— I —

The early modernity of London

1. INTRODUCTION: *THIS BLACK DESTROYER*

During the 1680s an anonymous author was ready to solve two of London's most intractable problems, but something stood in his way. His targets were the deplorable state of public health, 'those many new but nameless diseases', and the social plague of the unemployed poor, 'those useless, idle hands which daily molest our streets and constantly pray on the labour and industry of others dwelling within this great hive the City'.[1] Luckily, something could be done. The 'ill disposition and gross temperament of the air' around London, on which he blamed its general unhealthiness, was subject to improvement. Examples of ancient and modern cities from Rome to Amsterdam showed that through 'vast toil and industry' human art could improve on nature. Not that London was naturally deficient; rather its first founders had sited it on a well-ventilated promontory above a great river, allowing the city and its inhabitants' bodies the possibility of 'a clear and good air'. London's natural advantages, however, had become a curse, as 'the great concourse of people flocking hither in trade help and further this almost unavoidable calamity, in that they occasion so much dirt and soil'. The author therefore advocated a policy whereby the idle poor, especially children and the elderly, would cleanse the dirty metropolis. They would be paid (minimally) for their work or punished if they chose idleness, a carrot-and-stick that would avoid the need for parish relief. Their honest toil would also cleanse themselves so that 'those stinking and loathsome vapors flying from their filthy garments and nasty bodies' would no longer trouble London's resident gentry.[2] This enlightened project, the author insisted, was so practical that readers should dismiss the most powerful argument against it: that any plan to improve London's air was doomed to failure because of coal smoke.

[1] Anon., 'Orvietan: or A Counter=Poison Against the Infectious Ayr of London,' BL Sloane MS 621, f. 4, 2v.
[2] Quotations from *ibid.*, f. 5, 5v-6, 6v, 12.

The obstacle in the way of this plan was that London's coal smoke, according to an opinion 'for some ages past … current among us', was 'the only cause of polluting its air'. The author rejected this vehemently, arguing that if smoke's 'corrosive particles' really had such 'noxious effects' then why did iron degrade so quickly in the city's open air but not inside citizens' chimneys? If smoke were 'the sole cause of the corruption of the city's air', why did citizens take country houses in suburbs like Highgate, Hamstead, Chelsea, and Hackney where they were subjected to 'smoky effluvia' whenever the wind blew from the capital? He mocked the idea that 'that fuliginous and arsenical vehicle', 'those sulphurous emissaries of death', 'this black destroyer', was in any way as important as 'current' opinion thought. But this opinion, the author conceded, was very widely held, and he therefore denounced it with the anti-democratic rhetoric so familiar in political disputes. The idea 'of the smoke's being the sole destructive cause of the air in London' was 'so popular an error', 'so fond and vulgar an opinion', 'so crude and undigested an opinion', and 'so unsteady a basis to build their faith upon'. But its vulgarity and instability did not mean that only the poor, the uneducated, or the stupid perceived smoke's danger. Rather 'the judgments of persons not of the meanest apprehensions' also held this error. The Whig 'faction' itself, our author insinuated, derived its 'jealousies and fear' from 'spirits and faculties so stained and polluted' by a contaminated air.[3] This pollution he knew to proceed from dirty streets, but the fractious multitude blamed dirty urban air.

The London described in this tract was a busy, commercial place, sadly unphilosophical but brimming with potential. Its inhabitants' frustrating insistence that coal smoke was the root of their unhealthy air was matched by other philosophical failures, including the subordination of health to the desire for riches and 'getting a great estate', as well as the 'accursed' political maxims which made them 'the enemy of all order and good government'.[4] Londoners, then, were greedy, ambitious, and politically active, all of which had helped make their city the 'great hive'. Their city, for the author of *Orvietan*, was full of contradictions: a great and glorious metropolis and yet badly needing to be cleansed, a wealthy and opulent emporium yet capable of much improvement, a royal city yet subject to a contentious public sphere and riotous popular politics, a hive of 'labour and industry' yet full of the nastiness of the idle poor. It was an unfinished city, a place of possibilities, capable of wondrous renewal or further degradation.

