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Public and Private Space in Canaletto's London.

An Examination of the Artist's Depiction of the City and its Gardens

1745-1756.

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M.A Thesis
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Submitted 2000



19 APR 2002

Public and Private Space in Canaletto's London:
An Examination of the Artist's Depiction of the City and its Gardens
1745-1756.

Ferne Hudson

A study of the dimensions of public and private space in London; developing the concept that Canaletto may have consciously painted London as a civic ideal and a city of imperial proportions. The translation of the civic ideal into the private sphere of the beholder through humanist discourse is also explored. This depiction of the civic ideal is then contrasted to literary texts concerning London; ranging from satires to contemporary guidebooks, from the theoretical urban planning of Gwynn and Ralph to the works of Gay and Fielding. The contrast of the idea of private vice against public good reveals that what is not painted becomes as important as what is, for it in itself constitutes the private realm. The final chapter deals with Canaletto's depiction of St. James's Park and the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Ranelagh. The public nature of the gardens and the dimensions of display, spectatorship and spectacle are also examined.

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Introduction

An Introduction to Canaletto

Canaletto was born on the 28th October 1697 into the noble family of Da Canal and died on the 19th April 1768. He went by the names of Canale, da Canal, Canaletto and more commonly Canaletto. In his youth Canaletto trained under his father Bernado as a painter of theatrical scenery, a training most evident in his early years as a painter. It was written by Zanetti, an Italian biographer, that in 1719 Canaletto 'solemnly excommunicated' the theatre.¹ However this is not strictly true as in 1720 Canaletto travelled to Rome to design scenery for two operas by Scarlatti: Tito Sempronico Greco and Turno Aricino.²

It has been suggested that Canaletto was a pupil of Luca Carlevaris (1663-1730)³; there is little evidence to support this, although it is possible that they may have met and Carlevaris's influence is certainly discernible in Canaletto's early work. Since both were 'vedute' painters their work was destined to be compared. In July 1725, the painter Alessandro Marchesini wrote to the patron Stefano Conti,⁴ who wished to add to his collection of paintings by Carlevaris, and advised that the work of Canaletto was similar to Carlevaris but its superior for 'you can see the sun shining in it.'⁵

There are no paintings known to have been produced before 1720. In 1723 Canaletto had a minor role in Owen McSwiney's⁶ scheme to create a series of allegorical tombs to celebrate famous Whig monarchs, clerics and leaders.⁷ The project involved artists such as Pittoni, Piazzetta and Cimaroli.

¹ Zanetti, Descrizione di tutte le publiche pitture (1733) Quoted from F.J.B Watson, Canaletto (London, 1949) p.6

² W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto Vol. 1 (London, 1976) p.9

³ This was a claim made by the Abbé Gian Antonio Moschi in the nineteenth century. Michael Levey, Painting in Eighteenth Century Venice (London, 1980) p.108

⁴ J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1982) p.16 In 1735 and 1726 Conti bought two pairs of Venetian views by Canaletto.

⁵ Translation taken from Lionello Puppi, The Complete Paintings of Canaletto (London, 1970) p.8

⁶ Owen McSwiney was Canaletto's first major patron. He had been manager of the Queen's Theatre in Haymarket until he bankrupted himself and later fled to the continent in 1711. He was an acquaintance of Canaletto's second and most influential patron Joseph Smith who emerged as Canaletto's main patron in the early 1730s either after or before McSwiney left Italy in 1733.

⁷ Ten of which at least were bought by the second Duke of Richmond. It was Owen McSwiney's connection with the Duke of Richmond which later helped Canaletto receive his commission to paint the two views from the Duke's London home.

Canaletto painted the landscape for The Tomb of Lord Somers⁸ completed in 1722 - one of the first of Canaletto's paintings to reach London.

Throughout the 1720s and 1730s, first with the aid of Owen McSwiney, and later to a greater extent through the connections of Joseph Smith, Canaletto proved to be very popular amongst the English nobility. During the 1730s Canaletto produced, amongst other work: twenty four views for the Duke of Bedford, twenty two for George Grenville, seventeen for the Earl of Carlisle, four for the fourth Duke of Leeds and six for the Countess of Essex. His work became emblematic of the Grand Tour and was sought after by both those who visited Venice and those who wished to acquire views of Venice without actually going there.

Canaletto's paintings were made prominent through such large-scale sales but were also advertised through the engraving of fourteen paintings in a collection organised by Joseph Smith and executed by Visentini entitled the Prospectus Magni Canalis Venetiarum.⁹ The collection, enlarged in 1742 and again republished in 1751, served to advertise Canaletto's skill in a most accessible format.

This pattern of large-scale sales concentrated on the interests and aspirations of the 'Grand Tourist' market was to be severely undermined by the Austrian War of Succession. Fighting which had begun in 1741, spread to Italy by 1742 and the tourist market fell away. The massive decline in demand explains why Canaletto, with the exception of the Piazzetta series in 1743, produced few views of Venice after 1740. Between 1740 and 1741 Canaletto travelled around the areas of the Brenta Canal and Padua with his nephew Bellotto, producing a series of drawings and some thirty etchings. His output between 1740 and his visit to England in 1746 was both varied and distinct from the work which had typified that which served the English market. Canaletto's work in this period ranged from scenes of the Dolo, Mestre, the Venice Lagoon, to a series of capriccios and a scheme of thirteen overdoors for Joseph Smith, executed in 1744, depicting Palladian architecture.¹⁰

⁸ See Print 1

⁹ See Print 2 for detail of a portrait of Canaletto by Antonio Visentini for the Prospectus

¹⁰ The most comprehensive catalogue of Canaletto's paintings, engravings and drawings may be found in W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1976) Vol. II

Due to the existence of pictures of ancient and contemporary Rome produced during this period (1741-4)¹¹ there is debate as to whether Canaletto visited the city in 1742 or whether he based the series on existing pictures that he produced during his visit in the 1720s. Teriso Pignatti believes that it quite plausible that he made such a journey but most, including eminent historians such as J.G Links, believe that it is unlikely as no contemporary record of such a visit exists.

The lack of demand for Canaletto's work caused by the War of Austrian Succession, which may explain Smith's commission of 1744, is the most probable reason for the artist's decision to come to London in 1746. There was already an established tradition of Italian artists, mainly history and decorative painters, gaining noble patronage in England: Pellegrini (who worked chiefly for Lord Carlisle 1708-1713), Sebastiano Ricci (Duke of Portland and Lord Burlington 1712-16), Marco Ricci (Lord Carlisle 1708-1712) and Giovanni Battista Bellucci (Duke of Chandos 1716-1722). However with the exception of the scenery painter Antonio Joli and Francesco Zuccarelli (1752-62 and 1765-71) Canaletto was one of the later Italian artists to come and work in England.

Canaletto's probable reasons for coming to England were noted in detail at the time by the engraver George Vertue.¹² Vertue forwarded several possibilities such as the advice of Amiconi, the War of Succession, his popularity in England and investment in the stock market as reasons for Canaletto's arrival. However another prime reason, not mentioned by Vertue, may have been the building of Westminster Bridge and its potential for popular subject matter.

Canaletto arrived in England in 1746 and during his stay produced around fifty paintings and thirty drawings, but did not achieve the standing and success that had marked his earlier career. During his time in England Canaletto also painted outside of London turning to the country house portrait; painting Warwick Castle, Badminton House, Alnwick Castle, Syon House and Windsor Castle.¹³

¹¹ There are a set of five Roman views at Windsor dated 1742

¹² See Appendix One. George Vertue's Note of October 1746

¹³ See Print 3 for Alnwick Castle (c.1751-2) and Print 4 for Warwick Castle: the East Front from the Outer Court (1752). It is unclear whether or not Canaletto actually travelled up to Alnwick. In his article 'Canaletto in England' Journal of the Royal Society of Arts (1981) J.G Links states his belief that it is very unlikely that he did so and argues that it is much more likely that Canaletto made the painting from an existing engraving although admits that he has not found one that fits. This is a view also supported by Oliver Millar who believes that the picture's 'theatrical touch' suggests that it was painted from another depiction rather than on the spot. 'Canaletto' Burlington Magazine (Vol. 124,1982) pp.652-656. It is equally unlikely that Canaletto painted the view of Windsor, as claimed on the verso, from the window of 'the small cottage next to Mr. Crowle's garden'. Indeed Links believes that more likely Canaletto was studio bound and used the work of a local artist. 'Antonio Canaletto' Apollo (Vol.116, 1982) pp.189-190

From the 1750s onwards Canaletto's career becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate. It becomes difficult to tell which pictures, especially in the case of capriccios, were painted in England and which in Venice. It is known that Canaletto returned to Venice late in the year 1750 and, possibly as no fresh commissions presented themselves in Venice, came back to England at some point before July 1751. This is supported by the fact that Canaletto advertised his painting Chelsea College with Ranelagh House and the Rotunda¹⁴ in the Daily Advertiser on July 31st.¹⁵ In August 1751 George Vertue noted that the artist had been in Venice for eight months¹⁶ and had recently returned, thus if this statement is true then Canaletto left London no later than November 1750.

The Venetian, Pietro Gradenigo, noted in his diary in July 1753 that Canaletto had returned to Venice but his presence in England between 1753 and 1755 is well recorded.¹⁷ A second return to Venice is possible but unlikely as he was painting for Thomas Hollis from 1753 to 1754. It is believed that Canaletto finally returned to Italy in 1755. On his return to Venice, Canaletto continued to paint and in 1756 was finally elected to the Venetian Academy. In what is his last recorded composition S. Marco: the Crossing and North Transept, with Musicians Singing (1766), Canaletto took pride in the fact that it was executed 'cenzza ochiali' - without glasses.¹⁸ Canaletto died in 1768 with moderate possessions.

Problems of Dating

Whilst it is possible to give a brief summary of Canaletto's career, it is less easy to accurately date all of his pictures. Thus some of the paintings and drawings cited in this thesis cannot be ascribed to a precise date. It is possible on occasion to estimate a date from existent drawings and engravings but this is problematic as it is also known that Canaletto sometimes based paintings on engravings and drawings, rather than vice versa. The Latin 'pinxit' was used loosely on engravings and can not be taken to signify the definite existence of a painting.¹⁹ It is also difficult to use topography to estimate the date of a picture as Canaletto often used sketches from the past on which to base new paintings which to further complicate the issue sometimes led to less than accurate architectural observations. The large number of contemporary imitators of Canaletto, the debate over whether Canaletto in fact

¹⁴ See Print 5 for a photograph of the right half of the picture. (Blickling Hall, National Trust)

¹⁵ See Appendix Six – Vertue's Final Note August 1751

¹⁶ See Appendix Six – Vertue's Final Note August 1751

¹⁷ J.G Links and Katherine Baetjer, Canaletto (New York, 1989) p.12

¹⁸ J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1994) p.234

had a studio of helpers, and the closeness in style of his nephew Bellotto have all added to the difficulty in establishing the validity of certain paintings. This in turn has led to some pictures being wrongly attributed in the past, such as an oil painting of the Royal Exchange erroneously attributed to Canaletto. The most detailed catalogue with a full provenance for each drawing, engraving and painting is provided in Canaletto Volume II by W.G Constable and J.G Links.

Lack of primary material

Beyond the paintings themselves little contemporary evidence directly relating to Canaletto remains. The artist did not marry or have any children, there are no known existing letters written by Canaletto and certainly little written by Canaletto's own hand exists. The few exceptions are annotations written on the verso of several paintings and in his sketchbooks on colouring, a document describing a picture for his early patron Stefano Conti, and a receipt to Lord Brooke for ten guineas for a south front view of Warwick Castle. It is also peculiar that in an age in which there was much debate on the concepts of taste and connoisseurship, with many books devoted to the subject of the appreciation of the arts and artists, that there were no biographies in the eighteenth century entirely devoted to Canaletto. There are brief mentions of Canaletto in the more general Italian collected biographies which proliferated at this time,²⁰ but he is not covered extensively. It is known that Canaletto sent Mariette details of his genealogy when the latter was compiling his Abecedario, and yet only a single page was written about him.²¹ The lack of contemporary literary interest in Canaletto is perhaps symbolised by the fact he was not included in Alessandro Longhi's Compendio, which detailed contemporary Venetian artists and was published in 1762 - a year before Canaletto's eventual acceptance into the Venetian Academy.²²

Indeed Nicholas Ross noted that despite Canaletto's vast artistic output, 300 paintings and 500 drawings and engravings, the man behind the artist remains an enigma. 'In any pursuit of Canaletto the individual,' Ross states, 'we are left clutching at straws.'²³ However as an artist Canaletto came to almost single handedly embody the essence of the Grand Tour and as such achieved eminence in

¹⁹ W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto Vol. II (London, 1976) p.x

²⁰ Zanetti, Orlandi and Marietti were the earliest Italian writers to include Canaletto in their collected biographies.

²¹ J.G Links, Canaletto and his Patrons (London, 1977) p.8

²² Michael Levey, Painting in Eighteenth Century Venice (London, 1980) p.95

²³ Nicholas Ross, Canaletto (London, 1993) p.5

Although, on a lighter note, it might be apt to add that Canaletto and the Case of Westminster Bridge by Janet Laurence, a novel with Canaletto as the lead character, was published in 1998.

his own time. It is perhaps only the contrast of the prolific nature of his work that makes the lack of surviving contemporary interest so surprising, although the lack of academic interest in 'modern' art was an issue raised by English artists contemporaneous to Canaletto.

Much of the contemporary evidence seems to point to Canaletto's rather unscrupulous and avaricious nature with his habit of constantly changing the price and the likelihood of long delays in the production of the work. In a rather over-used quotation Owen McSwiney wrote to John Conduitt on the 27th September 1727: 'He is a covetous, greedy fellow and because he's in reputation people are glad to get anything at his own price.'²⁴ The letter later continues 'Tis above Three years yt. He has Two copper plates²⁵ in his hands, for ye Duke of Richmond & I thought it wrong to sett him at work on new work till he had delivered wt he has been obliged to do long since.'²⁶ It was clearly in the interest of men such as Owen McSwiney and Joseph Smith to portray Canaletto as being as awkward as possible²⁷ in order to validate their own positions. However the impression of Canaletto as a rather unattractive character is not helped by the Swedish patron Count Tessin's description of the artist after a visit to Venice in 1736, as 'pretentious, avaricious and a swindler'.²⁸

Canaletto's period in London is recorded through the sporadic but invaluable notes of the engraver George Vertue.²⁹ As a result he also merits a mention, albeit brief and erroneous, in Horace Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting* published in the late eighteenth century from earlier notes made by Vertue. 'The well-known painter of views of Venice came to England in 1746, when he was about the age of fifty, by the persuasion of his fellow countryman Amiconi³⁰, and encouraged by the multitudes of pictures that he had sold or sent over to the English. He was then in good circumstances, and it was said came over to vest his money in our stocks. I think he did not stay here above two years. I have a perspective by him of the inside of King's College Chapel.'³¹

²⁴ Quotation taken from J.G Links, 'Buon Gusto' *Apollo* Vol.113 (1981) p.84

²⁵ The two copper plates which are still at Goodwood are often supposed to be those sent in 1727. However both Homan Potterton and Viola Pemberton Piggott believe that stylistically they probably post-date 1730 and are probably the pair sent at a later date. Homan Potterton, 'Canaletto' *Burlington Magazine* Vol.1 (1990) pp.63-64

²⁶ *ibid.* J.G Links p.84

²⁷ See Appendix Four Section of the Letter to 2nd Duke of Richmond from Owen McSwiney 28th November 1727

²⁸ Teriso Pignati, *Canaletto* (New York, 1979) p.17

²⁹ All of George Vertue's entries concerning Canaletto may be found in Hilda Finberg, *Canaletto in England* (The Walpole Society, 1920-1921) Vol.9 (Oxford, 1921)

³⁰ Jacopo Amiconi (or Amigoni) an Italian decorative artist in England 1729-1739

³¹ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting* Collected by George Vertue, digested and published from MSS by H.W (1781) p.139

Canaletto's time in London can not be said to have been an unqualified success. He spent almost a quarter of his working life in England and produced much less than a quarter of his working output. Obviously artistic merit cannot be measured numerically, but it has also been seen that his time in England was recognised by contemporaries as one of stylistic decline. It has been argued that a change in climate and country failed to inject a renewed sense of poetry into his work. Indeed Oliver Millar has gone as far as to argue that 'there is no really important English composition.'³²

Yet even if this were true, in terms of providing a historical record of London's changing urban landscape Canaletto's work is of immense importance. His work provides an unrivalled narrative of London in the eighteenth century and is the basis on which one can analyse the dimensions of political topography and the concept of public and private space within the framework of what is, and also *what is not* depicted.

The earliest historical analysis of Canaletto's work in England, Hilda Finberg's Canaletto in England, published in the 1920s by the Walpole Society, has been followed by a multitude of studies of which those by J.G Links stand apart. This study owes most to The Birmingham Gas Hall exhibition catalogue 'Canaletto and England' and in particular to Mark Hallett. In his article 'Framing the Modern City'³³ Hallett has sought to move away from the framework of traditional art historical narrative which has in the past hidebound the author almost in totality to the topics covered briefly here in the introduction. Much past literature has been focused on the chronology of Canaletto's life, the relationship between Canaletto and Joseph Smith³⁴ and stylistic analysis (such as painterly technique, the extent to which Canaletto used a camera ottica,³⁵ and the issue of whether

³² Oliver Millar, 'Canaletto' Burlington Magazine (Vol.124,1982) pp.652-656

³³ ed. M.Liversidge and J. Farrington, Canaletto and England (London,1993)

³⁴ Joseph Smith was a great patron of the arts and was made Consul of Venice in 1744. He possessed the most extensive collection of contemporary Venetian art. He was a major influence on Canaletto and took over from Owen McSwiney in mediating between the artist and the English nobility. Debate has often focused on Smith's potential exploitation of Canaletto and some hold him responsible for the increasingly mechanical style of Canaletto's work. J.G Links argues that Canaletto's early work such as the Piazza S.Marco looking East c.1723 provides a 'foretaste of the Canaletto that might have been had Smith not later moulded him to the English taste.' J.G Links, 'Antonio Canaletto' Apollo (Vol.116, 1982) pp.189-190. Horace Walpole who rather acerbically called Smith the 'merchant of Venice' claimed that Smith had paid Canaletto at a very low price for years selling his work for a much higher rate to the English, and claims were made that Canaletto was exclusively bound over to Smith for four years. However the longevity of their relationship suggests an amicable and loyal relationship.

³⁵ Also known as the camera obscura - an instrument akin to the pin hole camera. Light travelled through a lens and the inverted image was projected onto glass at the back of the box. This image when viewed in the dark (or with a covering over) could be traced and then amended later. Much debate exists around the issue of the whether or not Canaletto used a camera ottica to aid him. For example, Michael Levey believed that steep perspectives were a distortion caused by the camera ottica which was not corrected by Canaletto Paintings in Eighteenth Century Venice (London, 1980) p.97, whilst J.G Links believed that this foreshortening of viewpoints was probably a 'calculated distortion to heighten the dramatic effect.' J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1994) p.43 A view mirrored by Gregory Martin's belief that to range buildings in sharp perspective was a skill learnt as a stage painter in order to give the illusion of depth. Gregory Martin, Canaletto: Paintings, Drawings and Etchings (London, 1967) p.1 Indeed Links later argued that as the camera ottica reproduced merely what was seen by the

Canaletto was aided by studio of assistants). Clearly stylistic analysis and a sense of chronology are necessary in order to place Canaletto's visit to London in perspective in terms of his previous achievements and artistic development. They provide a framework over which may be hung the ideological and cultural agendas of a modernist approach to art history. This study seeks to build upon both the theories forwarded by Mark Hallett and the topographical studies of historians such as John Hayes and Hugh Phillips, by examining the dimensions of public and private space within Canaletto's London compositions. Rather than concentrating on Canaletto's work either chronologically or indeed analysing his work picture by picture, we instead concentrate on the themes of private and public space, civic humanism, display and spectatorship and the role of the beholder.

Style

The usual and well-substantiated criticism of Canaletto's style is that his early original, dramatic, theatrical style³⁶, characterised by its atmospheric colouring and broad brush strokes and usually credited to the fact that he was 'educated in the spirit of illusionist back-cloths'³⁷, hardened into a lighter and more crystalline formulaic pattern. It is most likely that stylistic changes, and the resultant more mechanical paintings, may be attributed to his almost 'mass output' for English Grand Tourists between the years 1730 and 1740.³⁸ Canaletto's paintings also developed from large upright compositions to lower horizontal canvases but they remained related in terms of composition to the 'geometrical constructions' of his earlier works.³⁹ Over time his choice of under-paint became lighter and more uniform, quite removed from the dark red-brown or yellow-brown pigments of the 1720s.⁴⁰ This technique of painting a uniform pale grey or beige layer over a lighter preparation lent an opalescent quality to his work. Canaletto also tended to paint in a more liquid fashion with broad flat brush strokes moving away from the impasto of his youth in which he had actually etched in detail. In contrast to his later fluid style, in his earlier paintings Canaletto had used layers of paint to denote creases and folds in the clothing of his staffage and to give the impression of the third dimension in

human eye there were no 'errors' to be corrected. Thus it is impossible to discern how much the camera ottica was used in his work. It is clear as Nick Ross notes that he did use other mechanical aids in the form of a ruler and compass (evident from pinpricks in the canvas). However it is unlikely that Canaletto used the camera ottica or even painted anywhere apart from in the studio on his larger works due to the logistics of having to wield a large easel, the instrument itself and bladders of oils - despite even Canaletto's own claims written on the verso of certain paintings that they were painted on the spot.

³⁶ For example Grand Canal: Looking North from near the Rialto Bridge (1725)

³⁷ Eduard Safarik, Canaletto's View of London (London, 1961) p.2

³⁸ Michael Levey wrote rather descriptively that 'The tourist and the foreigner wanted an exact record of the city, and Canaletto can be seen actively tidying it up in the interest of topography, making it all as clean and neat as a town embedded in a glass paperweight: and as hard, clear and miniature - and distant.' Canaletto Paintings in the Royal Collection (London, 1964) p.11

³⁹ John Hayes, 'Parliament Street and Canaletto's views of Whitehall' Burlington Magazine (1958) p.346

his representation of architecture. Indeed Canaletto sought to replicate the differing architectural textures through his brushwork techniques, for example by representing stuccowork through raised speckles of paint.

As F.J.B Watson noted 'It is customary to account for the change of Canaletto's earlier broad style to his late manner as the result of his visit to England, whose cold northern skies and unfamiliar pastoral landscape are supposed in some way to have frozen his talent.'⁴¹ However F.J.B Watson, J.G Links and other art historians have convincingly argued that his style had become mannered and rather calligraphic before the 1740s. It was merely that the English were unacquainted with his work of this period as the outbreak of war in 1741 had disrupted the market. This, and the fact that Bellotto also went by the name of Canaletto, may explain the rumours that were rife when Canaletto arrived in England that he was in fact an impostor.⁴² W.G Constable believed that by 1735, Canaletto had reached 'full maturity' as a topographer and had already produced much of his best work,⁴³ indeed The Stone Mason's Yard⁴⁴ which is displayed in the National Gallery is cited by many, including Constable, as a masterpiece.

Variations in the quality of Canaletto's work have often been cited as evidence of outside help. It is unclear as to whether he had a studio of assistants, but it is likely that due to the great demand for his work at times he probably had helpers, possibly in the form of his father or more probably his nephew Bellotto.⁴⁵ The difficulties of determining exact dates for all of Canaletto's work also causes difficulties in the analysis of his painterly technique. K.T Parker put forward the possibility that he painted in several styles at once; this is most unlikely but illustrates the fact that in reality it is highly difficult to set exact perimeters within which one can separate one artistic period from another.

⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the analysis of paint pigment has revealed that Canaletto used Prussian Blue a synthetic pigment developed in the early eighteenth century but not known to be used by any other artist of the time. J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1994) p.44

⁴¹ F.J.B Watson, Canaletto (London, 1949) p.11

⁴² See Appendices Two and Three George Vertue's notes of June and July 1749. It was also suggested by the artist Edward Dayes that this rumour was spread about by hack copyists who were disadvantaged by the artist's appearance in London. Edward Wedlake Brayley The works of the late Edward Dayes (London, 1805) See K. Baetjer and J.G Links, Canaletto (New York, 1989) p.24

⁴³ W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto Vol. I (London,1962) p.116

⁴⁴ See Print 6

⁴⁵ Either of them could be the 'particular friend' cited in the letter from Owen McSwiney to the Duke of Richmond 28th November 1727 (Appendix Four)

More specifically the quality of his staffage also deteriorated over time and his figures were often re-workings of an established and well-worn pattern. W.G Constable argued that ‘ the fairly large, firmly constructed, well-characterised figures, which appear in many earlier pictures are replaced by smaller ones, well enough drawn and sufficiently expressive in action, but mainly types resulting from skilfully used recipes, in which dots and dashes again supply the lights.’⁴⁶ Not only is this true but it may also be seen that his later pictures are less peopled than in his earlier Venetian work.⁴⁷ This has instant ramifications if one uses Canaletto’s pictures of eighteenth century England as the historical basis for social comment and evaluation. However Canaletto’s general lack of imaginative flair and expression in his staffage may bode well for the accuracy in his representation of the more solid surroundings. Indeed E. Martini’s rather scornful statement ‘There is no agony in his pictures,’ but only ‘exact, sure, almost mechanical craftsmanship’⁴⁸ perhaps should be of some comfort to the historian.

It is Canaletto’s reputation for accuracy, ‘Flemish prosaicism’⁴⁹, and for possessing almost ‘molecular vision’⁵⁰ that provides historians with a vital albeit flawed pictorial record of London. It is in part due to the perceived detachment of Canaletto’s style, and a limited trust in the belief that Canaletto transformed reality ‘from a phenomenon of the moment into an everlasting and changeless event of consciousness’⁵¹ that his work continues to be seen as a sound foundation for historical analysis. And yet this study seeks not to accept the belief in the ‘mechanical nature’ or ‘detachment’ of his style, nor indeed in the ‘ossification’ of his painterly technique, but proposes that Canaletto’s paintings were indeed a *conscious* attempt to depict London as a serene imperial city and a civic ideal. A notion possibly fully understood by an artist who had painted under the supervision of Joseph Smith, a patron who had close relations with the English nobility and political connections with the Dukes of Richmond and Newcastle.

⁴⁶ W.G Constable and J.G. Links, Canaletto Vol. I (London, 1962) p.117 See Appendix Two George Vertue’s Note of June 1749

⁴⁷ Although again there is evidence of this stylistic deterioration prior to his stay in England. J.G Links argues in ‘Canaletto. Buon Gusto’ Apollo (Vol. 113 1981) pp.82-89 that paintings such as A Regatta on the Grand Canal and The Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day represent the peak of his career (1732-1735) whilst by the time of the two Piazzetta paintings (1743-4) the staffage have become ‘puppets’.

⁴⁸ E. Martini, La Pittura Venezia del Settecento (1964) quoted from Lionello Puppi , The Complete Paintings of Canaletto (London, 1970) p.13

⁴⁹ M. Levey, Eighteenth Century Venice (London, 1980) p.130

⁵⁰ James Gardner, ‘Molecular Vision: Canaletto at the Metropolitan Museum’ Art Magazine 1990 (Vol. 64) pp.57-59

⁵¹ P. Zampetti, I Vedutisti Veneziani del Settecento (1967) taken from Lionello Puppi, The Complete Paintings of Canaletto (London, 1970) p.14.

Definition of London

The title of this study uses London as a generic term to include areas such as Chelsea and Westminster. It was only by Act of Parliament in 1899 that the term London technically included 'outlying' areas such as Westminster, Hackney, Lambeth, Rotherhithe and Stepney.

Reproductions

Prints from slides, photographs and reproductions from the Internet (referenced in the footnotes) of many of the paintings, drawings and engravings mentioned in this thesis are to be found at the back of the volume. Unfortunately due to cost and availability it has not been possible to reproduce all compositions cited.

Chapter One

London as the 'Civic Ideal' and the importance of civic humanism in the translation of public space into the realm of the private.

Canaletto captured a city in flux. He painted London at a time when it was gradually changing from its mediaeval past in terms of paving and lighting and the increase in the number of brick built houses. However the trend for building, and the consolidation of London as a centre for both banking and mercantilism, was juxtaposed against a not yet marginalised medieval topographical network of winding alleys and the focal point of the structurally unsound old London Bridge. The dichotomy between modern and classical was captured by Canaletto's pictures such as The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House (1747)⁵², where the ramshackle south bank with its timber yards and warehouses stands deliberately understated in contrast to the elegant houses and riverside terraces of the nobility.

The physical growth of London caused much concern amongst contemporaries. Sir William Petty warned of catastrophic results in Another Essay in Political Arithmetic Concerning the Growth of the City of London unless London stopped expanding by 1800.⁵³ However the physical growth of London and the development of its modern financial centre were contrasted by the fact that mortality figures still dramatically outstripped the birth rate. In 1751, Corbyn Morris calculated from Parish records in London that between 1688 and 1750 burials outstripped christenings by 506,410.⁵⁴ More recently it has been estimated that between 1730 and 1750 almost three-quarters of children born in London died before they were five years old. Population was kept steady by the constant influx of immigrants from both the countryside and abroad. These trends were set against continuing and not unrelated debates about national deterioration and the infamy of luxury.

In contrast Canaletto's oil paintings of London depict a civic ideal, an almost geometric representation of an elite urban topography. Just as the prospects and panoramas of seventeenth

⁵² See Print 7

⁵³ A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality from 1657-1758 (London, 1759) p.64

⁵⁴ The problems with these statistics were recognised by the authors. The birth to death ratio was distorted by the fact that immigrants, dissenters and Roman Catholics were not included in baptism figures but were likely to be included in burial figures. Cross-Parish burials also distorted local statistics. Thus accurate statistical analysis proves very difficult. *ibid.* p.104

century engravings were ‘essentially manifestations of civic pride’⁵⁵ so Canaletto’s depictions of London should be understood within the same framework of civic idealism. Despite fierce debate centering on Canaletto’s place in determining English topographical tradition⁵⁶, the artist’s work is of major significance. The originality in producing a series of topographical oil paintings which in the main accurately portray London’s topography whilst also appealing to an essentially noble notion of London as a city of imperial proportions cannot be understated.

With the exception of London’s parkland, Canaletto produced a schematic selection of aristocratic urban house portraits, and depictions of well established sites of ecclesiastical and royal importance or elite-backed civic schemes and ceremonies. Thus Canaletto’s paintings of London allow the historian to question the existence of spatial divisions within the cityscape and allow for an examination of the concept of aristocratic urban power. The paintings reveal the existence of a real or perceived moral and immoral topography and the divisions of private and public space linked through the representation of London as a civic ideal and the concept of civic humanism.

The concept of ‘the ideal city’ is best understood as the desire for an enlightened polis ruled by a disinterested elite, the rule of men of virtue removed from corruption and commerce producing an ordered community characterised by harmony and order. Philip Ayres has argued that after 1688 the aristocratic oligarchy assumed for themselves the principles of civil liberty and ‘civic virtue’ thus distinguishing ‘themselves from the more obviously self-indulgent and less self-consciously virtuous aristocracy under Charles II and James II.’⁵⁷ The division between public good and private vice was elaborated upon in Shaftesbury’s Characteristicks.

⁵⁵ Ralph Hyde, Gilded Scenes and Shining Prospects: Panoramic Views of British Towns 1575-1900 (New Haven, 1985) p.11

⁵⁶ Urban scenes date back into the seventeenth century and it was the originator of the topographical tradition Anthony van der Wyngaerde who ‘set the trend for city perspectives’ and ‘long views’ which finally led to the first oil paintings of London. M. Galinou and J. Hayes, London in Paint (London, 1996) pp.6-7 The earliest known oil painting with London as its sole subject London from Southwark, dates from c.1630 and is inscribed with the initials Df B. Malcolm Warner, The Image of London: Views by Travellers and Émigrés 1500-1920 (London, 1987) p.16. Other earlier topographical artists include Wencelaus Hollar (who came to England with the first Earl of Arundel in 1636), Cornelius Bol (died 1666), Thomas Wyck (1616-77) and John Griffier the elder (1652-1718). M. Galinou and J. Hayes, London in Paint (London, 1996) p.71 argues that Canaletto contributed to but did not create the topographical scene in London. However the exhibition catalogue Canaletto and his influence on London artists Guildhall Art Gallery (London, 1965) purports that Canaletto was a major influence. The issue is complicated by the rising prominence of British artists in 1740s such as Joseph Nickolls, Samuel Scott, Marlow and George Lambert. Joseph Nickel’s A view of Charing Cross and Northumberland House (1746) and Richard Wilson’s Westminster Bridge under construction (1744) were painted prior to Canaletto’s arrival and Samuel Scott had also already produced views of Westminster Bridge and of Greenwich Hospital. However Canaletto, stands alone in producing the most extensive and accurate record of London’s urban landscape at this time. Michael Liversidge argues in ‘Canaletto and the English painters’ in Canaletto and England p.104 that ‘to deny Canaletto contributes a transforming and reinvigorating stimulus to this aspect of English painting perversely flies in the face of visual evidence.’ He argues that although topographical works by indigenous artists existed prior to 1746 they were merely ‘pedestrian’.

