

period — it opens doors and takes us down streets where real-life people can be heard and accessed in ways most feelingly fine.

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Lost Londons: Reprise

Let me explain what *Lost Londons* is and what it is not. “The core and centre of this book” is not “its literary practices,” as Tim Hitchcock writes, but London. It is first and foremost about experiences, and, if I might be allowed to make a couple of allusions here, it is about all aspects of the experience of authority in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century “Londinopolis.”³⁰ I am told by Tim that I squeeze the life-blood out of everyday experiences with the ways in which I choose to use words. In *Lost Londons*, he writes, it is “impossible to re-imagine” the “experience” of what it was like to be vagrant and down-and-out on London’s streets all that time ago. In my book there is no narrative, Tim says, no stories, biographies, or lives. Nothing. Individuals are all at sea in words not worlds. Like City magistrates I impose ideas on thousands of people standing shaking in the dock, catching their lived lives and feelings in a cage of words from elite lexicons that slices life into pockets for my authorial convenience: words like lewd, for instance, loose, sad, bad, or nightwalker. He writes that I boil down each case in the archives to a word or two in my writing, stripping them of stories and their London lives, pushing individuals to one side because I am too deeply pre-occupied with early modern language. In his view of *Lost Londons*, words are juxtaposed with narrative and also with living and breathing Londoners. He gets to the heart of the matter in chapters 5 and 11 (the two shortest chapters in the book, by the way), in which I consider at some length contemporary labelling of crimes and criminals and logging of names in records after counts, searches, and other forms of surveillance. But this is too smart; to trim *Lost Londons* down to one thing — words — when its stage is the heady city is just too severe by far. Clearly my book is being shaped for me by a powerful gravitational pull from deepest Hertfordshire, sucked into a vortex with words spinning, never once coming together to form a straight story. Tim Hitchcock imposes words on my book, and it is nice to be told what *Lost Londons* is about.

30 See Griffiths, Fox, and Hindle, eds., *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England*; Griffiths and Jenner, eds., *Londinopolis*.

Some of his remarks seem to originate in a lack of understanding of what we get in records of petty crime from the times before his own work begins. In a nutshell, it is not possible to provide the sort of narrative biography and thread that he is seeking for people who were rootless and down on their luck in London in the century or so before 1660 from the records of Bridewell, quarter sessions, any one of London's 109 parishes, or the City government. I do not tell tales from anything like the Old Bailey Proceedings with their highly crafted cradle-to-gallows biographies that have helped Tim (and others) write their own tales.³¹ It is quite frankly inappropriate to size up the bits and pieces in page after page in seventeenth-century Bridewell books in arguments that are, in fact, drawn from very different kinds of records from the Old Bailey and elsewhere when felons, not petty offenders, were put on trial. I work on petty crime, deliberately so, and by and large we do not get many words on single cases in the records with which I work, especially after 1600 when there are few long witness statements and hardly anything of length from the mouths of offenders. At London Bridewell before 1600, clerks wrote more about sex than anything else (and some long-winded investigations into bawdy houses and their work forces dragged on for months and many pages), but weeks and weeks went by without any sex in Bridewell or sessions records in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. As an aside, this book ends in 1660, and sex comes back in a big way at Bridewell towards 1700, a time, no one needs telling, when people with God in their hearts joined societies to stamp out vice and put their money where their holy mouths were, and that made a big difference to the picture at the turn of the eighteenth century. What we get instead are lines on "small trifles" like beggars begging, vagrants walking, thieves swooping, or nightwalkers walking in shadows. On the whole, we nearly always get just one line for one life: Thomas Tossler, vagrant, punished; John No Name, dumb, vagrant, sixpence, pass. Skimpy lines and lives: a note of name, home, job if lucky.

