

RICHARD LLEWELYN-DAVIES

1912-1981

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THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY



Photo by Michael Teague

## PREFACE

The Richard Llewelyn-Davies Lectureship in "Environment and Society" was established to honor the memory of an architect distinguished in the fields of contemporary architectural, urban and environmental planning.

Born in Wales in 1912, Richard Llewelyn-Davies was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, l'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and the Architectural Association in London. In 1960 he began a fifteen-year association with University College of the University of London as professor of architecture, professor of urban planning, head of the Bartlett School of Architecture and dean of the School of Environmental Studies. He became, in 1967, the initial chairman of Britain's Centre for Environmental Studies, one of the world's leading research organizations on urbanism, and held that post for the rest of his life. He combined his academic career with professional practice in England, the Middle East, Africa, Pakistan, North and South America.

In the fall of 1980, the year before he died, Richard Llewelyn-Davies came to the Institute for Advanced Study as a Director's Visitor. His deep pleasure in the qualities of this particular environment, the warm friendships he formed and the concern he felt for matters at the heart of our society led, through the generosity of his friends and colleagues, to the establishment of a fund for a lectureship which will be dedicated to a continuing examination of the questions he so vigorously raised.

It is an honor to present here the first of these lectures which will be held alternately at the Institute for Advanced Study and the University of London.

HARRY WOOLF

*Princeton, New Jersey 1985*

# INTRODUCTION

by Harry Woolf

I would like you to join me in remembering Richard Llewelyn-Davies this afternoon and to do so first by sharing with me these lines from a sonnet by John Masefield:

“This planet sings where other spheres were mute,  
This light begins when darkness covered me.  
Now, though I know I shall never know  
All, through my fault, nor blazon with my pen  
That path prepared where only I could go,  
Still, I have this, not given to other men.  
Beauty, this grace, this spring, this given bread,  
This life, this dawn, this wakening from the dead.”

[*Collected Poems*, 1922, p. 418]

Richard touched our lives briefly here, where he came as our guest, the first architect ever to be invited as a visitor to the Institute for Advanced Study. The strain between the aesthetic and the practical that is an architect's normal field of action was multiplied many times in him by a broader concern for the building in its total environment, whether set within the complicated dynamics of the modern city or infused into a rural village environment.

Examples of his low-keyed architectural resolution of those traditional tensions in the life of art and learning are numerous. The new London Stock Exchange genuflects politely to its old city surroundings, with wandering byways and a rambly kind of structure. The addition to the Tate Gallery in London maximizes the natural light for viewing the paintings and focuses the visitor's attention on the art, not the architecture. The 1957 village of Rushbrooke (in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk), sensitive to the interplay of light and darkness, shadow and substance, uses stucco and shed-like roofs to meld the new into the old in a rural framework normally inhospitable to modern architecture. Thus beauty, where none had been before, and personal grace transmitted into community harmony, “this given bread” now ours.

Richard Llewelyn-Davies was born in 1912, with private schooling, Trinity College, Cambridge, the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Architectural Association School in London, the path of his formal education. From an engineering experience with the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, where he worked on the rationalization of railway station construction, he moved through a period with the Nuffield Foundation, where his reports on hospital architecture profoundly altered their future design, to a professorial life at University College, London, where he changed the nature and direction of the Bartlett School of Architecture, introducing related disciplines such as urban planning into the curriculum and extending its reach by creating (in 1967) a new Center for Environmental Studies. The interdisciplinarity which he fostered was both timely and telling for other schools of architecture and departments of urban planning took up his cause. His deep concern for scientific analysis and research gave legitimacy to the study of growth, change and indeterminacy in the constructed environment, an area that remained the center of his attention throughout his life and came to constitute the core of his work.

Interlacing his traditional architectural accomplishments, but integral to it, was Richard's deep involvement with urban development and town planning. The rehabilitation of decaying older cities (such as Birmingham) and the planning of new towns such as Milton Keynes were complementary undertakings gathered under a common concern for the total environment. After the shock of a first encounter with the slums of Toledo, Ohio, and the riots in Detroit and Los Angeles, he worked with the black communities in Detroit and in Watts for the revitalization of housing and urban life in those areas. This was soon extended to cities in Georgia, Illinois, Texas, California and New York, and beyond those to several third-world countries.

The Gropius lecture that he gave at Harvard in 1975 dealt with the relationship between science and architecture, and his address to the Urban Design Conference at Philadelphia in 1979 with some of his unorthodox planning concepts. His career and his ideas were too rich and too complicated to compress into a brief dedicatory statement, so that it is best, perhaps, to let him speak for himself:

“My work as an architect,” he wrote, “has been based on belief in the power of human reason. I believe that creative design must be based on real depth of understanding. I believe that an architect has to understand the purpose of his building in a very broad sense, which includes understanding a lot about the society and culture within which he works. I also believe that his technical understanding of the means of building needs to be very complete. . . . I think that ideas about design come suddenly and unexpectedly in a creative flash, but I think that the result will be shallow and inadequate unless the creative moment comes against a background of deep and wide understanding. I do not think there is a great deal of difference in the creative activity of a designer and that of a scientist. I think both use inspiration on a basis of reason.”