⁵⁷ Phillip Ayres, Classical Culture and the idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, 1997) p. xiv.

We have found, that to deserve the name of *good* or *virtuous*, a creature must have all his inclinations and affections, his dispositions of mind and temper, suitable, and agreeing with the good of his *kind*, or that of the *system* in which he was included, and which he constitutes a PART. To stand thus well affected, and to have one's affection's *right* and *intire* (sic), not only in respect of one's self, but of society and the publick; This is *rectitude*, *integrity*, or VIRTUE. And to be wanting in any of these or to have their contraries, is *depravity*, *corruption*, and VICE.⁵⁸

The importance attached to civic pride and good urban architecture is fundamentally linked to the belief in the moral function of architecture. Thus the paintings of urban aristocratic residences, civic ceremonies and civic schemes such as the building of Westminster Bridge should be understood in this context. It is necessary to transcribe such sensations into the language of humanism. Geoffrey Scott recognised that the significance of humanist discourse could be undermined by the criticism that it was a theory centred only on metaphors of speech from which no valid inferences could be made. It is true that the words used in humanist terminology are metaphors but Scott argues that they are different from literary conceits for: 'when we speak of a tower 'standing' or 'leaning' or 'rising' ...the words are the simplest and most direct description we can give of our impression. We do not argue to the point of likeness, but, on the contrary, we are first conscious of the fitness of the phrase and only subsequently perceive the element of the metaphor.'⁵⁹

The clarity of depiction and sense of compositional order and balance within Canaletto's work reflect the humanist values of order in civic design. In order to appeal to the aristocratic market, that is the 'civic head', the urban landscape was necessarily depicted as harmonious and in good order, in order to reflect the values of public duty and thus the value of the ruling elite. The humanist association between the state of the people and the condition of the polis has been existent since biblical times and is so engrained into our culture that the image of muddled topography, unless neutralised by the picturesque, suggests a financially or culturally impoverished society. Thus the devastation caused by the Great Fire was used as a political allegory to represent the immorality of regicide. Cornelius Saftleven (1607-1681) painted London in flames, with wild beasts and ruins, and a painting of the execution of Charles I in the foreground.⁶⁰

In contrast Canaletto's work depicts London as a well ordered and 'polite capital.' His work deliberately sanitises the city avoiding its more depraved areas and concentrates on the aristocratic,

⁵⁸ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks* (1758) p.51

⁵⁹ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism* (Mass. 1924) p.160

ecclesiastical and imperial vision. Canaletto imposed upon the realities of London's tangled network of streets and alleys a series of paintings that realign the urban landscape along rational and geometric lines. It was impossible, in terms of academic art at least, to offer an alternative vision due to the perceived moral function of art, but Canaletto rather than being defined purely as a topographer should perhaps be seen as the ultimate humanist artist. Canaletto through his regimented composition symbolises urban order and thus morality: 'as Socrates warned and as the humanists understood, the cities without are built upon the cities within, and their separate moral orders are continuous and alike.'⁶¹

Thus the 'ideal' city and ordered spacious depictions of a gleaming city were more than a portrayal of public space but may be understood as a reflection of the public *itself*. Thus these pictures may be read not just as a celebration of architecture but as a celebration of an enlightened society. The state of the cityscape therefore held deliberate and easily interpreted comment on the populace and subsequently the influence and duties of the elite. The association of architecture with the effectiveness of the elite should perhaps be understood in terms of understanding God as both ultimate ruler and ultimate 'architect' and also through the concept inherent in the philosophies of Joseph Butler (1692-1752) that patterns found in individual systems might reveal the pattern and regularity of creation.⁶² The analogous relationship between virtue, politesse, social order and morality is encompassed by humanism and depicted through Canaletto's schematic depictions of London as a rational and well ordered public space.

The association between order and morality thus may be explained by the fact that we both transcribe ourselves in terms of architecture and also transcribe architecture in terms of ourselves.⁶³ This shared discourse: God as an 'architect', the 'chambers' of our mind or heart, the 'uplifting' spire, or 'swelling of the dome' cements the association of the human condition with the urban landscape – the fundamental reasoning behind civic pride. The link between the townscape and the state of the nation was already established within contemporary literary works, to Swift buildings were 'analogues of

⁶⁰ This picture may be seen in M. Galinou and J. Hayes, London in Paint. Oil Paintings in the Collection of the Museum of London (London, 1996) p.31

⁶¹ Max Byrd, London Transformed (London and New Haven, 1978) p.7

⁶² Nigel Everett, The Tory View of Landscape (London and New Haven, 1994) p.13

⁶³ Geoffrey Scott, The Architecture of Humanism (Mass., 1924) p.159

learning and government'⁶⁴ and the definition of 'fabrick' as a 'building' or 'edifice' synonymous with the 'moral fabrick' of the nation.⁶⁵ This is clearly seen in one of Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son:

'if upon the Tuscan foundation, the Doric, the Ionic and the Corinthian orders rise gradually with all their beauty, proportions, and ornaments, the fabric seizes the most incurious eye, and stops the most careless passenger, who solicits admission as a favour, nay, often purchases it. Just so will it fare with your little fabric, which at present I fear, has more of the Corinthian order. You must absolutely change the whole front, or nobody will knock at the door.'⁶⁶

As humanist language in a sense charts out its own specific topography in terms of the body, thus Canaletto's vision of public space can be transcribed in humanist terms to represent the moral topography of the private body. The language of humanism was often used to warn against the dangers of urban growth and is evident in Smollett's Humphry Clinker as Matthew Bramble warned against London's 'dropsical head.'⁶⁷ It is interesting that the image of an unruly public space is described in terms of individual human deformity. This links to the use of the body to depict an 'immoral topography', often specifically the female body to suggest licentiousness. The use of the body to make comment on the morality and order of topography, provides an interesting dimension to the discussion of spacing within art. Stallybrass and White designed a graph linking the body and topography in a chapter entitled The City: the sewer, the gaze and the contaminating touch.⁶⁸ The graph correlated the 'high' body to civic centres, courts, churches and mansions through to the sewers and slums that equated to the lower body stratum of filth and moral degeneration. In Canaletto's work the sensibilities of the 'top'- the nobility, the head, and enlightened thought, are symbolised by the subject matter itself.

The discourse of humanism therefore allows the beholder to understand the spacing within the composition in terms of the physical representation of one's own personal space. Thus the nobility were the civic head, the suzerains of 'public space.' As Burke wrote, 'Nobility is a graceful ornament to civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society.'⁶⁹ In turn Canaletto's compositions were a graceful ornament for the homes of the nobility pandering to the self-reflected glory to be enjoyed from civil order and urban development.

⁶⁴ Paul Fussell, The Rhetoric of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke (Oxford 1965) p.179

⁶⁵ *ibid.* Paul Fussell p.186

⁶⁶ Quoted from Beverly Sprague Allen, Tides in English Taste 1600-1800 Vol. I (Mass. 1937) p.93

⁶⁷ Tobias Smollett, Humphry Clinker (Herts, 1995) p.79

⁶⁸ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London, 1986) Chapter 3

The royal, ecclesiastical and ceremonious views Canaletto painted, and specifically the series of the Westminster Bridge scheme embody the use of polite taste, 'public' benevolence and private patronage to legitimise an elite. It was important that the paintings reflected an ordered topography, for if a well ordered urban space reflected the state of the populace so the civic body inferred the state of the civic head.

However the linkage of Canaletto's work to the concept of civic humanism is not without problems.

In 1947, Fiske Kimball wrote that:

in any broad study of artistic creation and evolution, the questions to be answered are: what? how? where? and who? As to why; we follow Goethe's sage advice, and do not ask. It is possible to point to certain relationships with political, social and economic movements, certain analogies with trends in criticism and other arts, certain influences and deviations but not causalities. Essentially, we shall find, the development is imminent, the miracle of creation is wrapped up in the mystery of personal artistic individuality.⁷⁰

Certainly it is difficult to discern with complete finality whether there is any political or social comment inherent within Canaletto's work - or that any philosophical, political or conceptual comment that may be drawn is not merely coincidental, or imposed upon the picture by the beholder's own private agenda. This in itself is problematic, as it would assume as it does in Kimball's statement that art stands alone as an individual creation -immaterial of general perception. It is possible that if a private agenda may be imposed upon the piece then its function to represent the artist's will is negated by its new function as a mirror to the beholder's own creative wants. This in turn would suggest that each beholder's view is equally valid, which complicates the use of art as a historical source, and brings the debate of public and private space within the private sphere of the *viewing* of art itself.

Yet it is impossible to state that political or philosophical concepts have no bearing on creation – especially when, as is the case with Canaletto, the artist is, and has been specifically trained to, consciously appeal to a very specific market. The concept of civic humanism was intrinsically bound up with the philosophies of taste, moral and civic virtue. Shaftesbury wrote in Characteristicks: 'I am

⁶⁹Jonathan Richardson 'An Essay on the Theory of Painting (London, 1725) p. vi Quoted from Stephen Copley, 'The Fine Arts in Eighteenth Century Polite Culture' pp.13-37 Painting and the Politics of Culture ed. John Barrell (Oxford,1992)

persuaded that to be a virtuoso (so far as befits a gentleman) is higher step towards the becoming of a man of virtue and good sense, than the being what in this age is called a scholar.'⁷¹ Since these virtues were perceived to determine behaviour and private discourse then the analogy itself may be more than coincidental. John Barrell argued that due to the contemporary debate over the moral function of the fine arts, 'polite discussions of art theory are grounded in a discourse of civic humanism, which conceives of a republic of the fine arts and taste as a political republic, and sees its productions as being justified in social terms through their role in cultivating the public civic virtues of the republican citizen.'⁷²

Thus if the values of 'civic virtue' were so engrained into aristocratic manners and subsequently patronage then it may be that Canaletto *consciously* attempted to appeal to the 'public civic virtues of the republican citizen.' Therefore contrary to Fiske Kimball's denial of the validity of the question 'why', the depiction of the civic appeal was a direct appeal to the market made possible by a shared discourse between civic idealism and the concept of taste. Humanism therefore is an inherent method of viewing and understanding in private individual terms a public environment. The irony is that the 'private instinct' to transcribe the public landscape into private terms is in fact determined by an almost universal methodology. If one follows this theory Canaletto's urbane urban landscapes should be recognised by all beholders as the ideal; for 'our instinct craves for order, since order is the condition of the human mind. And the pattern of the mind, no less than the body's humour, maybe reflected in the outside world'⁷³ or least the theoretical outside world.

Thus Canaletto's oil paintings concentrated on the civic head of London: St. Paul's, Westminster, Somerset House, Greenwich Hospital, Chelsea College and noble residences, and in turn the realities of urban living; overcrowding, haphazard building patterns, dirt and waste were avoided as they had to be. Canaletto's paintings of London present well ordered views of sites of aristocratic, royal and ecclesiastical importance. Thus the paintings of Northumberland House, Somerset House and the views taken from Richmond House and Montagu House should be understood as emblems of aristocratic presence in an urban context. It is to these depictions that we should now turn.

⁷⁰ Fiske Kimball, *The Creation of Rococo* quoted from Matthew Craske, *Oxford History of Art in Europe 1700-1830* (Oxford, 1997) p.7

⁷¹ Quoted from: Beverly Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste 1600-1800* Vol. 1 (Mass. 1937) p.86

⁷² Quoted from: Stephen Copley, 'The fine arts in eighteenth century polite culture' pp. 13-39 in *Paintings and the politics of culture* (Oxford, 1992) p.13 ed. John Barrell.

⁷³ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism* (Mass.1924) p.174

Somerset House was not a private residence and at the time that Canaletto painted it was actually used to house Venetian ambassadors. The house, finally demolished in 1766, provides an interesting example of the tenuous patterns of public and private ownership. Somerset House was built by the Duke of Somerset (the Protector) in 1549, who demolished the palaces of the Bishops of Chester and Worcester and the Church of St Mary le Strand which had previously stood on the site. When the Duke was attainted it fell to the Crown. While Queen Anne had kept court there the building had been known as Denmark House.⁷⁴ The site was an established London landmark, the 'first renaissance palace in England'⁷⁵, and was praised by James Ralph as 'the first dawning of taste in England.'⁷⁶

Canaletto's painting Old Somerset House from the River Thames (c.1752-5) is a well ordered composition, almost 'sturdy' in its appearance. The formal layout of the garden with its geometric shapes is mirrored by a rather static staffage who are promenading the public garden; the house framed by neat 'slices' of trees, sky and water provides an interesting analogy to the 'conquest' of nature in formal garden planning. Indeed the Thames, included in the foreground, seems almost part of the property. This is perhaps unsurprising as Somerset House included some six hundred-foot of river frontage. This command of the river was used to its full advantage in the pair: The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, Westminster Bridge in the distance and The Thames seen from the terrace of Somerset House the City in the Distance (c.1750-1).⁷⁷

These pictures both emphasise the separate identities of London and Westminster but also provide an interesting visual coupling of a homogeneous cityscape. When viewed together the terrace of Somerset House provides almost a 'spine' to the overall scene, which is practically joined by the leaves of the trees painted at the edge of each painting. This exaggerates the image of London as a great mercantile city, a metropolis unable to be limited to the confines of one painting alone. The eye is taken down through the terrace to the city ribboning out across the horizon in magnificence. The uplifting spires of the right hand composition The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, the City in the distance are contrasted by the masts and the presence of the York Water Tower on the left.

⁷⁴ London and its Environs Vol. VI (London, 1761) p.41

⁷⁵ ibid. London and its Environs p.32

⁷⁶ James Ralph, A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in and about London and Westminster (London, 1734) p.38

The pictures fan out together to reveal a seemingly continuous topography of London landmarks from the Tower, across to Westminster Abbey, Banqueting House through to St. Paul's, Wren's spires and the Monument. The impact of these two paintings viewed together in this way is certainly deliberate, and certainly should be understood as a conscious effort to depict London as a city of magnitude and imperial status rather than as a hangover of his earlier Venetian style.

Somerset House formed part of a series of aristocratic residences east of the Savoy, which also included Arundel and Northumberland House⁷⁸, of which Canaletto painted the latter. In many respects the painting A View of Charing Cross and Northumberland House (1746)⁷⁹ is rather unusual. Northumberland House was situated at Charing Cross where the Strand joined Whitehall, a key location, for as the guide London and Its Environs notes the Strand was 'the grand Channel of communication'⁸⁰ between London and Westminster. The noble residence located at Charing Cross is depicted very much within its urban context, with shops and their signs bordering the house from each side of the picture. It is perhaps fitting with regards to its situation amongst a shopkeepers' area that Hugh Smithson's great grandfather had made his fortune from haberdashery. Indeed the shops depicted adjoining Northumberland House include those of Mr Stump haberdasher and hosier Richard Taylor⁸¹. The depiction of the shops in Canaletto's work adds a sense of vibrancy often missing in his other scenes, as André Rouquet noted in The Present State of the Arts in Great Britain 'The London shops of every kind make a most brilliant and agreeable show, which infinitely contributes to the decoration of this great city'.⁸²

That the view is very public and accessible might explain the fact that it was engraved and published by Robert Sayer in 1753, and thus made even more accessible. In turn it became a widely copied topographical subject for other English artists disseminating the view as an integral part of London. The 'public' nature of the view was reflected in the fact that it was one of the very few private properties to appear in contemporary guides to London of that time. Northumberland House appeared

⁷⁷ See Prints 8 and 9 respectively

⁷⁸ David Pearce, London's Mansions. The Palatial Houses of the Nobility (London, 1986) p.32

⁷⁹ Northumberland House stood on the site of the present Trafalgar Square developed in 1829. Northumberland House was demolished in 1874 and sold to the Board of Works for £497,000. D.G Dendon, 'The Statue of Charles I' Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (London, 1931) Vol. 6 part III p.482

⁸⁰ London and its Environs (London, 1761) Vol.6 p.80

⁸¹ A full description of the identity of shopkeepers and their businesses may be found in Hugh Phillips, Mid-Georgian London. A Topographical Social Survey of Central and Western London about 1750 (London, 1964) p.100

⁸² André Rocquet, The Present State of the Arts in England (London, 1970) Facsimile of the 1755 edition. p.14

alongside iconographic London sites such as the Tower, Westminster Abbey and St. James's Palace in texts including London Guide, The Ambulator and Select Views of London.

Yet despite the existence of shops and people at work in the foreground the picture remains one of urban privilege, imbued with the values of aristocratic power. The Strand had been the site of the palaces of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I, and the open space of Charing Cross had been used for the execution of regicides in 1660. Defoe captured the area's dichotomous role in his description of Charing Cross as a 'mixture of Court and City'.⁸³

The sense of royal tradition and aristocratic privilege is reinforced through the composition of the painting. The beholder's eye is taken from the bottom left of the painting and Le Sueur's statue of Charles I⁸⁴ across the main sweep of the painting through to the Percy lion situated at the top of the house. The contrast of the white gleaming Portland stone of Northumberland House to the red brick of the shops and lesser housing is comparable to the contrast of the red brick of the south bank set against the gleaming white of the north bank in Canaletto's river compositions. This sense of overlordship is also created through the angle of the house in the painting; rather than painted in the usual manner with the front façade depicted as the centre of the composition, Northumberland House is painted across the main diagonal of the painting. The effect is such that the property almost 'stretches' along the main frame of the picture absorbing the foreground of the street into the private sphere of the 'house portrait'. This however was not an exaggerated depiction of aristocratic influence but a necessary compositional device that reflected the sheer presence of Northumberland House itself. The house and gardens absorbed four and a half acres of The Strand, with its façade stretching across 162 feet.⁸⁵

The view of Northumberland House was somewhat of an exception; no other private London residences were painted as a main subject. Instead only views were taken from Richmond House and Montagu House. It may be argued that no other private property reached such a status as an iconic part of London partly due to the lack of inspiring private architecture. Indeed while Northumberland

⁸³ Daniel Defoe, A Tour through London about the Year 1725 (London, 1727) p.65

⁸⁴ Placed by Wren in 1674 on the site of the last crosses erected by Edward I in 1291 which had been removed in 1647.

⁸⁵ Christopher Simon Sykes, Private Palaces. Life in the Great London Houses (London, 1989) p.153. The book offers a fascinating account of life inside Northumberland House during this period.

House was praised by James Ralph for its grandeur and majesty⁸⁶, the houses of Richmond and Montagu were both criticised for their design. Montagu House was described as 'heavy and insipid' and Richmond House marginally better but with an 'intolerable' entrance with no sense of proportion.⁸⁷

The paintings of Whitehall may be seen to support the values of civic idealism through the area's status as the domestic centre of those who had triumphed as an aristocratic oligarchy in 1688. The Duke of Richmond's painting Whitehall and the Privy Garden from Richmond House (1747)⁸⁸ and other views of Whitehall provide much scope for an evaluation of its dimensions of spacing and its importance as a site of aristocratic power. The Privy Garden had become the urban home for nobility such as: Duke of Montagu, Duchess of Portland, Duke of Richmond, Duke of Fife and Earl of Pembroke.⁸⁹ The area represented a nexus of power adjacent to both Parliament and the court at St. James's, and the convenience of the area increased dramatically with the construction of Westminster Bridge. The area from the York Buildings to Westminster Bridge was exclusively aristocratic often housing those who were most intimate with George II. Thus to paint aristocratic housing within this area was to make a political statement through the representation of Whig domesticity even if unaware of the implicit political significance of the area.⁹⁰

Mark Hallett has drawn attention to the 'spatial demarcations' within the picture drawn out through the paths across the lawn, wooden barriers, posts and bollards. The use of bollards, pillars and pathways is evident within other urban depictions such as that of Northumberland House, where the posts mark out an almost triangular shape in front of the residence. However Hallett argued that a 'fractured hierarchy' existed within the picture: starting with private sphere of aristocratic property, the public sphere of bourgeois emulation and in the distance the parallel public space of Parliament Square.⁹¹ Thus the sphere of elite influence is placed firmly in the nexus of the scene.

⁸⁶ James Ralph, A Critical Review of the Publick Buildings, Statues and Ornaments in and about London and Westminster (London, 1734) p.46

⁸⁷ *ibid.* James Ralph p.45

⁸⁸ See Print 10. The two paintings from Richmond House are widely believed to be his best works from his English period. J.G Links believed the Richmond Pair to be better than his work in Venice of the 1740s. J.G Links, 'Canaletto in England' Journal of the Royal Society of Arts (1981) p.305

⁸⁹ The Earl of Pembroke laid the first stone of Westminster Bridge

⁹⁰ Hugh Philips has established three distinct area of ownership within the urban framework. The area between the Tower to Temple Bar was entirely commercial or inhabited by those directly or indirectly engaged to work on the river or the warehouses. The area from Temple to the York Buildings, with the exception of Somerset House, was the preserve of the upper-middle class or learned professionals. Hugh Philips, The Thames around 1750 (London, 1951) p.119

⁹¹ Mark Hallett 'Framing the Modern City' pp.46-54 Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge (ed.), Canaletto and England (London, 1993)

On a larger scale the scene may be understood as representing the replacement of one site of power with another. The privy garden had been the centre of court life until fire destroyed all the main buildings of the palace at Whitehall in 1698 with the exception of Banqueting House. The destruction of the court buildings of the Tudors and Stuarts proved an effective visual simile for the events of the Glorious Revolution.⁹² It may be argued that the stratification and connections between physical space and perambulation so clearly defined in court culture are still evident in the spatial orderings of the picture. The strong demarcation of pathways suggests a protocol of perambulation that is the basis of court architecture. Indeed it is perhaps fitting that when the palace was in existence, rather than existing as a closed private aristocratic space, there was indeed a public right of way through the palace buildings and out of the street through to Holbein Gate. Thus the concept of aristocratic presence coexisting within a public urban environment was an established one.

The privy garden was therefore a site imbued with political importance. The execution of Charles I had taken place outside the Banqueting House: 'Immediately behind this building Charles I was beheaded, and on the place where the scaffold stood is a pedestrian of James II, the forefinger of the right hand pointing to the precise spot where his father suffered.'⁹³ It is also reputed that James II used the weathercocks on Banqueting House to check if the winds were favourable to William of Orange's plans for invasion. Thus the privy garden is not only important as a ducal view with stratified social divisions implicit within the painting, but is also symbolic in terms of monarchical history. The garden was the site of unprecedented regicide, the place where James II watched his fortunes change through a weather vane and finally where the court buildings were replaced by the houses of an aristocratic elite.

Whitehall and the Privy Garden from Richmond House⁹⁴ is therefore without doubt a representation of aristocratic overlordship, a portrait of urban influence; the sense of pride, property and autonomy is very present in the work. Taken physically from the second floor of the Duke's own house, the

⁹² G. S Dugdale, *Whitehall throughout the Centuries* (London, 1950) p.102 This text is one of the best histories of the area.

⁹³ *London Guide* (London, 1782) p.73

⁹⁴ The Duke of Richmond had bought paintings from Canaletto in the 1720s, was a friend of Owen McSwiney and had supported Joseph Smith's bid for Consul of Venice. Thus Canaletto sought him as a client and came to London with a letter of recommendation. As a result Canaletto was to paint the views from Richmond House of the Thames and the Privy Garden. The Duke of Newcastle (a close friend of the Duke of Richmond) had promised the consulship to Smith. A letter of apology was

view is one of urban pride and in its presence signifies the replacement of pre-1688 court culture with modern urban aristocratic presence. The Duke was a prominent Whig figure⁹⁵ and was very much involved in London's civic life. He was a commissioner of Westminster Bridge, president of London Hospital in 1741, elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1724, made President of the Society of Antiquaries in 1750 and Colonel of the Royal Horse Guards in 1750. He was also made a Knight of the Bath in 1725 and a Knight of the Garter in 1726. He was in many respects an ideal patron of Canaletto's portraits of civic pride. In turn it is no coincidence in Canaletto's depiction of an ideal city that Canaletto categorically painted these outward emblems of civic public duty: the procession of the Knights of the Bath, Greenwich and Chelsea Hospital and the Horse Guards.

Debate exists as to whether the Duke himself is portrayed in the picture. Hilda Finberg, J.G Links and W.G Constable made no mention that it was the Duke in his courtyard, and Oliver Millar strongly refutes that it is the Duke in the picture, firmly arguing that the figure does not wear the appropriate garter ribbon or star.⁹⁶ In contrast Elizabeth Einberg believes that it is the Duke as he is wearing a blue garter band and that yellow is the Duke's colour for liveried servants.⁹⁷ It is perhaps unlikely that the Duke of Richmond is depicted in this painting due to the positioning of a man urinating against the wall opposite. Urination in the street was a necessary reality of the period and urination was a fairly common motif in both the Dutch tradition and throughout Canaletto's work. A child urinates in a visible arc in the foreground of The Stone Mason's Yard and men are depicted urinating against a wall in the composition The Old Horse Guards from St. James's Park (1749). However to suggest that it cannot be the Duke in this picture due to the spatial positioning of the figures is no more fanciful than Elizabeth Einberg's suggestion that codified political comment exists within the painting of the Old Horse Guards due to the position of man urinating beneath the Union Jack.⁹⁸

written in July 16th 1740 by Richmond to Newcastle for relaying this promise to Smith who had made it well known in Venice. Tim McCann, The Correspondence of the Dukes of Richmond and Newcastle 1724-1750 (Lewes, 1984) pp.35-36

⁹⁵ Lord of the Bedchamber 1726-1735, January 1735 member of the Privy Council, High Constable of England at the coronation of George II and a Lord Justice of the realm in George II's absence.

⁹⁶ Oliver Millar 'Canaletto in England' Burlington Magazine (Vol.135, 1993) pp.939-840

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Einberg, Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting (London, 1987) p.169 However Canaletto's representation of the liveried servants is far from accurate. If one examines the pictures of George Stubbs, it may be seen that the livery is in fact a yellow gold with large red cuffs and red taping. This is born out by the household accounts. Each order for yellow livery suits included an order for scarlet material and scarlet 'twists' for the button holes, for example in April 1730 two separate orders were made for five and a half yards of yellow broad cloth alongside orders for two and quarter of scarlet. Goodwood County Record Office Household Accounts MS121 /177

⁹⁸ Elizabeth Einberg, The Old Horse Guards from St. James's Park Tate Gallery Pamphlet (London, 1987)

Moreover it may be seen from contemporary literature that *where* one urinated could be quite contentious in terms of public and private space.

A '*Lawyer* was footing it down to *Westminster*, and happen'd to piss within a Yard or two of the *Soldier's* Post, who had put him under Arrest, on his refusing the Penalty due on such Occassions. The *Barrister* insisted very strenuously on the *Centinel's* producing the Statute in this case *made and provided*, and cited several *Precedents* and *Authorities*, which he said had been practiced in all Ages and Nations without interruption, 'til this Time.'⁹⁹

Ultimately however, if one accepts as the beholder that the view 'belongs' to the Duke then it is almost irrelevant as to whether he is physically depicted or not. The view from the Duke's property is wholly representative of the Duke's private sphere successfully coexisting amongst urban public life. The building itself becomes representative of the Duke's presence in London and his role as a patron of urban improvement and his overlordship of the surrounding urban space. A space which, the paintings remind us, included the outward manifestations of ecclesiastical and aristocratic power in the forms of Banqueting House, Holbein Gate and St. Paul's.

Yet the painting of the privy garden from the Duke of Richmond's house should not be viewed in isolation but understood in relation to its pair The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House.¹⁰⁰ As we have seen Richmond House was far from renowned for its exterior and the two paintings should perhaps be seen a 'progression' through the residence without the necessity of having to paint the building itself. Thus the exterior paintings of the Duke of Richmond's house in fact come to represent the interior private sphere. It is then possible to interpret the liveried servant not as bowing to the figure in black but guiding him through with respect. It would be satisfying to think of the figure as the Duke's tutor Tom Hill to whom McSwiney first suggested that Canaletto should paint views from Richmond House at the Duke of Montagu's supper party. If we begin to analyse the pictures as a pair which relate the journey from the courtyard through to the back garden and terrace of the house it would seem unlikely that the Duke is depicted in his courtyard and more likely that he is depicted in a family group on the private river terrace. The pair successfully transfer the workings of Richmond House into the exterior, preventing the depiction of the household sphere whilst firmly placing the Duke's domestic life with the framework of London's most important landmarks. Once again the glorious depiction of the Thames should not be misinterpreted as essentially Venetian but as essentially a manifestation of civic pride.

⁹⁹ A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange (London, 1744) p.29

The other view of Whitehall now in the Buccleuch collection Whitehall: The Privy Garden from the North¹⁰¹ may have possibly been commissioned by the Duke of Montagu, Richmond's neighbour.

Canaletto may have been left with the picture after Montagu died on July 5th 1749 for the picture was finally bought by John Crewe in Venice in 1760. Despite ironically not concentrating on either noble residence, the architectural interests of the Dukes of Richmond¹⁰² and Montagu may have led to their commissioning of views of the Privy Garden.¹⁰³ Indeed the Duke of Montagu was Grand Master of the Freemasons.¹⁰⁴ The possibility of the Grand Master of the Masons, an order which embodied the sentiments of architecture and social order to the extreme¹⁰⁵, commissioning such a painting, would seem to support the idea of Canaletto's work symbolising the values of civic humanism and moral architecture.

That this view was an area of aristocratic power and thus a topographically 'moral' area was emphasised in The Polite Philosopher published in 1734. The author J. Forrester, having declared on the previous page that 'behaviour is like architecture', then eulogises Whitehall.

*That the Politeness we can only call,
Which looks like JONES's Fabrick at Whitehall:
Where just Proportion we with Pleasure see,
Tho' built by Rule, yet from all Stiffness free
Tho' grand yet plain, magnificent, not fine,
The ornaments adorning the Design.
It fills our Minds with rational Delight,
And pleases on Reflection, as at sight.*¹⁰⁶

Ironically the realities of living were rather removed from Canaletto's harmonious depiction and Forester's eulogy on rationality. Indeed rather than an example of ducal presence successfully

¹⁰⁰ See Print 7

¹⁰¹ Also known as the Privy Garden from Loudon House

¹⁰² The second of Duke of Richmond's love of architecture is well documented. He patronised Campbell, Burlington, Kent, Roger Morris and Brettingham. His library contained works by Alberti, Gibbs, and Campbell. Household accounts show payments to Bernard Lintoff a bookseller in 1725 which include 10s for 'Palladio' by Campbell. (MS121, f49) and the Duke paid 12s6d for the binding of Gibb's 'Architecture' in May 1728 (MS121, f157) In 1732 major renovations took place at Richmond Houses, as designed by Burlington. It is perhaps ironic that while Canaletto painted the view from Richmond House it is not certain what the house looked like or how far Burlington's plans were followed

¹⁰³ It is interesting to note that Batty and Thomas Langely dedicated their publication Ancient Architecture - Restored and Improved (which is believed to have influenced the design at Vauxhall Gardens) to the Dukes of Montagu and Richmond. 'The Encouragement of Arts and Industry, being Your Grace's delights; and this Specimen (or Attempt) for to restore the rules of the Ancient Saxon Architecture, (vulgarily, but mistakenly called Gothic) which have been lost to the Public for upwards of seven hundred Years past, being honoured with Your Grace's Approbations, and Encouragements; It is therefore most Humbly Inscribed to Your Graces's Protections' Frontispiece from Batty and Thomas Langely, Ancient Architecture- Restored and Improved (1742)

¹⁰⁴ Hugh Smithson was also a prominent freemason

¹⁰⁵ Paul Fussell, The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke (Oxford, 1965) p.174 argues that British Freemasonry was sustained by the 'architectural symbolism derived from the account of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings v-viii'

¹⁰⁶ J. Forrester, The Polite Philosopher (London, 1734) p.23

coexisting with social lessers, the privy garden could be interpreted as an affirmation of aristocratic power as a cohesive body against the private interests of smaller property owners. Joshua Smith owned a summerhouse,¹⁰⁷ garden and house in the privy garden but the Duke of Montrose built stables which cut off his view, and the Dukes of Richmond, Portland and Montrose together built a terrace scheme which separated Smith's garden from the Thames.¹⁰⁸

Indeed the gentrification of the Thames was not limited to bridge building but was also characterised by the absorption of the river itself into private property. The second Duke of Montagu extended his property in the 1740s to include the foreshore of the river in order to prevent the tipping of rubbish onto the banks and spoiling his view. Thus as the Duke of Richmond's view of the privy garden is one of ducal suzerainty, so his picture of the Thames which includes Montagu's house and terrace is representative of the absorption of the Thames into a private gentrified framework. Indeed it is possible that the Duke of Montagu is included in the group on the garden terrace in the painting The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House.

