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978-0-521-88524-9 - Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660

Paul Griffiths

Excerpt

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Introduction: Rhetorics and records

Lost Londons

‘The world is sare chaunged’, William Bullein wrote with wonder from London in 1564. ‘She is growne so great, I am almost afraide to meddle with her’, Donald Lupton wrote in 1632.¹ London’s size and shape changed speedily, and people felt that they were losing the city that they once knew. The population inside and outside the walls nearly quadrupled between 1500–1600, reaching roughly 200,000, and it almost doubled over the next five decades to around 375,000. The city spilled over its walls, numbers on the eastern edges soared more than fourfold in the seventeenth century (90,000), and sixfold in the West End in 1600–40 (18,500). Deaths outnumbered births and London would have shrunk without migrants. Our best estimate is that somewhere in the region of 5,600 were needed each year around 1650 to keep growth on track. Maybe one-in-six of the English spent time in London, hoping to strike it lucky.²

¹ William Bullein *A Dialogue Both Pleasaunte and Piety-Full Against the Fever Pestilence* (1564), p. 7; Donald Lupton, *London and the Country Carbonadoed and Quartered Into Severall Characters*, 1632, *The English Experience*, 879 (Amsterdam and Norwood, NJ, 1977), p. 1.

² Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London, 1580–1650* (Cambridge, 1981), chap. 3; Vanessa Harding, ‘The population of London, 1550–1700: a review of the published evidence’, *London Journal*, 15 (1990), 111–28; Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989), chap. 3; M. J. Power, ‘The east London working community in the seventeenth century’, in Penelope J. Corfield and Derek Keene, eds., *Work in Towns, 850–1850* (Leicester, 1990), pp. 103–20; Norman G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (1935), chaps 6–7; Jeremy Boulton, ‘The poor among the rich: paupers and the parish in the West End, 1600–1724’, in Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner eds., *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 197–225, esp. pp. 200–1; E. A. Wrigley, ‘A simple model of London’s importance in changing English society and economy, 1650–1750’, *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), 44–70. This, of course, was not the first time that London experienced dramatic growth. See Derek Keene, ‘Material London in time and space’, in Lena Cowen Orlin, ed., *Material London, ca. 1600* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), pp. 55–74, esp. p. 58.

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My title – *Lost Londons* – expresses in a couple of words the sense of loss as ‘sare’ growth changed familiar environments and cultures for ever.³ Lupton ‘quartered’ London in the same year (1632) that aldermen looked to Whitehall for help when it became clear that the City freedom, once ‘of very great esteem is [now] grown to be of little worth’, cheapened by ‘the extraordinary enlargement of the suburbs’, ‘multitudes’ of new buildings ‘on every side’, and ‘great numbers’ of ‘foreigners’ from other counties and countries who settled outside the walls with the same ‘benefits’ as freemen, but without serving a single day as an apprentice.⁴ By the second quarter of the seventeenth century City leaders felt that there was now nothing that they could do to stop growth. Too much had changed. Familiar things once taken for granted had now gone: skies now shrouded in smog, long-term job security for men with seven-year apprenticeships under their belts, or simply shopping in busy markets without nervous over-the-shoulder glances at huddles of thieves. London spilled over its walls, consuming green fields, and despite scores of City laws and orders, vagrants flooded in. London was so daunting that awestruck Lupton was ‘almost afraide’ to put pen to paper. The very sight of London would frighten me if my wife and friend did not live there, one man mused at around the same time.⁵

A sense of loss was widespread in print and policy. London changed so suddenly that nostalgia was a leading note in Stow’s *Survey of London* (1598).⁶ The past can seem sunnier, though Stow wrote with real feeling for a city now gone before epidemics of builders, inmates, and vagrants. Like others he looked back longingly to a time when care and community meant more. His judgment was not always sound, but fear of the new was common enough with aldermen who wrote policies not books.⁷ Loss and regret led to action, and for a long while aldermen believed that they could reverse change. Stow’s lost London was depicted as ‘changeless’ for four centuries before religious reform. His *Survey* was a leading work in ‘a stabilizing urban consciousness’ that put faith in permanence, sameness, and civic values in an otherwise

³ This sense of loss is also vividly evoked in Ian Munro, *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London: the City and its Double* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 27–9.

