

rethink our relationship to narrative and text, to live with the ambiguities of text, and to pay attention to its textures. This book is “Sare . . . Ghamidh” and all the more important for being so.

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Losing Bridewell in *Lost Londons*

Paul Griffiths has very deliberately not written a book about Bridewell, for his ambition is much higher. This is a major contribution to discussions about early modern crime, policing, and the challenges of metropolitan growth. However, it remains overwhelmingly based on the records of Bridewell, and some of the absences in the treatment of the hospital are therefore disappointing. The discussion of trial processes comes in the middle of the book, and when the reader gets there, the account is limited. There is little on who the governors actually were or the role of the treasurer and the clerk; the charter is discussed mainly in terms of challenges to it, and it is difficult to find a sustained discussion of what it actually said. What was the basis on which the governors acted? We find hardly anything about the hospital’s precarious finances; its staffing structure has to be inferred from scattered references, usually to the staff’s failings. There is only cursory reference to its use as a holding place for political prisoners (because they tend not to appear in the court books); yet Robert Southwell described Bridewell in 1591 as “the common purgatory of priests and Catholics.”¹⁷ Most curiously, there is hardly anything on the vicissitudes of the various efforts to provide work, whether for those being punished there or for those orphans supposedly in training under the so-called “artmasters.”

Do these lacunae matter? In light of Griffiths’ preoccupation with crime, perhaps some matter less than others. It is helpful, however, to be reminded of Bridewell’s mixed character as both a penal institution and as a house of occupations, because that element in its contested status in the city’s welfare provision is one that Griffiths rightly emphasizes. Money always matters, so we do need to know about the resource constraints, and personalities matter too, so one would expect more profiling of the governors. In the mid-1570s the activists on the court were a minority, and one with a decidedly godly tinge; I claim this explains

17 P. Caraman, ed., *The Other Face: Catholic Life under Elizabeth I* (London: Longman, 1960), pp. 86–87.

their willingness to ascend the social gradient in the controversial policy of prosecuting the clients of prostitutes, which led to the disastrous Bate case. I think Griffiths may be sceptical of my claims, but it is striking that the issue of religious ideology and its possible connection to the work of the court receives only the most cursory treatment (except pp. 206–207).¹⁸ Griffiths has no truck with “Puritanism and social control.”¹⁹ Yesterday’s debate perhaps, but the court of governors undoubtedly included some godly zealots. Griffiths does not mention the fact that the minutes in the first court book seem to owe a lot to Richard Grafton, the treasurer, MP, and hot Protestant printer and chronicler.²⁰ The rhetoric of those early minutes is much more discursive than that of the later ones, and exploring their relationship to the themes of the mid-century commonwealth reformers would be a suggestive line of enquiry. Griffiths’ sympathies, one suspects, are overwhelmingly with the offenders; he is not very interested in the identities or mentalities of the elite.

Jurisdiction matters, too. To be fair, in *Lost Londons* there is quite a lot on jurisdiction, especially the ways in which it was contested. What is more problematic is the absence of a discussion of Bridewell’s relationship to other jurisdictions in the city. Bridewell’s records are extraordinarily detailed, and Griffiths has done an enormous amount to unlock their treasures, especially in respect to the criminal labelling processes, which the other contributors to this roundtable have addressed. But Bridewell was by no means the only body charged with the prosecution of crime, and it might be dangerous to draw conclusions based on one jurisdiction alone. The discussion of crime maps perhaps inadvertently reveals the limitations of the record. Griffiths painstakingly analyses the arrest locations of offenders in the period 1604 to 1658. What the data show is the dominance of the area immediately adjacent to the hospital; the western wards of Farringdon Within and Without together account for nearly 55 per cent of arrests, whereas the eastern suburban ward of Portsoken accounts for just 0.11 per cent.

18 Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 232–233, 253–254; Griffiths, “Contesting London Bridewell.”

19 For the outlines of the debate, see K. Wrightson and D. Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village, 1525–1700*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982); M. Spufford, “Puritanism and Social Control” in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 41–57; M. Ingram, “Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England” in P. Griffiths, A. Fox, and S. Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); M. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehaviour in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

20 Meraud Grant Ferguson, “Grafton, Richard (c.1511–1573),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed January 13, 2009, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11186>. For the ideological impulses behind Bridewell’s foundation, Griffiths’ account needs still to be supplemented by P. Slack, “Social Policy and the Constraints of Government, 1540–1560” in S. J. Loach and R. Tittler, eds., *The Mid-Tudor Polity, 1540–1560* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 94–115; J. Innes, “Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555–1800” in F. Snyder and D. Hay, eds., *Labour, Law, and Crime: An Historical Perspective* (London: Tavistock, 1987), pp. 42–122; Beier, “Foucault Redux?”