The portrayal of the Thames in Canaletto's work is closely related to the eighteenth century idea of London as Rome's successor. It was a concept made possible through England's commercial success, and the need to legitimise it through classical allusion. The 1688 settlement and also the Great Fire of 1666 enabled comparisons to be made to vanished ancient civilisations. Texts such as A comparison between old Rome in its glory, as to the extent and populousness of it and London as it is at the present, published in 1706, declared London not only as Rome's successor, but its superior. In comparison with many contemporary texts which bemoaned London's filth and immorality, texts such as these offered a very similar vision of London to Canaletto's. The text quoted a tale by 'Lampridius' in which, following the orders of the Emperor Heliogabalus, all the cobwebs in Rome were gathered and in total weighed 10,000 pounds. The author indignantly stated:

But I answer, if the thing be true, 'tis like *Heliogabalus*, but not at all honourable to *Rome*, nor does it conclude anything else, but that the Citizens were poor and nasty, and the houses very ill-kept, and not well inhabited...I hardly believe there could be gather'd Five Hundred Pound Weight of

¹⁰⁷ Hugh Philips notes that the summer house is visible in The Thames and the City of London from Richmond House It is cut off on the left-hand side of the painting – although this is certainly not symbolic. The Thames around 1750 (London, 1751) p.122

¹⁰⁸ In contrast when the Countess of Portland and the Earl of Pembroke quarrelled over a projecting piece of garden in front of their houses, Commissioners of the Treasury found the land actually belonged to the Crown, but eventually divided it between the two aristocrats. *ibid.* p.122

Cobwebs in *London*, which is a sign of its Cleanness, Populousness and Wealth, although it is far more extended than Old *Rome* was...¹⁰⁹

Moreover not only was London clean, but London's 'broad highways' were in stark contrast to Rome's narrow roads which restricted traffic¹¹⁰ and the Thames was better than 'thirty Tibers'¹¹¹

As we have seen, Canaletto's paintings of Somerset House, the pair of The Thames from the terrace of Somerset House, the City in the Distance and The Thames from the terrace of Somerset House, Westminster Bridge in the Distance, are glistening views of London depicting the City as an enlightened ideal. In the City view, the mediaeval London Bridge is marginalised to the extreme right of the composition and St. Paul's, depicted in all its splendour absorbs the foreground. Levey wrote: 'there is poetry in the suspension of this city, itself a slender strip between the huge areas of sky and water, suspended in time through Canaletto's art.'¹¹² This description is reminiscent of W.H Draper's contemporary verse of London as 'A floating city meets my wond'ring eyes, A city not confin'd to narrow walls, Or limits fixed.'¹¹³

This ethereal portrayal of a city mystically hung between river and sky reflects well the literary depictions of London as a 'Roman' city and the Thames as a classical god. For example in Pope's Windsor Forrester (1717) Windsor is the rural arcadia in which Diana dwells and where Pan falls in love with one of Diana's nymphs Lodon, who in turn calls upon Diana and Thames to help her. They cannot save her and her tears form the river Loddon which flows into the Thames. This text is important as it sets out a classical vision of London named in the text as Augusta and also establishes the Thames as a classical God contemporaneous with Diana.

The depiction of London as an enlightened city with the Thames as a serene and mythical presence could appeal to many groups independent of their views on trade. Canaletto's pictures therefore consciously depict an enlightened city but one that avoids controversial segments of city life such as finance and commerce.¹¹⁴ In reality the Thames was almost 'clogged' with river traffic due to London's importance as a major trading capital, and due to the constant threat of war the shipyards

¹⁰⁹ A Comparison between Rome and London (London, 1706) p.15

¹¹⁰ ibid. A Comparison p.45

¹¹¹ ibid. A Comparison p.45

¹¹² Michael Levey, Canaletto Paintings in the Royal Collection (London, 1964) p.21

¹¹³ W.H Draper, The Morning Walk; or the City Encompass'd (1751) p.53

¹¹⁴ Trade and commerce are dealt with more fully in Chapter Two

were constantly busy. Canaletto avoided the sector of the river east of the London Bridge where the presence of merchant ships and the activities of the shipyard were removed from the urban centre. It was left for native artists such as Samuel Scott to concentrate on marine depiction. However it is interesting to note that Canaletto differentiated between mediums. It is unlikely to be coincidental that he depicted much more river traffic in his pen and ink drawing The Thames and the City of London from the Terrace of Richmond House (c.1747) than he did in the corresponding oil painting.

In Canaletto's paintings, boats were often emblems of civic or royal activity, or were validated by the overall subject matter. For example the painting of Greenwich Hospital from the North Bank of the Thames¹¹⁵ reflects royal power in a maritime context, with the perpendicular masts contrasting against the solidity of the architecture depicted. Greenwich was an established royal site: a palace had existed under Richard II and in 1428 the palace Bella Court was enlarged as the Palace of Placentia. The palace stood as a testament to the rebuilding schemes of a succession of monarchs. James I had commissioned Inigo Jones to build the Queens House, although work stopped with the death of Anne of Denmark in 1619 and it was later completed under Charles I. The Kings House was begun under Charles II but was left unfinished. The palace became a hospital for seaman after the death of Queen Mary as had been her wish when alive. The foundation stone of the hospital was laid in 1696 and the buildings under Wren, Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh, took nearly thirty years to complete.¹¹⁶ The shipping in this picture provides more an ornamental motif, providing movement and direction to the composition rather than a trading or military presence.

The boats depicted by Canaletto were usually ceremonial such as the barges of the Lord Mayor and the city guilds in Westminster Bridge from the North on Lord Mayor's Day (1746)¹¹⁷ and the barges depicted in Westminster Bridge from the North: the Master of the Goldsmith's Company Procession (1750). Indeed that Canaletto emphasised the civic aspect of such ceremonies in his paintings may be seen through comparing his painting of the Goldsmith's Company procession to the pen and wash

¹¹⁵ See Print 11

¹¹⁶ J.G Links notes that 'no single photograph will reproduce the view that Canaletto gives us of the two Greenwich paintings' JG Links, 'Canaletto in England' *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* p.305 Of A view of Greenwich from the River with numerous vessels and Greenwich Hospital from the North Bank of the Thames (owned by the Maritime Museum) the latter is more accurate. Indeed Jane Dacey had argued that the former may have been copied from an inaccurate print between 1740 and 1746 before his visit to London. Historians and topographers are quick to point to technical inaccuracies in his representation of the urban landscape. Yet because of his general realism topographical anomalies and the blending of different viewpoints is often seen as a 'deception' rather than as artistic licence. Jane Dacey, A Note on Canaletto's Views of Greenwich. *Burlington Magazine* 1981 pp484 - 487

¹¹⁷ See Print 12

composition Westminster Bridge with a distant view of Lambeth Palace (c.1750)¹¹⁸ which depicts a more realistic scene. The depiction of the Thames on Lord Mayor's Day may almost be understood in terms of a property portrait, as the Lord Mayor possessed jurisdiction over the Thames from Colne Ditch to Yendal (west of Staines Bridge).¹¹⁹ The subject produced material for two wash drawings one of which was bought by Sir Robert Hoare who was Lord Mayor in the year prior to Canaletto's arrival. The depiction of Lord Mayor's Day is fitting with the description of another foreigner, César de Saussure:

'The Lord Mayor's Barge is magnificent; it is enriched with gilding, carving and delicate paintings; it is decked with banners, streamers and flags, and is manned by 40 oarsmen, all wearing a bright-hued livery and caps of black velvet. The other barges are handsomely decorated likewise, one of them having a band of excellent musicians aboard.'¹²⁰

The concept of ceremony is intrinsically linked to the concept of public space and public display. It is the validation of the elite in the eyes of the public. The public aspect is reinforced by the publication, by John Brindley, of an engraving of the scene in 1747. The scene was not only easily disseminated and affordable but also easily understood for the engraving provided a key labelling all the buildings and barges depicted. The ceremony was seen to be of great public interest and as such the details of the ceremony were printed in contemporary guidebooks such as London in Miniature.¹²¹

However the private aspect of ceremonial activity was emphasised through the lack of crowds in Canaletto's work, ensuring that the picture remained a portrait of an elite civic ceremony rather than a depiction of the populace at large. The high vantagepoint of the painting suggests spectatorship, but the elevated viewpoint also enhances the serenity of Canaletto's depiction. De Saussure's account of the rowdiness of the crowd would not have been an acceptable presence in Canaletto's painting.¹²²

The Lord Mayor's Day is a great holiday in the City. The populace on that day is particularly insolent and sturdy, turning lawless freedom the great liberty it enjoys. At these times, it is almost contentious for an honest man, and more particularly a foreigner, if at all well dressed, to walk in the streets, for he runs a great risk of being insulted by the vulgar populace, which is the most cursed brood in existence. He is sure of being bespattered with mud, but as likely as not dead dogs and cats will be thrown at him for the mob makes a provision before hand of these playthings, so that they may amuse themselves with them on the great day.¹²³

¹¹⁸ See Print 13

¹¹⁹ London and its Environs Described (London, 1761) Vol. VI p.120

¹²⁰ A Foreign view of England in the Reigns of George I and George II. The letters of César de Saussure to his family. Transl. Madam van Muyden (London, 1902) p.109

¹²¹ London in Miniature (London, 1755) pp.74-5

¹²² Canaletto is more willing to depict crowds of people engaged in active spectatorship when not restricted by the constraints of oils. For example contrast the pen and wash composition (See Print 14) Westminster Bridge from the North East with a procession of Civic Barges (c.1750) to paintings of civic ceremonies

¹²³ *ibid.*, de Saussure p.112

Instead the concept of *civilised* spectatorship was imbued in Canaletto's work from the 'stillness' of his composition. The essence of spectatorship is depicted in Westminster Bridge from the North: The Master of Goldsmith's Company's Procession (1750) through the inclusion of small pleasure boats on the river. The depiction of the gleaming white Westminster Bridge across the breadth of the picture is certainly an emblem of civic achievement. It is perhaps no coincidence that the statues of the river gods Thames and Isis which were designed but never included in the finished product were included in the painting; for these symbolise the mythological status of the Thames as a river of imperial associations.

The depiction of civic ceremony was not limited to the Thames alone, but was the subject of the composition: Westminster Abbey: A Procession of the Order of the Knights of the Bath (1749).¹²⁴ The painting is very geometric and the use of strong curves in the foreground is very similar to his view of Badminton House. The red curve of the procession is in contrast to both the shining prospect of Westminster Abbey,¹²⁵ but more startlingly to the pale blue of the hooped skirt of the lady in the foreground. The painting may be linked to the 'privy garden set' through the fact that the Duke of Richmond was a Knight of the Bath and the Duke of Montagu Grand Master of the Order. Montagu was unfortunately ill on the day of the ceremony and had to be replaced by Lord de la Warr.¹²⁶

The concept of spectatorship is ever present, with people outside the Abbey, at windows and even, on the right of the picture, hanging over the crenellations. Unlike his depiction of the river scenes Canaletto's depiction of the ceremony is remarkably reminiscent of César de Saussure's eyewitness account of 1725.

'You cannot imagine what a number of people there were looking on from windows and from stands built especially for the occasion, everybody being desirous of witnessing this magnificent pageant. Another charming spectacle was the sight of ladies and persons of rank, all beautifully dressed, no one being able to remember to remember having seen such another before. I was fortunate in having a good view of the whole proceedings, comfortably and without any cost, for I was then lodging in a house looking on to the Old Palace Yard. It is true I had to give up my room and my windows of high rank, who paid the proprietor of the house very liberally, whilst I took refuge together with two or three persons of the household in a sort of garret or room, but we saw every bit as well as we should have done from my windows.'¹²⁷

¹²⁴ See Print 15

¹²⁵ The towers of Westminster Abbey were started in 1735 but possibly only completed by 1745

¹²⁶ Visible in line with the west door of the Abbey and preceded by the Dean. Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge (ed.) Canaletto and England (London, 1993) p.88

¹²⁷ A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I and George II. The letters of César de Saussure to his Family. Transl. Madame de Muyden (London, 1902) p.48

While the painting of this view is fitting with the guide book genre it is also significant in terms of overlordship. The Dean and the Chapter of Westminster had ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction over the City of Westminster,¹²⁸ and the painting was commissioned by Joseph Wilcocks, Dean of Westminster and Bishop of Rochester. The sense of the picture as an affirmation of ecclesiastical and royal power is confirmed through the inclusion of the inscription A:R:GEORGII IIA:D:MDCCXXXV on the gable that would not have been legible in reality.

The composition is linked through the Knights of the Bath to that of the Interior of Henry VII's Chapel¹²⁹ serving to reinforce the concept of a seamless and continuous ecclesiastical and aristocratic topographical presence. The Chapel was the appointed place for the Knight's investiture, and the names of the order's members were engraved on copper on the back of each stall, while the names of the honorary esquires of the Knights were engraved underneath each seat.¹³⁰

The scene is one in which oneself becomes spectator as the architecture envelops the beholder in this rare interior view. The magnificence of the architecture is emphasised by the rather overshadowed staffage who are depicted in active spectatorship regarding the architecture with raised canes or swords. The view is taken at the focal point of the chapel with the grille and tomb of Henry VII¹³¹ on the right and on the left the side chapel containing the tomb of the first Duke of Buckingham. The chapel also contained the tombs of the 1st Duke of Richmond and his wife Francis which were also situated at the east end of the chapel.¹³² This is fitting with the concept of a continuous aristocratic linkage throughout Canaletto's compositions. Once again the public are depicted within a scene of aristocratic privilege. The Will of Henry VII expressed his wish that only those of royal blood could be buried in the Chapel and that priests were to say a daily mass for the souls of himself, his wife and his children.¹³³

The ecclesiastical views that Canaletto paints are clearly imbued with the concept of ceremony, royalty and spectatorship. Few are painted to stand alone as portraits of ecclesiastical architecture in itself. Even the composition St. Paul's Cathedral painted in 1754 for the republican, Thomas Hollis, was painted from the Northwest, from where the view includes in the foreground a statue of Queen

¹²⁸ London in Miniature (London, 1755) p.120

¹²⁹ See Print 16

¹³⁰ *ibid.* London in Miniature p.169

¹³¹ The work of Pietro Torrigiano

¹³² An Historical Description of Westminster Abbey (London, 1753) p.42

Anne. Moreover St. Paul's may be interpreted as a motif of renewal and power and as an allusion to London as the new Rome.¹³⁴ Contemporary guidebooks often dedicated their front or back pages to comparisons between St. Peter's at Rome and St. Paul's in London.

The outside particularly the front of St. Paul's, is generally acknowledged to be much superior to St. Peter's at Rome. The two towers at the West End are elegant, and the portico finely masks the principle entrance. The loggia crowned with a pediment, make in the whole a fine shape; whereas St. Peter's is a straight line without any break. The dome is extremely magnificent, and by rising higher than that at Rome is seen to more advantage on a nearer approach. The inside falls far short of St. Peter's; the architect not being permitted to decorate it as intended.¹³⁵

The spires of Wren's fifty-two city churches provide a sense of height and variation, punctuating the skyline to provide relief from Canaletto's generally horizontal compositions. The spires also stand as a testament to the rebuilding of London after the fire and thus to London's status as a city re-born. The spires of Wren's churches and the dome of St. Paul's become almost motifs of classicism and renewal rather than symbols of God and of the church. However the symbol of urban rejuvenation and civic enlightenment was achieved ultimately through the depiction of Westminster Bridge. That Westminster Bridge was seen as a fitting symbol of London is easily understood in comparison to the twelfth century London Bridge which had a rather disastrous history of conflagrations and of people being crushed, in the absence of a footpath, by cattle and carriages. George Kearsley noted in his 'Guide' that 'It would be tedious to enumerate the many casualties which have arisen from the repeated conflagrations on the bridge, or the dangerous navigation beneath it, the fall at low water, being not less than five feet.'¹³⁶

The building of Westminster Bridge caused London Bridge to be viewed less as an embarrassing symbol of the failure of a City to modernise its urban framework and instead as the last and picturesque vestige of mediaeval London.¹³⁷ The symbolic differences between the two bridges is made clear in Samuel Scott's two paintings (1748-9): Old London Bridge and The Building of Westminster Bridge. As a pair they provide an 'obvious contrast between old and new by balancing

¹³³ op cit. An Historical p.4

¹³⁴ A New Guide to London (London, 1726) p.37 is an exception as it does not claim St. Paul's superiority to St. Peter's and states 'The English pretend this Cathedral exceeds that of St. Peter's at Rome, in length, Breadth, and in Excellence of Architecture: We leave it to the Learned, who have seen both, to decide this dispute.'

¹³⁵ Thomas Martyn, The English Connoisseur Vol.1 (1766) p.12. In the same text, even the Monument (engraved from a Canaletto drawing in 1752) was brought into contrast with the achievements of Antiquity. Thomas Martyn declared: 'it much exceeds in height the pillars of the Emperors Trajan and Antonius at Rome' p.186

¹³⁶ George Kearsley, Kearsley's Strangers Guide or Companion through London and Westminster (London, 1793) p.139

¹³⁷ This opinion was attacked by James Ralph who countered the theory of the picturesque with scathing criticism 'some people are ignorant enough to admire the *Bridge* merely because 'tis encumbered with houses from end to end; 'twill not be amiss to observe that nothing can be more ridiculous than this invention, nothing can possibly offend the eye more..' A Critical Review p.9 The houses were removed from the bridge in 1758.

the turbulent water' and dark solidity of the former with the 'calm and sunny atmosphere' of the latter.¹³⁸

It is interesting to note that Canaletto never painted a composition with London Bridge as the main subject. London Bridge was only painted as a marginalised motif in classical views, similar to the contrast between the undeveloped south bank and the north bank of the river. Canaletto only drew London Bridge in compositions such as the pen and ink Old London Bridge¹³⁹ and the seventeenth century style panorama A View of London from Pentonville (c.1750)¹⁴⁰, both currently in the British Museum. It was obviously a London landmark which although it captured Canaletto's interest, was not suitable for depiction in oils; this seems to support the fact that Canaletto consciously depicted London as an ideal city.

Part two: Westminster Bridge and the 'Publick Good'

The building of Westminster Bridge was the one major public scheme of importance during Canaletto's time in London¹⁴¹ and as such merits detailed attention. Canaletto's past patrons the Duke of Bedford and the Duke of Richmond were both commissioners of the bridge, and another commissioner of the bridge, Hugh Smithson, later Duke of Northumberland, was to become one of Canaletto's most loyal patrons during the artist's time in England.¹⁴²

It has been suggested that the scheme was initiated by Henry Herbert, the ninth Earl of Pembroke.¹⁴³ The Act for building the Bridge was passed in 1736, but no plans were agreed upon until May 1738, whereupon Labeledye's stone design was accepted. From the outset the project was defined in terms of civic virtue, thus the concept of the 'public good' became, to those who supported the project, inseparable from the act of bridge building:

'near two hundred Lords and Commoners; who not withstanding their great trouble and Wearisome Attendance in the discharge of several important Trusts reposed of them by legislature, have absolutely no Kind of Salaries, Perquisites, Fees, Rewards, or Considerations whatsoever, except (as a Nobleman among them nobly expresses it) *The honour of doing what it was thought impossible.*'¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Elizabeth Einberg, Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting 1700 – 1760 (London, 1987) p.189

¹³⁹ See Print 17

¹⁴⁰ See Print 18

¹⁴¹ And was possibly a prime reason for Canaletto's visit to London

¹⁴² Although it is interesting to note that the original Society of Gentlemen which contributed towards the cost of the bill did not include the Duke of Richmond or the Old Palace Yard set.

¹⁴³ John Summerson, Georgian London (London, 1988) p.88

¹⁴⁴ The Present State of Westminster Bridge 'In a letter to a Friend' (1743) p.4

The discourse of civic humanism was also evident in Labelye's tract, written after the completion of the bridge, when he stated: 'that publick Good and publick Spirit, (having in this case) got the better of private Interest, *Westminster Bridge* was petitioned for, obtain'd, undertaken, begun, and finished, under the Reign of his present Majesty.'¹⁴⁵

It is interesting to note that despite the rhetoric of 'public' good the bridge was only later funded by a parliamentary grant. Until 1741, the Bridge was originally funded by lottery money leading Henry Fielding to declare in *The Champion* (15th November 1739) that nothing 'was more reasonable that the Vices of private Persons should contribute as much as possible to the advantage of the Public'¹⁴⁶

The language of classicism, as much as the terminology of 'publick good' was used to justify schemes and actions. Labelye stresses that his plans for the building of Westminster Bridge were accepted before all others on the grounds that the 'Publick in general' was 'disgusted' at the idea of there being built a wooden bridge 'in the metropolis of the British Empire'.¹⁴⁷ It is no coincidence that in the face of constant criticism, Labelye was keen to bring attention to his classical 'find' (similar to that of Wren and St. Paul's) as early as possible.

'in digging this Foundation, there was found a Copper Medal – about the Size of a Half-penny, tolerably well preserved; the Head of the Emperor *Dalmatian* on one side, as appears by the inscription round it; the Reverse, a Woman standing, with a *Pair of Scales* in her Right-hand, supporting a *Cornucopia* with her Left, and these letters round, MONETA AUGUSTI, with the initial Letters of SENATUS CONSULTO; ... As to its being found there, it is easily accounted for, if it be true, that there was a Ferry about his Place, in the Time of the *Romans*, and there are many things which confirm this Opinion.'¹⁴⁸

Canaletto depicted the bridge, albeit not always entirely accurately, in nearly every stage of development, producing a total of twenty-four paintings and drawings.¹⁴⁹ The bridge had been almost complete by 1746 and had actually opened to traffic. However one of the piers began to settle, to the pleasure of Labelye's detractors such as Batty Langley, and needed dismantling. In 1749, Canaletto made a pen and ink sketch *Westminster Bridge under Repair from the South West*. Canaletto painted and drew the bridge at every stage from inception to repair to completion throughout his career. The

¹⁴⁵ Charles Labelye, *A Description of Westminster Bridge* (London, 1751) p.25

¹⁴⁶ RJB Walker, *Westminster Bridge. The Old Bridge of Fools* (London, 1979) p.106

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* *A Description* p.12

¹⁴⁸ Charles Labelye, *A Short Account of the methods made use of in Laying the foundation of the Piers of Westminster bridge* (London, 1739) p.31-2

¹⁴⁹ It is rather fitting that what is believed to be Canaletto's first commission, was from a foreigner Prince Lobkowitz of Bohemia. The painting of the bridge in its final stages was taken back to Prague.

oil painting Westminster Bridge under Repair was painted in 1754 for the radical Thomas Hollis, probably from an earlier drawing.

Canaletto's first painting of the bridge acquired by an English patron, London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge (1747), was almost definitely commissioned by Hugh Smithson (later 1st Duke of Northumberland). The painting was engraved that year by John Brindley with a dedication to Smithson as a commissioner of the bridge. The dissemination of the private painting into the most accessible and easily disseminated medium of the day reveals the public nature of the scheme and the obvious pride taken in it by a noble elite. The idea that Canaletto's paintings were bought by those seeking reflected glory from the civic scheme is lent support by Telford's story that Labelye had lived in the same house, 24 Abingdon Street, where a picture of the bridge by Canaletto was known to hang over the fire place.¹⁵⁰

In turn the engraving of the bridge had a large potential market as the scheme held much fascination for many. Not only was Westminster the first bridge to be built across the river since the twelfth century London Bridge but the techniques used were extremely modern. Caissons were used for building the piers instead of the usual methods of piling and sinking rubble and rubbish. New advances attracted spectators who came to witness the building of the bridge and the interest generated led to engravings being made of the techniques and machinery used.

The method made use of to drive the Piles, was contrived about two Years ago, by Mr. *James Vanloüé*, a very ingenious Watch-Maker of my Acquaintance, who in *November* last published a Print of our Engine, with an explanation.¹⁵¹

So large were the crowds attracted to what was widely regarded as a 'wonder of the modern age' that a fence was erected in 1746 to keep people off the bridge. These fences and the spectators may be seen in Canaletto's pen and ink drawing: The Western Arches of Westminster Bridge (1747).¹⁵² On the 5th November 1750 a crowd tried to forcibly cross the bridge causing Thomas Lediard¹⁵³ to read the riot act and guards to be bought in to disperse the crowd. It is perhaps ironic that a scheme praised for its status as a symbol of the public good became the cause of a riot twelve days before the official

¹⁵⁰ RJB Walker, Westminster Bridge, the Old Bridge of Fools (London, 1979) p.220

¹⁵¹ Charles Labelye, A Short Account of the Methods made use of in Laying the foundation of the Piers of Westminster Bridge (London, 1739) p.21

¹⁵² Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge (ed.) Canaletto and England (London, 1993) p.67

¹⁵³ Local JP and Surveyor of the Bridge

opening. The concept of an 'enlightened publick good', like Canaletto's sanitised depictions, ignored the realities of the majority of the populace.

There was not however unilateral public support for the public scheme. There was opposition to the Bridge from the watermen, who had with the City Corporations resisted plans for a new bridge for the last hundred years. Several arguments against the bridge were forwarded such as that trade would be diverted and thousands would be ruined, that the river would flood or that it would become impossible to navigate. The bridge was also opposed by Batty Langley (whose own design had been rejected) in his publication A Survey of Westminster Bridge as 'tis now sinking into ruin (1748). Langley actually accused Labelye, whom he mocks throughout the text as 'Mr. Self-Sufficient', of stealing his original ideas. Labelye defined opposition as the result of false rumours and jealousy of those determined to stand in the way of 'publick virtue'.

'For were you to trace the Authors of every false and malicious Story that has been raised about *Westminster Bridge*, and from what Motives, you would find some who speak out of *Disappointment* and *Malice*, being sorely vexed that any Undertaking should be carried on with Success, wherein they have no Share – some speak out of *Envy*, because they can lay no Claim to any Part of that Success – Others, who speak out of *Vanity*, in order to pass (upon those who still no less than they) for *Men of Taste*, or great *Connoisseurs* in Buildings- Others (perhaps no ways biased) who speak at Random, or upon no better Information than Watermen's or some such *impartial Evidences*.'¹⁵⁴

While Langley reserved his anger to bitter literary attacks; the watermen were more physical in the demonstration of their fears and anger. The watermen rammed the piers and abused the workers.

Labelye argued that he had been sabotaged in 1739:

'In the beginning of *February*, whilst the Carpenters were employ'd in preparing Timbers, and Framing a new Grating or Bottom for the Foundation of another Pier, the Masons continued in hoisting and setting the Stones of the first Course, which being finished, by lifting the Gate of the Sluice, near the Time of Low-Water, we sunk the *Caisson* with the Stones in it to try how it sat and grounded. By this first Trial, we found some loose Ground had tumbled in the Pit, (which was chiefly occasioned by a Barge, that had been maliciously sunk so as to hang in part over the Bank or Slope of the Pit) upon which the Sluice was shut again, and in less than two Hours pumping, we made the *Caisson* float as before, and drain'd all the Water that has been let into it.'¹⁵⁵

The role in which private interest determined the watermen's actions is similar to Adam Smith's theory 'deception rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind'.¹⁵⁶ Actions which unlike the theories of civil society are not dependent on the will of a 'disinterested' elite, and instead would seem to support Hobbes and Mandeville's theory of a perpetual clash of *individual* wills. Thus

¹⁵⁴ The Present State of Westminster Bridge 'In a letter to a friend' (1743) p.26-7

¹⁵⁵ Charles Labelye, A Short Account of the Methods made use of in Laying the Foundation of the Piers of Westminster Bridge (London, 1739) p.29

¹⁵⁶ Quoted from: Howard Caygill, The Art of Judgement (Oxford, 1989) p.90

we may look beyond the shared discourse of taste, civic virtue and its representative aesthetic forms and through the theories of alternative contemporary philosophies may evaluate Canaletto's treatment of marginalised communities in his work.¹⁵⁷

Mark Hallett argues that with the painting London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge Canaletto *consciously* 'foregrounds the working culture of the Thames'. He defines the watermen depicted under the bridge and ferrying the polite across the river as utterly dominated by the structure that looms over them, and as representatives of an already marginalised community clinging to the shadowed edges of the river.'¹⁵⁸

The difficulty with this idea is that it suggests a rather sympathetic depiction of the watermen, and this would seem to detract from the role of the picture as a portrait of urban modernity and civic progress. The picture is indeed a celebration of civic pride and public-spirited action. The watermen are indeed almost swallowed into the darkness of the arches so as to be barely discernible; but it is more likely that the picture rather than depicting the clinging desperate attempts of a marginalised community, is in fact a representation of the *triumph* of the actions of an aristocratic elite (whom Canaletto sought as clientele) over a debauched and lude community. Thus the arch could be seen to represent the conquest of 'public' (that is to say elite) interest over private (and therefore immoral) will.

Mark Hallett's theory of marginalisation was refuted in no uncertain terms by Oliver Millar. 'The editors should have reacted more ruthlessly when told that Canaletto's [image] foregrounds the working culture of the Thames, but defines the watermen...as representative of an already marginalised culture.'¹⁵⁹ However that marginalisation was occurring is certain; it is the issue of whether it was consciously commented upon by Canaletto which is less so. Charles Labelye's description of the function of the abutments of the new Bridge demonstrates the efforts to minimise the presence of the watermen:

'Such Abutments will also have several advantages, among others, the Stairs and Causeways, for the Conviency (sic) Water- Passengers, and the Loading and Landing of Goods will be at all times out of the indraft of the Arches. Such abutments will allow convenient Room for the boats and Vessels; and

¹⁵⁷ The philosophies of Mandeville and the concept of a marginalised London are more fully developed in Chapter Two

¹⁵⁸ Mark Hallett, 'Framing the Modern City' from Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge (ed.) Canaletto and England (London, 1993) p.49

¹⁵⁹ Oliver Millar, 'Canaletto in England' Burlington Magazine (Vol.135, 1993) pp.839-40

for the Watermen to ply for Fares without embarrassing the Streets leading to and from the Bridge.¹⁶⁰

It is evident that the building of Westminster Bridge went some way to undermine the oral culture of the Thames. The custom of calling out between boats and the playing of instruments on boats for entertainment had been an established tradition. The rudeness of the watermen and the crassness of their language was also legendary. A New Guide to London published in 1726, printed a table of fares and stated: 'Coachmen and Watermen are (in all Places) for the Most part, rude Fellows, that will hearken to no Reason; therefore if they happen to fall out with you, or ask you more prices than the following, you must give them what they ask and complain to the Commissioners, who will force the Coachmen to do you Justice; and to the Water-Bailiff, who will do the same with the watermen.'¹⁶¹

In humanist tradition the building of the bridge ensured that good architecture as a tangible effect of 'taste' led directly to the imposition of a new moral code of behaviour. Patterns of travel were also disrupted. Prior to the building of the bridge the most convenient passage to Vauxhall pleasure gardens had been by boat, often musicians would accompany groups on their boats for their journey and people from different parties would converse across the water. However after completion the bridge became the more favourable and safe option. Thus it may be argued that the public scheme indirectly encouraged more private sociability.

Mark Hallett argues that the redevelopment of the Westminster area was an 'interventionist project' which through the reordering of urban space served the interests of an urban elite. That is to say that despite being dressed in the language of the public good, the scheme was in fact typified through its benefits to a private elite.¹⁶² Not only did the Act enable the bridge to be built; it also permitted the improvement of the land abutting the bridge. The proximity of noble residences, such as those of the Duke of Richmond and Hugh Smithson, to the bridge and the resultant urban improvements and the contrasting neglect of the abutments of the southern bank prove telling. Evidence of the rejuvenation in progress may be seen in Canaletto's painting Whitehall: The Privy Garden from the North. The

¹⁶⁰ Charles Labelye, A Short Account of the Methods made use of in Laying the Foundation of the Piers of Westminster Bridge (London, 1739) p70-71

¹⁶¹ A New Guide to London (London, 1726) p.103 and tables for watermen rates p.107

¹⁶² Mark Hallett, 'Framing the Modern City' from Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge (ed.) Canaletto and England (London, 1993) p.47

Shaftesburian definition of virtue is to do the public good within one's environment rather than through divisive self-interest. Thus the notion of 'disinterestedness' is of prime importance in theory, but in reality self-interest is usually hidden behind the notion of a 'public' scheme.

Westminster rather than being an urban space suitably representative of its political and ecclesiastical importance was in fact characterised by the danger the area presented to those who found it necessary to pass through it.