The purpose of the Director's Visitor program, within which it was my privilege to invite Richard, is to bring to the Institute men and women of great accomplishment and thoughtfulness, who do not fall within the traditional categories of our four Schools, even though we consider *their* reach of extraordinary breadth. We expect our institutional serendipity to flow in both directions, to be enhanced by the addition of knowledge and experience not normally our own, by bringing into our midst another kind of intelligence, another point of view; and, flowing in the other direction, we expect our unique institution, through the interactive affects of personal exchanges, seminars and colloquia, to influence the work and thought of the visitor. Richard Llewelyn-Davies spent only one semester here, though I intended to invite him back for a second term. He certainly influenced us, from a reorientation of the seating arrangement in the seminar room improving discussion and exchange, to the permanent implantation of an environmental sensibility, at once more practical and more beautiful than we had known before.

We shall never know, now, of course, of the reverse effect, but we are extraordinarily pleased that his presence here, his interests and his values will never vanish. There are many to thank for helping to endow the Richard Llewelyn-Davies Lecture: Jim Wolfensohn, to begin with, for suggesting him to me, and Martin

Meyerson and Marietta Tree and many others. Perhaps it is not too presumptuous to think that we may find in this lecture series, inaugurated by Asa Briggs today in Richard Llewelyn-Davies' name and in John Masefield's words again, "This life, this dawn, this wakening from the dead."

Much is brought together in linking Richard Llewelyn-Davies with Asa Briggs: a natural affinity of subject matter, completely compatible in their special interests; a bent for the practical and the managerial; an amazing capacity to deal with vast arrays of information, while preserving and protecting the particular and the individual; and a concern for the institutions of organized life, physical and social, as they have emerged from the cultural context created by the descending flow of historical forces on the one hand and the cross currents of contemporary industrial and technological experience on the other. All of this, and more, is concentrated and intensified by urban life, the crucible in which, as Professor Briggs sees it, modernity is molded. The city is his beat, and we may ask what this scholar who has walked its streets has come to see.

Born in 1921, in Yorkshire, he reminds us in the preface to his recent *Social History of England* (1983) of the formative forces of his youth: "This book is the product of years of both study and talk, going back to my own undergraduate days . . . [when] I listened to Eileen Power and tramped the fields with John Saltmarsh. Indeed, it goes back before that to my Yorkshire upbringing in an industrial town on the edge of the Moors, as distinctive an environment as a seaport like Liverpool or a Cotswald village." It was during his fellowship at Worcester College (Oxford), in the years immediately following the Second World War, in which he served until 1945, that he began his research in depth on Victorian cities. *Press and Public in Early Nineteenth-Century Birmingham* appeared in 1949, and the *History of Birmingham (1845-1938)* in two volumes in 1952. During the years 1953-1955 he held concurrent appointments as Reader in Recent Social and Economic History and Faculty Fellow at Nuffield College. He spent the first of those two years at this Institute, so we proudly count him as one of our alumni. *Victorian People: A Reappraisal of Persons and Themes,*

published in 1954, emerged from that epoch as a work in which, as he described it years later (*Victorian Cities*, p. 11) he was "concerned with... years of orderly progress, continued economic development and social peace, [in which] I tried to account for the 'unity' of these years by choosing a number of people whose attitudes and careers reflected or directed the tendencies of the period..."

From 1961-1976 he was successively Professor of History at Sussex College, Dean of the School of Social Studies and Vice Chancellor. Selecting from his published work of that period as a sampling only of his range and interests, there appeared the first three volumes of what eventually would be four of the *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, Vol. I, 1961, Vol. II, 1965, Vol. III, 1970, *Victorian Cities*, 1963, and *William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs*, 1968.

In 1976 he was named Provost of Worcester College (Oxford) and in June of that same year became Baron Briggs. His publications since then have included *Essays in Labor History*, 1977, *Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace: Impact and Images of the Industrial Revolution*, 1979, *The Power of Steam: An Illustrated History of the World's Steam Age*, 1982, and most recently, *A Social History of England*, 1983.

There is an interesting rhythm in the flow of Asa Briggs's scholarship, and a significant branching out into several channels as it increases. In pursuit first of detail and precision, the source is Birmingham, one city in a prescribed period, with the stream broadening to *Victorian People*, *Victorian Cities*, and finally, *A Social History*.

A second channel into which his scholarly contributions move, and one that I suspect will be developed further in today's lecture, may be referred to as urban and industrial iconography. Here the urban traveller comes into his own. "The ideal social historian," he writes, (*A Social History*, 1983, p. 8) "is an explorer who does not stay in his study; he will use his eyes and his feet as much as his brain." Where that interest in imagery and artifact was immanent in his early works, it has now fully emerged. Illustrations are no longer decorative but essential elements of scholarly exegesis. From *The Nineteenth Century*, a handsome, illustrated volume, in which (among other things) he fractured the conventional separa-

tions of subject matter by interweaving economic history throughout the text, we move to and through *The Power of Steam, Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace*, and *The Social History of England* with increasing iconographic sensibility.

The assembly of anthologies devoted to labor history represents still another channel which we can do no more than simply identify, save perhaps to note an important singular contribution, beyond editorship, which Asa Briggs makes when he takes up "the language of class in early nineteenth-century England." But we must call a halt to the description and presentation of this versatile, thorough and most innovative of scholars, if this hour is to be his. It is an honor to welcome him back to the Institute and a pleasure to pass him on to you on the subject of "The Victorian City: Images and Realities."

# THE VICTORIAN CITY: IMAGES AND REALITIES

*by Asa Briggs*

It is a pleasure to be here at the Institute again and an honor to be delivering the first Richard Llewelyn-Davies lecture.

