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Managing the Metropolis: London's Social Problems and their Control, *c*.1660–1830

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AFTER ITS SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY GROWTH SURGE, greater London—the 'metropolis' —not merely outstripped but dwarfed other towns both in England, and in the British Isles and Empire more generally. Despite early seventeenth-century talk about the need to bring the huge and still growing metropolitan region under a more unified system of governance, this was not to be achieved until the nineteenth century, when a series of new 'metropolitan' authorities were brought into being, starting with the Metropolitan Turnpike Commissioners of 1827. Until the creation of these new overarching authorities, responsibility for governing the urban region remained divided among several benches of magistrates, and more than a hundred parishes—to which already complicated arrangements were added in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a multiplicity of statutory authorities, whose jurisdictions might, but did not necessarily, coincide with parish boundaries.

This chapter explores the implications of these two features of the metropolitan scene—its sprawling urbanity, on the one hand; the fragmentation of its governmental institutions, on the other—for local experience of, and responses to, social problems, between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Eighteenth-century experience lies at the heart of the paper, but this is set within a longer chronological perspective. The social problems which engaged the attention of English authorities throughout this period were crime, petty delinquency and 'vice' more generally, vagrancy, poverty, and problems associated with the arrest and imprisonment of debtors. Between the disappearance of the plague in the late seventeenth century and the growth of attempts to marshal responses to 'fever' epidemics in the early nineteenth century, disease control was not a major issue. The eighteenth century did however see an efflorescence of voluntary bodies intended to aid the sick poor. The schooling of the poor similarly provided a focus for voluntary effort, most notably in the century's opening and closing decades.

I

The extraordinary concentration of population in the London metropolitan region helped to ensure that its local authorities often found themselves dealing with a volume of business unequalled elsewhere. This is readily illustrated from the later decades of the eighteenth century, when comparative statistics were increasingly frequently compiled and printed.

The sheriffs of London and Middlesex were unique among local government officers in the extent of their jurisdiction over the metropolitan region. They were responsible for the empanelling of juries to try cases in quarter sessions and sessions of oyer and terminer and gaol delivery in both the City of London and Middlesex; also for the safekeeping in Newgate of (among others) prisoners awaiting trial at the Old Bailey; also for arranging the executions of those sentenced to death. Old Bailey sessions were held uniquely frequently—eight times a year, in contrast to the twice-yearly assizes of most other counties. Even so, the number of those appearing on serious criminal charges was such that Newgate could not easily hold them all. The practice developed of keeping Middlesex prisoners in the New Prison Clerkenwell until a few days before the Old Bailey sessions began. Records kept from 1770 reveal how numbers of prisoners 'for law' in Newgate leapt when the Middlesex contingent arrived: in 1770, totals of a few dozen City prisoners climbed to totals of 80–100 when the Middlesex contingent joined them.[1] John Howard, on his travels around English prisons in the 1770s and 1780s, found the totals of criminal prisoners in the New Prison and Newgate each higher than in any provincial county gaol.[2]

High totals of prisoners awaiting trial translated in due course into high numbers executed and transported. In the early 1770s—before the American War temporarily interrupted transportation—London and Middlesex were between them generating about 400 prisoners for transportation each year. No assize circuit—that is, no group of half a dozen or more counties and towns—generated even a third as many. Bristol was then producing an average of 17 transportees a year; Norwich, 2. At the same time executions at Tyburn were running at the rate of between 20 and 50 a year; in other assize circuits, execution totals were in single figures: the average county was probably executing only one felon a year.[3]

The sheriffs also had to process and execute most (though not all) warrants for the arrest of debtors in London and Middlesex. A parliamentary inquiry of 1792 revealed that they were then processing some 9,500 bailable writs a year in Middlesex, another

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[1] PRO, PCOM 2/166.

[2] John Howard, *The state of the prisons in England and Wales, with an account of some foreign prisons* (Warrington, 2nd edn, 1784), pp. 280–6.