'The streets and Highways in the City and Liberty of *Westminster*, and the Passages leading to Houses of Parliament, (notwithstanding such large sums of Money are annually rais'd for their Repair,) are in such disorder, that a Man is toss'd about like a Gin informer, before he can get to them...' ¹⁶³

In contrast to literary and artistic representations of a schematised moral and immoral topography consisting of zones of either *public good* or *private vice*, there were in reality no clear boundaries. Old Palace Yard was the site of the House of Lords but also an area categorised by the presence of taverns and coffee houses from which lawyers gleaned their professional witnesses. ¹⁶⁴ Westminster Hall was shared by both law courts and stall-holders, as Tom Brown described when he wrote of an Indian's visit to London for the first time:

'Here we entered into a great *Hall*, where my *Indian* was surprised to see, in the same Place, Men on the side with Baubles and Toys and the other taken up in the Fear of Judgement, on which depended their inevitable Destiny.' ¹⁶⁵

However the socially heterogeneous nature of the area came under attack and pressures to marginalise less desirable communities were evident. Commissioners were given permission, with the 1736 Act for the building of the Bridge, to redevelop those streets in close proximity. By February 1740 the Speaker of the House of Commons wrote a letter to the Vestry of St. Margaret's demanding that something was to be done about the beggars that lined the streets. ¹⁶⁶ The area was in a state of general disarray, some of the houses in the area of St. Margaret's Lane were declared so unsafe that the Bridge Minutes of November 1739 warned that the King should not pass that way to the House of Lords. ¹⁶⁷ The streets themselves were in no better state than the houses. A committee appointed after a complaint made in 1729 established that the streets were in bad condition due to water companies laying pipes too near the surface and then paving with rubbish.

¹⁶³ *A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange* (London, 1744) p.30

¹⁶⁴ Patrick Connor, *Michael Angelo Rooker* (London, 1984) p.95

¹⁶⁵ Tom Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical* (London, 1700) p.39

¹⁶⁶ RJB Walker, *Old Westminster Bridge: the Bridge of Fools* (London, 1979) p.15

A *commoner* being overturned in his Chariot in *King-Street*, went immediately to the house and in very lively Terms remonstrated against the Badness of the Ways, setting forth the pernicious Consequences that might attend their not being speedily repaired, and mov'd for a Bill to be brought in accordingly. Another Member oppos'd the Motion with much Warmth, urging amongst other Reasons, that as publick Companies for serving the Town with *New River* and *Thames-water* were continually laying Pipes, such a Bill would prove to little or no purpose; to which the first Member reply'd, *that if the water-Companies Pipe, then the Members of both Houses must Dance.*¹⁶⁸

The construction of Parliament Street joined Whitehall to the Palace of Westminster and the Bridge. The redevelopment of Westminster and Whitehall in reality meant the relocation of the poor in the interests of the elite. It was necessary to purchase all the houses from New Palace Yard and Union Street, seventeen houses on the east side of King Street and part of Westminster market – leaving only the more salubrious houses on the east side of King Street and the Privy Garden intact.¹⁶⁹ Using the Poor Rates of 1736, Lediard calculated that the yearly rent of all these houses came to only four thousand and twenty pounds. The process of gentrification and relocation of 'private' housing through a 'public' scheme is made clear in Lediard's report.

'That the Reasons why the Ground-Rents, in the greater Part of this Whole Extent, are at so low a Rate and the Houses yield so little, are because the Streets are so narrow, the Houses old, ruinous, and unfit for either Business or Pleasure; and consequently chiefly inhabited by the meaner sort of People.' In contrast, 'when the Streets are opened in the manner now proposed and proper Houses built, as well as for the Convenience of the Persons of the first condition, as of substantial Tradesmen, the great Resort which will then be to this Part of the City of Westminster, will give Encouragement for the said Convenience of being so near the Parliament House and Westminster Hall, but by rich and eminent Tradesmen, of every sort, for the sake of Commerce. This will greatly raise the Price of Ground-Rents, and consequently of the houses to be built thereon: And we see no Reason why the former should not yield as much as in the *Strand*...'¹⁷⁰

Lediard noted that the present inhabitants would have first choice of the new ground rents, but it was clear 'the meaner sorts' would be forced to relocate elsewhere due to the increase in costs. The building of the Bridge and the resultant almost 'proto-zoning' was as much an emblem of power as it was of the victory of parliamentary jurisdiction and elite interests over the watermen and the city guilds.

However the gentrification of the Westminster area did incur difficulties. The Bridge minutes of November 1739 noted that the properties marked for demolition were used as 'squats' 'by those who contribute little towards enlightening or repairing the Publick Ways'.¹⁷¹ It should perhaps have been

¹⁶⁷ op cit. RJB Walker p.14

¹⁶⁸ A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange (London, 1744) p.30-31

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Lediard, Some observations on the scheme offered by Messrs Cotton and Lediard, for the openings of the streets to and from the intended bridge at Westminster (London, 1738) p.3

¹⁷⁰ op cit. RJB Walker p.4

¹⁷¹ op cit. RJB Walker p.14

of little surprise to Thomas Lediard to find that by 1756 he had become 'the object of hatred' amongst the 'meaner sorts' of Westminster.¹⁷²

In the pen and ink drawing Whitehall and the Privy Garden with Montagu House and the Thames beyond¹⁷³ the demolition prior to the building of Parliament Street may be seen on the left of the picture.¹⁷⁴ Parliament Street was both spacious (seventy feet wide) and modern (with raised pavements) and was completed in 1756¹⁷⁵. However rather than being emblematic of *public* development, the houses were very much part of *private* enterprise. The street was built haphazardly as building plots were leased, with the first house being built in 1750, until the street was very much built up by 1752.¹⁷⁶ John Hayes believes that the houses with scaffolding depicted in the oil painting Whitehall: The Privy Garden from the North¹⁷⁷ were those leased to speculator James Mallors in December 1750. John Summerson describes the speculative builder as the 'mainspring of London's expansion for three hundred years.'¹⁷⁸

With the exception of buildings such as the new Horse Guards, Customs House, the Royal Exchange, the city churches built under Queen Anne's 1711 Church Building Act and Westminster Abbey's new towers, there were few new public buildings. The building of Westminster Bridge was possibly the only important public scheme of the first half of the eighteenth century.¹⁷⁹ Most improvements to London's public space creating a more structured and hygienic urban landscape comparable to Canaletto's vision ironically occurred after Canaletto's time in London.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷² op cit. RJB Walker p.249 (Works Minutes, 11 June 1745)

¹⁷³ W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1976) Vol. II Cat 754 notes that the drawing is connected to both the Richmond pair and Whitehall and the Privy Garden looking North but is different from all three.

¹⁷⁴ John Hayes while noting the difficulties of dating a picture through topographical change believes that the picture was probably painted between May-December 1747. As the Plantation Office which is depicted in the initial stages of being pulled down. 'Parliament Street and Canaletto's view of Whitehall' Burlington Magazine (1958) pp.341-349

¹⁷⁵ The area was further cleared with the demolition of Holbein Gate in 1759.

¹⁷⁶ John Hayes, 'Parliament Street and Canaletto's view of Whitehall' Burlington Magazine (1958) pp.341-349. Hilda Finberg noted that according to Roque's plan houses had already been built by 1745. However Links and Constable believe this is because the map was drawn on the assumption that they would be built rather than due to their actually having been built. W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1976) Vol. II CAT 439

¹⁷⁷ John Hayes, 'Parliament Street and Canaletto's view of Whitehall' Burlington Magazine (1958) pp.341-349 Hayes dates the picture to between 1750-1. Constable and Links note that the lion put above the facade of Northumberland House in 1752 is in the picture and so attribute it to the 1750s. This view does not fit with the theory that Montagu commissioned the painting unless one argues that the picture was abandoned temporarily after his death until a later date. It is very difficult to date this picture with certainty.

¹⁷⁸ John Summerson, Georgian London (London, 1988) p.22

¹⁷⁹ This period was notable for the building of hospitals: Westminster (1720), Guys (1724), St. George's (1733) London (1740), Middlesex (1745), but these were not public schemes. It is interesting to note that Hugh Smithson laid the first stone of the Middlesex Hospital in 1755.

Indeed by the 1770s one witnesses very different descriptions of the city due to the rate of private rebuilding and re-paving:

The streets are generally level and the principle ones open, and extremely well-built; the houses being generally of brick, and extending a considerable length these are chiefly inhabited by tradesmen, whose houses and shops make a much better appearance than commonly those do in any other city in Europe.¹⁸¹

Thus London almost 'grew into' the city painted by Canaletto. The notion of London as a modern city was later further reinforced through the building of Blackfriars Bridge. Smollett's critical character Matthew Bramble wrote:

'It must be allowed, indeed, for the credit of the present age that London and Westminster are much better paved and lighted than they were formerly. The new streets are better paved and lighted than they were formerly. The new streets are spacious, regular and airy; and the houses generally convenient. The bridge at Blackfriars is a noble monument of taste and public spirit. – I wonder how they stumbled on a work of such magnificence and utility.'¹⁸²

Thus before the later developments of the 1760s and 1770s, St. Paul's and Westminster Bridge were necessary symbols of enlightenment due to the dearth of grand public buildings in London at this time.¹⁸³ Those that were in existence often attracted much criticism. The Nouveau Théâtre de la Grande Bretagne described St. James's Palace as a 'mediocre edifice' in which 'today lives the strongest, happiest and the wisest King in the world.'¹⁸⁴ Defoe described Westminster Hall as looking 'like a Barn at a distance' and A New Guide to London described Somerset House as built without architectural skill with its courts and passages as 'more like those of a Prison than a Palace'.¹⁸⁵

London was therefore marked by its lack of grand administrative building, possibly due to the association of imperious 'official' architecture with absolutism.¹⁸⁶ On accession to the throne William of Orange ignored Wren's plan for a new palace, as plans had been ignored by Charles I and Charles II before him. Kent's designs for a new Houses of Parliament were also ignored. As the reality of

¹⁸⁰ The 1762 Paving Act appointed commissioners to oversee the repair of the streets, to remove rubbish, unfenced open cellars, remove overhanging boards and open coal shutes, and to ensure better lighting and drains. The curb was raised to a uniform and Purbeck stone was to replace pebbles, and crowded gates were to be pulled down and passages widened.

¹⁸¹ The Ambulator, or Stranger's Companion in a tour of London within a Circuit of Twenty-Five Miles (London, 1774) p. vi

¹⁸² Tobias Smollett, Humphry Clinker (Herts, 1995) p.79

¹⁸³ John Gwynn recognised the importance of the cupola of St. Paul's to London's skyline. 'The loss of the noble ornament would immediately reduce the appearance of the city to a level with that of any other populous city in the Kingdom.' John Gwynn, London and Westminster Improved (London, 1766) p.13

¹⁸⁴ Quoted from John Brewer, The Pleasures of the Imagination (London, 1997) p.12

¹⁸⁵ A New Guide to London (London, 1726) p.28

Canaletto's clean and well ordered topography was limited to paper thus urban planning and the call for a new rational topography remained textual theories. Shaftesbury's A letter concerning the art or Science of design and John Gwynn's London and Westminster Improved both purported that the opportunity offered by the fire of 1666 had been wasted. Gwynn argued that the rejection of Wren's plan caused 'irreparable damage' to London¹⁸⁷ through its 'sacrifice' to the 'mean, interested and selfish views of private property.'¹⁸⁸

The use of the argument of London as the new Rome to support plans for rebuilding, lends support to the argument forwarded here that civic idealism was understood in such terms by contemporaries and thus Canaletto's depictions would also be understood in this manner.

'The English are now what the Romans were of old, distinguished like them by power and opulence, and excelling all other nations in commerce and navigation. Our wisdom is respected, our laws are envied, and our domains are spread over a large part of the globe. Let us, therefore, no longer neglect to superiority; let us employ our riches in the encouragement of ingenious labour, by promoting the advancement of grandeur and elegance.'¹⁸⁹

Gwynn believed that good urban design would stimulate ingenuity, encourage the refinement of taste and promote welfare, cleanliness and decorum. The acceptance of civic humanism is evident by shared discourse.¹⁹⁰ In his call for the need to bring elegance to Westminster along similar lines to the Strand, Gwynn stressed the need to 'pave' and 'enlighten.' In clear terms rationality of design was seen to directly translate into a similar rational state for its populace. Civic idealism was seen to be directly linked to human behaviour, not merely through a shared vocabulary but through the humanist belief in the moral function of architecture and the fact, already examined, that we transcribe ourselves in terms of architecture and vice versa.

'the opening, paving, lighting, and removing of nuisances from the streets and squares, certainly conduce to the health and security of the inhabitants... The refinement of taste in a nation never fails to be accompanied by a suitable refinement in manners; and people accustomed to behold order, decency and elegance in public, soon acquire that urbanity in private, which forms at once the excellence and bond of society.'¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ J. Stuart, Critical Observations on the Buildings and Improvements in London (London, 1771) p.2 'I have ever looked upon it as a peculiar happiness, that all public improvements must among us spring originally from the spirit of the people, and not from the will of the prince.'

¹⁸⁷ John Gwynn, London and Westminster Improved (London, 1766) p.iv

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* John Gwynn p.3

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.* John Gwynn p. xv

¹⁹⁰ That the refinement of taste and the refinement of the 'polite arts' were integral to the theories of civic order and re-building and shared the same discourse may be seen by the juxtaposition of certain texts. The text of Gwynn's London and Westminster Improved was followed by an 'Observation on the State of Arts and Architecture'. Similarly in Defoe's Augusta Triumphant: or the Way to make London the most Flourishing city in the Universe, calls for a Foundling Hospital and a University are set beside a call for an Academy to promote English Music. p. 18 James Ralph's Critical Review was dedicated to Burlington with a preface entitled an Essay on Taste which argued that elegant building were a yardstick of the Nation's Taste.

The concept of new public buildings did not however signify a more 'public' urban space; public building and urban renewal were often synonyms for gentrification and the removal of existent public spaces. Gwynn whilst promoting schemes of public benevolence such as public drains and sewers, believed in the removal of things 'offensive' and dangerous' such as 'public markets' from Westminster¹⁹² and proposed the conversion of Smithfields into a square with the market removed to Islington or Southwark.¹⁹³

Despite the theoretical nature of the urban plans of men such as Ralph and Gwynn objections fundamental to the issues of public and private urban space were voiced. An article in the Gentlemen's Magazine fiercely criticised A Critical Review of the Public Buildings Statues and Ornaments in and about London and Westminster for its perceived attack on private property.

But tho' I cannot acquit him of trifling in this way of Amusement, which properly falls under the Denomination of building Castles in the Air; yet, it is a very innocent Pleasure and does no harm to anything but the Brain of the Projector. Nor can his severe censures upon several Buildings and Tombs, &c. probably have any other Effect; since I think, the Erector will not pay the Deference to his Anathema, as to pull down, or new model any of them. -But when he extends the Criticism in Architecture to several private Houses, and condemns and pulls down at will; he encroaches a little too much on the Possessor's Property. It is somewhat hard that a Nobleman or Gentleman cannot lay out 6 or 8000 l. of his upon a House, but some Critic must immediately stigmatise him in print for it.¹⁹⁴

'A Critical Review' was again the source of amusement in the same publication, which produced 'A critical review of the buildings, statues, vases & other ornaments in Grub Street, &c.' by 'Vitruvius Grubeanus.' The skit, demanding the inclusion of the 'octangular quadrangle' in a new plan for London¹⁹⁵ mocked both Gwynn's writing style and his hopes for geometric order in urban planning.

In conclusion, we have seen that Canaletto's paintings depict London as an ideal urban space, a city of imperial proportions. This in turn, as understood through the discourse of civic humanism, may be translated as a reflection upon the fitness of the civic head to rule and the subsequent fitness of the body of the public. Public space is transcribed and understood in terms of the private realm. Canaletto's depiction of London as an ideal thus concentrates on the physical manifestations of elite urban power and so offers a topographical network of urban and ecclesiastical importance often interconnected through the public duties and positions of key figures. Civic idealism and the

¹⁹¹ J. Ralph, A Critical Review (London, 1734) p.68

¹⁹² *ibid.* J Ralph p.18

¹⁹³ *ibid.* J Ralph p.20

¹⁹⁴ Gentleman's Magazine May 1734 p.246

depiction of London as the new Rome were political concepts embraced by both Whigs and Tories alike,¹⁹⁶ as all sought to position themselves as acting in the 'publick good'.

Similarly Westminster Bridge should be understood as the ultimate public scheme of the period despite its benefits to a private elite. Moreover the scheme should be understood in its originality. Despite the idea of a 'public' London represented by the dissemination of the views of the Bridge and of noble residences through widely accessible engravings there were few actual truly public buildings in existence. Thus perhaps explaining why residences such as Northumberland House gained such an iconic status. Public building schemes were in reality often seen as symptomatic of absolutism and as such the authoritarian nature of even theoretical plans by men such as Ralph and Gwynn came under attack.

However Canaletto's depictions should be understood as 'public' for the ideal must always be seen to represent the public good – at least in the terms of the elite which defines it and purchases representations of it. If Canaletto represents the 'public' what is not painted becomes as important as what is; therefore we must turn to the 'private' sphere in acceptance of the artificial boundaries placed between perceived moral and immoral topographies.

¹⁹⁵ Gentleman's Magazine July 1734 p.67

¹⁹⁶ Canaletto did not work exclusively for patrons of either political group: Hugh Smithson was Tory MP for Middlesex, Montagu was also a Tory and the Duke of Richmond a Whig. Politically Canaletto's most interesting patron was his last patron in England, Thomas Hollis. Hollis, who had met Joseph Smith (and possibly also Canaletto) in Venice in 1750-1, was a Republican, a supporter of American Independence and a benefactor of Harvard. He purchased six pictures between 1754-5 which included: The Capitol in Rome, St Paul's Cathedral, Capriccio of the Buildings in Whitehall, The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh, Old Walton Bridge, and an untraced picture of Westminster Bridge under construction. Canaletto is not known to have spoken English and it may be assumed that any knowledge of the politics of England would have been formed through his long association with Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith seems to have had Whig sympathies through his association with the Duke of Newcastle and the Duke of Richmond. Smith was an associate of Owen McSwiney who had orchestrated the series of allegorical tombs to commemorate 'the British Monarchs, the valiant commanders, and other illustrious Personages who flourish'd in England about the end of the seventeenth and the Beginning of the Eighteenth Centuries.' McSwiney's description of the scheme taken from Francis Haskell, Patrons and Painters (London and New Haven, 1980) p.288. This may be translated as a commemoration of Whig and protestant icons, tombs included those of Isaac Newton, Lord Dorset, William III, Duke of Devonshire

Chapter Two

Private Vices and Private London: Textual Opposites and Economic Realities.

What may be argued without any uncertainty is that Canaletto did indeed offer a view of London removed from urban realities. This explains why the concept of 'private' space is insinuated by what is not painted - rather than within the dimensions of the artist's work itself.

One picture is truly unique, Old Walton Bridge¹⁹⁷ painted for Thomas Hollis in 1754. This composition provides an interesting contrast to the London paintings, for it is a truly 'private' view. This painting is Canaletto's only English composition to include clearly identifiable characters, for it depicts Hollis with his friend Thomas Brand, his servant Francisco Giovanni, the dog 'Malta' and Canaletto himself seated sketching on a stall. It is a picture that suggests a real familiarity of the artist with the intended beholder and is a piece in which Canaletto seems at ease. It is notable that five out of the six paintings for Hollis are also among the few to include inscriptions in Canaletto's own hand.¹⁹⁸ Rather than singling out Walton Bridge as the first painting where Canaletto 'achieved' the realities of the British climate the painting should perhaps be seen as evidence that his paintings of London were not the product of ossification but deliberate. Walton Bridge is a relaxed composition (as may be seen by the inclusion of the artist himself in the scene) and thus one where it would be possible to include a more realistic, turbulent skyline; a skyline which would not have been suitable in his depictions of London as a serene mythical city. The picture therefore should not be seen as an anomaly but as proof that when suitable Canaletto was able to depict the climatic realities of England.

In the main however, Canaletto, due to his attempts to appeal to the market through the discourse of civic idealism, could not depict London in a similar manner to an indigenous artist such as Scott or

¹⁹⁷ See Print 19

¹⁹⁸ The inscription on Old Walton Bridge claims that the subject was painted in 1754 for the first and only time: Fatto nel anno 1754 in Londra per la prima ed ultima volta con ogni maggior attenzione ad istanza del Signior Cavaliere Hollis padrone mio stimatiss^o/Antonio Canal detto il Canaletto. This is not true as a second painting of Walton Bridge was commissioned for Samuel Dicker MP in 1755

Wilson. As an artist Canaletto could not even in graphic art depict the 'immoral topography' embraced by an artist such as Hogarth.

'Private' London, that is the urban realities not fitting with the concept of civic humanism, is therefore represented by what is *not* painted. The lower stratum as opposed to the civic head, the private rather than public urban scenes, remain uncharted by Canaletto. This somewhat undermines the argument forwarded that Canaletto was merely a topographer or that his paintings 'record reality with such apparent doggedness, that we imagine them to want imagination.'¹⁹⁹ Indeed Canaletto has achieved a rather odd status as a painter; as there are few painters in history whose status would be described or denied as 'an unprejudiced retina attached to a dextrous hand.'²⁰⁰ Marchesini's claim that Canaletto 'va sempre su loco, e forma tutto sul vero' (goes always on location, painting everything in truth)²⁰¹ is as we know to start from the basis of a falsehood. Yet Canaletto continues to be praised for accuracy and denounced for prosaicness despite the fact he painted neither Venice nor London in their everyday forms. Levey argued that the view painters 'catered for the eyes alone; they represented, and they did not need to comment.'²⁰² Yet can an artist truly paint without comment? Surely the omission of 'comment' is a statement of kind in itself especially if the omission of comment, is the omission of realities which detract from a perceived ideal?

Canaletto painted only a small section of the city, an area with the exception of the pleasure gardens generally limited to Charing Cross, Westminster and Whitehall. This in some respects reflects the concentration of aristocratic presence in these areas and the growing importance of the west of the capital.

'The gradual observation, which arises from hence, is, that the city of London gradually moves Westward; and did not the Royal Exchange and London Bridge stay that, it would remove much faster: for Leaden-hall-street, Bishop's Gate, and part of Fen-Church-Street have lost their antient trade; Grace-Church-Street instead keeping itself yet entire, by reason of its conjunction with and relation to London Bridge.'²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ James Gardener, 'Molecular Vision: Canaletto at the Metropolitan Museum' *Arts Magazine* (Vol. 64, 1990) pp.57-59 p.59 James Gardner provides a perplexing evaluation of Canaletto's work. 'Because Canaletto's paintings pose questions, great questions, which no one else has ever asked, few viewers are likely to perceive the greatness of the answers that they have yielded.' What exactly these questions and answers are, is not explained. We must assume that the critic in hand is a superior 'beholder' who wishes to keep the 'hidden messages' within Canaletto's work to himself.

²⁰⁰ David Bomford and Gabriele Finaldi, *Venice through Canaletto's Eyes* (London, 1998) p.12

²⁰¹ Quoted from: Nicholas Ross, *Canaletto* (London, 1993) p.12

²⁰² Michael Levey, *Painting in Eighteenth Century Venice* (London, 1980) p.96

²⁰³ *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality 1657-1758* (London, 1759) p.28

But it may also be understood in terms of the west representing an area of political and royal importance – and thus an essentially ‘moral’ public area. The east of the capital stood in marked contrast, for east of Temple existed the worst part of an area known colloquially as ‘Alsatia.’ The papers of the day reported that in this area an average of three to four ‘hold-up’ street robberies took place and a coach robbery fortnightly.²⁰⁴ Yet these boundaries while reinforced by Canaletto’s art and literary texts at the time were rather artificial. For example, Canaletto painted Westminster as a clean and ordered public space albeit with some signs of rebuilding, but as we have seen, the area partly due to the sanctuary provided by the abbey, possessed undesirable elements.

Similarly, the Strand was both part of a network of aristocratic housing but also notorious for the disreputable characters that frequented the area at night. The dichotomy is evident if one contrasts Canaletto’s view of Northumberland House to Louis Boitard’s design for a print (July 1749) The Sailor’s Revenge or the Strand in uproar.²⁰⁵ The public daylight scene represents a site of royal power and ducal power, an area used for pillorying and public whippings,²⁰⁶ the night scene one of freak shows and drunken revelries. Indeed topographical division becomes problematic if one moves away from a schematic artificial approach that is part of the literary formula and part of Canaletto’s depiction, to accept the blurring of spatial-social division that is part of urban existence.

Texts which stressed the immoralities of London as an entity, such as The Tricks of the Town laid open: or a companion for country Gentlemen which warn of vice and the existence of only back biters, apes, peacocks and zealots,²⁰⁷ provide a pictorial opposite to Canaletto. It has been written that: ‘The pattern of these guidebooks is always the same: a jerky survey of the fleshpots and landmarks – bagnios, play houses, taverns, gambling dens - with intermittent, unconvincing censure.’²⁰⁸ All of these texts warn of the perils of luxury and the general decline of morality. The problems of society are seen to be rooted in luxury and the failure of the individual to do his public duty, rather than as a direct result of poverty. In A Brief Description of the Cities of London and Westminster, John Fielding warned of the danger that ‘may attend the stranger’s walks in the

²⁰⁴ Hugh Philips, The Thames about 1750 (London, 1951) p.85

²⁰⁵ This depicts the crowds in the Strand, as the sailors recently discharged from the War of Jenkins Ear rise up against a brothel keeper who had taken advantage of them.

²⁰⁶ Hugh Philips, Mid-Georgian London: a topographical social survey of central and western London about 1750 (London, 1964) pp.103-105

²⁰⁷ The Tricks of the Town Laid Open; or, A Companion for a Country Gentleman (London, 1747) Letter One

²⁰⁸ Max Byrd, London Transformed (London and New Haven, 1978) p.21

nighttime, particularly in these parts of the town. He will be liable to the insults of street robbers, who take advantage of the watchman's absence, or sleep, or drunkenness; to knock down and plunder a single person.'²⁰⁹

Few texts deviate from the normal pattern of denunciations of gaming, whoring, homosexuality, foreign influence, foppish affectation and drunkenness. Indeed the complaints are recognisable as the perennial human need to attribute to our own time grim forecasts of the end of freedom, civilisation and the beginning of moral-sexual chaos. Tracts such as Hell upon Earth - or the Town in uproar warn of 'horrible scenes' of forgery, perjury, street-robbery, murder, sodomy and 'other shocking impieties' and 'of Peoples being almost under the Necessity of Carrying Pistols instead of Prayer Books to their Parish churches'.²¹⁰ In texts such as this London is an entirely immoral space; 'A kind of large Forrest of wild Creatures.'²¹¹

'The first thing you'd be encountered with would be the dismal Prospect of an *Universal Poverty*, and *Crowds of Miserable People*, either rack'd with the Agonies of their own Guilt or Folly or groaning under the intolerable Want of Bread...'²¹²

Such descriptions depict an immoral urban landscape founded on the baser instincts of humanity, and thus represent London in terms of topographical chaos, dirt and private vice. Thus we must accept London as either entirely moral – an ideal borne from public good and public duty, or as entirely produced from vice itself. Vice was often expressed as female which in essence 'seduced' the public man or the 'sins' of the populace were presented in female form to make them more shocking through their expression in scatological terms.

'Behold! What shocks the eye, intoxicate, A tattered female drunk, with sulph'rous GIN, In high procession born, and wicked pride, Her legs open wide-sprawling, portrait of shame.'²¹³

Thus as public space is transcribed into the realm of the private body, the female lower body depicted in engravings and literature stands in stark contrast to the civic head. It is interesting to note that while London is often described in such texts as the grand reservoir/sewer of the world,²¹⁴ the common name for channels which carried waste matter in the middle of the street was 'sink', a word also used to 'name the lower organs of the body.'²¹⁵

²⁰⁹ John Fielding, A brief description of the cities of London and Westminster (London, 1776) p.xxx

²¹⁰ Hell Upon Earth – or the town in an uproar (London, 1729) Frontispiece

²¹¹ A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange (London, 1744) p.1

²¹² *ibid.* A Trip p.14

²¹³ WH Draper, The Morning Walk; or City Encompassed (London, 1751) p.42

²¹⁴ *ibid.* A Trip p.2

²¹⁵ Max Byrd, London Transformed (London and New Haven, 1978) p.60

The immoral/private depictions are also the antithesis of the portrayal of London as an imperial city in its prime, as they present the capital as doomed to inherit the fate of fallen biblical cities such as Babylon, or empires such as Troy or Rome destroyed by luxury, corruption and deviance.

'The sinking land; Britannia soon shall see her glory tarnished, her laws decay. Her virtue languish, her religion fall, while some invader shall usurp her throne.'²¹⁶

Instead of Augustus and Thames we see London and Westminster as representing the worship of false Gods: Aphrodite (Westminster) and Pluto (the City and Trade).²¹⁷ Indeed Max Byrd suggests that the 'unsavoury reputation' of places of poverty such as Fleet Ditch²¹⁸ 'mocks not only the strong, wide rivers of the classical world but also those specifically English presentations of London and its river ... that celebrate order rather than mud and beauty rather than sable streams.'²¹⁹

The use of urban realities such as darkness, mud and crowds as literary analogies to the human condition made it impossible for Canaletto to depict them. It would not have been fitting to paint London as a foggy city, with grey skies and rain. The clarity of his depiction should not be understood in terms of stylistic ossification but in the fact that atmospheric truth came second to the need to portray London as an imperial city. The clarity of Canaletto's depictions can be contrasted to texts such as Gay's *Trivia*, in which it has been noted that 'mud' and 'muddy' are amongst the commonest words to be found. César de Saussure writing home to his family complained that: 'the streets of London are unpleasantly full either of dust or of mud. This mud arises from the quantity of houses that are constantly being built, and also from the large number of coaches and chariots rolling in the streets day and night.'²²⁰

Canaletto also never painted night scenes even at places that were quintessentially nocturnal such as the pleasure gardens. As dirt was seen as a symbol of degradation so darkness was seen as a cover for dishonesty and debauchery. This is made clear in texts such as The Devil upon Crutches in England, or Nightscenes in London where 'Eugenio' a student from Oxford is met walking in St. James's Park

²¹⁶ WH Draper, The Morning Walk; or City Encompassed (London, 1751) p.6

²¹⁷ John Corry, A Satirical View of London (London, 1801) p.7 Venus and her auxiliary, Bacchus, reign in fashionable circles. Masquerades, balls, fetes, public and private theatres, and all the luxurious designs that fancy can devise... In the City, Plutus has a great proportion of worshippers...' See also A.J Weitzman, 'Eighteenth Century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen City?' Journal of the History of Ideas (Vol.36, 1975) pp.469-480

²¹⁸ Comprises the drained areas of the City, Grub Street, Moorfields, Bedlam Hospital and Snow Hill down to Fleet Prison.

²¹⁹ op cit. Max Byrd p.55

by 'Asmodeus' a Devil who shows him London at night: a city characterised by whoring, unfaithful female gamblers, foreign operas and the chaos of Newgate and Bedlam.

Canaletto's pictures are typified by their calmness of presentation, and one must peer into the very background of pictures such as The Privy Garden from Richmond House or Northumberland House to gain any sense of crowds and traffic. The depiction of London as a city of wide streets and open spaces is far removed from the realities of an area typified by its network of alleys and narrow streets. Dr Johnson wrote that if one wished 'to have a notion of this great city, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is not in the shewy evolutions of buildings, but in the multiplicity of human beings which are crowded together.'²²¹ Contemporary literature and factual texts on urban improvements depict streets in which one is liable to be squashed by carriages, chair-men and farm animals. Tom Brown describes in Amusements, Serious and Comical what it must have been like for an Indian arriving in the City for the first time at Temple Bar.

Well, say I to the *Indian*; And how do you like this Crowd, Noise and Perpetual Hurry? I admire and tremble, says the poor Wretch to me. I admire that in so narrow a Place so many Machines and so many Animals, whose motions are so directly Opposite or Difficult, can move so dextrously, and not fall foul upon one another. To avoid all this danger, shews the Ingenuity of you *Europeans*; but their Rashness makes me tremble, when I see Brute heavy Beasts hurry through so many Streets, and run slippery uneven Stones, where the least false Step brings them within an Ace of Death.²²²

While it is the nature of literature to depict as dramatic a scene as possible, in more factual texts the realities of congestion were also noted. In A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, John Graunt warned in his 'observations' that the rapid expansion of London towards the west necessitated wider streets and new gates as the gates at Newgate and Holborn were: 'not sufficient for the communication between the walled city and its enlarged western suburbs, as daily appears by the intolerable stops and embarrasses of coaches near both these gates, especially Ludgate.'²²³

A sense of urban order is reinforced through the lack of crowds in Canaletto's work. The existence of 'multifarious' characters in chaotic perpetual motion is expounded upon by the character Matthew Bramble in Humphry Clinker.