Historians trying to make sense of London in this period have perceived a similarly Janus-faced city. It was an urban community defined by ancient

[3] *Ibid*., f. 34–5, 9-9v, 39. [4] *Ibid*., f. 38–9.

walls and ancient privileges, and yet was also a sprawling metropolis that seemed increasingly formless and boundless. Its wards and parishes, livery companies and voluntary societies, alehouses and coffee houses allowed both community and surveillance, and yet its constant traffic, constant movement, and constant growth made it the best place in England to hide in a crowd or to reinvent oneself. Its economy was richer, more specialized, arguably more capitalist, arguably more innovative, and certainly more important to the state, than anywhere else in Britain, and yet historians agree that it was not yet quite 'industrial'. London, in other words, has been described, in numerous different ways, as a, even as *the*, quintessential early modern city.

II. *POLLUTING ITS AIR*: EARLY MODERN LONDON IN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Orvietan's application of the word 'pollute' to the relationship between coal smoke and unhealthy urban air should not be possible during the 1680s. According to environmental historians' current narratives, both the thing and the word 'pollution' were new in the nineteenth century. The thing was new because the industrial revolution dramatically transformed human abilities to manipulate nature and thereby also brought about the spectre of environments newly subjected to large-scale dirtiness and destruction. Industrial pollution is therefore categorically different from anything possible in the traditional economies of the pre-modern period, however mucky and unhygienic such poor communities may have been. Pollution, in this framing, is the environmental cost of new kinds of industrial production and it is therefore inherently modern.[5] Air pollution has often had a special place in this narrative, as industrial cities in nineteenth-century Britain, Europe, and America consumed vast amounts of coal and so belched dark clouds out of the huge smokestacks that became symbols of the new industrial city.[6]

[5] E.g., Joel Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective* (Akron, OH, 1996); Christoph Bernhardt and Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, eds., *Le Démon Moderne: La Pollution dans les Sociétés Urbaines et Industrielle d'Europe/The Modern Demon: Pollution in Urban and Industrial European Societies* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2002); Thomas Le Roux, *Le Laboratoire des Pollutions Industrielles. Paris 1770–1830* (Paris, 2011); Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *L'Apocalypse Joyeuse: Une Histoire du Risque Technologique* (Paris, 2012).

[6] Stephen Mosley, *The Chimney of the World: A History of Smoke Pollution in Victorian and Edwardian Manchester* (Cambridge, 2001); David Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881–1951* (Baltimore, 2002); Melanie Dupuis, ed., *Smoke and Mirrors: The Politics and Culture of Air Pollution* (New York, 2004); Angela Gugliotta, '"Hell with the Lid Taken Off:" A Cultural History of Pollution – Pittsburgh' (University of Notre Dame, PhD Dissertation, 2004); Frank Uekotter, *The Age of Smoke: Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880–1970* (Pittsburgh, 2009).

Perceptions and representations of air pollution, and the broader development of environmentalism of which they are a part, are often similarly seen as inherently modern because they responded to these material changes. A few scholars have pushed the emergence of environmentalism back into the enlightenment, arguing that eighteenth-century attempts to control and manipulate nature had to confront problems posed by nature's limits. Improvers sought to know how soils, climates, rivers, and forests worked so as to maximize productivity, often in the service of the state.[7] Other historians, focusing on the modern period, have seen environmental politics as contingent developments, rooted in particular moments, local contexts, and historically specific methods of mobilizing support.[8] But despite these varying approaches to the development of environmental awareness, concern, and activism, there remains an often unspoken assumption among modern environmental historians that these phenomena can only be in response to modern industrial capitalism.

Studies of the cultural and political history of air pollution, working within this framework, have therefore argued that industrial smoke emissions offered a challenge to modern societies. This challenge elicited various and contested responses, a series of debates through which modern notions of pollution and modern practices of environmental politics emerged. Peter Thorsheim's study of the construction of air pollution in modern Britain begins its story in the middle decades of the nineteenth century because before that it was widely believed that 'coal smoke was beneficial to health'.[9] Adam Rome similarly argues that urban smoke was not considered a problem in the United States before the late nineteenth century. He finds that 'air pollution' did not take on its modern meaning of 'the gaseous, chemical, and metallic by-products of combustion and industrial processes' until as late as the 1930s.[10] Others have offered a slightly different periodization,

[7] Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, 1995); David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York, 2006); Paul Warde, 'The Environmental History of Pre-Industrial Agriculture in Europe,' in Paul Warde and Sverker Sörlin, eds. *Nature's End: History and the Environment* (Houndmills, 2009), 70–92; Warde, 'The Invention of Sustainability', *Modern Intellectual History* 8 (2011), 153–70; Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven, 2013).

