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“The centre of pleasure and magnificence”: Paul and Thomas Sandby’s London

John Bonehill

ABSTRACT In this essay John Bonehill examines *Six London Views*, a set of prints published between late 1766 and early 1768 by Edward Rooker, mainly after designs by Paul and Thomas Sandby. These prints are considered in relation to rival pictorial visions of the city as well as to architectural debates regarding the capital’s preservation and modernization—its pasts, presents, and futures. These London views advanced the argument for a more “magnificent” and scenographic cityscape, one indebted to the grand visions of court architects of the past, pre-eminently Inigo Jones, and more befitting the imperial age ushered in by the victories of the Seven Years’ War. **KEYWORDS:** John Gwynn; Robert Mylne; freemasonic histories of building; architectural displays of kingship; eighteenth-century landmarks of London

∞ IN LATE 1766, the printmaker and publisher Edward Rooker began taking subscriptions for “Several Views in London and Westminster,” scenes in and around Covent Garden and Whitehall as well as of Blackfriars Bridge “as it was in July” of that year. A view of Horse-guards and a further Covent Garden scene were added to this set of four urban prospects in early 1768 (figures 1, 8–9, 11–13).¹ While Rooker himself undertook the etching of these ambitious plates, and probably also composed the perspective view of the bridge in mid-construction, the scenes were largely after designs by two of the leading figures of the London art world, Paul and Thomas Sandby. The design for the view of Horse-guards was attributed to Michael “Angelo” Rooker, the printmaker’s son, though this may well also be after the Sandbys.

Although publication details credit the brothers separately, the designs appear—as with much of their work in this period—to be collaborations, Paul Sandby’s figures animating Thomas’s meticulously realized cityscapes. The set also recycles or even

1. *Public Advertiser*, November 10, 1766; *St. James’s Chronicle, Or, The British Evening-Post*, January 30–February 2, 1768. The set was reissued by John Boydell in 1777.

literally retraces settings and figures from other drawings and prints executed by the brothers around the same period, most obviously Paul's projected six-part series of London cries. It also intersects with the capital art of contemporaries—with architectural designs for the city, as much as the compositions of the painters Canaletto and William Hogarth, William Marlow and Samuel Scott. Indeed, this collaborative jigsaw was part of a wider series of ongoing exchanges in words and images, in the lecture hall and council chamber as well as in print and paint, regarding the city's preservation and modernization.

This essay situates Rooker and the Sandbys' *Six London Views*, as they have come to be known, in relation to rival pictorial visions of the city, and to broader debates over the ongoing transformation of the capital's architectural fabric. These contesting views were shaped by professional aspirations and competition, by appeals for public and even royal patronage, as well as more broadly by the politics of the age, by the mix of cultural hubris and anxiety that accompanied Britain's ascendancy to global power in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War. While this heady atmosphere gave London's artistic community the opportunity to promote epic schemes to remake the city as a fittingly imperial capital, and so also to advance their own claims to fame, there was a sense in which the grand projects proposed were conceived as paper monuments only. A "rage for building" had followed the 1763 Peace of Paris, with significant if ad hoc expansion of the capital's West End, but this new construction was directed by the speculation of developers rather than by architects.² Rooker and the Sandbys' suite of prints advanced the arguments for a more orderly re-visioning of London—arguments that were also made by others in their circle and beyond—while acknowledging any such plans as likely to go unrealized in the current climate.³

Although many contemporary views of the city, literary and visual, poetic, painted and printed, celebrated the splendors of modern London, there was also of course a well-established discourse lamenting the chaos of the urban sprawl.⁴ *Six London Views* continued this critical tradition, more particularly as it was adapted to and shaped by the politics of the 1760s. In so doing, the set targeted a very particular clientele and sensibility. Priced at sixteen shillings, it was aimed at the high end of the metropolitan print market, and so a relatively restricted, refined audience, one that might be expected to be attuned to the fine quality of a difficult technique, etching, as well as the range of erudite reference and undemonstrative humor. Quite unlike Hogarth's coarse, burlesque street theater, the satirical scenery of Rooker's—or rather the Sandbys'—London was understated, more reflective. Indeed, the satire may

2. *The Craftsman*, September 16, 1769.

3. This essay might be seen as augmenting recent accounts of the cultural politics of the postwar period, including Douglas Fordham's fine account, *British Art and the Seven Years' War: Allegiance and Autonomy* (Philadelphia, 2010), a book that I became aware of only on completion of this essay. Bridget Orr's review of it, "Painting Empire and the Seven Years' War," appeared in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2011): 617–26, and highlighted the central role of the Sandbys in Fordham's narrative.

4. For an invaluable summary of these debates, see Elizabeth McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: The Development and Design of the City 1660–1720* (Manchester, 1999), 12–113.

almost be seen to comment on the making of prints with a popular touch.⁵ *Six London Views* offered a series of novel perspectives on the capital's landmarks, both historic and modern, depicting them in the midst of building and repair, framed by commercial as well as leisured activity, as part of the processes of the city. They connect with observations on the improvement of the capital made by Thomas Sandby, very shortly after their publication, in his capacity as the first Professor of Architecture at the newly founded Royal Academy, as well as ideals promoted in freemasonic circles. London's past featured prominently in the debates that framed these statements. In *Six London Views*, the capital's streets and squares are a repository of history and memory, a stage for performances of rival narrations of the city's development. The set highlights lost urban geographies as well as those of that moment, including unrealized plans for the city's development, and the individual scenes were informed by various concerns, personal and political, contemporary and historical.

☞ Magnificence

Those sites featured in *Six London Views* were, at the moment of their production, being shaped or reshaped, materially and imaginatively, by a range of sometimes complementary but more often competing interests. Rooker and the Sandbys depict the capital as both living entity and architectural model, with scenes featuring haphazard modern developments alongside a number of prominent London landmarks associated with the court architect Inigo Jones or historic royal building projects. They place these and other material markers of the city's varied pasts, Henrician as well as Stuart, within the flow of day-to-day circumstances, contrasting old and new, the magnificent and the mean. Their appeal was on the one hand to an antiquarian impulse to record and preserve, and on the other to the forces of change. In a series of earlier drawings documenting the so-called Holbein Gate, which was dismantled in 1759 as part of attempts to improve circulation in the capital, Paul and Thomas Sandby had commemorated a significant recent loss to the city's monarchical architectural heritage. (This dismantling did enable the elder brother, in his role as architect to William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, to draw up plans to re-erect the gate in another royal landscape, his patron's Windsor Great Park estate.)⁶ However, fragments of the past might be integrated into scenes of new development or everyday circumstances, partly as markers of continuity but also to address the failings of the present. Material remnants of the national past, such as those featured in Rooker and the Sandbys' suite of

5. In this sense, the set might be judged to be, in part, a continuation of the brothers' vituperative attacks on Hogarth's raw commercialism and broad appeal, as well as his views on the formation of a national academy of the arts, which stretched back more than ten years; see *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain*, ed. John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy of Arts (London, 2009), 39–47, 106–19, 131–35.

6. *Ibid.*, 154–55. Thomas Sandby's service to successive Dukes of Cumberland, which included the Deputy Rangership of Windsor Great Park, is outlined in Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1997), 57–61.

views, had a moral and polemical force, serving not only as notable precedents but also as sources of instruction and validation.

