REVIEWS 1005

Paul Griffiths. Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550–1660.

Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xviii + 544 pp. index. append. tbls. map. bibl. \$99. ISBN: 978–0–521–88524–9.

If the lowest classes of early modern London have previously been lost from sight, they have now been found. In a door stopper of a book Paul Griffiths richly documents the throngs of petty criminals that pullulated in London between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth centuries. Here we are able to feel the variety and vibrancy of the encounters of the street and the courtroom. No longer lost are the 109 different types of offender that the Governors of Bridewell prison labeled in their court books between 1559 and 1658. They listed, among others, the bawd, beggar, briber, cozener, cutpurse, drab, drunkard, filcher, gadder, hedgeharlot, lecher, lingerer, and lurker; the dangerous, the desperate, the dissolute, the horrible, the impudent, the incorrigible, the monstrous, the nasty, and the naughty; nightwalkers, nips, picklocks, shifters, shopcreeps, sluts, stragglers, and swaggerers. Above all the court books documented hordes of vagrants, who stunningly numbered over 24,000 people, at minimum, since the records cover just sixty-six of the 100 years concerned and because other authorities besides Bridewell also arrested and punished vagrants.

Griffiths's method is *pointilliste*, and from the dots he creates a big picture. The first three chapters focus on the huge changes that London experienced and so troubled its elites, leading to pessimism and nostalgia. The city felt besieged with immigrants, with street crimes from theft to prostitution, with pregnant single women, slum housing, and immorality of all kinds from sex to alcohol. As Griffiths states, "no part of the city was left untouched by unrest," including elite districts (93). The second part of the book covers the criminals and their relationships with the elites. The author shows criminality was a transaction between the two, with London's leaders delineating a bifurcated world of godly citizens and "beastly" crooks, of law-abiding freemen and the "lurking," the unfree, and the masterless (142–44). The 109 labels sought to impose stable identities on the unstable. The third section examines in six chapters the official reactions to London's crime problems: how Bridewell worked, including disciplinary procedures; the policing

of the streets, including the quantity and quality of personnel; and techniques that included archives, quantification, and neighborhood surveillance.

The historiographical significance of the book is considerable. Based on Bridewell's evidence, which Griffiths states was "England's busiest judicial court" (19), he rejects the arguments of Valerie Pearl, Steve Rappaport, and others that, despite the great changes, London was essentially stable. He shows that their main criterion for stability — the absence of rebellions leading to anarchy — was wrongheaded. Rather, he concludes, "London cannot be called stable on any day covered by this book" (433). The strongest argument for London's stability was the power of its policing, which is among the most novel of the author's findings. He documents how controversial and feared Bridewell initially was with its virtually unlimited powers; also, how well accepted it became, at least among the elites, as an effective part of the judiciary. He describes in chapter 7 how the prison was experienced by its inmates and how the regime sought — anticipating Foucault's penitentiary — to reform prisoners. Most notably, Griffiths writes several chapters that radically revise our opinions of Dogberry and Elbow. He shows the city with effective and numerous police forces: constables, warders, watchmen, beadles, deputy aldermen, and marshals. He finds that in 1643 the square mile of the city had 800 officers, which is more than it had in 2000-01 (304)!

No book is perfect, but this one has only minor blemishes. The mapping of petty crime should have taken into account population levels. The heavy concentration of crooks in Farringdon Without is possibly explained by its huge size rather than any essential criminality. Another issue concerns the increased numbers of females arrested after 1620, which is not well explained. Was the gender balance of London's labor force changing? Was there increased hardship among single females, which set them on the roads, as I suggested in 1985 (Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640 [56–57])? The book's pointillism is driven by the terseness of Bridewell's records, which contain few of the life histories that appeared in magistrates' examinations elsewhere. So the author piles anecdotal example upon example, which does not make for easy reading. In most other respects, however, this is a major contribution to our understanding of the subject.

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