⁴ TNA PC2/42/305–6. ⁵ TNA SP16/423/19.

⁶ Ian Archer, ‘The nostalgia of John Stow’, in David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington, eds., *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre, and Politics in London, 1576–1649* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 17–34; Patrick Collinson, ‘John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism’, in J. F. Merritt, ed., *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598–1720* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 27–51.

⁷ See below, pp. 27–47.

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changing world.⁸ Nearly all things are in place. Wards are described one-by-one and Stow sings the praises of pillars of communities, landmarks, churches, or guilds. His London was walkable, and readers followed him along patternless small streets and main roads to track down monuments and stories.⁹ All in all, his *Survey* was a picture of stability, and its steadiness and textbook account of authority were reassurances. Nostalgia was not just warmth for something lost, however. One of Stow's later editors said that he 'had a mighty concern for the reputation of the city', and that he was 'uneasy at some things in his time that abated it'.¹⁰

After Stow, Anthony Munday brought the *Survey* up to date – in 1618 and again in 1633 – and it remained a tribute to London's grand past and present, much like his eight scripts for mayors' parades.¹¹ It would have pleased Stow that three decades after his death institutions that he had thought of as civic bedrocks – guilds and parishes – forked out large sums for Munday's edition of his *Survey*. Stow had himself become a piece of nostalgia by now; he was 'old Stow'.¹² London was dramatized and described more often around 1600. Some writing adapted stresses and strains for the stage in crime scenes or pauper characters. Jonson wrote about 'sucking shifters' who plotted crime all day long. Scenes were set in Bridewell and Bethlem, symbols of rising crime and disorientation.¹³

⁸ J. F. Merritt, 'Introduction: perceptions and portrayals of London, 1598–1720', in Merritt, ed., *Imagining Early Modern London*, pp. 1–24; James Knowles, 'The spectacle of the realm: civic consciousness, rhetoric and ritual in early modern London', in J. R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring, eds., *Theatre and Government under the Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 157–89.

⁹ Cynthia Wall, *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 99, 101. Cf. Andrew McRae, "'On the famous voyage": Ben Jonson and civic space', in Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein eds., *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 181–203, esp. p. 183.

¹⁰ John Styrpe, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster: Containing the Original, Antiquity, Increase, Modern Estate and Government of Those Cities, Written at First in the Year MDXCVIII by John Stow ... Corrected, Improved, and Very Much Enlarged: and the Survey and History Brought Down from the Year 1633*, 5 books in 2 vols. (1720), vol. I, p. xvii.

¹¹ J. F. Merritt, 'The reshaping of Stow's *Survey*: Munday, Styrpe, and the Protestant City', in Merritt, ed., *Imagining Early Modern London*, pp. 52–88, esp. p. 64.

¹² GL MSS 4383/1, fo. 191; 4071/2, fo. 39; 3907/1, 1618–19; 1002/1, fo. 431v; 959/1, fo. 137; GCL company minute books P, fo. 162; R2, fo. 21. See also Ian Archer, 'The arts and acts of memorialization in early modern London', in Merritt, ed., *Imagining Early Modern London*, pp. 89–113, esp. p. 92.

¹³ Anne Barton, 'London comedy and the ethos of the city', *London Journal*, 4 (1978), 158–80; Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995), chaps 3 and 6–8; John Twynning, *London Dispossessed: Literature and Social Space in the Early Modern City* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 6, 28, 54; William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), chap. 3; Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca, NY, 2004), chaps. 5–6.