Richard came to this Institute himself in 1980, the year before he died. Knowing many places, including Cambridge University and the House of Lords, two of Britain's most famous "other places," Richard found this a particularly congenial place, as I did—and like him I have been associated with the same two "other places" in Britain also.

This Institute, he felt, was the right kind of place, detached from the great cities he knew at first hand, in which to think, to talk and to plan. He had been involved in planning, of course, in many places, old and new, in many different parts of the world, but it was London, a world city, which served as his working base—first, University College, and then the new Centre for Environmental Studies, which he and his colleagues succeeded in turning into a lively research centre. Jeremy Bentham, watching from University College, doubtless thoroughly approved. He would also have approved of Richard's infectious enthusiasm.

I am glad that Richard's friends and colleagues are among my distinguished audience tonight. It was with Richard himself in mind, however, that I chose my subject. "The Victorian City" made people think and talk about "Environment and Society," which will be the theme of all these lectures, in a new way; and although they did little about planning, they certainly thought and talked a lot about that, too. Robert Vaughan, who coined the phrase "the age of great cities" during the 1840s, a decade of unprecedented urban growth in England, described the history of great cities as preeminently "the history of social experiment;" and by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become common not only to compare Victorian cities with each other, a fashion which has continued in the twentieth century, but with an ideal city which belonged to no particular time or place. There was argument about what that ideal city should be, but it was usually felt in

England that even if it was not to be a "garden city," it should have some gardens in it. It should have a mission too, and the missionary idea applied to all cities. "Every town," wrote W. R. Lethaby in 1900, "is a Zion and has had its prophets."

We are now far enough removed in time from the cities of Victorian Britain to think and feel that their new way is an old way. Twentieth-century cities, many of the most striking or disturbing of them far away from Britain, dwarf them, and the newest of them are very unVictorian. Moreover, we have already passed through different phases in the interpretation of Victorian ways of thinking, talking and looking, so that even the huge two-volume study of "the Victorian city" by different authors, edited by Dyos and Wolff, and published in 1973, a study which had the same title as this lecture, is already beginning to look a little dated.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, given the size and range of post-Victorian cities and given all the historiographical shifts and arguments about Victorian cities themselves, it is generally recognized not only that the Victorian way of thinking, talking and looking was a new way worth studying in its own right, but also, more disturbingly, that our contemporary cities in Britain, at least, still rely in the late-twentieth century on what once seemed a solid, but now seems an increasingly vulnerable Victorian infrastructure. (The word was described in Saturday's London *Times* as "today's political buzzword."<sup>2</sup>) These are only two of the many reasons why it is interesting to consider—or reconsider—the nature and implications of Victorian experience. A third reason is that given the particular nature of that experience, the Victorian city is perhaps the most convenient or appropriate social context in which to examine the relationship between fact and perception, practice and ideology, a relationship of perennial interest in all societies.

I am sure that Richard would have insisted, as I shall insist in this lecture, that in any such consideration we cannot separate the visual and the social. Far too many urban studies, including the most sophisticated, do. What we destroy, what we build, and what we choose to see, often remaining blind to the rest, reflect the values and shapes of society. No one made this clearer than John Ruskin, awkwardly outstanding among Victorian seers, or William Morris,

who gave a remarkably relevant lecture on Architecture and History in 1884 and who, unlike Ruskin, figures increasingly prominently in contemporary criticism. The “practical” people whom Ruskin and Morris were criticizing also usually knew what they were doing, however, much though what they were doing might be deplored or condemned not only by Ruskin and Morris but by others of a less prophetic disposition. And this applies, for example, to the Bradford textile manufacturers whom Ruskin addressed face to face, to the railway builders, who tore cities apart as well as linked them together, and to the jerry builders who were more interested in speculation than in standards. They were not usually acting through ignorance. There was a clash of values.

I emphasize clarity of intent even though the image and the reality of Victorian London, the city on which I shall concentrate, was fog. There was no doubt about the physical nature of the real fog. As Dickens, most remarkable and memorable of the novelists who turned to the nineteenth-century city, described it in *Our Mutual Friend*, “The whole metropolis was a heap of vapor charged with the muffled sound of wheels and enfolding gigantic catahrr.” No gaslight could penetrate it. For Nathaniel Hawthorne, just as vivid a writer, London fog was more like a distillation of mud than anything else—“the spiritualized medium of departed mud, through which the dreaded citizens of London probably tread in Hades whither they are translated.”

Fog in the mind is a more difficult product to analyze than fog in the streets. For all the clarity of intent on the part of the decision makers, Victorian cities produced a multiplicity of blurred reactions, including ambivalent reactions, from among local inhabitants—they could see the same city in very different ways—as well as from travelers, writers and artists. And as both Dickens and Anthony Trollope knew, fog could be very effectively manufactured by city boosters and by agencies of entrenched vested interests seeking to protect themselves or to advance their claims. (I should add that Trollope never mentioned London fog although he did once refer *en passant* in *The Warden* to “the thickest of London smoke” and “the unsullied Thames”).

One reason why there was metaphorical fog was that it was

difficult to locate responsibility for why the Victorian city was what it was or what it seemed to be. And this was particularly true of London, the government of which was not unified until 1888: there was an extra London element of anomaly in vestrydom. Nonetheless, in all Victorian cities, even those able and willing to deal positively with their own affairs, there were too many invisible hands, not all of them as beneficent as that identified by Adam Smith, for anyone to be in a position to make it clear why things were happening, particularly perhaps, but not exclusively, in public health. Indeed, Samuel Smiles, not usually thought of as a critic of *laissez faire*, talked of a "terrible Nobody" everywhere at work. What made matters worse was that there could be complacency tinged with pride in all the mess and muddle. That was worse than meanness or vested interest.