²²⁰ A Foreign view of England in the reigns of George I and George II- the Letters of César de Saussure to his Family. Transl. Madame von Muyden (London, 1902) p.67

²²¹ Quoted from G.H. Cunningham, London (London, 1927) p.vii

²²² Tom Brown, Amusements Serious and Comical (London, 1700) p.22

²²³ A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality from 1657-1758 (London, 1759) p.29

'The different departments of life are jumbled together - The hod-carrier, the low mechanic, the tapster, the publican, the shop-keeper the pettifogger, the citizen, and courtier, *all tread upon the kibes of one another*: actuated by the demons of profligacy and licentiousness, they are seen everywhere, rambling, riding, rolling, moving, justling, mixing, cracking and crashing, in one vile ferment off stupidity and corruption.'²²⁴

As we have seen, even in compositions that deal with the concept of ceremony and public display both are presented as an extension of aristocratic activity, as the necessary public display of a private elite. However crowds, like darkness and dirt, became in eighteenth century literature 'a familiar symbol for disintegration of community.'²²⁵ Celina Fox has argued that it was not until after the Great Exhibition of 1851, that artists began to realise that all classes of Londoners could be portrayed in a single crowd without representing a threat to the social order.'²²⁶ This may explain Canaletto's failure to depict truly public urban events such as St. Bartholomew's Fair or Southwark Fair.²²⁷ Moreover such gatherings were seen as somewhat threatening to the elite that Canaletto was desperately trying to appeal to; and were viewed as public in the carnivalesque rather than the classical genre.

The unwillingness to depict crowds may also explain why, despite his earlier career painting scenery and possible friendship with Antonio Joli,²²⁸ Canaletto did not depict Covent Garden. Joseph Van Aken had painted Covent Garden and it was also a subject for artists such as Peter Angelis and Samuel Scott. Indeed Scott's painting Covent Garden Piazza and the Market was once attributed to Canaletto. Covent Garden Piazza had appeared in a number of eighteenth century topographical prints in guide books such as Bowle's London Described (1731), London and its Environs Described (1761) and Rooker's Views (1777). Yet once again the subject had no place in Canaletto's depiction of aristocratic London despite the importance of markets to London's urban landscape. John Gay wrote of London's abundant markets in his Trivia:

'Shall the large Mutton smook upon your Boards? Such, *Newgate's* copious Market best affords; Would'st thou with mighty Beef augment thy Meal? Seek *Leaden-hall*; *Saint James's* sends thee *Veal*. *Thames-Street* gives *Cheese*; *Covent-garden* *Fruits*; *Moor-fields* old Books; and *Monmouth-Street* old Suits.'²²⁹

²²⁴ Tobias Smollett, Humphry Clinker (Herts., 1995) p.80

²²⁵ Max Byrd, London Transformed (London and New Haven, 1978) p. 25

²²⁶ Celia Fox, Londoners (London, 1987) p.32

²²⁷ Depicted in a composition by Hogarth of the same name in 1732

²²⁸ Antonio Joli remained in England until c.1748. F. Russell, 'Canaletto and Joli at Chesterfield House' Burlington Magazine (Vol.130 1988) pp.627-630 suggested that Canaletto must have worked at Chesterfield House as his pictures of Italy were deeply incorporated into the decorative scheme. Antonio Joli was also employed to work at Chesterfield House c.1747 and so if Russell's theory is true it is possible that they may have even worked together in England.

²²⁹ John Gay, Trivia (London, 1922) edited and introduced by W.H Williams p.30

On the rare occasion that Canaletto tackled the deviant, such as the inclusion of prostitutes in his painting of St. James's Park (an area notorious as a haunt for homosexuals and prostitutes) they were painted as an aesthetic. That is to say rather than legitimised by the medium they were instead painted as outwardly respectable, as if the hypocrisy of their dress was further supported by the hypocrisy of their representation. Thus the 'immoral' or poor become either picturesque or indistinguishable (for example the watermen under Westminster Bridge) or merely overwhelmed and rendered barely noticeable by the sheer architectural presence within the picture.

The depiction of the watermen is unusual for Canaletto's paintings are for the most part typified by the absence of urban labour even in pictures that incorporate schemes of construction. The rebuilding of Westminster takes up almost a third of Whitehall: The Privy Garden from the North and yet despite scaffolding and piles of wood and the exception of a lone man in the middle distance, there is no sign of a workforce at large. Similarly, London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge as a testament to the building process exhibits the scaffolding and a bucket dangling from the centering suggesting that work is indeed in progress, but there is again no evidence of an urban workforce. Instead the bucket and centering are picturesque emblems of civic renewal, compositionally resembling a device he had used in Venice of depicting the city through an arch with a lantern suspended above.²³⁰ While it is true that it is only by the nineteenth century that urban labour becomes acceptable subject matter (possibly due to widespread public schemes) the absence of a prominent workforce is in contrast to his extra-London paintings and those of his English contemporaries. Samuel Scott's painting An Arch of Westminster Bridge portrays workmen seated on scaffolding and Canaletto's own Venetian view of the Campo Rialto (c.1756) depicts men at work on the roof of a building. In London the depiction of urban labour is restricted to pen and ink sketches such as Westminster Bridge under Repair from the South West (1749).

In contrast the household activities of the servants are depicted in Canaletto's scenes, for example beating carpets in the Old Horse Guards from St. James's Park in order to prepare the house for the London season. Their inclusion is a stylistic device used to break up the monotony of the buildings. But it is also the activities of servants who through their presence at the periphery of the houses, at

²³⁰ Jane Farington and Michael Liversidge, (ed.) Canaletto in England p.64

doors and windows, provide an almost neutral intermediary point between the closed private sphere of the household and the consciously public facade of the house.

Canaletto rarely painted interiors, the exceptions being: Interior of Henry VII's Chapel²³¹ and The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh²³², King's College Chapel and The Interior of San Marco. He certainly never takes the beholder into the private sphere of the household. It would have been unusual for him to paint domestic interiors in oils, a genre of the seventeenth century Dutch tradition, but in graphic art and specifically Hogarth's work domestic interiors are accessible metaphors of both status and morality. For example, in the Rake's Progress Squanderfield's salon is believed to be a copy of a room in Horace Walpole's house at 24 Arlington Street.²³³ Interiors had come to represent a political, moral and cultural urban discourse that would be unavailable to Canaletto as a foreigner and unacceptable to his market. Ironically views of interiors were not suitable for the interiors of the elite. It is again an example of how the boundaries between private and public space in Canaletto's work are shown through what is and what is not painted.

The ultimate irony in the discussion of the 'public sphere' is that 'public space' is understood through the definition of a private elite. As we have seen the public spaces of the lower orders such as markets and fairs were not suitable for representation, but according to Jürgen Habermass there also existed a bourgeois public sphere. A sphere 'poised between the state and civil society' composed of 'a realm of social institutions – clubs, journals coffee-houses, periodicals – in which private individuals assemble for the free, equal exchange of reasonable ideas.'²³⁴ This concept of bourgeois public space is noticeably absent from his work despite depicting areas famous for their coffee houses and clubs. The absence of this 'public sphere' is intrinsically related to the perception of trade and commerce as 'immoral' activities. Lloyds had 'grown' from a coffee house and the Stock Exchange had originally met at Jonathan's in Exchange Alley.²³⁵

Ironically, Vertue had noted that one of Canaletto's prime reasons for visiting England was for investment purposes but even in the dearth of public buildings to portray, buildings related to trade

²³¹ See Print 16

²³² See Print 20

²³³ Details of the Rake's Progress taken from Sean Shesgreen, Hogarth Engravings (New York, 1973) p.xx

²³⁴ Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London, 1986) p.82

²³⁵ *ibid.* Stallybrass and White p.99

and commerce such as Customs House and the Royal Exchange were absent from Canaletto's schematic depictions. The Royal Exchange: the Interior Court was once attributed to Canaletto by Hilda Finberg but is now widely believed to be the work of an English imitator. Similarly Canaletto did not paint the river as a mercantile presence but as part of private property, a classical emblem or a setting for civic ceremony.²³⁶

By 1750 more people worked in industry, trade, commerce and service than in agriculture and yet trade often was regarded as the harbinger of vice and luxury. The moral standing of trade was not uniformly agreed upon, and indeed John Barrell argues that the discourse of civic humanism was gradually abandoned and instead 'self-interest' and the 'privatisation' of interests gradually gained acceptance by the nineteenth century. Similarly Stephen Copley argues that 'traditional humanism is redefined to accommodate commerce in its vocabulary of civic virtues, and the definition of the establishment is widened to celebrate the place and virtues of the middle class citizen.'²³⁷

Yet at this time commerce had an ambiguous status as both a bringer of luxury and as the sign of a flourishing mercantile empire. This ambiguity is reflected in one of the most influential texts of this period, J. Brown's An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times (1757). The book states that commerce at first supplies mutual necessities and spreads mutual humanity through mutual knowledge, stimulates the arts and sciences and creates law. However in its 'excessive stages' trade leads to vast wealth, avarice, gross luxury and effeminate retirement. Similar to the view purported by Tory historians who traced the fall of ancient civilisations to the point where economic power replaced rural simplicity,²³⁸ Brown argued the nation was representative of the *declining* Roman Empire: 'it seems evident that our present effeminate Manners and defect of Principle have arisen from our exorbitant Trade and Wealth left without Check, to their natural Operations and uncontrolled Influence.'²³⁹

²³⁶ Although the paintings included the barges of trade guilds the emphasis is placed on civic pageantry not trade. As we have seen it is only in the engraving that the trade aspect is emphasised through the labelling of the guilds in the key.

²³⁷ John Barrell, The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt. The Body of the Public (London and New Haven, 1986) p.9

²³⁸ David Solkin, Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century (London and New Haven, 1993) p.48

²³⁹ J. Brown, An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times (London, 1757) p.209

When trade was vilified it was clearly linked to luxury and thus private vice. Commerce was not a fitting activity for a 'disinterested elite'. Henry Fielding warned the politician:

'surely he forgets himself a little, when he joins the Philosopher in lamenting the Introduction of Luxury as a casual Evil, for as Riches are the *certain* Consequence of Trade, so is Luxury the no less *certain* Consequence of Riches: nay, Trade and Luxury do indeed support each other; and the latter, in its turn, becomes as useful to trade, as Trade had been before to the support of Luxury.'²⁴⁰

This increase in luxury thus undermines the status quo as:

'the Nobleman will emulate the grandeur of a Prince, and the Gentleman will aspire to the proper State of the Nobleman; the Tradesman steps from behind his Counter into the vacant Place of the Gentleman, Nor doth the Confusion end here: It reaches the very dregs of the people...'²⁴¹

Areas of London such as Leadenhall Street and Exchange Alley, characterised by their muddled topographical network, were viewed by contemporaries as part of London's more dubious urban space, as is made evident in texts such as A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange. It is perhaps therefore no surprise, when one considers these issues, that Canaletto chose not to apply his skill to enforce a sense of order upon an area 'with no orderly punctuation at all'.²⁴² Once again the connection was made between a tangled topography and immoral activity. The Royal Exchange had a dubious reputation not only for its links to commercial activity but due to its existence as a haunt for homosexuals. Hell on Earth claims that homosexuals having met at certain walks and 'appointments' proceed to 'houses of resort' or areas known as 'markets' which are the *Royal Exchange, Lincoln's-Inn, Bog House*, and the South-side of *St. James's Park*, the Piazzas of Covent Garden, *St. Clement's Church Yard &c.*²⁴³

There had been attempts to justify this 'bourgeois sphere' in classical terms. In 1700 Toland described the Bank of England as: 'like the Temple of SATURN among the *Romans*, is esteem'd so sacred a Repository, that even Foreners (sic) think their Treasure more safely lodg'd here than with themselves at home.'²⁴⁴ However despite Toland's alignment of the principles that governed the City and the Bank of England with 'corresponding features in the Roman Empire'²⁴⁵ it was still not an aspect of the city suitable for the interiors of aristocratic homes or indeed for the merchant who craved respectability.

²⁴⁰ Henry Fielding, An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late increase of Robbers &c. (London, 1751) p. xxvi

²⁴¹ *ibid.* Henry Fielding p.6

²⁴² Max Byrd, London Transformed (London and New Haven, 1978) p.25

²⁴³ Hell on Earth or the Town in Uproar (London, 1729) p.43

²⁴⁴ Philip Ayres, Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, 1997) p.11

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* Phillip Ayres p.11

It is interesting to note that the copy in the British Library of London and the progress of Commerce by Glover published in 1739, belonged to Canaletto's patron Thomas Hollis. It is written in pencil in the frontispiece that the cover was: 'Bound for Thomas Hollis, The republican Editor of Milton, Algernon Sidney, Locke etc.' The poem represents commerce as the child of Neptune, born on the coast of Libya, making its first appearance amongst the Phoenicians, erecting an empire at Carthage, living amongst the Dutch and then the English.

However what was permissible to be portrayed in literature was not always acceptable in art, although ironically the Bank of England, Royal Exchange and Mansion House were situated around the site of the old Roman Forum.²⁴⁶ Moreover if one supports the view that Canaletto's depiction of London is in essence the aspiring vision of the results of 'public virtue' and complements the concept of the civic ideal then it would be rather strange to depict a building which represented a banking system which through the 'funding of the National Debt produced forms of property which depended on the state and thus involved their holders in dangerous forms of political dependence.'²⁴⁷ That is to say a concept essentially 'hostile to the requirements of classical political virtue'.²⁴⁸ The belief in the immorality of the creation of wealth through trade and speculation was a sentiment which had been further reinforced by the events of 1720 and the South Sea Bubble, rendering the depiction of London's financial centre, despite the existence of possible classical allusions, rather undesirable.

The literary texts of the day offer a pictorial opposite to Canaletto's oil paintings, partly as the imagery was suggested through the text but resided visually in the most private sphere of all -the beholder's imagination. This rather vivid representation of vice was acceptable in literature and not art because of the academic restraints on art. But it should be asked why was there this dichotomy between the two media? The division between art and literature may be due to the fact that art had 'commodity status'. 'The characteristic Augustan representation of the production and reception of literary texts as a species of non-material aesthetic exchange between writer and patron or reader is unsustainable in the context of painting and sculpture, where the commodity status of the individual work of art is inescapable.'²⁴⁹ The issue was complicated by the acceptance of the involvement of

²⁴⁶ Hugh Philips, The Thames around 1750 (London, 1951) p.11

²⁴⁷ Lawrence Klein, Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness (Cambridge, 1994) p.127

²⁴⁸ *ibid.* Lawrence Klein p.127

²⁴⁹ Stephen Copley, 'The fine arts in eighteenth century polite culture' Paintings and the politics of Culture pp.13-37 ed. John Barrell (Oxford, 1992) p.16

physical labour in production. Art due to its 'commercial value' had to be defended against accusations of 'luxury' through being seen to possess a moral, *public* function. In contrast literature could take advantage of its relative freedom by moralising through its coverage of salacious topics.

Alarmist texts depict a corrupt London characterised by private vice, an opposite of Canaletto's public vision. However if one assumes that 'Canaletto's London' would be the ideal to which alarmists would hope that the populace would or could aspire to, then in a sense they support Canaletto in terms of providing a theoretical boundary between immoral-moral and public-private space. Thus if alarmist texts provide a pictorial opposite but the same proposed ideal then it is Mandeville's vision, one often misunderstood as the promotion of anarchic selfishness and immorality, which offers the true antithesis to the public virtues of civic humanism and the values imbued within Canaletto's work for it refutes the existence of clear boundaries between public good and private vice. Interestingly Mandeville demonstrated this through the condition of the cityscape, once again revealing the prominence of the discourse of civic humanism.

Mandeville argued that The Fable of the Bees was designed 'to shew the Vileness of the ingredients that all together compose the wholesome Mixture of a well order'd society.'²⁵⁰ He suggested that success bred dirt and chaos and that dirt was an 'Evil inseparable from the Felicity of London'²⁵¹.

'For if we mind the Materials of all Sorts that must supply such an infinite number of Trades and Handicrafts, as are always going forward; the vast quantity of Victuals, Drink and Fewel that are daily consum'd in it, the Waste and superfluities that must be produced from them; multitudes of Horses and other Cattle that are always daubing the Streets, the Carts, Coaches and more heavy Carriages that are perpetually wearing and breaking the pavements of them: If, I say, we mind all these, we shall find that every Moment, must produce new Filth....it is impossible that London should be more cleanly before it is less flourishing...'²⁵²

Mandeville's philosophy was that Vice nursed Ingenuity which when joined with Time and Industry created a successful society in the whole - 'So vice is beneficial found, When its by Justice lopt and bound'.²⁵³ Mandeville argued that harmony was achieved by 'violence' as desire and production will always lead to conflict rendering the reality of a 'disinterested elite' obsolete. In Canaletto's depiction the concepts of Beauty and Virtue and Civic Idealism hide the reality of the existence of immoralities

²⁵⁰ Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees: or Private Vices, Publick Benefits (London, 1732) preface to the second edition

²⁵¹ *ibid.* Bernard Mandeville p.v

²⁵² *ibid.* Bernard Mandeville p.iv-v

²⁵³ *ibid.* Bernard Mandeville p.24 Mandeville's depiction of a society where 'insects liv'd like Men, and all Our actions performed in small' p.2 offers the perfect contrast to the ultimate humanist poem Sir John Denham's Cooper's Hill. 'I see the

but the vanity of 'civic pursuits' is itself mirrored through the very existence of Canaletto's commissions.

Canaletto's paintings depict wealth as 'blameless' as long as wealth is the grandeur of ecclesiastical buildings or the property of nobility rather than derived from finance, as long as shipping is royal or ceremonious rather than mercantile. In contrast Mandeville through accepting private interest had no trouble accommodating the concept of trade and commerce but in the depictions of Canaletto it is not self-interest which helps to create the civic ideal, but the coexistence and actions of the public-minded aristocrat which create the successful urban landscape. The general belief in the existence of clear boundaries between public virtue and private vice is made clear in an objection to Mandeville's work printed in the Gentlemen's Magazine. The anonymous author states that: 'The author of the *Fable of the Bees*, and those who confound the Distinctions between *moral good* and *Evil*' failed to distinguish between the 'benevolent man' and those 'consumed by self love'.²⁵⁴

Ironically it is the self-promotion of the 'public ideals' and more specifically the private vanities of the 'public man' which provide the urban-aristocratic market for Canaletto's oil paintings. The justification of civic schemes through the vocabulary of the 'public man' is evident through the depiction of Westminster Bridge as a public scheme; when in fact it was patronised by a private elite and in terms of the resultant gentrification benefited a private elite.

The discourse of the 'public good' and humanist philosophy²⁵⁵ were fundamental to the principles of taste.²⁵⁶ Both philosophies were linked through the requirement of a disinterested elite and through the idea that true liberty presented itself through decisions made independently from economic realities

City in a thicker cloud of businesse, then of Smoake, where men like Ants toyle to prevent imagerie wants' (London, 1642) p.2

²⁵⁴ Gentleman's Magazine April 1732 (Vol. II) p.687

²⁵⁵ An example of the intrinsic nature of humanism to taste and moral is evident in Hutcheson's Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue. 'That as the AUTHOR of *Nature* has determined us to receive, by our *external senses*, pleasant or disagreeable Ideas of objects, according as they are useful or hurtful to our Bodies; and to receive from *Uniform Objects* the pleasures of *Beauty* and *Harmony*, to excite us to the Pursuit of Knowledge, and to reward us for it; or to be argument to us of his *Goodness*, as the uniformity it self proves his *Existence*, whether we had a *sense of Beauty in Uniformity* or not; to direct our Actions, and to give us still *nobler Pleasures*: so that while we are only intending the Good of others, we undefignedly promote our own greater *private Good*. Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (London, 1725) p.123

²⁵⁶ Indeed the vast conceptual difficulties raised by the implausibility of offering a finite definition of taste are neatly summed up in an article written in December 1739 on garden design for the Gentleman's Magazine p.640 which grasps the crux of the matter: 'I would ask these Virtuosi, if they have any clear and determinate Idea annexed to this word *Taste*, which they so frequently use, and to which they so often sacrifice real and obvious Conveniences? Is it their own taste they mean? Or whose? And by what Criterion do they decide whose Taste is best? For I conceive Taste to be meerly (sic) an arbitrary Thing, and of which there can be no settled Standard, as appears by its Variations in different Ages, and different Countries.'

and financial constraints. However the existence of a 'disinterested elite' in terms of art appreciation, civic schemes and art purchasing should be regarded as a fallacy. Indeed the idea that a disinterested aesthetic attitude was a requirement of 'taste' should be regarded itself as the ultimate private vanity.

Taste was also specifically connected to humanism through the perceived public function of academic art. Daniel Webb in his text On the Beauties of Poetry and Painting repeated Ovid's words: 'Each pleasing art lends softness to the mind, And with our studies are our lives refined.'²⁵⁷ Hume believed that good judgement was learned but required a lack of prejudice, which perhaps should be understood in modern terms as possessing the correct set of prejudices. Similarly Oliver Goldsmith also believed education played a part but only when taste was initially inherent, when 'nature has done her part, by implanting the seeds of taste, great pains must be taken and great skill exerted, in raising them to a proper pitch of vegetation.'²⁵⁸ In contrast Francis Hutcheson categorically stated that 'a Man naturally devoid of *Taste* could by no *Education* receive the ideas of *Taste*.'²⁵⁹

Thus it was not clear if education played a role in taste, or where if taste was 'inherent' or 'natural' it had originated. The concept of the natural savage free from society's prejudices bore no relation to the idea of natural taste that expressed itself through social elitism inherent from birth. The idea of education and taste was further complicated for if taste percolates down from the elite to the base population then the implication is that taste is both a cause and effect of virtue.²⁶⁰ This concept of 'learned' taste was far from homogeneous, complicating somewhat the relationship between taste, morality and humanism.

Moreover while in theory taste was implicitly linked to civic idealism through the requirement of a disinterested elite and the shared discourse of humanism, the realities of purchase were distinct from the philosophies of taste. 'For a philosopher-aristocrat to write a few learned volumes celebrating the virtues of politeness is one thing; for an entire propertied class to embrace those virtues as the

²⁵⁷ Scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte, et studio mores convenienter eunt. Daniel Webb, On the Beauties of Poetry and Painting (Dublin, 1764) p.25

²⁵⁸ Oliver Goldsmith, Complete Works (London, 1872) p.375

²⁵⁹ Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry in to the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (London, 1725) p.83

²⁶⁰ Iain Pears, The Discovery of Painting (London and New Haven, 1988) p.38

defining hallmark of its own self-image is something else altogether.²⁶¹ It has been recognised that within his own time Shaftesbury was accused of ‘foppery’, ‘unintelligibility’ and ‘affectation’.²⁶²

In reality the purchase of art was very removed from the philosophies of taste. In An Essay on the Theory of Painting, Jonathan Richardson lamented that ‘there are so Few Lovers of Painting; not merely for furniture, or for Ostentation, or as it represents their Friends, of Themselves; but as it is an Art capable of Entertaining, and Adorning their Minds As Much as, nay perhaps More than any other whatsoever.’²⁶³ As Elizabeth Einberg acerbically observed ‘it was axiomatic that the English were only interested in portraits of themselves, their houses and estates, their horses and their families, probably in that order.’²⁶⁴

Similarly Canaletto found it very difficult to find buyers for paintings which did not directly reflect the buyers themselves. Thus paintings such as those of Somerset House, the Horse Guards, London from the North: the Master of the Goldsmith’s Company’s Procession and Whitehall: The Privy Garden from the North either remained unsold or did not find immediate buyers. It is perhaps telling that the majority of directly commissioned work was not for his portrayal of public urban space but of country seats such as Badminton, Alnwick and Walton Bridge.²⁶⁵ Thus the ultimate irony was that the depiction of a ‘public’ London distinct from private interest and thus private commission, despite its association with civic idealism, did not titillate the personal private agenda which dictated elite purchase.

Canaletto’s difficulty in sustaining commissions throughout his time in London may be determined from both his decision to return to Italy in the 1750s and also through his changing approach to his choice of subject matter and use of the market. Despite the sensibilities of aesthetic debate and theories of taste, economic forces could not be regarded as distinct from the creative process. Realities meant that economic forces were determinates, especially with the demise of the all encompassing support of the ‘renaissance style’ patron. As the household became an increasingly

²⁶¹ David Solkin, Painting for Money (London and New Haven, 1993) p.27

²⁶² Michael Meehan, Liberty and Poetics (London, 1986) p.25

²⁶³ Jonathan Richardson, A Discourse on the Dignity, Certainty, Pleasure and Advantage of the Science of a Connoisseur (London, 1715) Quoted from: Bernard Denvir, The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society 1689-1789 (London, 1983) p.70

²⁶⁴ Elizabeth Einberg, Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting 1700- 1760 (London, 1987) p.12

private sphere so the artist was no longer protected from market forces. Art was increasingly commercial with the development of auction houses and the relaxation of import laws. Devoid of patrons such as Joseph Smith, Canaletto lacked guidance and thus an understanding of the marketplace, such dealings having been taken out his control from early on in his career.

Canaletto's repeated self-advertisement in the Daily Advertiser²⁶⁶ may be taken as an indication of his need to generate buyers for his work, but it also aligned him more strongly with the print and book market rather than as a painter of great standing. One advert directly linked his work to a print seller, pleasure garden and a guidebook; an action which would seem to undermine his status as an artist and simultaneously lowered his target audience.

It was in a sense a wise option as topography was at the top end of the engravings market compared to its difficult status in oil painting. England had not been traditionally associated with topographical engravings, which were perceived as more in the European tradition. Indeed many of the earlier prints of London were produced by foreign artists such as Hollar (whose patron was the Earl of Arundel)²⁶⁷ and Johannes Kip. However engravings were increasingly popular, with a proliferation of London publishers specialising in town prospects,²⁶⁸ and by 1760 English prints were dominant with in the European market.

Topography and engraving were also linked through the production of maps such as Roque's map,²⁶⁹ and also through the association between engravings and antiquities. For example, Hollar had produced Monasticon Anglicanum and also The History of St. Paul's described by Graham Perry as 'triumphs of the preservationist spirit of the antiquarians.'²⁷⁰ Samuel and Nathaniel Buck travelled annually with the Society of Antiquaries²⁷¹ for whom they engraved 'urban records' of the places visited by the society from 1726 onwards. The linkage between property ownership and engravings was minimal possibly as engravings were not individual pieces of art, and were cheaper and more

²⁶⁶ See Appendices Three and Six for examples

²⁶⁷ The Earl of Arundel also bought Van Dyck to England and employed Inigo Jones to work on his property at Greenwich and was also a patron of Daniel Mytens

²⁶⁸ For example: John Harris, Henry Overton, John Bowles, Thomas Bowles and Thomas Bakewell, all of whom had connections to Canaletto.

²⁶⁹ Roque's map was dedicated to Richard Hoare, Mayor of London, who was to leave office in November 1746 and was presented to him to by the Court of Alderman. It may be assumed that Canaletto's painting of the Mayor's procession on the river in 1746 and the subsequent engraving would have attracted similar markets.

²⁷⁰ Graham Perry, Hollar's England (Wilts, 1980) p.23

easily disseminated; yet also lent credibility by subscription lists for larger scale projects. The more public nature of engravings may be discerned from the advert by John Brindley which marketed Canaletto's prints in the General Advertiser as 'for the Ornament of Gentlemen and Ladies' apartments, Nobleman's Halls, &c. in the country...Care will be taken to take this and the undermentioned Prints into all the different Towns in England.'²⁷²

Engravings enabled Canaletto to reach a wider audience and also to advertise himself,²⁷³ but they also allowed him to depict London less as a civic ideal and ironically more of a truly public urban landscape. Twenty-four engravings of Canaletto's views of London were published in England. Compositions such as South East Prospect of Westminster Bridge (1747), Northumberland House (1753) and George Bickham's 'A view of the monument erected in 'memory of the dreadful Fire in the year 1666'²⁷⁴ provide an easily understood and easily disseminated overview of the cityscape. The most popular engravings of all were Canaletto's four views of Vauxhall pleasure gardens published by Robert Sayer²⁷⁵ which were continually republished until 1794.²⁷⁶

Canaletto's drawings also reveal a less formal, rigid and geometric landscape. Pen and wash compositions such as Old London Bridge and London from Pentonville provide the beholder with a relaxed, almost mediaeval, picturesque landscape. His drawings also provide less crystalline depictions of the river, often with more river traffic, and a more 'lively' staffage. The Western Arches of Westminster Bridge shows men at work on the bridge, figures engaged in active spectatorship and watermen crowded beneath the arches on their boats. The existence of such drawings reveal that Canaletto's depictions were not characterised by their stillness and opalescence through stylistic ossification but through deliberate restraint. Certainly this was a result of the expectations of the medium, but this only reinforces the shared philosophies of 'taste' and humanism.

²⁷¹ The link between the engraving of topographical scenes and civic idealism is represented in some respects by Sir Joseph Aylotte who was both first clerk to the Commissioners of Westminster Bridge and Vice President of the Society of Antiquaries.

²⁷² General Advertiser 2nd June 1747 quoted from Timothy Clayton, The English Print 1688-1802 (London and New Haven, 1997) p.121

²⁷³ The existence of a possible self-portrait suggests there may have been plans to produce a catalogue of his works whilst in London. The portrait of Canaletto depicts him in front of a backdrop of St Paul's with a drawing of the dome to his right. The composition is framed with a stone oval which reads 'Antonio de Canale origine Civis Venetus... Il celebre Canale.' FJB Watson believes that it is a self-portrait as the dome of St Paul's is identical to that in the Duke of Richmond's painting of the Thames. Watson also argued that it was possibly painted to be engraved for a cover for a collection of engravings as it was so similar to the version engraved by Visentini. However few support the idea that it was indeed painted by Canaletto himself. FJB Watson 'A self-portrait by Canaletto' Burlington Magazine 1956 pp.295-296

²⁷⁴ Based on a Canaletto drawing that cannot be traced

²⁷⁵ Engraved by Edward Rooker and J.S Muller

²⁷⁶ Malcolm Warner, The Image of London: Views by Travellers and Émigrés 1500-1920 (London, 1987) p.44

Thus we have seen that Canaletto presented through his paintings a 'public' London based on the definition of an elite; of aristocratic overlordship, ecclesiastical presence and civic pageantry. A schematic topography mirrored in the prolific urban histories and guidebooks to London.²⁷⁷

In turn a view of a city typified by 'private vices' is offered as a literary alternative in the form of texts such as the Devil on Crutches and a Morning Walk, while a philosophical opposite may be found in the work of Mandeville.

In reality it may be seen that the concept of a 'disinterested attitude' merely protected the reality of economic motivation and reflected glory. Canaletto's increasing inability to appeal to *private* interests in turn dictated his depiction of truly *public* spaces such as the pleasure gardens. Thus the next chapter deals with his depiction of Vauxhall and Ranelagh, and through the theme of public sociability also evaluates his paintings of St. James's Park.

²⁷⁷ Such as Maitland's History of London (1739 and 1756) Stow's Survey Vol. I and II (1743) John Bowles London described and the History and Present State of the British Isles (1743)

Chapter Three

Rus in Urbes: Pleasure Gardens and Parkland as Public Space

‘There smiling pleasure, gay delight
Mix, and confound each rank and right;
These plains which constant joys supply,
Delight the taste, the ear and eye’
(Madame du Bocage, 1750)²⁷⁸

Canaletto’s paintings of the pleasure gardens²⁷⁹ and the resultant engravings, by dint of their subject matter, seem to rest uneasily with the concept of the civic ideal. The gardens should be understood as signifying Canaletto’s attempt to cater for a wider audience and thus generate sales in the face of decreasing commissions. The gardens in some respect represent a truly public space: areas of urban space criticised but accepted for social mixing. Similarly St. James’s Park was also an area typified by a lack of social homogeneity and like Vauxhall enjoyed a notorious reputation. All three gardens were designated areas of spectatorship; areas where one went to see and be seen. ‘We have divers sorts of Walks about London, in some you go to see and be seen, in others neither to see nor to be seen, but like a Noun Substantive to be Felt, Heard and Understood.’²⁸⁰ The depictions of the gardens allow the beholder to examine the dimensions of public and private space through the analysis of modes of scrutiny, spectacle and perambulation.

St. James’s Park may be differentiated from the pleasure gardens for despite royal presence the absence of an entrance fee made the park the most public and mixed of spaces. ‘Coachmen, Footmen, Chairmen, all in an uproar about *St. James’s Palace* – City Tradesmen with *full bellies* and *empty minds*, gaping at the Nobility and Quality as they pass from Court.’²⁸¹ Indeed it was royal presence itself which directly contributed to the dubious reputation of the park for there were no powers of

²⁷⁸ Malcolm Warner, *The Image of London: Views by Travellers and Émigrés 1500-1920* (London, 1987) p.129

²⁷⁹ The pleasure gardens had become by the end of the eighteenth century, an intrinsic part of the London season. The four main London gardens were: Cuper’s, Marylebone, Ranelagh and Vauxhall, but there were many imitations in existence. Canaletto both painted and drew scenes of the two main pleasure gardens: Ranelagh and Vauxhall. *The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh* is likely to have been painted as a pendant to the painting of *Vauxhall, A View of Centre Cross Walk* (both sold at Christies in 1999) but unfortunately there is no early recorded provenance of either picture. Thomas Hollis commissioned a painting of the Rotunda at Ranelagh which is dated at 1754. It is believed that Canaletto made at least two drawings of Ranelagh as two engravings exist: *A view of the Rotundo, House and Gardens, &c. at Ranelagh* and *A view of the Rotundo, House and Gardens at Ranelagh with an exact representation of the Jubilee Ball as it appeared May 24th 1751 being the Birth Day of his Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales*.