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4 Lost Londons

Rogue literature kept thieves and vagrants in the limelight. Dekker promised to bring 'notorious villainies' 'to light' and to name criminal 'tribes' 'over and over again' until people knew them off by heart. 'Read and learn, read and loathe', he told his readers.¹⁴ These 'new fictions of urban settlement' helped people cope with unsettling change through descriptions in plays, comic spoofs, or pamphlet-journalism.¹⁵ Like maps, literature made London seem negotiable. Stow's *Survey* was a portable prose map, and streets were 'uttered' more often in the *Cries* (1599) and *Cries of London* (1614). Only a smallish number of city maps were drawn at this time, though there was a need for more as built-up areas mushroomed.¹⁶ As with literature, maps 'laid a lucid order' over a city that was anything but still. They offered comfort, putting things in place, and trying to make change appear familiar all at once.¹⁷

Another form of 'corporate continuity' was the spate of printed histories of guilds that drew stable images of society and economy. Guilds funded them, as well as portraits of their great and good members, all part of what Archer calls 'the arts and acts of memorialization'.¹⁸ There was more memorializing of this sort in civic bodies around 1600, as people turned to history for examples of confident and solid societies. The city's first 'remembrancer' – Thomas Norton – got the post in 1571. As with the Dick Whittington story that was more widely circulated at this

¹⁴ Twynning, *London Dispossessed*, pp. 66–7, 63. See also Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana and Chicago, IL, 2001); Gamiini Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (Stroud, 1977); Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 341–55; John L. McMullan, *The Canting Crew: London's Criminal Underworld, 1550–1750* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984); G.M. Spraggs, 'Rogues and vagabonds in English literature, 1552–1642', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (1980).

¹⁵ Eric Wilson, 'Plagues, fairs, and street cries: sounding out society and space in early modern London', *Modern Language Studies*, 25, (1995), 1–42; McRae, 'On the famous voyage', p. 182; Knowles, 'Spectacle of the realm', p. 162; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, pp. 130, 126, 77; Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: the Places of London Comedy, 1598–1642* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007), pp. 4–14.

¹⁶ Sean Shesgreen, *Images of the Outcast: the Urban Poor in the Cries of London* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002), esp. chaps 1–2; Wilson, 'Plagues, fairs, and street cries', 30; Andrew Gordon, 'Performing London: the map and the city in ceremony', in Gordon and Klein, eds., *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space*, pp. 69–88; Wall, *Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London*, pp. 78, 86.

¹⁷ Cynthia Wall, '"At Sheakespear's-Head, over-against Catharine-Street in the Strand": forms of address in London streets', in Tim Hitchcock and Heather Shore, eds., *The Streets of London from the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (2003), pp. 10–26, esp. p. 13; Wall, *Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London*, p. 80. Cf. Helen Mills, 'Mapping the early modern city', *Urban History*, 23 (1996), 145–70; Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: a Sense of Place* (Basingstoke, 2002).

¹⁸ Ian Anders Gadd, 'Early modern printed histories of the London livery companies', in Gadd and Patrick Wallis, eds., *Guilds, Society, and Economy in London, 1450–1800* (2002), pp. 29–50, esp. p. 44.

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time, history strengthened spirits of citizenship and solidarity.¹⁹ Civic funerals also became more impressive, with marches arranged according to status. Tomb inscriptions listed at length the worthy acts of good magistrates, and ministers also lauded charitable works in funeral sermons. Stow spoke proudly of London's charitable spirit, and others took turns after him at Spital sermons and other pulpits to praise a proud protestant city that rated greatness by giving. The more money citizens spend 'the more honour' they bring 'unto our citie', Richard Johnson bragged in 1607.²⁰