I challenge historians to fill in the gaps between the moment of birth and the moment of arrest using the threadbare sentences that we often get in records of petty crime. True enough, Bridewell's clerk thumbed through handy lists of names in courtbook margins where recidivists lurked, hoping to miss his eager eye. But he was looking for little pieces of criminal biographies through tracking return offenders rather than biographies, as Tim says; these turn up all the way through *Lost Londons*, including paragraphs on long-term stayers in the books — their stints as servants, their (often illegitimate) pregnancies, their rocky marriages, homes, husbands (all are women), stillbirths, letters of transportation, jobs, and the crimes for which they ended up standing before the Bridewell court. These are all the brass tacks of experience: biographical scraps, but with them I can at least recreate some sense of the experiences of what it was like to be a vagrant, beggar, inmate, street-seller, or pregnant and homeless in London

31 See <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>. See also Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *Tales From the Hanging Court* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006).

with nowhere left to turn. *Lost Londons* is about the people who walked up and down the maze of streets all day long, just hoping to make ends meet in a hard city, and the magistrates who talked about them all the time in words that were always meant to define, confine, and one day snuff out vagrant swarms. This book shows, in one policy and prosecution after another, how experience and the words pumped out by magistrates collided and locked horns with the poor multitude, and how wounds were licked on both sides. This is all very distant from Tim's judgement on my work with words, that it is a Victorian "factory of labels," in part, because this book never once tones down conflict. How could it? Consider again what it is about. The nub of the matter in nearly every page of *Lost Londons* is conflict between different or clashing needs, ideologies, or lifestyles: the vagrant cripple who whacked a warder with his crutch before tottering over into a muddy "kennel"; the vagrant who pulled down civic orders against vagrants from a public post; the City elite who saw the migrant "swarm" — their word — in terms of us or them, day-long trouble or a semblance of order, blooming civic pride or a city with little to look forward to except continuing decay with no sign of an end in sight.

This book, then, is about London — lost Londons and, yes, found Londons as well. Patricia Fumerton is right about that. London was mapped, policed, and quantified like never before — found in other words. Losing must always come first, however; there ought to be no question here of which one is the cart and which the horse. By "Lost Londons" I mean a deeply felt idea that London was going through the piercing hardships of a seemingly irreversible slump in prestige in the midst of a population boom and migrant influx that picked up pace from around 1550. Lost because London now needed to be re-imagined and the swift seeming change it experienced quickly assimilated in perceptions of civic identity and also in prose, plays, policies, or prosecutions. It is quite wide off the mark to say that I am not interested in elite mentalities. Quite the reverse: I could not even have begun to think about writing *Lost Londons* if elite mentalities had not been the starting point because the perceptions of London's leaders lie behind each piece of policy and each prosecution that appears in this book. The ties between perceptions of sagging civic fame and disorder, tellingly revealed, I believe, in thoughts and actions about crime and control, are the crux of this book. It explores law and order to learn about a city that, magistrates thought at the time, was getting bigger not better.

Lost Londons is not just about Bridewell, although anyone reading some of Tim's or Ian's comments could be forgiven for thinking so. Nor is it "overwhelmingly based" on Bridewell records, or from beginning to end "the story of Bridewell's archive." A quick flick through footnotes should put these claims to bed for good. Bridewell takes up 23 lines in a manuscript bibliography that stretches to nine pages and includes the records of 70 London parishes, the Court of Aldermen Repertories from 1533 to 1661 and Common Council Journals from 1507 to 1662 (88 volumes in all), four decades of Middlesex sessions records and three from Westminster, all of the hospital records from between 1550 and 1660 (Christ's, St. Bartholomew, St. Thomas, Bethlem — bound up with

Bridewell — and, of course, Bridewell), Privy Council Registers, State Papers, Star Chamber, guild records, ward records, church court records — I'll stop there. Lumping records together in a self-congratulatory pile is nowhere near enough, however. It is what we do with them that counts at the end of the day. Ian Archer is right: it is, needless to say, quite risky to rely on a single jurisdiction to draw comprehensive maps and patterns for a city as large and knotty as London. I do draw crime maps from Bridewell prosecutions (maps that hinge on the stated location of arrests) with a clear westward slant. Appropriately, I raise the issue that my caseload might possibly skew what we see in these maps; the two Farringdon wards seem to be stuffed with trouble of all stripes. Ian is being slightly uncharitable, however, as I do produce evidence from elsewhere — not all of it anecdotal — to show that London's trouble hotbeds were indeed in areas that straddled the west walls (City Sessions also give us this westward slant, by the way). The sprawling ward of Farringdon Without almost always topped trouble tables with more brothels than anywhere else in 1500, and again, three centuries later, more graffiti on its walls in 1750, more prostitutes who dipped into their clients' pockets, and the highest number of "irregular" healers in 1600; this same ward was also well known as a home for radical preaching in the run-up to the English Revolution.³² The western-most wards also had more police than anywhere else in the allocation of watchmen through the city by aldermen. It might even have been Bridewell's location just over the west walls that made City leaders ask the Crown for its out-of-use palace in the first place, so that they could gain a firm foothold in a notorious trouble spot that had vagrant-heavy Fleet Street stretching along its southern section.