Contrasting the architectural magnificence of earlier urban schemes with the piecemeal developments of his own day was a central theme of Thomas Sandby's Royal Academy lectures. These important if now little-known discourses distinguished the effects of public, civic virtue on London's architectural fabric from the consequences of private, commercial enterprise. Although London was indeed for Sandby "the centre of pleasure and magnificence," he lamented that it afforded few opportunities for "men of talents to perform their parts," noting how in "this overgrown & crowded metropolis every spot of ground is so hardly come at, and so dearly purchased that in modern houses scarcely anything can be consulted but base convenience." Elsewhere, Sandby argued that it was "in the Temple and Palace alone that Architecture can exert her powers, and display her true splendour & magnificence." Yet, in a pointed reference to George III's occupancy of the modest villa of Buckingham House, he found that "the monarch of Gt. Britain is lodged in a Building that deserves not the name of a Palace."⁷ For Sandby, along with his close friend John Gwynn, the architect and pamphleteer, the grand city churches, palaces, and squares of the seventeenth century in particular provided exemplary models for the wide-ranging urban improvements they imagined as more appropriate to a modern, imperial London. This was the principal theme of Gwynn's remarkable *London and Westminster Improved*, published the previous July, which had argued for a cityscape more fitting for the capital of a country that now, in the wake of the dramatic victories of the Seven Years' War, rivaled the grandest cultures of the past:

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 dominions are spread over a large part of the globe.⁸

Gwynn proposed a radical remaking of the city, whereby its royal parks and palaces, new bridges, squares, and thoroughfares would be laid out according to a grid that straightened the crooked streets and alleys of post-Fire London and also afforded striking vistas. He illustrated his arguments with four plans tracing his new urban geography, working in colored inks—reds, greens, and blues—over a map of the city as it then stood, making present and future simultaneously visible (see figure 3).⁹ Gwynn's plans "improved" the city rather than simply sweeping it away, although considerable areas of what remained of medieval London were to be demolished. He paid

7. Thomas Sandby, "Six Lectures on Architecture," Royal Institute of British Architects, London, "Lecture the Fourth," fols. 1, 2; "Lecture the First," fol. 3.

8. John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved* (London, 1766), xiv.

9. Gwynn's publication has attracted a good deal of commentary in recent years, most importantly Miles Ogborn's "Designs on the City: John Gwynn's Plans for Georgian London," *Journal of British Studies* 43 (2004): 15–39. Cf. Fordham, *British Art and the Seven Years' War*, 130–32.



FIGURE 1. Edward Rooker after Paul Sandby, *Scotland-Yard with Part of the Banqueting-House* (1766), etching, 41.2 × 55 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1881,0611.310. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

particular attention to circulation, introducing broad avenues strung with residential streets and squares, as well as a series of bridges. These plans were prefaced by an extended “Discourse on Publick Magnificence,” which promoted the idea of building as an eloquent expression of enlightened monarchical rule. Gwynn’s designs remade the city as an appropriate stage for the public show of majesty, with Whitehall cleared and widened, renovated as a site of royal pageantry, and particularly of continuity—as if the site of regicide left intact would inevitably prompt reflections upon a moment of radical discontinuity.¹⁰

In the Rooker/Sandby views, Jones’s Banqueting House, the only remnant of the Palace of Westminster, destroyed by fire in 1698, is seen from a court in Whitehall. It towers over an enclosed but untidy space, one that presented “nothing more than a scene of desolation and deformity” for Gwynn, animated here largely by servants and rivermen (figure 1).¹¹ Like other scenes in the series it appears to allude—in format and

10. Gwynn’s interest in royal ceremonial was made most explicit in [John Gwynn & Samuel Johnson], *Thoughts on the Coronation of His Present Majesty King George the Third* (London, 1761).

11. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 89. This particular plate demonstrates the complexities of unraveling the respective roles of the two Rookers and the Sandby brothers in this series. Although the design is credited to Paul Sandby, an original drawing of the courtyard, now in the collection of the Guildhall Library, London, is almost certainly attributable to the elder brother.



FIGURE 2. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta interna dell'Atrio del Portico di Ottavia* (ca. 1760), etching, 41.7 × 54.7 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1914,0216.121. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

technique as well as subject—to Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s famed Roman *vedute*. These showed the Eternal City’s antiquities, or rather fragments of them, as crumbling and overgrown, hemmed in by modern buildings and in the midst of the everyday and often unsavory activities of the street (figure 2). Yet, in addition to a parallel with the scenery of another historic—if now congested and messy—urban environment, there is, as noted above, also a gently satirical, humorous aspect to Rooker and the Sandbys’ London. Scotland Yard had been a place of residence for Jones and Sir Christopher Wren as well as having literary connections, with the royalist poet and surveyor Sir John Denham and also with the playwright and architect Sir John Vanbrugh. Vanbrugh’s house there, erected on the site and out of the bricks and stones of the ruined palace—despite attempts by Wren to block construction—was satirized by Jonathan Swift in *Van’s House* (published about 1703–10), which is being discussed by two men in the foreground of the Sandbys’ design.¹² Swift lampooned the building’s less than

12. Thomas Sandby presumably identified with these literary architect-surveyors, styling himself as “Poet Tom” on occasion, often incorporating usually humorous verse into his lectures and correspondence; see British Library, Add. MS 36994. Swift’s verse actually comprised three separate poems, written several years apart: “Vanbrug’s House” (ca. 1703); “Vanbrug’s House, built from the Ruins of

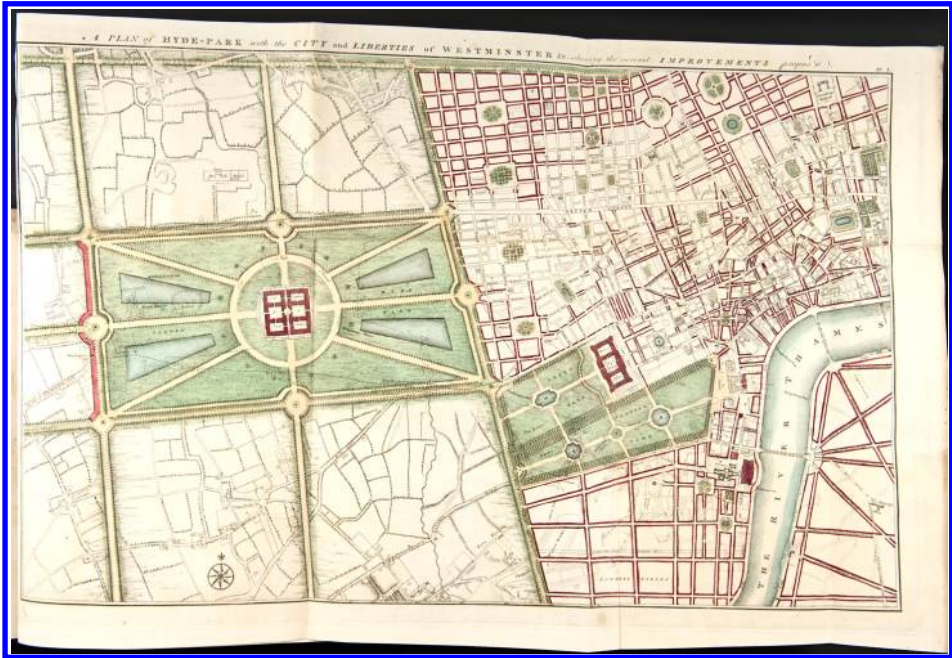


FIGURE 3. “A Plan of Hyde-Park and the City and Liberties of Westminster,” from John Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved* (London, 1766). University of Glasgow Library.

magnificent situation and its scale—how urban tourists struggled to locate the house until “at length they in the Rubbish spy / A Thing resembling a Goose Py.”¹³ A sumptuous new building had been planned on this spot, to be designed by Wren. Instead, Vanbrugh built little more than a folly, as another contemporary satirist termed it, with pretensions to grandeur, perhaps a guard house of sorts.¹⁴ Although Vanbrugh’s intervention in the urban fabric is dismissed here as comic, a more serious point might also be intended. What had emerged out of the conflagrations of the previous century, out of the political and social divisions of the age as well as the material depredations visited by fire, was of particular concern in the new imperial era of the 1760s.