[3] John Howard, *The state of the prisons in England and Wales, with an account of some foreign prisons* (Warrington, 1777), pp. 480–6.

3,000 or so in the City, some half to three quarters of these resulting in arrests.[4] Most debtors arrested were detained at first in 'spunging houses', but unless they succeeded in reaching agreement with their creditors they were likely to end up in one of the numerous metropolitan debtors' prisons: probably Newgate, the Fleet or the King's Bench prison. These last two prisons also received debtors who transferred from prisons elsewhere in the country, whether for more convenient access to the courts or their creditors, or to enjoy the superior amenities of these high-court prisons. Howard in 1779 found 473 prisoners in the King's Bench prison, 177 in the Fleet; the next largest total in any one prison was 88, in one of the London local prisons, the Marshalsea.[5]

Responsibility for dealing with petty delinquents and vagrants was divided among more diverse bodies. Even so, numbers processed by particular authorities or institutions were large. Howard, in 1779 again, found 171 prisoners in Clerkenwell bridewell, 74 in the Westminster bridewell at Tothill Fields, and 44 in the Surrey bridewell in St George's Fields, though only 13 in the City Bridewell (the next largest figure was 27, in bridewells in Chelmsford and Exeter).[6] The Middlesex clerk of the peace reported to parliament in the mid-1770s that Middlesex and Westminster (*excluding* the City of London) spent some £150 a year apprehending vagrants. Until a recent cost-cutting exercise had dramatically reduced bills, they had spent about £1,000 a year on vagrant removal. Only certain Midland counties—disadvantaged by their 'cross-roads' position — outstripped these totals.[7]

Responsibility for poor relief was divided among 108 parishes in the City of London and 8 in the City of Westminster, with some 50 others in the metropolitan fringe. The populousness of some of these parishes helped to ensure that their burdens were extraordinary. Returns to parliament in 1777 revealed that almost half the hundred-plus parishes in England then raising more than £1,000 a year in poor rates lay within the metropolis. St Martin in the Fields, and St George's Hanover Square—which in 1775–6 had raised £12,035 and £10,022 respectively—topped the national roster (outside the metropolis, the highest total for a single parish was Liverpool's £3,333). Only certain provincial urban and rural district boards of guardians rivalled the totals raised by these metropolitan parishes.[8]

It is possible to exaggerate both the anonymity of the populous metropolitan district and the intimacy of the small town or rural district. Sir John Fielding, long-serving Westminster magistrate—despite being blind even at the time of his appointment—impressed seekers after justice by his ability to direct the speedy tracking down of suspects and witnesses.[9] The City within the walls was divided into relatively small

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[4] *CJ*, vol. xlvii, p. 645.

[5] Howard, *State of the prisons* (1784), pp. 280–6.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Reports from committees of the House of Commons*, vol. ix, pp. 64–78.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] A. Babington, *A house in Bow Street* (2nd edn, London, 1997), p. 102.

wards and parishes, some with quite small numbers of residents. The 1801 census revealed that whereas the Westminster parish of St George's Hanover Square then had some 75,000 inhabitants, City parishes 'within the walls' averaged only 750. Jonas Hanway may have been over-optimistic when he argued in the 1780s that, given the multiplicity of parishes in the metropolis, 'It is more than possible to know every inhabitant, and how he lived'; still, in the smaller parishes this was not unrealistic.[10] Conversely, local authorities in provincial towns and straggling rural parishes would not always have known all local residents, especially poor residents, let alone the lodging or transient population. None the less, in some parts of the metropolis the forces of authority were very thinly stretched; the general ambience, exceptionally anonymous. Philanthropists interviewing beggars on the streets of London in the 1790s to find out why they were not availing themselves of other forms of support on offer found that some, who should have been entitled to relief, simply did not know how to contact parish officers to make their needs known: the inhuman scale of the urban environment had defeated them.[11]