It was a Victorian commonplace that it was neither kings nor ministers who took most of the relevant decisions about London's future, few of them deserving to be called strategic. There was no Napoleon III. It was recognized at the same time, of course, that some landlords did take decisions, but they, after all, were heirs not only to an older urban tradition, the tradition of the square and the crescent, a tradition which Napoleon III seems to have admired, but to substantial and increasingly lucrative London estates. Whatever their influence, however, and whatever the influence of the railway builders, the character of London building—and unbuilding—was in general determined by a multiplicity of individual decisions influenced by, and in turn influencing, prevailing market trends.

I agree with Donald Olsen, author of *The Growth of Victorian London* (1976), a study which tries to relate the visual to the social, that whatever was happening in the industrial cities of the north of England, where there was just as much fog as there was in London and where smoke could be extolled as wealth, "the Victorians were, in part consciously [and I would add only in part] transforming the metropolis into an environment designed to reinforce certain specific values." Olsen singles out "privacy for the individual and his family," claiming that specialization and segregation were important means to that end.<sup>3</sup> And while I would add others, less

positive, like fears of disease or disorder, and would seek to relate psychology more to the sociology, I agree with him also that it was these specific values that gave Victorian London "order and system." This was not, as in "the Paris of Haussmann," an order which was "essentially visual and spatial in nature," but rather an order which was "functional and social."

Much of the technical "order and system" was hidden from view. It included gas pipes, drains and sewers, and (from 1863) underground railways, one of London's many "firsts"—all that we now call infrastructure. Yet the social order and the cultural system were not hidden from view. Leaving on one side the clutter and the dazzle of the advertising, they were always on display, very differently, in London and Paris. The architecture was as significant as the engineering. And there was system, too, behind allocations of space and differential population densities, elements in the city which are not dealt with in a highly sophisticated fashion. George Ponderevo in H. G. Wells's novel *Tono-Bungay* was right to sense that he could trace the lines of an "ordered structure" out of which the confusion of London has grown," a process that was "something more than a confusion of casual accidents, though it may be no more [he concluded] than a process of disease."

London was a low density city which covered an area which throughout the Victorian age was persistently some four times as large as Paris, whatever happened to their respective populations. In 1854, when the Metropolitan Board of Works was founded in London to coordinate rather than to unify the procedures of vestrydom, London was already described as "a province covered with houses" with a diameter so great that persons living in the furthest extremities" had "few interests in common." "Its area," it was argued, was "so large that each inhabitant is in general acquainted with his own quarter and has no private knowledge of the other parts of the town."

What was more or less common, however, although there were blocks of new tenements to contradict it, was living in houses. Parisians, it was often pointed out, lived in rooms and apartments, Londoners in single or less often multiple family homes. This affected community interaction. The quarter was not a *quartier*,

although in the poorer quarters as the century proceeded an actively manifest social life was maintained, revolving around the street and the pub. As M. J. Daunton, a stimulating recent writer on Victorian cities has pointed out, the experience of living in such working-class quarters—and he might have added middle-class suburbs—depended on the actual use of space in such districts inside houses and between them. (It depended also, of course, on conditions of travel—the walking way or new ways of movement). For the relevance of his criteria, compare the experience of living in the cellars of Liverpool or the back-to-back houses of Leeds or the tenements of Glasgow. Daunton warns us, indeed, that “to view the Victorian city through the eyes of social reformers, town planners or geographers is of more significance for the history of intellectual trends in the middle class than it is for grasping changing patterns of urban life.”<sup>4</sup>

The warning, while salutary, should not inhibit continuing discussion of the visual appearance of London in those parts that were planned as well as in the large areas which were not. It is significant that Charles Eastlake in his influential book *Hints on Household Taste* (1868) began not with the home but with the street and with the differences in street vistas in London and Paris. Through real though limited street “improvements”—the term was controversial—carried out by the Metropolitan Board of Works, there was a kind of Parisian influence on London, culminating after the century was over in Kingsway. Yet, in general, there was uneven, even apparently random, visual “intake” in most parts of London, with little of the Parisian dual aesthetic of broad new boulevards and narrow old streets. Moreover, and it was a matter of frequent comment, particularly during the last decades of the century, while London was pushing people into its suburbs, as new a phenomenon, it seemed, as the industrial cities of the early century, Paris was pushing industry there. It was doubtless reflecting, as Anthony Sutcliffe, stimulating historian of both cities, has put it, “a much older tradition whereby unpleasant functions, and the unpleasant people who went with them, had been located by public initiative outside the concentrated built-up area of the city.”<sup>5</sup>

There was, of course, a centuries-old London before 1837 just as

there was a centuries-old Paris, and the differences between them, visual and social, go back long before 1837 and have to be explained in terms of that pre-Victorian history as well as in terms of economics or geography. The distribution of churches old and new, very old in places, is a link with that past, one of many. So, indeed, too, is the distribution of hospitals, a subject which deserves a lecture in itself and which was a matter of great interest to Richard. There was also a longstanding cultural difference in the tale of the two cities which shaped *perceptions* of nineteenth-century London and Paris. The latter has been called a "secular Rome," and in the year of Victor Hugo's centenary celebrations the title seems superbly appropriate. London could never have claimed the same title in any dialogue between the two, although in relation to the great new provincial cities of Britain it strengthened its cultural position as the nineteenth century went by.

