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Introduction

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WRITING HOME to the Doge and Senate, those crusty patricians ensconced in their colonnaded palace on St Mark's Square, Venetian ambassadors to the Tudor Court hymned the praises of London as one of the principal cities of Europe, but ignored or dismissed almost all the remaining English towns. Other sixteenth-century visitors from the great continental states were equally critical. Only travellers from the more remote central European countries found anything remarkable in English provincial towns. Scottish and Welsh towns barely figure in foreign reports: Edinburgh on one occasion was compared to a French country town.[1] Yet by the late eighteenth century British towns – not just London but provincial towns – were the envy of the civilised world, admired in the many travellers' accounts which rehearsed details of their affluence, manufactures, vigorous club life, bustling, friendly shops, well-lit, orderly streets, and much else.[2] Whereas at the start of our period only a minority of English people, maybe 15 per cent or so (and a much lower proportion in Scotland and Wales) resided in cities and towns, by the accession of Queen Victoria nearly half the British population was urban. Not only was there an increasingly integrated national system of towns, but British towns became notable as centres of economic and social innovation, of political discourse and cultural enlightenment, their advance having a growing impact on national society and beyond. Hitherto located on the European periphery in terms of urban development, analogous to regions like Scandinavia and central

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[1] *Calendar of State Papers Venetian*, 1556–7, pp. 1045 *et seq*.; *Calendar of State Papers Spanish*, 1554–8, p. 33; G. von Bülow, 'Journey through England and Scotland made by Lupold von Wedel . . .', *TRHS*, 2nd series, 9 (1895), 223–70; G. W. Groos, ed., *The Diary of Baron Waldstein* (London, 1981); M. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 2.

[2] P. Kielmansegge, ed., *Diary of a Journey to England in the Years 1761–1762* (London, 1902); R. Nettel, ed., *Journeys of a German in England in 1782* (London, 1965); C. Williams, ed., *Sophie in London 1786* (London, 1933).

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Europe with their low urban populations and localised towns, from the eighteenth century Britain emerged as the chief laboratory of a modernising world.

(i) THE IMPORTANCE OF TOWNS

Even in the Tudor and early Stuart era towns were hardly the marginal players in national society that foreign portraits implied. As we saw in Volume I, Britain inherited from the middle ages an established cadre of 800–900 towns.[3] London was already a major European city by the fourteenth century, but after the Reformation the island also boasted fifty or so 'great and good towns', regional centres and shire towns as well as ports, with sizeable populations, diversified economies, municipal charters and a strong sense of civic identity (see plates 1–3). The other, smaller, towns, despite their rural aspect and absence of walls (so vital for continental visions of urban identity), were much bigger and more economically advanced than villages and had an extensive role in provincial society (see plate 4). In the pre-industrial period population scale was rarely a perfect index of urban importance. Certainly, with their high mortality rates British towns contributed powerfully to population movement as tens of thousands of people a year left the hard-pressed countryside in search of work there: significantly, the story of Dick Whittington and his cat arriving and making good in London begins to circulate at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.[4] Urban markets and fairs were vital in the general expansion of inland trade, taking back a growing share of the commerce they had lost in the late middle ages. Towns led the way in social policy initiatives (parish rates, workhouses and settlement controls), which were often subsequently adopted by crown and parliament. Under Charles I, a core of towns served to polarise political opposition to the regime and London was the scene of an unprecedented explosion of radical activity during the 1640s, which culminated in the execution of the king. Again in the century after the Reformation, towns contributed to the growth of religious pluralism and a new print culture. London's voice was certainly strong and made itself heard in the rise of domestic and overseas commerce, national politics and the spread of social and cultural innovation, but provincial towns sang important parts in the urban chorus.[5]

Truly, however, during the 'long' eighteenth century British towns came into their own as a dynamic force on a European scale. They established new specialist industries and promoted the rise of the service sector (with shopping invented as a cultural as well as a commercial exercise). Cities and towns saw the emergence of new social groups and new social alignments. They were the forcing

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[3] See D. M. Palliser, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. i: *600–1540* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. ch. 24.

[4] C. M. Barron, 'Richard Whittington: the man behind the myth', in A. E. J. Hollaender and W. Kellaway, eds., *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 197–8.

[5] See below, Chapters 5, 7, 8, 10–11.