Gwynn’s vision of an “improved” London, along with the delineation of the city’s landmarks in *Six London Views*, revisited issues of urban planning in the centenary year of the Great Fire. Indeed, Gwynn situated his plans within a longer history

Whitehall that was burnt” (1709); and “The History of Vanbrugh’s House” (1710). For a discussion of the house and Swift’s response to it, see Vaughan Hart, *Sir John Vanbrugh: Storytelling in Stone* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2008), 213–17.

13. Jonathan Swift, “Vanbrugh’s house, built from the Ruins of Whitehall that was burnt,” in *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin, 1735), 21–36 at 26.

14. *A True Character of the Prince of Wales’s Poet, with a Description of the newly erected Folly at White-hall* (London, 1701).



FIGURE 4. Edward Rooker after John Gwynn, *A Plan of the City of London after the great Fire, in the Year of Our Lord 1666. With the Model of the New City, according to the grand Design of Sir Christopher Wren* (1749). London Metropolitan Archive, City of London.

of city planning and Wren’s proposals for post-Fire London in particular, which he had already celebrated in several earlier publications, including a lavish plan, of 1749, etched by Rooker (figure 4). Devoted as he was to honoring and promoting Wren’s project to rebuild London, Gwynn was markedly inclined to think the correct role of the architect was as the servant of royal will. His writings are marked by a hostile attitude toward the unconstrained activities of tradesmen who, he argued, had frustrated Wren’s magnificent plan. He deplored a commercial climate where an undertaker who had simply shown he could manufacture coffins was able to dupe clients into thinking him an architect. In “the rage for building,” projectors and speculators had spread “a profusion of deformity,” making the city “a confused heap, an irregular, slovenly, ill-digested composition.”¹⁵ Gwynn entrusted princes, as in Continental tradition, with the discernment to identify and employ men of genuine learning, and the capacity for disinterested thought. “Magnificence” was likely to proceed from a prince who behaved with due regard to his status, renewing a courtly rhetoric dating back to the revival of classical learning in the Italian peninsula.¹⁶

15. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 67–68, 7.

16. There is now a substantial literature on the significance of theories of “Magnificence” to Italian court culture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, though later adaptations of this rhetoric have yet

Grand palatial building was the purest expression of this ideal. Accordingly, Gwynn's plans included a monumental new royal palace in Hyde Park. Given that the grounds on which the Stuarts had intended to establish a massive palace complex at Whitehall were, as the prints of the Rookers and the Sandbys make clear, unalterably colonized by subsequent building projects, it was natural to turn to Hyde Park, once loaned to the nation by Charles I, as the site for a structure of equivalent splendor. Indeed, Gwynn's proposal was but one of several palace schemes for the park advanced in the second half of the 1760s, including one by William Chambers, who, it was reported, had "taken most of his hints from the 7th Chapter of the first Book of Kings," producing a design "to be covered in cedar, above the beams, that are to lay on forty five pillars, fifteen in a row, like unto Solomon's Temple."¹⁷ Solomonic models of kingship had been, of course, central to the iconography of the Stuarts, as expressed so spectacularly in the ceiling for the Banqueting House by Peter-Paul Rubens.

This association gained additional charge during the middle decades of the eighteenth century through the fashioning of freemasonic visions of the relationship of a monarch to his masons. Histories of the "Royal Art" invariably traced its origins to the founding figures of Solomon and his master builder, Hiram Abiff; based on largely unwritten rituals, employing structures such as arches as well as drawing instruments, the craft of building as depicted there was of considerable interest to architects.¹⁸ Freemasonic histories of architecture expressed admiration of figures like Jones and Wren, who had worked for kings. Accounts of the rise of the craft declared James I "a *Royal brother Mason*," who had appointed Jones not only "*Master Surveyor*" but also "*Grand Master of England*."¹⁹ Jones's interests in ancient but moreover biblical architectural models, of which Solomon's Temple was the grandest, were integral to Stuart plans to establish a "New Jerusalem" by the Thames, and were readily incorporated into freemasonic narratives. Charles II had been initiated, it was said, during his years of exile, whereupon he resolved to "encourage the *Augustan Style*" by reviving the lodges dissolved during the Civil Wars and Interregnum. Wren was claimed as a "Deputy," whose great works for the monarch included a "never finished, . . . most curious *New Palace at Greenwich* from a Design of *Inigo Jones*."²⁰ Wren's work at Greenwich held particular significance, as one of the few sites where his grand, never-realized vision of a royal London was to be encountered in built form. Accordingly, *Remarks on*

to receive scholarly attention; see most recently Evelyn Welch, "Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni Pontano's *De Splendore* (1498) and the Domestic Arts," *Journal of Design History* 15 (2002): 211–21.

17. *Middlesex Journal*, September 21, 1769.

18. James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons*, ed. and rev. John Entick (London, 1767–76), 17–25. On the bonds between speculative freemasonry and the royal family at this moment, see John Money, "Freemasonry and the Fabric of Loyalty in Hanoverian England," in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), 235–74.

19. Anderson, *Constitutions*, 126, 127.

20. *Ibid.*, 173. Unsurprisingly, this history did lend itself to parody; see Charles Dibdin, *Songs, Duettos, Glees, Catches, & c., with an explanation of the procession in the pantomime of Harlequin Freemason, as performed at the Theatre-Royal, in Covent Garden* (London, 1781).

the Founding and Carrying on the Buildings of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, published in 1728 by Wren's colleague Nicholas Hawksmoor, a keen proponent of the "Royal Art," was a foundational text for figures such as Gwynn and Thomas Sandby, not least in proposing architecture of royal magnificence.²¹ In this respect, it is important to recall that the elder Sandby, for all that he professed an ignorance of the craft, was charged with the most important freemasonic architectural commission of his day, the brothers' hall in Great Queen's Street in 1775.²²

At a ceremony for the laying of its foundation stone, led by Sandby, Freemason's hall was celebrated as continuing a tradition of "stately public buildings." According to a speech made on the occasion, "raising superb and magnificent structures hath been common to all numerous societies, as well religious as scientific, as well military as commercial."²³ Thomas Sandby's fullest statement of his own commitment to these ideals came in his sixth and final Royal Academy lecture, on "Taste, Symmetry & Grandeur," where he made approving reference to Gwynn's *London and Westminster Improved*. He illustrated his talk with over forty elevations, plans, and sections for a "Bridge of Magnificence" to cross the Thames at Chambers's new Somerset House. Drawings of the bridge exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1781 were much admired by newspaper critics. Expressing a hope of seeing the work actually commissioned, one writer, acknowledging its sublime qualities, observed "the Motion for it, in the House of Commons, should originate with Mr *Burke*," as had the proposals for new Somerset House.²⁴

Throughout his Academy lectures Sandby advocated a painterly and poetic architectural vision, a kind of storytelling in stone, much indebted to the associationism of Henry Home, Lord Kames, arguing that "it is partly an Art, and partly a Science; the one inspir'd by fancy & warmed by imagination, grows poetical in design, & picturesque in execution. The other lays down fixed and invaluable Rules, and thereby produces a determinable conclusion."²⁵ The place at which Sandby's Bridge of Magnificence was to span the Thames was a site of no little significance to the architect, probably in deference to its associations with Jones, who was responsible for the river stairs and possibly the palace's riverfront gallery as well as a chapel. Sandby made a number of drawings of the old palace before and during its demolition. These included two pendant views from the gardens and river walk of old Somerset House that owe a good deal to Canaletto, expansive prospects upstream toward the City of Westminster, and downstream, toward the City of London (figures 5–6). In the view

21. Nicholas Hawksmoor, *Remarks on the Founding and Carrying on the Buildings of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich* (London, 1728). On the architect's freemasonic connections, see Vaughan Hart, *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2002), 96–101.