Bridewell's patch was all of London and also built-up Middlesex (its jurisdiction is spelled out in my introduction, although Ian suggests that it is not). Time and again Bridewell was called London's house of correction (City orders nearly always instructed officers to lock up vagrants and other good-for-nothings in Bridewell). In 1615, a Bridge watchman said at Star Chamber that Bridewell

32 Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution & Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 75–76; J. M. Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London 1660–1750: Urban Crime and the Limits of Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 140; Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and Control in the Metropolis, 1730–1830* (Harlow: Longmans Ltd., 1999), pp. 64–65, 67, 68, 75; Lisa Forman Cody, "Every lane teems with instruction, and every alley is big with erudition": Graffiti in Eighteenth-Century London"; Deidre Palk, "Private Crime in Public and Private Places: Pickpockets and Shoplifters in London, 1780–1823"; and Heather Shore, "Mean Streets: Criminality, Immorality and the Street in Early Nineteenth-Century London," all in Hitchcock and Shore eds., *The Streets of London*, pp. 82–100, 135–150, and 151–164, especially pp. 87–88, 142, 153–154; Margaret Pelling, "Defensive Tactics: Networking by Female Medical Practitioners in Early Modern London" in Shepard and Withington eds., *Communities in Early Modern England*, pp. 38–53, especially p. 44; Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion, & the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London, 1637–1645* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997), p. 123; Paul S. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent, 1560–1662* (Stanford, CA: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 113, 144, 175, 233–237, 248ff.

was “the usual place to which constables do ordinarily commit idle and vagrant persons.” The number of Bridewell cases dwarfs those in other jurisdictions across the length and breadth of the city. I believe that my crime maps will stand the test of time, along with the argument that around 1625 the City spent more of its time on taking women to court and on crimes spawned by growth – vagrancy, begging, and the like. Even if some disappearing sex cases in Bridewell and sessions turn up in church courts (and Martin Ingram believes that there is little reason to think this)³³ or King’s Bench, the numbers would not be enough to make a real difference. Also on Ian’s wish list is a more upbeat case for policing London’s niggling necklace – its suburbs – by way of Westminster’s Court of Burgesses and St. Katherine’s Constables’ Accounts. Yet, along with many more words from Westminster and Middlesex quarter sessions and parish records, I use both of these sources in my book precisely to show the negative and positive points that I make about policing. More officers than we now think possible did follow the letter of the law and did good jobs on the beat, and scores of others were ne’er-do-wells or sleazy crooks who took bribes at the drop of a hat and who inhabit a section in chapter 9 of *Lost Londons* called “Policing – Ambivalences and Abuses.”

Lost Londons is far from being an “Archerian narrative pursuit of stability,” as impressive as that designation sounds. As a matter of fact, it is somewhat surprising to read this when I open my conclusion with these clear-cut words: “Make no mistake, London cannot be called stable on any day covered by this book” (p. 433). Others who have written on London before me (including Ian Archer) have turned this upside down because in their view stability was “fundamental,” “maintained,” “remarkable,” and even in “full flower” in London four centuries or so ago, with the result that the city “remained relatively peaceful and harmonious.” For example, in a book that never once attempts in any way to get to grips with the nitty-gritty of living from one day to the next, F. F. Foster calls his last chapter “the triumph of stability.”³⁴ The good ship stability ought now to be scuttled, however, as cities by their very nature cannot be stable, never mind one that was growing so fast and beyond the wildest imaginations of anyone alive at the time. London’s leaders did not pursue stability in quite the way that Archer thinks of that strategy or mind-set. They tried instead to keep on top of