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ground for party politics and radicalism. Accoutred with coffee-houses and taverns, societies and concerts, they shaped the distinctive character of the English and Scottish enlightenments. British cities and towns forged new patterns of leisure, time, taste and sensibility, and created new perceptions of modernity through a stress on public and private improvement, and through refashioned notions of the built environment, marked by the profusion of classical-style terraced housing and later of bourgeois suburbs.[6]

A fundamental factor in the changing image and role of British cities and towns was urbanisation, the process by which the growing proportion of population living in cities created distinct behavioural and structural changes in society. Everything in this volume demonstrates that urban growth was not a lagging indicator of British industrialisation, rather the reverse. After a century and a half of stagnation or decline in the late middle ages, the sixteenth century saw renewed urban population growth, in line with the national increase. London's advance was most spectacular, rising from about 75,000 in the 1550s to about 400,000 a century later, but many provincial towns increased their size. Limited economic expansion and other problems led to considerable social instability in the urban system before the English Civil Wars – similar to the situation in other parts of Europe.[7] However, from the late seventeenth century English towns increasingly diverged from the continental pattern in their enjoyment of sustained, real demographic growth, which served as a precondition for general economic expansion. London's momentous, apparently inexorable, rise, to nearly a million inhabitants by 1800, making it one of the greatest cities in the world, was increasingly complemented by fast-growth provincial towns; Scottish and Welsh towns followed the trend, if some way behind.[8]

Outlining the urbanisation trend is much easier than calculating precise rates of growth, an area which remains controversial. In this volume a range of estimates are provided, often reflecting different urban parameters. Thus Chapter 6 uses relatively high urban thresholds of over 5,000 to suggest that England had perhaps 5 per cent of its inhabitants living in towns by 1540, and 8 per cent in 1600. Paul Glennie and Ian Whyte (Chapter 5) take a wider definition of towns and believe that by the end of the seventeenth century the urban population of England was of the order of 30–3 per cent, with 22–5 per cent in Scotland and 13–15 per cent in Wales. In a comprehensive and radical reworking of all the available population data for towns between 1660 and 1841, John Langton (Chapter 14) argues that in the late Stuart period the English population had already achieved an urban rate of 40 per cent, with Wales at 33 per cent and Scotland at 25 per cent. By 1801 there is more agreement, aided by the census

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[6] See below, Chapters 14–18.

[7] See below, Chapter 6; P. M. Hohenberg and L. H. Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe 1000–1950* (London, 1985), esp. ch. 4.

[8] E. A. Wrigley, 'Urban growth and agricultural change: England and the continent in the early modern period', in P. Borsay, ed., *The Eighteenth Century Town* (London, 1990), pp. 41–82.

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evidence, and it is likely that the British population overall was 42 per cent urban, rising to 51 per cent in 1841.[9]

Calculation is difficult because, although the relative demographic order of towns is broadly agreed, estimates vary about their absolute population size (particularly of the bigger cities). As will be evident from subsequent pages, at the present time there is no consensus on this matter, and it would be premature to try and standardise our population figures. Difficulties stem both from the fragility and incompleteness of the data for the pre-census period (discussed at length below, pp. 457–62), and also from issues relating to the definition of towns. Such problems, in some ways more taxing than for many other European countries in the period, do not invalidate the urban approach, but challenge us to create sensitive, imaginative and robust methodologies in response. Certainly the usual problem of defining early towns – identifying the urban features of small places which by modern standards are hardly recognisable as towns – persists into the Tudor and Stuart period. Only the bigger centres normally combined those recognised attributes of urbanness: a substantial population density, a developed urban economy and social order, distinctive political and administrative structures, and a cultural role and influence extending beyond the immediate locality. From the eighteenth century, however, the problems are both simpler and more complex. All but the smallest towns have usually shed their bucolic image and agricultural functions, and acquired clearly urban and urbane aspects, such as shops, professional men, public improvements, new housing and sociable activities. Now problems of definition focus on recognising and identifying the frontiers of the urban community, as the traditional urban palimpsest is overlaid with new developments: the growing array of leafy suburbs for the better off; new industrial colonies on the periphery with spots of working-class housing; the emergence of the modern conurbation.[10] Already by the Restoration of Charles II the majority of London's population lived outside the civic limits and by the later Georgian era there was a penumbra of metropolitan suburban and satellite communities, many of them larger than middle-rank provincial towns, frequently with distinctive identities. At the end of our period provincial centres like Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow were developing in a similar direction. By the early nineteenth century difficulties of definition on the ground were compounded by the growing confusion of urban administrative categories. As Britain became a modern urban nation the urban community was increasingly amorphous and elusive.[11]

