes stimulated extensive debate as to what would constitute an appropriate setting for St. Paul's but none of them was pursued. Matters remained in abeyance for some years until Holford was called back to prepare a new plan for the entire cathedral surroundings. From this commission emerged the Paternoster Square development to which Holford's name would become permanently attached.[7]

[4] Royal Academy of Arts, *London Replanned* (London: Country Life, 1942), pp. 14-17.
[5] C.H. Holden and W.G. Holford, *The City of London: a Record of Destruction and Survival* (London: Architectural Press, 1951).
[6] 'Plan for the St. Paul's area', *Architectural Review*, November 1946, pp. 123-150.
[7] William Holford, 'St. Paul's: Report on the surroundings of St. Paul's Cathedral in the City of London', *Town Planning Review*, 27.2 (1956), pp. 59-98, especially pp. 76-81.

4.3 St. Paul's and surroundings, as illustrated in the Royal Academy report, *London Replanned*, London: Country Life, 1942.

The Holford development

Holford's Paternoster Square constituted a 'comprehensive redevelopment', a planning concept widely practised in post-war Britain and typified by the large-scale urban renewal project involving the replacement of war-damaged or obsolete fabric with a new development offering a mix of uses, public space and traffic-pedestrian segregation.[8] In the Paternoster case the proposal comprised a raised pedestrianised podium above service roads and a vehicle park; shops and restaurants; and a series of slab blocks of varying height, one rising to eighteen storeys (figure 4.4). The firm of Trehearne and Norman was responsible for design of the individual blocks, which were of concrete construction faced with Portland stone and slate, with the tower mainly of glass.

Like the earlier proposed schemes for the area, Holford's plan was extensively analysed on its appearance in 1956 and the immediate reaction was generally positive. The scheme was approved in 1961 and completed in 1967. Yet even as construction proceeded, criticisms emerged, particularly concerning the apparent encroachment on the view of the cathedral's west front. Within a few years of

[8] See for example Otto Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities: Architect Planners and the Politics of Radical Urban Renewal in 1960s Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

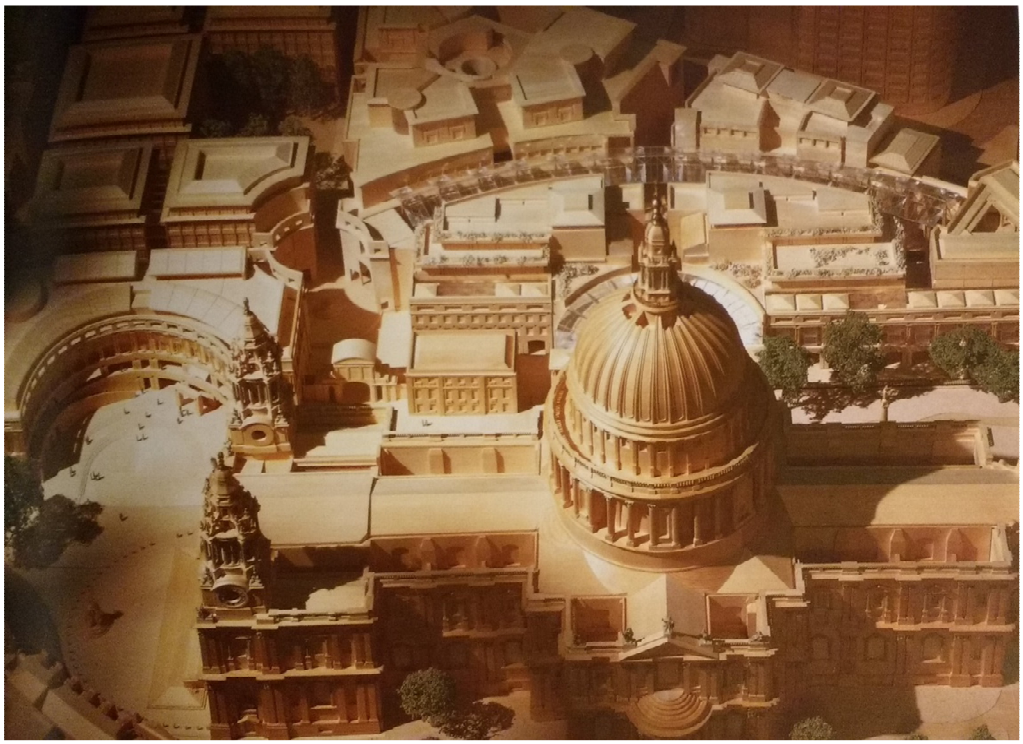
completion the scheme was cited as exemplifying the failings of post-war urban development, with complaints about the unattractiveness of the public spaces and the outdated form of the office blocks. In commercial terms the development was judged to be performing poorly, the retail element unsuccessful and the office design inflexible. In 1986, less than twenty years after completion of Holford's scheme, plans were set in hand for the redevelopment and the creation of a new Paternoster Square.

4.4 The Paternoster Square development as completed, 1967. (Source: Georgian Group, *Aspiring Visions: A Planning History of the St. Paul's Area from 1666 to the Present Day*, Lavenham: Lavenham Press, 1988.)

The Arup and Simpson proposals

The immediate impetus for redevelopment came from a change of ownership which transferred much (though not all) of the Paternoster site to a consortium of developers and funders, among them Stuart Lipton, promoter of Broadgate and other major projects. Within a year ownership had passed again to Mountleigh, a leading property company of the period, with Lipton retained to manage the project and organise a masterplan design competition. The brief (not published at the time) was for a mixed development of predominantly office and retail use. Yet there was

emphasis too on the creation of an identity for the site that reflected its history and relationship with St. Paul's. Seven leading architectural practices submitted schemes and Arup Associates, led by senior partner Philip Dowson, was selected to take the project forward.[9] The Arup plan (figure 4.5) involved a piazza and flanking colonnaded crescent in front of St. Paul's; a new cathedral close to the north, within which would stand Temple Bar, the City's historic gateway removed in 1878; and beyond that that a large office and retail development, planned around an elliptical arcade and new square. No building would rise above eight storeys. The plan placed strong emphasis on the development's relationship with St. Paul's, while also asserting the need to cast it in an authentically contemporary architectural form.[10]



4.5 Arup Associates, Paternoster Square masterplan, model. (Source: Nicola Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, London: Wordsearch, 2003.)

An initial version of the Arup plan went on public exhibition in the summer of 1988, by which time an additional participant in the debate had appeared in the person of

[9] Other entrants were Foster Associates; Arata Isozaki; MacCormac, Jamieson, Prichard and Wright; Richard Rogers Partnership; Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; and James Stirling and Michael Wilford.
[10] *Paternoster: The Master Plan* (London: Arup Associates, 1988), pages unnumbered. Temple Bar had been an intended feature of Holford's development and would appear (in various locations) in all the proposed schemes.

Prince Charles. By now a firmly established presence in architectural discourse, the Prince had been privately shown the shortlisted competition entries and had indicated dissatisfaction with them all, subsequently making his reaction public in his Mansion House speech of December 1987. Reflecting on the significance of St. Paul's in the nation's memory and deploring the 'wrecking' of the surrounding skyline by modern development (likening the impact to that of wartime bombing), the Prince asserted that none of the proposals for Paternoster Square would do justice to the site and called for a new development brief which placed less emphasis on commercial considerations and more on the achievement of a setting worthy of the cathedral.[11]

In parallel the Prince made known his support for an alternative proposal prepared independently by the classical architect John Simpson to a brief from the urban planner and theorist Leon Krier. Simpson's conception extended beyond the immediate development site to encompass the southern flank of St. Paul's, restoring the pre-war street pattern and creating a series of classical buildings, including a domed building presumably inspired by the Hawksmoor 'baptistery'.[12] The inclusion of flats and a hotel represented a further departure from the developers' brief. In response to Prince Charles's endorsement of the alternative scheme, now sponsored by the *Evening Standard*, the developers agreed to put Simpson's design on exhibition alongside the Arup masterplan. It was presented in the form of a finished model and perspectives in oil by the artist Carl Laubin, which contrasted sharply with the diagrams and polystyrene blocks used to illustrate the Arup plan (figures 4.6 and 4.7). As subsequently reported by the architectural commentator Peter Murray, the response from visitors both at this and at a second exhibition presenting a more developed version of the Arup scheme indicated a clear preference for Simpson's version.[13]

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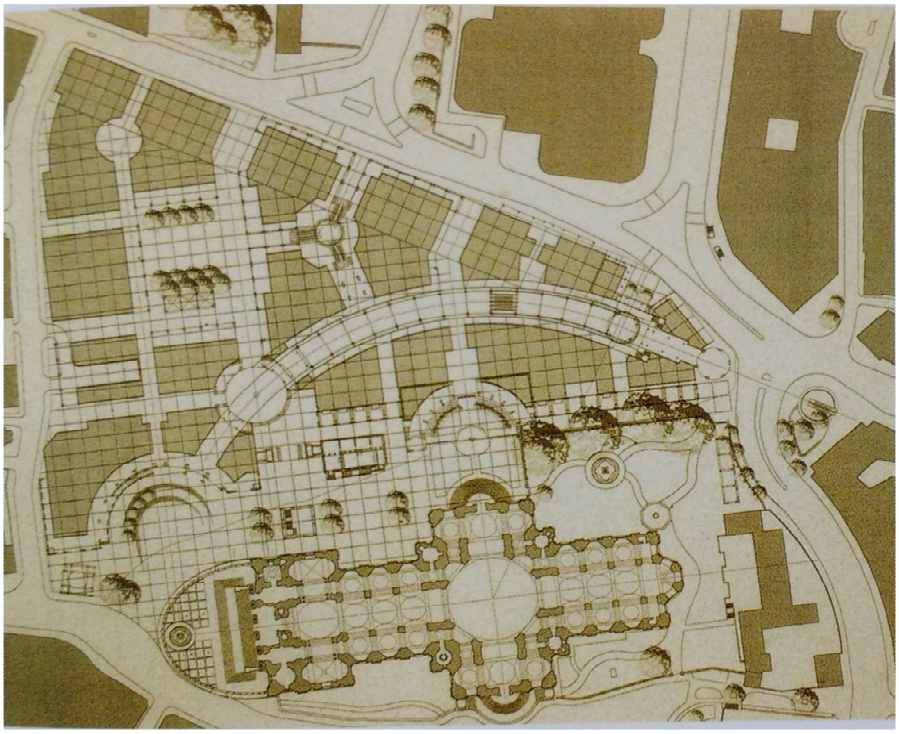
[11] Speech to the Corporation of London Planning and Communication Committee, 1 December 1987, in Charles, Prince of Wales, *Speeches and Articles 1968-2012*, volume 1 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), pp. 337-343.
[12] Richard John and David Watkin, *John Simpson: The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace and Other Works* (London: Papadakis, 2002), pp. 90-95.
[13] Peter Murray, 'Paternoster – Post Holford', *London Journal* 16(2) (1991), pp. 129-139 (p. 129).

4.6 John Simpson, Proposed Paternoster Square development, 1988: painting by Carl Laubin.
(Source: John Russell Taylor and David Watkin, *Carl Laubin: Paintings*, London: Plus One, 2007.)

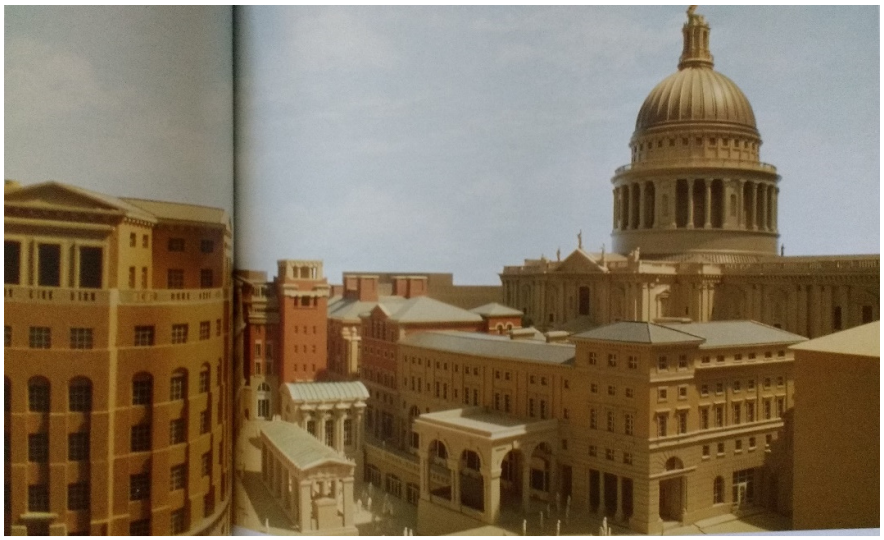


4.7 Arup Associates, Paternoster Square, block site plan, 1987. (Source: Nicola Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, London: Wordsearch, 2003.)

The Farrell masterplan

With the project now at the centre of a major public controversy, the site went through further ownership changes, ending up with Paternoster Associates, a consortium of British, American and Japanese developers. The Arup scheme was abandoned and replaced by a new masterplan based on Simpson's concept, though with Simpson now required to share responsibility with Terry Farrell, designated lead masterplanner, and the American classical architect Thomas Beeby. Together they chose a group of colleagues, all associated with classicism, to design the individual buildings.[14] This scheme was put on public exhibition in May 1991. Comprising eight individual office blocks surrounding a public square, the scheme was broadly consistent with Simpson's earlier design, with strong emphasis on restoration of the historic street pattern and the relationship with St. Paul's (figure 4.8). At the developers' insistence, however, the residential element was dropped.

[14] The group comprised the British architects Quinlan Terry, Robert Adam and Paul Gibson, the Anglo-Greek Demetri Porphyrios and the US-based South-African Allan Greenberg.



4.8 Terry Farrell masterplan for Paternoster Square, model. (Source: Nicola Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, London: Wordsearch, 2003.)

Public response to the exhibition was again positive but the scheme met with a notably cool reception from the architectural profession. After a process of revision, the development finally secured planning permission in August 1993. However, with the commercial property market by now in recession, it became clear that the Farrell plan in its current form was no longer viable. The moment had passed.

The Whitfield scheme

In 1995 Mitsubishi Estates, now the sole site owner, commissioned William Whitfield initially to review the existing scheme and subsequently to produce an entirely new one.[15] Whitfield consciously adopted a lower-key approach than his predecessors, placing emphasis on commercial viability and a less architecturally contentious design than the earlier ones. His scheme retained key elements of the Farrell plan, with a revival of the traditional streetscape, configuration of separate blocks around a public piazza and the overriding importance of the relationship with the cathedral. Yet Whitfield opted for diversity and informality in the architecture by giving other practitioners a free hand in the design of the individual buildings within a prescribed

[15] As Surveyor to the Fabric of St. Paul's (to 1990), Whitfield had been an assessor for the original competition and, as a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, had been involved in that body's assessment of the earlier schemes.

framework of height, footprints and materials.[16] The recovered Temple Bar was placed prominently at the entrance to the piazza, with a newly designed but historically resonant stone column inside the space (figure 4.9).

With planning consent secured, the Lord Mayor ceremonially inaugurated the demolition of Holford's blocks in 1999 and construction of the new scheme commenced the following year. The completed Paternoster Square was formally opened in September 2003, a full seventeen years after the launch of the first design competition.

4.9 Paternoster Square as completed, 2003. (Source: Alec Forshaw, *New City*, London: Merrell, 2014.)

Reconnecting with history: Paternoster Square and its context

As described in the introductory chapter, the 'Big Bang' deregulation of financial services created an immediate demand for a new form of office building with large floor-plates, a central atrium and the services necessary for electronic trading. The Paternoster Square redevelopment formed part of the process of renewing the City's office provision in such a way as to meet this demand. Holford's blocks were

[16] Individual buildings were designed by Whitfield himself; Allies and Morrison; Eric Parry; MacCormac Jameson Prichard; Sheppard Robson; and Sidell Gibson.

deemed functionally obsolete, the office space apparently incapable of accommodating the processes now central to the City's needs.[17] It has since been claimed that, given the continued evolution of technology, the inadequacy of the pre-Big Bang office stock was exaggerated[18] and indeed, as will be seen, there were claims even at the time that the case for refurbishment of Holford's blocks deserved closer investigation. However, for the redevelopment scheme's promoters and most commentators, it was taken as read that the existing scheme was, as Simon Bradley later put it, 'an obvious case for treatment'.[19]

If that much seemed clear, the seventeen-year duration of the project demonstrated that the nature of the treatment required was anything but obvious. As those involved were only too aware, no less than their predecessors had been at the end of the war, this was no routine office redevelopment. Stretched across the northern flank of St. Paul's Cathedral, the City's foremost historic monument and a building of unchallenged national significance,[20] this was a site of unique planning sensitivity. Indeed, having been at the heart of the City's evolution over the past millennium, Paternoster Square was itself a place of powerful historic resonance. Discussing the meaning of 'context' in relation to architecture, Adrian Forty refers to the conception of architecture in 'dialogue with its surroundings, both in the immediate physical sense, but also as a historical continuum'.[21] It is a notion that might be aptly applied to Paternoster Square. This was a site inseparable from its locational and historical context, and it was how the new development engaged with that context that formed the core of the Paternoster discourse.

Though at one level a technical matter, the specific uses to which the new development would be dedicated proved contentious. While it may have been largely taken for granted that Holford's office blocks were not fit for purpose in the

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[17] Francis Duffy, 'Power to the City', *Architectural Review*, January 1988, pp. 19-20.
[18] Matthew Carmona, *Public Places – Urban Spaces* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2010), pp. 253-254.
[19] Bradley, 'The precinct and setting of St. Paul's', p. 448.
[20] Not entirely unchallenged: the ever independent-minded Jonathan Meades considered the cathedral overrated: 'St. Paul's already has dodgy neighbours', *The Times*, 21 April 2003, p. 16.
[21] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 132-133.

Big Bang City, it was not unanimously accepted that the site should continue to fulfil exactly the same function as in the Holford era. The developers' brief specified a mixture of office, retail and public space, with the maximum volume of commercially viable accommodation, requirements with which the Arup plan and rival bids complied.[22] The expectation was thus that use of the site should remain unchanged - in other words, that it should be given over mainly to offices. Yet as some commentators pointed out (and as even the developers to a degree acknowledged), that assumption dated only from the post-war period. Prior to the bombing, and even with the City becoming largely identified with financial services, the area around St. Paul's retained a good deal of its historic character, still serving as home to a variety of businesses and providing warehousing space and a wide range of shops as well as offices.[23] Holford himself initially envisaged that the new development would preserve something of the pre-war mixture of activities and even include a residential component.[24] His ambition was not in the event realised, apparently owing to the main landowner's insistence on maximising the potential office space.[25] Nonetheless the debate surrounding the replacement development indicated that the vision of the Paternoster site as involving something more than an office complex was not dead.

Thus, however much commercial office use may have been at the heart of the project, it is notable that all the successive schemes were promoted principally on the basis of what they offered other than in terms of office space. Much emphasis was placed on the extensive new shopping and leisure opportunities that would be available. The Arup masterplan held out the prospect of major retail outlets, a market, museum and hotel. The Farrell prospectus talked of a wide range of shops, restaurants open in the evening and ample outdoor space for social interaction. The common theme was clear: the project would generate that sense of place and urban vitality that the Holford development – and indeed the City as a whole, dedicated

[22] Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, p.22.
[23] Willes, *In the Shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral*, pp. 264-267.
[24] Holford, 'St. Paul's', pp. 68, 71.
[25] J. C. Moughtin, 'Urbanism in Britain', *Town Planning Review*, 63.1 (1992), pp. 29-46 (p.35).

almost entirely to financial services - so signally lacked. The gain, moreover, was presented in historical terms, the new development less an act of creation than re-creation. The new Paternoster Square, it was claimed, would restore the varied activity and vibrant atmosphere that had survived in the area right up to the Second World War. In the case of both the Farrell and the Whitfield schemes, the vision was underlined by early twentieth century photographs illustrating the 'hustle and bustle' [ref?] of crowded shopping streets (figure 4.10).[26]

4.10 St. Paul's Churchyard, c. 1910. (Source: *Paternoster Square: The Masterplan*, London: Paternoster Associates, 1990.)

Yet it was in Simpson's initial scheme that a concern to recover what had been lost was most evident. In the background was the influence of Léon Krier, responsible for Simpson's brief. Closely associated with the international 'New Urbanist' movement and the principal figure behind Prince Charles's Poundbury development, Krier was known as a strong advocate of a return to a more heterogeneous urban environment with an emphasis on mixed uses.[27] He deplored the automatic assumption that developments such as Paternoster Square must be restricted to

[26] *Paternoster Square: The Masterplan* (London: Paternoster Associates, 1990), p. 16; Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, p. 15.
[27] Richard Economakis (editor), *Leon Krier: Architecture and Urban Design 1967-1992* (London: Academy Editions, 1992); Roger Scruton, 'Cities for living', *City Journal*, Spring 2008, https://www.city-journal.org/html/cities-living-13088.html (accessed 23 June 2020).

high density office and retail use and urged that planning briefs be shaped less by market forces and more by considerations of urban quality and 'civic values'.[28] Two particular aspects of Simpson's scheme bore evidence of Krier's thinking. First, it encompassed not only the site scheduled for redevelopment but the entire area around St. Paul's; this was an exercise in urban place-making rather than a specific development project. Second, it included a feature missing from all the other proposals: flats (together with a hotel), an element provided on the premise that genuine revival of the area's vitality demanded the presence of a permanent residential community. It was Simpson's vision of the revivified Paternoster Square that formed the subject of Carl Laubin's paintings illustrating Simpson's plan.[29] (Laubin produced broadly similar images for the Farrell scheme.) In his most widely reproduced depiction (figure 4.6), Simpson's classical buildings and St. Paul's behind provided the backdrop for a lively but relaxed and noticeably uncontemporary urban scene populated by figures in casual dress, indicative perhaps of residence nearby, and a line of clergy and choirboys processing to the cathedral, underlining the ecclesiastical character of the site in history. Laubin's image suggests the memory of an earlier City in which not just the buildings and spaces but also the activity taking place within them were predominantly small-scale, localised, benign and far removed from the pressures of contemporary global capitalism.[30] This was perhaps a notion of conservation or 'heritage' that extended beyond preservation of the physical fabric of the past to encompass its restoration in socio-economic and cultural terms too.

The concept of the City of London as a place where people live and not just work was not in itself a novel idea. It had featured in London planning discourse since at least the end of the war and prompted the City Corporation's decision to proceed with the Barbican development and the adjacent Golden Lane Estate. Those two

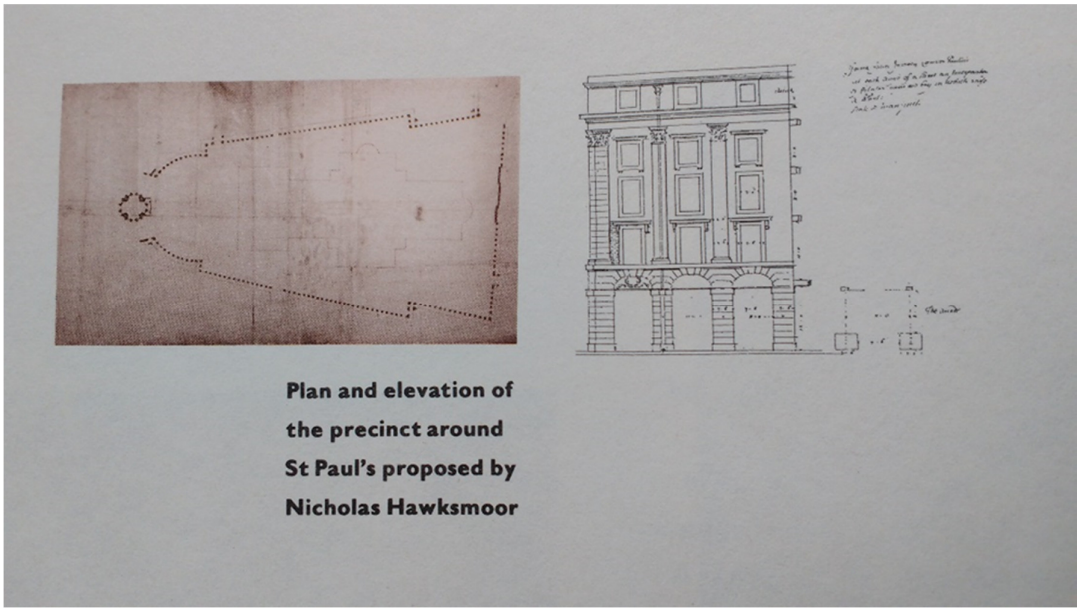
[28] Léon Krier, 'God save the Prince!', *Modern Painters*, 1.2 (1988), pp. 23-25.
[29] Trained as an architect, Laubin became closely (though not exclusively) associated with the imagery of both postmodernism and classicism: John Russell Taylor and David Watkin, *Carl Laubin: Paintings* (London: Plus One, 2007).
[30] The image perhaps recalls Rowlandson's London scenes, with a flavour too of the tradition of the architectural *capriccio*, a genre of which Laubin became a noted exponent.

projects apart, however, the notion achieved little traction, successive development plans placing ever-increasing emphasis on the City's role as a financial centre.[31] In this environment it was perhaps inevitable that, when Simpson's scheme was absorbed into the Farrell plan, considerations of commercial viability (more than ever uncertain in the economic recession of the early 1990s) led the Paternoster developers to insist that the residential element be dropped, just as their predecessors had done in the Holford case. That remained the position in the Whitfield phase. Certainly, restoration of the area's former vitality by way of new shops and cafes and attractive spaces deriving from the historic streetscape continued to feature heavily in presentation of the development. But the prospect of a wider spectrum of uses in the form of, for example, a market and hotel evaporated and there was no further talk of a housing element. The omissions were noted, in some cases with regret.[32]

With or without housing and other non-office uses, the new development's relationship with history remained at the heart of the narrative through all its phases. What is nonetheless striking is the variation in the way the site's past was viewed. Did it represent an asset or a constraint? The Arup masterplan acknowledged the value of reviving the street life of the area and maintaining continuity with 'the traditions of urban living in London'. Yet the scheme identified itself as fundamentally an essay in modernism, standing 'for the best of our time'.[33] Revealing was the attitude of the architect Francis Duffy, author of the competition brief, for whom the objective seemed to be less that of restoring the past than that of countering its legacy. Far from being the key to the success of the project, the historic streetscape around St. Paul's - 'the picturesque alleys and tiny plots of an earlier, fundamentally different city' – was one of 'two ghosts ….to be exorcised'. The other was Holford.[34] Yet the Arup scheme did in a sense engage very directly

[31] The City's resident population currently (2021) stands at 7500: Corporation of London, *Corporate Plan 2018-2023*, https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/About-us/corporate-plan-2018-2023.pdf (accessed 11 October 2021). It numbered over four million at the end of the nineteenth century.
[32] See for example Penny's comment cited below, and Colin Amery, 'Slabs of horror replaced by lumpen stones', *Financial Times*, 22 November 1997, p. 5.
[33] *Paternoster: The Master Plan* (London: Arup Associates, 1988), pages unnumbered.
[34] Duffy, 'Power to the City', *Architectural Review*, January 1988, p. 19.

with the past by way of a historical plan that had remained unrealised. The proposed new cathedral close and surrounding colonnade were related to Wren's unrealised ambition to place the new cathedral in a formal setting. The plan document asserted that 'St. Paul's is an English baroque masterpiece, and [Wren and Hawksmoor] planned a baroque and formal precinct for it, not a medieval one', underlining the point by reproducing Hawksmoor's sketches of a planned precinct (figure 4.11).[35]



4.11 Nicholas Hawksmoor's proposed St. Paul's precinct, as reproduced in *Paternoster: The Master Plan* (London: Arup Associates, 1988).

In contrast the Simpson and Farrell schemes rested firmly on the conviction that recovery of the historic streetscape and the wider mix of uses that went with it were key to revival of the character and atmosphere of the cathedral neighbourhood that had been so completely erased by a combination of German bombs and post-war planning. The Farrell scheme, claimed David Watkin (in fact at a point when its future was already in doubt) would recreate Paternoster Square as:

[35] 'Baroque and formal' the Hawksmoor design may have been but it was nonetheless partly based on the existing street plan. Moreover, the proposed piazza was irregular in shape, with a main axis out of alignment with that of the church: Downes, *Hawksmoor*, pp. 88-90. The original vision was sustained by the eighteenth century penchant for depicting St. Paul's standing in open space rather than surrounded by other buildings: Ralph Hyde, 'Images of St. Paul's', in Derek Keene, Arthur Burns and Andrew Saint (editors), *St. Paul's: The Cathedral Church of London, 604-2004* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2004), pp. 317-334 (pp. 324-325).