As I suggested in my book *Victorian Cities*, now eighteen years old, London gained in cultural importance vis-à-vis other British cities during the last decades of Victoria's reign not just because it became more of a world city, a new nineteenth-century term, but because of nationalizing tendencies in British culture and politics themselves. The provincial cities, a newer phenomenon, lost ground. It was a writer from outside Britain in New York's *Century Magazine*, however, who, with the world in view, described London in 1883, in words which even Hugo might have used, as "the focus of intellectual activity and the mint of thought. Here ferments the largest and most highly developed humanity which as yet the universal mother has given birth to, and there the whole world's intellect comes to pay homage."

Culture—and history—must figure prominently in all discussions of "the Victorian City." For the most part, the Victorians themselves, however, like to start with facts, particularly the facts of number, approaching them, as I pointed out in *Victorian Cities*, with an often unstable mix of fear and pride; and they liked to connect the facts relating to London to facts relating to other places or, perhaps more usually before the 1890s, *vice versa*.

In 1837, the year when Queen Victoria ascended the throne, there were only five places in England and Wales outside London

with a population of 100,000 or more. In 1800 there had been none. By 1891 there were 23 and by 1901, the year when Queen Victoria died, there were 30. The number of towns with populations of 50,000 to 100,000 increased from 5 in 1801 to 49 in 1901. Alongside the growth of England's provincial cities, most of them expanding from a new kind of industrial base—these were Vaughan's cities of the new age—London grew too. In 1800 it was already the largest city in Europe. It then covered around ten square miles, two miles from north to south, five from East to West. By 1900, however, the distance from its northernmost point to its southern boundary at Croydon was eighteen miles. During each of the first five decades of the nineteenth century, the first five decades of the national census, the population of the new industrial cities was growing most rapidly, by as much as forty to fifty percent in a decade. Yet the population of London also increased by over twelve percent every ten years. And during the last decades of the century London had established its place once more as the focal point of change. Between the two Censuses of 1841 and 1901 its population rose from 1,813,676 to 6,586,269.

As Henry James wrote in 1888 (and already I am back to "culture"): "When a social product is so vast and various" as London, "it may be approached on a thousand different sides, and liked and disliked for a thousand different reasons." Yet James knew what he felt himself about it. "It is the single place in which most readers, most possible lovers, are gathered together. It is the most inclusive public and the largest social incarnation of the language, of the tradition." It might not be a "pleasant, agreeable or cheerful place" or "exempt from reproach." All it was could be described, however, only in terms of "magnificence." It was "the biggest aggregation of human life, the most complete compendium of the world."

Such a judgement, essentially a cultural judgement, does not greatly illuminate our understanding of what was specific in the *Victorian* city. All it does is tell us about London. After all, Dr. Johnson in the eighteenth century and Charles Lamb early in the nineteenth century had presented pre-Victorian pictures of London which were not dissimilar. "When a man is tired of London he is tired of life." "Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches,

Covent Gardens, shops sparkling with pretty faces of industrious milliners, neat seamstresses, ladies cheapening, gentlemen behind counters lying, authors in the street with spectacles . . . lamps lit at night . . . noises of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of Fire and Stop Thief; inns of court, with their learned air, and halls, and butteries, just like the Cambridge colleges; old bookstalls, Jeremy Taylors, Burtons on Melancholy, and Religio Medicis on every stall. These are thy pleasures, O London."

Johnson and Lamb were writing, however, at a time when London, big although it seemed to be, was still restricted enough in distances and numbers to be fitted into a traditional framework of urban description and imagery. It was still a coherent entity which could be contrasted with the country beyond. By the time of James, this was no longer so. London sprawled. Its main contrasts were interior to itself; large parts of it were *terra incognita* to the privileged and had to be explored. It posed problems which could affect everyone. It called for statisticians, not satirists, to provide keys to their solution: figures of speech, it was said at the time, had given way to figures of arithmetic. Changes within the city—not least visual changes—became a measure of change in society as a whole.

There were continuities, however, and they are central to my theme. Statistics itself in its early development, although not in the late nineteenth century, was a major subject of satire, as can be seen merely through flipping the pages of the early *Punch*, founded in 1841. Thackeray, a novelist of memory, could still settle in the mid-Victorian years for a critique of London which was essentially pre-Victorian—a London of dissipation, ostentation, idleness, drift—as Seymour Betzky has written, a scarlet city.<sup>6</sup> And Trollope, too, a great admirer of Thackeray, gives us a very different picture of London from Dickens. Like Thackeray's London, his is a limited London in contacts and in space. "We are thinking of moving . . . of going to St. John's Wood or Islington," says Gertrude "wickedly" in *The Three Clerks*. "'Islington!' said the Honorable Mrs. Val nearly fainting."

In the same novel, Trollope, whom Henry James considered "a good observer," wrote quite simply of London that it was "very difficult nowadays to say where the suburbs of London came to an end, and where the country begins. The railways, instead of enabling Londoners to live in the country, have turned the country into a city. London will soon assume the shape of a great starfish. The old town, extending from Poplar to Hammersmith, will be the nucleus, and the various railway lines will be the projecting rays." This was a theory of London's growth before George Pondero or for that matter before the Chicago School. The ghosts of the members of that school, to whom I owe much, hover in my mind throughout this lecture although I shall not refer to them again.

Return now, therefore, to James and to his reactions, bearing in mind that after saying that Trollope was a good observer, he added that "his great, his inestimable gift was a complete appreciation of the usual."