However, the urban transformation of Britain in this period cannot be construed simply in terms of demographic and economic forces. Urban historians have ever to be sensitive to the importance of the political and cultural dimension. The destiny of early modern towns was shaped decisively by their relations with

[9] See below, pp. 169, 197, 462 *et seq.*   [10] See below, pp. 619–21, 644 *et seq.*, 812 *et seq.*
[11] See below, pp. 552 *et seq.*

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the state. Tudor and early Stuart governments were particularly active in the urban arena, granting new charters, bolstering the power of civic oligarchies, interfering in town administration, giving corporations new official powers in regard to economic and social policy.[12] During the 1530s and 1540s one of the biggest and most successful measures of state intervention in British history, the Reformation, had a significant impact, as one sees in Chapter 8. It transformed much of the traditional fabric of the medieval town, stripped away monastic houses and fraternities, disrupted ceremonial life, depressed some urban economies and opened the door to religious and political division.[13]

A hundred years later the opposition to Charles I and the outbreak of Civil War ushered in a period of major uncertainty and instability for towns. Recent research has highlighted the demographic, economic and physical damage wrought by Civil War hostilities.[14] The long-term effects of the political and religious dissension of the English Revolution contributed to the tension and conflict in boroughs during the later Stuart period. On the other hand, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 the state's concentration on foreign policy, war and taxation left British towns with a considerable measure of local autonomy, running their affairs in a way unknown to continental cities, where busybody central governments routinely intruded into social policy, transport, architecture, planning and intellectual life.[15] British cities assume a two-sided function in the political system of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, both as the lairs of 'corrupt influence' and as arenas, theatres, where a new kind of pluralistic, participatory politics was produced. Influential in this respect was the collapse of state censorship in the 1690s, which boosted the role of towns as engines of the print revolution, with newspapers and the publishing industry wielding a powerful influence over their commercial and service development, political life, cultural image and, not least, their relations with their hinterlands and regional society.[16]

[12] See below, pp. 238 *et seq*.

[13] See below, pp. 263 *et seq*.; also R. Tittler, *The Reformation and the Towns in England* (Oxford, 1998); M. Graham, *The Uses of Reform: 'Godly Discipline' and Popular Behaviour in Scotland and Beyond, 1560–1610* (Leiden, 1996); M. Lynch, 'Preaching to the converted? Perspectives on the Scottish Reformation', in A. A. MacDonald, M. Lynch and I. B. Cowan, eds., *The Renaissance in Scotland* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 301–43.

[14] M. Stoyle, *From Deliverance to Destruction* (Exeter, 1996), esp. chs. 3–6; M. Bennett, '"My plundered towns, my houses devastation": the Civil War and North Midlands life 1642–1646', *Midland History*, 22 (1997), 35–48; I. Roy, ' England turned Germany? The aftermath of the Civil War in its European context', *TRHS*, 5th series, 28 (1978), 132–44. See also B. Coates, 'The impact of the English Civil War on the economy of London 1642–1650' (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1997).

[15] See below, pp. 254–62; G. S. de Krey, *A Fractured Society* (Oxford, 1985); J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (London, 1988); C. Tilly and W. T. P. Blockmans, eds., *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe A.D. 1000 to 1800* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 178–80.

[16] See below, Chapters 16, 17; C. Y. Ferdinand, *Benjamin Collins and the Provincial Newspaper Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997).