> the urbane, gracious, bustling focus for business, shopping, and leisure north of Saint Paul's ……The square and the network of streets and lanes that connect with it will be returned to a traditional pattern.[36]

Similar rhetoric was later applied to the Whitfield scheme, notwithstanding the different architectural vocabulary. 'The lines of the ancient streets have been restored….. the shape of the old territory is being revived', was the writer Peter Ackroyd's verdict on the completed development (one pronounced, it should though be noted, under the promoters' imprint).[37]

Yet for some critics – principally those committed to modernist values - recovery of the Paternoster Square of history was an illusory, unhistorical, even meretricious notion. Simpson's concept in particular bristled with references to 'tradition', a term that was applied to both the restored pre-Blitz street layout and the form of architecture considered appropriate for new building. Both aspects were at the heart of the Prince Charles narrative. Yet how, the critic Stephen Gardiner asked, could the notion of a medieval streetscape be reconciled with the presence of eight-storey office buildings cast in classical form?[38] (An answer offered by the Farrell plan's promoters was to point to yet another strand of City history: the unbroken tradition of classical commercial buildings from the seventeenth century onwards.[39] This was, however, an association unlikely to have commended itself to modernist critics, who had long deplored the City's adherence to classical, 'neo-Georgian' office forms until well into the twentieth century.) Restriction of the use-mix appeared to add a further layer of incongruity, the art historian Nicholas Penny questioning how the promoters of the Farrell plan could claim to restore 'the traditional urban grain' of the area while making no provision for people to live there.[40] Even within the

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[36] David Watkin, 'It's Back to the Future in the Heart of London', *City Journal*, winter 1996, https://www.city-journal.org/html/it%E2%80%99s-back-future-heartlondon-11739.html (accessed 14 January 2020). The article appeared when the scheme was already under review.
[37] Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, Peter Ackroyd introduction, p. 4.
[38] Stephen Gardiner, 'Liquorice allsort horrorshow', *Guardian*, 26 May 1991, p. 56.
[39] *Paternoster Square: The Masterplan* (London: Paternoster Associates, 1990), p. 39.
[40] Nicholas Penny, 'Paternoster Square', *AA Files*, No. 22 (Autumn 1991), p. 97.

commercial sphere, the new Paternoster appeared hardly comparable with its historical model, in that what had once been the home of booksellers and small businesses was bound to become, in the completed development, the domain of a few big companies.[41] It was a fallacy, argued Deyan Sudjic, that under Simpson's plan the Paternoster site could again be:

> the romantic world that Canaletto painted……. Nobody, not even John Simpson with his toy town Classical plan for the site, endorsed by the Prince, is going to recreate the world that filled the churchyard with publishers and printers. Nor will architecture bring back the religious faith expressed by Wren's building, which made it the vibrant heart of a bustling city.[42]

The 'Canaletto' and 'toy town' references (the former doubtless prompted by Prince Charles's declared admiration for the artist's London views) clearly alluded to Laubin's paintings, which for hostile commentators encapsulated the unreality of the architect's conception.[43] For Peter Murray, Simpson's 'Canaletto images' likewise embodied the 'heritage dreamworld' ('heritage' being a term of particular contempt in late-twentieth century modernist vocabulary) of contemporary classicism.[44]

The architectural historian Robert Thorne observed of the Farrell plan that restoration of the historic streetscape around St. Paul's was seen as reinstating a historical pattern of development wilfully interrupted by Holford's post-war scheme. In this narrative, Thorne suggested, 'the recent past is presented as a historical hiatus waiting to be filled by a return to earlier traditions'.[45] Recovery of the pre-war streetscape was certainly seen by some proponents (notably Prince Charles) as atoning for the errors of the post-war era, when comprehensive redevelopment such

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[41] Rowan Moore, 'A waste of space', *Evening Standard*, online edition, 11 November 2003 (accessed 15 April 2020).
[42] Deyan Sudjic, 'St. Paul's: A new vision', *The Times*, 18 November 1988, p. 14.
[43] Laubin has acknowledged the influence of Canaletto. The association may have been reinforced by Laubin's depiction of Simpson's London Bridge City project, which centred on a Venetian-style piazza and campanile: Taylor and Watkin, *Carl Laubin*, pp. 43, 163-164.
[44] Murray, 'Paternoster – Post Holford', *London Journal*, 16.2 (1991), p. 132.
[45] Thorne, 'The setting of St. Paul's cathedral', p. 117.

as Holford's Paternoster project had been the principal tool of renewal for bomb-damaged UK cities, in marked contrast to the faithful reconstruction seen in continental cities such as Warsaw.[46] Yet Thorne's commentary also pointed to the contradiction inherent in such a notion. However firmly its proponents may have rejected Holford's comprehensive redevelopment as a 'historical hiatus', what they were proposing in its place was the direct opposite of the unplanned, organically evolved described in the promotional literature and elsewhere. It was in its way another version of comprehensive redevelopment.

The Holford legacy

William Holford was the most influential figure in British town planning when he presented his scheme for the surroundings of St. Paul's. By the time the process of replacing it was initiated, Holford had been dead for a decade and his reputation had slumped.[47] He was frequently described as an 'architect-planner', a term commonly used in the 1940s and 50s but subsequently eclipsed with the emergence of a new breed of planner trained in the social sciences.[48] Those attracting the label were the leading figures in the post-war urban renewal process, the outcome of which could be seen, as Otto Saumarez Smith shows in a recent study, in the comprehensive redevelopment projects undertaken in most major UK towns and cities.[49] Holford's St. Paul's plan provided a key example in the capital.

At the heart of the plan was the requirement to create a 'worthy setting' for the cathedral, a notion originating, as already described, in Wren's time. There was much debate as to what exactly this should mean in the circumstances of the mid-twentieth century. Some saw it as the opportunity to place St. Paul's within the

[46] Charles, *Speeches and Articles*, p. 338; Watkin, 'It's back to the future'. The UK-mainland Europe contrast was a recurrent trope within anti-modernist rhetoric: see for example Timothy Mowl, *Stylistic Cold Wars: Betjeman Versus Pevsner* (London: John Murray, 2000), p. 133. For discussion of continental examples see John Darlington, *Fake Heritage: Why We Rebuild Monuments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), pp. 128-134, 159-161.
[47] Mervyn Miller, 'William Holford', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (2004) (accessed 6 February 2020). He had been knighted in 1953 and became a life peer in 1965, the first member of his profession to be thus honoured. His involvement with the City had spanned twenty years and is commemorated by a monument set close to Wren's tomb in St. Paul's.
[48] Peter Hall, *Abercrombie's Plan for London - 50 Years On* (London: Vision for London, 1994), p. 2.
[49] Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities*.

classically ordered formal space envisaged by Wren and then more recently by the Lutyens committee (see figures 1.3 and 4.3).[50] That option was rejected by Holford on the rationale that there was no possibility, two and a half centuries after the cathedral's completion, of achieving a setting that properly reflected the scale and character of Wren's conception. Instead he proposed a design which juxtaposed the 'aloof and monumental' quality of the historic building with the 'vitality, productivity and general usefulness' of its surroundings. Using words that would later be repeatedly quoted against him, he argued that 'there is more to be gained by contrast in design….than from attempts at harmony of scale or character or spacing'.[51] What distinguished St. Paul's, Holford observed, was the very fact that it sat not within a designed symmetrical space but rather at the heart of an entirely unplanned townscape. Unlike St Peter's in Rome or the Paris *Invalides*:

> St. Paul's offers a series of views at the end of streets and alleys and gaps between buildings, which are sometimes narrow and mostly irregular. It is seldom apprehended as a whole, except from the air; and often it is only one or two features - the dome, or one of the Western Towers, or the porch or the pedimental figures on one of the transepts, that close the view.[52]

Holford thus saw it as his task to produce a plan which would modernise and enhance the St. Paul's environment, while also preserving the cathedral's historic relationship with its context. His solution was one based on 'open planning, with blocks of different height and a varied skyline; thus permitting a less congested layout, and offering views through and between the taller buildings'.[53] As previously noted, he initially hoped that the development would include warehousing and dwellings as well as offices.[54] Holford's awareness of the past did not, however,

[50] This was notably the view of Duncan Sandys, Minister of Housing and Local Government, whose intervention lay behind Holford's commission.
[51] Holford, 'St. Paul's', p. 68.
[52] Holford, 'St. Paul's', p. 68.
[53] Holford, 'St. Paul's', p. 71.
[54] Holford, 'St. Paul's', p. 67.

extend to a desire to replicate it literally; there was thus no mention of re-creating the pre-war street layout.

Publication of the plan prompted diverse reactions. There was some disappointment at the loss of an opportunity to enclose St. Paul's within a formal setting that would match the grandeur of the building. There was disquiet too at the prospect of a large-scale modernist development in this location, with concerns voiced at the stylistic discord between the size and angularity of the new blocks and the cathedral silhouette.[55] However, leading architectural commentators of the time pronounced the scheme a success, commending Holford's reading of the cathedral's relationship with its context and his consequent rejection of a monumental setting.[56] Especially conspicuous among the supporters was the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner, who presented laudatory accounts of the scheme both in print and in a radio broadcast.[57] For Pevsner, the informality of Holford's scheme, with its considered irregularity of layout, varied building heights and mixture of open and blocked vistas, placed it firmly in that tradition of English picturesque landscape planning which had been at the centre of Pevsner's Reith lectures (published that year, 1956). The concept of a distinctive English picturesque version of modernist planning and architecture was a cause actively promoted at this time by the *Architectural Review* (of which Pevsner was a long serving co-editor) and one the journal had sought to demonstrate in its own St. Paul's scheme. Holford's plan was duly greeted with an enthusiastic assessment in the *Review*.[58] For his part Pevsner continued to champion the plan, the more so, perhaps, given his consternation at the City's

[55] 'See for example, 'Approach to St. Paul's "not majestic enough"', *The Times*, 23 March 1956, p. 7; 'No worthy setting for St. Paul's, *Daily Telegraph*, 17 March 1956, p. 6. For a summary of the main lines of comment see Holford, 'St. Paul's', pp. 95-96.
[56] See for example Robert Furneaux Jordan, '"Worthy setting" for St. Paul's', *Observer*, 25 March 1956, p.13; John Summerson, 'Worthy of St. Paul's', *New Statesman*, 31 March 1956, pp. 302-303.
[57] Broadcast text published in *The Listener*, 10 May 1956, pp. 594-596.
[58] 'St. Paul's', *Architectural Review*, June 1956, pp. 295-298. For 'picturesque modernism' and Pevsner's involvement, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), introductory essay by John Macarthur and Mathew Aitchison, pp. 13-20. The book published a text unfinished by Pevsner, most of it comprising articles on the post-war townscape movement which had already appeared in the *Architectural Review*. Pevsner's analysis of the Holford plan appears at pp. 190-192.

reluctance to embrace modernism.[59] In the first edition of his *Buildings of England* the as yet unbuilt development was pronounced 'a brilliant essay in the English tradition of informal planning translated boldly into a c20 language.' The 1973 revision assessed the completed scheme as 'outstandingly well conceived' in its planning, 'sensible and unobtrusive' in its architectural form.[60]

Despite the enthusiasm of Pevsner and other contemporary critics, by the time the development was completed the overall response to it was far from positive.[61] Alongside disappointment at what was seen as the mediocre detailing of the individual buildings and complaints about the windswept public spaces, much adverse comment was directed at the apparent projection of Juxon House, the block at the top of Ludgate Hill, and consequent encroachment on the full view of St. Paul's west front, which the bombing had for the first time fully revealed (figure 4.12). The effect was in fact quite deliberate; for Holford gradual revelation of the west front on the approach up Ludgate Hill was fundamental to the maintenance of the essentially picturesque character of the cathedral setting. (The new block was within the historic building line, though its presence was emphasised by the recession of the block immediately in front.) Nonetheless the feature continued to be condemned as a serious misjudgement.[62]

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[59] Robert Thorne, 'London and the Buildings of England', *London Journal*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 74-79 (p. 77).

[60] Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 243; Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The Cities of London and Westminster*, 3rd edition, revised by Bridget Cherry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 285-286. Simon Bradley was markedly less enthusiastic in his still more substantive revision of Pevsner's text: Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 595-596.

[61] Holford's proposals for the cathedral's southern flank, involving major road alignment, remained unimplemented, though the Millennium Bridge project eventually produced a version of his conception of a cathedral vista from the river.

[62] Gordon E. Cherry and Leith Penny, *Holford: A Study in Architecture, Planning and Civic Design* (London: Mansell, 1986), pp. 171-172.

4.12 St. Paul's west front and Juxon House, late 1960s? (Source: Gordon E. Cherry and Leith Penny, *Holford: A Study in Architecture, Planning and Civic Design*, London: Mansell, 1986.)

Holford's plan and its reception have been described at some length, because the debate formed an inescapable backdrop to consideration of the projected replacement. Indeed at one level the discourse surrounding the redevelopment schemes could be read as a resumption of the earlier debate. In both cases context – physical, historic, emblematic – remained the overriding preoccupation. As Robert Thorne observed, alternative schemes were again proposed and assessed on the premise that the area must be considered holistically, implying a comprehensive redevelopment of the site comparable, in scale if not in content, with Holford's.[63] Once again all schemes were judged against the criterion of how they would relate to the surroundings and impact on the setting of St. Paul's.

Yet while the overall framework of debate may have remained unchanged, the specific issues at stake and arguments presented were, thirty years on, inevitably

[63] Thorne, 'The setting of St. Paul's cathedral', p. 127.

different. Discussion in both cases was, as it happened, cast in essentially binary terms. In the post-war era Holford's 'picturesque modernist' concept was placed in opposition to an alternative which some saw as both preferable and, given the extent of wartime destruction, entirely feasible: clearance of the entire surroundings of St. Paul's to enable the cathedral to stand isolated in a large-scale classically planned space. By the 1980s that option was off the agenda, implying as it did a radical reshaping of the City for which there was neither a realistic opportunity nor, in a conservation-minded age, any appetite. The Arup plan may have made conscious obeisance to the ideas of Wren and Hawksmoor but it nonetheless preserved the irregular, asymmetrical footprint of the cathedral precinct. To the extent that commentators referred back to the notion of a grand open space, it was generally to dismiss it as inconsistent with Wren's conception as it had evolved and, in some cases, to acknowledge that in this respect Holford's judgement had been sound.[64] With the formal space option out of the frame, the discourse again presented a choice between two options: on one side, a design expressive of contemporary planning and architectural values (as Holford's had been in its time) and, on the other, an approach rooted essentially in the values of the past. Return to the past was now seen as a matter not of reviving earlier ambitions to give St. Paul's the equivalent of St. Peter's Square but rather the opposite, namely re-creation of the medieval City streetscape that the bombs had obliterated, a solution left unmentioned in the Holford era.

The most conspicuous discontinuity between the discourse of the 1950s and that of the 1980s concerned attitudes towards Holford and the kind of project with which he was identified. The role of comprehensive redevelopment as an indispensable tool in urban reconstruction was accepted largely without question for around two decades after the war. Holford was acknowledged as one of the outstanding exponents of the process and it was no surprise that, at the peak of his reputation and with his longstanding involvement with the City, he should have been given

[64] Alan Hamilton, 'The delight in a tantalizing glimpse of St. Paul's', *The Times*, 29 June 1987, p. 20; Gavin Stamp, 'By a City churchyard', *Spectator*, 22 August 1987, pp. 13-15.

charge of the now overdue renewal of the site to the north of St. Paul's.[65] As discussed earlier, what he proposed did not escape controversy but the immediate consensus was that, as a contemporary response to the City's contemporary needs, it was the right solution. Three decades after the unveiling of Holford's scheme, with modernist planning at the nadir of its reputation, the conservation ethos securely entrenched and the image of post-war urban renewal projects apparently beyond redemption, the case for replacement of Paternoster Square was for the most part treated as self-evident.[66] David Watkin's description - 'a boastful monument of modernist architecture at its most brutal' - encapsulated the predominant view of the blocks in later years.[67] Such comments on post-war urban development and its practitioners had long been common currency.[68] What is, however, especially notable about Watkin's observation is that the evident animus was directed at not only the creator of Paternoster Square but also its most conspicuous champion, Nikolaus Pevsner.

'No one, except ….. Pevsner, ever liked it', observed the commentator Ken Allinson some years after the scheme's disappearance.[69] The celebrated historian's sustained advocacy of Holford's design proved to be a continuing refrain across later discussion of the scheme to the point at which responsibility for the perceived failings appeared to lie as much with Pevsner as with Holford himself. In the mid-1950s Pevsner was well established as Britain's best known and most respected architectural commentator and it was certainly not by chance that he was given the opportunity to present the case for Holford's plan to a wide audience through the medium of radio broadcast. Thirty years later Pevsner (who died in 1983) had become a highly controversial figure, and it was a transformation wrought in large measure by the author cited in the previous paragraph, David Watkin. Watkin's 1977 polemic, *Morality and Architecture*, had set out an uncompromising indictment

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[65] See for example 'St. Paul's Churchyard', *Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1955, p. 6.
[66] See for example Simon Jenkins, 'A second chance to choose Cinderella', *Sunday Times*, 26 June 1988, p. 1(S); Bulldozers move in at Paternoster Square', *The Times*, 26 May 1999, p. 29.
[67] Watkin, 'It's Back to the Future'.
[68] Saumarez Smith, *Boom Cities*, chapter 6.
[69] Ken Allinson, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 5th edition (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2009), p. 37.

of not only architectural modernism itself but also those held responsible for promoting it, amongst whom Pevsner was deemed principal offender.[70] Watkin blamed modernist (and politically left-leaning) planners and architects, and by extension those such as Pevsner who promoted them, for the urban redevelopment schemes which had involved the destruction of historic towns and cities. It proved an enduring controversy, the flames fanned by other commentators, notably the architectural historian John Harris.[71] Though in the original text of *Morality and Architecture* Watkin's thesis was set out in entirely general terms, his later revision included a preface in which the author pointed to specific cases which had underlain his concern. One of them was Holford's Paternoster Square, a development which Watkin saw as exemplifying all those projects which had 'violated British towns' and which he recalled Pevsner welcoming as 'outstandingly well conceived'.[72] It was a connection that recurred across the writings of both Watkin himself and those who endorsed his views, the result of which was to bring debate on the future of Paternoster Square into the ambit of the continuing *Morality and Architecture* discourse. No other single project appears to have been so regularly cited as evidence of Pevsner's supposed misjudgement. Indeed there is hardly a clearer indicator of the decline in Pevsner's standing than to compare his role in the Paternoster debate of the 1950s with his involvement in the controversy surrounding the successive plans of the 1980s and 90s. For Timothy Mowl, another of Pevsner's adversaries, the historian's admiration for Holford's scheme encapsulated his 'blinkered' commitment to the modernist ideal.[73] Reviewing the Farrell plan, *Apollo* editor Robin Simon looked back on the *Buildings of England* entry on Paternoster Square as epitomising Pevsner 'at his most patronizing and prescriptive'.[74]

The latter writer, deploring what he saw as Pevsner's persistent influence on architectural criticism, was uneasy that the historian's unqualified endorsement of Holford's design continued to be invoked in defence of the scheme. He cited no

[70] David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
[71] John Harris, 'N.P. at the B. of E.: Working with Pevsner', *Apollo*, December 1996, pp. 59-61.
[72] David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture Revisited* (London: John Murray, 2001), p. x.
[73] Mowl, *Stylistic Cold Wars*, p. 133.
[74] Robin Simon, 'Paternoster Pevsner', *Apollo*, September 1992, pp. 137-139.

specific example. Nonetheless the comment points up the fact that the retrospective view of the Holford scheme was not invariably one of unqualified rejection. Holford himself had asserted that the contemporary architect 'is more concerned with the design of environments than with the design of monuments'[75] and a few later commentators were willing to concede that he had successfully translated this principle into practice at Paternoster Square, achieving a well conceived work of urban design, albeit one let down by the indifferent quality of the buildings. The concept of 'picturesque modernism' may have long ceased to be at the centre of planning and architectural discourse by the 1980s. Yet Gavin Stamp, however much he abhorred Holford's scheme in architectural terms, could nonetheless commend its creator as:

> the only person who seems to have understood the true character of the City and the need for intimate spaces around St. Paul's…….His 1961 plan was in essence picturesque, allowing unexpected glimpses of the cathedral. It dispensed with the pointless axial vista to the north transept, and recognised the importance of keeping Ludgate Hill long and narrow and not 'opening up' Wren's portico.[76]

Stamp and others acknowledged too that the much criticised projection of Juxon House was not a miscalculation, but an integral feature of Holford's design concept.

Had Holford's complex been allowed to survive longer, it is possible that the case for its destruction would have been more firmly challenged. By the turn of the millennium the recently rebranded Twentieth Century Society was actively promoting the importance of post-war architecture and a few exemplars of mid-century modernist projects such as Sheffield's Park Hill Estate, Plymouth Civic Centre and the Barbican in London, had been listed. Paternoster Square might arguably have been

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[75] William Holford, *The Built Environment* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1965), p. 1.
[76] Gavin Stamp, 'By a City churchyard'. Kenneth Powell showed a similarly forgiving attitude to Juxon House: 'A Paternoster for the prince', *Country Life*, 17 December 1987, pp. 52-53.

a candidate for inclusion in this select group as a leading expression of picturesque modernist planning. As it was, a few modernist-minded critics were prepared to question the assumption that the existing development must be demolished after only twenty years. For Deyan Sudjic, unenthusiastic about the Arup plan and repelled by Simpson's alternative:

> There are things wrong with Holford's plan but to dismiss it out of hand we run the risk of taking the same cavalier view of the past as the more simple-minded Modernists of the 1950s, and producing solutions that will be just as short-lived.[77]

Perhaps with the example of the nearby Bracken House in mind, Sudjic and the architecture critic Hugh Pearman raised the possibility of at least some of the existing buildings being successfully refurbished.[78] These were nonetheless isolated voices. The predominant view, even among potentially sympathetic commentators, was that Holford was doomed. Colin Davies acknowledged, albeit with evident regret, that 1960s developments such as Paternoster Square remained for the moment unloved, while a future Twentieth Century Society director could argue for the preservation of unfashionable modernist buildings and yet point to the Holford development as one case for which listed status was unlikely ever to be achieved.[79] It is striking that even commentators such as Sudjic and Jonathan Glancey who expressed severe disappointment with the completed Whitfield scheme stopped short of explicitly suggesting that retention of Holford would after all have been a better outcome.

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[77] Deyan Sudjic, 'St. Paul's: A new vision', *The Times*, 18 November 1988, p. 14.
[78] Hugh Pearman, 'Spot the difference', *Sunday Times*, 2 August 1992, p. 2. Albert Richardson's Bracken House, the first post-war building to be listed, was at this time the subject of a widely acclaimed internal redevelopment scheme.
[79] Colin Davies, 'Unbuilt London', *Architectural Review*, January 1988, pp. 15-17; Kenneth Powell, 'A testing time for Modernist taste', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 1988, p. 14.

Prince Charles and his public

From the mid-1980s until at least the end of the following decade, discussion of contemporary architecture in the UK was dominated almost to the point of obsession by the figure of the heir to the British throne. Prince Charles was hardly the first representative of British royalty with opinions on buildings. Unlike his predecessors, however, the Prince did not confine his attention to projects of immediate personal concern. Though he was not without such projects - notably the Poundbury development - they represented just one strand in a broader engagement with the subject of the built environment, which centred around his advocacy of 'traditional' (his favoured term) architectural language over modernist forms. The Prince thus made himself a leading and certainly the best known, participant in the architectural discourse of the period – indeed, in Kester Rattenbury's later description, 'the nation's number one architectural critic'.[80] He took part, moreover, in the most public way (though often reinforcing this through private discussions) that involved a series of controversial speeches; a television film, book and exhibition - all promoted under the label *A Vision of Britain*: and establishment of the Prince's own Institute of Architecture and an associated magazine, *Perspectives on Architecture*. Prince Charles's campaign accordingly became a major preoccupation for the architectural profession and commentators. Over the period from 1988 to 1990 the *Architectural Review* devoted four major articles and then a complete issue (December 1990) to the Prince. From the same period date three books analysing and challenging the Prince's views.[81] More widely, the theme of 'the Prince versus the architects' proved an irresistible source of copy for the mainstream news media. While the Prince's presence became less evident over time, it continued periodically to re-emerge[82] and

[80] Kester Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased: Architecture in the UK national press', in Kester Rattenbury (editor), *This is not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 136-156 (p. 138). For a more extended assessment of the Prince's interventions in the field of architecture, and in particular the impact on media coverage of the subject, see *Architecture in the Media*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Polytechnic, 1989, especially pp.6-10, 234-239: available via Ethos, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.305146

[81] Charles Jencks, *The Prince, the Architects and the New Wave Monarchy* (London: Academy Editions, 1988); A. C. Papadakis (editor)*, Prince Charles and the Architectural Debate* (London: Academy Editions, 1989); Maxwell Hutchinson, *The Prince of Wales: Right or Wrong?* (London: Faber, 1989).

[82] Notably in relation to Richard Rogers's Chelsea Barracks redevelopment scheme and the continuing Poundbury project.

to this day few accounts of late-twentieth century British architecture fail to devote some attention to his activity and its perceived consequences. The Prince promoted his case by reference to current or recent major projects, three of which particularly concerned him and in consequence became the focus of high-profile controversy: the National Gallery extension, the Mansion House development and Paternoster Square. The last of these may not have yielded a single quotable phrase to match 'monstrous carbuncle', 'glass stump' and other images applied to other projects which incurred royal displeasure. Nonetheless the name of Prince Charles became embedded into the Paternoster discourse more completely than in any other individual case.

The impact of the Prince's engagement in the debate did not originate in the novelty of his arguments. As Gavin Stamp was one of the few to observe, however controversial the Prince's pronouncements, he was in large measure articulating ideas already well embedded within architectural and planning discourse.[83] In his comments on the Paternoster project, the Prince condemned post-war development projects such as Holford's for their destructive impact on the historic City streetscape and skyline; deplored the unimaginative quality of contemporary commercial architecture as exemplified in the Paternoster competition entries; urged architects to consider the merits of classical detailing and traditional materials; and called for reform of the planning system, firstly to allow more weight to be given to non-commercial considerations and preservation of historic context such as that around St. Paul's and secondly to increase the scope for public participation in planning decisions. Virtually all this had been heard before. The narrative of the destruction (social as well as physical) wrought by modernist planning had emerged, alongside the fast developing conservation culture, well before the end of the 1960s and it was largely unchallenged by the end of the following decade.[84] From the latter period date Watkin's *Morality and Architecture*, already mentioned, and Roger Scruton's

[83] See Gavin Stamp, 'Another vision of Britain', *Spectator*, 13 January 1990, pp. 8-12.
[84] Early sources of the anti-modernism narrative included the writings of Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman in the US and Nicholas Taylor in the UK, paralleled by a succession of polemics from members of the architectural community such as Peter Blake and Malcolm MacEwan.