Griffiths does not weight these data for population levels (and we are admittedly in a dark area here), but, if we take Finlay's estimates from the 1638 household listing, then Farringdon Without accounted for 20 per cent of population and 40 per cent of arrests, and Portsoken for 0.11 per cent of arrests and 8.4 per cent of population. Portsoken was not a "stable" ward on either Griffiths' criteria or my own. What this suggests, and to be fair Griffiths recognizes, is that offenders in the eastern part of the city might have been more easily processed elsewhere, perhaps in the Counters. It also suggests the difficulty of understanding crime patterns through one institution.²¹

These observations also call into question some of the larger claims about changing patterns of prosecution. Griffiths charts what elsewhere he has called the "disappearance of sex" as vagrancy charges come overwhelmingly to dominate proceedings. Whereas about 46 per cent of the case load of the Elizabethan courts had been sex crime and only 36 per cent vagrancy, by the period 1618–1657 vagrants accounted for over two-thirds of offenders and sexual offenders for less than 5 per cent. My difficulty here is whether offenders were being dealt with elsewhere. Dabhoiwala has demonstrated the continuing importance of the prosecution of sexual offences in the restoration period. Dabhoiwala's methodology, admittedly with more comprehensive records than those available to Griffiths, attempts to chart the prosecution of sex in all metropolitan jurisdictions, including the sessions, the Middlesex and Westminster houses of correction, and King's Bench (and there are many indictments of bawdy house keepers in the King's Bench, not dealt with by Griffiths).²² Griffiths may be right, but, if he is, then he has to explain why things were different within a few years of the end of his study. In this sense he has not "joined the dots." What is his view of the overall trajectory of the prosecution of sexual offences over the period 1500–1700? Here is a new project for him.²³

When it comes to explaining the changing nature and treatment of crime, Griffiths' main explanatory factor is, put simply, the city's growth, which brought vagrants, in his words, in "flocks," "floods," "swarms," and "downpours." London's growth was "dangerous" and contributed to a "slump in civic prestige"; the freedom was "grown to be of little worth," complained the aldermen in a

21 R. Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London, 1580–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 168–171.

22 F. N. Dabhoiwala, "Prostitution and Police in London, c.1660–c.1760" (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1995).

23 For the longer term of the regulation of sexuality in London, see also Martin Ingram, "Regulating Sex in Pre-Reformation London" in G. W. Bernard and S. J. Gunn, eds., *Authority and Consent in Tudor England: Essays Presented to C. S. L. Davies* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), pp. 79–95; F. Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); F. Dabhoiwala, "Sex, Social Relations and the Law in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century London" in M. J. Braddick and J. Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 85–101, 262–267.

petition of 1632.²⁴ The courts, Griffiths claims, were swamped by crimes directly related to London's growth after 1600. Their understanding of crime was "environmental": crimes that were cause and consequence of the city's sprawl and squalor emerged more vividly in the consciousness of magistrates after 1600. It seems to be the city's growth that explains the shift from concern about crimes of a sexual nature to vagrancy. The explanation for this seems to be in part that the prosecution of sexual offences was highly controversial, as the Bate case in the later 1570s demonstrates, whereas, in circumstances of rapid population growth, everyone could agree on the necessity of rounding up vagrants. And I am happy enough with that explanation.

However, the dynamics of London's growth tend to be assumed rather than stated; there is little sense of its quantitative or topographical dimensions, and the relationship between the city and the suburbs is under-explored. The discussion of crime maps, assisted by the maps in the appendices, is confined to the area under the jurisdiction of the aldermen; the pattern of crime in the expanding areas beyond their control is not addressed. It is also a rather one-sided account of growth. Growth leads to dilapidation, tatty buildings, slums; the newcomers are overwhelmingly vagrant. The relationship of vagrants to other elements of migration remains elusive; there are no "betterment" migrants here, and apprentices only appear when they have been naughty. Buying into the contemporary rhetoric about vagrant swarms perhaps occludes the variety of experiences.²⁵ Griffiths has little to say, for example, about the role of seasonal migration to London, those who came specifically to seek work during the law terms when the capital's population was swollen by gentry visitors.

Growth is also largely divorced from the economic context, save for rather sweeping statements such as "the population boom and resource pinch around 1600 . . . made jobseekers take to the roads in droves from all parts of the land" (p. 192). By way of an invaluable corrective to previous historians' obsessive concentration on the crisis of the 1590s, he has some extremely suggestive remarks about the harsh conditions of the 1620s and 1630s when, as Jeremy Boulton has shown, living standards deteriorated to their lowest point in the whole period.²⁶ At this time, as Griffiths shows in some of the most moving and compelling passages in the book, the campaigns against big-bellied women and inmates rose to ferocious levels, and concern about foundlings peaked, while it also seems to have been a period of marked feminization of crime in London. In this period the proportions of female thieves and vagrants rose markedly. Nowhere, however, is there a sustained discussion of the implications of the state of the

24 TNA, PC2/42/305-6.

25 P. Clark, "The Migrant in Kentish Towns, 1580-1640" in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (London, 1972), pp. 117-163.