22. In correspondence relating to the commission, Sandby, despite having been named Grand Architect of the Order of Freemasons, confessed to being little acquainted with the finer points of the craft; Thomas Sandby to William White, January 5, 1786, Freemason's Hall, London, GBR 1991 FMH HC 10/B/5a-b.

23. George Smith, *The Use and Abuse of Free-masonry* (London, 1783), 88.

24. *Public Advertiser*, May 8, 1781.

25. Sandby, "Lecture the First," fol. 12.



FIGURE 5. Paul and Thomas Sandby, *View to the west from the gardens of Somerset House* (before 1776), pen, ink, and watercolor over graphite, 46.7 × 192.4 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; G.13-30. © The Trustees of the British Museum.



FIGURE 6. Paul and Thomas Sandby, *View to the east from the gardens of Somerset House* (before 1776), pen, ink, and watercolor over graphite, 51.4 × 189.3 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; G.13-31. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

east, a succession of microscopically delineated architectural landmarks—St. Paul's, the spires and the towers of the city's churches and the Monument, symbols of London's triumphant survival of the disasters of the previous century, civil war, fire, and plague—rise above the crowded, narrow, and irregular warehouses of the waterfront in a further contrast of grand public works with haphazard commercial development. This contrast is also a notable feature of the pendant view, looking west toward historic Westminster Abbey and the modern, neo-Palladian wonder of Westminster Bridge. Further contrasts are drawn here between the manicured, ornamental gardens and the irregular layout of riverside warehouses and wharfs, and between the polite, leisured assembly of Paul Sandby's foreground figures and the busy, industrious activity of the waterway stretching out a few feet below. These two pendant views most likely date from the same period as the brothers' work on the *Six London Views*, which were advertised with a perspective view of Sandby's Bridge of Magnificence, an image of an imagined, ideal London rather than the mundane city of the scenes it prefaced (figure 7).²⁶

26. The original drawing for this subscription ticket survives in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art; see Bruce T. Robertson, *The Art of Paul Sandby*, exhibition catalogue, Yale Center for British Art (New Haven, Conn., 1985), 28. This paragraph recasts remarks and observations first made in *Paul Sandby*, ed. Bonehill and Daniels, 21, 149–51.



FIGURE 7. Thomas Sandby, Subscription ticket for *Six London Views* (1766), etching. By courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

∞ Situation

Streets and squares pictured in *Six London Views* are all to the west of those areas caught up in the devastations of the Great Fire, and so feature buildings and structures of the medieval, Tudor, and Stuart periods as well as those of more recent times in startling combinations and juxtaposition. They also stage the contemporary uses of these spaces, sometimes to humorous effect. While Covent Garden, as redeveloped in the 1630s by Jones for Francis Russell, fourth Earl of Bedford, was held up as a model of civic planning and elegance, it was no longer inhabited by the gentlemen it had been built to house. Its commercial function had long come to dominate its residential one,



FIGURE 8. Edward Rooker after Thomas Sandby, *The West Front of St Paul's Covent Garden* (1766), etching, 41.7 × 55.7 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London, 1977, U.710. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

and it had become associated with retail and entertainment, not only the theater but also taverns, coffee houses, and brothels. According to one architectural commentator, writing in the early years of the reign of George III, Jones's St. Paul's in Covent Garden had the reputation of being "the finest *Barn* in England."²⁷ Views of the church invariably focused on the severe Tuscan-temple front of the east end facing out onto the market square, a situation that accentuated these pastoral associations. Thomas Sandby's view of the west front was highly unusual, if still showing the church in dramatic contrast with the commercial and residential buildings that hem it in (figure 8).

The West Front of St Paul's Covent Garden features a blackly comic collision, showing a funeral procession amid the street traders and beggars. In the elder Sandby's view, through the square's colonnade from the southeast, the arches frame a series of incidents featuring characters across the social spectrum, of varied ages, at work and

27. [John Stewart], *Critical Observations on the Buildings and Improvements of London* (London, 1771), 31. Jones had himself so characterized it; see Hart, *Hawksmoor*, 42.

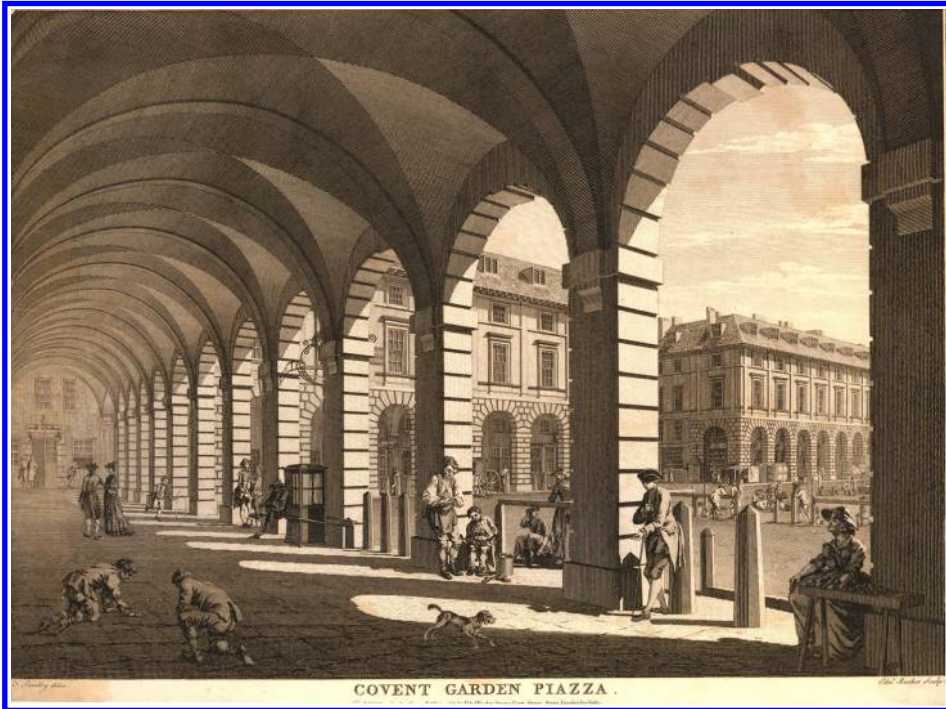


FIGURE 9. Edward Rooker after Thomas Sandby, *Covent Garden Piazza* (1768), etching, 39.3 × 53 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1860,0623.108. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

play (figure 9). Some of these figures are familiar from Paul Sandby's novel contribution to the tradition of *London Cries*, which comprised some seventy or so drawings in addition to twelve published prints.²⁸ These prints and drawings, featuring an array of unattractive vagabonds and outcasts, some with a long ancestry in European art and others freshly and clearly observed, paid particular attention to location as well as dramatic incident. Sites included the waterfront of the Thames, the gallows of Tyburn, and the arcades of Covent Garden, residential streets and major thoroughfares. A demobilized sailor, reduced to selling stockings, is placed at the end of Whitehall at Charing Cross, identifiable by the pillory on the left and Hubert Le Sueur's equestrian monument to Charles I, with its Wren-designed pedestal, which someone has climbed, somewhat disrespectfully (figure 10). This was recognized as the center of London, the crossroads of all the various social thoroughfares, polite and plebeian, commercial and social, a site of royal significance and a place of punishment, of state execution (of regicides) as well as the pillory. There is little of the sentimentalizing of,

28. Paul Sandby, ed. Bonehill and Daniels, 131–39. A very different reading of Sandby's drawings and prints is given in Sean Shesgreen, *The Image of the Outcast: The Urban Poor in the Cries of London* (Manchester, 2002), 123–31.



FIGURE 10. Paul Sandby, *Stocking Vendor* (ca. 1759); pen, ink, and watercolor over graphite, 19.8 × 15 cm. Nottingham City Museums and Art Galleries, Nottingham.

or moral identification with, the capital's lowest trades observable in print series published a decade or so earlier by the Sandbys' great rival, Hogarth.