"I came to London as a complete stranger," James wrote in his notebook in 1881. "*J'y suis absolument comme chez moi.* Such an experience is an education—it fortifies the character and embellishes the mind." "You can draw up a tremendous list of reasons why [London] should be insupportable. The fogs, the smoke, the dirt, the darkness, the wet, the distances, the ugliness, the brutal size of the place, the horrible numerosity of society, the manner in which this senseless bigness is fatal to amenity, to convenience, to conversation, to good manners—all this and much else you may expatiate upon. You may call it dreary, heavy, stupid, dull, inhuman, vulgar at heart and tiresome in turn. I have felt all these things so strongly at times that I have said—'Ah London, you, too, then are impossible.' But these are occasional moods; and for one who takes it as I take it, London is on the whole the most possible form of life. I take it as an artist and as a bachelor; as one who has the passion of observation and whose business is the study of human life."

Olsen's assessment of Victorian London is in the James tradition. London for him is a place of movement, of variety, and in these respects like Paris, of pleasure and of culture. It is also, and

not least, a place where there is always the chance of private withdrawal—solitude amid multitude, as Baudelaire, supreme poet of Paris, put it. London for Olsen as for James and for Rasmussen, who is also in the same tradition, is a “unique city.”<sup>8</sup> Yet James in some of his moods could be as critical as any other observer not only of Victorian London but of Victorian England, as he was when he wrote, also in 1881, that “England is all clogged and stuffed,” carrying “the great rubbish heap and sweepings of centuries that she drags after her, sheathed in the fog and the smoke.”

There are links here with an older American tradition. When Emerson, for example, criticized the way in which the English had cast a spell over foreigners, he referred not to England’s provincial cities, sources of new wealth and power, but to London. “The nation sits in the immense city they have builded, a London extended into every man’s mind, though he live in Van Dieman’s Land or Capetown.” And Emerson went on to complain of the way that English novelists who were read throughout the world, were restricted by their London context. “The essays, the fiction and the poetry of the day have . . . municipal limits. Dickens . . . writes London tracts. . . . Their novelists despair of the heart. Thackeray finds that God has made no allowance for the poor thing in His universe; more’s the pity he thinks; but adds ‘tis not for us to be wiser: we must renounce ideals, and accept London.”

“Images” and/or “realities”? It is difficult to get back to the facts—and to treat them as facts as so many Victorians wished to do. The perceptions are pervasive. Was London *sui generis* or was it the biggest and in a way the most representative Victorian city among many? There were different and often clashing images of it which were current both at different points in Victoria’s reign; and at each point on the way there is an enormous range of reactions from Henry Mayhew to Charles Booth, both of whom were just as much interested in the drama of London as in its statistics, or from Gissing and H. G. Wells, through their reminiscences as well as through their sociology, to Saki through his satire. There was a *fin de siècle* poetry too. The movement of the huge metropolitan city—the newness and noise of many of its streets, the brightness of

its lights, the "flow" of its traffic and of its crowds (what Carlyle called a "living flood"), the quickened sense of time could even inspire cults in the late nineteenth century, so that while Oscar Wilde, having made fun of the countryside, could claim that "a modern city is the exact opposite of what everyone wants," another of the "decadents" could write of London:

London, London, our delight,  
Great flower that opens but at night.  
Whose day begins when day is done  
Lamp after lamp against the sky  
Opens a sudden beaming eye  
Leaping a light on either hand  
The iron lilies of the Strand.

It was doubtless with such writing in mind that Saki in 1906 could make his terrible Reginald describe London as "the city of dreadful nocturnes." Most of such writing, however,—and this was writing influenced by Paris—leaves out one major London theme which is present throughout the reign—the contrast between East End and West End, a contrast, at once social and visual, between prosperous London and outcast London, between glitter and darkness, ostentation and privation. At the time when Saki was writing, the theme was represented by the contrast between Park Lane and Whitechapel Road.

It is naive to dismiss such a contrast simply as one element in London's variety or to trace back segregation simply to the pressure of individual motivation, the desire or the necessity to be with people like oneself. Every single social indicator revealed the deprivation of East Enders, absolute and relative. And for all the changes which have taken place during the last century—in expert knowledge, in political structures and processes, in the role of local and central government, in engineering and in building—this contrast, environmental and social, still persists.

It was not a new contrast, but it was sharpened in Victorian London and fitted into a new social context as London, "Greater London," expanded, apparently it seemed without limits, in dif-

ferent directions, with a dreary and largely featureless new South and a new commuter North, "Metroland," indeed, with suburbia of all shades.

Olsen, concerned as he is with cultural "identity," says very little about such social divisions—he has only two references to the East End—although he comments generally in his concluding chapter on "London in 1900: the Victorian Legacy" that it was "a better place for the strong than the weak." By contrast, many contemporaries focussed on poverty and wealth, class segregation and problem centeredness as the main features in any picture of Victorian London. Long before Andrew Mearns's *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, the pamphlet which shocked a shockable generation in 1883, John Holingshead's *Ragged London*, which appeared in 1861 prepared the way. The word "slum," first used as early as the 1820s, had ancient roots and emerged from slang. The word "overcrowding," however, which was first used in the 1840s, was very much a new word, part of the new problem vocabulary of the period. By the time Charles Booth began to collect his statistics, significantly choosing the Toynbee Hall settlement in London's East End as a base, a theory of the two Londons was generally accepted.