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Another key relationship was with rural society, and here we know more about certain aspects than others. The exchange function of towns in the agrarian economy figures prominently in this work (especially in Chapters 5 and 13), but the terms of trade between town and countryside and the patterns of urban investment and property ownership in rural hinterlands have attracted less research.[17] On the other hand, nobody can doubt the vital role of landowners in urban development in Britain, as in much of Europe. During the sixteenth century relations with local gentry ranged from the amicable to the downright acrimonious. There was a good deal of jostling over jurisdictions and privileges, and a rather condescending view of towns among the seigneurial classes. After the Restoration the upper classes' experience of great continental cities whilst on the 'Grand Tour' contributed to a landed invasion of English towns, initially London and then provincial centres.[18] Gentry and their families rented houses or lodgings in urban centres and some of them became almost residential towns in the German manner, their new fashionable areas designed (and portrayed) as extensions of landed estates. Resort towns depended heavily on landed patronage and the West End of London was developed by the aristocratic Russells and Grosvenors, among others, as a fashionable cantonment for the landed elite. Many landowners, of course, paid shorter visits to town, but the impact on the urban economy and social life of genteel demand for housing, consumer wares and leisure entertainment was profound. The retreat of the landed classes from many provincial towns, and even, to some extent, from London, after 1800 was no less decisive for their future.[19]

These major changes created both important opportunities and powerful challenges for British towns. Whether in the developed or developing worlds, urbanisation has often been associated with social disruption, social segregation and social alienation.[20] Certainly urban growth in the early modern era had negative dimensions; there were considerable costs entailed. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the failure of economic growth to keep pace

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[17] For a dissection of the complexities see E. A. Wrigley, 'City and country in the past: a sharp divide or a continuum?', *HR*, 64 (1991), 107–20; for recent work on the credit links between town and hinterland see C. Muldrew, 'Rural credit, market areas and legal institutions in the countryside in England 1550–1700', in C. Brooks and M. Lobban, eds., *Communities and Courts in Britain 1150–1900* (London, 1997), pp. 155–78.   [18] See below, pp. 240–1.

[19] For London see Lawrence Stone's splendid essay, 'The residential development of the West End of London in the seventeenth century', in B. C. Malament, ed., *After the Reformation* (Manchester, 1980), pp. 173–209; J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (London, 1945); for the provinces see: P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford, 1989); L. Williams, 'Rus in urbe: greening the English town 1660–1760' (PhD thesis, University of Wales, 1998).

[20] L. Wirth, *On Cities and Social Life* (Chicago, 1964); W. A. Hance, *Population, Migration and Urbanization in Africa* (New York, 1970); T. G. McGee, *The Urbanization Process in the Third World* (London, 1971); D. J. Walmsley, *Urban Living: The Individual in the City* (London, 1988), pp. 3–7.

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with demographic expansion, aggravated by the influx of poverty stricken labourers from the countryside and periodic harvest disasters and trade disruption, led to acute social problems for a number of larger and middling towns. Various studies have highlighted the tidal wave of poverty. At Warwick in the 1580s 30 per cent of the inhabitants of St Mary's parish were classed as poor; at St Martin's, Salisbury, in 1635 the comparable figure was over a third.[21] As elsewhere in Europe, numerous British towns, not least in Scotland, were affected by subsistence crises, and town elites suffered nightmarish fears over the rising tide of vagrants and the disorderly. Plague during the sixteenth century became largely an urban scourge, repeatedly decimating the poorer districts, but, despite its disappearance in the 1660s, towns remained killing fields (especially for urban infants), with mortality, if anything, higher than in the previous period.[22] Nor did urban expansion banish other problems. Trade fluctuations and changes in the urban economy – together with agricultural improvement – created cyclical crises of unemployment and large-scale poverty, while large numbers of middling traders were at risk from bankruptcy.[23]

Urbanisation caused mounting environmental problems. While rising energy use created a heat island effect in the Georgian capital, facilitating fashionable socialising even in the winter months, the pervasive metropolitan stench, fuelled by coal fires and furnaces and rotting human and animal waste (London had perhaps 100,000 horses by 1811), greeted travellers at many miles distance, while in central areas the Thames was an open sewer, fogs smothered the streets, trees withered and royal statues became so black that they were mistaken for chimney sweeps or African kings.[24] At Sheffield smoke and pollution from the iron forges

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[21] P. Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), pp. 67–85 *et passim*; A. L. Beier, 'The social problems of an Elizabethan country town: Warwick 1580–90', in P. Clark, ed., *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (Leicester, 1981), p. 58; in P. Slack, 'Poverty and politics in Salisbury 1597–1666', in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700* (London, 1972), p. 176.

[22] P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1985); J. A. I. Champion, ed., *Epidemic Disease in London* (London, 1993), pp. 1–52; E. A. Wrigley *et al.*, *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580–1837* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 217–18, 272 *et seq.*; J. Landers, *Death and the Metropolis* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. chs. 4–5; but see M. J. Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 141–3.