Figures from the younger Sandby's set of *Cries* were also to be found haunting the gateways and confined streets in and around Windsor in views executed by the brothers around this period. Indeed, there are interesting connections and parallels in the Sandbys' depictions of the royal landscapes of London and Windsor, both of which make comic contrasts between persons of ostentatious fashion and careless squalor, setting these encounters against a now rather reduced, shabby, and shambolic if once monumental backdrop.²⁹ Those noisy, insolent, and ragged hawkers, prostitutes, and vagrants making up Paul Sandby's *London Cries*, who animated his brother's views of the city as well as of Windsor, represented forms of street commerce and unsightly activity to be swept away—if a more stately and scenographic civic landscape, free from what Gwynn termed the “Hottentot crawl,” was to be laid out.³⁰

Urban improvements opened up opportunities for the study of the city's histories, its Roman as well as Anglo-Saxon and medieval pasts. In *Parentalia* (1750), Christopher Wren's son had included his father's observations on London “in ancient times,” derived in large part from the traces of the city's Roman past encountered when foundations of new churches were excavated.³¹ Wren's plans for the post-Fire rebuilding of the city, as published by Gwynn, respected the Roman wall, indeed employed it as a boundary. These remains were the material connection with the empire of the past that modern Britain now emulated in “power and opulence.” Wren's design was also celebrated by Gwynn for re-establishing traditions of Roman public works dedicated to maintaining the cleanliness of the city's streets as well as the health of its populace. Recalling the plague years of the early Restoration, Gwynn noted how “the want of water, and the concurring consequence of the increase of filth, rendered the city scarce ever free from pestilential devastation.” Wren's plans made London “more regular, open, convenient and healthful.” If London had been improved, made a cleaner, more hygienic, and fire-resistant city, it still by no means “answered to the characters of magnificence or elegance,” judged Gwynn. While admiring recent attempts to cleanse, pave, and light the streets of Westminster, he felt these improvements had fallen short of rendering the thoroughfares “safe and commodious, . . . elegant and magnificent,” more “viewable.” In Gwynn's own plans these qualities would radiate out from the parkland-set royal residence; the “spacious opening [where] the King's palace should be situated” he envisaged as the spectacular focal point of the city.³²

In re-designing London in the wake of the Great Fire, Wren and the others who advanced plans, including John Evelyn and Robert Hooke, revisited earlier Stuart attempts to reclaim London for the forces of the Crown. Designs for grand royal

29. Paul Sandby, ed. Bonehill and Daniels, 156–63.

30. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 7.

31. Christopher Wren, *Parentalia: or, Memoirs of the family of the Wrens* (London, 1750), 263–70.

32. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 3, 4. For an excellent account of contemporary pavement schemes, see Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies 1680–1780* (New York and London, 1998), 91–104.

palaces that James I had his surveyors draw up were but part of a wider program to check the growth of the city and assert a single controlling perspective, which included aligning the monarch's power to re-order the national landscape with the prospective visions of the poet.³³ Jones's designs on London made it an appropriate setting for the display of kingship, a city that derived its authority from the monarch's sacred person. Architecture was thus held to have a moral force and agency, with the poet-king and his mason together fashioning a harmonious and thus civilizing "Augustan style" (a philosophy adapted and made central to later claims that freemasonry was a "Royal Art"). Proclamations accompanying plans for "beautifull and magnificent" new buildings drew parallels between James I and Emperor Augustus as arbiters of a concord that would allow the arts of peace to flourish.³⁴ This iconography was extended during the Restoration, featuring prominently in the commemoration of the Great Fire, one of numerous chimerical fictions of authority employed by the Crown post-Commonwealth. Caius Cibber's sculptural relief set in the base of Wren's Monument to the Fire depicted an Augustan Charles II presiding over the rebuilding of the capital. On the succession of George III this imagery of Stuart authority and control was modified to meet the demands of a more circumscribed monarchical power and an altogether less mystical vision of kingship. With the glorious victories of the Seven Years' War the reign of George III was welcomed as a new Augustan age, with the strength of the nation's arms having established the conditions for the flowering of the arts. This mythology of cultural reform under the command of an imperial ruler, whose powers were now bolstered by global military triumphs, proved a potent one, appealing to a diverse constituency who might proclaim themselves loyal to king and country.

In a dedicatory address to the monarch prefacing the *Elements of Criticism*, first published in 1762 as the war was being brought to an end (under the direction of George III's closest adviser, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute), Kames argued that "[t]he fine arts have ever been encouraged by wise princes, not simply for private amusement, but for their beneficial influence in society." Kames's writings exerted a considerable sway over Thomas Sandby, not only in a like promotion of the prince as the appropriate sponsor of magnificent projects but also—as noted above—in his advancement of an architectural philosophy concerned to promote the expressive possibilities of building. "Every building ought to have a certain character or expression suitable to its destination," Kames had observed.³⁵

33. Leah Marcus, "Politics and Pastoral: Writing the Court on the Countryside," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (Stanford, Calif., 1994), 139–60. Cf. Jules Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550–1960* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1995), 25–29.

34. The comparison is made most explicitly in a proclamation of July 1615: "it was said by the first Emperour of Rome, that he had found the City of Rome of Bricke, and left it of marble. . . . the first King of Great Britaine, might be able to say in some proportion, That Wee had found Our Citie and Suburbs of London of stickes, and left them of Bricke" (*Stuart Royal Proclamations, King James I*, ed. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes [Oxford, 1973], 346).

35. Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1762), 1:2, 3:299.



FIGURE 11. Edward Rooker after Paul Sandby, *A View of St. James's Gate, from Cleveland Row* (1766), etching, 18 × 23.8 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1929,0529.36. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Buildings and spaces associated with figures such as Jones and Wren were granted a particular significance in the views Sandby published with Rooker as well as in related drawings. But as might be expected of a figure so closely identified with Windsor, Sandby promoted the native gothic as the equal of the architecture of classical antiquity, and it was prominent in his theories on the origins of building, the most overtly freemasonic aspect of his thinking.³⁶ In Sandby's lectures, combinations of classical and gothic stylings resonated with conceptions of Britain as a northern nation that was also heir to the rich effusions of southern European culture, as a land of liberty and authority, energy and order.³⁷ However, he was troubled by the hybrid of "Grecian Architecture with the Gothic" he observed in high Tudor palatial building, which Gwynn also dismissed as a form of "mongrel composition."³⁸ Much to these men's distaste, architecture of this "mixed kind" occupied a prominent place in the national landscape. *A View of St. James's Gate, from Cleveland Row* (figure 11) depicts the only surviving fragment of the palace commissioned by Henry VIII, which had become the

36. Sandby's admittedly eccentric theories on the origins of the style were laid out in an unpublished "Lecture on Gothic Architecture," quoted in Anderson, *Constitutions*, 68.

37. On this synthesis in landscape design, see Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge, 1993), 17.

38. Sandby, "Lecture the Third," fol. 39; Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 35.

official residence of the monarch on the destruction of Whitehall Palace at the close of the seventeenth century. Gwynn considered it a residence “ill-becoming the state and grandeur of the most powerful and respectful monarch of the universe.”³⁹ In Rooker and the Sandbys’ print, St. James’s Gate is viewed in exaggerated perspective, as in the manner of a *vue d’optique*, the eye led out toward Pall Mall. Engraved perspectives of this kind were marketed to be viewed through a convex lens or a “diagonal mirror”/ “optical pillar machine,” most notably the zograscope, which enhanced the illusion of depth and space.⁴⁰ It is, perhaps, an allusion of a part with the satire of overtly commercial forms of printmaking as well as spectatorship encouraged by the urban environment that runs throughout the series. *A View of St. James’s Gate* does not offer the reassuringly regularized and geometric, ordered and decorous vision of the city pictured in prints of the capital’s grand public buildings by figures such as John Maurer. There are signs of building activity, masons and large stone blocks, amid the everyday activities of local residents, soldiers, and street sellers, although it is unclear whether they are engaged in repairing the evidently crumbling remains of the royal residence. This once-grand palace is now much diminished by ad hoc modern improvements to the building itself in the form of chimneys, guttering, and sash windows as well as by its situation amid muddy and waste-filled streets.