It was not only in scale that the metropolis was distinctive, however. A closer study of the available statistics, in conjunction with population figures, suggests that—at least, judging from the showing they made in official records—some problems were relatively more prevalent in the metropolis than elsewhere, others less prevalent. Serious crime, for example, would appear to have been over-represented: whereas only some ten per cent of the nation's population lived in the metropolitan region, between 1769 and 1776 some forty per cent of all transportees derived from there; the proportion of all executions taking place in the metropolis may have been even greater. The metropolis certainly had a disproportionate share of prisoners for debt: its prisons characteristically contained more than a half of the national total of imprisoned debtors.

Given these gloomy statistics, it is not surprising that the metropolis should have had a quite exceptional number of prisons: Defoe, in his 1724–6 *Tour of the Whole Island of Great Britain* counted 22 'public gaols' and a multitude of 'tolerated prisons', including 119 spunging houses, 'perhaps as many as in all the capital cities of Europe put together . . . notwithstanding we are a nation of liberty'.[12] By contrast, poor-relief spending per capita, though probably higher than the national average, was not high by the standards of the high-spending south-east. (Middlesex averaged about 6s. per capita per annum in the late 1770s, compared with the 7s. 6d. average of six other south-eastern counties.) Such statistical exercises cannot of course capture all that was distinctive about the metropolitan experience. They do however suggest some lines of enquiry.

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[10] Cited in Elaine Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies: the night watch and police reform in metropolitan London, 1720–1830* (London, 1998), p. 73.

[11] *Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor* (London, 6 vols, 1798–1814), vol. I, pp. 122–8.

[12] D. Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, ed. P. Rogers (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1976), p. 321.

In order to explain these patterns we need to take into account, on the one hand, the urban setting (the metropolis often differed from other towns less than it differed from rural-industrial or agricultural districts) and, on the other hand, certain distinctive characteristics of metropolitan governmental institutions.

Let us consider first the possible reasons for the over-representation of serious crime in the metropolis, meaning chiefly crimes against property with an element of menace to the person, such as housebreaking and robbery. (Petty larceny, strikingly, rarely figured in metropolitan courts: petty criminals must have been diverted into other channels.)[13] The prevalence of less trivial forms of property crime may well be explicable in part in terms of the tempting opportunities for crime that the metropolis provided. Here was an exceptional concentration of well-stocked élite and middle-class households, warehouses, shops and stalls, and of crowds milling around the streets. Day-time thieves might hope to melt away amidst the traffic on the streets, their getaway perhaps aided by accomplices posing as unconnected passers-by. Roads to and from London—many of which passed through areas of heath or common—carried a steady stream of journeyers to and fro; within the metropolis, there were roads linking the urban core with satellite settlements, and green spaces on which travellers were especially vulnerable at night. A mobile servant population contained its share of light-fingered opportunists; servants might also form a weak link in a household's defences. There were moreover many none-too-scrupulous dealers in second-hand goods into whose hands stolen property might be passed.[14]

A number of pieces of criminal legislation seem to have had their roots in metropolitan concerns about crimes that were particularly rife in this prosperous urban setting: laws against theft from shops, thefts by servants, and against street robbery, for example.[15] Concerns about safeguarding person and property in this relatively anonymous, highly mobile environment also prompted special rewards, over and above ordinary statutory rewards, for those apprehending and prosecuting metropolitan

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[13] This absence of cases of petty larceny is noted in John Beattie's important forthcoming study, *Policing and punishment in London*, *1660–1750: urban crime and the limits of terror* (Oxford, forthcoming), ch. 1. I am grateful to John Beattie for allowing me to cite this work.