²⁸⁰ Tom Brown, *Amusements Serious and Comical* (London, 1700) p.54

²⁸¹ *Hell upon Earth or the Town in an uproar* (London, 1729) p.7

arrest for any crime except treason.²⁸² Thus the area attracted beggars and prostitutes, both of which are evident in Canaletto's work. A beggar sits casually under a tree in the far left of the composition The Old Horse Guards, London from St. James's Park²⁸³ (1749) and a prostitute raising her skirts to reveal a red shoe is visible again to the left of the painting.

As with the pleasure gardens the pathways and walks, laid out by Le Nôtre, were central to its attractions. Out of all the walks the Mall was the most fashionable. Indeed Jonathan Tyers the proprietor of Vauxhall advertised his gardens by sending people dressed in the height of fashion to promenade the Mall whilst speaking loudly of the weather and of their plans to go to Vauxhall.²⁸⁴ English Architecture: or the Public Buildings of London and Westminster describes the Park as 'a kind of garden to the people of London' noting that 'tis very seldom that so large a piece of ground is to be had for amusement so near the metropolis of a trading kingdom'.²⁸⁵ This text included engravings of the park amongst those of Wren's churches and of sites such as Greenwich and Banqueting House.

The use of public space for the private sport of others provides the opportunity for the ultimate dissection of the dimensions of space and human interaction. It was a concept that provided much material for contemporary literature. A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange describes the Mall as the place for: 'Ladies to shew their fine Clothes and the Product of their Toilet, the Men, to observe all the Beauties.... Everyone here is curious in examining those who pass them, and are generally very nice and very malicious.'²⁸⁶ This sense of scrutiny is echoed in Fanny Burney's Evelina (1788) in which Evelina relayed to Reverend Mr Villers that 'the ladies were so much dressed that Miss Mervan and I could do nothing but look at them.'²⁸⁷

²⁸² Elizabeth Einberg, The Old Horse Guards from St James's Park Tate Gallery pamphlet (London,1992)

²⁸³ Elizabeth Einberg believed that the Old Horse Guards was painted for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn owner of No.1 Downing Street. Alternatively Jane Farrington believes that as with Whitehall and the Privy Garden Canaletto would have been aware that it was part of London about to be re-developed, as plans for rebuilding had been proposed in the early 1740s. Jane Farrington and Michael Liversidge, Canaletto and England (London, 1993) p.80. In 1745, the Secretary at War made a memorandum which noted that it was not safe for Royal coaches to pass under the gateway, men on duty were in danger of falling masonry and the chimneys were likely to catch fire. Plans for rebuilding were delayed by Scottish rebellion. The New Horse Guards were designed by William Kent and completed by Vardy in 1753. The Old Horse Guards was advertised for viewing in the Daily Advertiser in July 1749, and bought by Lord Radnor in 1756, the provenance in between is unknown. Canaletto painted another view of the Old Horse Guards in 1749 depicting the Banqueting Hall in the centre and painted the New Horse Guards circa November 1752 to 1753

²⁸⁴ W. S Scott, Green Retreats: The story of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859 (London,1955) p.27

²⁸⁵ English Architecture: or the public buildings of London and Westminster (London, 1755) p.59

²⁸⁶ A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange (London, 1744) p.4

²⁸⁷ Fanny Burney, Evelina (Oxford, 1982) Reproduction of the 1788 edition p.26

St. James's Park served a dichotomous role as both a designated area for the perambulations of aristocrats and as an established part of the 'clandestine erotic topography of the London male homosexual subculture.'²⁸⁸ The erotic topography of the park is evident through the presence of prostitutes and homosexuals. The park enjoyed a dubious reputation due to the perceived dangers of open parkland, especially areas not lit at night, and the opportunities that such space offered for deviant sexual behaviour. Such associations create stigmatised concepts of open public space that remain today. However it is interesting to note that the idea of sexual licentiousness was ironically expressed in some literary texts in terms of enclosure rather than exposure, with one text describing the open parkland as an 'all-sin-sheltering grove'.²⁸⁹

The use of body space in public is an added dimension to the essence of an existent erotic topography and one not limited to the discourse of humanism or the sexual implication of scrutiny alone. The depiction in Canaletto's composition of men urinating²⁹⁰ seems slight compared to the sight relayed by Cassanova to Lord Pembroke of: 'six or seven people shitting in the bushes with their hinder parts turned towards the Publick', a sight which Pembroke assured him was commonplace.²⁹¹ The opportunity for sexual adventure is evident in a diary entry made by James Boswell on the 24th June 1763. 'I went into St. James's Park and picked up a young *Brimstone*...I agreed with her for Six Pence: we went to the bottom of the park arm in arm...I dipped my *Machine* in the Canal and then perform'd most manfully...'²⁹²

The possible 'contamination' of morals through proximity to such an area is brilliantly captured in J Forester's The Polite Philosopher: 'A GOOD Family but no Fortune, threw DRACO into the Army when he was very young. *Dancing, Fencing, - and a Smattering of French*, are all the Education either his friends bestowed, or his Capacity would allow him to receive. He has been now two Years

²⁸⁸ Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilisation (London, 1986) p.50

²⁸⁹ A Ramble in St. James's Park Earl of Rochester (1732) taken from E.J Burford, (ed.) Bawdy Verse, A Pleasant Collection (London, 1982) p.159

²⁹⁰ Three people are depicted urinating against the wall – similar to the View of the Privy Garden from Richmond House. Elizabeth Einberg states: 'It is a matter of speculation whether the aligning of the figures with the Union Jack on the Parade above was deliberate- it could have amused a client with anti-Hanovarian sympathies.' Einberg notes that Duke of Cumberland 'Butcher of Culloden' often attended drills and that Sir William Watkins Wynn was an active Jacobite who supported the Stuart Pretender King in 1745. Elizabeth Einberg, The Old Horse Guards from St James's Park (London, 1992) Tate Pamphlet

²⁹¹ E.J Burford, Royal St. James's: Being a Story of Kings, Clubmen and Courtesans (London, 1988) p.48

²⁹² *ibid.* E.J Burford p.47

in Town, and from *Swearing, Drinking, and Debauching* Country Wenches (the general Rout of a military Rake) the Air of St. James's has given his Vices a new Turn.²⁹³

The subject of St. James's Park may have ostensibly been selected due to the changing landscape caused by the re-building of the Horse Guards, but its appeal was perhaps more deeply linked to the parkland itself as an area notorious for the observation of others and illicit sexual encounters. The public appeal of Canaletto's depictions of St. James's Park and the Horse Guards is evident through the popularity of the engravings of the subject which included the New Horse Guards (incomplete) published in November 1752 and the completed version in November 1753. It is significant that despite (or possibly due to) the popularity of the engravings the paintings themselves did not sell.

The concepts of eroticism and public display were also central to the attractions of Vauxhall²⁹⁴ and Ranelagh.²⁹⁵ It is fitting that 'Spectatum veniunt, veniunt Spectantur ut ipsae' a quotation from Ovid is used for the frontispiece of *A Trip to Vauxhall* by Hercules Mac Sturdy (London, 1737). The pleasure gardens were an intrinsic part of London's social calendar and much of their attraction lay in the opportunities to observe both the amusements provided and also other people. As we have seen, before the building of Westminster Bridge the journey to Vauxhall itself became incorporated into the general spectacle. Horace Walpole wrote of how the singing and music began even before the party had entered the gardens: 'We got into the best order we could and marched to our barge, with a boat of French horns attending, and little Ashe singing. We paraded some time up and down the river, and at last debarked at Vauxhall.'²⁹⁶

The fundamental attraction of the gardens lay in the open opportunities for spectatorship and spectacle in public space. The methods of encouraging spectatorship through optical and aural stimulation, the deliberate representation of the self in public and the modes of viewing others within the same public arena all allow for the ultimate evaluation of the relationship between public and

²⁹³ J. Forrester, *The Polite Philosopher* (London, 1734) p.26

²⁹⁴ Vauxhall Gardens opened c.1661 and finally closed in 1859. The gardens were originally known as the New Spring Gardens, in contrast to the Old Spring Gardens at Charing Cross. By the end of the seventeenth century Vauxhall enjoyed a reputation for impropriety and sexual intrigue. Jonathan Tyers leased the garden from an Elizabeth Masters in 1728. In 1752 George Doddington sold the moiety of the estate to Tyers for £3800 and sold the remainder in 1758 again to Tyers, making him sole proprietor. Jonathan Tyers died in July 1767 following which the gardens passed to his two sons.

²⁹⁵ Ranelagh House was built by Earl of Ranelagh (paymaster to the forces under James II) in 1690. The gardens were sold in 1733. Lacy, a patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, made arrangements to turn Ranelagh into a pleasure garden. Ranelagh opened, on the 5th April 1742 with a public breakfast, as a direct rival to Vauxhall. Its main advantage over Vauxhall was the Rotunda with its large central fireplace. Ranelagh was the most expensive, and therefore most exclusive, pleasure garden with an entrance fee of 2/6d

private space. In his excellent article The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Siting of the Viewer,²⁹⁷ Peter De Bolla evaluated the political and erotic dimensions of spectatorship within cultural topography and defined several methods of semiotic practice. These definitions provide the basis from which we can begin to examine the politics and dynamics of display and observation in the pleasure gardens that Canaletto depicted.

De Bolla stresses the distinction between the glance and the gaze as methods of viewing. The gaze in contrast to the glance 'penetrates and organises the visual field in order to arrive at a meaning'.²⁹⁸ 'The glance is quite distinct as a viewing activity, requires a different mode of address and arrives at a different viewpoint. In this mode the eye moves hurriedly across surfaces, delighting in variety, that cornerstone of mid-eighteenth century aesthetics, and as it moves around the enclosure of the scopic field it feels itself to be located, sited within the virtual spacings of visuality through which it moves.'²⁹⁹

That the glance was the overriding method of spectatorship in the gardens might be seen through the decorations and other spectacles used in the gardens, particularly at Vauxhall. It may be argued, to take de Bolla's term, that moving through 'virtual spacings of visuality' was recreated tangibly through devices such as triumphal arches, the obelisk, trompe l'oeils and other various and often changing decorations. The emphasis within Vauxhall Gardens was on stimulation rather than on contemplation; through the use of images to conclude the main walks,³⁰⁰ the dramatic way in which the pictures in the supper booths were all suddenly revealed, and the sudden illumination of a thousands lamps at once.

'Here are fine pavilions, shady walks, illuminated by above one thousand lamps, so disposed that they all take fire together, almost as quick as lightening, and dart such a sudden blaze as is perfectly surprising' (England's Gazetteer, 1751).³⁰¹

Each 'spectacle' deliberately offered stimulation through 'visual assault' in order to invoke a shared sense of amusement.

²⁹⁶ Mollie Sands, An Invitation to Ranelagh (London, 1946) p.25

²⁹⁷ Peter de Bolla, 'The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Siting of the Viewer' Taken from Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (ed.) Visions and Textuality (London, 1995) pp. 282-295

²⁹⁸ *ibid.* de Bolla p.284

²⁹⁹ *ibid.* de Bolla p.285

³⁰⁰ Each walkway was terminated by a painted landscape. In 1728, Batty Langely advised in his book, New Principles of Gardening, to place painted or real ruins at the end of walks.

³⁰¹ Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p.292

Similar experiences of visual 'assault' were able to be found at Ranelagh: 'I have acknowledg'd myself charm'd at my Entrance; you will wonder therefore when I tell you, that satiety follow'd: In five Minutes I was familiar with the whole and every Part, in the next 5 Indifference took Place, in 5 more my Eyes grew dazzled, my head grew giddy, and all night I dreamt of Vanity Fair.'³⁰²

Musical bushes were another rather bizarre effect that contributed to the rather surreal theatrical atmosphere at Vauxhall. These were musical bands hidden in pits and covered with foliage that would play 'fairy-music' in the Rural Downs. Lockman wrote 'In these Downs were three openings (last season) covered with shrubs; whence others call'd the subterraneous sounds heard there, the Fairy Music... [which] put them in mind of that imaginary Being call'd the *Genius of the Wood*.'³⁰³ This took place until the mid-eighteenth century when it was found the 'natural damp of the earth' was rather 'prejudicial to the instruments'.³⁰⁴ Such aural and optical amusements were fundamental to the concept of public spectacle and a sense of collective public sociability.

The gardens relied on the pleasure taken in illusion and visual fantasy and the fact that more pleasure was taken in contrived nature rather than in nature itself. Addison noted in The Pleasure of the Imagination: 'We are quickly tired with looking upon hills and valleys, where everything continues fixed and settled in the same place and posture, but find our thoughts a little agitated and relieved at the sight of such objects that are ever in motion, and sliding away from beneath the eye of the beholder.'³⁰⁵ The fleeting nature of the trompe l'oeils and the plasterboard monuments was therefore ideally suited to the charming and frivolous nature of Vauxhall. In many respects the subject of the trompe l'oeil was secondary to the illusion itself but yet also added to the sense of theatre within the gardens by providing almost a 'backdrop' to events. In Canaletto's drawing View of the Centre Cross Walk &c. in Vauxhall Gardens (engraved by Edward Rooker, 1751) one man steps out of a walk as if from the wing of a theatre, poised to doff his tricorne at an obsequious seeming man stood with his head tilted back and with one leg behind the other. The effect is quite rigid and staged with the trompe l'oeil of cascades and classical ruins providing a theatrical back cloth to the staffage. The

³⁰² 'Of the luxury of the English; and a Description of Ranelagh Gardens and Vauxhall, in a letter from a Foreigner to his friend in Paris' Gentleman's Magazine June 1742 p.419 Also quoted in de Bolla's article.

³⁰³ T.J Edelstein, Vauxhall Gardens (New Haven, 1983) p.26

³⁰⁴ op cit. Wroth p.302 Cited in but not accredited.

³⁰⁵ Joseph Addison, Essays on the Pleasure of the Imagination (London, 1813) Essay Two p.16

beholder himself is almost deceived into viewing the individual components of the trompe l'oeil as natural features of the garden.

De Bolla defines the third method of viewing as one: 'that is a catoptric mode in which the eye recognises self-reflection in order to register its own power to see and recognise its instrumentality in viewing.'³⁰⁶ This method of observing through the use of mirrors provides the beholder with a sense of having a deeper field of vision and a greater intimacy with one's subject. This is as the spectator will have his back turned to the field of activity in order to view it. The principal supper room at Ranelagh also known as the Pavilion or Hall of Mirrors provided an optimum space for this mode of viewing.

While de Bolla's psychological theory is couched in very modern terminology it was not an alien concept to contemporary observers. That vanity and display are implicit in the use of mirrors to observe oneself or others is evident in a verse from *A trip to VAUXHALL' or a General SATYR on the TIMES* by Hercules Mac-Sturdy.³⁰⁷

See yonder gay Flirtilla laughing walk,
And with embroider'd Strepson seems to talk;
Each syllable she utters, hollow land,
She answers him, but speaks to all the Crowd.
This couple for each other are design'd,
But she is making love to all Mankind!
And he, whose only View in Wedlock's Pelf,
Can find no charms in any but himself!
The dear, dear Looking-Glass, his sole Delight,
No others Eyes so black, no Teeth so white.'

This method of observation also allows one to explore the eroticism of scrutiny. They are not unrelated, as the awkward flush of one under scrutiny is often linked to the sexual. For example there is much contemporary and literary evidence of the awkwardness of young women subjected to the prolonged and amorous gaze, moreover gazing upon young girls was often done under the guise of looking into a mirror or upon a picture in a supper booth, thus suggesting 'deceptive visuality.' The use of a medium to watch oneself viewing another links voyeurism with public display. It is also intrinsically linked to the concept of theatricality through the conscious recognition of oneself within

³⁰⁶ Peter de Bolla, 'The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Siting of the Viewing' in Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (ed.) *Visions and Textuality* (London, 1995) p.285

³⁰⁷ *A Trip to Vauxhall: or a General Satyr on the times with some explanatory notes by Hercules Mac-Sturdy* (London, 1737) In the Guildhall Library.

a given public arena. Indeed it was noted that in the Pavilion at Ranelagh: 'If the spectator stands in the center (sic), which is under the great chandelier, he may see himself reflected in all the glasses'.³⁰⁸

The essence of theatricality within the gardens was deliberate and (to borrow Hercules MacSturdy's words) went beyond the idea of an individual 'speaking to all the crowd'. In many respects the gardens were in fact replacement theatres for the summer months.

'I am to observe to you, that, during the fine season, the Theatres are shut up; but that the Vulgar, who, by the way, I am told, make no inconsiderable Part of the Audience, may not be long deprived of a Pleasure they relish so much, and understand so little, certain Places, resembling perhaps what Theatres were in their origin, are opened at the extremities of the Town, where the Spectators are entertain'd with a Medley of Vaulting, Tumbling, Rope-dancing, Singing and sometimes Farces, and regale themselves, in the Interval, with Eating, Drinking, Smoaking, or making Love to the Ladies of Pleasure.'³⁰⁹

This sense of theatre was also prevalent through the encouragement of collective participation.

'*Everyone* at first entering the Rotundo at this time, feels the same Sensation as at hearing suddenly a very fine concert; the architecture having the same effect on the eye as music on the ear, the mind is absorbed in an extacy (sic).'³¹⁰ Collective experiences were more basic at Vauxhall, as each night between nine o'clock and quarter past a tin cascade previously concealed by a landscape painting would be revealed after the ringing of a bell. De Bolla writes of the cascade that 'Perhaps the Pavlovian registers to this ringing of the bell are too insistent for us, but there is nevertheless a coercive feel to this communal fantasy deception, as well as a desire to be seen participating in this group activity.'³¹¹ However this is somewhat overstated, as once again, good manners or 'taste' were often suggested through a disinterested aesthetic attitude. Albeit fictional, a letter by Oliver Goldsmith and a poem by Ned Ward Junior both relate the experience of a widow, a Mrs Tibbs and the tin cascade.

'Mrs Tibbs, who had seen the waterworks a hundred times, and could accordingly assume a disinterested attitude, did not stop her song when the master of their supper box came to inform her that the display was about to begin. The widow, however, who seemed to have gone to the garden purposely to there see the cascade, struggled between good breeding and curiosity. Good breeding was almost victorious, but at the last moment- the moment of Mrs Tibbs' final note curiosity gained the upper hand. She was struggling to her feet to bounce of to the spectacle at the conclusion of the

³⁰⁸ From a clipping in the collection London Play Palaces 6 (Bodleian) 'A description of Vauxhall Gardens 1766 GM' probably Gentleman's Magazine p.354 'If the spectator stands in the center (sic), which is under the great chandelier, he may see himself reflected in all the glasses'

³⁰⁹ 'Of the luxury of the English; and a Description of Ranelagh Gardens and Vauxhall, in a letter from a Foreigner to his friend in Paris' Gentleman's Magazine June 1742 p.419

³¹⁰ The Ambulator, or the Stranger's Companion in a tour around within a Circuit of Twenty-Five Miles (London, 1774) p.144 My own italics

³¹¹ Peter de Bolla, 'The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Sitting of the Viewing' in Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (ed.) Visions and Textuality (London, 1995) p.290

song when the waiter reappeared and informed them that the waterworks were over. 'The waterworks over!' she cried, 'The waterworks over already! That's impossible! They can't be over so soon!'³¹²

Similarly by the 1770s it was fashionable to arrive at the Rotunda at Ranelagh by eleven o'clock - one hour after the evening concert.³¹³ The idea that taste was dictated through a disinterested manner and being under rather than overwhelmed by spectacle may be seen through contemporary literature. Those overwhelmed by the experience were either naïve young ladies who then compromised themselves and were later saved such as in Evelina or those from the lower orders such as 'Colin' in Shepherd Colin's Description of Spring Gardens- Vauxhall to his wife. In these verses 'Colin' relates to his wife his overwhelming experiences in the 'paradise' of Vauxhall. 'Methought, when I first entered, Such splendours round me shone, Into a world I ventured, Where rose another sun.'³¹⁴

Such sentiment would make it very difficult for Canaletto to paint the pleasure gardens as public places of spectacle and amusement. Indeed his paintings of the gardens are closer to landscapes, and are painted only in daylight despite (specifically in the case of Vauxhall) the gardens' quintessentially nocturnal nature. Canaletto's paintings and engravings such as A View Of The Temple of Comus &c. in Vauxhall Gardens (drawn Canaletto and engraved by Muller in 1751) also include family groups. In 'A View of the Temple of Comus' the supper booths, with the exception of one seated couple, are empty and the foreground is dominated by a group of men, women and children looking at the Temple and the people around them. However it is notable that despite the polite nature of the depiction and its emphasis upon family groups the sense of collective observation is well developed.

Similarly this sense of promenade and spectatorship is captured through the depiction of groups of women and couples in the Canaletto and Rooker engraving A View of the Grand Walk &c. In Vauxhall Garden taken from the entrance. This engraving may be compared to one by Muller, drawn by Wale (1751) of Vauxhall Gardens - shewing the Grand Walk at the entrance of the Gardens, and the Orchestra with the Musick playing where the sense of observation and display is again very strong. Ironically the orchestra is not central to the piece; instead crowds mill to the right of the picture, and men are depicted with their necks craned in spectatorship. Unlike in Canaletto's

³¹² J.G Southworth, Vauxhall Gardens (New York, 1941) p.48-9

³¹³ Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p.206

³¹⁴ Shepherd Colin's Description of Spring Gardens Vauxhall to his wife (1741) taken from J.G Southworth, Vauxhall Gardens (New York, 1941) pp.33-34

composition the concept of flirting and coquetry is more firmly developed, with gentlemen escorting ladies by the elbow or pulling at the wrist.

The promotion of conscious display and observation in public was not limited to Vauxhall alone. On May 26th 1742, Horace Walpole wrote about his visit to Ranelagh and the 'vast amphitheatre, finely gilt, painted and illuminated; into which everybody that loves eating, drinking, staring or crowding, is admitted for twelve pence.'³¹⁵ Indeed this openness of observation is evident in the Canaletto/Parr engraving An Inside View of the Rotunda in Ranelagh Gardens (December, 1751). 'Taking a round' as promenading the rotunda was known, was the main attraction of Ranelagh, 'this amusement of walking round the rotundo, may be considered as one of the pleasures of the place; and indeed, great numbers of both sexes take a particular delight in it.'³¹⁶

The gardens were often criticised for social mixing and the lack of class discrimination shown in the admittance of its customers. However it is possible that the most intimidating experience of open public display is not as de Bolla suggests the underlying threat to the socio-cultural balance, but instead the potential for humiliation to those who sought to appear as people of rank. This therefore brings us back to the conscious representation of the self in public and the concept of a truly public space. The humiliation of individuals often provided much amusement to those who took pleasure in the misfortune of others. The London Magazine³¹⁷ expounded in great detail upon the dangers posed by male costume to those not accustomed to wearing formal clothes. The sword caused great angst for those who could not 'keep the nimble dancing instrument from getting between their legs, to their no small mortification, and to the diversion of others.'

'Some, for fear of double misfortunes to their toes, as well as their toasting irons, hold their Swords strait (sic), and turn their toes in, just like a Dutchman steering his fly-boat; but even this precaution won't do: for the direct point behind is either sticking the gentleman's skins, or poking into the furbelows of the ladies petticoats.'

The bag-wig was perhaps the most awkward item of attire:

'the stiffness it gives to a person who is unused to wear it is immediately seen: for you will observe him jerking his head, first one way and then another ... and if it falls off, which is not a (sic) uncommon case, the confusion is compleated (sic), and the unbagged gentleman is under the disagreeable necessity of pocketing his foppery, and making his retreat.'

³¹⁵ Quoted in Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of The Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p.199

³¹⁶ The Ambulator, or the Strangers Companion in a tour around London within a Circuit of Twenty-Five Years (London, 1774) p.143

³¹⁷ 'Harlequin in Ranelagh' no:XXII London Magazine 1774 p.212

The idea that one would reveal their true rank through public display was not limited to dress alone. The price of food was notoriously exorbitant at both establishments and thus socially divisive. At Vauxhall champagne cost eight shillings a bottle, burgundy six and claret or hock five.³¹⁸ The food prices were as notorious as their scant proportions:

A chicken at best, is not a big bird
Id est-if it's bought at Vauxhall.
Because, not withstanding whatever you've heard,
They run here remarkably small³¹⁹

The Connoisseur related a story about an elderly gentleman at Ranelagh forced to take supper by his two daughters and his overbearing wife. The chickens he expostulated were half a crown each and no bigger than a sparrow, whilst the ham: 'A shilling an ounce! that is sixteen shillings per pound!- A reasonable profit truly! Let me see- suppose now the whole ham weighs thirty pounds: -are a shilling an ounce ...why your master makes exactly 24 pounds every ham...'³²⁰

Thus despite the public nature of the gardens the amusements themselves were often socially divisive, partly as we have seen through the idea of disinterested superiority but also through material cost. Moreover deliberate steps such as the separation of liveried servants into a separate 'coop' were taken to ensure that social mixing was to a certain extent controlled.

In Canaletto's paintings of the pleasure gardens the staffage depicted seem of a similar social status. Social diversity is more evident in The Chinese Pavilions in Vauxhall engraved for Robert Sayer³²¹ in which poor countrywomen, although marginalised to the left of the picture, are in stark contrast to the finely dressed women also depicted. The comparison is openly made between classes to the right of the composition where two men are seen shaking hands each facing one another with the right leg extended, holding their tricorns in a stooping bow. Behind in a similar but parodic pose a poor young man stands with what appears to be a plate or a cap in his hand, his right leg extended with a coat over his right hand and holding a handkerchief or parcel. It is not clear what he is doing but the mirrored stance is almost certainly deliberate.

³¹⁸ David Coke, The Muse's Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786 (Gainsborough's House, 1978) p.31

³¹⁹ Alfred Crowquill (ed.), The Vauxhall Papers cited in J.G Southworth, Vauxhall Gardens (New York, 1941) p.137

³²⁰ The Connoisseur no. 68 1755 p.206 from cutting in C27 GLPR (Guildhall Library, London)

³²¹ Guildhall L/VAU/GAR (no artist or date)

The concept of codified affirmations of rank through display and almost staged patterns of perambulation complement the idea of the gardens as a theatre or indeed as a pseudo-court. The layout of Vauxhall Gardens provides an interesting insight into the political dimensions of spacing. The overall plan of the garden may best be seen in the engraving by Samuel Wale (drawn by J. S Muller) A General Prospect of Vauxhall Gardens Shewing One View of the disposition of the whole Gardens (c.1751). The main entrance into Vauxhall through the proprietor's house from the river was obviously due to the ease of access afforded by the water, but it also helped to link the gardens with a sense of grandeur and power. As we have seen, where geographically possible the London homes of the aristocracy went down to the banks of the Thames - even at the expense of their lesser neighbours.³²²

That the river was associated with proprietorship and power is supported by the fact that the Prince's Pavilion was placed at the river entrance of the garden. If the river was seen merely as a method of easy access it is more likely that the pavilion would have been placed further away. The spacings of Vauxhall were not haphazard and in many respects the gardens possessed a clearly defined centre of royal patronage and activity bounded by almost compulsory routes of perambulation, a concept reminiscent of the court ritual of the royal palaces of Europe. This eclectic blend of country garden and court culture is depicted in the second verse of Lockman's poem Rural Beauty, or Vauxhall Garden:

'See a grand Pavilion yonder; Rising near embowering Shades, There a Temple strikes with wonder; In view of Colonnades; Art and Nature (kindly lavish) Here their mingled beauties yield: Equal, were the Pleasures ravish Of the court and of the field.'³²³

The nexus of power was concentrated in the centre front area of the garden behind the Prince's Pavilion. This area included the rotunda, supper room, grove and pavilions. Liveried servants were prevented from mixing within this 'amphitheatre' of visibility as they were constrained within their separate enclosure. The inner part of the gardens was seen to be the most respectable, perhaps as it was the most visible. Thus the peripheral walks were seen as less respectable than the more visible

³²² On a lighter note the Thames may also be seen as the ultimate serpentine river so fashionable in contemporary garden plans. 'Every Man now, be his Fortune what it will, is to be *doing something at his Place*, as the Fashionable Phrase is; and you hardly meet any Body, who after the first Compliments, does not inform you, that he is in Mortar *and the moving of Earth*; the modest Terms for Building and Gardening. *One large room, a Serpentine River, and a Wood* are become the most absolute Necessaries of Life...' Gentleman's Magazine December 1739 p.640

inner walks and the decision to break away from social voyeurism equated with a lack of respectability. Tom Brown wrote that those who had ‘an inclination to be private take delights in the close walks of the Spring Gardens, -where both mutually serve one another as guides to lose their way, and the windings and turnings are so intricate, that the most experienced mothers have often lost themselves in looking for their daughters.’³²⁴

When Jonathan Tyers took over the lease in 1728 the irregular pathways were straightened. The marginalisation of the ‘wildernesses’ into constrained, almost geometric plots provided a visual metaphor of restraint. The dominance of long walkways added to a sense that virtue and illumination had conquered the illicit and the shadowed. The tidying up of the corners and the straightening of paths in Vauxhall was therefore necessary due to the association of alleys and dark passages with sexual immorality, due both to the opportunities provided by them and possibly also through the symbolism of the secret chasm. Thus the pathways of the pleasure gardens were understood in terms of humanism. William Hogarth remarked in The Analysis of Beauty (1753) that the serpentine path ‘leads the eye a wanton kind of chase.’³²⁵ The use of humanist terminology is also evident in Evelina. Evelina criticises Vauxhall ‘The Garden is very pretty, but too formal; I should have been better pleased, had it consisted less of strait walks, where’ (and here she quotes from Pope’s ‘Moral Essays’ Epistle IV) ‘Grove nods at Grove, each alley has its brother’.³²⁶

Thus Vauxhall deviated from the increasing trend away from geometrical regularity and uniformity in garden planning. Interestingly there is no recorded contemporary evidence that it was ever necessary to partition off areas of the garden at Ranelagh. Indeed it is significant that Vauxhall, the ‘*jardin de jour*’, followed closely all the fashions of mid-eighteenth century garden features (the ruins, temples, Gothic, Chinoiserie) with the exception of serpentine, asymmetrical paths. It is perhaps feasible therefore to suggest that contrived disorder was only permissible within the private sphere or at least where respectability was stringently regulated and highly visible.

³²³ W. S. Scott, Green Retreats: The Story of Vauxhall Gardens 1661-1859 (London, 1955) p.72

³²⁴ Tom Brown, Amusements Serious and Comical (London, 1700) p.54

³²⁵ Quoted from: Bernard Denvir, The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society 1689-1789 (London, 1983) p.76

³²⁶ Fanny Burney, Evelina (Oxford, 1982) p.193 However her assumptions are proved incorrect as she is later accosted by a group of gentlemen on the dark walks only several pages later.

It was this fear of the connotations of the private self being removed from the public arena and the similar fear of hidden identity and moreover hidden status, which led to the condemnation of the masquerade or ridotto.³²⁷ The mask may be understood in terms of providing the ultimate private fantasised space within an intrinsically public environment. 'In the masquerade high and low mingle together in a fantasised invisible space behind a mask; it precisely marks the distinction between what can be seen and what must not.'³²⁸ The connotations of the mask are dependant upon whether one believes that it creates a private space protecting the individual from others, or whether the mask allowed the wearer to be what they were not in a public environment. De Bolla argues that the fantasised private space behind a mask is less potent than open mixing of ranks and thus did less to undermine socio-political stability.

However Vauxhall was likely to have been viewed as more dangerous than Ranelagh where masquerades³²⁹ were most prevalent, not due to the absence of masks but as it was less exclusive as the entrance fee was cheaper. Moreover the effect of the mask was muted at Ranelagh, for as masks were 'illegal' many travelled to the gardens without them and so people often recognised each other later anyway. A newspaper clipping from Wednesday 25th 1750 (no month given) states that JPs and Civil officers will 'seize or disperse, all Persons that shall be going in MASKS, and bring them to such Punishment as the Law in that Case directs'.³³⁰

Masquerades offered an opportunity to dress extravagantly, to see and be seen. In 1765, a newspaper article stated that at Vauxhall a lady dressed in Turkish fashion 'engaged a considerable share of general Observation.'³³¹ The terminology is interesting with the connotation being that there was a stock amount of 'observation' from which one could take a share of - 'a kind of collective mediation on self and other.'³³² This is a sentiment echoed in a description of a picnic taken at Vauxhall by Walpole and a group of friends recounted to Lord Montagu in June 1750. 'In short the whole air of our party was sufficient, as you will easily imagine to take up the whole attention of the garden.'³³³

³²⁷ The authorities perceived masks to be morally and politically dangerous and masquerades were banned in 1756, although to little effect.