Civic ceremonies also stressed both unity and continuities with an ordered past.²¹ More money was spent on parades and more fulsome verses when the freedom was no longer the shining light of yesteryear that had made people feel proud and protected. Once a modest horseback parade, the mayor's autumn welcome into office developed into the high-point of the civic year by 1600, with long processions of governors and guilds in rank order, highly crafted montages, dazzling colours, day-long dancing and music to keep crowds in high spirits, and leading dramatists vying to come up with scripts for pageants. All this effort and show to inflate civic 'fame' at a total cost often above £1,000 came at the same time that suburbs mushroomed. But the civic map of display was located within the walls. There was no wish to celebrate larger metropolitan identities incorporating the ribbon-developments that sapped specific senses of civic identity. This day, that City magistrates hoped would stick in minds all year long, looked backwards and forwards to present images of a prosperous and united city, in stark contrast to the dark forebodings of trouble and loss that reverberated throughout the rest of the year.²² A more sprightly civic consciousness was also signified in

¹⁹ LMA Rep. 17, fos. 101v-2; James Robertson, 'The adventures of Dick Whittington and the social construction of Elizabethan London', in Gadd and Wallis, eds., *Guilds, Society, and Economy in London*, pp. 51-66. On civic histories see Robert Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England: Politics and Political Culture, c. 1540-1640* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 280-94.

²⁰ Richard Johnson, *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields* (1607), fo. A4v.

²¹ Knowles, 'Spectacle of the realm', p. 180. See also Manley, *Literature and Culture*, chap. 5; Michael Berlin, 'Civic ceremony in early modern London', *Urban History Yearbook*, 13 (1986), 15-27; Theodore B. Leinwald, 'London triumphing: the Jacobean Lord Mayor's show', *Clio*, 11 (1982), 137-53; Knowles, 'Spectacle of the realm', pp. 167, 171; Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the citizen: the communal year at Coventry, 1450-1550', in Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (Toronto, 1972), pp. 57-85; Mervyn James, 'Ritual, drama, and the social body in the late medieval English town', in his *Society, Politics, and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 16-47.

²² Richard Mackenney, *Traders and Tradesmen* (Beckenham, 1987), pp. 155-65, 172; Munro, *Figure of the Crowd*, chap. 2; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, chap. 5; Berlin, 'Civic ceremony', 24-5; Knowles, 'Spectacle of the realm', pp. 173-4; William Hardin, 'Spectacular constructions: ceremonial representations of city and society in early

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building schemes, improvements, and embellishments: ‘incomparable paving’ that flattened one thousand ‘deformities in the streets’, running water, trim landscaped walks, a stately new Exchange, grander churches, a spruced up cathedral (the crowning ‘master-peece to all the rest’), and more besides.²³ Unlike ‘dangerous growth’, these works were civil, soothing, and moral. Smithfield was a ‘civil walk’; Moorfields was ‘most beautiful’, healthy, and ‘a continual comfort to behold’, reflecting the ‘noble’ minds of citizens.²⁴

The City often thought that its next-door neighbour in Whitehall did not do nearly enough to stop the slump in civic ‘fame’. Strange, then, that it was now that London became a gleaming capital city.²⁵ The first Stuart monarchs had sky-high hopes, bragging that their ‘imperial city’ would some day soon become ‘the greatest’ Christian city in 1615, with all the brash self-confidence of an imperial throne.²⁶ New landscaped walks in London or a smarter cathedral lifted a bloated ‘imperial ideal of metropolitan grandeur’. Slack comments that ‘absolute power’ made ‘a bid to shape even the landscape’ around this time. The Crown backed plans to

Stuart London’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (1995); Gordon, ‘Performing London’. Cf. Joseph P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, CA, 1997).