The Aesthetics of Architecture, two key texts laying a theoretical foundation for both resistance to modernism and the revival of classicism.[85] A handful of practitioners had sought to maintain the classical tradition throughout the post-war decades. The need for improved public consultation and community involvement had been a prominent strand in planning discourse for at least twenty years.[86] Distrust of expert opinion was well established within conservation rhetoric.[87]

Even the theme at the heart of the Prince's contribution to the Paternoster debate – the impact of post-war development on the City skyline and the surroundings of St. Paul's – was a well rehearsed one. As far back as the 1930s fears about the encroachment of high buildings on views of St. Paul's led to the promulgation of a code protecting sightlines from significant points.[88] Awareness of the issue increased in the light of the cathedral's wartime role, as enshrined in Herbert Mason's celebrated image, which acquired iconic status from the day it appeared.[89] Despair at the destructive effect of new development on the familiar steeple-punctuated City skyline became a favoured trope in the early literature of the conservation movement, often with anticipation of the Prince's repeated juxtaposing of the role of post-war City planners with that of the *Luftwaffe*.[90] Especially worth noting is an observation coming twenty years earlier from a perhaps unexpected quarter in the person of Nikolaus Pevsner, his rhetoric startlingly prefiguring that of the Prince:

> The twentieth century has done much to the City, most patently to its skyline……The new heights……destroyed the skyline of the City which had until

[85] Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (London: Methuen, 1979).
[86] Gordon E. Cherry, *Town Planning in Britain since 1900* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 147, 183.
[87] Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation: Antiquity to Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 325.
[88] Lucy Markham, 'The protection of views of St. Paul's Cathedral and its influence on the London landscape', *London Journal*, 33(3) (2008), pp. 271-287.
[89] Tom Allbeson, 'Visualizing wartime destruction and postwar reconstruction: Herbert Mason's photograph of St. Paul's reevaluated', *Journal of Modern History*, 87.3, pp. 532-578.
[90] Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank, *The Rape of Britain* (London: Elek, 1975), p. 128; Tony Aldous, *Goodbye Britain?* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1975), p. 70. Amery and Cruickshank would later number among Prince Charles's advisers and presumably encouraged the Prince's appropriation of the skyline destruction theme.

> then, still as Canaletto had shown, been punctuated by Wren's church steeples…….Now we are in for skyscrapers…from everywhere dominating the skyline. It is changing the character of London decisively, and what has so far taken the place of traditional London is visual chaos…… in fifty years from now people will say of us: Were they blind? Did they not see what was happening?[91]

Yet however unoriginal the substance of Prince Charles's views, his status was such as to stimulate an awareness of issues to do with the contemporary built environment that extended beyond the normal confines of architectural discourse to become a conspicuous feature across the mainstream media. In this period 'mainstream media' meant principally the broadsheet press, which provided high-profile, often front page, news coverage of the Prince's interventions in the architectural field, accompanied by copious feature articles and editorial comment. More limited reporting also appeared in tabloid papers, while developments were regularly discussed in weekly magazines such as *The Spectator* and *New Statesman*.[92] Broadcast material included the Prince's own *Vision of Britain* film and television documentaries on both the Mansion House and Paternoster Square controversies.[93] For much of the media, the news value of the story clearly lay more in the Prince than in the subject of architecture. This was an era when many professional elites were coming under scrutiny in response to concerns about monopoly power and anti-competitive practices and, as Kester Rattenbury later observed, the Prince's involvement would have been equally newsworthy had his targets been another profession such as lawyers or dentists.[94] The media coverage embraced two dimensions. First, the Prince's own speeches and related activities, together with the reaction among architects and other interests, were extensively reported and analysed. Commentators noted the Prince's (or at least his

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[91] J.L. Howgego, *The City of London Through Artists' Eyes* (London: Collins, 1969), introduction by Nikolaus Pevsner, p. 11.
[92] Kester Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Polytechnic, 1989, p. 103: available via Ethos, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.305146.
[93] *The Battle for Mansion House Square*, BBC1, *The Battle for Paternoster Square*, BBC2 and *HRH The Prince of Wales: A Vision of Britain*, BBC1, broadcast respectively on 17 May 1985, 17 February 1988, 28 October 1988. All are available to view in the British Film Institute Archive.
[94] Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', p. 138.

speechwriters') facility for condensing his views into quotable soundbite phrases or images.[95] The juxtaposition in the Paternoster context of German bombing and modernist planning, however unoriginal a motif in itself, can be considered a case in point. Second, current projects were discussed in large part by reference to the Prince's actual or predicted reaction to them, a phenomenon of which the successive phases of the Paternoster development provide perhaps the outstanding example. Certainly, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, at least for the mainstream media, the Prince's declared antipathy to the modernist aesthetic embodied in the competition entries and his continued advocacy of a classical alternative constituted the primary if not the sole explanation for the quantity of coverage devoted to the Paternoster project.

While Prince Charles's impact on the media may have been self-evident, the claim – advanced not least by the Prince himself – that he had stimulated a new interest in architecture on the part of the wider public proved a more problematic issue.[96] An occasional voice asserted that the Prince had not created the interest but was riding on what was already there.[97] Hard evidence for either position seems to have been lacking but there appears to remain a broad view that the Prince's interventions did indeed exercise a material influence on public awareness and opinions.[98] For the architectural profession, satisfaction that the Prince had at last spurred media and by extension public debate on contemporary architecture was quickly offset by complaints about royal interference with the conduct of design competitions and democratic planning procedures. The abandonment of the Arup plan for Paternoster Square in favour of Simpson's classical conception (together with rejection of the Mies Mansion House scheme) were cited as the prime evidence of this inappropriate interference.[99] The Prince was depicted as the unqualified amateur meddling in

[95] Charles Jencks, 'The Prince versus the architects', *Observer*, 12 June 1988, p. 33-34; Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', p. 144.
[96] See for example 'A vision of Britain', *Spectator*, 5 November 1988, p. 5; Jonathan Glancey, 'All Greek to the prince', *Guardian*, 2 September 1998, p. 15.
[97] 'Architects need praise as well', *Independent*, 3 December 1987, p. 22.
[98] Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', pp. 136-137; Tom Dyckhoff, *The Age of Spectacle: Adventures in Architecture and the 21st-Century City* (London: Random House, 2017), p. 237.
[99] 'Misuse of princely privilege', *Architectural Review*, September 1987, p. 4; Richard Rogers, 'Pulling down the Prince', *The Times*, 3 July 1989, pp. 10-11.

matters which he did not understand and were not his business. 'The architectural fellowship wished he would just keep quiet and "leave it to the experts"', it was reported when the Prince's involvement in the Paternoster project emerged.[100] 'Architects are getting fed up with the Prince's interference', complained the former RIBA President Michael Manser.[101]

Such comments encouraged extensive discussion on the specific nature of Prince Charles's role. The Prince's own utterances leave little doubt that he cast himself as a representative of the general public confronting elite interests, the amateur articulating the views of the 'man in the street' in the face of the architectural and planning establishment and the vested interests of the commercial property industry. The Prince himself set out his position in the Mansion House speech, asserting that 'large numbers of us in this country are fed up with being talked down to and dictated to by an existing planning, architectural and development establishment', a situation evidently exemplified by the current proposal for Paternoster Square, which he immediately went on to condemn.[102] Such perceived condescension doubtless explained the Prince's reported antipathy to the 'architect speak' in Philip Dowson's presentation of the Arup plan.[103] There was a clear need, the Prince confirmed in a second speech made shortly afterwards, for the lay person to challenge the authority of the expert:

> although there is no one who appreciates or values experts more than I do…it is important not to be intimidated by them…..we have had forty years of practice at urban design and comprehensive planning and development. The result has been pretty disastrous.[104]

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[100] Mira Bar-Hillel, 'The Prince and the Planners', *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 August 1987, p. 17.
[101] 'Charles stirs new row over St. Paul's design', *Sunday Times*, 2 August 1987 p. 4.
[102] Charles, *Speeches and Articles*, p. 339.
[103] Murray, 'Paternoster – Post Holford', p. 130.
[104] Speech to the 'Remaking cities' conference, Pittsburgh, 5 March 1988, in Charles, *Speeches and Articles*, pp. 344-348 (p. 344).

It was a theme being simultaneously heard in relation to many other professions, as mentioned above, and it is one that has continued to resonate across a variety of discourses.[105]

The 'man in the street' narrative was widely replicated by commentators. John Simpson, for example, referred to the Prince as 'giving the general public a voice'.[106] For Gavin Stamp, applauding the Prince's Paternoster intervention, he was 'acting as the conscience of the nation'.[107] Yet the notion of the Prince as the voice of public opinion inevitably met with the response that to regard the heir to the throne as an 'ordinary' member of the public or 'man in the street' was an absurdity. On the contrary, here was a uniquely privileged establishment figure who was using his influence not to represent the opinions of 'ordinary citizens' but to override democratic processes and force his own narrow aesthetic preferences on society.[108] An even if the Prince's role was that of the layman or amateur, it was argued, he was hardly an untutored one, given that he had surrounded himself with a personally chosen group of advisers comprising leading architectural practitioners, commentators and historians in sympathy with his views. To this group was attributed the main responsibility for the content of the Mansion House speech (which, as mentioned, drew on motifs previously articulated by those involved) and Simpson's Paternoster brief.[109]

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[105] Notably during the UK's 2016 European Union referendum campaign, in the course of which the Cabinet Minister Michael Gove (doubtless unconsciously) echoed the Prince's sentiments of thirty years earlier with his assertion that 'the people of this country have had enough of experts': *Sky News*, 3 June 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGgiGtJk7MA (accessed, 17 June 2022).
[106] Quoted in Mira Bar-Hillel, 'Charles gives buildings the common touch', *Sunday Telegraph*, 3 December 1989, p. 7.
[107] Gavin Stamp, 'Hurrah for the champion of ordinary people', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1987, p. 17. However, Stamp was by no means an unqualified admirer of the Prince's architectural interventions: see Stamp, 'Another vision of Britain', *Spectator*, 13 January 1990, pp. 8-12.
[108] 'Misuse of princely privilege', *Architectural Review*, September 1987, p. 4.
[109] 'Prince's vision becomes reality', *Architects' Journal*, 8 November 1989, p. 9; Patrick Wright, *A Journey through Ruins: The Last Days of London* (London: Radius, 1991), p. 234. The advisers included Léon Krier, 'community' architect Rod Hackney, writers Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank, historian Jules Lubbock and polemical journalist Christopher Booker: Elizabeth Grice and Hugh Pearman, 'Charles' kitchen cabinet', *Sunday Times*, 6 December 1987, p. 33. David Watkin appears also to have periodically offered advice to the Prince: Watkin, 'It's Back to the Future'. Despite their varied backgrounds, most of them could confidently be identified with an anti-modernist agenda and some as champions of classicism.

There was in any case the issue of who exactly were 'the public' or 'ordinary people' on whose behalf Prince Charles was claiming to speak. 'Who', asked Charles Jencks, 'is this "most of us" that has been "cowed"?'[110] Across much of the discourse surrounding the Prince's utterances, 'the public' appeared to serve as a generic term embracing everyone outside the ranks of those clearly able to demonstrate expert knowledge of or professional interest in the built environment. The architectural historian Timothy Hyde has recently noted that 'public opinion' is something which architectural discourse has taken for granted in the sense that it 'has been presumed to exist…to be a fact'.[111] It is an observation that might well apply to the discussion surrounding the Prince. The identity and role of 'the public' are presented in essentially generalised form, with little attempt to render the notion in more specific terms or place it on an evidential base. Beyond passing references to a claimed high approval rating for the Prince's views, there is little sign of any quantified or otherwise nuanced analysis of the general public's attitude towards either the broad issues or the individual projects with which he was concerned.[112] So unspecific indeed is much of the reference to 'the public' that the term seems to be describing something that is assumed to exist, just as Hyde suggests, and which is available to be invoked as necessary, whether by the Prince himself, his opponents or other participants in the debate.

Also of potential relevance in the present context is the art historian T. J. Clark's observation that the discourse concerning a work of art could involve a distinction between, on the one hand, the material presence of a specific audience and, on the other, the implied or imaginary presence of the public as a whole.[113] However much reference the Paternoster discourse may have made to a generalised, undifferentiated public, there must be assumed also the existence of another, more

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[110] Jencks, *The Prince, the Architects and the New Wave Monarchy*, p. 9. I have been unable to identify the source of the words quoted by Jencks.
[111] Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgement: On Architecture in the Public Eye* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 161.
[112] See for example Jencks, 'The Prince versus the architects'; Charles, Prince of Wales, *A Vision of Britain*, p. 9.
[113] T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), pp. 11-12.

specific public, one with an identifiable relationship with those individual projects caught up in the Prince-related discourse, of which Paternoster Square was the principal example. Here perhaps was Clark's 'audience' for the projected development. It might be taken to include those working in the immediate vicinity; regular or occasional passers-by; worshippers and tourists visiting the cathedral; those valuing the public space available at the site; and indeed anyone choosing, whether because of the historical significance of the location or for any other reason, to have a view on the future of Paternoster Square. Such was presumably the range of interests reflected in the reportedly substantial attendance at the exhibitions on the successive development plans and in the response to the public consultation process. With public participation in the planning system at the heart of the Prince's agenda, he seems to have regarded the presentation of the schemes plans to the Paternoster 'audience' by way of high-profile exhibitions – and the reported preference for a classical design - as his personal achievement.[114] (18,000 visitors were stated to have inspected the Farrell plan. The response indicated an approval rating of over 80 per cent from the general public but only very limited support from architects, thus appearing to support the Prince's claim of a profession seriously out of step with public opinion.)[115] Yet in parallel the Paternoster case was also cited as evidence that, far from extending the public's involvement in planning, the effect of the Prince's activity was in reality to curtail it, since matters which ought to have been the subject of public discussion were settled behind closed doors in the Prince's private discussions with developers such as Stuart Lipton and architects such as John Simpson.[116]

The presence of Prince Charles was less evident in the later stages of the Paternoster narrative, testifying to his waning influence by the end of the century.[117]

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[114] *A Vision of Britain*, pp. 72-73.
[115] 'Huge vote for new Paternoster plan', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1991, p. 19; John and Watkin, *John Simpson*, pp. 95-96.
[116] Deyan Sudjic, 'An unacceptable extension of the royal prerogative', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 December 1987, p. 17; Hutchinson, *The Prince of Wales: Right or Wrong?*, p. 28.
[117] Indicators of the decline included the demise of the Prince's Institute of Architecture and its associated magazine *Perspectives*, and also, it was argued, by the completion at this period of acclaimed high-profile projects by committed modernists such as Foster, Rogers, MacCormack,

Though the eclipse was acknowledged even by sympathetic observers, they consoled themselves that, while the prospect of an uncompromisingly classical Paternoster design had evaporated, the replacement Whitfield scheme preserved, in the historically-aware configuration of its buildings and spaces, the spirit of the approach with which the Prince had been so firmly associated.[118] However, as a postscript to this section, reference should be made to an episode occurring long after the project's completion which once more touched on the issue of Paternoster Square's relationship with 'the public'. As noted, awareness of the site's role as one of the City's principal areas of public open space had remained at the heart of the development project through all its phases. 'The square should be in the public realm, and not just some private space that they might wander into. It should belong to the public', was William Whitfield's ambition on assuming responsibility for the project.[119] Despite the predominantly cool reception accorded to the completed development as a whole, commentators were ready to acknowledge the gains for the public in terms of an improved pedestrian environment and striking views of St. Paul's.[120] Yet the notion of Paternoster Square as a facility for the public was conspicuously undermined within a few years, when the development, now home to the London Stock Exchange, became the intended site of an 'Occupy London' protest camp.[121] The response from the owners was to assert the Square's status as private land and close it off to the public, making the development a *cause célèbre* in the contemporary controversy surrounding the 'privatisation' of public space (a topic which will arise again in the Broadgate context). The resulting debate included reference to the contrast between the promise of public amenity and facilities offered by successive developers and architects involved in the redevelopment of Paternoster Square with the present-day reality of a regulated private estate protected by barriers and security guards.[122] It can be assumed that Prince Charles

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Hopkins and Grimshaw: Gavin Stamp, 'Prince who built a house of straw', *The Times*, 7 March 1998, p.1[S]; Glancey, 'All Greek to the prince', p. 15.

[118] John and Watkin, *John Simpson*, p. 98; Giles Worsley, 'Modernist homage to St. Paul's', *The Times*, 26 September 1996, p. 18.

[119] Jackson, *The Story of Paternoster*, p. 58.

[120] See for example Bradley, 'The precinct and setting of St. Paul's', p. 450.

[121] Denied access to the Square, the protesters set up the camp adjacent to the cathedral.

[122] Rowan Moore, *Slow Burn City: London in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Picador, 2016), p. 335.

did not have political protests in mind in his references to the public's concern with the future of the Square; certainly the Prince appears to have offered no comment on the Occupy episode.

Style wars resumed

While most participants in the Paternoster Square debate may have agreed that the Holford scheme had to go, there was no consensus about the form of its replacement. The variety of the design options put forward for the new development, and the divergence of views they provoked can be read as reflective of the wider contemporary debate as to the future direction of building and urban design in the UK. The 1980s were the heyday of what Terry Farrell has termed 'High Postmodernism' in Britain.[123] However, enthusiasm for the idiom was waning by the end of the decade in the face of a modernist resurgence exemplified in a series of acclaimed high-profile projects involving Rogers, Foster, Grimshaw, Hopkins and other leading practitioners.[124] It was around this time too that the movement for a return to an unequivocally classical vocabulary became increasingly conspicuous and confident, encouraged no doubt by its well publicised royal backing.[125] Timothy Hyde refers to an 'unsettled, uncertain state of architectural style' in this era[126] and indeed 'style' was an inescapable word in discussion of the contemporary built environment. It was, moreover, a term widely characterised as the subject of a 'battle', thereby reviving a long-established trope of architectural discourse dating back at least to the mid-nineteenth 'battle of the styles' over the design of what became the Foreign Office.[127]

Ed Wall, 'Post-landscape or the potential of other relations with the land', in Ed Wall, Tim Waterman (editors), *Landscape and Agency: Critical Essays* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 144-163.

[123] Terry Farrell and Nathaniel Furman, *Revisiting Postmodernism* (Newcastle upon Tyne: RIBA Publishing, 2019), p.32.

[124] See for example the range of projects described in Ken Powell, *New London Architecture* (London: Merrell, 2001), and *New Architecture in Britain* (London: Merrell, 2003).

[125] For a contemporary view of the debate see J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (London: John Murray, 1987), pp. 263-271; and, for a retrospective assessment, Powers, *Britain*, pp. 210-221.

[126] Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgement*, p. 100.

[127] Bernard Porter, *The Battle of the Styles: Society, Culture and the Design of the New Foreign Office 1855-1861* (London: Continuum, 2011). The notion of a 'battle of styles' appeared in contemporary discourse, though the capitalised version may well have originated only in the twentieth century: see H. S. Goodhart-Rendell, *English Architecture since the Regency* (London: Constable, 1953), p. 115.

Paternoster Square stood at the heart of this perceived contestation. Certainly, the arguments surrounding the Arup, Simpson and Farrell schemes well illustrated the sharply divergent view on the form – or, as much of the discussion would have it, 'style' - appropriate to a major new development on a supremely important site in the heart of the capital. There were, to be sure, commentators ready to point out that more was at stake than 'style', if by that was meant simply the external appearance of individual buildings. The real issue, it was argued, was not whether or not the design aesthetic involved classical detailing. Rather it was whether a major urban development such as Paternoster Square would meet the needs of the contemporary city; create an authentic sense of place; achieve an effective balance between civic, private and commercial space; and determine the design of new buildings in relation to existing ones in terms of scale, lay out, density, materials, decoration and public realm (issues that the Broadgate development was seen as addressing).[128] Commentators challenged too the 'battle' image, arguing that to suggest that practitioners and clients were restricted to a binary choice of design idiom was to ignore the rich plurality and inter-mingling of contemporary architectural form, ranging from, as one writer observed, 'high modernism and high-tech architecture through a variety of contextual-modern designs to the Beaux Arts and neo-classicists'.[129] Nonetheless the adversarial language was predictably seized on by the general media, which relished the notion of the architectural establishment, overwhelmingly committed to modernist forms, pitched up against an opposition centred on Prince Charles which was resisting a renewed hegemony of

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The Foreign Office controversy had a precursor earlier in the century in the German debate stimulated by Heinrich Hübsch's *In What Style Should We Build?*: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 62-65. Arguably the trope went back even further to the seventeenth century ancients-moderns dialectic.

[128] See for example Charles Knevitt, 'Cathedral 's model neighbours', *The Times*, 19 November 1988, p. 5; Alan Powers, 'The submerged cathedral', *Spectator*, 23 March 1991, pp. 41-42; 'Paternoster - not a question of style', *Perspectives*, April/May 1996, p. 3.

[129] John Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets' in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp 69-89 (p. 77). The writer could have cited as contemporary examples the high-tech of Lloyd's and the mixture of modernist and postmodern forms at Broadgate, to look no further than the cases considered in this study.

modernism and promoting 'traditional' forms of building and urban design.[130] The Paternoster controversy seemed, in the imagery so beloved of the media, the most ferocious confrontation of all, the journalist Rowan Moore looking back on it as 'the Passchendaele of the Great Architecture Wars of the 1980s'.[131]

As Moore's comment implies, by the time the project was completed the notion of a 'battle of the styles' was seen as a thing of the past. Nonetheless the cool reception of the Whitfield design was perhaps indicative of a continued uncertainty as to the architectural language that was right for the new century. With 'postmodern' or other label no longer to hand, commentators appeared to struggle to establish a frame of reference for the scheme. They noted in particular the presence of apparently classical elements within designs produced by practitioners seen as broadly committed to modernism.[132] On one reading the scheme presented a successful synthesis of two design traditions, Whitfield already being seen as a leading exponent of such a synthetic approach.[133] From another perspective, however, and especially for modernist-leaning critics, the classical details amounted to no more than incidental decoration which compromised the integrity and clarity of the overall design concept. The buildings, observed Rowan Moore, 'seem uncertain whether to look "traditional".....or "modern".....and end up falling somewhere in between'.[134] Whitfield's replacement Juxon House (figure 4.13), the steel structure of which was concealed behind a crescent-shaped façade with Corinthian columns and other classical motifs, attracted particular comment. 'This is neither a classical

[130] On contemporary media representation of architectural and conservation issues in terms of conflict, see Kester Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*.
[131] Rowan Moore, 'Living with the carbuncles', *Daily Telegraph*, 21 November 1997, p. 28.
[132] See for example 'Sir William Whitfield obituary', *Guardian*, 3 April 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/apr/03/sir-william-whitfield-obituary (accessed 21 August 2020); Andrew Saint, 'Sir Richard MacCormac', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (2018) (accessed 21 August 2020).
[133] 'Squaring up', *Architects' Journal*, 30 October 2003, online edition (accessed 18 August 2020); Ken Powell, *Arup Associates* (Swindon: Historic England, 2018), p. 116. See also for example Maev Kennedy, 'Wren masterpiece's new neighbours', *Guardian*, 22 July 1998, p. 4; Jonathan Glancey, 'A very English compromise', *Observer*, 28 June 1999, p. B12. Glancey was in the event disparaging of the completed scheme.
[134] Rowan Moore, 'A waste of space', *Evening Standard*, online edition, 11 November 2003 .

building nor a contemporary one' was Deyan Sudjic's verdict.[135] Giles Worsley was similarly dismissive of the colonnade fronting Eric Parry's building on the Square's northern flank (figure 4.14). Yet at the same time Worsley (an authority on British classical architecture) read the completed scheme as an essay in 'soft' modernism, discerning no classical elements beyond the Whitfield-designed column placed within the central space.[136]

4.13 Whitfield Partners, Juxon House. (Source: author's photograph.)

However much critics may have puzzled over the apparent classical touches in Whitfield's scheme, far more attention within the Paternoster discourse, certainly as it concerned the first two phases of the project, was given over to a different approach to classicism, an approach which its advocates saw as involving a return to

[135] Deyan Sudjic, 'If only Sir Christopher were alive today', *Observer*, 19 January 2003, p. D12. See also a more recent assessment in similar terms by the architectural writer Alec Forshaw: *New City: Contemporary Architecture in the City of London* (London: Merrell, 2013), p. 35.
[136] Giles Worsley, 'Peace descends on St. Paul's, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 2003, p. 21. A former *Perspectives* editor, Worsley was close to Prince Charles but was of broad sympathies and his overall view of Whitfield's scheme was positive: Giles Worsley obituary, *The Times*, 21 January 2006, p. 72.

a form more authentic, timeless and 'traditional' but which opponents dismissed as pastiche. The issues involved in this discussion will be explored in the next section.

4.14 Eric Parry, London Stock Exchange. (Source: ericparryarchitects.co.uk.)

Classicism: practitioners and proselytisers

Design of the built environment of the late-twentieth century in classical form, whether deriving from the ancient world, renaissance Italy or Palladian England, provoked strong and polarised reactions. For its proponents, classicism (alternative labels included 'neoclassicism', 'new classicism', 'classical revival', 'traditional classicism') encapsulated the timeless architectural values that the Modern Movement had rejected. Such values were summed up by David Watkin, one of classicism's most assiduous advocates, as 'order, colour …… ornament [and] a traditional approach to urban design'.[137] For detractors the adoption of classical form for a project of contemporary architecture was inherently dishonest and the result inevitably synthetic. Nowhere was the polarity of opinion more in evidence

[137] John and Watkin, *John Simpson*, p. 9. For Watkin, Roger Scruton and other classicists on the political right, 'order' was a necessary condition not just in building design but in society as a whole.

than in the case of Paternoster Square, which provided an arena for debate on the merits of contemporary classical architecture and urban design to a degree matched in the UK context, if at all, only by Quinlan Terry's Richmond Riverside development.[138] For Watkin the Farrell plan would provide 'harmonious new buildings of warm materials and traditional forms'.[139] For Stephen Gardiner, a critic of longstanding modernist sympathies, on the other hand, the scheme was 'facadism…... as huge and meaningless as the dead traditionalism of the Twenties'.[140] Even from *Country Life's* generally sympathetic perspective the scheme represented a critical test case for classicism:

> There will never be a better opportunity, a prime city-centre site overlooking one of the major monuments of English classical architecture, a rich consortium of developers and a public fed up with the tedious excesses of post-Modern office blocks. If classicism doesn't work here, it never will.[141]

The name most closely associated with the notion of Paternoster Square as a classical conception was, and has remained, that of John Simpson, responsible for the first 'alternative' proposal which also provided the basis of the subsequent Farrell plan. The latter, however, was a collective project involving a selection of the leading classical practitioners of the day, a group characterised by one press commentator as 'the biggest classical closed shop of our times'.[142] Indeed the developers' description of the buildings - a 'classical family group' - might almost have been applied equally to the designers.[143] The Paternoster project thus became at this stage a showcase for contemporary classical architecture and its exponents.

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[138] See Ken Powell, 'Street credibility for classicism', *Country Life*, 19 May 1988, pp. 172-175; David Watkin, *Radical Classicism: The Architecture of Quinlan Terry* (New York: Rizzoli, 2006), pp. 24-29.
[139] Watkin, 'It's Back to the Future'.
[140] Gardiner, 'Liquorice allsort horrorshow', *Guardian*, 26 May 1991, p. 56.
[141] 'Classicism's last chance?', *Country Life*, 30 May 1991, p. 126. The author was presumably the Architectural Editor, Giles Worsley. See also Gavin Stamp, 'Classical revival goes on trial at St. Paul's', *The Times*, 24 May 1991, pp. 1, 20.
[142] Kester Rattenbury, 'Paternoster Square dance', *Guardian*, 3 June 1991, p. 34.
[143] *Paternoster Square: The Masterplan* (London: Paternoster Associates, 1990), p. 37.

While it is convenient to speak of 'classical architects', they cannot be regarded as an entirely homogeneous group and indeed were not viewed as such by the practitioners themselves. Robert Adam, for example, was keen to distance his own work from that of Quinlan Terry, which he saw as presenting classicism in 'frozen form' and rooted in 'pessimism and disenchantment'.[144] Commentators too discerned differences in the work of individual classical practitioners, distinguishing for example between what was regarded as Terry's rigid view of classical form (a charge Terry himself is likely to have rejected) and the more flexible approach demonstrated by Adam and Simpson.[145] All that said, the clear sense emerging from late twentieth-century architectural discourse, not least that surrounding Paternoster Square, is of an identifiable movement with, whatever the internal variation and dissent, a shared commitment to what were seen as the timeless values of classical architecture.