[23] See below, Chapter 15; J. Hoppit, *Risk and Failure in English Business 1700–1800* (Cambridge, 1987), chs. 5–7.

[24] T. J. Chandler, *The Climate of London* (London, 1965), pp. 126, 147 *et seq.*; L. W. Labaree *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 1959–93), vol. VII, p. 380; J. Evelyn, *Fumifugium: Or, The Inconvenience of the Aer and Smoake of London Dissipated* (1661; new edn, London, 1772), new preface (for the political dimension to Evelyn's original tract see M. Jenner, 'The politics of London air . . .', *HJ*, 38 (1995), 535–51); F. M. L. Thompson, 'Nineteenth-century horse sense', *Ec.HR*, 2nd series, 29 (1976), 80 (figure as proportion of national figure for non-agricultural horses); R. B. Johnson, *The Undergraduate* (London, 1928), pp. 255–6; M. W. Hamilton, 'An American knight in Britain', *New York History*, 42 (1961), 125.

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wrapped the town in fumes, discolouring its buildings; in 1764 Horace Walpole baldly declared it was 'one of the foulest towns in England'. As pollution choked the lungs of townspeople, contaminated water supplies spread sickness and death among babies and children.[25]

Urban growth also posed other problems. The spatial expansion of bigger towns combined with high levels of migration and mobility created a perception of individual isolation and anomie and a more general sense of urban fragmentation: by the end of the eighteenth century observers are talking about the divisions, even the different peoples in towns. In 1797 a Londoner visiting the Borough area of south London declared 'we met and saw a variety of people who had heads on their shoulders and eyes and legs and arms, like ourselves, but in every other respect as different from the race of mortals we meet at the West End of the Town . . . as a native of Bengal from a Laplander'.[26] Newcomers (and residents as well) faced the difficulty of making their way in the city. Urban improvement and affluence removed many of the signs and symbols of traditional urban society – ancient landmarks, distinctive vernacular housing (replaced by uniform, neo-classical terraces), street signs. Distinctions of dress and life style were elided by new fashions of consumption. Inflows of gentry and professional men with their smart leisure tastes and entertainments, often aping those of London, challenged the cultural codes of many older provincial towns. Overall, towns experienced major difficulties in integrating newcomers and creating and recreating a sense of urban and communal identity.[27]

None the less, as the following chapters reveal, towns in Britain (and their inhabitants) showed a considerable resilience and capacity to cope with these pressures and problems, developing, in addition to traditional urban structures and agencies for maintaining stability, new organisations and stratagems, as urbanisation accelerated. On balance, Britain fared better in dealing with urban change than most other European countries.

In the precarious and unstable world of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries economic and social pressures, despite their severity, were in considerable measure contained; public order in British towns was challenged but only rarely overturned by food and apprenticeship riots; political problems, such as conflicts between the different political groups within the community, were negotiated and largely resolved. Crises were often turned to advantage. Thus the Reformation became an opportunity for a number of towns to seize command of their own governance from church control, while elsewhere town leaders

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[25] R. E. Leader, *Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century* (Sheffield, 1901), p. 150; Landers, *Death and the Metropolis*, pp. 70–2.
[26] W. C. Mackenzie, ed., *The War Diary of a London Scot* (Paisley, 1916), pp. 177–8.
[27] See below, Chapters 17, 18, 20.

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exploited Puritanism to attempt to consolidate their political and moral author-ity. During the upheavals of the Civil War there was no breakdown of the social order or of urban government; rather the dire political situation drove provin-cial towns to improve their political and social relations with the gentry, which facilitated the fashionable landed influx of the late seventeenth century. In the Georgian era popular action was vociferous: scores of old-style food riots were joined by recurrent political protests and agitation, by crowd attacks on the Irish, impressment and brothels, and by strike action (with nearly 150 disputes recorded in England in the last decades of the eighteenth century).[28] However, most popular action was localised and readily controlled. The exception to prove the rule were the religious-inspired Gordon riots of 1780 which led to large-scale destruction in the capital and a major reorganisation of city policing. Political radicalism in the 1790s was largely moderate and constitutional and a good deal less intimidating than the loyalist mobs which, egged on by the upper classes, threatened and sometimes attacked respectable reformers.[29]