Questions of “situation,” the relation of a building to its surroundings, featured prominently in Sandby’s lectures, in accordance with Kames’s observations on “destination.” In contrast to the lack of opportunity afforded architects by the tangle of London streets, Sandby extolled the virtues of an open prospect, arguing that variety would “produce a Continual moving Picture and increase our delight by constant succession of new and entertaining objects.”⁴¹ This conception of landscape as providing a series of affecting, ambient views may also be seen to shape his conception of urban scenery, though flux and change are seen to occasion disturbance as much as pleasure. *Six London Views* attend closely to matters of situation and the jarring juxtapositions to be observed in the city. Indeed, they are views shaped by the vantage point of the street, with buildings half-glimpsed over rooftops or framed by arcades and archways. There are gateways and alleyways, roads and streets, leading to spaces adjacent to those depicted, as well as allusions to places elsewhere. There is a sense of immersion in the urban environment and of moving through it, of encountering the detritus and squalor of London’s streets and squares as well as the noises and odors of the city at midsummer. Paul Sandby animates his brother’s views with the cries of hawkers selling cheap street food or workmen sending up clouds of brick dust. In recording the degraded city, the Sandbys acknowledge London as a palimpsest many times overwritten. Their views relate a number of historic and mythic pasts, and document not only the city’s old and

39. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 10.

40. Mark Hallett, “Framing the Modern City: Canaletto’s Images of London,” in *Canaletto and England*, ed. Michael Liverside and Jane Farrington, exhibition catalogue, Birmingham City Art Gallery (London, 1994), 46–54 at 53–54; *London 1753*, ed. Sheila O’Connell, exhibition catalogue, British Museum (London, 2003), 60.

41. Sandby, “Lecture the Fourth,” fols. 6–7. This lecture is perhaps the clearest instance of Kames’s influence on Sandby’s architecture of feeling.



FIGURE 12. Edward Rooker after Michael “Angelo” Rooker, *The Horse-guards* (1766), etching, 39.5 × 52.7 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1978, U.3601. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

modern buildings but also the repair of their fabric, along with the accumulated layers of dirt and rubbish city planners had long determined to scrape away.

∞ Collaboration and Competition

If four of the scenes published by Rooker between 1766 and 1768 were centered on grand historic structures, now rather shabbily framed, the set also included views of more recent prestigious public schemes: the new Horse-guards and Blackfriars Bridge. Gwynn had been scathing about Horse-guards, which was built by John Vardy after a design by William Kent. He found the entrance “mean and pitiful,” and recommended its replacement with a triumphal arch.⁴² Horse-guards was more conventionally depicted from St. James’s Park, as in earlier drawings by Thomas Sandby, and carefully situated in relation to the adjacent Admiralty buildings and nearby Treasury.⁴³ In marked distinction, Michael “Angelo” Rooker’s view across Whitehall (figure 12), framed by a decrepit archway—possibly the medieval gate that features at the far end of the Scotland Yard scene—conveys a sense of the cramped confines of the city streets bemoaned by contemporaries, the lack of striking vistas afforded by existing layouts.

42. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 127.

43. A drawing of these buildings from St. James’s by Thomas Sandby, datable to the 1750s, is to be found in the Guildhall Library, London.

There is also the familiar rough mix of people, including a blind beggar and a family of brush-sellers loaded with wares, and two fashionably dressed women as well as horse-guards standing sentry.

There appears to be some irony intended in viewing Kent's building through this looming arch and array of everyday figural activities. *Horse-guards* is perhaps another gently satirical reworking of the pictorial traditions and narrative associations of the *veduti*, especially as they had been employed in painted depictions of London in recent years.⁴⁴ Views of the capital by visiting artists as well as native-born practitioners, notably Canaletto and Scott, re-assembled the city's historic and modern landmarks scenographically, with monuments such as St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey framed by the arches of the river's bridges, implying a melancholic contrast between the epic and the everyday. Rooker the younger's glimpsed view of Horse-guards employs a similarly theatrical device, with the crumbling gate forming a proscenium arch. Yet the tawdry figures as well as the picturesque decay of their immediate surroundings, prominent in the foreground, do not appear in this instance to enhance the grandeur of the building in view. It is literally a view from below, socially as well as spatially.⁴⁵ Rooker junior appears to have been a pupil of Paul Sandby, and the unconventional viewpoint and staffage of *Horse-guards* are of a piece with the plates in the series assigned to the brothers. One element of the Rookers and Sandbys' suite is jarring, however, and may reveal much about the compromises of such a collaborative project.

Edward Rooker's *Part of the Bridge at Blackfriars as it was in July 1766*, in which neither Sandby appears to have had a hand, alludes to a still more contentious public building project (figure 13). Blackfriars had been commissioned by the Corporation of London as the city's tribute to "the glorious summer" of 1759 and so originally named Pitt Bridge, with the adjacent streets to be called (in honor of the great earl and architect of the nation's imperial triumphs) Chatham Place, William Street, and Earl Street. A dedicatory inscription to Pitt, described by Horace Walpole as of a "very Roman air, though very unclassically expressed," pronounced the bridge "a monument of this city's affection to the man who, by the strength of his genius . . . recovered, augmented, and secured the British Empire in Asia, Africa, and America, and restored the ancient reputation and influence of his country amongst the nations of Europe."⁴⁶ Yet, in the wake of the controversial Peace of Paris, which concluded the Seven Years' War, the monastic locality asserted its prior right and the bridge became known as Blackfriars. Robert Mylne's startling design, which had included statuary commemorating naval victories, was stripped back. His sculptural program fell victim to spiraling costs, although the changed political climate, marked by the removal of the hawkish Pitt

44. Hallett, "Framing the Modern City."

45. On the use of such devices in the Sandbys' art, see Matthew Craske, "Court Art Re-viewed: The Sandbys' Vision of Windsor and Its Environs," in *Paul Sandby*, ed. Bonehill and Daniels, 48–55.

46. *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 48 vols., ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1937–83), 21:449. Cf. Rev. Busby Birch [Bonnell Thornton], *City Latin; Or, Critical and Political Remarks on the Latin Inscription on Laying the First Stone of the Intended New Bridge at Black-Fryars* (London, 1760). For the inscription, see *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, October 31, 1760.