[8] E.g., Harriet Ritvo, *The Dawn of Green: Manchester, Thirlmere, and Modern Environmentalism* (Chicago, 2009); Robert W. Righter, *The Battle over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Dam and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (Oxford, 2005); Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge, 2002).

[9] Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800* (Athens, OH, 2006), 3. See also p. 17 for his claim that John Evelyn was a marginal and unrepresentative figure.

[10] Adam W. Rome, 'Coming to Terms with Pollution: The Language of Environmental Reform, 1865–1915', *Environmental History* 1 (1996): 6–28, quotation from p. 6. See also Mark

finding concern over air pollution in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[11] Rome, Thorsheim, and other scholars stressing the environmental great divergence of modern from pre-modern environments clearly have important stories to tell, nor is there any doubt that both environmental change and environmental awareness were different in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries than previously. Moreover, Thorsheim may be right that at the beginning of the nineteenth century British people in general and Londoners in particular were much more concerned with rotting biological waste than with coal smoke.[12] But this was a new departure, a result of eighteenth-century studies of airs and their relationship to biological processes, not the legacy of an immobile classical natural philosophy.[13] As *Orvietan's* depiction of smoke-obsessed citizens in the 1680s suggests, there is in fact a rich story of environmental change and environmental concern to be told about London before the industrial revolution.

While environmental history is sometimes seen as an almost intrinsically modern field, scholars have also developed an increasingly wide range of approaches to the human relationship with nature before the industrial revolution. Nature has been central to recent explorations of contacts between Europeans, Africans, Americans, and Asians in the early modern centuries, as the 'Columbian Exchange' and subsequent movements of peoples, goods, plants, and microbes transformed the world.[14] John Richards' monumental survey of the early modern world showed how very different societies and polities, across and beyond Eurasia, came to exploit nature in parallel ways.[15] Geoffrey Parker has argued that global early modern political history can be explained by the Little Ice Age, as bad weather and poor harvests

Whitehead, *State, Science and the Skies: Governmentalities of the British Atmosphere* (Oxford, 2012), which makes 1843 its point of departure.

[11] Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (New Haven, 2014), ch. 9; Ayuka Kasuga, 'Views of Smoke in England, 1800–1830' (University of Nottingham, PhD Thesis, 2013).

[12] Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution*, 10.

[13] See, for example, Simon Schaffer, 'Measuring Virtue: Eudiometry, Enlightenment, and Pneumatic Medicine,' in Roger French and Andrew Cunningham, eds. *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 281–318. The persistent influence of classical environmental thought, as well as the diversity of this tradition, is masterfully surveyed in Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1967).

[14] Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT, 1972). Leading examples include William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983); Elinor G. K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge, 1994); J. R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914* (Cambridge, 2010); James C. McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500–2000* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

[15] John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, 2005).

led to rebellion and revolution across Eurasia in the mid-seventeenth century.[16] From Egypt to Japan early modern historians have found crucial environmental aspects to older narratives of state building and imperial expansion.[17] Within Europe early modernists have examined the relationships between environmental management and state formation in Spain and Venice, while medieval environmental history is the subject of an excellent recent synthesis that reflects vigorous and multifaceted expansion.[18] A few have even described pre-industrial pollution problems and laws enacted to combat them, though without trying to show the extent of such concern or how it changed over time.[19]

Collectively, this work presents a picture of an early modern world in which natural and man-made environments changed frequently and in which people responded to such change in sophisticated and interesting ways. Environmental history is clearly not, therefore, an exclusively modern subject. While certain aspects of the modern concern with toxic pollutants indeed are specific to the recent past, broader problems of urban waste disposal and perceptions of cleanliness have much deeper and richer histories. Many studies of this draw on, or fade into, the history of medicine. In doing so, much pre-modern environmental historiography has differed from Mary Douglas, whose structuralist approach to pollution explicitly rejected the

[16] Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change, and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 2012). For a more nuanced exploration of the relationship between climate change and political instability, Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2011). For an interrogation of Parker's thesis in the European context, see Paul Warde, 'Global Crisis of Global Coincidence?' *Past and Present* 228 (2015), 287–301.