I have recently written a history of Toynbee Hall<sup>9</sup> which brings out among other points how disturbed the people of the provinces were when a pattern of poverty similar to that which Booth revealed there could be traced by other statisticians not only in Britain's characteristic Victorian cities but in older traditional cities like York, (transformed though York had been by the railway). And this revelation encouraged the formulation and adoption of national policies, the culmination of the nationalizing trend in culture and politics noted earlier. By then, however, the Victorian industrial city seemed to have settled down. It was no longer the "system of life created according to entirely new principles" as it had been described within four years of Queen Victoria coming to the throne.

I started my own exploration of Victorian cities not with London, but with these new industrial cities which I already knew well at first hand. I was living at the time in one of them, Leeds,

described in the 1840s—and you can take your choice—as a “poem” on the one hand and as a “denial of civilization” on the other, and I had written a biography of one of them, Birmingham. From the start I was writing as much about perceptions of them as about their structures, about images as much as realities, although from the start, too, and it was a main motivation—I pitted what I felt I knew of their reality against the image of the “insensate industrial town” as presented by Lewis Mumford.

I knew from my own experience, more intimate than Mumford's, that it was not true that the new cities of the industrial revolution, whatever their problems, were “man-heaps, machine warrens, not agents of human association for the promotion of a better life,” as he argued both in 1938 in his *Culture of Cities* (I liked the term “culture” in this context as I still do) and in his *The City in History* in 1961. Nor did it seem to me true from my own knowledge that “there were no effective centers in this urban massing; no institutions capable of uniting its members into an active city life; no political organization capable of unifying its common activities.” Kinship relations counted in the politics of late nineteenth-century Birmingham, for example, as much as in the politics of a village; and it was a Leeds minister of religion who from that context, not from that of a village or a small town, questioned the indiscriminate use of the word “masses” to describe the inhabitants of cities. There was more voluntary organization in Victorian cities, I felt, than ever before, more coordinated political action; and it was a travesty to claim, it seemed to me, that “in every quarter, the older principles of aristocratic education and rural culture were replaced by a single-minded devotion to industrial power and pecuniary success, sometimes disguised as democracy.” Finally—and here I drew on literature as well as my own experience—it did not seem to me to be true that all industrial cities were all the same, that all were variants of Dickens' Coketown, *alias* Smokeover, *alias* Mechanicsville, *alias* Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Essen, Elberfeld, Lille, Roubaix, Newark, Pittsburgh or Youngstown. Their social structures were different, particularly those of Manchester and Birmingham, England's biggest industrial cities, and so were their appearances. When night fell, it did

not fall—and indeed it still does not fall, I feel—on the same urban environment in all these places.

In the light of research I concluded that industrial cities were as varied even in their appearance as preindustrial cities, that their topographies were different, that they grew at different rates of growth, that the composition of their work force, age-mix and the balance within them between native-born and immigrants varied, that through their economic and social relationships they had different attitudes to class and to politics, that religion played a different role in each of them. They drew on different heritages from the past, when they had a pre-industrial past, and they did not always invent the same history or duplicate the same monuments when they sought to create a heritage for posterity. Many of their buildings, monumental and functional, are worth preserving, and are now being preserved. Above all, it seemed to me that through the focussing of attention on their problems, which were seldom minimized, these cities directed attention for the first time in human history to the full possibilities of “social control,” of getting behind what had previously been considered as Fate. They were capable at times, too, as in the Birmingham of the 1860s, of enunciating civic gospels which combined concern, commitment and vigor; and their cultural as well as their social life attracts the interest of historians and today can both invoke nostalgia and command respect.

Perhaps it does not behoove the first Llewelyn-Davies lecturer to add that one of the most misleading of Mumford’s judgements was that “sonorous oratory served the double function of stimulant and anaesthetic; exciting the populace and making it oblivious to its actual environment.” I prefer a sentence in Professor Robert Ker’s lecture to the Royal Institution of British Architects on its fiftieth anniversary in 1884: “The greatest masters of popular lecturing are persons who do not know too much of their subject.”

Looking back at my book *Victorian Cities* in retrospect, I believe that I was right to present profiles of particular cities and deal in generalizations only when I had assembled particulars. I agree with Jane Jacobs when, writing after me and in a different context, she argued that “city processes in real life are too complex to be

routine, too particularized for application as abstractions. They are always made up of interaction of particulars and there is no substitute for knowing the particulars.”<sup>10</sup> I was particularly critical of those writers, including some living at the time who turned Manchester, the shock city as I called it, of the industrial revolution, into a kind of abstraction, ignoring the existence of those elements in the city which they knew would rob the abstraction of its plausibility. Yet I also stressed in my book that through knowing the particulars and through elucidating in what respects Victorian cities differed from each other we should be able to go on to identify those aspects of city experience and perception which lend themselves to a useful comparative study not only of pre-Victorian, Victorian and post-Victorian cities but of British cities and foreign cities during what only the British dare to call “the Victorian age.”

I suggested further that British cities of that period had much in common with cities overseas, particularly American cities, and that while the first effect of industrialization was to differentiate communities, all industrial cities can nonetheless be considered as members of a common group experiencing common problems. I pointed to preoccupation with public health, public order and the need for new administrative machinery as common features, along with social segregation and the provision of a new range of social amenities. *Chronologies might differ but there were similarities of response and some borrowing of ideas and practices from one city to another.* They were, of course, productive of the same imagery also.