³²⁸ Peter de Bolla, 'The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Sitting of the Viewing' in Stephen Melville and Bill Readings (ed.) *Visions and Textuality* (London, 1995) p.291

³²⁹ Masquerades evolved from the carnival and were introduced into Britain by Heidegger in 1708. There is an anecdote that Hogarth suggested the idea of a Ridotto al Fresco at Vauxhall to save Tyers from suicide.

³³⁰ *Wroth Collection* (Museum of London) no page number or clipping citation. Vol. II

³³¹ clipping in the *Wroth Collection* (Museum of London) Vol. III p.9 dated 1765 also cited in de Bolla's article

³³² Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilisation* (London, 1986) p.4

³³³ Taken from Christopher Simon Sykes, *Private Palaces. Life in the Great London Houses* (London, 1989) p.114

While there were no defined rules concerning the costume worn at masquerades, contemporary opinion was harsh on those who were perceived to have transgressed the established bounds of decency. The Duchess of Kingston came under attack when she appeared almost naked as Iphigenia, clothed in a diaphanous dress with bared breasts and transparent side panels around her hips. Mary Montagu commented acerbically that her 'dress, or rather undress was remarkable; she was Iphigenia for the sacrifice, but so naked, the high priest might easily inspect the entrails of the victim.'³³⁴ This incident quickly gained notoriety and became a popular subject for engravings.³³⁵ Such scorn was not reserved merely for female dress. The Gentleman's Magazine in March 1770 reported scathingly upon a Captain Watson who came to a masquerade dressed (or again perhaps undressed) as Adam: 'the unavoidable indelicacy of the dress, flesh coloured silk with an apron of fig leaves worked in it, fitting the body to the utmost nicety, rendered it the contempt of the whole company.'³³⁶

A more typical costume was the domino³³⁷ but it was not necessary to come in costume at all: some merely wore a scarf or themed jewellery such as arrows and crescent moons to symbolise Diana, the huntress.³³⁸ In Canaletto's drawing (engraved by Grignion) A View of the Canal, Chinese Buildings, Rotunda &c. in Ranelagh Gardens, with the Masquerade (1752) there is an Indian Prince with a hookah but most of the company are depicted wearing dominoes, many of the women are dressed quite normally and certainly far from all are masked.

The most popular costumes of the day, according to Fox and Ribeiro, were Punch, Harlequin, sailors, witches, oriental costume and shepherds and shepherdesses. This is supported by the engravings of the period. However the costumes of Iphigenia and Adam have a disproportionate presence in contemporary engravings and the depiction of opposites such as the 'nun' flirting with the 'Turk' or 'Bishop' proved a popular metaphor of social chaos. The deliberate depiction of contrasts may be understood in terms of the idea, popular in contemporary texts, of the masquerade representing the

³³⁴ John Dixon Hunt, Vauxhall and London's Garden Theatres (Cambridge, 1985) p.41

³³⁵ There are many engravings of this subject in the Guildhall Print Room and the British Museum also has a copy of an anonymous print dating 1749 entitled Miss Chudley in the actual dress as appear'd in ye character of Iphigenia. A bare breasted woman appears again in an engraving printed by Sayer A view of the Rotundo House & gardens at Ranelagh, with an exact representation of the Jubilee Ball as it appeared May 24th 1759 being the birthday of HRH Prince of Wales. Such engravings were no doubt both a cause and effect of such notoriety.

³³⁶ 'The exotic diversion- the dress worn at masquerades in Eighteenth Century London.' Aileen Ribeiro The Connoisseur January 1978 p.11

³³⁷ Which included a tricorn, hooded cloak, black lace or silk covering the head and lower jaw, and a mask in either black velvet (loretta) or grotesquely shaped in white (larva) Celina Fox and Aileen Ribeiro, Masquerade (London, 1983) p.7

³³⁸ *ibid.* Celina Fox p.9

whole world in miniature³³⁹ with theatricality in its chaos. In Canaletto's compositions, including his engravings, there is little evidence of chaos for they instead draw upon the more polite aspects of sociability.

It is of no surprise with the potential for gender inversion and even 'corporeal' inversion (i.e. faces covered but with bodies in *deshabille*) that pamphleteers and public figures denounced masquerades as undermining the country's moral fibre. In February 1740, the Gentleman's Magazine printed a piece originally in the Daily Advertiser which defined the masquerade as a 'Nocturnal Sacrifice to Bacchus and Venus' where we 'openly encourage such Revels of Vice and Folly, instead of Sobriety and Virtue.'³⁴⁰ The earthquakes in London in February and March 1750³⁴¹, similar to that in Lisbon, were interpreted by some as a judgement by God on the immoralities of the age and specifically masquerades. The choice of analogy in the text The Theory and History of Earthquakes which blamed the earthquake on the vices of London and Westminster as 'the place where infamy appears without a mask'³⁴² is similar to de Bolla's argument despite the fact that the pamphlet specifically denounces masquerades.

In Ranelean Religion Displayed in a letter from a Hottentot of Distinction the author paints a scene where Christianity is neglected, churches rot in a state of disarray and people 'embrace a Religion ...call'd the *Worship of Pleasure*.'³⁴³ The new principal temples are the pleasure gardens of London of which 'the *Chief* about the Metropolis is *Ranelagh* from whence the sect take their Names.'³⁴⁴ The pamphlet includes new versions of the Evening Prayer, the Creed, the Lord's prayer and the Litany, and argues that the Earthquakes were sent to denounce Bishops, Priests and Deacons for trying to prevent the worship of pleasure.

'OUR Idol, on whom we have placed the Affections of our Hearts, mighty is thy Name and boundless thy power over the Children of Men. May thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in the City as it is in Court. Give us thy Wealth sufficient to defray the Expenses of our daily Pleasures. And let our Debts be paid unto us, better than we pay those to whom we are indebted...'³⁴⁵

³³⁹ From verse attached to engraving by Nathaniel Parr The Jubilee Ball after the Venetian Manner, or Masquerade at Ranelagh Gardens April 26th 1749. In the Guildhall Library GLPR C:2 RAN See Appendix Seven

³⁴⁰ Gentleman's Magazine February 1740 p.80

³⁴¹ Canaletto is known to have returned to Venice in 1750. It is presumed that he did so in order to find more work at home. It would be interesting if the earthquake in London may have also determined his return.

³⁴² The Theory and History of Earthquakes (London, 1750) pp.20-21

³⁴³ Ranelean Religion Displayed in a letter from a Hottentot of Distinction (London, 1750) p. iv

³⁴⁴ *ibid.* Ranelean Religion p. v

³⁴⁵ *ibid.* Ranelean Religion p.14 There was much contemporary interest in the amount of money 'wasted' at the Pleasure Gardens. A Trip from St. James to the Royal Exchange (London, 1744) p.39 defines Vauxhall and Ranelagh as places where 'as much Money is spent in one Evening, as would keep a family a Week formerly.'

While the principal aim of this tract clearly is to depict a capital absorbed by luxury and the consequent decline of morality, it also serves to draw upon the communal nature of the gardens. Ranelagh is depicted as replacing the church as the centre of shared experience, the meeting place of all classes and most importantly as the new seat of judgement. It has become the centre of society and ritual, and in a sense visual experience.

In contrast to these warnings of vice and degeneracy Canaletto's depictions of the gardens are the embodiment of respectability. It is probable that as Canaletto's paintings of the gardens were no doubt executed with a market and buyers in mind the social heterogeneity of the gardens was distorted and the portrayal of nocturnal revelries such as masquerades limited to engravings. The motives for entering the pleasure gardens were very different from the motives for buying an oil painting and this perhaps offers an explanation as to why Canaletto's paintings appear to be more like landscapes than any thing else. Once again the sensibilities of the 'top end' of the social scale purge the realities of the 'bottom' despite the fact that one is dependant on the other and that both coexist exist within the cityscape.

However while this chapter has evaluated spectatorship, spectacle and masquerades at Vauxhall and Ranelagh collectively as 'pleasure gardens' they were not perceived as similar in terms of respectability. Despite texts such as the Ranelean Religion Displayed Ranelagh always enjoyed a more exclusive reputation than Vauxhall. In contrast to Vauxhall, it was common to visit Ranelagh and the rotunda at day time: 'Many people of fashion visit this place in the day time, to view the rotundo, which together, with the diversity of the rural objects in and about the garden, render them perfectly agreeable.'³⁴⁶ This was possibly due to the fact that as Ranelagh did not serve alcohol³⁴⁷ and did not rely so much on spectacle it could also be enjoyed in the daytime. Ranelagh was 'held in very high esteem by the nobility and the gentry' and its short season April-July was to ensure that the gardens 'were devoted to the entertainment of the best company.'³⁴⁸ It has been suggested that the more sombre depiction of Ranelagh in the Vauxhall and Ranelagh pair View of the Grand Walk and

³⁴⁶ The Ambulator, or the Stranger's Companion in a tour around London within a Circuit of Twenty-Five Years (London, 1774) p.147

³⁴⁷ John Fielding, A Brief Description of the Cities of London and Westminster (London, 1776) p.32 notes that only tea and coffee were served at Ranelagh.

³⁴⁸ Fanny Burney, Evelina (Oxford, 1982) p.138

The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh³⁴⁹ is possibly to reflect its more respectable reputation.³⁵⁰

Thus Canaletto implicitly comments on the moral reputation of each venue without necessitating the incorporation of the 'immoral' elements of spectacle itself.

The view of the Rotunda next to Chelsea Hospital in Chelsea College with Ranelagh and the Rotunda³⁵¹ deliberately links Ranelagh by association to royal benevolence and the virtues of the 'public man'. The reflected respectability inferred by its proximity to the hospital is evident in W.H Draper's The Morning Walk; or City Encompassed. A poem in Blank Verse

'... For lo! Great Surrey's Heights
And smiling Vales beneath; fair Ranelagh's top,
Gay peeping, in high circumambient form,
And thou St. George! thou mansion which displays
Fair Charity! and as we nearer view
Her amiable feat, more greatly still
To the o'erflowing mind, where sick and lame
Find refuge from disease.'³⁵²

There were links between the Earl of Ranelagh³⁵³ and Chelsea Hospital that went beyond geographical proximity. The Ambulator notes that a picture of Charles II on horseback and 'other pieces by Signor Verio and finished by Mr Cook' were donated to Chelsea Hospital by the Earl of Ranelagh.³⁵⁴ While Faulkner's 'Chelsea' relates that in 1729 the daughter of the Earl of Ranelagh Lady Catherine Jones opened a school for the poor daughters of the pensioners of Chelsea Hospital.³⁵⁵

However despite the supposed contrast between Vauxhall and Ranelagh it has been argued by David Solkin that the degenerate nature of Vauxhall was exaggerated and that in fact the public nature of the gardens encouraged polite behaviour. That is to say - visibility encouraged respectability. The interpretation of the pleasure gardens as spheres of 'rational judgement' is compatible with Canaletto's depiction of Vauxhall and Ranelagh as respectable public spaces. Solkin draws attention to reforms made by Tyers, such as the introduction of privately hired police and good lighting, which

³⁴⁹ Not the Thomas Hollis version of the same scene

³⁵⁰ Christie's catalogue, Old Master Pictures p.190

³⁵¹ See Print 5

³⁵² W.H Draper, The Morning Walk; or City Encompassed. A poem in Blank Verse (1751) p.20

³⁵³ Ranelagh House belonged to the Earl of Ranelagh, who retained the house and some of the gardens when the estate was sold.

³⁵⁴ The Ambulator, or Stranger's Companion in a tour around London within a Circuit of Twenty-Five Miles (London, 1744) p.24

must have made a vast difference to the nature of the gardens. It is true that prior to 1730 and Tyers's ownership the gardens were disreputable and were not fashionable, and indeed it was the case that the improvements Tyers undertook helped turn Vauxhall into one of London's prime attractions. In his argument that visibility promoted polite behaviour Solkin quotes Lockman: 'Let me add, that many might not scruple to intoxicate themselves with wine, when concealed by a Room; who yet would not hazard their being seen in Liquor, in a Place free and open to Thousands.'³⁵⁶ However Lockman was widely regarded as being 'in Tyers pocket'.³⁵⁷ Southworth noted that even 'newspaper accounts were invariably laudatory to the point of fatuity. The managers of the gardens probably furnished the copy. The paucity of detailed information during the earlier years, especially before the advent of Tyers, blurs the possibility of a clear cut picture in all its details.'³⁵⁸

Moreover the combination of open display and observation in a mixed public space is not always positive or conducive to polite behaviour. Indeed examples of displays of vanity, sexual intrigue, accidents, theft, aggression and conspicuous consumption are all to be found in contemporary literature. Even at Ranelagh, which was supposed to be more genteel there were still incidences of violence. On May 6th 1752, Dr. John Hill was caned by another gentleman in the Rotunda, an incident captured by the engraving A night scene at Ranelagh on Wednesday 6th of May 1752 drawn by Clody and engraved by 'Telltruth'. While on the 12th May 1752 four footmen were charged for riotous behaviour at Ranelagh House.³⁵⁹

At Vauxhall disputes were settled by the creation of boxing rings, although fights were often avoided. Henry Angelo wrote in Reminiscences (1776): 'Rings were made in every part of the Gardens to decide quarrels; it now no sooner took place in one quarter than by a contrivance of the light fingered gentry, another row was created in another quarter to attract the crowd away.'³⁶⁰ Theft was also rife and articles such as the following are abundant in the Wroth collection of newspaper clippings: 'Saturday evening a man genteelly dressed, with a gold laced waistcoat on, was detected picking a

³⁵⁵ Thomas Faulkner, An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Royal Hospital and Military Asylum at Chelsea (London, 1805) p.60

³⁵⁶ David Solkin, Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century England (New Haven and London, 1993) p.111

³⁵⁷ The satirist George Bickham produced an engraving in 1741 entitled Spring Gardens, Vauxhall-Hall which depicted, among other characters, Lockman with his hand literally in Tyers's Pocket. Guildhall B.Li/VAU/gar

³⁵⁸ J.G Southworth, Vauxhall Gardens (New York, 1941) p.32

³⁵⁹ Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p. 205

³⁶⁰ Wroth Collection (Museum of London) Vol.1 p.13

Gentleman's pocket in Vauxhall gardens, and being carried to the bar to be searched, several handkerchiefs were found upon him...'³⁶¹

The majority of literary sources were obviously keen to promote and exaggerate tales of the dangers caused by social mixing and open public space. Social inversion was a predominant theme. In the satire A Trip to Vauxhall a knight, his lady and their son visit the gardens. Unbeknown by the knight 'his' son was actually fathered by a footman espied in the liveried servants' coop by his wife who then later turns her attentions to a waiter at Vauxhall.³⁶² The fact that a large part of the attraction of the pleasure gardens lay in the eroticism of the combination of visuality and heterosociability may explain the content of such texts. Even Lockman, keen to promote the gardens for Tyers, wrote in A Sketch of the Spring Gardens that Vauxhall was so popular because 'the juvenile Part of both sexes may enjoy their darling Passion-the seeing of others, and being seen by them.'³⁶³

An Enquiry into the Causes of the late increase of Robbers stands in contrast to many texts. Henry Fielding despite initially stating:

'Now what greater Temptation can there be to Voluptuousness, than a Place where every Sense and Appetite of which is compounded, are fed and delighted, where the Eyes are feasted with Show, and the Ears with Music, and where Gluttony and Drunkenness are allured by every kind of Dainty...'³⁶⁴

later notes that Vauxhall and Ranelagh 'are seldom frequented by any below the middle Rank; and a strict Regard to decency is preserved in them both'.³⁶⁵

In reality it is difficult to judge how 'respectable' Vauxhall truly was and thus how accurate Canaletto's depictions were. It is probable that despite Tyers's efforts the gardens were never viewed as totally respectable. In 1763, in order to gain a renewal of the license, Tyers was ordered by magistrates to rail off the walks and in 1764 it was announced that the dark wood would be illuminated. It is significant that these measures were believed necessary. Moreover in 1764: 'A

³⁶¹ A newspaper clipping in the Wroth Collection (Museum of London) Vol. III p.15 The article dates from 1733

³⁶² A Trip to Vauxhall: or general Satyr on the times with some explanatory notes by Hercules Mac-Sturdy (London, 1737) p.6

³⁶³ Jonathan Lockman, A Sketch of the Spring Garden (1762) taken from Peter de Bolla, 'The Visibility of Visuality: Vauxhall Gardens and the Sitting of the Viewer' p.13

³⁶⁴ Henry Fielding, An Enquiry into the causes of the late increase of Robbers (London,1776) p.9

³⁶⁵ *ibid.* Henry Fielding p.18 Argues only these two pleasure gardens are necessary, rather than two hundred that were in existence by the end of the eighteenth century.

company of bloods, &c. tore up the railing, and did other damage, at Vauxhall, occasioned by Mr Tyers having railed in the dark walks, to prevent indecencies so much complained of.’³⁶⁶

Wroth believed that Vauxhall became increasingly rowdy between 1772 and 1778.³⁶⁷ It is likely that Tyers’s proprietorship was a time of increased respectability bordered by periods of debauchery. Yet whatever the reality, the reputation that Vauxhall enjoyed in novels, pamphlets and engravings is likely to have ensured its reputation endured, even if only fantasised. This may explain why the painting of Vauxhall did not find an immediate buyer, while the Interior of the Rotunda was sold to Thomas Hollis, and why Canaletto possibly deliberately but implicitly painted Ranelagh as the more sombre of the pair.

Part two: Music and Art at Vauxhall - A Truly Public Notion?

In a study of public and private space, just as Westminster Bridge stands alone as one of the few public schemes of this period, so Vauxhall may be seen to be one of the few public areas of London that brought art and music into the public sphere. Indeed Edward Croft Murray suggests that Vauxhall became the ‘first public Gallery of British Art.’³⁶⁸ However this is not necessarily to imply that Vauxhall was socially cohesive for this is challenged by the fact that how people socialised or perceived the gardens was socially divisive in itself.

Both art and music³⁶⁹ were included in the admission cost to Vauxhall where there was on average four to five hours of mixed music an evening, beginning at eight with an interval and continuing at eleven.³⁷⁰ Vauxhall made professional music from Handel to the sentimental ballads of Thomas Arne cheaply accessible to a far wider audience than ever before. John Brewer believes that the pleasure gardens were vital in shaping ‘an indigenous British musical tradition, ostensibly separate from foreign, especially Italian, musical forms but in practice very dependant on them. By the 1760s the performers and composers associated with the oratorio and the pleasure gardens were to make English stage musicals almost as popular as the spoken classics.’³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Quoted David Coke, The Muse’s Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786 (Gainsborough’s House, 1978) p.21

³⁶⁷ Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p.306

³⁶⁸ Edward Croft Murray, Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837 Vol. II (Middlesex, 1970) p.38

³⁶⁹ A 1752 Act stated that all gardens and other places with music and dancing required a licence. Ranelagh was refused a music license in 1754

³⁷⁰ David Coke, The Muse’s Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786 (Gainsborough’s House, 1978) p.17

³⁷¹ John Brewer, The Pleasures of the Imagination (London, 1987) p.379

Jonathan Tyers introduced musicians such as Mrs Arne (married to Michael Arne a song writer on Royal Commission to Frederick Prince of Wales), Mr Lowe (an actor and tenor singer), Mr Beard and Mr Reinhold.³⁷² The young Mozart visited the garden and Handel regularly performed there. On the 21st April 1749 Tyers staged the rehearsal of Handel's firework music in Vauxhall, an event that was so popular that it attracted 12,000 visitors and held up traffic for three hours on London Bridge. However it is interesting to note that the entrance fee was doubled for this occasion for the Gentleman's Magazine³⁷³ states that admission cost 2s 6d. Nevertheless the music of the gardens was most accessible as sheets of 'Vauxhall music' which were widely available, ranging from music by J. C Bach (son of J. S Bach) to the words of sentimental ballads which were published in the London Magazine.

David Solkin argues that music created a calm atmosphere within the garden and induced civility through espousing the virtues of happily married life, innocence and pastoral simplicity. Therefore, he argues, it was fitting that Roubiliac's statue of Handel represented Orpheus- whose Lyre brought civilisation to the barbaric world.³⁷⁴ Solkin's argument would appear to borne out by the report on the statue written in the London Daily Post on the 18th April 1738 which stated that Tyers:

'who in consideration of the of the real merit of that inimitable Master, thought it proper, that his Effigies should preside there, where his Harmony has so often Charm'd even the greatest Crouds (sic) into the profoundest Calm and most decent Behaviour.'³⁷⁵

However, from the beginning there was confusion as to whether the statue was either Orpheus or Apollo. Most people believed that it was Orpheus as traditionally he was more likely to be depicted seated than Apollo, but the earliest guide to Vauxhall specifically states that the statue was Apollo.³⁷⁶

³⁷²The musicians provided strong links to the theatre to cite one example 1739 the Drury Lane production 'Tragedy of the Disinterested Mother and Rosamond' was written by Mr Addison, music by Mr Arnes, the Queen played by Mrs Arne, King Henry by Mr Beard and Sir Trust by Mr Reinhold. Information from A Scrapbook in the Garrick Club on Microfilm in the Guildhall Library (Oxford 1979)

³⁷² op cit. John Brewer p.379

³⁷³ Gentlemen's Magazine 1749 April 21st p.185

³⁷⁴ The statue was erected on the 26th April 1738 and placed in the space between the supper boxes and the south of the orchestra. The statue was originally placed in a wooden arch with drapes, surrounded by other figures, including Harmony. The positioning of Handel is evident from the engraving The Triumphal Arches, Mr Handel's Statue &c. in the South Walk of Vauxhall Gardens B.Li/VAU/gar

³⁷⁵David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens' pp.74-98 Rococo. Art and Design in Hogarth's England, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1984) p.78

³⁷⁶ Terence Hogkinson, Handel at Vauxhall Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin Reprints I (London, 1969) p.6 the statue is also important historically as it was the first public statue of a living, rather than a historical, royal or military person. Roubiliac's depiction of Handel is also sets a precedent in terms of the relaxed state of the sitter who is wearing a night cap, no wig, with one slipper off and the other dangling from his foot surrounded by discarded instruments and a score tucked under an arm.

Solkin argues that music 'did more than engineer an important distinction between Vauxhall's refined present and coarser past; it also helped set off the pleasures enjoyed by the middle and upper ranks of society against those enjoyed by the poor. This was a point that Tyers's publicists stressed over and over again. To press the Garden's claims to politeness they frequently invoked market fairs and other traditional sites of popular pleasure as a symbolic oppositional presence, signifying precisely those elements of sensual grossness and low social status that could no longer, at least in theory, be found at Vauxhall itself.'³⁷⁷

It is true that the music of Vauxhall did invoke traditional sites of popular pleasure and many of the songs took drinking and love as their prime theme. Even as late as 1767, the verses published by Thomas Arne 'The words of the Favourite Catches and Gleees, which, with the Elegant and Humourous Music, composed by the most eminent Masters of the Last and Present Age' celebrate drinking, love and virginity. However it is difficult to accept that such verses did much to contribute to a calm and civilised atmosphere. A typical verse from An Entire new Collection of English Songs and Cantatas composed by Mr Arne (London, 1741) is from the 'Provok'd Wife' sung by Mr Beard. 'My morals are Sound- for they lye in my Glass, / My Religion and Faith are my Bottle and Lass/ My Church is the Tavern, a Vinter the Priest, /And thus I go till the Saint is deceas'd, And when I no longer can revel and roar; /But must part with my Bottle, my friend and my Whore, Embalm me in Claret, Pay Rites at my Shrine; Thus living I'm happy, when dead I'm divine.'³⁷⁸ A Collection of all the New Songs &c. sung this season at Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone Gardens, the theatres, Sadlers Wells and by the choice spirits³⁷⁹ includes drinking songs such as 'The Bacchanalian'³⁸⁰ and 'The Toast' sung by Mr Beard: 'When burgundy, jolly God, invites, To revel in the Evening Rites, In vain his Altar I surround, Tho' Burgundian Incense crown'd'³⁸¹

Indeed if such verses were to invoke 'a symbolic oppositional presence' it would not have been interpreted as such by those who purchased sheets of Vauxhall music bringing it into their domestic sphere, or by those whose only opportunity to witness the performance of professional musicians was

³⁷⁷ David Solkin, Painting for Money: Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in the Eighteenth Century (New Haven and London, 1993) p.115

³⁷⁸ An Entire New Collection of English Songs and Cantatas composed by Mr Arne (London, 1741) p.10

³⁷⁹ A Collection of all the New Songs &c. sung this season at Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone Gardens, the Theatres and Saddlers Wells by the choice spirits (London, 1758)

³⁸⁰ ibid. A Collection p.18

³⁸¹ ibid. A Collection p.26

at the pleasure gardens. The music of Vauxhall was seen as quintessentially British, allowing it to increasingly become a vehicle for patriotism³⁸² and for this to have occurred the music cannot have been viewed as a divisive medium. Moreover contrary to the numerous contemporary tales and stories about the inability of many to afford food and the misinterpretation of the art at Vauxhall, there are no tales of the mocking aspects of the musical programme.

As we have seen, Edward Croft Murray suggested that Vauxhall became the 'first public Gallery of British Art.' Almost fifty paintings filled nearly all of the existing supper boxes at Vauxhall with the exception of those on the west side of the grove.³⁸³ These paintings were executed by Hayman, Gravelot³⁸⁴ and possibly also Hogarth, however as the quality of work is quite poor in places much of the painting was probably carried out by less experienced artists. Indeed the Description of Vauxhall (1762) and Lockman's Guide to Vauxhall (1752) suggest that the majority of work was not done by Hayman himself.³⁸⁵

The paintings fall into two distinct groups as defined by Lawrence Gowing,³⁸⁶ the first being illustrations to novels, ballads and rustic festivals and the second to rural pastimes and games such as Sliding on Ice, Leapfrog and Playing at Shuttlecock. The content of these paintings led Terence Hodgkinson to go as far as to suggest that they were essentially 'cockney-bourgeoisie.'³⁸⁷ With the exception of a group of paintings by Gravelot of scenes from Shakespeare's plays, which Vertue noted as being completed circa 1745,³⁸⁸ it is not clear when the pictures were executed. Lawrence Gowing believes that they were produced in the mid-1730s, but more recent work by Brian Allen suggests that the paintings date from 1741-2 prompted by the threat of Ranelagh, and were not executed over a long period of time. This appears to be challenged by the existence of an article in the Scot's Magazine written in 1739, which describes the supper box paintings. The article describes the paintings as depicting 'some of the most favourite fancies of our poets in the most remarkable scenes of our comedies, some of our celebrated dancers, &c. in their most remarkable attitudes, several of

³⁸² By 1804 verses such as The Volunteer 'A Scarlet coat and smart cockade, are passports to the fair..' are prominent. A scrapbook in the Garrick Club A microfilm in the Guildhall Library from (Oxford 1979) p.66

³⁸³ Brian Allen, 'Francis Hayman and the Supper box Paintings for Vauxhall Gardens' pp.113-133 George Hind (ed.), The Rococo in England- A Symposium Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1986) p. 117

³⁸⁴ Building Houses with Cards is widely attributed to Gravelot

³⁸⁵ *ibid.* Brian Allen p.119

³⁸⁶ Lawrence Gowing, 'Hogarth, Hayman and the Vauxhall Decorations' Burlington Magazine January 1953 p.10

³⁸⁷ Terence Hogkinson, Handel at Vauxhall Victoria and Albert Museum Bulletin Reprints I (London, 1969) p.6

³⁸⁸ *ibid.* Brian Allen p.113

the childish diversions, and other whims.³⁸⁹ The childish diversions and whims clearly refer to the paintings executed by Hayman et al; the pictures of dancers and poets are untraced. It may be possible that these pictures are from an earlier scheme that was gradually replaced by the Hayman-Gravelot pictures; however the situation remains unclear.

Lockman wrote in his 'Sketch' that the pictures 'exhibit the most useful lessons of Morality, blended with the happiest strokes of Humour.'³⁹⁰ Much recent literature has been devoted to the moral content of these paintings, with Terri Edelstein establishing the linkage between the paintings and seventeenth century morality prints.³⁹¹ David Solkin argues that the supper box scenes offered a contrast between high and low cultures, sentimentalising the poor. 'We should not forget that these pictures were seen *in relation* to the polite activities taking place around them and that the relation between high and low itself was an object of fascination.'³⁹²

However the paintings themselves did not 'stand apart' from the character of the garden but were instead very much part of the spectacle and fabric of the garden itself. An article on Vauxhall in England's Gazetteer (1751) described the supper boxes as 'decorated with pleasant paintings, on subjects most happily adapted to the season, place and company.'³⁹³ In the article quoted earlier from the Scot's Magazine the 'useful lessons of morality' are also evidently not perceived and instead the pictures are regarded as fitting to the outdoor pursuits and frivolity of the gardens.

'the eye is relieved by the agreeable surprise of some of the most favourite fancies of our poets in the most remarkable scenes of our comedies, some of the celebrated dancers, &c. in their most remarkable attitudes, several of the childish diversions, and other whims that are well enough liked by most people at a time they are *disposed to smile*, and everything of a light kind, and tending to *unbend the thoughts*, has an effect *desired* before it is felt.'³⁹⁴

The paintings whilst likely to have been didactic in theme were probably understood by the majority as reflecting the general lightness of atmosphere which characterised the gardens. Moreover the

³⁸⁹ David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens' pp.74-98 Rococo, Art and Design in Hogarth's England, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1984) p.78

³⁹⁰ Lockman, A Sketch of the Spring Gardens in a Letter to a Noble Lord (London, 1750) p.2

³⁹¹ T.J Edelstein, Vauxhall Gardens (New Haven, 1983) p.27 Texts such as Emblems published by Francis Quarrells in 1635 with engravings by William Marshal, or *Amor ut pila vices exigit* ('Love like a shuttlecock is changeable') by the Dutch author Jacob Cats. The latter was not published in England until the nineteenth century but was widely known in England and printed in Dutch, French and Latin.

³⁹² David Solkin, Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century (London and New Haven, 1993) p.144

³⁹³ Quoted from Warwick Wroth, The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1979) p.292

³⁹⁴ Scot's Magazine August 1739 Quoted from David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens' pp.74-98 Rococo, Art and Design in Hogarth's England, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1984) p.78

paintings were very much part of the fabric of the garden and indeed formed part of the collective experience of spectacle itself.

The Scot's Magazine³⁹⁵ noted that the supper box paintings had 'been put up last spring to protect the ladies, while sitting in arbours, from catching cold in their necks by the inclemency of the evening breezes'. The article continues:

'the paintings at the back of every arbour afford a very entertaining view, especially when the Ladies, as ought ever to be contrived, sit with their heads against them. And what adds not a little to the pleasure of these pictures, they gain an unexceptional opportunity of gazing on any pleasing fair-one, without any other pretence than the credit of a fine piece behind her -To preserve these pieces from the weather they are fixed as so as to be in cases, contrived on purpose, from the close of entertainment every night to the fifth tune of the evening following after which they all fall down.'

Baron Friedrich von Biefeld, who visited the gardens in 1741, described a similar effect. 'When the clock strikes nine, there is heard the third sound of the whistle, and immediately there rises, as out of the earth, a vast number of rollers, which unfolding themselves as they rise, cover all the boxes in three of their sides, and fasten themselves in the extremities of each box.'³⁹⁶ Thus the pictures not only offered an excellent opportunity for gazing at the opposite sex but served as head rests and windbreaks and were incorporated into the overall spectacle of events.

Therefore it may be argued that the pictures were not valued as works of art and therefore were not examined as such. Instead they formed part of the visual but not mental stimulation that the frivolous amusements and spectacle in the garden offered. Indeed the Gentleman's Magazine notes that 'In Vauxhall ...they have touched up all the pictures, which were damaged last season by the fingering of those curious connoisseurs, who would not be satisfied, without *feeling* whether the figures were alive.'³⁹⁷ It is unsurprising, therefore, that when Vauxhall closed and the pictures were auctioned in 1841 they were described as being in poor quality as they were 'nailed to boards and much obscured by dirt.'³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Quoted from David Coke, 'Vauxhall Gardens' pp.74-98 Rococo, Art and Design in Hogarth's England, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1984) p.77

³⁹⁶ Brian Allen, 'Francis Hayman and the Supper box Paintings for Vauxhall Gardens' pp.113-133 George Hind (ed.), The Rococo in England- A Symposium Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1986) p.113

³⁹⁷ Gentleman's Magazine Vol. XXV 1755 Quoted from David Coke, The Muse's Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786 (Gainsborough's House, 1978) p.23

³⁹⁸ *ibid.* Brian Allen p.119

This in turn does not suggest the use of paintings to contrast high and low culture but ironically incorporates art into the 'low' itself. The touching of the paintings suggests that they were not seen as art and were viewed without 'maturity' by the beholder and understood only through 'ocular fingering.' Condilliac argued that there were distinct stages of visual perception; beginning from the recognition of an albeit meaningless field of colour, progressing to the use of the eye and hand to perceive externally and finally to the independence of the eye alone.