[17] Anglophone examples include Alain Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History* (Cambridge, 2011); Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); Mark Elvin, *Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven, 2004); Conrad Totman, *The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-Industrial Japan* (Berkeley, 1989).

[18] Karl Appuhn, *A Forest on the Sea: Environmental Expertise in Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, 2009); John T. Wing, *Roots of Empire: Forests and State Power in Early Modern Spain, c.1500–1750* (Leiden, 2015); Richard C. Hoffmann, *An Environmental History of Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2014). See also Scott G. Bruce, ed., *Ecologies and Economies in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Studies in Environmental History for Richard C. Hoffmann* (Leiden, 2010).

[19] For medieval and early modern England, William H. Te Brake, 'Air Pollution and Fuel Crises in Preindustrial London, 1250–1650', *Technology and Culture* 16 (1975), 337–59; Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (New York, 1983), 243–54; Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England 1660–1770* (New Haven, 2007); Peter Brimblecombe, *The Big Smoke: A History of Air Pollution in London Since Medieval Times* (1987). See also Michael Stolberg, *Ein Recht auf saubere Luft? Umweltkonflickte am Beginn des Industrielzeitalters* (Erlangen, 1994), 18–23; Richard W. Unger, 'Energy Sources for the Dutch Golden Age: Peat, Wind, and Coal', *Research in Economic History* 9 (1984), 225; Conrad Totman, *Japan: An Environmental History* (2014), 174.

sufficiency of 'medical materialism', stressing instead the role of the body as an image of the community and its social order.[20] But, as Mark Jenner has most forcefully demonstrated, medieval and early modern European understandings of health are not explicable without reference to medicine.[21] Jenner has therefore led the way in showing how cultural analysis must incorporate medical thought and professional practice in order to understand how and why early modern English people cleaned their streets, buried their dead, emptied their cesspits, and assessed their smoky capital.[22] Similar studies of pre-modern conceptions of dirtiness often focus on public health, prevention of plague, and the importance of airs in the classical medical tradition. In so doing they have shown that popular and elite conceptions of healthy living and healthy spaces overlapped to a substantial degree, as medical doctrines related to washing, scouring, and cleansing influenced both individual and collective behaviour.[23]

[20] Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, 2006). Douglas is famous for the idea that pollution is 'matter out of place', but this phrase (borrowed from William James) is the beginning, not the conclusion of her analysis. She argued most fundamentally that pollution is that which threatens social relations and conceptions of order, and is ultimately concerned with 'bodily disintegration' (p. 213) and death. She suggested in chapter 2 that medical materialism *and* conceptions of order structure notions of pollution in both modern and 'primitive' cultures, but the discussion is almost entirely limited to the primitive. She argued that to understand modern pollution as deriving from an ordered system we would need first to 'abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt'. (44) Rejoining the symbolic and the medical in an analysis of modern cultures seems not to be possible because modernity produces 'disjointed, separate areas of existence'. (50) Thus while 'matter out of place' is a memorable formulation, it is not at all clear that her ideas are easily compatible with the concern for medicine and science that has informed most early modern and modern historians' studies of environmental pollution.

[21] Cf. the economic determinism of Bas van Bavel and Oscar Gelderblom, 'The Economic Origins of Cleanliness in the Dutch Golden Age', *Past and Present* 205 (2009): 41–69, which critiques the cultural approach of Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley, 1988), esp. ch. 6, i, 'Cleanliness and Godliness', 375–97.