²³ Roland Freart, *A Parallele of the Antient Architecture With the Modern*, trans. John Evelyn, 2nd edition (1707), epistle dedicatory, fo. 5r; James Howell, *Londinopolis: an Historical Discourse or Perustration of the City of London, the Imperial Chamber and the Chief Emporium of Great Britain* (1657), p. 10; Knowles, ‘Spectacle of the realm’, pp. 176–7; Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Early modern English conceptions of “cleanliness” and “dirt” as reflected in the environmental regulation of London, c. 1530–c.1700’, unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (1991); LMA Rep. 23, fos. 536v–7; Jour. 30, fos. 256–6v; J. F. Merritt, ‘Puritans, Laudians, and the phenomenon of church building in Jacobean London’, *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), 935–60; Peter Lake, ‘The Laudian style: order, uniformity, and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s’, in Kenneth Fincham, ed., *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–42* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 161–85; TNA SP16/195/32; John King, *A Sermon at Paules Crosse on behalfe of Paules Church, March 26 1620* (1620), pp. 55–6. On ‘urban renaissance’ see Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989). See also Edmund Howes, *Annales, Or, A Generall Chronicle of England Begun by John Stow: Continued and Augmented With Matters Forraigne and Domestique, Ancient and Moderne, Unto the End of the Present Year, 1631* (1631), p. 1021; Knowles, ‘Spectacle of the realm’, pp. 161–2; Tittler, *Reformation and the Towns*, pp. 338–41.

²⁴ King, *Sermon at Paules Crosse*, p. 55; Howes, *Annales*, p. 1024; Johnson, *Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields*, fos. A2r, A3r, B1r; Howell, *Londinopolis*, p. 301; LMA Jours. 27, fos. 364v, 396; 28, fos. 16v, 81; Reps. 27, fos. 142, 366; 29, fos. 13v–14; Letterbook V, fo. 291v; *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols., The American Philosophical Society (Philadelphia, PA, 1939), vol. I, p. 235; Laura Williams, ‘To recreate and refresh their dulled spirites in the sweet and wholesome ayre’: green space and the growth of the city’, in Merritt ed., *Imagining Early Modern London*, pp. 185–213, esp. pp. 191–2; Brett-James, *Growth of Stuart London*, pp. 455–7.

²⁵ J. C. Robertson, ‘Stuart London and the idea of a royal capital city’, *Renaissance Studies*, 15 (2001), 37–58.

²⁶ LMA Jour. 29, fos. 351–1v.

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‘beautify’ the city, singling-out bringing ‘the new streame unto the west parts’, paving Smithfield, planting Moorfields, the new Royal Exchange, Sutton’s hospital, and ‘the reedifying of Algate, Hicks Hall’, and ‘like workes’.²⁷ Imperial London was toasted in shimmering prose. Munday called ‘supreme’ London Great Britain’s ‘royal chamber’ and ‘metropolis’ beyond compare. Thomas Jackson wrote a sparkling sketch a decade earlier: ‘opulent and famous and renowned’ London was ‘the chamber of our land and emprise of our island’. It was also an ‘open haven for all merchandize and commerce’, Munday said, and a ‘store-house of peace and plenty’.²⁸

Aldermen did not see much ‘peace and plenty’ in the city around them, though they could crow about grand buildings or ships stuffed with spices. But on their daily rounds they saw too many blankets of filth, dirt-coated vagrants, and eyesore slums. From a distance the Exchange gleamed in the sunlight, but close up they saw loose-tongued women selling their wares on its edges. Stow’s changeless city had long since gone. Authors now wrote about the urban whirl, hoping to acclimatize people to what they now thought to be an unsafe larger London. True enough the City talked up trade or pet projects like the new river, and Londoners counted their blessings not to be living in a backwoods village (the slick urban polish/country bumpkin trope was secure by now). Like celebratory authors, they window dressed the city in imperial garb, but the City was also unsure about its new imperial airs and graces. This was Whitehall talk in the main, the grandiose image management of monarchs who wanted to outshine their rivals on mainland Europe with sparkling baroque courts and imperial razzmatazz. But this imperial façade slipped easily, and in the end the City came to the jaded conclusion

²⁷ SRPC (136), pp. 280–7; LMA Jour. 29, fos. 351–1v; Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 69; LMA Jour. 29, fos. 351–1v. See also Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1992), pp. 403–12; Manley, *Literature and Culture*, p. 496, and chap. 5; Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia, PA, 1987); J. Newman, ‘Inigo Jones and the politics of architecture’, in Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, eds., *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 231–45; Robertson, ‘Stuart London’; Robertson, ‘London 1580–1642: the view from Whitehall; the view from the Guildhall’, unpublished PhD thesis, Washington University (1993). Robert Ashton comments that after 1603 the Crown tried to turn London into ‘a more civilized urban environment worthy of a great capital city’: *The City and the Court, 1603–1643* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 168.