[14] Vivid accounts of the milieu of metropolitan crime are supplied in the *Whole proceedings on the king's commission for the peace, oyer and terminer and gaol delivery for the City of London, and also the gaol delivery for the County of Middlesex; held at Justice Hall in the Old Bailey* (often referred to as the 'Old Bailey Sessions Papers'—published eight times a year throughout the eighteenth century). For attempts to put faces on London criminals, see P. Linebaugh, *The London hanged: crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (London, 1991); P. King, 'Female offenders, work and lifecycle change in late eighteenth-century London', *Continuity and Change*, 9 (1996), 61–90.

[15] This case is made in J.M. Beattie, 'London crime and the making of the "bloody code", 1689–1718' in L. Davison *et al.*, eds, *Stilling the grumbling hive: the response to social and economic problems in England, 1689–1750* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 49–76, and further developed in Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, chs. 7–9. See also PRO, SP36 157/93 (for proposals from Middlesex justices in 1739); Sir L. Radzinowicz, *History of English criminal law and its administration since 1750* (5 vols, London, 1948–86), vol. III, pp. 68–79; R. Connors, 'The grand inquest of the nation: parliamentary committees and social policy in mid-eighteenth-century England' *Parliamentary History*, 14 (1995), 301–7; and S. Devereaux, 'Convicts and the state: the administration of criminal justice in the eighteenth century during the reign of George III' (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 1997), pp. 203–5.

street robbers; they also brought tougher stop-and-search legislation and proposals for the registration of servants.[16]

If much about the metropolitan environment favoured the criminal, none the less the region was also well-stocked with courts and magistrates; many of its districts were relatively intensely policed and, in the course of the eighteenth century, considerable effort was invested in raising the standard of both magistrates and watch forces. High totals of prosecutions and convictions probably also in some part reflect the efficiency of the metropolitan criminal-justice apparatus.

Many victims of crime throughout early modern England are thought to have been deterred from prosecuting, by the time and trouble involved in finding a magistrate, identifying a likely suspect, and then turning up at quarter sessions or assizes to give evidence. In towns, magistrates were generally ready to hand; attending at court was also less likely to involve a long journey. Accordingly, it seems that prosecution levels often ran higher in towns.[17]

The high levels of crime inevitably associated with the concentration of population around London encouraged the early development of semi-professional or professional police agencies, whose effect was presumably to facilitate the apprehension and prosecution of suspects. As early as the sixteenth century, the staff of London prisons moonlighted in tracking down criminals and recovering stolen goods.[18] In the mid-eighteenth century, it is clear that one recourse for the metropolitan victim was to go along to a local prison and ask the gaoler about prisoners recently brought in, who might be lined up for an identity parade. If this failed, staff might try to glean leads from prisoners, or, drawing on their own experience, see if they could track the perpetrator down.[19] The efforts of prison staff were supplemented by those of other freelance 'thieftakers'. From the mid-eighteenth century, the Fielding brothers, as Westminster magistrates, sought to bring thieftaking under magisterial control; from 1792, this arrangement was institutionalised with the establishment of seven metropolitan police offices, each with their own staff of constables.[20] In provincial towns, such resources were much

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[16] On rewards in general, see Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. II, chs. 2–5; Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 5; R. Paley, 'Thieftakers in London in the age of the McDaniel gang *c.*1745–54', in D. Hay and F. Snyder, eds, *Policing and prosecution in Britain, 1750–1850* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 316–24; D. George, 'The early history of registry offices', *Economic History*, 1 (1929), 579–90. Sir John Fielding, *Extracts from such of the penal laws as relate particularly to the peace and good order of the metropolis...* (new edn, London, 1762) was designed to increase public awareness of legislation especially useful in a metropolitan context.

[17] Cf. P. King, *Crime, justice and discretion in England, 1740–1820* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 143–4.

[18] L. Hutton, *The black dog of Newgate* [orig. pub. 1597, reprinted in A.V. Judges, *The Elizabethan underworld* (London, 1965)], pp. 265–91.