The movement (principally but not exclusively a UK and US phenomenon) involved a small but complex network of architects, academics, commentators and other sympathetic interests. At its heart were the practitioners committed to working principally or exclusively in the classical mode, the outstanding figures of this era being those contributing individual designs for the Farrell Paternoster scheme. Alongside them stood the commentators and scholars who actively promoted the classicist cause in books, journals and the press. Examples included *Country Life's* Clive Aslet and the architectural historian John Martin Robinson, author of books on the classical country house, historic and contemporary. A significant presence was that of the philosopher and polemicist Roger Scruton, who strove to frame a coherent theoretical basis for continued adherence to classical forms.[146] But the most prolific and influential promoter of classicism by way of the printed word was

[144] Richard John, *Robert Adam: The Search for a Modern Classicism* (Mulgrave, Victoria: Images, 2010), p. 17.
[145] Gavin Stamp, 'Making classics avant-garde', *Daily Telegraph*, 2 May 1988, p. 19; Murray, 'Paternoster – Post Holford', p. 132. Stamp's successive contributions to the Paternoster commentary were indicative of an ambivalent but ultimately negative view of contemporary classicism: compare his piece cited with a letter in *The Times*, 30 May 1991, p. 15 and 'The curse of Palladio', *Apollo*, November 1994, pp. 108-109.
[146] See in particular *The Classical Vernacular: Architectural Principles in an Age of Nihilism* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1994).

undoubtedly David Watkin, whose name has already featured extensively in this chapter. As a leading authority on the development of classical architecture from antiquity onwards, Watkin played the primary role in the establishment of a historical context for a modern-day reincarnation of classicism. His writing, above all *Morality and Architecture*, cited earlier, placed him at the centre of the anti-modernism discourse from which classicism derived much of its momentum. The practitioner and commentator strands of the movement converged in Watkin's extensive output of books and articles on contemporary classical architects and architecture, which included substantial monographs on John Simpson and Quinlan Terry.[147]

Outside this core group stood an extensive and varied mix of actors. They included, for example, the artist Carl Laubin, closely involved, as already described, in the visual presentation of classical projects, with Paternoster Square a leading example;[148] Prince Charles's short-lived Institute of Architecture, with its emphasis on the teaching of classical form and 'traditional' building skills; *Country Life* magazine, which in the 1980s and 1990s promoted classicism as a corollary of its anti-modernism agenda.[149] Additional support in later years came from the Georgian Group and the Driehaus Foundation, providers in the UK and US respectively of awards for new buildings in the classical tradition, and the international publishing firm of Rizzoli, responsible for Watkin's monographs and other relevant titles.[150]

Thera are indications too of a movement with a distinctive socio-political hinterland. Widely noted was a relationship with the political right, and in particular with

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[147] 'Bibliography of David John Watkin', in Frank Salmon (editor), *The Persistence of the Classical* (London: Philip Wilson, 2008), pp. 229-240.
[148] Laubin's 2008 painting, *Professor Watkin's Capriccio*, encapsulates the inter-connectedness of the classicist milieu, with references to a wide range of classical projects, historic and contemporary, including Simpson's Paternoster scheme: David Watkin, 'The capricci of Carl Laubin', in Lucien Stock (editor), *The Architectural Capriccio: Memory, Fantasy and Invention* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 133-159.
[149] Roy Strong, *Country Life 1897-1997: An English Arcadia* (London: Country Life, 1996), p. 210.
[150] Paul Goldberger, *Timeless Architecture: A Decade of the Richard H. Driehaus Prize (*Winterbourne: Papadakis 2013); David Watkin, Henry Hope Reed Award Acceptance Speech, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5bVgJBoww4 (accessed 4 October 2020).

contemporary right-wing intellectuals.[151] The key figures in this context were Watkin and Scruton, both of whom were identified with what was had become known as the 'new right'. That term referred to the ideology which featured prominently in 1980s political discourse and which - in contrast to the paternalist, consensual outlook of traditional conservatism - rejected Keynesian economics and the corporate state and proclaimed the doctrine of the market, private enterprise and individual responsibility. Its adherents adopted the cause of resistance to modernist forms (initially the preserve of figures on the left such as Jane Jacobs) in large part because of the association with collectivist government and the welfare state. In contrast the language of classicism was presented, especially by Scruton, as the means of creating a harmonious urban space, something seen as fundamental to an ordered society and entirely beyond the capacity of modernist architects and planners to achieve.[152]

Overt political affinities apart, the fact that classicism was, on both sides of the Atlantic, the overwhelmingly preferred choice for the late-twentieth century country house was indicative of a connection with, at the very least, affluent elite clients.[153] Country and large town houses have remained central to the work of Quinlan Terry, Robert Adam and John Simpson, the latter's output also including major projects at Buckingham Palace and Eton College.[154] At the centre of the elite connection was of course the person of Prince Charles. His continued significance for the movement was evident in his own speeches and writing, in the establishment of his Institute and the copious endorsements prefaced to other writings, notably Watkin's books on

[151] W.J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (London: Phaidon, 1996), p. 621; Wendy Steiner, 'Venice on Thames: Forward to the past', *Independent*, 4 February 1990, p. 31.
[152] Charles Jencks, 'The Tory Interpretation of History', *Architectural Review*, February 1978, pp. 64-68; Reyner Banham, 'Stirling Escapes the Hobbits', *New Society*, 4 October 1984, pp. 15-16. The association may have been enhanced by Margaret Thatcher's choice of Quinlan Terry to refurbish 10 Downing Street's interior and by the architect's work for Conservative politician Michael Heseltine. For the new right and architecture see Stephen Rosser, 'A view from the right: Aspects of British architectural historiography in the late 20th century' (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Birkbeck, University of London, 2015).
[153] John Martin Robinson, *The Latest Country Houses* (London: Bodley Head, 1984).
[154] David Watkin, *The Architecture of John Simpson: The Timeless Language of Classicism* (New York: Rizzoli, 2016). Yet the City of London has so far, perhaps surprisingly, remained resistant, none of the leading classicists having yet achieved a major commission there.

Terry and Simpson and, most recently, Terry's guide to the principal elements of classical architecture.[155] But by far the most conspicuous demonstration of the Prince's involvement with the classicist movement was his continued active public campaign for the realisation of a major classical scheme at Paternoster Square.

The embrace of classical architecture by significant sections of the social and political establishment stood in marked contrast to its evident marginalisation by the architectural establishment, which continued to regard classicism as an irrelevant phenomenon standing outside the mainstream of architectural development. That attitude can be read into, for example, the already cited comments of critics such as Sudjic and Gardiner on Simpson's Paternoster scheme and, separately, Richard Rogers's wholesale dismissal of classical forms as incapable of meeting the requirements of the contemporary built environment.[156] On their side classicists complained about the exclusion of traditional and classical practices from architectural courses, the loss of traditional craft skills and the reluctance of the architectural press to cover classical projects.[157] It was a divide that endured, perhaps in some respects even to the present day. No classical project or architect committed to classical form has yet appeared among the winners of the Stirling or Pritzker Prize or in the lists of RIBA Presidents and Gold Medallists.[158] No significant example of late-twentieth century classical architecture (such as Terry's Richmond development or his work at Downing College, Cambridge, both projects of the 1980s) has so far been listed.[159] It is noticeable too that, while monographs on individual UK classical practitioners have been produced (many the work of champions such as Watkin or Aslet), overall the bibliography remains relatively small, with as yet no general study of British classicism as it developed in the later twentieth century.

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[155] Quinlan Terry, *The Layman's Guide to Classical Architecture* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Stolpe; Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation for Public Benefit, 2022).
[156] Richard Rogers, 'Pulling down the Prince', *The Times*, 3 July 1989, pp.10-11.
[157] See for example Watkin, *Morality and Architecture Revisited*, pp. 152-153.
[158] A Traditional Architecture Group was established within the RIBA in 2003 with a view to breaking down boundaries.
[159] Works by Raymond Erith and Francis Johnson, representatives of an earlier generation of classicists, do have listed status.

Contemporary classical architecture was for the most part characterised as a movement in opposition to 'modernism', a term which appeared to encompass the full span of architectural development from at least the post-war period to the present day. However, classicism was seen too, as in the *Country Life* comment cited above, as a counter to postmodernism. This was despite the fact that the distinction between the two idioms was far from clear-cut, not least because appropriation of classical motifs (typically as ironic commentary) was itself a salient feature of postmodern rhetoric.[160] Many proponents of classicism were at pains to dissociate themselves from what David Watkin dismissed as 'Post-Modern games'.[161] Demetri Porphyrios, practitioner of classicism and critic, dismissed architects who 'flirted with classical imagery' without a genuine understanding of the form.[162] For Quinlan Terry, postmodernism was 'even worse than modernism because done with irony'.[163] Yet for all such comments, it can hardly escape notice that Terry Farrell's Paternoster plan - though it brought together Terry, Adam, Porphyrios and other prominent classicists – was a project led by one of the most prominent British exponents of postmodernism.[164] It might therefore well be asked whether his scheme was in any way open to a postmodernist reading. Certainly, it embodied two significant strands of postmodern thinking, both of which were central to Farrell's work: an active engagement with the history of the site and a close concern with the relationship between new buildings and the wider urban context.[165] Yet contemporary commentators seem to have had little inclination to seek out a postmodern dimension to the Farrell proposal; indeed the word itself scarcely features in the discussion of the scheme. The overwhelming view appeared to be

[160] Robert A.M. Stern, *Modern Classicism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988). Stern distinguished between 'ironic classicism' and 'canonic classicism', exemplified by Quinlan Terry's work.
[161] David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2005), p. 676.
[162] Demetri Porphyrios, *Classical Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1991), p. 7.
[163] Quoted in Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, p. 691.
[164] Geraint Franklin and Elain Harwood, *Post-modern Buildings in Britain* (London: Batsford, 2017), pp. 132-137.
[165] Farrell and Furman, *Revisiting Postmodernism*, pp. 63-65. There was also an arguable postmodern dimension to the Arup design, cast in what Kenneth Powell characterises as 'thoroughly contextual' modernism, evidently alluding to the colonnaded crescent and other classically-derived motifs. For some critics such features produced 'post-modernist undertones' which caused them to rate the scheme below more radical rival competition entries): Powell, *Arup Associates*, p. 116.

that the plan expressed a firm commitment to contemporary classicism and a very public one at that; this was after all not a secluded country house for an affluent client nor a suburban office development such as Richmond Riverside but rather the redesign and reconstruction of an iconic site in the heart of the City of London.

Conclusion

The architects' competition for the redevelopment of Paternoster Square was launched in the same month – November 1986 – that the new Lloyd's building was formally opened, both events thus occurring a few weeks after 'Big Bang' day. That project had been conceived a decade earlier and had no functional connection with the Big Bang process, despite the association it came to acquire. This chapter has suggested that the Paternoster development was firmly rooted in the moment of Big Bang in that it formed part of the response to the apparently insatiable demand of the deregulated City for more and better office provision - a connection nicely encapsulated in the choice of one of the blocks within the completed scheme (that designed by Eric Parry) as the new home of the London Stock Exchange, the original driver of Big Bang (see figure 4.14). Yet the Paternoster discourse, extensive and wide-ranging as it was, seemed to place relatively little emphasis on the project's role in respect of the City's operational requirements, and that confined largely to the issues of overall development density and the balance between office and other uses. What the analysis has suggested is that the overriding focus of attention here was on the development in relation to its context, involving as it did a site of enduring significance by virtue of its history and its location adjacent to the City's preeminent monument, St. Paul's Cathedral.

If the Lloyd's building had taken the best part of a decade to complete, it would require over half as much time again for Paternoster Square to reach fruition. The world in 2003, when William Whitfield's scheme was finally unveiled, was different in many ways from that in which the project had been initiated. The domestic political setting had changed with the eclipse of Thatcherism and the advent of New Labour, while the global environment had seen the end of the Cold War and was now dominated by the impact of the 2001 US terrorist attacks and events in the Middle

East. Within the sphere of architecture and urban design the debate had evolved significantly since the mid-1980s. Modernist values were more confidently reasserted around the world and exemplified in numerous major projects across the UK, momentum driven by economic upturn, international investment and national lottery funding.[166] Many of these were the focus of considerable public interest and acclaim. The 'starchitect' cult was much in evidence, with leading members of the profession enjoying celebrity status in the media.[167] Prince Charles meanwhile, though by no means absent from the architectural scene, was no longer the dominant presence he had been over the course of the previous two decades.[168] Most immediately relevant in the present context were the changes affecting the City over this period. Now unchallenged in its position at the centre of global finance, and with a London mayor enthusiastic for the role of 'iconic' new buildings in the projection of the capital's image, the City was seeing the first examples of the high-rise office towers, designed by architects of international standing and cast in distinctive - and consistently modernist - forms, that would quickly and dramatically transform the Square Mile's skyline (a topic briefly discussed further in the concluding chapter of this thesis).

In this environment it is perhaps in retrospect no surprise that completion of Paternoster Square was not the major event that might have been expected at the *dénouement* of such a long-running and controversial saga. Whitfield's scheme was greeted with some expressions of cautious approval from commentators and some of outright disapproval. But the overall tenor of the reception was, and has remained, one of ambivalence, summed up in such descriptions of the development as 'downbeat', 'bland', 'worthy', 'a compromise'.[169] Set alongside such prominent

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[166] See for example the projects discussed in Kenneth Powell, *New London Architecture* (London: Merrell, 2001) and *New Architecture in Britain* (London: Merrell, 2003).
[167] Leslie Sklair, *The Icon Project: Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 62-69.
[168] See for example Rattenbury, 'Naturally biased', pp. 144-145; John and Watkin, *John Simpson*, p. 98.
[169] Terms appearing in Powell, *New London Architecture*, p. 210; Jonathan Glancey, 'Pull it down!', *Guardian*, 7 April 2003, p. B14; Allinson, *London's Contemporary Architecture* (2009), p. 37; Colin Davies, *Thinking about Architecture: An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (London: Laurence King, 2011), p. 146. 'Compromise' was a description accepted by Whitfield himself: Jackson *The Story of Paternoster*, p. 66.

millennial City projects as Rogers's Lloyd's Register of Shipping and Foster's St. Mary Axe, Whitfield's assorted low-rise blocks, alleys and central square were widely judged as distinctly underwhelming. For the previous decade and a half – one might indeed say for much of the period since the Second World War - the treatment of this site next to St. Paul's had been one of key issues of British architectural and urban planning discourse. As new century began, a solution had at last materialised. However, the world appeared to have lost interest and moved on.

CHAPTER 5
BIG BANG CITY, EXPANSIONIST CITY, AMERICANISED CITY: BROADGATE

'Broadgate' was the name given to a multi-stage development on a large site on the north-eastern fringe of the City. The project as considered in this chapter comprised two components: first, the regeneration of disused railway land associated with the redundant Broad Street station and, second, a major redevelopment of the still fully operational Liverpool Street terminal. This undertaking extended across virtually the full span of the 1980s and was completed in 1991. Over the following twenty years the development continued to expand northwards, doubling its original size and accommodating one of the City's prominent high-rise towers. In parallel a number of the project's original buildings were substantially remodelled or replaced.

The Broadgate development did not escape the attention of contemporary commentators and it has continued to claim a place in retrospective accounts of the City's built environment in the closing years of the last century. However, taken as a whole, the Broadgate discourse is rather less extensive than that relating to the other projects considered here and, to a degree, less polarised in content. The sustained attention which the mainstream media devoted to the arguments over the Mansion House site, to the successive schemes for Paternoster Square and to the radical design of the Lloyd's building was not matched in the case of Broadgate. With this project a good deal of the interest was to be found within specialist commentary (especially in the commercial property field) and was relatively low-key and technical in content. Commentators found little reason to delve into the site's history, though they did show interest in the significance of its location in a hitherto peripheral part of the City. The development's architectural form was far from ignored, but overall the Broadgate discourse involved less emphasis on stylistic or aesthetic issues, notwithstanding contributions from leading critics such as Charles Jencks and Martin Pawley. The development did not face significant opposition from the conservation movement and controversialists such as Gavin Stamp – and indeed Prince Charles - are noticeably absent from the literature. Of the four case studies examined in this study, Broadgate emerges as overall the least contentious.

There is nonetheless a compelling case for including Broadgate within the scope of the study. Described as the City's largest building project since the Great Fire, Broadgate was a development of indisputable scale and ambition. It was also a landmark project in several respects besides size. This was a major City redevelopment driven not by public authority but by private enterprise. Although an office development intended to serve the needs of the City, it occupied a site well away from the traditional heart of the Square Mile and it set the pace in the expansion of the capital's financial district beyond the historic boundary into adjacent areas of a very different character. Despite its core purpose of creating much needed new office space in the City, this development comprised more than a collection of routine 'spec offices'; rather it constituted a major urban planning enterprise at a time when the subject of the quality of London's urban environment was emerging as a focus of widespread interest and concern. It provided a showcase for the diversity of late twentieth-century architectural thinking - modernist, post-modernist and high-tech – and was widely noted as constituting an early example in the UK of American construction methods. Then, within twenty years of the main scheme's completion, the pressure for alteration and replacement of the original components placed it at the heart of the debate concerning the preservation of commercial buildings with a designed short-life cycle which were yet deemed to be of architectural or historic importance.

Still more significant is Broadgate's role in relation to the central theme of this study, the interaction between the City's new architecture and the 'Big Bang' change process taking place around it. The earlier case study chapters have examined the discourse surrounding three major City of London developments: the Mansion House site, the Lloyd's headquarters and Paternoster Square. Though all three have touched in various ways on the subject of 'Big Bang', a direct connection between the buildings and the contemporary City cannot be considered to have emerged as the sole or even the principal strand of discussion. In the case of Stirling's Poultry building and all the Paternoster Square schemes, the requirements of the post-Big Bang City certainly had a bearing on the nature of the development, as they were

bound to do in respect of any new office building of the period, but they were hardly central to the controversy that surrounded both projects. In the Lloyd's case the Big Bang association loomed larger, partly by virtue of the near-coincidence of the building's formal opening with the event but more especially because the character of the architecture was read as the perfect expression of the 'new' City. Yet even here the connection turned out to be no more than circumstantial, given the client concerned and the building's origin in an earlier era. With Broadgate, however, the discourse leaves no doubt that here was the development that constituted the City of London's first substantive architectural response to the new world of global flows and 24-hour trading and to the challenge to its hegemony presented by the advent of a rival financial centre in Docklands. In practical terms Broadgate could be seen as the first project to provide the City with a substantial quantity of office accommodation in the form and of the standard now demanded by banks and international finance houses. But it was too the development that came to be most closely identified with the perceived culture and lifestyle of the City in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Reaction to Broadgate in a direct response to the functional requirements of the contemporary City will thus be a prominent theme within this chapter. But attention will extend also to a range of other issues in a discourse no less rich in its way than that of the other case studies: the project's status as one of the key speculative property undertakings of the era and the outstanding achievement of the industry's then leading personality; its significance as both an urban planning project of uncommon scale and one promoted by private enterprise rather than public authority; its character as a 'theatre' of 1980s culture and lifestyle; the architectural language employed; the impact on the immediately adjacent inner city area; and, finally, the project's emergence in the new century as the focus of a conservation campaign.

The project described

In his 1960s guide to London, the architectural writer Ian Nairn described a narrow passage that ran between Broad Street and Liverpool Street stations:

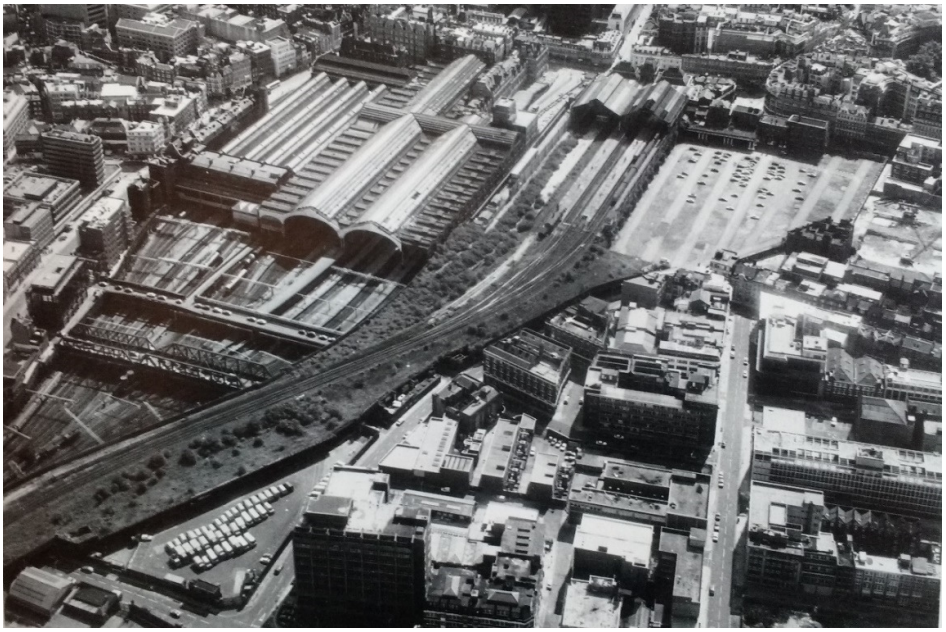
> You enter from the affluent flurry of the City. You leave ….in the sad emptiness of south Shoreditch: warehouses, railway tracks, Hawksmoor's church peering over the wrecked grandeur of Spitalfields.[1]

It was this area, straddling what had long been the border between London's financial district and the impoverished East End and dominated by the two railway termini (figures 5.1 and 5.2), which two decades later became the site of the Broadgate development.[2]

[1] Ian Nairn, *Nairn's London* (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 41. For an assessment of Nairn's distinctive contribution to mid-twentieth century architectural and topographical literature – and his influence on subsequent writers featured in this thesis, notably Gavin Stamp and Owen Hatherley - see Gillian Darley and David McKie, *Ian Nairn: Words in Place* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2013). Simon Jenkins similarly described Bishopsgate as changing 'completely and dramatically from the grand to the slummy. Gone is the big City opulence. This is run-down Cockney with a vengeance – cheap stores and seedy alleyways': *A City at Risk* (London: Hutchinson, 1970), p 24.

[2] This narrative draws in particular on *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station* (London: Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, 1991); Alastair Ross Goobey, *Bricks and Mortals: The Dreams of the 80s and the Nightmare of the 90s: The Inside Story of the Property World* (London: Century Business, 1992), especially chapters 3 and 4; Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 436-438; Kenneth Allinson and Victoria Thornton, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), pp. 23-24; Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 456-459; Alec Forshaw, *New City: Contemporary Architecture in the City of London* (London: Merrell, 2014), pp. 164-170; Ken Powell, *Arup Associates* (Swindon: Historic England, 2018), pp. 73-79.

5.1 City/Shoreditch street plan in the pre-Broadgate era. (Source: *Master Atlas of Greater London*, Sevenoaks: Geographers' Map, 1967.)


5.2 Broad Street and Liverpool Street stations prior to redevelopment. (Source: John Davies and others, *Broadgate*, London: Davenport Editions, 1991.)

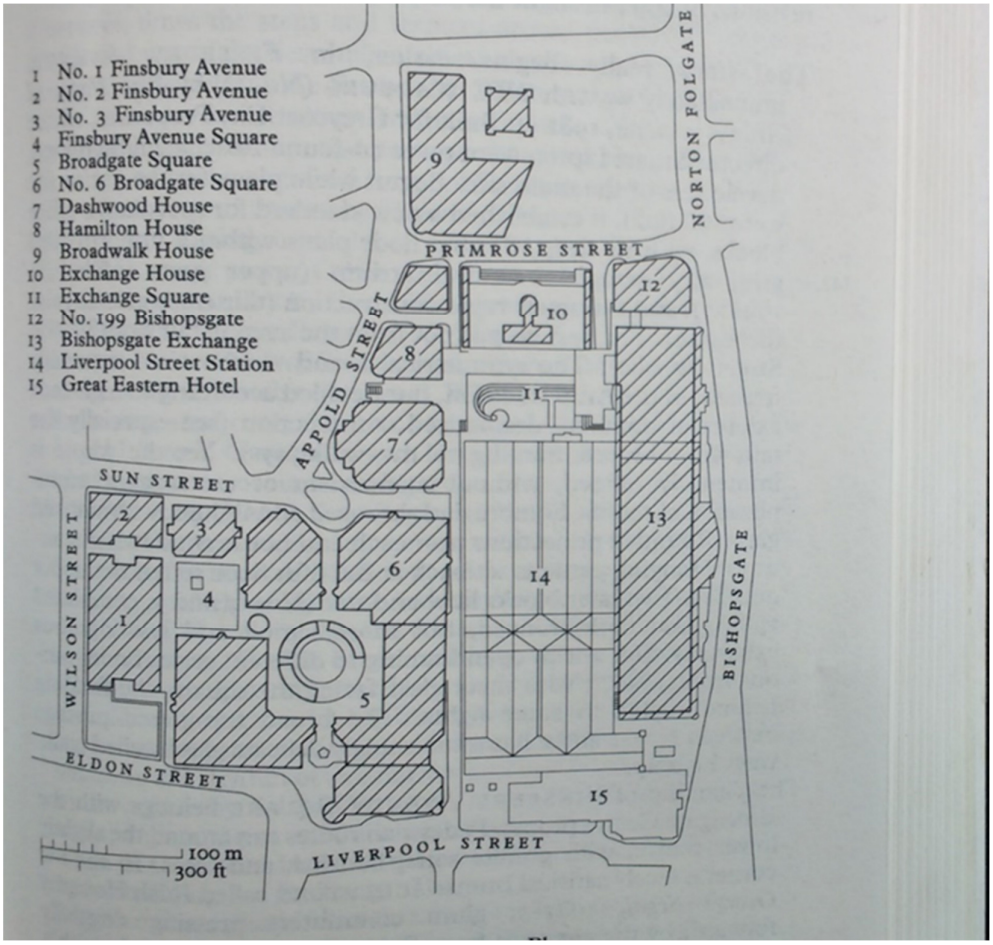
The Broadgate story (see site plan and map at figures 5.3 and 5.4) begins with an initial project which, though never unequivocally included within the 'Broadgate' designation, nonetheless paved the way for the much larger undertaking that would

follow.[3] This first stage was Finsbury Avenue, a development sited on redundant railway land west of the then still functioning Broad Street station and comprising three individual office blocks grouped around a newly created square. The development was undertaken by Rosehaugh Greycoat, a partnership venture formed by the financier and developer Stuart Lipton, who commissioned Arup Associates both to masterplan the scheme overall and design the individual buildings. Peter Foggo was Arups' lead partner and it is his name that has remained most closely associated with the project. Construction proceeded by way of the fast-track process that Lipton had seen in the US and completed to 'shell and core' point, leaving fitting out to tenants in accordance with their own requirements. Work began in late 1982 and the first tenant moved in after only 15 months. Construction of the remaining blocks began in 1985. By then, however, both the buildings and the new square which they framed had been absorbed into an altogether more ambitious conception.

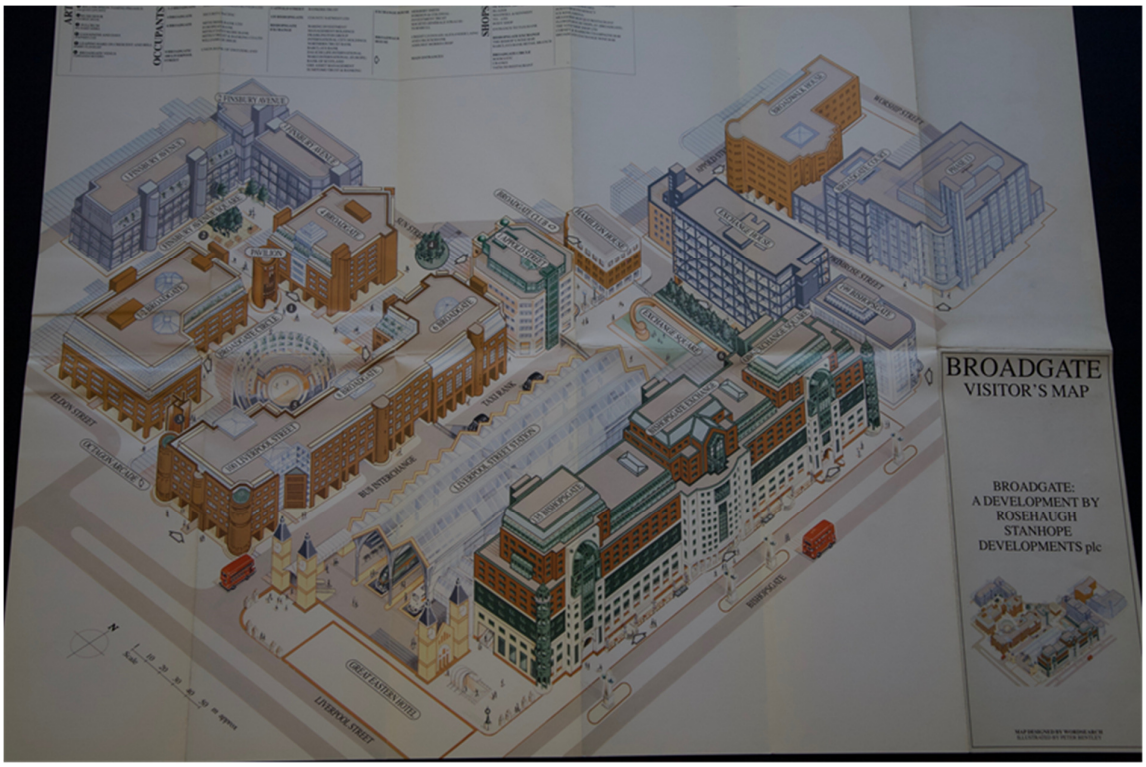
The impetus for the main Broadgate project was British Rail's decision to close and demolish the Broad Street terminal and to combine a new development on that site with a major redevelopment of the neighbouring Liverpool Street station, for which plans had been in gestation for several years with a view to exploitation of the 'air rights' over the station.[4] Having considered a number of potential developers British Rail in 1983 commissioned the Bradman-Lipton partnership, now re-established as Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, to undertake the project. Once again Arups were commissioned to prepare a masterplan and take responsibility for design. What eventually emerged was a speculative development that provided the City with some 370,000 square metres of additional office space, albeit in a location that was, at that point, distinctly marginal in relation to the capital's traditional business district. Beyond that, however, Broadgate involved a large-scale scheme of urban renewal, the effect of which was to replace the run-down area to the west and north

[3] The complete development will be referred to as 'Broadgate'. However, so far as individual components are concerned, the original Finsbury Avenue blocks will be identified as such and all remaining elements referred to as forming part of the 'main scheme'.
[4] 'Air rights' describes the exclusive development rights available to any landowner in respect of the 'airspace' above the site in question.

of Liverpool Street with an entirely new urban quarter extending to, and initially beyond, the City boundary.