²⁸ Anthony Munday, *The Survey of London Written in the Yeere 1598 by John Stow . . . Since Then Continued and Much Enlarged . . . by Anthony Munday* (1618), epistle dedicatory, p. 4; Thomas Jackson, *Londons New-Yeeres Gift, Or the Uncovering of the Foxe* (1609), fo. 8r.

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that it could not now stop either ‘dangerous growth’ or the perceived slide in civic prestige.

Rhetorics

This book is composed from rhetorics and records and not many, if any, should be taken at face value. I do not necessarily believe claims that the freedom’s worth hit rock-bottom in 1632, or others that vagrants were falling on London like swarms of locusts. These were rhetorics and perceptions, calculated and strong enough, London’s magistrates hoped, to make people believe what was being said and to act accordingly and quickly.

No magistrate worth his salt was ever satisfied with what he saw on the streets. His job was to squeeze more effort from people and keep officers on their toes. And so complaints poured out about bungling officers, crime-waves, or empty coffers. Policing was a shambles, magistrates said, to make people aware of the need to police better; resources were thin, they complained, prodding people to dig deeper into their pockets; and the freedom was of ‘little worth’ nowadays, they said, hoping that someone in Whitehall would at long last take action to stop suburban sprawl or protect jobs. Yet not one complaint would have been taken seriously or made any difference unless it had had some basis in day-to-day realities. Magistrates were not crying wolf all of the time. We know that London’s growth led to more disorder, overcrowded areas, smog, and concern. Policing shows the double-edged nature of rhetoric: at once embellishment but also corresponding to some reality. Magistrates complained about amateurish officers all the time, and this is enough evidence of deep-rooted flaws for some scholars.²⁹ But this tedious critical chorus has all the appearance of routine calls to order to urge vigilance from officers, who were told to be ‘continually’ at ‘constant stacons’.³⁰ Magistrates always see room for improvements. In fact there were second-rate officers, but this is not the full story, although it is the handiest one when a case was being made for improvements. There were also plenty of hard-working officers, as we will see.

Rhetorics often point in several directions at once. Tainted or otherwise, they matter less for the truths they might tell than for the extent to

²⁹ Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c.1550–1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 173. Cf. J.M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London, 1660–1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford, 2001), p. 132; Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 221–2.

³⁰ LMA Rep. 56, fo. 22v; Jour. 20, fo. 323; Rep. 40, fo. 72.

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which it is possible to recreate mind-sets embedded in crime clamp-downs, for example, or long-drawn-out efforts to ‘sweeten’ slums. We must put ourselves inside the minds of people sitting in the Guildhall if we want to understand how policies and plans began, and ask what they felt about the state of their city, always aware that anything they say might be tinged with exaggeration for effect. Such a perspective will give us a clearer idea of the responses of Londoners in terms of their perceptions of how change challenged the existing, perceived nature of the city and citizenship. This is how the City understood its own stresses and strains. Archer notices a ‘sense of perceived crisis’ in London towards 1600.³¹ If Londoners felt that their city was in dire straits, then quite frankly it is of less importance what we say today about whether or not the city was stable all that time ago. What matters above all else is a perception and appearance of troubling flux, even if it turns out to be Guildhall hyperbole. Perceptions spawned policies and prosecutions, and each piece of rhetoric that we read in records today. City leaders did not sit around inventing ever more unlikely scenarios. They travelled deep into each quarter of the city and saw things with their own eyes. Information also poured into the Guildhall that provided sources for new understandings of London and its ‘sare’ growth. And the resulting rhetorics were what magistrates thought and felt at the time.