26 J. P. Boulton, "Wage Labour in Seventeenth Century London," *Economic History Review*, second series, vol. 49 (1996), pp. 268-290, and "Food Prices and the Standard of Living in London in the 'Century of Revolution,' 1580-1700," *Economic History Review*, second series, vol. 53 (2000), pp. 455-492.

London economy in the 1620s and 1630s, and the explanation for the greater gendering of crime in this period is rather circular. Griffiths seems to argue that the migration stream was becoming more feminized; he wants to predate the shift in sex ratios in the capital whereby the predominance of males in the later sixteenth century became a preponderance of females in the later seventeenth. He may be right. I want him to be right. But his evidence is that there were more women among the vagrants arrested, which proves relatively little, as vagrancy was such a subjective offence in the first place, and it is the feminization of vagrancy that he is seeking to explain. Griffiths is very sensitive to shifts in criminal labels in this period — for example, the increasing feminization of the label “lewd” — but he misses the opportunity to compare the aldermanic rhetorics of the 1590s and 1620s–1630s. Nor is the rhetoric of that 1632 petition of which he is so fond properly contextualized. Remember, this is a book about “rhetorics and records” (p. 8).

It is striking that Griffiths’ own rhetorical register, which is so negative when dealing with the city’s growth, shifts gear in the closing chapters where he talks about policing. Here the emphasis seems to be on the relative effectiveness of London’s institutions in meeting the challenges posed by growth. This all sounds a bit like the pursuit of stability, does it not? These are highly impressive and significant findings, particularly the emphasis on the role of public officers in bringing prosecutions. His arguments, that our perceptions of policing have been distorted by over-concentration on felonies and that the victimless crimes prosecuted in Bridewell show police officials in a much more activist light, are highly compelling. We are told that “London was better policed in the century before 1600 than existing work would lead us to believe” (p. 331); the use of constables’ deputies made for greater continuity in personnel; there were important innovations like the provost marshals from the later 1590s onwards, as well as an ever proliferating number of supplementary police officials (beadles, warders, and the like); there were even attempts to improve street lighting. There was also an extraordinary increase in the level of surveillance, with a proliferation of surveys and registers: London was becoming a more documented city, and the authorities potentially knew a lot about criminal networks. It is true that Griffiths balances the evidence. He documents police corruption, and he is under no illusions about the practical difficulties of law enforcement, but the overall thrust of his remarks is in the direction of more positive assessments of policing.

It is curious, then, that this discussion is conducted almost entirely with reference to developments within the area under the city’s jurisdiction. There is very little on the specific problems of policing in the patchwork quilt of jurisdictions in the suburbs. There are unhelpful passages like, “London was fenced by traitorous suburbs looking longingly at treasures over the walls” (p. 145), in this case with a footnote to an article by me!²⁷ I think a more positive case might be

27 I. W. Archer, “Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs” in P. Clark and R. Gillespie, eds., *Two Capitals: London and Dublin, 1500–1840, Proceedings of the British*

made for suburban policing too: the Westminster court of burgesses show some shared preoccupations with the city governors in the early seventeenth century; one can use the constables' accounts of the precinct of St Katherine's to show active policing. I suspect, however, that we would agree that the case is rather harder to make. Only by tackling the tangled variety of institutions and personnel charged with policing can one make proper sense of crime in the city. In that respect perhaps Griffiths has fallen short of his ambitious goals.

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Found Londons?

Excited, impressed, critical, detached, immersed, overwhelmed, mesmerized, frustrated, amused, angry — these are just some of the many emotions I experienced on reading Paul Griffiths' extraordinary new book — or perhaps more accurately “production” — *Lost Londons*. But why talk about my feelings? One of the first rules of literary criticism (and I assume of historical analysis as well) is not to say “I feel” but rather “I think.” We have been taught to deal with the mind not the heart, and with facts not feelings. But I *feel* Griffiths would applaud my emotional reaction, if not all the emotions *per se*. “It helps to know the city better,” he declares in the conclusion to his book, “if we imagine it as ‘emotional states’ or ‘moods,’ now frozen in perceptions written down in records” (p. 437). What Griffiths does in his moving, if also monumental, production of *Lost Londons* is to immerse us in an explosion of minutia of early modern London — what he refers to as “200,000 Londons” (p. 67) — and to force us to experience it, and them, most feelingly. We vividly smell, see, and most especially hear the voices of those long dead Londoners.

We hear the voices of authors, neighbours, suspects, prisoners, authorities (in their many figurations) but even things and places — “Bridewell's ‘intent’ was to get rid of ‘the great number’ of vagrants and ‘valiant beggars’” — as if Bridewell, a thing, could

Academy, vol. 107 (2001), pp. 133–147, which is a preliminary attempt to compare the effectiveness of government across the wider metropolitan area and would in fact broadly support the thrust of Griffiths' reassessment on policing. See also R. Shoemaker's important *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, c. 1660–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), which anticipates Griffiths' stress on misdemeanours and identifies variations in prosecution levels within the suburbs.