5.3 Site plan of the Broadgate development as inaugurated in 1991. (Source: Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London*, London: Penguin, 1997.)



5.4 Broadgate map, 1991. (Courtesy of Wordsearch London.)

Six years in construction, the Broadgate development as inaugurated in December 1991 involved a complex sequence of large, low-rise office blocks. The westernmost part of the site consisted of the three Finsbury Avenue buildings which now formed the northern and western flanks of a new Finsbury Avenue Square. Adjacent on the eastern side was a further group of blocks enclosing a second square, variously designated Broadgate Square, Circle or Arena. To the east and north was a further, and identifiably distinct, component designed around the redeveloped Liverpool Street station. This encompassed a single range extending along most of the train shed's eastern side and with a frontage on Bishopsgate; a single block placed laterally over the railway tracks; and three smaller blocks north-west of the station with an outer face on Appold Street. Enclosed within these elements was a third square, named Exchange Square, placed on a raft over the station platform ends. The development was completed at that point by a single block to the north of Primrose Street.

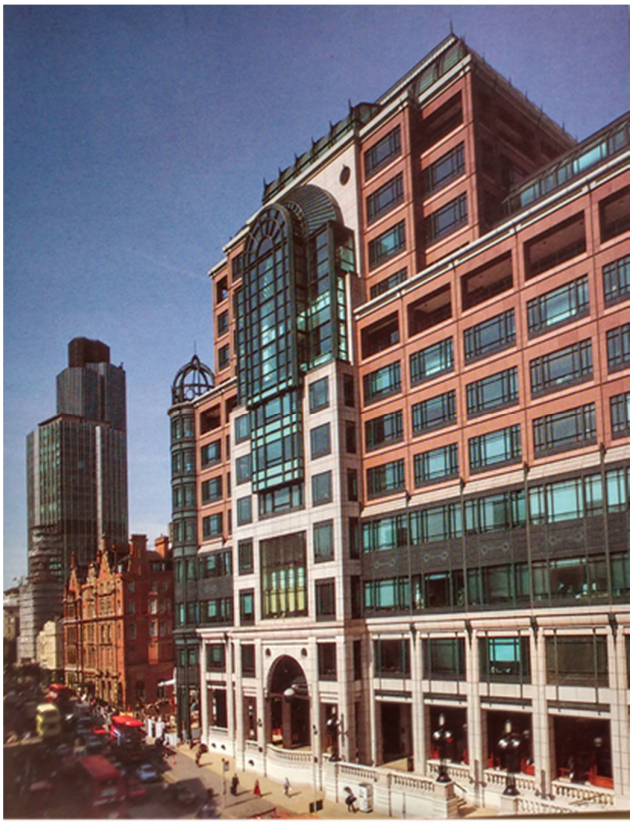
The most significant and talked-about feature of the development was less the individual buildings than the way they related to each other and the use made of the spaces between them. The overall design concept involved the creation of an extensive new area of public realm focussed on the three linked pedestrian squares around which the office blocks were grouped. Hard by the relatively intimate Finsbury Avenue Square was Broadgate Square, a much larger space that enclosed an open amphitheatre with rising tiers around it (though with one quadrant left open) providing a summer performance space and winter ice-rink, a model seen as deriving from New York's Rockefeller Center. Yet more contrast was provided by Exchange Square, placed at a higher level by virtue of its position over the railway and including a stepped performance space and water-play. The extensive open space created by the squares and the various smaller areas, colonnades and walkways was enhanced by landscaping, planting and street furniture. The most unusual and ambitious feature of the Broadgate spaces, however, was a lavish collection of outdoor sculpture that included, among other works, Richard Serra's *Fulcrum*, placed at the point of entry from Liverpool Street, George Segal's *Rush Hour* in Finsbury Avenue Square and Jacques Lipchitz's *Bellerophon Taming Pegasus* in Broadgate Square.

5.5 Arup Associates: Numbers 1-3 Finsbury Avenue, 1982-1985. (Source: Ken Powell, *Arup Associates*, Swindon: Historic England, 2018.)

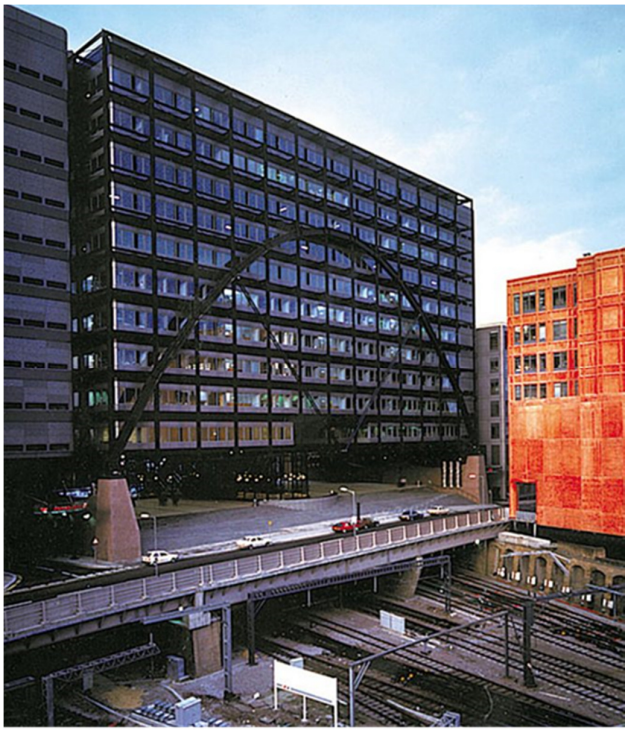
The architectural content of the scheme underwent a process of almost continual evolution over the period of design and construction, as a result of which Broadgate as unveiled in 1991 reflected a notably wide spectrum of form. The first of the Finsbury Avenue blocks was generally characterised as a modernist conception, involving a bronze-clad steel-frame structure with deep, flexible floor plans and a spacious central atrium (figure 5.5). The other two blocks were smaller but of broadly similar design. Though Arup Associates subsequently planned the main Broadgate scheme, they were in the event responsible for less than half the project in building design terms. Arups' work can be seen in the first four phases of the scheme, essentially the office blocks around Broadgate Square, together with the amphitheatre. With its irregularly projecting towers and turrets, open colonnades, pink granite cladding and a free-standing circular pavilion, the architecture here was read as, if not postmodern, then certainly as a less rigorous, more picturesque version of modernism than that of the Finsbury Avenue blocks. The amphitheatre, with its missing segment and hanging vegetation, was likened to a Roman ruin (figure 5.6).

5.6 Arup Associates: Broadgate Square, 1985-1991. (Source: *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, London: Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, 1991.)

Thereafter, Arups' involvement ceased, the practice having apparently concluded that the remaining stages of Broadgate would impose demands beyond its capacity. To complete the development Rosehaugh Stanhope turned to the Chicago office of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), led by Bruce Graham. This huge and long established US architectural and planning practice did not yet have a high profile in the UK (though it was at this time also embarking on the Canary Wharf masterplan) but its record in the commercial field and experience of high-speed construction methods evidently made it a natural choice to complete the development. A consequence of the change was a further evolution of architectural language. The perceived latent postmodern elements in the Arup phase of the main scheme now developed into the more explicit postmodernism that had become the hallmark of much of SOM's work. The outcome was seen as especially conspicuous on the eastern flank of the development, which comprised a single range extending for 250 metres along Bishopsgate, its frontage presenting a combination of polished granite, bronze panelling and varied classical detailing (figure 5.7). Very different again, however, was Exchange House, the single block placed over the railway tracks on the (then) northern perimeter of the site. Here the idiom seemed to move towards high tech in the form of a huge exposed steel-frame slab structure with floors suspended from parabolic arches, a design concept seen as having clear affinities with the nineteenth-century railway context around it (figure 5.8). Other blocks in this area of the site conformed broadly to the low-rise atrium model, though with some stylistic variation (one, for example, clad in orange concrete resembling terracotta).



5.7 Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: Broadgate, Bishopsgate frontage. (Source: *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, London: Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, 1991.)



5.8 Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: Broadgate, Exchange House, 1985-1991 view from the north. (Source: SOM.com.)

Following completion of the development centred on Liverpool Street, and with City-related activity expanding ever further beyond the confines of the Square Mile, Broadgate extended northwards. Later in the 1990s the estate was acquired by British Land, one of the largest UK property companies, and the present century has seen the completion of a further open space and two more major SOM-designed office buildings, one of them the 540-foot Broadgate Tower. In parallel the earlier phases of the scheme have been subject to substantial change, beginning with an internal redesign of the original Finsbury Avenue block and radical alteration of one of SOM's Exchange Square buildings. Over the last decade a still more fundamental transformation has taken place, involving demolition of two of the main Broadgate blocks, the remodelling of others and the insertion of a substantial new building adjacent to Broadgate Circle. These changes did not go unnoticed. A campaign was mounted to secure statutory protection for the Arup work at Broadgate as both an important example of postmodern architecture and an embodiment of the distinctive culture of the 1980s City. However, the Government resisted pressure for listing of Broadgate as a whole or of individual buildings and the redevelopment programme continued apace. To date only one component of the scheme – the first of the Finsbury Avenue blocks – has secured listed status.

Mega-project, enlightened developer

In terms of media coverage Broadgate as it took shape in the mid to late-1980s was in competition with all three other projects examined in this study: the newly completed Lloyd's building, the Mansion House controversy in both its Mies and Stirling phases and the projected redevelopment of Paternoster Square. Not only was attention given to Broadgate more limited in scale than that directed at the other projects; it also reflected a narrower, more specialised range of interest. Press coverage of the development at this period was thus more likely to be found in the property or business pages than in the main news sections or in articles by the paper's specialist architecture correspondent. The main emphasis, particularly in the early stages, was less on Broadgate as a contemporary work of architecture than as a property development of exceptional size and strikingly innovative character, a

project located on a seemingly peripheral site that offered not just a pioneering form of office building but the provision of new urban space and facilities on a grand scale. Moreover, it was an undertaking initiated not by a public authority (as in the case of the contemporary Docklands redevelopment) but by private enterprise. The sheer scale of the project aroused extensive comment. Involving (by 1991) a twelve-hectare site and fourteen buildings, Broadgate was summed up as the largest privately-led development ever undertaken within the City of London and one of the largest such projects anywhere in the UK.[5]

Nonetheless commentators were able to locate the project within a wider contemporary context. Broadgate was seen as just one of a number of large-scale, private sector-driven developments taking place or planned in the capital at this time, notably in Docklands and at King's Cross and Paddington, two other huge renewal projects on redundant railway land.[6] Martin Pawley, writing early in the life of the development, looked wider and saw Broadgate as exemplifying the 1980s 'mega-project', a global phenomenon of construction schemes driven principally by generous private investment but extending to the public sector and including not only major office developments like Broadgate but also out-of-town shopping and entertainment centres, science parks and airport terminals.[7]

There is awareness too of the project as a milestone development in financing terms, significant both as the outcome of a partnership between a commercial developer and a nationalised industry and as a demonstration 'air rights' project. A means of realising railway asset value (an objective of the Thatcher government's market-oriented policy towards nationalised industries), air rights development had

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[5] Stephanie Williams, 'The coming of the groundscrapers', in Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster (editors), *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 246-259 (pp. 255); Susan Fainstein, *The City Builders: Property Development in New York and London* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2001), p. 48. The City's other large-scale new development, the Barbican, a public sector project, occupied 16-hectares.

[6] Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp. 425-435; Michael Edwards, 'A microcosm: Redevelopment proposals at King's Cross', in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp 163-184. King's Cross was initially another Rosehaugh Stanhope venture.

[7] Martin Pawley, 'An episode of little and large', *Guardian*, 7 June 1985, p. 9.

been pioneered in London by an earlier Lipton project at Victoria and then quickly taken up at most of the capital's other principal terminals, including all those in the City. Liverpool Street, however, would remain the most ambitious example.[8] Though a technical device, the air rights aspect resonates with two key themes within the Broadgate discourse. Firstly, it was noted as forming part of the City's response to Big Bang and the Docklands challenge, since utilisation of air rights provided one way of countering the acute shortage of space inside the Square Mile available for new quality office accommodation.[9] Secondly, it reflected what will be a recurring strand in the Broadgate story, the influence of the United States, where development over rail terminals had been a long established practice, for example at New York's Grand Central.[10]

Commentary on the nature of the Broadgate development was accompanied by extensive reference to the individual seen as principally responsible for it. The Mansion House chapter referred to the historically negative image of the speculative property developer (together with most of the buildings for which such developers were responsible). However, commentators on Broadgate were virtually at one in seeing the Bradman-Lipton partnership responsible for the project as representing something different, a departure from what one referred to as 'the comfy stereotype of the greedy and insensitive' developer.[11] Particular interest centred on the person of Stuart Lipton and this was an interest extending beyond the property specialists who would habitually profile the industry's leading personalities. Here was a real estate entrepreneur with an unusually serious and informed interest in urban design, quality architecture, the building process and the contemporary creative arts: a figure whose project portfolio, Broadgate in particular, earned him such descriptions as the 'humane, civilised developer', the 'thinking man of property', a successor to

[8] Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, p. 457; Russell Haywood, *Railways, Urban Development and Town Planning in Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 217-218; Forshaw, *New City* , p. 164. Away from the railway context, the air rights principle was involved in another notable late-1980s City project, Terry Farrell's Alban Gate.
[9] Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, p.141. Air rights development as a means of realising railway asset value accorded closely with the Thatcher government's policy towards nationalised industries.
[10] Simon Bradley, *The Railways* (London: Profile, 2015), pp. 489-490.
[11] Andrew Rabenek, 'Broadgate and the Beaux Arts', *Architects' Journal*, 31 October 1990, pp. 36-51 (p. 48).

earlier shapers of London such as John Nash and Thomas Cubitt.[12] It is difficult to identify any other developer of the period to whom such terms were so liberally applied. It is hard too to point to any other developer of this period whose name would be so widely discussed outside the property business itself - save for the single exception of Peter Palumbo, who was likewise cast (not least by himself) in the role of enlightened architectural patron and radical urban planner. The Lipton narrative, however, conveys no suggestion of a lone individual deploying his inherited fortune in relentless pursuit of one architectural *idée fixe*. The image now presented by commentators is that of the property professional with a proven record of completed developments, entering into the partnerships that best served his commercial interests, framing his projects on the basis of systematic research into market opportunities and client demands and demonstrating a close understanding of building design and construction (especially as practised in the US). For Lipton an interest in high-quality architecture and public space was a matter not just of personal aesthetic choice but also of hard-headed commercial advantage, a view summed up in his own widely quoted comment, 'good architecture is good business'. It was an outlook well established in the US property business, a historian of SOM later observed, but novel in Britain.[13] Lipton was noted as one of several contemporary developers adept at media management[14] and it is perhaps significant in this context that Broadgate was the subject not only of the two lavish promotional books (1985 and 1991) cited throughout this chapter but also two ventures sponsored by Rosehaugh Stanhope to provide a permanent visual record of the development. One of these was a series of paintings and drawings by the artist Robert Mason depicting the construction process and, in particular, the workers involved in it. The other was a portfolio of images of the development, both during construction and on completion, by the photographers John Davies and Brian

[12] David Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4: A Club No More, 1945-2000* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2001), p. 702; Peter Davey, 'Big business', *Architectural Review*, August 1988, pp. 14-19 (p. 18); 'Thinking man of property', *Observer*, 22 October 1989, p. 15 (author unnamed); Jonathan Glancey, 'The reconstructed developer', *Independent*, online edition, 7 March 1994 (accessed 15 June 2019).
[13] Nicholas Adams, *Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: SOM Since 1936* (Milan: Electa Architecture, 2006), p. 300.
[14] Kester Rattenbury, *Architecture in the Media*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford Polytechnic, 1989, p. 103: available via Ethos, https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.305146.

Griffin.[15] Yet there was little doubt as the underlying seriousness of purpose, the financial commentator Dominic Hobson, for example, suggesting that in fact 'the character of Broadgate owes more to the accountant in Bradman than the artist in Lipton. What art there is, is the servant of business.'[16]

Accounts of Lipton's post-Broadgate career note (aside from the collapse of Rosehaugh-Stanhope in the early 1990s recession) his emergence as an establishment figure by virtue of his appointment to various high-profile public positions, most significantly the chairmanship of the newly established Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), the Blair government's successor to the Royal Fine Art Commission.[17] That role represented an acknowledgement of Lipton's interests and achievements in the field of architecture and it is tempting to see it as a token of an upturn in the speculative developer's public standing.[18] Yet it is hard to point to any evidence of a trend in the latter respect or to identify any later developer with a public profile comparable to Lipton's. The promoter of Broadgate, the project which first made his name widely known, remained an essentially singular figure.

New offices for a new City

In their promotional book published to mark the start of work on site, Broadgate's developers were unequivocal as to the context in which they were embarking on the project:

> The City is changing. And at an unprecedented rate. Growing internationalisation of financial markets and foreign competition. Reforms in the

[15] Robert Mason, *Broadgate: Paintings and Drawings 1989-1990* (London: Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, 1990); *Broadgate: Photographs by John Davies and Brian Griffin* (London: Davenport Editions, 1991). Mason's work was exhibited at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven in 1990.
[16] Dominic Hobson, *The National Wealth: Who Gets What in Britain* (London: Harper Collins, 1999), p. 1050.
[17] See for example Jonathan Glancey, 'No more Mr Flash Guy', *Guardian*, 24 May 1999, p. B14; David Woodward, 'Sir Stuart Lipton', *Director*, 1 May 2008. For the CABE background see Robert Bargery, *Design Champion: The Twentieth Century Royal Fine Art Commission, 1924-1999* (London: Royal Fine Art Commission Trust, 2019), p.104. Lipton stepped down from the chairmanship in 2004 amid concerns about an alleged conflict of interest.
[18] The Labour government's near-simultaneous choice of the developer Elliott Bernerd to chair London's South Bank Board might be read as a further indicator.

> Stock Exchange. The continuing technological revolution. These changes are fundamental and far reaching. And they are creating novel demands on accommodation..... Responding to that need is Broadgate.[19]

Broadgate was thus from the outset presented as the authentic expression of the new City of deregulated markets, global capital flows and 24-hour trading. The link was picked up again shortly after the project's completion in a publication emanating from the City Corporation which summed up Broadgate as 'the premier development of the Big Bang era'.[20]

The City of the 1980s had a twofold need: first, a substantial increase in the quantity of modern office space available to accommodate the demands of a rapidly expanding financial services sector; and second, office accommodation in a form and of a standard consistent with the new ways in which business was conducted. In the background was the emergence of rival locations elsewhere in the capital – most obviously the vast new development at Canary Wharf – to which City businesses would be attracted if the necessary facilities were not to be found within the Square Mile.[21] Broadgate was accorded a pivotal role in relation to both requirements.

Utilisation of the scope for 'air rights' development, noted above, was one way in which Broadgate contributed to the demand for additional office space. Greater significance in the longer term, however, came to be attached to the development's location at the very edge of the City.[22] The traditionally favoured locale for those requiring a City address was at the heart of the Square Mile, close to the Bank of England and Stock Exchange. Yet it was here that the opportunity for new office development was most constrained by the historic street plan and (until sharply

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[19] *Broadgate* (London: Rosehaugh Stanhope Developments, 1985), pages unnumbered.
[20] Michael Cassidy, 'A city in evolution', in *City Changes: Architecture in the City of London 1985-95* (London: City of London Corporation, Architecture Foundation, 1992), pp. 9-11 (p. 10).
[21] Miriam Bona, 'The city of new shapes', *The Times*, 3 October 1986, p.16.
[22] The northern part of the site lay within the borough of Hackney until 1994, when it was brought within the City boundary 'to simplify planning procedures and facilitate service provision': Local Government Boundary Commission For England, Report No. 636 (April 1992), 'Review of the City of London', pp. 15-17.

reversed) the City Corporation's conservation-oriented planning policy. The Bradman-Lipton partnership conceived the Broadgate venture on the premise that leading City firms now attached higher priority to the availability of modern quality office space than to proximity to a central location and that they would therefore be prepared to move to the new development, notwithstanding its peripheral site.[23] It was a calculation based on research and one which Lipton was noted as having already successfully tested on a smaller scale with his late-1970s development at Cutler's Gardens, to the east of Bishopsgate, at the time another off-centre site, which was identified as a small-scale precursor of Broadgate.[24] The new project inevitably involved considerable risk - this was after all a huge speculative development – but it was one that in the event paid off.[25] Even before completion, the scheme was pronounced a success, with speedy take-up of the new offices, in many cases by prestigious City firms.[26] Thus Broadgate emerged as setting the pace in the expansion of London's financial hub beyond the tightly drawn area in which it had traditionally been confined into hitherto marginal locations, and from there into adjacent but very different locales outside the City. The expansion process was a continuing one, evidence of which appeared within the next few years in the form of new office developments around Aldgate, along both north and south banks of the Thames and in Spitalfields and Shoreditch. So well established did the 'peripheral' developments become that they soon came to be regarded as core City locations in their own right[27] and it is now the norm for accounts of recent architecture in 'the City' to include examples in such areas as Shoreditch and Southwark.[28] It was,

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[23] *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, p. 69.
[24] Goobey, *Bricks and Mortals*, p. 67-69. The development, the work of Richard Seifert, incorporated surviving eighteenth century warehouses.
[25] John Brennan, 'Space matters more than location', *Financial Times*, 27 October 1986, p. XL; Martin Spring, 'Stretching City limits', *Building*, 14 October 1988, pp. 41-48.
[26] Spring, 'Stretching City limits', p. 44. Occupants eventually included Warburgs, Security Pacific and Lloyd's Merchant Bank: Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4*, p. 703. A later tenant was the new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
[27] 'Broadgate tempts New York', *The Times*, 22 August 1985, p. 16; David Lawson, 'Square Mile gets bigger', *Financial Times*, 23 September 1988, p. IV; P.W. Daniels and J.M. Bobe, 'Office building in the City of London: A decade of change', *Area*, 24.3 (1992), pp. 253-258 (p. 256).
[28] Alec Forshaw, *New City: Contemporary Architecture in the City of London* (London: Merrell, 2014), pp. 174-187; Ken Allinson and Victoria Thornton, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 6th edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 91-100, 109-128.

however, Broadgate that led what one commentator described as the 'symbolic "breakout"' of the financial services sector beyond the confines of the Square Mile.[29]

In terms of the City's second requirement - a new kind of office - Broadgate was accorded an equally seminal role. A widely noted feature of the project was Rosehaugh-Stanhope's willingness to commission research to determine in advance the requirements of potential tenants and how they would best translate into built form. This research process seems to have been in itself innovative; there is certainly no suggestion of its being a feature of either the Mansion House or Paternoster Square projects, both of which were also fundamentally speculative office developments. At the centre of the Broadgate work was a series of studies by DEGW, a respected architectural practice specialising in office design, a well established field in Germany and America though still rather less developed in the UK.[30] One of its partners was Francis Duffy, who had written extensively on the subject and who would go on to produce a detailed study of future office requirements in the City of London and hold up Broadgate as a pioneering example of how these could be met.[31] DEGW was involved with a succession of Lipton's projects but Broadgate (especially the Finsbury Avenue blocks) was the scheme with which its name has been most widely connected and where its work appears to have been especially influential, albeit in combination with other strands of the developers' research and, crucially, Lipton's personal experience of American practice.[32]

The essential requirements of the new office blocks were identified as an internal configuration providing the very large floorspace needed for electronic securities-

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[29] Robert J. Bennett, 'Rethinking London government', in Keith Hoggart and David Green (editors), *London: A New Metropolitan Geography* (London: Edward Arnold, 1991), pp. 206-219 (p. 209).
[30] Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, pp. 218-220.
[31] Francis Duffy and Alex Henney, *The Changing City* (London: Bulstrode 1989); Francis Duffy, *The Changing Workplace* (London: Phaidon, 1992), pp. 226-236. Duffy nonetheless found aspects to criticise, not least the failure to include adequate provision for future changes in working practice. For discussion of the broader context to DEGW's work see Amy Thomas, 'The political economy of flexibility: Deregulation and the transformation of corporate space in the Postwar City of London', in K. Cupers and others (editors), *Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformations from 1960 to the Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), pp. 127-150 (pp. 135-136).
[32] Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, p. 455.

dealing; a central atrium space; service facilities that would accommodate the complex electrical equipment, air-conditioning and cabling networks involved in present-day financial services; and capacity for future change. As one architectural commentator observed, the focus of City office design was no longer on the executive wanting a comfortable working environment but the financial dealer seeking 'an atmosphere of intense concentration and feverish activity……This is the way money is made'.[33] 'Banking factories' was the label attached to the new office form by the newly appointed City planning officer, Peter Rees.[34] Such comments aptly encapsulated the transformation in City working culture and atmosphere which was detectible from the mid-1980s, as the traditional 'gentlemanly' way of life gave way to a more serious, hard-driven outlook.[35] The expectations of the many American firms now setting up in London were seen as especially significant in driving this change. As one property commentator observed, 'American conglomerates ……. have little interest in rabbit-warren Victorian blocks or older glass towers, but rather want layers of dealing floors buried in wide efficient structures'.[36] It was against this background that the design of the Broadgate office buildings emerged, a medium-rise, deep plan form to which the terms 'groundscraper' or 'atrium office block' were attached.[37] Running across the Broadgate discourse, contemporary and retrospective, is therefore the theme of the development's significance as a response to the demands of a specific constituency - London's financial services industry - at a specific point in time - the age of Big Bang.[38] Such attention to practical matters is in marked contrast to the predominantly aesthetic, style-oriented debate on the Mansion House scheme and

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[33] Colin Davies, 'Arup Approaches', *Architectural Review*, May 1987, pp. 47-51 (p. 48).
[34] Judith Huntley, 'Room for "banking factories" in the City', *The Times*, 31 October 1985, p. 23.
[35] Richard Roberts and David Kynaston, *City State: How the Markets Came to Rule Our World* (London: Profile, 2001), pp. 18-24.
[36] David Lawson, 'A champion twists some arms', *Financial Times*, 4 July 1986, p. 17. See also 'Broadgate tempts New York', *The Times*, 22 August. 1985, p. 16.
[37] For a full definition of 'groundscraper' see Historic England, *Post-Modern Architecture* (December 2017), p. 8, https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-post-modern-architecture/heag186-post-modern-architecture-iha (accessed 30 June 2022).
[38] See for example Judith Huntley, 'The build-up to the Big Bang', *The Times*, 8 November 1985, p. 21; Martin Pawley, 'A bigger bang with US methods--and money', *Guardian*, 3 June 1986, p. 25; Alexi Ferster Marmot and John Worthington, 'Great Fire to Big Bang: Private and Public Designs on the City of London', *Built Environment*, 12.4 (1986), pp. 216-233 (p.231).