But they are also a confusing clutter. Ambiguities abound. There was even pride in growth/size: John Graunt was not the first to gloat that London was better than Paris or Amsterdam because it was bigger.³² But long before he sang larger London’s praises, magistrates in at the deep end feared growth because its exact extent was unknowable. It was simply ‘extraordinary’ or ‘excessive’, not something that was fully comprehended.³³ This not knowing led to panicky rhetoric and apparent incongruities as magistrates worked hard to steady the ship. London was at one and the same time a golden imperial city and a ghost of its former grand self; Europe’s trading hub and an employment wasteland for citizens and a thieves’ paradise. Which one of these standpoints is credible depends on who is speaking, at what time, and for what reason. The bright portrayal of the Renaissance city was royal rhetoric in the main. The City basked in this regal sun now and then, but aldermen thought that they had more than enough to cope with in their own back-yard. Uplifting civic rhetorics

³¹ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 8–9.

³² Paul Slack, ‘Great and good towns’, in Peter Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain: Volume II, 1540–1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 347–76; and ‘Perceptions of the metropolis in seventeenth-century England’, in Peter Burke, Brian Harrison, and Slack, eds., *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 161–80.

³³ See below, pp. 36–40.

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tended to share elevated senses of civic pride, settled government, and a sparkling past. London was also painted brightly or dimly in literature and letters with the same regard for purpose and accuracy. James Howell must have suspended smell when writing that Paris's streets were caked in an 'oily stain that can never be washed off', unlike London's, and could 'be smelt' ten miles away. But his spin-doctoring *Londinopolis* (1657) was written to drum up pride in the 'imperial chamber' or 'chief emporium of Great Britain'. Alexander Magno could write with gusto that 'London is a very beautiful city' in 1562, but he was scared stiff of stepping outside after dark.³⁴ The City, too, could slip from lofty grandeur to seedy crime in the short space of a few sentences of the same order/pronouncement, juxtaposing optimism and pessimism for effect.

The point, needless to say, is that, as John Lawrence said in 1624 with no hint of paradox, London had 'many things' worthy to be 'comend[ed]' and many blemishes.³⁵ Magistrates did not flit from one seemingly contradictory rhetoric to another without purpose. There was a grain of truth in each positive or negative note. Contrary rhetorics depended on each other and despite outer oppositions existed in what Slack calls 'productive counterpoint'.³⁶ Differing ideas of dilapidation and elegance were meant to persuade people of the need to improve the environment. Rhetorics of losing London could sit on the same page as others lauding London and no one would have been taken aback. All of these perceptions had validity and collectively created senses of change and novelty, but also of threat and anxiety. Regal/shabby or disorderly/orderly, London was neither one thing or the other. But like any city of similar size going through swift growth, London was always tense, and this was why many people looked back longingly with Stow to better times. Later on Londoners would glance back to these 'troubled' times that now looked like a bygone halcyon age: 'How this city flourished under James in wealth and riches', 'great ornament of public and private building', and rousing 'expressions' of glory, William Gough wrote with rose-tinted glasses in 1682, even thinking that the 'numerosness of inhabitants' was a blessing back then.³⁷ Such is the power of losing London: longing

³⁴ Howell, *Londinopolis*, p. 392; 'The London Journal of Alessandro Magno 1562', eds., Caroline Barron, Christopher Coleman, and Claire Gobb, *London Journal*, 9 (1983), 136–52, esp. 141, 148.

³⁵ John Lawrence, *A Golden Trumpet to Rowse up a Drowsie Magistrate: Or, a Patterne for a Governors Practise Drawne From Christs Comming to, Beholding of, and Weeping Over Hierusalem. As it was Sounded at Pauls Crosse the 11 of Aprill, 1624* (1624), pp. 100–1.

³⁶ Slack, 'Perceptions of the metropolis', p. 163.

³⁷ William Gough, *Londinium Triumphans* (1682), p. 346. Almost three centuries later, John Timbs walked through the city and wrote *Walks and Talks about London* (1865), 'a nostalgic tour through a city in transition', Lynda Nead notes, 'Written at a time when