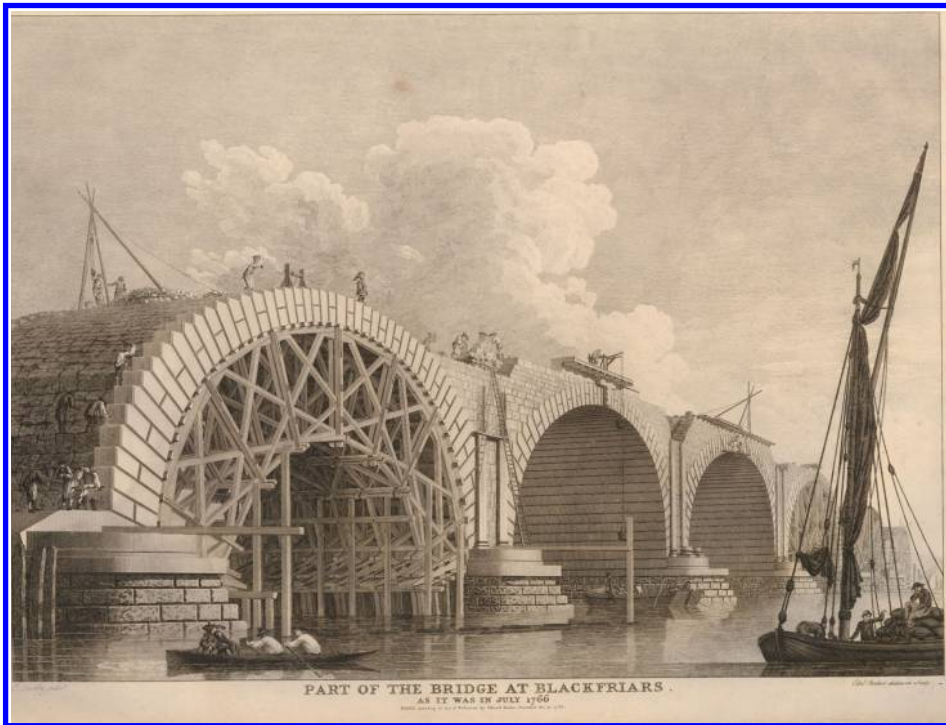


FIGURE 13. Edward Rooker, *Part of the Bridge at Blackfriars as it was in July 1766* (1766), etching, 40 × 45.7 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1904,0819.799. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

from office, also made the bellicosity of its imagery appear dated. The design had been a controversial choice from the beginning, its elliptical arches attracting a good deal of criticism in the press from such luminaries as Samuel Johnson and John Wilkes's ally, Charles Churchill, who attacked "the Northern Comet" Mylne, newly "Arriv'd from Italy" in verse and in a graphic satire set above an expansive Thames-side view.⁴⁷ Mylne's relative lack of experience, and a sense that he owed his success to connections at court as well as to the glamor of association with Grand Tour culture, was also the subject of much speculation. Blackfriars was overseen by a committee chaired by John Paterson, a city solicitor and prominent figure in the circle around Bute, who was seen as smoothing the way for the acceptance of Mylne's design.⁴⁸

47. Johnson's "Considerations on the Plans Offered for the Construction of Blackfriars Bridge," no doubt guided by his friend Gwynn's views, appeared in *The Gazetteer*, December 1, 1759, December 8, 1759, and December 15, 1759. Cf. Charles Churchill, *The Ghost, Book IV* (London, 1763), 174–75. Various versions of Churchill's graphic satire were published; the example referred to here survives in the Royal Institute of British Architects library in London.

48. For an invaluable account of the disputes that attended the making of the bridge, see Roger Woodley, "A very mortifying situation": Robert Mylne's Struggle to Get Paid for Blackfriars Bridge," *Architectural History* 43 (2000): 172–86.

Mylne was also contracted “to design the proper Avenues to the said Bridge,” the approach roads, Chatham Place and New Bridge Street to the north, and Albion Place and Great Surrey Street to the south.⁴⁹ A further responsibility was the embankment of the north side of the river, especially upstream, necessitated by the location of the waterway’s deepest channel closer to the south bank. Mylne claimed his designs would give “an idea of the Thames being a navigable river,” so taming its unruly swells.⁵⁰ Embellishment and improvement of the river, the reformation of wharfs and quays, was held to be of value not only to commercial development but also to the scenography of the city. In *Critical Observations on the Buildings and Improvements of London*, published in 1771, John Stewart made the case for a “properly displayed” river. He envisaged its bridges and quays affording views of an “extensive sweep of water,” the prospect animated “with numberless gay images moving on its surface.” According to Stewart, Blackfriars was of peculiar significance as a viewing station in that it afforded “the best and perhaps the only true point of view for the magnificent cathedral of St. Paul’s, with the various churches in the amphitheatre, that reaches from Westminster to the Tower.”⁵¹ Modern improvements could be thus linked visually with Wren’s great monuments to London’s post-Fire rebirth as well as with sites of historic and royal association.

Gwynn’s *London and Westminster Improved* also had much to say about the regulation and channeling of the Thames, advancing plans that would afford a fine series of “moving pictures” of the majestic palatial cityscape the author imagined. Gwynn had little to say about Mylne’s thoughts on these matters, however, his views clearly tempered by the rejection of his own design for Blackfriars and the controversy that had followed. Writing as “Publicus,” in an extended review of the various entries for the Blackfriars competition, Mylne had dismissed Gwynn’s bridge design as “like looking at a Turkey-carpet,” a “trifling geegaw,” a confection of “candied sugar.” He compared its overly elaborate and complex ornament with “the rigid virtue and severity” to be observed in Jones’s Covent Garden church, framing his observations in free-masonic terms:

If he had considered the connexion and almost sameness of forms, produced by the Druids, the Mexicans, the Aegyptians, the Greeks, the Etruscans, he would never have deviated so far from stone and lime, as to borrow a form from a drinking-glass, or front of an organ.⁵²

Mylne’s own masonic interests are in evidence in his writings, as well as his designs, if they appear less than fraternal: there were clearly professional and perhaps

49. *Report of 1771 to Common Council from the committee appointed to carry the act of Parliament into execution for building Blackfriars Bridge* (London, 1771), entry for January 22, 1771.

50. Publicus [Robert Mylne], *Observations on Bridge Building, and the Several Plans Offered for a New Bridge* (London, 1760), 26.

51. Stewart, *Critical Observations*, 34, 33.

52. Publicus, *Observations*, 21–22.

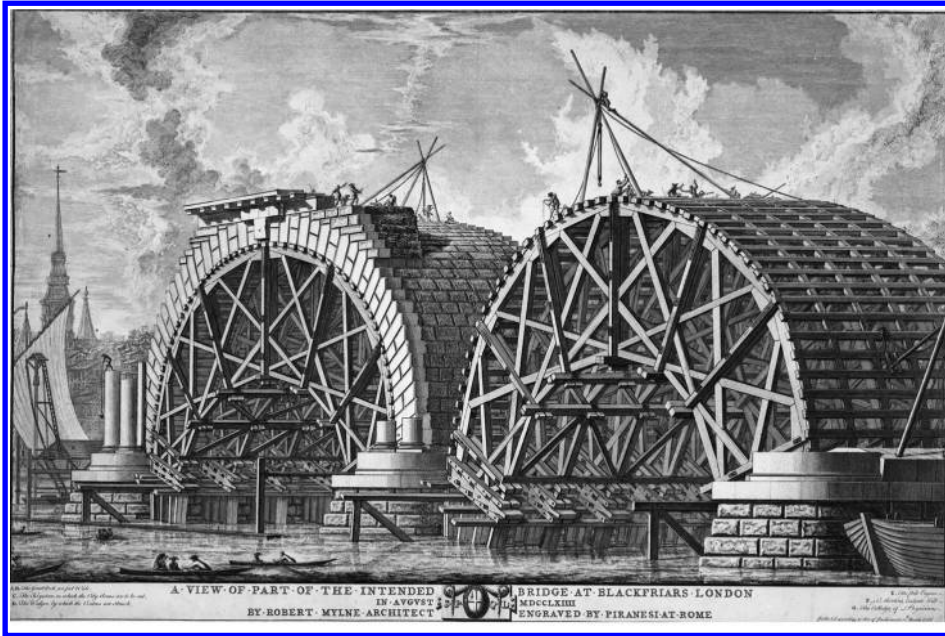


FIGURE 14. Piranesi after Robert Mylne, *A View of Part of the Intended Bridge at Blackfriars London* (1766), etching, 39 × 60.1 cm. Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum; 1912,0108.1. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

political differences and antagonisms within the brotherhood.⁵³ In *London and Westminster Improved*, Mylne's fellow mason Gwynn retaliated, ridiculing the young Scot's pretensions by referring to him only as "Mr Trowel" and, perhaps in acknowledgment of Churchill's satire, "just arrived from Rome!"⁵⁴ Mylne had advertised his connections with Grand Tour culture through an engraving of Blackfriars in midconstruction by Piranesi after a drawing by its architect published in March 1766 (figure 14). Rooker's composition recalled this engraving as well as continuing a tradition of bridge building as process and event begun by Canaletto.⁵⁵ Piranesi's and Rooker's designs dramatize the mechanics of the construction and engineering, detailing the scaffolding supporting Mylne's novel elliptical arches, the activities of the laborers dwarfed by the massive scale of the structure. Viewed alongside Piranesi's work Rooker's scene appears less

53. The tensions in masonic culture of the post–Seven Years' War period, which may in part account for the differing views among figures such as Churchill, Gwynn, and Mylne, are outlined in John Money, "The Masonic Moment; or, Ritual, Replica, and Credit: John Wilkes, the Macaroni Parson, and the Making of the Middle-Class Mind," *Journal of British Studies* 32 (1993): 358–95.

54. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 65. Gwynn's attendance at a lodge in his native town of Shrewsbury is confirmed in records of membership held in Freemason's Hall, London.

55. A number of artists were attracted by Blackfriars Bridge's newsworthiness and the scenic possibilities of its setting. William James, David Martin, and the poet George Keate all exhibited pictures of or taken from the bridge at the Society of Artists in 1768.

dynamic, if no less a stage set. In the context of the other prints in the engraver's series executed in collaboration with the Sandby brothers, it shares the thematic concerns of those views, in alluding to contemporary debates over the improvement of the capital, though its framing of current practices and developments is distinct in execution as well as tone.

Observations

In the course of his *Observations* Stewart made approving reference to Gwynn's "most judicious and well-digested plan" for the improvement of the city. He himself advocated sweeping renovation of London's public buildings, the establishment of "new openings, new communications, and new decorations," the replacement of "those miserable brick hovels, with belfries like the new invented cork-screw." Yet, quite unlike Gwynn, Stewart was not one to recommend the court as the primary sponsor or even as a major beneficiary of these much-needed works. Rather, Stewart saw the impetus for building reform as needing to come from the city, to be paid for by duties, lotteries, or voluntary taxes. Public improvements were shaped by "the spirit of the people, and not from the will of the prince," he argued. A capital not only more appropriate to this new imperial age but one also more easily controlled and policed would be the reward. If London's architects were in broad agreement about the need to rebuild and re-plan the city, Gwynn and the Sandbys' royalism was far from universally shared. A humorous frontispiece to Stewart's pamphlet mocked not only the *rus in urbe* pretensions of the recent speculative development of Cavendish Square but also the absurdity of its newly unveiled equestrian monument to a royal prince. It pictured animals grazing and taking shade beneath the rotund figure of Thomas Sandby's chief benefactor, Cumberland (figure 15), sandwiched between the classicizing façades of the square's town houses. Stewart presumably intended a satirical contrast between the elegance of the design and the corpulent, ungainly figure, "in features and proportions . . . extremely like the original." With reference to the duke's bloody reputation, as forged on the field of Culloden and in the days after the defeat of the '45, Stewart likened Cavendish Square's faux pastoralism, its wooden fence and farm animals, darkly, to "the idea of a butcher's pen."⁵⁶ While the politics of Stewart's review are not straightforward, they do appear broadly sympathetic to the mob cries of "Wilkes and Liberty" that had in recent years accompanied the violent demonstrations against the arbitrary ambitions of the Crown and its ministers.⁵⁷ London's public spaces were quite literally a stage of political theater and conflict at this moment, in ways that coincided with and

56. Stewart, *Critical Observations*, 40, 2, 18, 14. The monument was the work of the sculptor Henry Cheere. My thanks to Nick Grindle for bringing the play on Cumberland's reputation in Stewart's description of the square to my attention.

57. It is one of the complexities of Stewart's *Observations* that Cumberland was often enlisted as a defender of liberty in the early 1760s, to be identified to an extent with the anti-Bute position of Wilkes's supporters for his opposition to the Peace of Paris. Of particular relevance in this context are Paul Sandby's graphic satires of the period attacking Bute, prints such as *The Boot & the Block-head* (1762); see Paul Sandby, ed. Bonehill and Daniels, 116–19.

inevitably framed architectural debates over their redesign. Planners advanced several schemes to reform areas south of the river, especially once the construction of Blackfriars was underway, with St. George's Fields recognized by Gwynn as "the only spot now left about London, which has not yet fallen sacrifice to the depraved taste of modern builders."⁵⁸ On May 10, 1768, twenty thousand gathered on the fields to protest John Wilkes's imprisonment, eventually meeting with gunfire that left several dead.



Urban improvements prompted a range of associations and reconsiderations of national pasts, including unsettling cultural memories of relatively recent date. These were examined and explored in a range of cultural practices, most notably perhaps in print, in newspaper columns and pamphlets, graphic satire and view-making. Those histories animated by the city's streets and squares were enlisted to various ends by the capital's artistic community. They might authorize the founding of academies and the liberalization of the artistic professions, as long advocated by Gwynn and realized, if not without considerable conflict, during the 1760s, with the establishment of the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy of Arts.⁵⁹ London's histories were then also employed to advance arguments for the civic role of the architect as servant of the Crown and/or the city. Figures such as Jones or Wren were enlisted for such causes, including the distinction of the architect from the mere builder or surveyor. Gwynn's jokey dismissal of the claims of the coffin-maker to the status of architect and more pointedly those of "Mr Trowel" are to be viewed in this light. Architects' commentaries on their rivals' designs on the country's capital, as well as their celebration of contributions made by illustrious predecessors to London's embellishment, weighed practitioners' claims to a public function against the realities of private interest.

Six London Views, or more particularly the Sandbys' contributions to the series, addressed these contests over London's improvement. They offered a pictorial commentary on the compromises of current architectural practice, on the need for regulation of the city's buildings, squares, and streets—their social character as much as their embellishment, form, and layout. The unruly natural force of the Thames, for example, required mastering. The set was also shaped by friendships and rivalries with other members of the London art world, with architects like Gwynn and Mylne but also artists such as Canaletto or Hogarth who had, in their differing ways, laid claim to the imagery of the city's streets and squares. In a larger if not unrelated sense, the set

58. Gwynn, *London and Westminster Improved*, 10. On the various unexecuted schemes to reform the area in this period, see Peter Guillery, *The Small House in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2004), 150–59.

59. John Gwynn, *An Essay on Design; including proposals for Erecting a Public Academy* (London, 1749). For a recent account of these arguments and debates, see Matthew Hargraves, "Candidates for Fame": *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760–1791* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2005). A copy of Gwynn's *Essay* inscribed "To my ingenious friend Paul Sandby" survives in the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Yale University.

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS
 ON THE
 BUILDINGS
 AND
 IMPROVEMENTS
 OF
 LONDON.



———— Nil fuit unquam
 Sic impar. Hor.

LONDON:
 Printed for J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall.
 MDCCLXXI.

FIGURE 15. Frontispiece to [John Stewart], *Critical Observations on the Buildings and Improvements of London* (London, 1771). University of Glasgow Library.

was also the product of professional and political anxieties over the lack of monarchical investment in grand civic building projects on a par with the royal houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Theories of architectural magnificence, especially as they developed out of freemasonic histories of building, appeared appropriate to honor the imperial reign of George III. But Thomas Sandby's bridge or his friend Gwynn's improvements were envisaged as "paper landscapes," not as potential structures. Their magnificent designs were statements of ideals that were politically contentious—and practically unrealizable. In contrast, Paul and Thomas Sandby's *London Views*, as engraved and published by Rooker, registered the fragmentary experience and nature of the city, a sense of change and process, of banal actuality, rather than "pleasure and magnificence."

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