[19] Numerous instances of these practices are recorded in the Old Bailey sessions papers (for which see n. 14 above), e.g. for identity parades, see 11–13 Oct 1738; 13–19 Sep 1775; for prison staff gleaning leads from prisoners, and chasing down perpetrators, see 22–27 Feb 1749; 16–20 Jan 1766; 11–16 Jan 1775.

[20] Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 5; Paley, 'Thieftakers'. Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. III, pp. 54–8, 123–37—an account chiefly dependent on printed sources—charts the establishment of police offices. See also Henry Goddard, *Memoirs of a Bow-Street runner* (London, 1956).

more rarely available; only Manchester institutionalised such provision before 1800.[21]

These quasi-detective forces, moreover, were superimposed on relatively—and increasingly—intense and professional 'watching' arrangements. Under the medieval Statute of Winchester, all towns were supposed to be 'watched' at night by teams of citizens. The practice of substituting for such citizens or their deputies salaried bodies of watchmen spread through the metropolis during the eighteenth century. By the end of the century, only a handful of parishes still relied on the traditional civic watch. Increasingly watchmen were vetted for age and health, equipped with uniforms, and directed to operate according to a schedule. The City of London, regarded as the best policed part of the metropolis, by the 1770s aimed to field a nightly watch of over 700 men.[22] Arrangements such as these were imitated in many of the larger provincial towns in the later eighteenth century. Unique to the metropolis, by contrast, was the development—again in fits and starts from mid-century—of a system of central-government-subsidised foot and horse 'patroles', to supplement neighbourhood watch forces.[23] Against this background, it seems more likely than not that metropolitan magisterial and police provision did contribute to high levels of prosecutions, convictions and inflictions of serious punishment.

In the case of imprisonment for debt, it is incontestable that the concentration of prisoners for debt in the metropolis owed much to the special characteristics of the institutions operating there. Of course, given the intensity of commercial activity in the metropolis, one might have expected many suits for debt to originate there: Julian Hoppit reports that in the early eighteenth century the metropolis provided over half of all the nation's bankrupts; by the end of the century, about a third (though he suggests that ease of access to the court of chancery probably helped to ensure the over-representation of the metropolis in these totals).[24]

Two features of the metropolitan institutional scene helped to expand the number of prisoners for debt. One was the multiplicity of courts handling local small-debt suits, and competing for creditors' business by offering them the chance to imprison their debtors with minimal formalities. These included the City courts—the mayor's court and the sheriffs' courts—and the county court for Middlesex; also the King's Palace court (whose debtors were consigned to the Marshalsea prison); the court of the Dean

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[21] G. Fisher, 'The birth of the prison retold', *Yale Law Journal*, 104 (1995), 1256–7.

[22] Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. II, ch. 7, provides an overview of metropolitan policing; D. Rumbelow, *I spy blue: the police and crime in the City of London from Elizabeth I to Victoria* (London, 1971) is an anecdotal overview of City police. Recent and in some respects revisionist accounts include R. Paley, '"An imperfect, inadequate and wretched system": policing the metropolis before Peel', *Criminal Justice History*, 10 (1989), 95–130; Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 22–7, 62–8, 77–82, 94–5; Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, chs. 3–5; S. Brown, 'Politics, commerce and social policy in the City of London, 1782–1802' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), ch. 6, 'The maintenance of order'.

[23] Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. III, pp. 54–62, 135–7.

[24] J. Hoppit, *Risk and failure in English business, 1700–1800* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 63.

and Chapter of Westminster (whose debtors were consigned to the Westminster Gate-house), the court serving the manors of Stepney and Hackney (whose prisoners were sent to Whitechapel prison), and the court of the bishop of Winchester operating in the Clink liberty in Southwark (whose prisoners were consigned to 'the Clink'). To these were added, from 1749, a series of statutory courts of conscience, serving Southwark, Westminster and Tower Hamlets, all founded within a few years in the mid-eighteenth century.