[22] Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Early Modern Conceptions of Cleanliness and Dirt as Reflected in the Environmental Regulation of London, c. 1530–1700' (Oxford: D. Phil Thesis, 1992); '"Another *epocha*"? Hartlib, John Lanyon and the Improvement of London in the 1650s,' in Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Timothy Raylor, ed. *Samuel Hartlib and the Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication*, (Cambridge, 1994), 343–56; 'The Politics of London Air: John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* and the Restoration', *The Historical Journal*, 38 (1995): 535–51; 'Death, Decomposition and Dechristianisation? Public Health and Church Burial in Eighteenth-Century England', *English Historical Review* 120 (2005), 615–32; 'Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories', *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 335–51; 'Polite and Excremental Labour: Selling Sanitary Services in London, 1650–1830', paper at the Cambridge Early Medicine Seminar, November 2013.

[23] Guy Geltner, 'Healthscaping a Medieval City: Lucca's Curia Viarum and the Future of Public Health History', *Urban History* 40:3 (2013), 395–415; Dolly Jørgensen, '"All Good Rule of the Citee": Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400–1600', *Journal of Urban History* 36.3 (2010), 300–15; Leona Skelton, *Sanitation in Urban Britain, 1560–1700* (2015); Keith Thomas, 'Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England,' in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, eds. *Religion, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in*

In the case of late-medieval England, both wood and coal smoke were among the nuisances frequently regulated in towns in the interests of public health and beauty.[24]

The environmental history of early modern Europe can be told, therefore, but it must differ in crucial ways from the modern stories that dominate the field. The concern with wilderness that has been so fundamental in American and some other literatures simply does not apply in places like Britain where dense populations had farmed and hunted for millennia.[25] Early modern perceptions of nature entailed inherently moralizing attempts to order individuals into societies, as Douglas's approach suggests. But they were also based in learned medical and natural philosophical traditions that sought to explain health and disease. Early modern conceptions of cleanliness and dirt, therefore, stand somewhere between what some historians have identified as the modern attitude, characterized by scientific and technical language, and the 'primitive' attitude described by Douglas, which has nothing to do with 'science' but rather is focused on symbolic systems and social orders. In the early modern period, recent work suggests, urban dirtiness offended both morally and medically.[26]

These ideas, finally and perhaps most importantly, are inseparable from the social as well as legal, political, and institutional contexts in which they were expressed. The story of attitudes towards coal smoke in early modern London is therefore also the story of when such attitudes were voiced, to what purpose, and through what mediating structures and genres. As Emily Cockayne has argued, daily life in early modern English cities required the negotiation of endless annoyances and nuisances, any of which could threaten the crucial bonds of neighbourliness and community.[27] If Douglas was right that pollution is always, at least in part, about social order, then it makes sense that perceptions of pollution would be complex, variable, and contested in a city where social relations and social identities were particularly subject to negotiation and re-invention. If pollution is a certain kind of matter out of place, then understanding the meaning of urban coal

Honour of Patrick Collinson (Cambridge, 1994), 56–83; Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 2013).

[24] Carole Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge, 2013), 163–9.

[25] E.g., Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 1967). The classic critique of this focus is William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,' in William Cronon, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, 1996), 69–90.

[26] Relationships between the religious or moral implications of the word 'pollution' and other terms to assess material dirtiness in early modern France is explored in Patrick Fournier, 'De la souillure a la pollution, un essai d'interpretation des origines de l'idee de pollution,' in Bernhardt and Massard-Guilbaud, eds. *Le Démon Moderne*, 33–56.

[27] Cockayne, *Hubbub*.

smoke demands close attention to the rapidly changing places of early modern London.

III. *THE GREAT HIVE*: LONDON IN EARLY MODERNITY

London is not a case study in how polluted early modern cities could be. Rather, it was a place that mattered so much precisely because it was so atypical. No other city in the early modern world so dominated its country the way that London dominated the urban landscape of England. Edo, the world's largest city for most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shared pre-eminence in Japan with Osaka and Kyoto. Other great capitals sat atop networks of comparably important urban centres: Beijing was joined by Nanjing and Shanghai; Agra by Shajahanabad/Delhi, Lahore, and Surat; Istanbul by Cairo and Aleppo. All of these capital cities, which held from 500,000 to 1,000,000 people at some point between 1500 and 1800, were complemented by other major urban centres of over 100,000.[28] Paris, always the dominant city in France, was joined by a series of regional centres like Lyon, Rouen, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Orléans, Lille, Nantes, and Rennes, each with 40,000–100,000 people in 1700.[29] Even in the Kingdom of Naples, where no urban centre came close to the capital in either size or importance, Lecce reached around 30,000 people in 1600, more than 1/10 the population of Naples itself.[30]

