

**Figure 8.18** Centenary Square, Birmingham

**Figure 8.19** Victoria Square, Birmingham



8.18



8.19

A number of possible locations have been outlined in previous chapters. Ornament and decoration is most effective when its use is governed by some rationale. The rationale for decoration is often of a functional nature, for example, at the junction of material change, to outline the edge of a building element such as a window or to emphasize change of plane or ownership. Once a decorative theme is established it gives reason for the distribution of decoration for additions to the urban scene. There has been no attempt here to educate the taste of the reader nor to dictate a style of decoration. Such matters are questions only for the individual. It has been the aim of this book to put forward principles for the rational location and distribution of ornament and decoration; principles, however, which are flexible enough to permit creative interpretation.

# EPILOGUE

# 9

## INTRODUCTION

Chapter 9 is presented as an epilogue, 'a short speech or poem at the end, especially of a play'. It is a personal statement by the editor of the series. This essay is presented as an epilogue to retain the integrity of the original work, which is the result of the pooled insights of the three original authors. The aim of the essay is to clarify the intentions of the book. This book does not set out to advance the cause of ornate city architecture nor to provide a manual of good decorative design. The aim of the book is much more modest: it presents one starting point for a rational discussion about the nature of, and the need for, ornament and decoration in the city. For this purpose an attempt was made to find out where, when and why decoration was used in the city. City decoration is analysed in terms of form and function and then classified. Such a typology is an essential tool for teaching, learning and rational discussion. The procedure adopted in this study is similar to those used for intellectual endeavour in many subject areas.

Many local authorities prepare design briefs and design guidance notes. These documents will probably have something to say about materials,

colours and details to be used in certain areas of the city. Such documents are not meant to constrain the imagination of the creative designer in the pursuit of his or her client's requirements: they are designed to focus the attention of all developers on the broader needs of the city and its community. Clearly it would be preferable for documents such as the design brief to be prepared by professionals with an understanding of the principles involved in the art of decorating the city: such professionals should also have a flexible mind which appreciates the work of the innovative designer whose work challenges those principles. The aim of this book and the others in the series is to explore the nature of the principles of urban design.

The main body of this chapter examines the use of decoration in the traditional mud cities of the Hausa people of Nigeria (Dmochowski, 1990). The traditional Hausa cities are so different and distant from the urban world of Europe and North America that it may be possible to discuss the use of decoration in those cities without being drawn into the polemics which invade the subject in our own professional world. It may therefore be possible to examine city decoration developed by this group without the possibility of misunderstanding. For