Part of the explanation for the success of British towns in coping with the economic and other pressures of the period relates to the nature of the changes affecting them, not least industrialisation. Whereas the Industrial Revolution was conventionally identified with the introduction of new technology and the rapid spread of large-scale factory production, this industrial breakthrough gen-erating capital concentration and class stratification, recent interpretations have suggested that most industrial advances into the early nineteenth century were small scale, incremental, technical, and workshop or domestically based, while economic expansion was seconded by the proliferation of service activities – again structured in a traditional way. It is essential, as Chapter 14 makes plain, not to downplay the dynamic importance of industrialisation in urban growth during the long eighteenth century. Rather the process should be seen as broadly manageable both in its nature and effects, at least until the turn of the century.[30]

Another key factor relates to the complex nature of the urban transformation in the pre-Victorian era. The older tripartite hierarchy of London, 'great and good towns' (the regional and county centres) and small market towns was

[28] For the situation in the 1590s see M. J. Power, 'London and the control of the "crisis" of the 1590s', *History*, 70 (1985), 371–85. P. Clark, '"The Ramoth-Gilead of the Good": urban change and political radicalism at Gloucester 1540–1640', in J. Barry, ed., *The Tudor and Stuart Town* (London, 1990), pp. 265–73; D. Underdown, *Fire from Heaven* (London, 1992); R. B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 58, 65–6 *et passim*; N. Rogers, *Whigs and Cities* (Oxford, 1989); K. Wilson, *The Sense of the People* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 125 *et passim*; C. R. Dobson, *Masters and Journeymen* (London, 1980), p. 22.   [29] See below, Chapter 16.

[30] N. F. R. Crafts, *British Economic Growth during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1985); E. A. Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change: The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge, 1988).

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replaced by an increasingly diffuse and polycentric system. Admittedly, London advanced exponentially: by 1840 it was the leading imperial and global metropolis and there can be no doubt that its growth had a powerful effect from the sixteenth century, promoting new markets, financial networks, the dissemination of innovation and new expectations of urban life. However, London's economic and cultural ascendancy was always sectoral, geographically incomplete, and its meteoric development should not distort our vision of the rest of the urban system.[31] After 1700 there was a growing number of new commercial and industrial cities like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow, together with a tremendous upsurge of more specialist towns – resort and leisure centres, industrial towns, Atlantic ports and naval towns; almost every category with its own cluster of sub-types.[32] As a result, it is possible to conceptualise British urbanisation in the pre-Victorian era as something akin to a wave system. Major aggregate change frequently took the form of a multiplicity of small-scale alterations affecting a diversity of urban communities – alterations which rarely coincided everywhere and which by themselves could usually be absorbed at the local level. Certainly it would be blinkered to see the urban transformation of our period as an exclusively big city phenomenon. Middle-rank and market towns, small industrialising and other specialist centres all made an essential contribution to urban development into the early nineteenth century, mediating a good deal of the upheaval. There was an important political dimension to this process. The diversification of forms of urban government after the Revolution of 1688, exemplified by the rise of a bewildering array of improvement, police and other administrative agencies in both chartered and unincorporated towns, likewise served to order and contain the intense pressures of an urbanising world.[33]

At a different level, individual townspeople, groups and communities pursued their own strategies for survival and success. The challenge of urbanisation was answered on a daily basis through the personal, often grimly heroic, choices and decisions of ordinary men and women. Of exit, voice and loyalty, famously conceived by Albert Hirschmann as the standard human choices in a time of crisis, exit, in the form of migration, was the most favoured by British townspeople. In Chapter 15 we hear the story of Thomas Carter, a teenage tailor from Colchester, who travelled to London, moved around the metropolis changing masters and lodgings, when unemployed went back to his home town, and finally set up business there later in life. Men and women moved all the time,

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[31] See below, Chapter 19; also M. Reed, 'London and its hinterland 1600–1800: the view from the provinces', in P. Clark and B. Lepetit, eds., *Capital Cities and their Hinterlands in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 57–77; P. Borsay, 'The London connection: cultural diffusion and the eighteenth century provincial town', *LJ*, 19 (1994), 27–30.

[32] See below, Chapters 20, 21, 23, 24.   [33] See below, Chapters 16, 22.