London, in stark contrast to all of these cases except Naples, stood entirely alone as the only great city in early modern England, almost twenty times larger than the second largest English city around 1700. In that year, London contained something over 500,000 people, while the next largest urban centres in England were Norwich with 30,000, Bristol with 21,000, and Newcastle, Exeter, and York each with 10–20,000 people.[31] There are many ways to express the magnitude of this gulf: metropolitan London contained within it several parishes that would have been England's second largest city; if the immigrants who arrived in London in the year 1700 had instead founded their own town it would have immediately ranked among the ten largest cities in England; the same can be said of the number of

[28] Population figures taken from William T. Rowe, 'China: 1300–1900,' in Peter Clark, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History* (Oxford, 2013), 310–27; Ebru Boyar, 'The Ottoman City: 1500–1800,' in *ibid*., 275–91; James McClain, 'Japan's Pre-Modern Urbanism,' in *ibid*., 328–45; Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India. Vol. 1: c. 1200-c. 1750* (Cambridge, 1982), 171.

[29] Philip Benedict, *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France* (1989), 24.

[30] Brigitte Marin, 'Town and Country in the Kingdom of Naples,' in S. R. Epstein, ed. *Town and Country in Europe, 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2004), 319–21.

[31] Paul Slack, 'Great and Good Towns 1540–1700,' in Peter Clark, ed. *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume II 1540–1840* (Cambridge, 2000), 352.

babies christened in 1700 (14,600), or of the number of Londoners over age 80, or its number of naturally left-handed girls; and so on.[32] This division of urban England into one huge metropolis and a series of large provincial towns meant that within England there was no general category of the urban. Instead there was London, and there was everywhere else.

For some historians this has meant that London was absolutely central to England's transition from a medieval to a modern society. Roy Porter's many writings presented this position vividly, arguing that eighteenth century fashion, polite culture, and enlightenment itself were primarily metropolitan in origin and orientation.[33] Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* described a 'model case of British development' in which the key institutions *c.* 1700 were emphatically metropolitan, especially the coffee house and the periodical press.[34] Since the English translation of Habermas in 1989, publics and news media have become crucial to historical debates about the relationships between social and political change during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.[35] London has been central in much of this work, though often historians have been reluctant to frame their accounts as merely metropolitan. Instead, studies of coffee houses or parliamentary lobbying, for example, have stressed the national spread of news culture and political engagement rather than the outsized importance of London to their stories.[36] Despite that, studies of news circulation and public opinion have continued to show the centrality of London to these processes. Provincial readers consumed books, newspapers, pamphlets, and manuscript newsletters produced in the metropolis so as to understand and perhaps even pull the capital's levers of power.[37] In narratives describing an increasingly self-aware public, an

[32] Christening total from Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758 Inclusive* (1759). Edmund Halley found that 4 per cent of Breslau births lived to 80, but a proportion of only 1.7 per cent would have sufficed to give over 10,000 octogenarian Londoners in 1700. Andrea Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Cambridge, 2002), 186.

[33] E.g., Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (2000); *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1991); *London: A Social History* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), ch. 5–7.

[34] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Thomas Burger trans. (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 57–68.

[35] E.g., Steve Pincus, '"Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *Journal of Modern History* 67:4 (December 1995), 807–34; Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, 2005); Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007); Brian Cowan, 'Geoffrey Holmes and the Public Sphere: Augustan Historiography from the Post-Namierite to the Post-Habermasian', *Parliamentary History* 28:1 (February 2009), 166–78, which points out that British historians' interest in news culture long pre-dates Habermas's translation into English.

[36] E.g., Cowan, *Social Life*, esp. 154–84; Pincus, 'Coffee', 811.

[37] Jason Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013); Chris Kyle, *Theater of State: Parliament and Political Culture in Early Stuart Britain* (Stanford, 2012); Alex Barber, '"It Is Not Easy What to Say of Our Condition, Much Less to Write