Paternoster Square. Nonetheless functionality was certainly not the only aspect of Broadgate attracting attention. The project's promoters insisted that, operational issues aside, businesses wanted to be based in buildings with 'strong architectural identity in an agreeable environment'.[39] How they sought to meet those two requirements and how the outcome was received will be explored in the following sections.

A new city within the City: private sector urbanism

'The great achievement of the design is to organise the external spaces of this part of the City, making civilised squares enjoyed by the working population', wrote an obituarist of the Arup partner Peter Foggo in 1993; 'here the private ends of architecture are truly transcended by its public purpose'.[40] It was a comment that well illustrates one of the principal features of Broadgate's reception: the main interest in the scheme was seen to lie less in its various individual buildings than in its significance in the context of a rapidly developing interest in urban design quality. There was virtual unanimity among commentators that Broadgate represented something new and important – a huge multi-purpose urban estate in the City of London, offering a mix of facilities for both business and leisure within an extensive landscaped, traffic-free and publicly accessible environment. Here at last, suggested an early commentator, was a major project that reflected a desire to look beyond the preoccupation with architectural style prompted by Prince Charles's views and to engage instead with the broader issue of contemporary urban design.[41] That a project on this scale should be taking place within the City was itself seen as remarkable. With the major bomb sites already used up and the City Corporation adhering to a conservation-based planning policy, the Square Mile in the early 1980s was unpromising territory for an ambitious development scheme. The availability of a substantial envelope of redundant land at least partly within the City boundary therefore represented at this point a unique opportunity. It was, as the architectural

[39] *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, p. 69.
[40] Nicholas Mare, 'Structures to move the spirit', *Guardian*, 17 July 1993, p. 30.
[41] John Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets' in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp 69-89 (p. 77).

journalist Paul Finch observed, 'the urban equivalent of a greenfield site'.[42] What appeared on that site was, as Charles Jencks characterised it, a 'dense city in the City', a new community within which 25,000 people would not only work but also have access to shops, eating, drinking and recreational facilities and a series of well equipped and maintained public spaces.[43]

The developers did not disguise the nature of Broadgate as a commercial office venture. Nonetheless, as with Palumbo's promotion of Mansion House Square, they placed the main emphasis on the development as a major urban intervention, one that would in this case open the way to renewal of a large run-down area and the realisation of fully worked out design conception with public access and amenity at its heart:

> Intrinsic to [the] concept are the pedestrian routes which flow through the development, opening up into the new central square…….. The buildings are designed, with differing styles, around the square. Using a combination of granite, metal and glass facades, each is given its own identity. Above the cornice line, at a height of 5 or 6 storeys, the buildings are stepped back with glazed and landscaped terraces.[44]

Arups confirmed the intentionally irregular character of the planning, indicating that the layout of the squares and other spaces was based on a reading of natural pedestrian movement across the site.[45] Commentators were intrigued by the

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[42] Paul Finch, 'Towards an urban architecture', in *City Changes: Architecture in the City of London 1985-95* (London: City of London Corporation, Architecture Foundation, 1992), pp 17-19 (p. 18).
[43] Charles Jencks, *Post-Modern Triumphs in London* (London: Academy Editions, 1991), p. 46. For one later commentator, the development merited the label 'edge city', a term which gained currency in planning discourse in the early 1990s, principally in the context of new development on the periphery of US cities. Canary Wharf might be seen as having a particularly strong claim to the description in the UK. Nonetheless it was evidently seen in one instance as applicable to Broadgate in relation to the 'downtown' represented by the City's Square Mile: Kenneth Allinson and Victoria Thornton, *London's Contemporary Architecture*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), p.11. See also Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Mark Clapson, *Anglo-American Crossroads: Urban Research and Planning in Britain, 1940-2010* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 79-82.
[44] *Broadgate*, pages unnumbered.
[45] Peter Foggo, quoted in Spring, 'Stretching City limits', p. 44.

conception and sought to relate it to antecedents and comparators. On one reading the varied size and informal sequencing of the squares, the diversity of the building forms and the landscaping seemed to place Broadgate within the English townscape tradition and identify it as a contemporary version of London's eighteenth-century estate development.[46] Contrasts were drawn with the more formal urban planning tradition found elsewhere in Europe and with the grid pattern favoured in American cities, a familiar trope in writing on London history and topography since at least Rasmussen's celebrated pre-war study.[47] Alan Powers juxtaposed the 'comfortable and restrainedly picturesque' configuration of the Broadgate squares with the more contrived approach to the creation of space - 'agoraphobic dotting of buildings in a void' – seen in another major exercise in urbanism of the time, Paris's La Défense.[48] Curiously absent from the commentary, though, is any comparison with an example closer to hand, the Barbican. Conceived three decades earlier but not completed until 1982, the Barbican epitomised, in its concrete forms, point blocks and deck-access precincts and walkways, the assertively Corbusian urbanism of the post-war period that seemed far removed from the more flexible and varied approach displayed at Broadgate.[49] Perhaps any such comparison was seen as irrelevant by virtue of the Barbican's status as a public sector enterprise, its origin in an earlier era and the fact that it was a residential rather than a commercial office development and therefore locatable within the tradition of large post-war council estates. But equally noticeable is the absence of any contrast with the unadorned regularity of Mies's Mansion House conception, which *was* an office development and which was

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[46] The connection with earlier London squares was invoked by Prime Minister Thatcher no less, in her speech at the start of Broadgate's construction, 31 July 1985: https: Margaret Thatcher Foundation, speeches //www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106107 (accessed 17 April 2019).

[47] Spring, 'Stretching City limits', p. 44; Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, p. 435; Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *London: The Unique City* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 198-199. However, see Michael Webb, *The City Square* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), pp. 207-212 for examples of a more flexible approach to urban design in the US, comparable with that now seen at Broadgate.

[48] Alan Powers, Britain: *Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion, 2007), p. 223. The reference is evidently to the 1980s phase of the development, centred on La Grande Arche. Powers's juxtaposition in turn has echoes of Pevsner's Buckingham House-Louvre comparison: *The Englishness of English Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 179.

[49] See for example descriptions in Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, pp. 281-284 and Barnabas Calder, *Raw Concrete: The Beauty of Brutalism* (London: William Heinemann, 2016), pp. 110-111. Commentators have nonetheless discerned, alongside the modernism, a host of historical allusions in the Barbican plan: Otto Saumarez Smith, 'Concrete city', in Jane Alison and Anna Ferrari (editors), *Barbican: Life, History, Architecture* (London: Barbican Centre, 2014), pp. 11-25 (p. 23).

finally rejected just at the point when construction of the main Broadgate scheme was commencing.

That such generous provision of public space and amenities should form part of what was otherwise a speculative office development prompted extensive comment. Much of this was positive. Even before its completion, Broadgate was noted as demonstrating the scope for combining private and public interests to produce a financially successful development which also involved attractive urban design and new public spaces and facilities.[50] Paul Finch pronounced the project (albeit in the context of a celebratory exhibition promoted by the City Corporation) 'the outstanding success story of the decade, both in terms of the commercial success of the ……buildings, and [the developer's] vision of how to create public environments'.[51] For the architectural historian and 'Pevsner' guide editor Simon Bradley, Broadgate was proof that 'the voracious demands of commerce can work in harness with generous and humane principles of planning'.[52] In the political climate of the 1980s, in which private investment was accorded a key role in the process of urban renewal, reactions such as those of Finch and Bradley can be read perhaps as indicating relief that a commercial developer had achieved an outcome that could be judged successful in planning terms.[53] For the urbanist Richard Burdett, Broadgate's private sector status brought to mind eighteenth-century developments on the capital's fringe as described in John Summerson's *Georgian London*, a new edition of which had recently been published. Summerson characterised London as a 'metropolis of mercantilism…raised by private, not by public wealth'.[54] That phrase is noted by Michela Rosso, a later authority on Summerson, as encapsulating one of the book's principal themes, 'the supremacy of the market over the role of planning'

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[50] Marmot and Worthington, 'Great Fire to Big Bang', p. 225. The authors nonetheless saw a need for a more proactive public sector role in City planning.
[51] Paul Finch, 'Towards an urban architecture', in *City Changes: Architecture in the City of London 1985-95* (London: City of London Corporation, Architecture Foundation, 1992), pp 17-19 (p. 18).
[52] Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, p. 434.
[53] See for example the concern voiced in 'London 1990: a developer's playground', *Country Life*, 8 November 1984, p.1338.
[54] Richard Burdett, introduction to Mason, *Broadgate*, p. 7. The Summerson reference comes from the original edition of *Georgian London* (London: Pleiades Books, 1945), pp. 9-10. Later editions replaced 'mercantilism' by 'merchandise': see for example, John Summerson, *Georgian London* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988), p. 14.

and the importance of the 'capitalist speculator' in the formation of the city of that period.[55] Burdett evidently saw the description as no less applicable to late-twentieth century London, pointing also to the example of the modern American city, where private enterprise accepts a responsibility to contribute to the enrichment of the public realm. Both connections were doubtless recognised and presumably endorsed by Broadgate's promoters, under whose imprint, it should be noted, Burdett was writing.

However, the response to private sector-led development on this scale was not uniformly enthusiastic. The years of Broadgate's construction and inauguration coincided with emerging concern about the state of contemporary London and in particular what was widely regarded as the inadequacy of the capital's infrastructure and public realm.[56] The debate - driven in large measure by contemporary high-profile architects, above all Richard Rogers, by now devoting a significant proportion of his time to the subject of urban form[57] - arose out of the political controversy surrounding, firstly, the Conservative government's market-based approach to planning, evident in its curtailment of local authority planning powers and transfer of functions to ministerial-appointed urban development corporations and, secondly, its decision to abolish upper-tier authorities in metropolitan areas, including the Greater London Council. The latter measure proved especially contentious, since its effect was seen as depriving the capital, uniquely among world cities, of a single strategic planning authority.[58] Wider environmental concerns and contrasting international

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[55] Michela Rosso, 'Georgian London revisited', *London Journal*, 26.2 (2001), pp. 35-50 (pp. 40-42).
[56] Powell, *New London Architecture*, p. 7.
[57] Rogers's contribution encompassed, among other things, the 1986 Royal Academy exhibition, 'London as it could be' (see Richard Burdett (editor), *Richard Rogers Partnership: Works and Projects* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1996), pp. 236-241); and two books, Richard Rogers and Mark Fisher, *A New London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992); Richard Rogers, *Cities for a Small Planet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), based on the author's Reith lectures (see especially chapter 4, 'London: the humanist city'). In the New Labour era, Rogers chaired the government's Urban Task Force, whose report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance* (London: DETR, 1999), pp.49-85 contained numerous recommendations on urban design and the public realm. For an outside assessment of Rogers's activities see Richard J. Williams, *The Anxious City: English Urbanism in the Late Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 12-14.
[58] Muhammet Kösecik and Naim Kapucu, 'Conservative Reform of Metropolitan Counties: Abolition of the GLC and MCCs in Retrospect', *Contemporary British History*, 17.3 (2003), pp. 71-94; Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 927-934. A recent writer refers specifically to Broadgate, together with Canary Wharf - both 'spectacular temples of neo-liberalism' -

examples (notably Barcelona, revitalised for the 1992 Olympic Games) provided further stimulus to debate.[59] The outcome of this discourse was a succession of ambitious schemes, some realised, others abortive, for the radical reordering of central London spaces including Trafalgar and Parliament Squares and the South Bank.

It was against this background that admiration for the urbanism on display at Broadgate was qualified by disquiet that it should have been left to private enterprise to undertake a major development of this kind. Thus a generally laudatory newspaper profile of Lipton could nonetheless deplore the fact that Broadgate and other schemes were the outcome of 'self-interested bargaining between bureaucrats and businessmen, not ….independent analysis. The participation of a public spirited developer in no way makes this an acceptable way for a great city to conduct its affairs'.[60] There was unease too at the risks seen as inherent in passing responsibility for major development projects to the private sector, dependent as this must be on the condition of the economy (as was only too clearly demonstrated by the impact of the early 1990s property downturn on the fortunes of the Broadgate's developers).[61] The urban geographer John Punter was in no doubt that Broadgate must be read as an explicit expression of the contemporary political environment:

> In Europe at large few people would look to commercial development to provide the design framework for the new city or to take the lead in providing the architectural foci or new spaces ….It is a measure of how much the role of the public sector has been transformed by Thatcherism in the last decade that

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as an outcome of the planning changes in London: Stephen Brooke, 'Space, emotions and the everyday: The affective ecology of 1980s London', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2017, pp. 110–142.

[59] Williams, The *Anxious City*, chapter 4.

[60] 'Thinking man of property'. See also the similar reservations in Gillian Darley, Sociable city doves fly off as hawks come home to roost', *Observer*, 29 December 1991, p. 39.

[61] Rogers and Fisher, *A New London*, pp. 14-15. Godfrey Bradman's Rosehaugh company went into receivership in 1992, though Lipton's Stanhope survived.

> major public investment in urban spaces or cultural facilities has been moved completely off the agenda in Britain.[62]

Nor was the provision of high-quality public spaces within a development such as Broadgate the product of purely altruistic motivation, the urbanist Matthew Carmona was later to suggest (echoing Hobson's comment cited above); rather, in a context of reduced public sector involvement in planning, developers saw little alternative but to fill the vacuum as a means of safeguarding their investment.[63]

Theatre of Big Bang

Though the City itself did not play a major part in the urban design debate, what Rogers and others were describing as lamentably absent from London – a high-quality environment, wide range of public amenities, vibrant street life, 'café culture' – was already acknowledged within the City as essential to attract firms and their staff in the face of competition from not only Canary Wharf but also overseas financial centres such as Frankfurt.[64] Broadgate was held up as a ground-breaking demonstration of what could be achieved in this respect. A striking image emerging across the commentary - and evident in diverse forms of writing - is that of Broadgate as a stage-set on which was acted out the collective life of the City of London in the late twentieth century. Thus Richard Burdett (writing, as already noted, under the Rosehaugh Stanhope imprint) characterised Broadgate as 'a "collage" that seeks to establish a sense of place in the City. Its public spaces are designed as forms of "collective consciousness", places where people gather, which carry the imprint of urban life'.[65] For the urban sociologist Sharon Zukin, Broadgate exemplified the 'postmodern urban landscape', in which could be seen 'a milling crowd of office workers, tourists and consumers in a panorama of the bazaar of

[62] Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets', p. 81.
[63] Matthew Carmona, 'The place-shaping continuum: A theory of urban design process', *Journal of Urban Design*, 19.1 (2014), pp. 2-36 (p. 13).
[64] Rowan Moore, *Slow Burn City: London in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Picador, 2016), p. 59.
[65] Burdett, introduction to Mason, *Broadgate*, p. 7.

modern urban life'.[66] And Peter Ackroyd concluded his London 'biography' with a vignette of Exchange Square at the close of the twentieth century, using the generous space and the *alfresco* activities taking place there as the prompt for a meditation on one of this writer's recurrent themes, the interconnectedness between the capital's past and present.[67] The picture suggested by such readings is that of Broadgate as a stage-set in the tradition of such classic examples of urban theatre as the *piazze* of medieval and renaissance Italy (a favourite reference-point for Richard Rogers) or the designed spaces of baroque Rome, now deployed in the context of 1980s London.[68] The 'performance' presented on this stage involved a varied cast of not only office workers, commuters and travellers passing through Liverpool Street but also visitors and tourists, to whom the development offered open space and public amenity on a scale and of a kind hitherto virtually unknown in the traditionally enclosed, and to many mysterious, world of London's financial district (figure 5.9).[69] Charles Jencks took up the stage-set image but placed it more directly in the Big Bang context. Jencks looked on the development as a performance space in which the world of global finance was on public display, introducing the motif of conspicuous consumption widely seen as a prominent feature of 1980s urban life and with it the figure stereotyped as the personification of that era: the 'yuppie'.[70] Broadgate's amenities were intended, he suggested:

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[66] Sharon Zukin, 'Postmodern urban landscapes: Mapping culture and power', in Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (editors), *Modernity and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 221-247 (pp. 221-222).

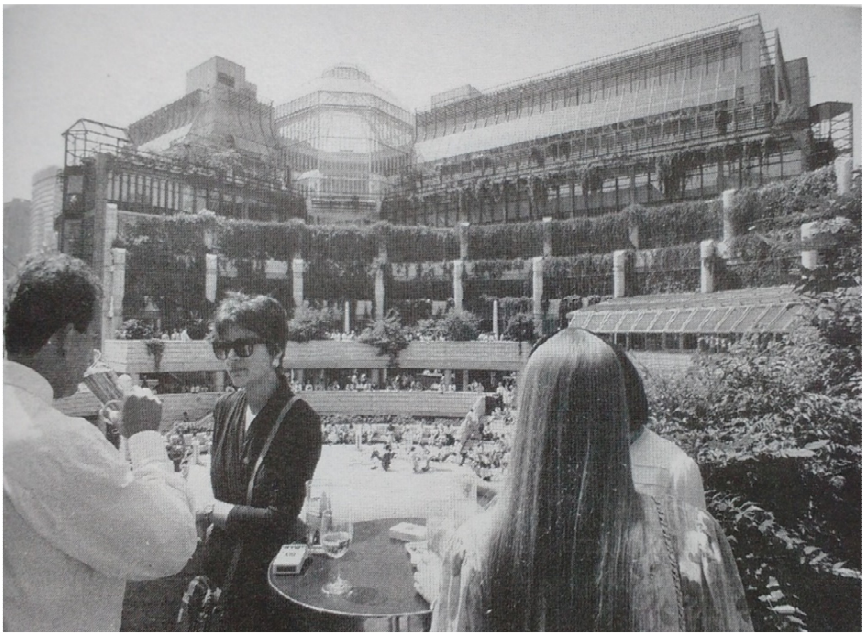
[67] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000), pp. 777-778: Petr Chalupský, *A Horror and a Beauty: The World of Peter Ackroyd's London Novels* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2016), pp. 14, 20.

[68] Webb, *The City Square*, chapter 5, 'Urban theatre'; Eamonn Canniffe, *The Politics of the Piazza: The History and Meaning of the Italian Square* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). The stage-set motif reappears more broadly in a recent description of the streets and spaces of the post-Big Bang City as 'backdrop to the theatre of *haut finance*': Amy Thomas, 'Money walks: The economic role of the street in the City of London 1947–1993', *Opticon* 1826, (16) 20, pp. 1-15 (p.11).

[69] See the description of the City as 'a foreign country' in Richard Roberts and David Kynaston, *City State* (London: Profile, 2001), p. ix. For a general discussion of late twentieth century urbanism as theatre see Williams, *The Anxious City*, pp. 235-241.

[70] For the cultural background see Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Art and Politics Since 1940* (London: Methuen, 1995), p. 21; Alwyn Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum, 2010), pp. 230-233 and, in respect of the City specifically, Kynaston, *The City of London, volume 4*, pp. 720, 727-728.

to cure "yuppie burnout", or too many hours at the video screen watching the Tokyo and New York markets bound up and down…. to attract and keep City workers, Mammon now has to provide public space, site-specific sculpture, wine bars, continuous sideshows of concerts and skating and acceptable urbanism.[71]



5.9 Broadgate café culture, as illustrated in Richard Rogers and Mark Fisher, *A New London*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

For the journalist and cultural commentator Peter York, who served as both contemporary observer and retrospective historian of the decade, Broadgate encapsulated the essential values and lifestyle of the 1980s, offering the complete consumer experience:

At [Broadgate] you could go ice-skating, eat gravadlax, admire your reflection in the mirror-smooth marble floor and spend the morning in your office making a killing on BT shares. Work as play, money as happiness.[72]

[71] Jencks, *Post-Modern Triumphs in London*, p. 47. A contemporary fictional sketch of Broadgate and its clientele appeared in Justin Cartwright, *Look at It This Way* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 73.
[72] Peter York and Charles Jennings, *Peter York's Eighties* (London: BBC Books, 1995), p. 114. The sale of British Telecom shares was the Thatcher government's first major utility privatisation, from which the City derived large profits.

The association endured long beyond the 1980s. Twenty-five years after completion, a polemic on the continued impact of privatisation policies on London could still recall Broadgate as a 'shoulder-padded yuppie citadel'.[73]

As evident from Jencks's comment above, the adornment of the public areas by a rich display of outdoor sculpture was acknowledged as an important constituent of the overall Broadgate experience. As described by the Chairman of British Land, the development's later owner, Broadgate's art provided 'a social amenity of a kind rare in London. Informally presented, broadly selective, alternatively reflecting and counter-pointing the excitement of urban life, the collection has become a focus of one of the world's great cities'.[74] The collection showcased the work of leading British and international artists, much of it newly commissioned, and represented the personal choice of Stuart Lipton and a colleague, David Blackburn. The two of them are characterised in Philip Ward-Jackson's study of the City's public sculpture as 'enlightened despots, doing what was best for the environment in the long term, but without consultation or concessions to notions of popular taste'. Items were selected on principles of 'eclecticism and internationalism' and included both abstract and figurative pieces.[75] Yet once again the notion of hard-headed business calculation came into the frame. Anticipating Dominic Hobson's comment cited earlier, an early review of the Broadgate sculptures portrayed Lipton as the enlightened patron but one nonetheless motivated by the conviction that the collection would enhance the development's attraction for tenants and hence its profitability.[76]

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[73] Ian Martin, 'The city that privatised itself to death', *Guardian*, online edition, 24 February 2015 (accessed 26 July 2019). The privatisation aspect will be discussed further below.
[74] Tim Shackleton, *Art at Broadgate* (London: British Land Company, 1999), foreword by John Ritblat, Chairman, British Land, p. 2.
[75] Philip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of the City of London* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), pp. 44-45.
[76] William Feaver, 'Putting art to work', *Guardian*, 2 July 1989, p. 39. Works of art were also commissioned to embellish the interior of the offices.

5.10 Richard Serra, *Fulcrum*, 1987. (Source: Stanhope plc.)

Broadgate's public art – above all Serra's colossal *Fulcrum* - aroused much interest among commentators and one might even speculate that this striking innovative aspect of the project may have been a contributory factor (alongside those listed in the following section) in the relatively low-key reception of the development's architectural content.[77] Yet Deyan Sudjic - one of the few architecture critics to examine the art collection in relation to the overall design context – reached the conclusion that the best of the sculpture pointed up the questionable merit of some of the buildings, Serra's *Fulcrum* (figure 5.10) in particular demonstrating a quality well above that of the buildings surrounding it.[78] Specialist art critics, presumably feeling more at ease with the subject, were readier to engage in extended discussion of the Broadgate collection. Richard Cork for example wrote of the 'austere theatricality' of *Fulcrum* as 'an ideal preparation for the great circular arena' in Broadgate Square, while Flanagan's *Leaping Hare* was judged an apt

[77] A survey indicated that two-thirds of early Broadgate tenants regarded the sculptures as a feature, 'a conversation point' of the development: Sara Selwood, *The Benefits of Public Art: The Polemics of Permanent Art in Public Places* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1995), p. 331.
[78] Deyan Sudjic, 'Changing the face of the City', *Guardian*, 4 December 1991, p. 34. Compare the much briefer reference to the sculpture collection in Bradley and Pevsner, *London 1*, pp. 436-438; and the absence of any mention at all in Powell, *Arup Associates*, pp. 73-79. Sudjic is known as a critic whose interest in design is not restricted to the built environment..

accompaniment for the various leisure and festive activities taking place inside the space.[79] Yet not all commentators viewed the art collection in positive terms. The art critic Andrew Brighton (influenced perhaps by references to the developers' supposed underlying motivation) seemed to regard challenging works such as those of Serra as inappropriate to the surroundings and indicative of a cynical and patronising attitude on the part of the developers, whose only concern was with the value of the investment.[80] For the cultural theorist Malcolm Miles the sculpture conferred an 'aura of culture' on the development, behind which Broadgate remained a 'corporate fortress'.[81]

When all has been said, however, the fundamental component of the Broadgate 'stage' was the ensemble of buildings distributed across the site and constituting, in the words of the London historian Jerry White 'an architectural feast – some eclectic art deco-ish and retro-chic, some ……..uncompromisingly modern'.[82] It is to this that attention must now turn.

Globalised architecture for globalising clients

That a building project on the scale of Broadgate should have aroused relatively little contemporary public debate is likely to be explained by three factors in particular: the absence (at that stage) of a conspicuous high-rise element; the fact that it did not involve the destruction of important and admired historic fabric; and the new development's acknowledged positive role as catalyst for the modernisation of the rail terminus and regeneration of a rather run-down, and at the time off-centre, neighbourhood. However, a further factor may perhaps have been the sheer diversity of the architectural language on display, the modernism of Arups' Finsbury Avenue blocks giving way to the more picturesque, postmodern-oriented form of that practice's Broadgate buildings, followed by the admixture of postmodern

[79] Eugene Rosenberg, *Architect's choice : Art in Architecture in Great Britain Since 1945* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), introduction by Richard Cork, p. 31. Cork would nonetheless would have preferred to see more of the works on display newly commissioned for the site rather than acquired from elsewhere.
[80] Andrew Brighton, 'Philistine piety and public art', *Modern Painters*, 6.1 (1993), pp. 42-43.
[81] Malcolm Miles, 'Art and urban regeneration', *Urban History*, 22.2 (1995), pp. 238-252 (p. 245).
[82] Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People* (London: Viking, 2001), p. 80.

classicism and high tech introduced by SOM. In short, it was a development that could be read as showcasing virtually the full spectrum of late-twentieth century architectural taste, the only major omission being classicism of the kind proposed in the Paternoster Square context. Certainly this parade of built form might be seen as further contributing to the Broadgate 'performance' already discussed. Yet there is no firm evidence to suggest that a notion of a stylistic evolution across the site was a conscious objective for the developers, while for their part commentators seemed noticeably incurious as to a possible explanation or rationale for the diversity of architectural language. Most of them, however, were of the view that the transformation across the site from Arups' Finsbury Avenue blocks on one side to SOM's Bishopsgate flank on the other represented a process of steady decline. As *Architectural Review* editor Peter Davey put it, the 'progressive collapse of the quality of urban building is nowhere better shown than in the continuing story of the decay of the quality of [Broadgate]'.[83]

Reception of the Finsbury Avenue blocks was largely free of controversy and predominantly positive. The very fact of Arups' involvement caused something of a stir. Here was a practice which was chiefly associated with bespoke commercial and industrial buildings and prestige commissions from universities and cultural institutions and which had hitherto shown little interest in speculative office development.[84] However, with the prospect of public sector commissions looking less secure in the political and economic environment of the early 1980s, the opportunities offered by a project such as Finsbury Avenue, and then Broadgate itself, was evidently seen as too good to miss and, as it turned out, the project is reported to have provided the bulk of the practice's fee income over the remainder of the decade.[85] There was consensus that Finsbury Avenue brought something

[83] Davey, 'Big business', p.16. Davey was described as a critic hostile to corporate capitalism and to postmodernism, on both of which counts Broadgate will therefore have offended: Catherine Slessor, 'Peter Davey', *Architectural Review*, April 2018, p. 114. The development was only one of the targets in Davey's excoriating article.
[84] Peter Buchanan, 'Urban Arups', *Architectural Review*, May 1985, pp. 21-30 (p.21); Moore, *Slow Burn City*, p. 302. The Chatham building mentioned in the Lloyd's chapter exemplified Arups' commercial work.
[85] Powell, *Arup Associates*, pp. xx, 72; Ken Powell, 'Sir Philip Dowson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (2017) (accessed 22 August 2019).

new to the built environment of the City. This was in part simply acknowledgement that these buildings involved a new form of office accommodation in response to the City's changing needs. But the buildings were seen also, and have continued to be seen, as achieving a degree of architectural refinement hitherto absent from speculative office design, whether in the City or elsewhere in the UK. 'Arups have provided an object lesson for all architects', observed one early reviewer, 'They prove that speculative offices can make a sensitive contribution to a civic environment, and that a huge office building can have a richness and delicate scale suggestive of the human beings who work within'.[86] Subsequent readings were in similar vein, Alan Powers recently contrasting Arups' approach to modernism at Finsbury Avenue ('showing the future') with that of Mies at Mansion House Square ('a relic from the past').[87] Formal acknowledgement of the significance of Arups' work came with 1 Finsbury Avenue's Grade II listing in 2015.[88]

Once past the initial Arup blocks, however, the Broadgate reception involves a more complex and contentious discourse. While there may have been a broadly if not universally positive view of the overall development as an ambitious and innovative urban renewal project, reaction to the individual components of the scheme as works of architecture ranged from cautious ambivalence to outright disapproval. The positive response to the modernism of Finsbury Avenue was not quite matched by the reception of Arups' work on the main Broadgate scheme. Though the architecture was acknowledged to be of a quality well above that of the generality of London commercial development, the practice's espousal of what was viewed as a softer version of modernism puzzled commentators and engendered such descriptions as 'mannered', 'fussy', 'impaled firmly on the stylistic fence'.[89]

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[86] Buchanan, 'Urban Arups', p. 30.
[87] Alan Powers, *Bauhaus Goes West: Modern Art and Design in Britain and America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), p. 217.
[88] Historic England, list entry, 1 Finsbury Avenue: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1422594 (accessed 23 April 2019).
[89] Moore, *Slow Burn City*, p. 302; Stephanie Williams, 'The coming of the groundscrapers', in Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster (editors), *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 246-259 (p. 256); Deyan Sudjic, 'Changing the face of the City', *Guardian*, 4 December 1991, p. 34.