The forms of art and music available at Vauxhall were truly public diversions as they were accessible to all and encouraged a sense of collective participation in a public environment. Indeed the assumption of a disinterested attitude as indicative of taste can be read as a reaction to the truly public nature of the amusements provided. The paintings were almost certainly didactic in theme but the subject matter itself was over shadowed by the incorporation of the paintings into the fabric of the gardens. This in turn dictated that as the paintings were literally accessible to the hands of the public they could not truly be read as an 'oppositional presence' whatever the private agenda of their inception or their interpretation by an elite. This concept is fundamental to the evolution of the music at Vauxhall into a patriotic vehicle.

The liberality of Vauxhall and its novelty in allowing art to be brought into the public sphere of viewing is made clear by comparison with the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts' statement concerning their 1761 exhibition. The statement claimed the right to: 'exclude all persons they shall think improper to be admitted, such as livery servants, foot soldiers, porters, women with children etc, and to prevent all disorder in the room, such as smoking, drinking etc., by turning the disorderly out.'³⁹⁹

Ironically, despite the very public nature of the gardens it is possible to determine aristocratic influences. Within country houses the spacing of the pictures symbolised the continuity of wealth, ownership and position. Similarly the pleasure gardens relied on impact through cumulative effect. Much is made of the paintings at Vauxhall forming a proto-art gallery and establishing the origins of bourgeois art spectatorship, yet the art in Vauxhall was in many respects an extension of aristocratic

³⁹⁹ Quoted from Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768* (Yale, 1988) p127

methods of hanging, removed from the constraints of early public galleries. In both the country house and in the gardens art was not to a fixture to be admired in the stationary 'gallery' sense. It was regarded as part of the general spectacle or the furnishings of a room and as such understood as a backdrop to eating or as part of the general perambulatory experience. Paintings commissioned for the aristocracy, as with the supper box paintings, were often painted with the actual location in mind and as such were fixed commodities. Thus both the country house and the pleasure gardens used spatial dimensions to enhance visual effect, and so rather than forming a proto-gallery the use of the paintings was more faux-aristocratic. The private realm of the aristocratic interior was reproduced and modified for the public sphere of the pleasure garden.

Marcia Pointon wrote that portraiture in country houses 'was seldom scrutinised in isolation but as part of a spatial dialogue. Heavy hangings, curtains, artificial lighting and judicious distribution could be employed to modify a work not expressly executed for a particular location, especially as the portrait backgrounds themselves often reproduced and 'mirrored' those features.'⁴⁰⁰ Similarly as backgrounds in portraiture often mirrored their surroundings, so the supper box pictures reflected the charm and frivolity of the gardens themselves. Also as lighting and decoration were used to detract from a painting not executed for its surroundings so in the gardens similar effects were used in order to detract from the poor quality and condition of the paintings themselves. Aristocratic ideas of the perambulatory viewing of portraiture met the popular and more accessible art of the *fête galante*.

The concept that the garden's attractions were often based on borrowed aristocratic devices is lent support by the design of the rotunda at Vauxhall with its alternate busts, pier glasses, vases and mirrors. The interior is depicted in The Inside of the Elegant Music Room in Vauxhall Gardens (drawn by Samuel Wale and engraved by Thomas Bowles). The design is comparable to the interiors of houses such as Petworth and Beningborough where portraits were hung alternately with pier glasses.⁴⁰¹ Externally the buildings at Vauxhall are believed to have been influenced by Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved⁴⁰² by Batty and Thomas Langley (London, 1742) dedicated to

⁴⁰⁰ Marcia Pointon, Hanging the Head (New Haven and London, 1993) p.17

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.* Marcia Pointon p.17

⁴⁰² Evident in engravings such as A view of the Chinese Pavilions and Boxes at Vauxhall Gardens (1751, drawn by Samuel Wale and engraved by Thomas Bowles)

the Dukes of Richmond and Montagu.⁴⁰³ The Rotunda at Ranelagh, at first named the amphitheatre, was built⁴⁰⁴ to be similar to the Pantheon at Rome.⁴⁰⁵

Trompe l'oeils which terminated the walks at Vauxhall were used in aristocratic interiors, often in circular rooms. Triumphal arches, such as those placed along South Walk at Vauxhall, were traditionally used as part of court street theatre⁴⁰⁶ and were erected when James I arrived in London in 1604, and later when Charles II entered in 1661. While César de Saussure's account of the coronation of George III and Caroline in 1727 may explain the method by which the lights at Vauxhall were all lit simultaneously.

' On the King's appearance all the candles were suddenly lighted, and everyone in the room was filled with astonishment at the wondrous and unexpected illumination. Little cords of cotton-wool, almost imperceptible to the eye, saturated with sulphure of saltpetre, with spirits of wine, and other ingredients, had been prepared and arranged so as to carry the flame rapidly from one candle to another.'⁴⁰⁷

Thus the public diversions at Vauxhall were ironically developed from both decorations for elite interiors and from devices used for the public display of the monarchy.

However the gardens were significant in political and aristocratic terms beyond the borrowings of street court theatre. The artists involved in the execution of the paintings at Vauxhall are notable as the St. Martins' Lane set, which included artists such as Hogarth,⁴⁰⁸ Roubiliac, Moser, and Hayman, had close links to the centre of opposition which held Frederick Prince of Wales as their champion. Mark Girouard in his article 'Coffee at Slaughters' believes that it was no coincidence that the first full-length description of Vauxhall appeared in the opposition paper Champion, which Fielding edited for some time. Indeed Girouard argues, Fielding 'went out of his way to give Vauxhall a puff in his novel Amelia. Nor is it, I think, a coincidence that Fielding was Hogarth's friend, and a Slaughter's Coffee House man; or that the Champion praised up Gravelot's Shakespeare designs in

⁴⁰³ For example Plate LIII Plate LVI, LIX Plate XXX

⁴⁰⁴ Erected in 1741, by William Jones - architect to the East India Company

⁴⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that at a recent auction Christie's exhibited the pair: The Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh (not the Thomas Hollis version) and Vauxhall: The Centre Cross Walk with Panini's painting of the Pantheon in between. View of the Centre Cross Walk and the Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh were sold at Christie's on the 9th July 1999 for £3,851,500 including buyers premium despite a predicted selling price of £4-5 million.

⁴⁰⁶ John Dixon Hunt, Vauxhall and London's Garden Theatres (Cambridge, 1985) p.21

⁴⁰⁷ A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I and George II: The letters of César de Saussure to his Family transl.

Madam van Muyden (London, 1902) p.262

⁴⁰⁸ According to John Lockman, Hogarth was entirely responsible for the idea of having attractions at Vauxhall.

David Coke, The Muse's Bower: Vauxhall Gardens 1728-1786 (Gainsborough's House, 1978) p.23

1741; or that the Champion's successor the Remembrancer consistently publicised Roubiliac.⁴⁰⁹

Girouard also noted that The Present State of the Arts, published in 1755, by Jean André Rouquet (a French painter and enamellist) who admired Hogarth was the same Rouquet cited in The Description Of Vauxhall (1762) who had done the Chinoiserie decoration for the central Chinese pavilions.

It is certain that Hogarth gave his picture Henry the Eighth and Anne Boylene to Tyers for the Prince of Wales Pavilion, and in light of Girouard's arguments it is possible that this act may have had political undertones. As Frederick Prince of Wales was regarded as the 'Patriot Prince' and a symbolic head of the opposition,⁴¹⁰ the picture was probably conceived by Hogarth as an anti Walpole satire.⁴¹¹ The same line of argument may perhaps be used to question the motives behind the paintings of King Lear and Hamlet which deal with questions of succession, and with Henry V before Agincourt as Henry V was regarded as the ultimate patriot-King.⁴¹²

The supper box paintings may also, albeit tenuously, be interpreted in this vein. Therefore the games depicted in the supper box paintings may perhaps be codified symbols of opposition, thus linking emblems of personal social morality to perceived moral failings within a political and specifically Whig arena.⁴¹³ Thus The Play of Cricket may be significant due to the fact that it was a passion of Frederick, Prince of Wales and the shuttlecock painting may relate to the C-t Shuttlecock published 30th April 1740. This depicts George II and Robert Walpole using the Duke of Argyll as a shuttlecock, who flies over the Prince of Wales with his sword pointed at Walpole.⁴¹⁴ A further link between the opposition and the artists of Vauxhall may be made by the fact that Roubiliac sculpted the monument to Argyll in Westminster Abbey.

The fact that all were linked, including Samuel Wale who engraved Canaletto's paintings and drawings of the pleasure gardens, makes it all the stranger that Canaletto is not mentioned in conjunction with any of these important figures of the eighteenth century art world. This is especially the case as the old adage, that rising nationalism promoted by Hogarth et al. made it increasingly

⁴⁰⁹ Mark Girouard, 'Coffee at Slaughters' Country Life January 13th 1966 p.61

⁴¹⁰ Linda Colley, 'The English Rococo' pp.10-17 Rococo, Art and Design in Hogarth's England, Victoria and Albert Museum (London, 1984) p.10

⁴¹¹ T.J Edelstein, Vauxhall Gardens (New Haven, 1983) p. 31

⁴¹² *ibid.* T J Edelstein p.31

⁴¹³ *ibid.* Linda Colley p.12 notes Frederick Prince of Wales and his immediate supporters were not anti- Whig but believed themselves to be purist-Whigs.

difficult for foreign artists (and therefore Canaletto) to survive in England, does not stand when one considers the importance of men such as Gravelot and Roubiliac.

In conclusion, Canaletto, with the exception of Thomas Hollis's Interior of the Rotunda, could not sell his paintings of the pleasure gardens although engravings of both Centre Cross Walk and Interior of the Rotunda were made by Robert Sayer. The fact that Canaletto found it difficult to sell his paintings is revealed through the existence of an advertisement in the Daily Advertiser for the painting Chelsea College with Ranelagh House and the Rotunda placed on the 31st July 1751.⁴¹⁵ The pleasure gardens were, perhaps due to their public nature, not suitable for the interiors of the nobility, not even when painted as landscapes. The public nature of the gardens, their wide appeal and their accessibility, as well as Canaletto's need to re-define his target audience, is reflected by the prominence of engravings of the gardens and their popularity.

It is interesting to note that these engravings were sold directly in the gardens and were therefore almost part of the general spectacle. An advertisement placed on May 7th 1752 stated 'This Evening will be Published in the Avenues of Vauxhall Gardens, price 1s. each VIEWS of VAUXHALL GARDENS, elegantly designed on the Spot, by the Celebrated CANALETTI.' These prints were listed as: The Grand Walk, at the Entrance, with the Orchestra &c, The Grand Walk, where the Triumphal Arches are seen, and The Temple of Comus, with the Pavilions on each side and of The Grand Cross Walk, where the painted ruins are discovered. It was also announced that A View of the Inside of the Rotunda sold by Robert Sayer was almost finished. It is interesting to note that the advert suggested that it was necessary to buy Sketch of the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall. In a letter to a noble Lord, also available at Overton's premises, as: 'This pamphlet, though entitled a Sketch, contains a full and accurate description of the various beauties of Vauxhall; and is a very necessary companion to the Four Views of Signor Canaletti above -mentioned.'⁴¹⁶ Thus Canaletto's engravings of the gardens were seen as parallel to the guide book market in both purpose and status.

Some of the most popular views were Canaletto's depictions of London including: St. James's Park and the Horse Guards, Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh, and A Costume Ball in Ranelagh

⁴¹⁴ op cit. T.J Edelstein p. 31

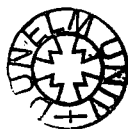
⁴¹⁵ W.G Constable and J.G Links, Canaletto Vol. II (London, 1976) p.408

Gardens. These were popular as they could be viewed through a device known as a zograscope, which gave the illusion of depth allowing the spectator to feel as if one was actually *inside* the picture. This provides an interesting analogy between the private sphere of the beholder being transposed into the 'public' parklands, allowing them to become a spectator *in* the events of the picture. It is also comparable to the 'ocular fingering' of Condilliac's 'immature' beholder.

It is perhaps fitting that having originally painted scenes of an almost 'imperial' London, a public civic ideal, the declining interest in his oil paintings finally led to his engravings being advertised as 'for the Parlours of the Curious'.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁶ Wroth Collection (Museum of London) Vol.1 p.123

⁴¹⁷ 'Four Canaletto's and A sketch of the Spring Gardens in a letter to a noble Lord. Priced one shilling' Cutting of an advertisement dated 1752 Winston Collection (Bodleian) Vol. I



Conclusion

Canaletto's compositions of London provide an insight into the aristocratic, ecclesiastical and ceremonial aspects of London's urban life. Through the clarity of depiction and geometric nature of his paintings, Canaletto's work would have been understood at the time as representations of an urban landscape in which one could take pride. That good urban architecture and ordered urban space were representative of the populace itself and the ruling elite through the discourse of civic humanism and the idea of 'moral fabric', was a notion very much understood by contemporaries. Humanist discourse was not limited to literary analogy alone but inherent and interlinked within the discourses of taste, morality, public duty and the notion of the civic ideal. It is perhaps of no coincidence that of Canaletto's main patrons, Hugh Smithson, the Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Montagu (a possible patron) were all prominent freemasons, an order as we have seen fundamentally linked to the concept of civic humanism.

To paint London as a spacious and clean ideal city would therefore necessarily be interpreted as a favourable comment on the elite and the populace as a whole. It was impossible depict one without insinuating the other – so deeply engrained is the need to transcribe our outward manifestations of living to the state of the individual itself. The popularity of the belief in London as Rome's successor and the pride taken in London as a civic centre of enormous importance were sentiments which created a market for the engravings of London scenes. Whilst paintings that did not symbolise the property or direct interests of the buyer may not have sold, engravings were popular across a range of subjects. Engravings such as London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge engraved in 1747 and the Thames from Somerset House with the City in the Distance (1750) to London from Pentonville (engraved 1753) were all bought as emblems of civic pride.

Moreover it was not only the scenes of public ceremony such as the Lord Mayor's Procession or easily understood metaphors of a city re-born such as the Monument which were popular. As we have seen private property such as Northumberland House became the popular subject of engravings. Canaletto's paintings of London and their subsequent engravings offer a truly public vision of

London. Aristocratic residences, especially in the case of Northumberland House, are depicted in harmony with their urban surroundings

The subjects chosen by Canaletto also serve to present London as a city where aristocratic presence and public duty were ever present and ever linked. The Knights of the Bath are linked through their place of investiture to the Interior of Henry VII's Chapel. The Duke of Montagu was the Grand Master of the Order. Henry VII's chapel holds the tombs of the 1st Duke of Richmond and his wife. Hugh Smithson and the Duke of Richmond were also commissioners of Westminster Bridge.

The ultimate irony in this depiction of London as a public ideal was that there were in reality few public buildings. Indeed public schemes often in reality served private interest or at least attempted to homogenise public space. The ultimate public scheme, the building of Westminster Bridge marginalised 'the meaner sorts' of the general public and even the theoretical texts of John Gwynn proposed the marginalisation of markets by moving Smithfield to Islington and removing public markets from Westminster. Moreover Canaletto did not paint public areas not sanctioned by the elite, thus avoiding the subjects of markets such as Covent Garden or fairs such as Southwark Fair which were depicted instead by contemporary indigenous artists.

That the segregation of London into acceptable and unacceptable, immoral and moral spheres (evident in both Canaletto's paintings and literary texts) was artificial can be seen through the nature of areas such as the Strand and Westminster and the efforts made to 'cleanse' them. The coexistence of both elements would be too confusing and undermine the validity of humanist assumptions which is perhaps why Mandeville's philosophies were often misunderstood as 'evil'.

Canaletto's exclusion of certain urban realities, painting west rather than east, clear not overcast skies and a city free of crowds and congestion, was as deliberate as the textual opposites which depict London as a 'forrest of wild creatures' or as a fallen Rome. The deliberate nature of his depictions show that we should revise the rather desultory view of Canaletto as purely a topographer providing a 'proto-photograph.' The view is not only anachronistic but incorrect and leads to the rather bizarre notion quoted earlier of the artist as an 'unprejudiced retina attached to a dextrous hand.' Canaletto's depiction of sites of aristocratic influence and outward emblems of power in a style marked by order

and clarity should be read as a deliberate attempt to cater to the civic head and not as a topographical exercise and not as a stylistic hangover from his Venetian period.

However as we have seen, a deliberate attempt to cater for the 'public man' did not necessarily promote sales as art continued to serve private interests. It is in the search for a wider market that Canaletto turned to the subject of the pleasure gardens. The engravings of the views of Vauxhall and Ranelagh proved to be most popular and had an enduring appeal. With the exception of the Interior of the Rotunda at Ranelagh sold to Thomas Hollis, Canaletto did not find buyers for the paintings of the gardens. The engravings sold much more successfully than the paintings themselves perhaps reflecting the public nature and wide appeal of the gardens.

Indeed the communal nature of the gardens, the essence of shared experience, spectacle and observation were not evident in Canaletto's paintings of the gardens, and Vauxhall's essentially nocturnal nature was ignored. Instead the paintings treated the gardens primarily as landscapes. The more sombre depiction of Ranelagh may be read as a statement of its more moral reputation. Despite this rather dignified portrayal the paintings did not find immediate buyers, the nature of the gardens rendering them an unsuitable subject for the homes of an elite. The cheap and accessible nature of the gardens and in particular Vauxhall presented instead an ideal subject for engravings. Thus while Canaletto could not have painted a masquerade at Ranelagh it could be depicted in the engraving A View of the Canal, Chinese Buildings, Rotundo &c. in Ranelagh Gardens with the Masquerade.

The viewing of these engravings through a zograscope in order to incorporate the beholder into the general scene serves to bring the essence of the gardens to the engravings themselves. Thus the realm of the public sphere can be directly transported to the household of the beholder by a rather more sophisticated method than reading A Sketch of the Royal Gardens whilst viewing the 'four views of Signor Canaletti'.⁴¹⁸

The gardens themselves also offer the opportunity to analyse the nature of public sociability and the presentation of the private self in the public sphere, the concept of the mask in the masquerade perhaps being the most fantasised private space of all.

⁴¹⁸ Refers to the quote on pg. 101

Thus Canaletto's paintings and engravings of London provide the basis from which the beholder may analyse the spatial dimensions of London's urban landscape, parkland and pleasure gardens. The compartmentalisation of his vision and the deliberate nature of his choice of subject matter reveal a seemingly 'seamless' aristocratic and ecclesiastical topography of public duty and successful coexistence. It is only in the face of declining commissions that we see the depiction of a more heterogeneous (albeit still elite backed) public space.

As we have seen, Nicholas Ross warned that 'in any pursuit of Canaletto the man we are left clutching at straws.' The ultimate irony must be that as an artist Canaletto produced an unprecedented and unequalled visual record of London in the eighteenth century.

Appendix One

George Vertue's note (October 1746)

Signor Canaletto (a sober man turned 50) a Venetian painter of Views came to London - as he had done at Venice many nay multitudes of paintings for English Noble & Gentleman and great Numbers bought by dealers & sold here gave him a desire to come to England. being persuaded to it by Signor Amiconi History painter at his return to Venice could best acquaint(ed) him with Success here. and also of the prospects he might make of Views on the Thames at London -. of them he has begun some Views.

its said he has already made himself easy in his fortune and likewise that he had bought most part to put into the Stocks here for better Security. or better interest than abroad - or that of late few persons travel to Italy from hense during the wars.

Add.23079.f.40 Taken from
The Walpole Society Vol. IX 1920-21
Hilda Finberg, Canaletto in England
(Oxford, 1921) p.28

Appendix Two

George Vertue's Note (June 1749)

Signor Cannelletti from Venice having now been in England some time has painted several views about London of the new Bridge at Westminster & London Bridge & about Whitehall, also for the Duke of Richmond - and in the country for the Duke of Beaufort Views of Badminton &c. on the whole of him something is obscure or strange, he does not produce works so well as those of Venice or other parts of Italy. which are in Collections here. and done by him there. especially his figures in works done here, are apparently much inferior to those done abroad. which are surprizingly well done & with great freedom and variety - his water and skys at no time excellent and or with natural freedom. & what he has done here his prospect of Trees woods or handling or pencilling of that part not various nor so skillfull as might be expected. above all he is remarkable for reservedness and shyness in not being seen at work, at any Time, or anywhere. which has much strengthened a conjecture that he is not the veritable Canaletti of Venice. whose works there have been bought at great prices. or that privately he has some unknown assistant in making or filling up his peices of works with figures.

Appendix Three

George Vertue's Note (July 1749)

The months of July. Canaletto (sic) the perspective painter of Venice. it may be supposed that his shyness of showing his works doing –or done. he has been told of – and therefore probably, he put his advertisement in the publick news papers.

‘Signor Canaletto hereby invites any Gentleman that will be pleased to come to his house to see a picture being done by him being a View of St. James’s Park. which he hopes may in some measure deserve approbation any morning or afternoon at his Lodgings Mr Wiggan Cabinet Maker in Silver Street Golden Square.’

At last after some time I heard that difficulty was spread about, that this Man was not the person so fam’d in Italy at Venice. it seems his Name and family was Canali - so he was always call’d - he had a Sister who had a Son who having some Genius, was instructed by his Uncle Canali - and this young Stripling by degrees came on forward in his proffession on being taken notice of for his improvements he was called Canneleti the Young, but in Time getting some degree of merrit, he being puffed up. disoblighd his Uncle who turned him adrift. but well Imitating his uncles manner of painting became reputed and the Name of Canneltti was indifferently used by both uncle and nephew- from thence the Uncle came to England and left the nephew at Venice so that this caused the report of the two Canaletti’s which was in this manner.

The Walpole Society Vol. IX 1920-21
Hilda Finberg, Canaletto in England
(Oxford, 1921) p.32

Note there is no evidence that Bellotto or Canaletto ever had such a disagreement. It is even possible that Canaletto encouraged Bellotto to use his name as they were known to have both been using it during their joint travels.

Appendix Four

Section of the letter to 2nd The Duke of Richmond from Owen McSwiney: 28th November 1727

The fellow is whimsical and vary's his price every day: and he that has a mind to have any of his work must not seem to be too fond of it, for he'l be ye worse treated for it, both in the price and in the painting too. He has more work than he can doe, in any reasonable time, and well: but by the assistance of a particular friend of his, I get once in two months a piece sketched out and a little time after finished by force of bribery.

Taken from J.G Links, Canaletto (London, 1994) p.53

Appendix Five

Letter from Thomas Hill to the Duke of Richmond

(May 20th 1746)

The only news I know to tell you, is what I had this day from Swiney at the Duke of Montagu's House, where we dined, & he, I think got almost drunk. Canales, alias Canaletti, is come over with a letter of recommendation from our old acquaintance the consul of Venice to Mac in order to his introduction to your Grace, as a patron of the politer parts, or what the Italians understand by the name of virtù. I told him the best service I thought you could do him wd be to let him draw a view of the river from yr dining-room which in my opinion would gain him as much reputation as any of his Venetian prospects.

Goodwood County Record Office MS.103 f.244

Appendix Six

Vertue's final note
August 1751 (advert from July 30th 1751 Daily Advertiser)

Lately Canaletti painter has been painting a Large picture a View on the River Thames of Chelsea College, Ranelagh Gardens &c. an parts adjacent, with barges, & boats and figures – this he expos'd to publick View at his Lodgings – being a work lately done to shew his skill – This valu'd at 60 or 70 pounds, haveing (sic) made a Tour to his own Country at Venice for some affairs there – in 8 months going and comeing, it is thot (sic) that his View is not so well as some Works of Canaletti formerly bought into England, nor does it appear to be better than some painters in England can do.

The Walpole Society Vol. IX 1920-21
Hilda Finberg, Canaletto in England
(Oxford, 1921) p.35

Appendix Seven

Section of verse taken from engraving by Nathaniel Parr

By His Majesty's Command The Jubilee Ball after the Venetian Manner, or Masquerade at Ranelagh Gardens (April 26th 1749)

The **Turk** stands gloting (sic) on a **Chistian** Dame,
And to ye **Nun** the **Friar** tells his Flame,
Who turns from **Domine** with **Monstrous** Nose
'Crying that sham (sic) you must not here impose'
To **Mary Scot** the **Humble Plaid** extends
His hand, and in Obeisance (sic) lowly bends

Here the whole World in Miniature we see;
This scheme makes even Contraries agree,
Two **Moral Figures** top the jovial set,
The **Emblematic** Dresses rightly met
MAD TOM one half with straw-wav'd scepter (sic) rules

And PUNCH comes grinning with his Brother-Fools

(C2: Ranelagh engravings section Guildhall Library)

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Bodleian Firth b.33 (19) *Notice protesting against a jubilee masquerade ball* (1767).

Bodleian GA Surrey c.21-25) *Royal Gardens Vauxhall* Five scrapbooks of Tickets, Letters and Engravings. This is probably the same collection that John Brewer cites as the *Winston Collection* in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*. Staff at the Bodleian had not heard of this name – but Vol. III contains letters and tickets belonging to a Mr. Winston.

Bodleian *London Play Palaces* Volumes 5 and 6

Bodleian *Ticket/ Show Places Various*

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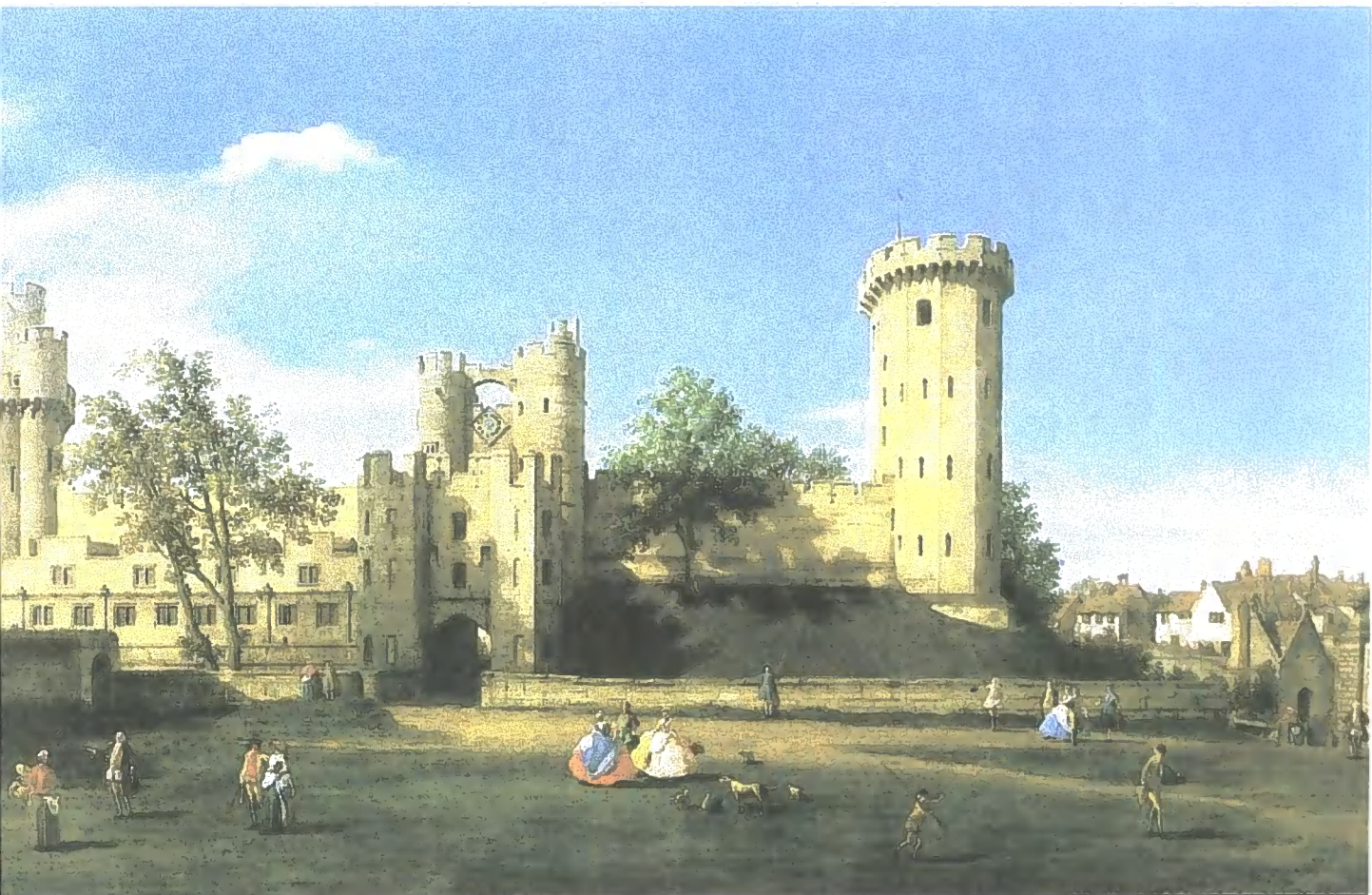
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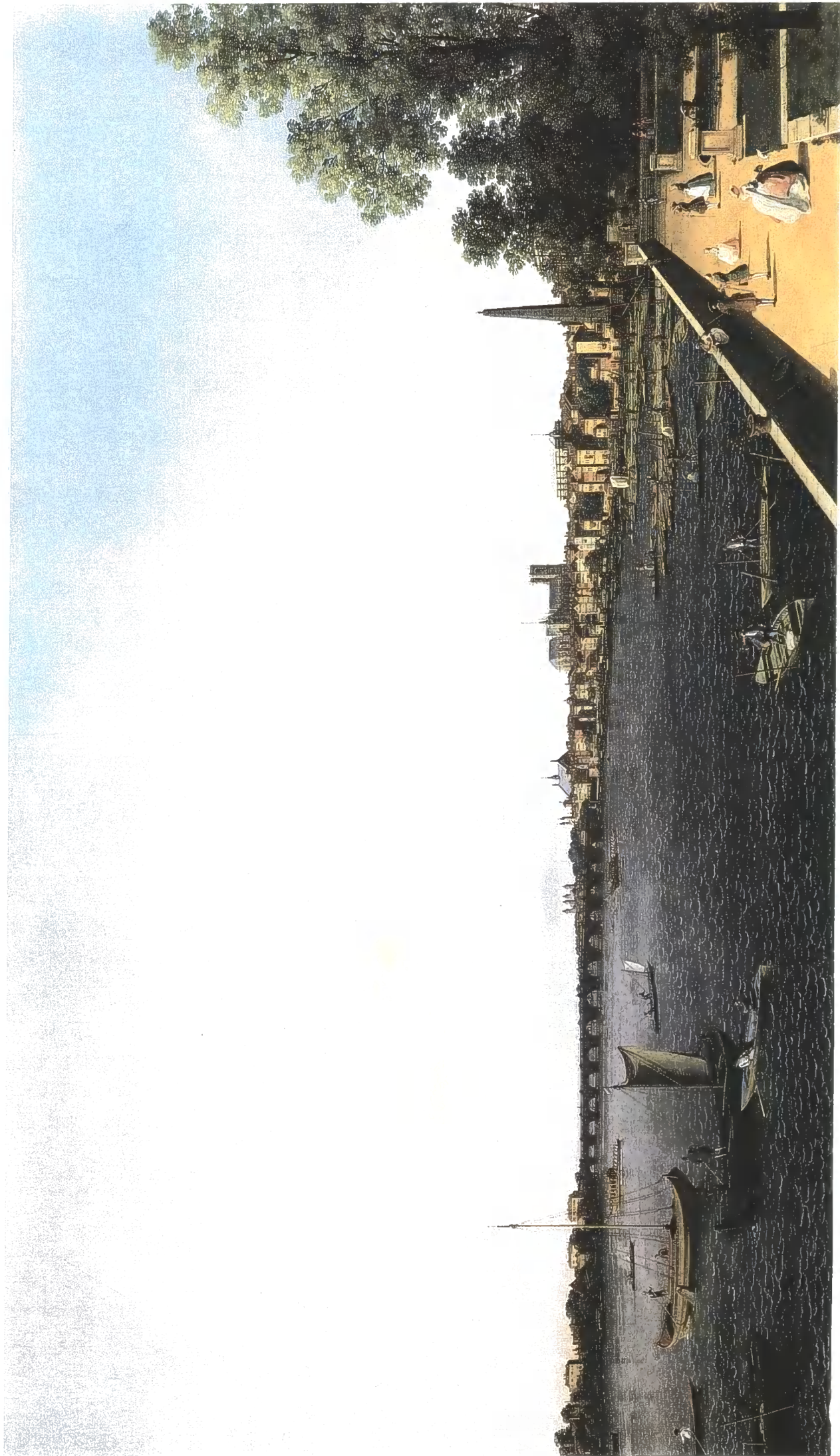
















CANALETTO
VENEZIA















