Paul Griffiths. *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xvii + 544 pp. $99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-88524-9.

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Professor Griffiths focuses his attention on London during a critical time in its evolution into one of the world's great cities, looking not for signs of its stability (touted by previous historians) but for the inherent instabilities that make up any modern metropolis. As such, the themes that Griffiths develops in *Lost Londons* are universal. How do we define and redefine *our* city-- the one that we live in, and through? How do we process its changing faces for ourselves? To what do we look to reconcile its meanings to the realities of our lives? Griffiths looks to London's criminals and controllers to answer these questions for themselves, to follow their changing perceptions-- their "mental maps"--as they navigate and "re-imagine" their new London, mourning the loss of a more familiar city, celebrating the vibrancy of its changing face, and dealing with the often unpleasant characteristics of the new metropolis emerging before their eyes. Throughout *Lost Londons,* one can see Griffiths' open-eyed, but affectionate, response to this new city in the narrative that he weaves. In all, *Lost Londons* allows read-ers to understand the city's changes through the voices of some of its residents as they seek to define and manage a newfound London for themselves.

Griffiths' London is designed to be viewed from the perspectives of those who related to its streets and those charged to control and regulate that relationship as the city grew and changed. Their rhetoric dominates his study. Extensive use of records from wards, parishes, courts, Common Council, and especially the Bridewell and Bethlem Courtbooks take the reader into the sessions at which orphans, sailors, apprentices, vagrants, loiterers, fishwives, and prostitutes tell their stories. Their audiences, whether aldermen or magistrates, heard the consequences of rapid population growth and economic and unprecedented social change firsthand. It is in the language of those accounts that Griffiths sees his story of change. He wants to "get deep into the minds of people on both sides of the law" (p. 23). How these people described themselves and their conditions, how those stories were translated into the official

records, and the conclusions reached by the courts and clerks about what patterns these individual accounts represented--what London was *becoming*--adds a particular flavor to *Lost Londons.* The picture that emerges is of Londoners who are proud of what their city is becoming, but who clearly see its flaws and answer its challenges to their perceptions by expanding the options available to them to achieve different levels of control.

Griffiths divides his narrative into three sections. In part 1, he traces some of the changes that the city experienced in the period from 1550 to1660. The physical characteristics of the city and its streets, the cultural "environments" of London, are seen through contemporary reports and official records. This London inspires wonder, and fear. The parts that residents play are changing, and very few know quite what to do about it. In part 2, he turns to "worlds" and "words" to see how the landscape of activities defined as "crimes" changed in character and locale from decade to decade, and how the words used to describe crime and criminals transformed as Londoners absorbed the changes to their city. Part 3 follows the dialogue of change as expressed in new programs and policies, in expanding uses of institutions to plug the gaps in social control available to the city's magistrates, and in new acceptances of the structural maps of London's new realities. His choice to address his attention to crime and control as an example of how Londoners saw and felt their city necessarily reduces the scope of his study, of course, and a reader hoping for a more global examination of the nature of London's growth and change during this period will find his account wanting. Histories to fill in those gaps are few and far between for this period, although students can find rich and fulfilling narratives on later Londons that can rest comfortably beside Griffiths' narrative--being illuminated by his London, and at times illuminating the city better than he does.[1] Overall, however, as he puts

it, his goal is to examine both London's "mass and mess," (p. xiv) and in this he succeeds.

Griffiths allows the voices of criminal London to speak for themselves with deft skill. His use of hospital court books is inspired, and focuses attention even more closely on categories of social "deviance" that represent a cross-section of likely sources of disorder in London on a level not covered in most other studies. Griffiths does, however, rely so heavily on recitations of the voices of his subjects at times that the reader can easily lose his way. The words are wonderful--sprightly, ironic, and descriptive at turns--but what do they prove, really? How many adjectives assigned to vagrants at different times point to newly revised "mental maps" of London? How many different terms for activities related to prostitution do we need to know before drawing any definitive conclusions about how London's residents looked at their city? Those questions are answered tentatively at times, and in some senses the "words" threaten to overwhelm Griffiths' analysis of the "worlds" that his Londoners are creating for themselves.

Griffiths regains some control of his narrative with reports and proposals from hospital governors, London's magistrates, and aldermen that describe the patterns of behaviors that they see and prescribe responses to those behaviors. These sources provide Griffiths with some context for the perceptions that he thinks represent official London's opinions about their city and its changing face. Even then, however, Griffiths' choice to address his topics thematically, while understandable, does not allow the reader to follow any sort of chronological map of change (with all its fits and starts) as Londoners navigate their new city. A reader unfamiliar with the labyrinthine and often competitive relationships between and among city institutions during this period will have trouble following any close analysis of the arguments over jurisdictions and even over definitions of what and who is "criminal" during the period un-

der study. The reader is sent to the 1570s, and back to the 1550s, and forward to the 1620s with sometimes dizzying speed, which may not serve to illuminate what Griffiths implies are progressively more sophisticated analyses of the causes and consequences of London's changes.

Griffiths does not claim that his purpose is a comprehensive view of London's "criminal classes" in the late Tudor and early Stuart eras. But a reader may be forgiven for wondering how the great social and political changes of the age may have influenced his subjects' pessimisms and optimisms about their smaller world as we view this microcosm of London life. Missing from *Lost Londons* is England. As the capital, London and its neighboring boroughs were not immune to the effects of changing religious and political realities during this period. Although Griffiths does discuss the relationship between city and Crown, he does not acknowledge the closer influences that changing national policies and priorities probably had on the perceptions of his Londoners toward their city. During the Interregnum, especially, as Puritan sensibilities at Westminster overrode older perceptions of order, one has to assume that new categories of "wrong" were transferred to magistrates and criminals alike. In other words, do the political currents between Crown and Parliament influence London's changing criminal face? One has to answer "yes"--and wonder where this factors into Griffiths' subjects' thinking about their city.

In all, Paul Griffiths' *Lost Londons* is certainly a welcome addition to the literature on urban growth, on how changing definitions of crime and criminality may reflect larger trends in understanding that growth, and, especially, on the transformation of London into a modern multifaceted metropolis. Its questions are universal, but are answered only incompletely. That is to the good, however, when one considers that any city remains mysterious and enigmatic--even to those who call it home. Griffiths may have intended for us to see London between 1550 and 1660 from the minds of her inhabitants, and he succeeds best at reminding us that those views are of many Londons, both lost and found.

Note

[1]. J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); Douglas Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon, and London: Allen Lane, 1975); Peter King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Stanley H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Martin J. Wiener, *Reconstructing the Criminal: Culture, Law and Policy in England, 1830-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) are but some of the monographs that shed light on this transformative period.

Griffiths' London

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