It was, however, the abrupt change in idiom introduced by the SOM components (see figures 5.7 and 5.8) that aroused the most vigorous debate. Though the American practice's Exchange House was widely admired, critics seemed unsure as to how its form should be interpreted, their ambivalence one more indicator perhaps of that wider uncertainty and dissension concerning architectural values already discussed in the Paternoster 'style battle' context. The favoured reading of Exchange House was to see its forcefully exposed steel frame as representing an SOM version of high tech, consciously chosen to connect with the British engineering tradition and specifically the adjacent Victorian railway structures. Yet there was an alternative view which saw the building not as an authentic example of high tech modernism but rather as an essentially postmodern conception that incorporated high tech motifs as a decorative or ironic allusion to the surroundings.[90]

When it came to the rest of SOM's work, and particularly the more overt postmodernism on display in the Bishopsgate frontage, the reaction from critics was overwhelmingly negative. Descriptions such as 'warmed-up *Beaux-Arts* style', 'turn-of-the-century Chicago super-block', 'glitzy wrapping paper', 'vast megalith' typify early reactions to this phase of Broadgate.[91] Allusions to the architecture of Chicago and *Beaux-Arts* style constitute an especially prominent element in discussion of the Bishopsgate block. The immediate reference-point here was presumably SOM's origins in pre-war Chicago, and the fact that the Broadgate commission was handled by the practice's Chicago office, as opposed to its separate establishment in New York.[92] Moreover, though unequivocally identified with a modernist aesthetic in the

[90] For the flavour of the continuing debate see Martin Pawley, A special relationship', *Blueprint 67* (May 1990), p. 10; Rabenek, 'Broadgate and the Beaux Arts', *Architects' Journal*, p. 40; Nicholas Adams, *Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: SOM Since 1936* (Milan: Electa Architecture, 2006), pp. 300-301; Charles Jencks, *The Story of Post-Modernism* (Chichester: Wiley, 2011), pp. 9-10, 87-88.
[91] Spring, 'Stretching City limits', p. 46; Martin Pawley, 'Hot breath of the windy city', *Guardian*, April 20 1987, p. 11; Davey, 'Big business', p.14; John Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets', in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp 69-89 (pp. 79). p. 438. Nor did attitudes soften with the passage of time, a later and otherwise generally well-disposed commentator on SOM's work referring to the 'inflated historicism' seen at Broadgate: Adams, *Skidmore, Owings and Merrill*, p. 300.
[92] For the distinction between SOM's Chicago and New York offices see Elain Harwood, *Nottingham* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 216; Elain Harwood, *Space, Hope and Brutalism: English architecture, 1945-1975* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 359-360.

post-war decades, the firm had by the 1980s espoused a form of postmodern classicism which could seem to hark back to the distinctive *Beaux Arts* style favoured in Chicago architecture at the end of the nineteenth century.[93]

In both substance and tone the commentary on SOM's work at Broadgate played into the contemporary debate about the nature and significance of postmodernism, and in particular the view that it had become, as one hostile critic put it, 'no more than the pretty plaything of rampant capitalism'.[94] This was indeed an established trope by the end of the 1980s. Davey's article already cited described SOM's London projects (which included Canary Wharf and King's Cross besides Broadgate) as being 'all in the meaningless *nouveau*-capitalist style'.[95] Even postmodernism's leading apologist, Charles Jencks, acknowledged postmodern classicism as 'the entrepreneurial mode'.[96] And if Broadgate's postmodernism could be read as an expression of corporate capitalism, the connection could be extended beyond those commissioning or using the buildings to the designers. 'The point isn't the architecture, it's the power', wrote the American critic Michael Sorkin in 1984, reviewing a monograph on SOM's recent projects.[97] Certainly, a continuing theme permeating the literature on SOM has been the firm's status throughout its existence as 'the ultimate corporate practice' and a prime example of 'architecture as big business'.[98] Since its foundation in the 1930s the firm had established a formidable reputation for its ability to handle large-scale projects, particularly but by no means

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[93] Elizabeth Williamson and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London Docklands* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 116. Williamson provides a useful account of the introduction of the American postmodern aesthetic to late twentieth century London. Chicago's espousal of *Beaux-Arts* at the end of the nineteenth century was seen as amounting to a step back from the more progressive principles of the 'Chicago School', which may help explain the pejorative tone of the references by modernism-inclined commentators on Broadgate. For the Chicago background see Jay Pridmore and George Larson, *Chicago Architecture and Design* (New York: Abrams, 2018), pp. 67-74.

[94] E.M. Farrelly, 'The new spirit', *Architectural Review*, August 1986, pp. 7-12.

[95] Davey, 'Big business', p. 18.

[96] Charles Jencks, *Post-Modern Triumphs in London*, p. 11.

[97] 'SOM story', reproduced in Michael Sorkin, *Exquisite Corpse: Writings on Buildings* (London: Verso,1991), pp. 80-81. 'Power' has indeed been a word regularly attached to SOM; see for example Bruce Graham obituary, *The Times*, 6 April 2010, p. 57. Examples, real or imagined, of the firm's readiness to exploit its influence can be found in Sorkin and in Pawley, 'Hot breath of the windy city', p. 11.

[98] Kenneth Frampton, introduction, *Architecture of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1997-2008* (New York: Monacelli, 2009), p. 3; Jay Merrick, 'The architecture firm that reached for the sky', *Independent*, online edition, 15 February 2010 (accessed 29 July 2019).

exclusively in the commercial field, as a result of which it had secured an almost uniquely powerful position within the USA and, increasingly, worldwide. By the early 1980s SOM had become the largest architectural practice in the world[99] and an awareness of the firm's global reach and image is clearly evident in much of the commentary on its work at Broadgate. The postmodern vocabulary, especially the marble, polished granite, classical detailing and bowed shop-fronts on Bishopsgate (figure 5.11), may have betokened a nod to British history and perceived contemporary taste in London but if so the gesture met with little enthusiasm.[100] What SOM were offering was seen as fundamentally a transplanted American product, out of scale and inappropriate in its context and, as Davey put it (in language that would later feature in debate on the subject of globalisation generally), 'specific to no place'.[101]

5.11 Broadgate, the Bishopsgate walkway. (Source: author's photograph.)

The reactions evident here involved rather more than modernist critics' antipathy to a postmodern showpiece. (Even the sympathetic Jencks could refer to the 'monolithic Post-Modern facades' produced by firms such as SOM 'in every global

[99] Colin Davies, *A New History of Modern Architecture* (London: Laurance King, 2017), p. 199.
[100] The leading commentator on SOM notes that reference to local context and history had formed an important part of the practice's turn to postmodernism: Nicholas Adams, *Skidmore, Owings and Merrill: SOM Since 1936*, p. 41. The Bishopsgate formula reappeared in SOM's work at Canary Wharf: Elizabeth Williamson and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London Docklands*, pp. 118-119.
[101] Davey, 'Big business', p. 18; in Kenneth Powell, 'A welcome invasion from the other side of the Atlantic', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1990, p. 20.

city'.[102]) SOM's Broadgate commission (which was later extended to include the development's enlargement northwards[103]), together with the practice's central role at Canary Wharf, seemed a further stage in this global practice's campaign to extend its empire to the UK. Nor was it unique, since rival major US architectural practices, such as Kohn Pedersen Fox, Swanke Hayden Connell and Cesar Pelli were following SOM's example and establishing offices in London, a phenomenon that neatly paralleled the arrival in the capital of Merrill Lynch, Goldman Sachs and other leading US banks.[104] Like SOM, these were firms associated with the large offices and tower blocks of corporate America, the providers, as Francis Duffy put it, of 'globalized architecture [for] globalizing clients'.[105] It is therefore hard to resist the conclusion that the negative response to the later phases of Broadgate may well have been underpinned by an attitude of hostility to global capitalism and specifically to the United States. For the British architectural profession there was an immediate issue in the form of loss of work, a concern publicly voiced by, among others, the RIBA president and the chairman of the Royal Fine Art Commission, the latter complaining of an 'invasion of this country …..by American developers and architects'.[106] The anxiety may well have been further fuelled by the new high-speed construction methods imported from the US with their consequent perceived narrowing of the architect's traditional role. It was an issue the critic Colin Davies raised with specific reference to Broadgate:

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[102] Charles Jencks, *The Story of Post-Modernism* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2011), p. 80.
[103] Broadgate Tower, completed in 2008, houses SOM's Europe office.
[104] Noted in Powell, 'A welcome invasion', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1990, p. 20; Martin Pawley, A special relationship'. For a fuller discussion see Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, pp. 420-421. By the end of 1987 ten major American practices were reported to be operating in Britain, though only three had by that point opened offices: Kenneth Powell, 'KPF London', in Ian Luna and Kenneth Powell (editors), *KPF: Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Rizzoli, 2003), pp. 24-29 (p. 24).
[105] Duffy, *The Changing Workplace*, p. 227. See also for example Leland Roth, 'Kohn Pedersen Fox', *Oxford Art Online* (2003) (accessed 17 June 2022); Brenda Polen, 'Tall storeys', *Guardian*, 26 March 1990, p. 36.
[106] Powell, 'A welcome invasion', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1990, p. 20. Powell had no sympathy for the complaint: 'xenophobia and protectionism are no longer acceptable attitudes for architects'. The issue arose at Canary Wharf, the young British firm of Troughton McAslan winning a commission in response to complaints that all the jobs were going to North Americans: Elizabeth Williamson and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London Docklands*, p. 116.

> Where, you might ask, is there room for architecture when office buildings are becoming more like automated information factories. Detailed planning is already a matter for specialists who understand the technology….The architect is required only to provide "shell and core".[107]

Arups' own Peter Foggo expressed unease, even as he worked on the Broadgate project, that an uncritical adoption of the US approach could reduce the creative element of the architect's role, turning 'architects into shoppers rather than designers'.[108]

Beyond such professional concerns, one might detect hints of the longstanding anti-Americanism entrenched within some sections of the British cultural elite, a phenomenon especially evident in the age of Thatcher and Reagan.[109] One commentator read the hostile reaction to SOM's Broadgate work as the latest manifestation of a strain of xenophobia in British architectural criticism that dated back at least to the reception of Charles Mewès's Ritz Hotel and Daniel Burnham's Selfridges building.[110] It was an attitude most obviously found on the political left, which included architectural critics such as Martin Pawley and Peter Davey. Indeed Murray Fraser notes the attitude on display at the *Architectural Review* in the later 1980s, when Davey was editor, the magazine 'reacting to the American "invasion" with a series of sneering, patronizing articles…which itemized all [the writers] felt wrong with decadent, narcissistic and commercialized US architecture'. It was a stance that might well be seen as exemplified by Davey's comments on Broadgate cited earlier.[111]

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[107] Davies, 'Arup Approaches', p. 50.
[108] Ken Powell, *Arup Associates* (Swindon: Historic England, 2018), p. 75. Whether such unease played any part in Arups' withdrawal from the project is unclear. For a contemporary general comment on the issue see 'Into a new perspective', *Economist,* 31 August 1991, pp. 28-32.
[109] Hugh Wilford, 'Britain: in between', in Alexander Stephan (editor), *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism After 1945* (New York; Berghahn Books, 2006), pp. 23-43 (pp. 29, 38). See also Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, p. 410.
[110] Rabenek, 'Broadgate and the Beaux Arts', p. 38.
[111] Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'* , p.422. See for example Davey's editorial comment, *Architectural Review*, February 1989, p. 4 and subsequent correspondence, April 1989, p. 9 and May 1989, p. 10.

Global City, inner city

The close juxtaposition of, one hand, a huge new development, expressing the values and mores of the post-Big Bang City; and, on the other, what remained, until at least the end of the century, a physically decayed and economically deprived inner urban area presented a contrast that seemed every bit as stark as that observed by Ian Nairn in the 1960s.[112] According to one view, Broadgate offered the prospect of alleviation of the disparity. The architectural journalist Stephanie Williams confidently asserted that the newly opened development was 'generating new life in the run-down borders of Shoreditch and Hackney', though how far the 'new life' was of the kind needed by low-income residents of the area was left unclear.[113] Elsewhere, however, the relationship between the new development and its surroundings was viewed in a fundamentally negative light. For instance, the Labour politician Mark Fisher saw the transition from the 'splendours' of Broadgate to the shabbiness of nearby Shoreditch and Hoxton as encapsulating the extremes of wealth and poverty in the capital (a situation for which the City was itself widely held to bear a major responsibility) and as evidence that individual urban renewal projects could in themselves offer no guarantee of wider prosperity.[114]

That Broadgate's promoters were themselves aware of the disjunction and the risk of consequent social tension can be inferred from their references to an 'energetic' community relations policy, training initiatives and local employment

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[112] In 1986 the Borough of Tower Hamlets Spitalfields ward, immediately east of Bishopsgate, was ranked as the most deprived of all London wards: Fainstein, *The City Builders*, p. 140. For all the much discussed gentrification of its Georgian housing, the area retained high rates of unemployment and overcrowding: John Eade*, Placing London From Imperial Capital to Global City* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000), p. 136.

[113] Williams, 'The coming of the groundscrapers', p. 257. In the present century Shoreditch has become a byword for inner city gentrification: see for example Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: Gentrification, Housing Bubbles, Growing Inequality, and What We Can Do About It* (London: Oneworld, 2018), pp. 38-39.

[114] Rogers and Fisher, *A New London*, p. 125. This book has already been cited as an indicator of Rogers's emergence as the leading contributor to public discourse on urbanism, culminating in his role as the 1997 Labour government's adviser on that subject. The comment quoted here, however, comes from Fisher's contribution to the text. For the contemporary debate on wealth inequality see for example John Rentoul, *The Rich Get Richer: The Growth of Inequality in Britain in the 1980s* (London: Unwin, 1987), pp. 52-53; John Osmond, *The Divided Kingdom* (London: Constable, 1988), pp. 18, 167-168.

opportunities.[115] The employment issue was a sensitive one in the context of concern that the expansion of the financial services industry into areas of deprivation (especially Docklands) was producing little benefit in terms of worthwhile job opportunities for local people.[116] There is no suggestion that the experience of Broadgate provided any reassurance on this score. Moreover, the speedy moves to enclose the entire development within the City boundary - reducing Hackney's rateable value in the process[117] - seemed to signify a desire to preserve and formalise the distinction between Broadgate and its less affluent surroundings. To outside observers the physical form of the development seemed to proclaim a message of exclusivity and separateness from its wider environment. Despite the attractiveness of the internal spaces, concluded the historian and critic Gillian Darley after the opening, 'Broadgate …..functions entirely on its own terms. There is no recognition here of the proximity of the unruly, nonconformist face of, say, Brick Lane'. For Darley the inward-facing character of the development, like that at Canary Wharf, was all too symptomatic of the increasing fragmentation of urban life and culture, creating 'a city divided between self-contained islands…..In the nursery rhyme it was the rich man in his castle, now it is the office worker'.[118]

The image of Broadgate as a fortified enclave enclosing and protecting a privileged community from its less favoured surroundings reappeared a decade and a half after the development's completion.[119] The context was one already touched on in relation to Paternoster Square, namely 'privatised' public space, a description applied to privately owned and managed land, public access to which was permitted only on terms determined by the owner. The practice thus represented a departure from the traditional concept of public space, responsibility for which conventionally lay with public authorities rather than the private sector and to which the public enjoyed

[115] *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, pp. 73-74. Similar sentiments continue at the time of writing to appear on the Broadgate website: https://www.broadgate.co.uk/ourcommunity (accessed 29 November 2021).
[116] See for example Inwood, *History of London,* p. 918; Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, p. 434.
[117] White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, p. 420, note 55.
[118] Darley, 'Sociable city doves fly off', *Observer*, 29 December 1991, p. 39.
[119] Anna Minton, 'The privatisation of public space' (RICS 2006), p. 13: www.annaminton.com/single-post/2016/05/03/What-Kind-of-World-are-We-Building-The-Privatisation-of-Public-Space (accessed 19 May 2019).

generally unrestricted access. The issue became a focus of controversy in the UK early in the 2000s and was discussed as much by reference to contemporary gated residential estates and shopping malls as to office developments.[120] The phenomenon was traced back to its import into Britain from the USA in the 1980s and viewed as further expression of the neoliberal ideology that dominated the political landscape on both sides of the Atlantic in that era.[121] Broadgate and Canary Wharf, both American products in so many respects, were identified as early examples. Attention was drawn to the rules governing public access to the Broadgate site (prohibiting for example demonstrations and certain types of photography or filming) and to the presence of security guards ready to remove anyone failing to comply (figure 5.12).[122]

[120] See Minton, 'Privatisation' and the same author's *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City* (London: Penguin, 2009). The notion itself can be seen as a long established one, Spiro Kostof pointing to medieval Italian *piazze* and the seventeenth and eighteenth century English square as earlier examples of space subject to contestation between private and public interests: *The City Assembled: The Elements of Urban Form Through History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 125-127.

[121] David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 15; Carmona, 'The place-shaping continuum', p. 13. Nonetheless Minton saw privatised public space as having been taken up with greater than ever enthusiasm in the New Labour era: *Ground Control*, p. 196.

[122] Williams, *The Anxious City*, chapter 6; Minton, *Ground Control*, p. 4; Deyan Sudjic, *The Language of Cities* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), p. 110. See also Martin, 'The city that privatised itself to death'. The situation was eventually acknowledged by the authorities as unsatisfactory: London Assembly, Planning and Housing Committee report, *Public Life in Private Hands* (Greater London Authority, May 2011).

5.12 Broadgate perimeter sign, 2019. (Source: author's photograph.)

If Broadgate was seen to be expressing the City's separateness from the very different hinterland adjacent to it, it was yet also given a leading role in the City's encroachment on that area. Just as Broadgate had itself extended London's financial district into a hitherto run-down and seemingly formless area, so the relentless demand for new office space created pressure for further expansion by way of what Deyan Sudjic characterised as a leap across the 'development firebreak' formed by Bishopsgate to the Spitalfields market site.[123] With the market due for closure in 1991, a succession of major office development proposals not only generated controversy around the consequent loss of historic fabric but also opened up debate as to the potential impact of the City's expansion on the low-income and ethnically diverse communities of inner east London.[124] It was a confrontation, a contemporary academic suggested, between 'rich development potential and poor

[123] Sudjic, *Language of Cities*, p. 108.
[124] For a flavour of the debate see for example Kenneth Powell, 'A chance to restore balance', *Country Life*, 13 November 1986, pp. 1488-90; 'Save Spitalfields', The Times, 30 April 1990, p. 15; Sean O'Neill, 'Battle cries in Banglatown', *Guardian*, 5 June 1990, p.19; Mark Girouard and others, *The Saving of Spitalfields* (London: Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, 1989), especially Raphael Samuel's essay on the potential conflict between building conservation and the interests of the local population.

social conditions seldom equalled in the developed world'.[125] Within this discourse Broadgate remained an inescapable presence in the background as both embodiment of the encroaching City and catalyst for further expansion.[126] Indeed commentators noted Stuart Lipton's involvement in an (abortive) market site redevelopment proposal.[127] With eventual completion of the redevelopment (on the basis of a Foster-designed office and retail scheme), Spitalfields became, in the view of one observer as become 'an extension of [Broadgate] rather than an extension of Brick Lane'.[128]

A monument to the era

In 1982 the pressure group 'SAVE Britain's Heritage' voiced regret that the planned Broadgate project would involve the loss of Broad Street station and proposed an alternative scheme which would allow the front part of the station to be retained.[129] Though the initiative received support from the Victorian Society, it did not in the event prove the starting-point for a high-profile campaign in defence of Broad Street comparable with that simultaneously being mounted against the Mansion House scheme. Nor does the station's eventual demolition seem to have provoked much comment from the conservation community, a passing reference from *Private Eye's* 'Piloti' aside.[130] Whether because the building was not in the final count judged to be of sufficient importance - it remained unlisted, contrary to English Heritage advice - or because of a preoccupation with the Mansion House and other contentious cases, or for some other reason, conservationists appear to have remained

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[125] John Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets', p. 79. Punter's was one of several contemporary academic studies on the controversy; see also Jane M. Jacobs, *The Politics of the Past* and the same author's *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City (*London: Routledge, 1996), especially chapter 4; Rachel Woodward, *Saving Spitalfields: The Politics of Opposition to Redevelopment in East London* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1991); Chris Rhodes and Narun Nabi, 'Brick Lane: A village economy in the shadow of the City?', in Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster (editors), *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 333-354.

[126] Jacobs, *The Politics of the Past*, p. 170.

[127] Powell, 'A chance to restore balance'. There was speculation that Lipton's real objective was to obstruct any competition to Broadgate: Punter, 'Classic carbuncles', p. 80.

[128] Quoted in Minton, *Ground Control*, p. 23. The development pressure on Spitalfields has continued to the present day.

[129] *Save Broad Street* (London: SAVE Britain's Heritage, 1982).

[130] 'Nooks and corners', *Private Eye*, 12 July 1985, p.9. The article reported that English Heritage's recommendation that the building be listed had been rejected.

indifferent to the fate of Broad Street. In contrast, the eventual restoration of Liverpool Street station was acclaimed as a conservation triumph.[131] As for the Broadgate development itself, save again for a brief comment from 'Piloti' deploring the loss of existing streetscape to make way for a 'pretentious monolith',[132] conservationists seem to have remained silent.

Yet it was not long before the new development had itself become a potential case for conservation. In 1996, only a few years after Broadgate's opening, the Twentieth Century Society was alerted to the planned alteration of the first of the Finsbury Avenue blocks that would close off the atrium and thereby increase the internal space available for dealing operations. In the Society's view the building was already established as one of 'exceptional quality' and the possibility of pressing for it to be 'spotlisted' was therefore considered. On reflection the Society concluded that, flexibility and adaptability having been built into the design of the building, the case for preservation was not in the final count compelling and the issue was not therefore pursued.[133] A decade into the new century, however, found the Society less accommodating in its attitude.

The Finsbury Avenue modification proved in the event to be only one of a number of significant changes made to Broadgate's original buildings within their first two decades. The prospect of still more drastic change emerged in 2011 with the proposed demolition of two of the Arup blocks at the centre of the development to make way for a large new headquarters building designed by MAKE Architects for the Swiss bank UBS. This time the Twentieth Century Society showed no hesitation in taking up the challenge and campaigning for all the blocks enclosing Broadgate Square to be given the protection of listing. The case presented in defence of the buildings was based in part on what was seen as the inherent quality of the design.

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[131] See for example 'Mainline masterpiece', *The Times*, 6 December 1991, p. 19.
[132] 'Nooks and corners', *Private Eye*, 2 November 1984, p.9.
[133] Kenneth Powell, 'Beyond the Fringe', in Michael Stratton (editor), *Structure and Style: Conserving Twentieth Century Buildings* (London: E. and F.N Spon, 1997), pp. 73-84 (p. 76). Powell was the then director of the Society. The alteration involved was required by the building's prestige occupant (SBC Warburg), a fact which may well have added to the sensitivity of the issue.

But it rested too on their significance as the embodiment of their time, an era widely depicted in retrospect as distinctive and important if not especially attractive - the 'brash, flash "loadsamoney" culture of the 1980s economic boom'.[134] However, the proposed listing, though endorsed by English Heritage, was rejected by the government and demolition of the blocks proceeded. Ministers also rejected the Society's bid to secure protection for the surviving components of the development. The principle of listing buildings as illustrative of particular periods or episodes in the nation's history was well established and the case for identifying an appropriate architectural representation of the Big Bang era was not apparently disputed. However, the Government indicated that a better example could be found at Canary Wharf.[135] In 2018 the Society announced the end of its campaign to preserve Broadgate, noting that as a consequence of the successive demolitions and remodelling 'the integrity of the scheme had become irreversibly compromised' (figure 5.13).[136]

[134] Robert Booth, 'Heritage or horror? Row over Broadgate demolition plan', *Guardian*, online edition, 12 May 2011 (accessed 20 June 2022). See, among several retrospective accounts of the era appearing around this time, Andy McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society* (London: Constable, 2010), especially pp. 1-9, 298-304.

[135] Department for Culture, Media and Sport, press notice 'Broadgate Square now immune from listing', 17 January 2013, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/broadgate-square-now-immune-from-listing (accessed 12 June 2019). To date no component of the Canary Wharf development has been listed.

[136] For a full narrative see Twentieth Century Society press notice, 'Historic England's decision paves way for demolition of final surviving unaltered elements of Broadgate', 25 September 2018, https://c20society.org.uk/news/historic-englands-decision-paves-way-for-demolition-of-final-surviving-unaltered-elements-of-broadgate (accessed 11 June 2019).

5.13 Broadgate Circle following completion of the UBS building. (Source: Twentieth Century Society.)

The Broadgate case was seen as exemplifying the issues involved when buildings of recent origin were deemed to be of architectural or historic importance. Most immediately, the debate illustrated the speed with which a commercial building (especially in areas of high land values such as the City, with a constant demand for larger, 'state of the art' accommodation and facilities) could be pronounced obsolete, no matter how much care may have been devoted to its design and construction, how much adaptability may have been written into the specification and how much acclaim the building may initially have received. This was an example of what the architectural historian Robert Bargery has recently characterised as 'disposable architecture' designed to last no more than thirty years.[137] Early commentary on Broadgate had included extensive reference to the 'quality' of Arups' work. Yet twenty years on from the development's opening, the architect responsible for the UBS project was quoted as dismissing the two Arup blocks standing in its way as no longer fit for purpose and said to be 'incredulous' that they should be thought worth preserving.[138] Moreover, with a project of such recent provenance, there was ample opportunity for those originally involved to be caught up in what proved a rancorous

[137] Bargery, *Design Champion*, p. 64.
[138] Booth, 'Heritage or horror?', *Guardian*, online edition, 12 May 2011. The architect in question was Ken Shuttleworth of Make.

public dispute. The involvement of a building's designer in subsequent controversy attaching to its preservation was by no means unknown and could well lead to acrimony, as demonstrated by, for instance, Denys Lasdun's hostility to the prospect of significant alterations to the National Theatre twenty years on from completion.[139] With Broadgate, however, feelings seem to have run especially high. Though the figure principally responsible for the Arup buildings, Peter Foggo, was dead, his widow denounced as 'scurrilous' claims that Foggo was dissatisfied with the designs as executed. (Yet, as noted earlier, Foggo himself had voiced unease about the design process involved in the project.) Broadgate's original developer, Stuart Lipton, came forward to condemn the proposed new building. For English Heritage, still hoping for the Arup blocks to be listed, the affair exemplified the City's short-term attitude to its buildings, hailing them when new (as had certainly been the case with Broadgate) only to dismiss them after a short interval as 'worthless'.[140]

One journalist reporting the Broadgate affair was prompted to reflect more generally on the difficulties confronting those seeking to protect potentially important architecture of recent date. An immediate obstacle arose from the longstanding government policy of refusing to list buildings under thirty years old unless under threat and of 'outstanding' quality, in other words only in exceptional cases. This was a test that No 1 Poultry would in due course be able to pass, acquiring a grade II* listing less than twenty years from completion. However, despite the claims made for it, Broadgate was judged not to meet the required standard even as a designed *ensemble*, let alone as what remained after the cumulative loss of constituent parts. For Broadgate's supporters the case was further evidence of the unwillingness of ministers to protect important modern buildings in the face of objections from powerful interest groups, in this case the City of London.[141] It was seen as demonstrating too the challenge faced by those promoting the cause of

[139] Barnabas Calder, *Raw Concrete: The Beauty of Brutalism* (London: William Heinemann, 2016), pp. 321-322.
[140] Booth, 'Heritage or horror?', *Guardian*, online edition, 12 May 2011; Jack Watkins, 'We should love these Eighties architectural stars', *Independent*, online edition, 4 July 2011 (accessed 13 June 2019).
[141] The attitude was seen as applying to both the Labour and subsequent coalition governments, as evidenced in other cases involving 'difficult' modern buildings such as Birmingham Central Library and the South Bank Centre.

recent architecture with which public taste had yet to catch up. Buildings of the 1980s suffered from the particular disadvantage of association with an era of conspicuous consumption and corporate excess which, from the perspective of the first decade of the new century (and despite the Twentieth Century Society's enthusiasm), did not stand high in public esteem.[142] One might gloss this by noting that argument over the future of Broadgate was taking place against the background of a global financial crisis and economic recession that was widely portrayed as rooted in the deregulated markets of twenty years earlier.[143] In such a context it is perhaps no surprise that the preservation of a prominent memorial to that era was not a cause commanding widespread support.