33 Martin Ingram is currently working on the regulation of sex in early modern London, and he has guided me on seventeenth-century church courts in conversations and publications. See his “Law, Litigants, and the Construction of ‘Honour’: Slander Suits in Early Modern England” in Peter Coss, ed., *The Moral World of the Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 134–160, especially p. 154: “The probability is that London and its suburbs had expanded so rapidly that the church courts were by then [early seventeenth century] slackening their grip on moral regulation far more than in most other areas.”

34 F. F. Foster, *The Politics of Stability: A Portrait of the Rulers of Elizabethan London* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p. 4; Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, p. 385; Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability*, p. 9; Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 274.

what William Bullein in 1572 called “sare changes” and gradually (but reluctantly) came to accept that growth could not be reversed, and that is a significant difference. They came to accept that instability, like hard-up paupers, would never go away, however hard they tried to get rid of it. For each step forward there were almost always one or two more back.

It follows then that I do not “depict London as an essentially successful city.” Far from it: I depict London as a city and, therefore, ambivalent (*Ghamidh* is the Arabic word I use in my conclusion). Not many paragraphs pass by in *Lost Londons* without something springing up on the debit side of things — ham-fisted officers, others on the make or take, black-sheep citizens, streetwise thieves, down-on-luck migrants sleeping on streets in the middle of cold winter. Not a single alderman worth his salt would ever have called any of this “successful” — barely coping, he might have said in a hardnosed moment, as he turned his thoughts once more to crime waves and better policing. A big problem has always been that historians who believe that early modern London was first and foremost stable have just assumed, and never defined, what they mean by stability: it was, by implication at any rate, the simple absence of instability on some sort of social strain gauge. If any time was spent by contemporaries defining instability, it was poorly done: heavens opened, walls came tumbling down, hubbub, the racing rioting rabble took to London’s streets jumping on anyone who seemed suspiciously foreign.³⁵ This is Steve Rappaport on the problem of definition: for him, stability is at one pole as social mobility ticks along nicely, charity calms the cries of the poor, and office-holders team up in glowing shows of citizenship, while on the other pole the four horsemen of the apocalypse ride through Ludgate as riots and *sansculottes* bring the city to its knees. Two extremes, but there is no sensitivity here towards the words and mind-sets of people who were in power at the time (Patricia is spot on when she says that I “would applaud her emotional reaction”). City leaders back then never used counterpoints of stability/instability to think and feel their way into, and through, London’s mass and mess. Instability for them was not cataclysms that shake systems, as Rappaport would like it to be, but something much less dramatic, the humdrum urban cadences of vagrancy, theft, the single woman living alone without a man in sight, and the incessant pitter-patter of trouble after the curfew bell sounded for the last time. All these troubles were ever present and never absent. Marked out like this, the City got through one of the roughest and toughest patches in its long history by working round-the-clock to keep a fragile balance between the flux and hurly-burly of any city in the grip of great growth, on the one hand, and sharper efforts to police troubles and understand them through labelling, counting, surveillance, and knowledge, on the other. It was a balance that could tip either one way or the other in the twinkling of an eye in years when men in the Guildhall knew, in their waking pragmatic moments, that big and small troubles defined their city. On this point, I really

35 Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds*, pp. 18–19.

like Tim's words: "a lurching stumble through a landscape filled with fear and danger."