When Disraeli talked of two nations living side by side in the same city, he had been anticipated by Dr. Channing in Boston who asked from a Boston pulpit in 1841, “Why is it, my friends, that we are brought so near to one another in cities? It is that nearness should awaken sympathy; that multiplying wants should knit us more closely together; that we should understand one another’s perils and sufferings; that we should act perpetually upon one another for good. Yet,” he went on, “it is the unhappiness of most large cities that instead of this union and sympathy they consist of different ranks so widely separated as, indeed, to form different communities. In most large cities”—and here he anticipated

Disraeli—"there may be said to be two nations, understanding as little of one another . . . as if they lived in different lands."

Continuing the parallels, some might say the rhetoric, it was in New York, not in London, that a city missionary could complain in 1853 that slums were a "comingled mess of venomous filth and seething sin, of lust and drunkenness, of pauperism and crime of every sort." And it was in Sydney, Australia, that sanitary investigators of the 1870s used the evocative term *How the Other Half Lives* twenty years before Jacob Riis chose it as the title for his portrait of the New York ghetto. While General Booth of the Salvation Army was comparing "darkest England" with the "dark continent," the condition of the underprivileged in Montreal was described as being "as little known as that of natives in Central Africa."

With imagery of this kind ringing in the ears, I applaud David Cannadine's article in *Social History* in 1977, "Victorian Cities: how different?" and Richard Dennis's still more recent book *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century* (1984), one of a group of *Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography*, which sets out carefully and with the support of admirably plotted quantitative analysis to test qualitative propositions about the role of public transport, the geography of housing, class consciousness and social stratification, residential mobility, persistence, and the sense of community in a number of British Victorian cities, deliberately excluding London but including Liverpool, a much studied city which deliberately I left out. I particularly welcome the fact that this important book was written not by a social historian but by a social geographer. I have always argued that the study of cities is interdisciplinary, and I recognize the increasingly important part that sophisticated geography is now playing in the mix.

I would like to feel, however, that in any future interdisciplinary mix there will be a place for architects and engineers as well as for historians, geographers, economists, sociologists, psychologists and students of literature, the last of these concerned, as Maurice Baring once put it, with "the sustaining power of literature to create reality." In a survey of the state of urban history in the 1980s, focussing on the work of an international conference at Leicester in

1980, Anthony Sutcliffe noted “the virtual disappearance of what might be termed the architectural approach to the study of urban history.”<sup>11</sup> I regret this. I had predicted myself at an earlier Leicester conference on the same subject, the first of its kind in 1966, that urban history would develop with “the help of the camera and the computer.”<sup>12</sup> So far there has been more evidence of the influence of the latter than of the former, although in his introduction to a fascinating collection of photographs of London taken between 1839 and 1879 Gavin Stamp claimed that the camera offered “a clear vision of an historical reality.”<sup>13</sup>

Although the word “historical reality” poses awkward questions—this lecture has pointed only to a few of them—there is no doubt that these photographs have a “tantalizing precision.” They are more informative, if less comprehensive, than the woodcuts in *The Builder*. The first photographs were of new buildings and structures, but significantly by the end of the 1870s there was more interest in the London that was disappearing or was under threat than in the London which was new. From the period in between—after the new city of Nash had ceased to look smart, elegant and new and before “lost London” had developed the charm of “the old days”—I will take my concluding piece of Victorian rhetoric. The date is 1858, and I cannot resist quoting it as a plea from the side of the architect for the continuing study of architecture and history together.

Architecture has a noble and lofty office to perform. . . . Besides ministering to our comforts and satisfying our material wants—besides pleasing the eye and embellishing our cities—architecture has to raise up monuments which may tell to future eyes of our habits of thought, of our governing or prompting ideas and of our state of civilization.<sup>14</sup>

This should not be the last word. I prefer a comment of Professor E. A. Freeman (later to be Professor of History at Oxford) from the side of the historian. It was made four years later. “The story of architecture without its historical bearings,” Freeman exclaimed, “would be truly frightful in its results.” And Professor J. Mordaunt Cook’s comment on the comment in his inaugural lec-

ture as Professor of Architectural History at Bedford College in London in 1983 is an extra last word. "Just how frightful, of course, he [Freeman] never lived to see." I would like to have heard—and this would have been my really last word—Richard Llewelyn-Davies' comment on that.

## NOTES

1. H. J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds.), *The Victorian City, Image and Reality* (1973).
2. *The Times*, 2 March 1985.
3. D. J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (1976), p. 18.
4. M. J. Daunton, Review of *The Victorian City* in *Journal of Historical Geography* (1980) and "Public Space and Private Space" in D. Fraser and A. Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (1983).
5. A. Sutcliffe, "London and Paris: Capitals of the Nineteenth Century" (Dyos Memorial Lecture, 1983).
6. S. Betzky, "Society in Thackeray and Trollope" in B. Ford (ed.), *From Dickens to Hardy* (1963), p. 161.
7. See P. Collins, "Trollope's London" (Dyos Memorial Lecture, 1982).
8. See E. Rasmussen, *London, The Unique City* (1937).
9. A. Briggs and A. Macartney, *Toynbee Hall, The First Hundred Years* (1984).
10. J. Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1963), p. 143.
11. A. Sutcliffe, "Urban History in the Eighties, Reflections on the H. J. Dyos Memorial Conference" in the *Journal of Urban History* (1984).
12. Introduction to H. J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History* (1968), p. vii.
13. G. Stamp, *The Changing Metropolis* (1984), p. 9.
14. *Building News* (1858), quoted in Olsen, *op. cit.*, p. 17.