Conclusion

Though by a considerable margin the largest of the four projects considered in this study, Broadgate can be reasonably summed up as the least noticed, certainly as far as contemporary general media and public debate was concerned. Likely explanations are not far to seek. The development in its 1980s phase included no high-rise office block, nor any individual 'iconic' work of architecture so singular as to provoke strong views either for or against it, one commentator later complaining of the project's 'discrete and unmemorable appearance'.[144] It made no conspicuous impact on the London skyline, did not involve an especially sensitive site and did not (Broad Street station aside) require the wholesale destruction of historic fabric. It was not the work of a celebrity architect; indeed, as this chapter has suggested, the developer principally responsible for Broadgate probably attracted more reference in the literature than any of the individual architects involved. More positive reasons for the failure to attract significant controversy include the fact that the

[142] Watkins, 'We should love these Eighties architectural stars', *Independent*, online edition, 4 July 2011.
[143] See for example Philip Augar, *Chasing Alpha: How Reckless Growth and Unchecked Ambition Ruined the City's Golden Decade* (London: Bodley Head, 2009); John Lanchester, *Whoops!: Why Everyone Owes Everyone and No One Can Pay* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), p. 168; David Kynaston, *City of London: The History* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2011), pp. ix-x; C. Kirkland, 'Thatcherism and the origins of the 2007 crisis', *British Politics*, 10, 4, (2015), pp. 514-535.
[144] Charlie Gere, 'Armagideon Time', in Joe Kerr and Andrew Gibson (editors), *London: From Punk to Blair* (London: Reaktion, 2003), pp. 116-122 (p. 120).

development substantially increased the City's stock of public space and amenity (albeit on 'privatised' terms), that it facilitated the overdue renewal and enlargement of one of the capital's busiest rail terminals and that it offered the prospect of regeneration of an apparently run-down area. Yet despite the absence of obvious areas of contention, the Broadgate discourse as examined in this chapter is still rich enough to make clear the development's significance across a range of contexts. In terms of architectural discourse, I have pointed to the response to the work of Arups and more especially SOM as resonating with the stylistic debate which marked the final decades of the twentieth century and which, I have suggested, was also conspicuously exposed in relation to Paternoster Square. In the contemporary political context, while there was no suggestion of the presence of a political agenda such as arose in the Mansion House context[145], Broadgate's status as a developer-led scheme played into contemporary concerns about the Thatcher government's curtailment of the public sector's role in urban planning and the removal of a strategic planning authority for London. Discussion of the project connected too with the developing debate on the condition of the capital's infrastructure and public realm.[146]

More fundamentally, however, Broadgate emerges from my analysis as a – and in all probability *the* – signature development of its place and time. Here was a project that was and has continued to be directly identified with the City of London of the 1980s - deregulated, market-centred, technology-dependent and above all Americanised. The last aspect assumes particular prominence in the Broadgate context by virtue of the attention commentators have given to the project as exemplifying the arrival in the City of American business methods and culture generally and, as an adjunct of this, American building techniques and American

[145] Margaret Thatcher formally inaugurated construction of the main scheme in 1985 and returned the following year to inspect the Finsbury Avenue buildings while her successor John Major provided a commendatory foreword for the developers' 1991 promotional book. There is, however, no indication of any more substantive ministerial involvement in the project. See Margaret Thatcher Foundation Archive, 'Speech commencing construction of Broadgate', 31 July 1985, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106107; 'Remarks opening Broadgate building', 11 July 1986, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106449 (both documents accessed 23 May 2022); *Broadgate and Liverpool Street Station*, p. 9.

[146] Encapsulated in the writings of Richard Rogers cited earlier.

architects.[147] Broadgate is viewed as significant too in relation to another aspect of the contemporary City, namely the financial services industry's hunger for more space, both within the Square Mile and beyond its boundaries, with consequent implications for the very different character and communities of inner north and east London.[148]

Broadgate thus emerges from this discourse as an emblem of – and indeed in one striking image a stage-set for – so many of the leading strands in the narrative of both the City of London and the UK as a whole in the final years of the twentieth century: global finance, unfettered markets, the pervasive influence of North America, privatisation, conspicuous consumption, urban planning, postmodernism, inner city problems, wealth inequality and social divisions. In sum, Broadgate may seem to have been the least talked about of the major developments of the late-twentieth century City and it may seem at first sight to be the least deserving of close scrutiny in the context of the present study. Yet if the central theme of the present study is the architectural expression of the Big Bang City, I would argue that this has emerged as the project that best answers to the description.

[147] See in particular Fraser, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship'*, pp. 456-459.
[148] A theme especially well caught in the developers' own prospectus: *Broadgate* (London: RS Developments 1985), no page numbers. See also White, *London in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 80, 420 note 55.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The extent and richness of the commentary on the City of London's architectural development over the last half century stands in marked contrast to the City's traditional image as an enclosed area of offices devoted to the single purpose of making money. This thesis has taken reception of four major building projects in the City, all dating from the moment of radical change labelled 'Big Bang', as the focus of a study of discourse – that is, published commentary, interpretation and debate - relating to the subject of architecture. On the basis of an examination of published literature relating to the four projects, I have explored the relationship between two themes: on the one side the event of Big Bang and its consequences, on the other the concurrent transformation of the City's built environment. I have examined the extent to which the discourse surrounding the City's new buildings and spaces connects with the changing financial context in which the projects were undertaken; how far deregulation of London's markets, which radically reshaped the working and character of the City, was seen as also influencing the form of the its new buildings; and thus whether the buildings were read as the material expression of the Big Bang City. I have looked too at the role taken by the four projects in other narratives, in particular those relating to the contemporary political environment, and have sought to locate discussion surrounding these projects within the overall context of architectural discourse relating to the UK in the late twentieth century. The main emphasis of the research has been on material broadly contemporary with the case study developments, but I have also devoted some attention to the way in which the projects were discussed and interpreted on a retrospective basis.

To summarise the broad conclusions of the thesis, the discourse surrounding the four case study projects has proved to have plenty to say about the spatial and temporal context within which they were undertaken and, moreover, to present that connection in a variety of ways. But it has also extended well beyond that specific context to encompass many of the broader strands of architectural discussion and controversy, strands which were equally evident in relation to a large number of

other major developments dating from the same period. What would seem to mark out the discourse around the City projects is, firstly, the fact that it captures these wider strands of debate in particularly sharp focus; and, secondly, an evident awareness of the significance conferred on the projects by virtue of where they were located, namely, within a well defined part of London which, for all the changes of recent times, has remained unique in its function, character and history.

As I anticipated, the four case studies at the centre of the thesis have proved to be the subject of an extensive discourse. It is a discourse that has turned out to range well beyond the single theme of Big Bang, but I would nonetheless argue that it does indeed speak to a significant extent of the spatial and temporal context in which these projects were located - the City of London in the final two decades of the twentieth century. It is accordingly permeated with reference to the principal feature of that context: market deregulation (for which 'Big Bang' serves as shorthand) and the consequent impact on the City in terms of business practice, institutions, culture and enhanced global role. That said, if interaction between the developments and the contemporary financial and business environment is a clearly discernible strand of discussion in each of the cases examined, the literature nonetheless reveals striking variation as between the four projects in both the extent and the specific nature of that interaction.

The most direct connection made between the projects and the Big Bang process, I would suggest, is the purely functional one. The need for new offices – and for a new form of office building - to fulfil the demands of the City's new way of working was widely acknowledged by commentators. Three of the four developments examined - the Mansion House Square/Poultry project, Paternoster Square and Broadgate – emerge as relevant to that requirement in so far as each of them involved the provision of a substantial volume of commercial office space. (The Lloyd's building, custom-designed to meet the distinctive needs of that one institution, inevitably stood apart.) Yet in practice, given the earlier origins of the Mies Mansion House scheme, an explicit functional connection with the reforms of the 1980s could be articulated only in relation to three cases: the Stirling Poultry

building, Paternoster Square and Broadgate. As it turns out, moreover, the commentary on both the Poultry and Paternoster developments includes little more than passing allusion to their role as office developments for the Big Bang age; with each of them the interest and importance are seen as rooted in other considerations, these relating principally to matters of architectural and urban form (and in the Poultry case the merits of the buildings to be sacrificed). The outcome has therefore been to leave only one project – Broadgate - that is directly and extensively discussed as architecture of the moment, a development constituting a tangible response to the needs and character of the City in the age of Big Bang. The connection emerges most obviously in respect of the development's physical form, the 'groundscraper' or 'atrium' model widely regarded as the optimum solution to the demands of the 24-hour global financial system.[1] But I would see the link as present too in the readings of Broadgate as both a showcase for the lifestyle and values associated with contemporary finance and an exemplar of the all-pervasive American influence on the City, an influence seen as evident in the design of the buildings and spaces no less than the provenance of the businesses using them.[2]

It is then in the Broadgate context, I would argue, that a direct relationship between the Big Bang City and the form of its architecture is established most unequivocally. (The Canary Wharf development – in a sense an extension of, as well as a rival to, the Square Mile – was characterised in this way to a far greater extent than any of the other three projects examined here.) To say this is not, however, to close down the issue, because there are points at which the discourse can be observed as ranging beyond purely functional considerations to connect the buildings and the contemporary City context in a less immediately obvious way. In the case of the Mies Mansion House scheme and Lloyd's an entirely circumstantial relationship can

[1] Stephanie Williams, 'The coming of the groundscrapers', in Leslie Budd and Sam Whimster (editors), *Global Finance and Urban Living: A Study of Metropolitan Change* (London: Routledge, 1992), particularly pp. 248-249; Historic England, *Post-Modern Architecture* (December 2017), p. 8, https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-post-modern-architecture/heag186-post-modern-architecture-iha (accessed 30 June 2022).

[2] See for example Charles Jencks, *Post-Modern Triumphs in London* (London: Academy Editions, 1991), p. 47; Peter York and Charles Jennings, *Peter York's Eighties* (London: BBC Books, 1995), p. 114; Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 456-459.

be discerned. The former, a product of the 1960s conceived and driven forward by a single individual (and one with apparently no direct involvement in the financial services sector) was patently irrelevant in relation to the deregulated City. Yet such was the extended time-lapse involved in site assembly at the heart of the Square Mile that the scheme became the focus of controversy at a point where reform of the City was firmly on the horizon. In that context the development could be presented by some proponents as a contribution to the general process of business modernisation, if not to the specific circumstances of Big Bang.[3] In the Lloyd's case commentators found scope for a still more blatantly unhistorical interpretation. By virtue of both the timing of its completion and even more its strikingly innovative form, the building was promptly cast as the very embodiment of Big Bang, notwithstanding the fact that the conception dated from the previous decade and fulfilled the particular requirements of an institution to which the Big Bang changes had no direct application.[4]

An altogether more subtle rendering of the theme of the contemporary City within the architectural discourse is one that conveys the suggestion of friction or conflict. Thus I would argue that within the conservationist response to the City's new projects was a perceptible antagonism towards, or at least suspicion of, the financial and business interests seen as promoting them. That was certainly how the conservation movement was viewed in pro-development circles and it was a sentiment that can arguably be discerned in Gavin Stamp's writings, especially his comments directed at the person of Peter Palumbo.[5] It is notable too that, even as conservationists protested at the destruction of the original Broadgate buildings, references to the 'brash, flash "loadsamoney"' culture of the 1980s that they represented suggest that the era was not one with which they themselves would choose to identify.[6] And though not driven by specific conservation factors, an essentially negative view of global finance can be read into the proposed alternative

[3] For example by Michael Manser: letter, *The Times*, 1 May 1985, p. 17.
[4] See especially Kenneth Browne, letter, *Architectural Review*, November 1986, p. 6
[5] See for example Gavin Stamp, 'No knock-down argument', *Spectator*, 17 June 1989, pp. 16-17.
[6] Robert Booth, 'Heritage or horror? Row over Broadgate demolition plan', *Guardian*, online edition, 12 May 2011 (accessed 20 June 2022).

approach to the design of Paternoster Square, with its classical aesthetic, non-office elements and strong visual and verbal allusion to the historic locale. It is perhaps discernible also in the hostile reactions to SOM's work at Broadgate, for some commentators the very embodiment of corporate America and international money-making, and in the concerns voiced about that project's uneasy relationship with adjacent inner urban areas.[7]

It is a short step from the contemporary financial environment to the sphere of contemporary politics. Though the Big Bang process was in large part managed within the City itself, there was a clear impetus from the Conservative government, which saw reform of City trading practices as a necessary deregulatory, liberalising measure in tune with core Thatcherite values. Against this background (and given also the close association long seen to exist between the Conservative party and the City), the subject of Big Bang was widely treated as including a political dimension and that connection is clearly discernible within the architectural discourse. Thus the Lloyd's building, though conceived in the period of a Labour government, was quickly accorded (largely by unsympathetic observers) the role of signifier not just of the Big Bang City but the entire era of Thatcherite values and policies.[8] The political context loomed at Broadgate too, expressed in both the unashamedly entrepreneurial culture associated with it and in the reading of the development as evidence of the eclipse of the public sector in infrastructure provision in favour of private enterprise.[9] The Mansion House discourse acquired its own political dimension by virtue of the references to Peter Palumbo's known political sympathies and connections and the project's significance within Thatcherite circles as a test-case for a rebalancing of the planning system away from conservation interests.[10] A political strand is less overt in the Paternoster Square context but it nonetheless can

[7] See for example Peter Davey, 'Big business', *Architectural Review*, August 1988, p. 18; Gillian Darley, Sociable city doves fly off as hawks come home to roost', *Observer*, 29 December 1991, p. 39.
[8] Peter Conrad's article provides the outstanding example: 'Thatcher's monuments: Cardboard city', *Observer Magazine*, 23 April 1989, pp. 36-38.
[9] John Punter, 'Classic carbuncles and mean streets' in Andy Thornley (editor), *The Crisis of London* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp 69-89 (p. 81).
[10] See for example Laurence Marks, 'Palumbo's tower of trouble', *Observer*, 12 May 1985, p. 9.

be detected, I would suggest, in the 'new right' and elite patronage associations of the movement promoting a classical solution.

Overall then I would argue that the contemporary financial context (and its extension into the sphere of politics) did prove to play a significant role in reception of the City's new architecture, the connection emerging by way of a mixture of functional, circumstantial and symbolic factors. It is nonetheless evident from the case study analysis that that Big Bang-related factors cannot be regarded as accounting for anything approaching the full content of the discourse under consideration here. The four developments examined were all major works of architecture attracting a high level of interest from commentators. (Indeed, in circumstances where a large proportion of City office stock was undergoing reconstruction, much of it relatively routine and away from the public eye, the four case study projects might well be considered atypical examples. They, however, were the ones that attracted attention and thus generated a substantive discourse. The fact that three of them were speculative office developments intended principally to serve the interests of commerce, and specifically financial services, can be taken as indicative of the extent to which architects were compelled, in a changed economic and political environment, to look to such projects as a major source of work in compensation for the reduction in public sector commissions.) It is therefore hardly surprising that their reception extended beyond the distinctive circumstances of the City to reflect the broader currents of contemporary architectural discourse: the design of the urban environment; the significance of historic fabric and the arguments for and against its preservation; the nature of architectural debate, in particular the place of lay opinion within it; and, perhaps the most pervasive theme of all, the architectural form (or forms) appropriate at the end of the twentieth century.

Viewed from the opposite direction, it will be equally evident that the cases examined here, however significant in themselves, constitute only a small proportion of the major developments undertaken in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s, many of which involved issues similar to those arising in the City context. Looking no

further than the capital, one might point to a range of high-profile developments of the period which, no less than the City cases, have continued to stimulate discussion concerning the state of contemporary architecture, whether exemplified by the postmodernism of James Stirling's Clore Gallery and John Outram's Isle of Dogs Pumping Station, the classicism of Quinlan Terry's Richmond Riverside or the high tech of Richard Rogers's Channel 4 building. The theme of urban place-making was prominent in relation to Terry Farrell's Embankment Place and the much larger scale development at Canary Wharf. Relationship with the historic context (specifically the adjacent St Pancras station complex) was an issue in the design of the British Library, while the threatened destruction of Victorian buildings as part of the King's Cross redevelopment prompted concern among conservationists. The issue of quality public space featured prominently in the protracted debate on the future of Trafalgar Square and the South Bank. Prince Charles saw the National Gallery extension project as a prime example of the architectural establishment's disregard for lay opinion.

What then marks out the response to the particular projects discussed in this thesis within the overall body of discourse relating to late twentieth century British architecture? In part I judge the difference to be simply one of degree. For example, it is difficult to point to any controversy relating to the historic environment at this period which matched the Mansion House case in intensity, duration or widely acknowledged long-term significance.[11] Few, I would argue, demonstrated so clearly the range of arenas in which architectural discourse was taking place and the dominating presence of certain participants, in particular Gavin Stamp. No single issue appears to have been more central to Prince Charles's campaign against the planning and architectural professions than the apparent implications of the Paternoster Square development for the setting of St. Paul's and the City skyline.

[11] Of the four cases examined, the Mansion House controversy is the only one to have so far received substantive attention from scholars: see for example Victoria Wilson, 'Circling the Square: Mies van der Rohe and James Stirling', *arq.urb*, 20 (September-December 2017), pp. 170-198; Michela Rosso, 'Heritage, populism and anti-modernism in the controversy of the Mansion House Square scheme', in Ákos Moravánszky and Torsten Lange (editors), *Re-Framing Identities: Architecture's Turn to History, 1970-1990* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017), pp. 227-243.

Few developments, I would contend, were more revealing than these four projects taken together as to the state of architectural debate during this period, whether concerning the turn away from 'International Style' modernism (even when its most celebrated exponent was involved), the equivocal response to postmodernism, the polarised reactions to high tech or the heated arguments around the revival of classicism. One might also look back in time and see the discourse around the City projects as both bringing together and sharpening the focus on already established strands of architectural debate. These include the validity of Modern Movement principles in urban planning and building design, accepted almost without question in the post-war years but vigorously challenged by the 1970s; the relative weight to be attached to the preservation of historic fabric as against new development; the balance between competing uses (commercial, residential and wider public realm) in the planning and management of urban space; public participation in planning decisions; the role and image of the property development industry; the acceptability or otherwise of high-rise buildings in the centre of London and other major cities; and the protection of the capital's skyline best known monument and revered national icon, St. Paul's Cathedral.

That apart, what seems most to distinguish the response to the City's new buildings is the very fact of their location in the City. Permeating the discourse as a whole is a palpable awareness that these were projects whose significance arose in large part from their setting in a clearly defined part of London which remained distinctive in its function, character and, crucially, history and which was once again in the process of renewing itself. That awareness is very much in evidence in the various connections noted between the City projects and the contemporary financial and political context. But it shows too, I would suggest, in the attention devoted by commentators to the City's long historical evolution, its enduring *genius loci* and accumulated memory. The most obvious example is Paternoster Square, the discourse concerning which embraces almost the entire span of that area's history. Yet it can also be discerned in, for example, references to the strategic importance of the Mansion House site within the City street layout and the attention given to it in past plans; in the discussion of Broadgate's relationship with the very different

inner urban areas adjacent to it; and in the reaction to the decision of the three hundred-year old Lloyd's to embrace the language of high tech. However individual and innovative these four projects may have seemed, they were all in one sense or another read as engaged with the locale in which they were set. The City of London – its singular character, purpose, history and way of life – remains an inescapable presence.

As indicated in the introduction, this thesis rests on analysis of a body of architectural discourse which is richly varied in the form it takes and the context within which it is set. Indeed the evidence presented by the four case-studies has left little doubt as to the breadth and diversity of the commentary attaching to a high-profile building project in the period concerned, and particularly one located in the heart of the capital. The material involved has been substantial in volume and diverse in nature, extending across specialist professional and technical publications, academic journals and monographs, literature on the UK's political, financial, social and cultural history and the columns (on occasion the front page) of daily newspapers and weekly magazines. The content has reflected a mixture of expert and lay opinion. The most substantive contributions have come from those with a clearly developed interest and expertise in the field of architecture and urbanism. But non-specialist participants of various kinds have also featured, bringing the perspective of their particular background and interests, whether involving their own academic discipline (such as financial history or social geography), their commercial interests or their political convictions. There has been a place too for the voice – or at least the claimed voice - of the 'man in the street', whether in the form of the public response to consultations and opinion surveys or, more controversially, the opinions of Price Charles (a topic explored in depth in the Paternoster Square context).

The nature of the writing involved has shown considerable variation, ranging from unadorned descriptive material through considered critical evaluation and historical analysis to uncompromising polemic. Discussion of purely aesthetic qualities has been countered by attention to more prosaic operational considerations. Discernible

too has been a distinctiveness in the character of the discourse surrounding each of the case studies. In the case of Paternoster Square, for example, awareness of history is an especially salient feature. With Broadgate there is a strong emphasis on commercial property and urban planning issues, while the Lloyd's building involves considerable attention to constructional and operational matters. The Mansion House discourse stands out for its polemical (and politically oriented) character.

This last topic suggests one possible avenue for further research. A follow-up project might involve undertaking a more comprehensive exploration of the development of architectural discourse in Britain over the course of the last, say, fifty years. Resting on a substantially broader research base than the specific case studies examined here, such a project might consider, among other matters, the range of contributors taking part in architectural discourse, the constituencies represented and the inter-connections involved; the nature of the projects and issues provoking debate and controversy; the relationship with other areas of public discourse (such as globalisation, climate change); the different genres of writing involved and the impact of contemporary literary, cultural and political influences; and the arenas within which discourse takes place, and in particular the transformed media environment in the internet age. A specific aim of the research might be to map the changing character and role of the architectural press over the course of the last forty years and to examine the factors involved in this process. For example, a cursory comparison of recent *Architectural Review* issues with those of forty years earlier suggests the extent to which interest in architectural history and theory appears to have given way to a near-exclusive concern with specific contemporary projects.

However, a more immediate sequel to this thesis would be to extend its scope forward in time to encompass major projects undertaken in the City of London since the turn of the millennium. It may be worth outlining this option in a little more detail, given that it involves the further development of themes that have emerged

in the course of the present study. Though the focus here has been on the final two decades of the last century, the City's built form did not cease thereafter to arouse interest and provoke controversy. At the centre of more recent debate has been a theme encountered in this study in relation to the Lloyd's project: the large-scale building of distinctive appearance, consciously designed as a readily identifiable 'brand image' or 'statement building' and promptly attracting the label 'iconic'. This phenomenon is not peculiar to London - indeed examples can be found in cities throughout the world - and has already been the subject of scholarly attention at a global level.[12] Nonetheless there is a case for exploring the theme in the specific context of London in relation to the cluster of high-rise office towers that began to take shape in the eastern sector of the UK capital's financial district during the first years of the new century. Commencing with the Norman Foster-designed development currently designated '30 St. Mary Axe' but universally dubbed the 'Gherkin', the tower-building process has continued up to the present day and has produced the substantial concentration in the area around Bishopsgate that now dominates views of the City from all directions (figure 6.1). Other examples have appeared on the periphery, especially the Thames south bank, site of the UK's tallest building, the 'Shard'.

The impact of these developments on the character of the City and above all on its skyline (not a new preoccupation, as this study has shown) has been extensively discussed by commentators, specialist and lay.[13] It is a debate prefigured in the

[12] See for example Deyan Sudjic*, The Edifice Complex* (London: Allen Lane, 2005); Anna Klingmann, *Brandscapes: Architecture in the Experience Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), especially pp. 265-268; Murray Fraser with Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the 'Special Relationship': The American Influence on Post-war British Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 467-470; Leslie Sklair, *The Icon Project: Architecture, Cities, and Capitalist Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Andrea Glauser, *Vertical Europe: The Sociology of High-rise Construction* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2019).

[13] Relevant literature includes – in addition to the studies cited in the previous footnote - official publications, notably *Interim Strategic Planning Guidance on Tall Buildings, Strategic Views and the Skyline in London* (Greater London Authority, 2001) and *Tall Buildings in the City of London* (Corporation of London, 2015); and academic studies such as Igal Charney, 'The politics of design: architecture, tall buildings and the skyline of central London', *Area*, 39/2 (June 2007), pp. 195-205; Maria Kaika, 'Architecture and crisis: Re-inventing the icon, re-imag(in)ing London and re-branding the City', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* New Series, 35.4 (2010), pp. 453-474; and Rowland Atkinson, *Alpha City*: *How the Super-Rich Captured London* (London: Verso, 2020), pp.

case studies examined in this thesis, especially the Mies Mansion House project (which would have been dwarfed by the later generation of towers) but its history extends back still further to the concerns of the 1930s about the encroachment of high buildings on views of St. Paul's.. Yet much interest has focussed too on the meaning and imagery attaching to these buildings in the context of twenty-first century London and the UK. Various factors are involved: the height of the buildings, their distinctive individual profiles, the involvement of global 'starchitect' practitioners and the application, at first irreverently by the media but later by developers as a marketing tool, of sobriquets such as 'gherkin', 'cheesegrater' and 'scalpel'.

6.1 The City and the Thames south bank, 2021. (Source: author's photograph.)

The vision of a City skyline determined no longer by the dome of St. Paul's and an array of church steeples but by a group of distinctively shaped towers has become central to the promotion of London as a 'world city', a notion based principally on the capital's status as a, if not *the*, global finance centre but one also increasingly reflective of it role in other spheres, especially digital technology and the 'knowledge economy'. The basic theme was actively promoted within the City itself in a context

20-21. The subject has continued to receive exhaustive coverage in both general and specialist media.

where the still expanding development at Canary Wharf continued to represent a threat to the primacy of the Square Mile. But it also quickly acquired a political dimension, as the case for building high in the City was taken up by London's first elected Mayor, Ken Livingstone, a figure on the political left, and then by his Conservative successor, Boris Johnson. It resonated too with the New Labour government of Tony Blair. The widely held view was that the global standing of the contemporary City should be both proclaimed and further enhanced by way of its built form, comparison being made with the towers dominating the business districts of cities in North America, the Gulf and East Asia. While the message may have been directed principally at transnational business and political elites, it has proved relevant for a wider audience, the 'Gherkin' and 'Shard' now featuring in tourist literature as a prominent feature of London's iconography. Conversely, for anti-globalists the association with international capital and global elites has been a cause of alienation from the City's new buildings and skyline. The cluster of high towers is thus regularly invoked as a ready image for the 2008 banking crisis (a key event in relation to this discourse comparable with Big Bang in the context of the present study) and for the capital's role as a centre of international money laundering and (particularly at the time of writing) a haven for Russian 'kleptocracy'.

The controversy surrounding the proliferation of high towers represents a further instalment in an ongoing debate about the City of London's buildings and spaces and as such it would seem to invite substantive analysis on broadly the lines adopted in this study, in other words with a focus on the discourse generated. In the meantime it can be said with some confidence at the conclusion of this thesis that the built environment of the City, now dominated by a display of high towers scarcely imaginable forty years previously, is still the focus of attention and argument up to and including the present time no less than it was in the age of Big Bang. It will almost certainly remain so – and continue to generate a rich resource for researchers to explore - for the foreseeable future.

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