What of other concerns, particularly those raised by Ian Archer, who believes that I assume the dynamics of growth — take them for granted in other words — and that in *Lost Londons* growth is at all times rather one-sided: gloomy, grubby, shabby, smelly, noisy, seamy, not pleasing to the eye, and boding nothing but bad? Population figures spring to mind when Ian's thoughts turn to quantitative dimensions, and what we know so far is duly included in the book. I know of no trustworthy data that break down London's growth into a figure for this ward or parish and another for that one and so on, 26 and 109 times in all. This nuts-and-bolts stuff belongs to a deep and broad book, not to a small segment of a much larger book, and regrettably hardly anyone does early modern metropolitan demography these days, although I understand that work of this sort is being done in the "People in Place" research project based within the Centre for Metropolitan History (www.history.ac.uk/cmh/pip/index.html). One thing we do know for sure: more and more women took to the road for a London job after 1600, and London's sex ratio tipped towards them at a point in the seventeenth century about which we are still not quite sure. Given what my figures for prosecutions and especially vagrancy say about the scope and scale of female offending around 1625 and after, there seems to me to be little harm in speculating that, in the case of the sex ratio we see towards 1700, where women outnumbered men, the tide might have been starting to turn well before then. Bridewell's vagrant count is a beginning because perceptions spawned policies, and in the two decades after 1635 more than eight in ten recidivists at the busiest court in the land by far were women, some of whom went to the court many more times than the great majority of Bridewell governors. There are many sides to growth, not just two, but I provide, in *Lost Londons*, more than one. I argue that growth was never one thing or another, but that it was felt to be both good and bad, pretty and ugly, and beneficial and harmful at one and the same time. Early on in *Lost Londons* I write that "Contrary rhetorics depended on each other and despite outer oppositions existed in what [Paul] Slack calls 'productive counterpoint'" (p. 10). The summing-up section of chapter 2 — "Mapping Troubles" — is called "composite spaces" and describes a London in which lush, gleaming buildings strutted a stone's throw away from stinking slums, and ships stuffed with spices docked at quays where thieves milled around and dapper merchants rubbed their hands thinking about bumper takings. There is a very good reason why I write more about London's darker sides, something for which Ian, in particular, raps me on the knuckles, and that quite simply is to try and get a little bit of balance back. So many words have been written and trees pulped to describe London's lucky well-to-do, their guilds and their panelled rooms, their deaths, their polish, pirouettes, swanky clothes, mouth-watering food, shopping, stuffed shelves, flash far-eastern commodities, spanking new houses, trim landscapes, railed-in hedged-in spruce walks built by the hoi polloi they did not really like. So many of these accounts of the smallest segment of London's population remain within their swanky environs and proceed as if all

were well with the world outside. It wasn't, however, and what I write about in *Lost Londons* affects their perceptions and possessions as well. If I am too lopsided in *Lost Londons*, then I am the latest in a long line. Quite frankly, however, I believe that there is far more reason today to lean my way and make a serious case for a city that was never without troubles, both big and small, and in night as well as day.

Lastly, a few odds and ends need cleaning up. I am not, I hope, unthinking enough to accept blindly and blandly the authorities' side of things; once would be too many times for an offence as serious as this. The constable, mentioned by Tim Hitchcock, who duped Dorothy Morton in the Blue Boar along Gutter Lane one winter night in 1627 was indeed sharp-witted and not doing his sleazy best to get some sex on the side. Like others in their police work, he stepped into the role of a punter in order to trap "common whores" or "nightwalkers" and get them under lock and key; one appears at Bridewell 64 times for picking up nightwalkers and heading off to a nearby alehouse to complete his arrest — 64 times when he got away with it? In *Lost Londons*, most men on the beat are not said to be clumsy, sluggish, or couldn't-care-less mediocrities. Quite the reverse: many were capable, careful, and knowledgeable, and historians in the "long eighteenth century" mould should look back to see 1600 not as a backwoods, but as a time when magistrates thought long and hard about the quality and nature of police work in constructive ways. In a similar vein, I do not unquestionably trust the word of officers. I hope that I now know labelling in contemporary sources when I see it. With front-line knowledge, many cases were comfortably cleared up to the satisfaction of magistrates who held all the aces in their hands while sitting in their power huddles around tables where information was defined and weighed up, and where there was a natural leaning towards the words of officers. Also, I think that we should accept without reservation that, in the eyes of any bench of magistrates anywhere in the land, anyone coming into their court with a brand on his or her hand was without any shadow of a doubt a recidivist. It is my fault if this is fuzzy, but make no mistake: as Ian, perhaps chidingly, says, my "sympathies are overwhelmingly with the offenders." I'll end there. No more words.

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