Figures for debtors applying for release from metropolitan prisons under periodic amnesties suggest that many creditors readily availed themselves of the chance to arrest, when it was on offer. When, from 1726, new rules limited access to these facilities, however (that is, when Parliament in the Vexatious Arrests Act raised the threshold sum that debtors had to owe before creditors could have them imprisoned for the asking), prisoner totals fell sharply. Thus, whereas in 1711–12, over 3000 debtors applied for release from metropolitan local prisons, predominantly from the Clink, Whitechapel and the Marshalsea, out of a national total of some 6,500; in 1774, when the national total had fallen to a little over 2,000, the metropolitan local total had fallen much further, to a mere 300. The Clink had gone out of business, and Whitechapel was a mere shadow of its former self.[25]

A second feature of the metropolitan scene tending to inflate the number of prisoners for debt was the presence in Westminster of the high courts, notably king's bench, common pleas and exchequer. All of these courts offered generous coercive facilities to creditors throughout the kingdom—and any debtor imprisoned on a warrant issuing out of one of these courts might, if he (or more rarely she) chose, transfer to the relatively spacious and comfortable high-court prisons, the Fleet prison in the City of London, or the King's Bench prison in Southwark. By the late eighteenth century, a high proportion of all prisoners for debt in the country were concentrated in these two prisons alone. In 1774, prisoners in these two prisons accounted for over forty per cent of all release applications. In 1779, John Howard found about one-third of all prisoners for debt in these two prisons.[26]

During the heyday of the practice of imprisonment for debt—from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century—imprisoned debtors provoked an ambivalent

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[25] Figures for 1711–12 and 1774 are my calculations, based on listings in the *London Gazette*. On imprisonment for debt generally, see P. Haagen, 'Eighteenth-century English society and the debt law' in S. Cohen and A. Scull, eds, *Social control and the state: historical and comparative essays* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 222–47. The Vexatious Arrests Act was 12 Geo. I c. 29 . Smaller national totals partly reflect the fact that insolvency acts had become more frequent, but the disproportionate withering of smaller prisons more certainly reflects a real change in the incidence of imprisonment. For the Clink and its decline, E.J. Burford, *In the Clink* (London, 1977). For Whitechapel, see Howard, *State of the prisons* (1784), pp. 237–8.

[26] J. Innes, 'The King's Bench prison in the later eighteenth century: law, authority and order in a London debtors' prison' in J. Brewer and J. Styles, eds, *An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980), esp. pp. 256–61 and n. 28. My calculations are from lists in the *London Gazette*. See also Howard, *State of the prisons* (1784), pp. 280–6.

response. On the one hand, they were often perceived as victims: the victims of callous creditors, who did the country no service by shutting away people who might have been more usefully employed if allowed to remain at liberty. Conversely, however, it was also commonly supposed that many debtors were themselves unscrupulous and unsavoury characters — people who, whether by temperament or as a result of misfortune, had little regard either for the law or for conventional morality.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Parliament recurrently expressed concern about disorderliness and lawlessness associated with the high-court prisons. Part of the problem was that the prisons were by no means sealed off from the world. Prisoners who could provide sureties for their safe return were allowed to go out of prison on day passes; some were allowed on the same basis to settle in the neighbourhood of the prison, in areas described as falling within 'the Rules' of the prisons. These neighbourhoods developed something of the character of sanctuaries: inasmuch as many of their residents were already prisoners, they enjoyed a degree of legal immunity; they might moreover combine to mistreat unwelcome visitors—such as bailiffs, or other officers of the law. Late seventeenth-century parliamentary committees characterised these neighbourhoods as 'pretended privileged places'.[27] Nor were they the only such.

Unofficial sanctuaries also developed in certain 'liberties', whose peculiar legal status complicated law enforcement. The inadequacies of magisterial control in Southwark—notionally subject to both the City Corporation and Surrey magistrates, but in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries not being effectively governed by either—made possible the flourishing there of the sanctuary termed 'the Mint'.[28] A campaign to break up the sanctuaries, initiated in the 1690s, reached its conclusion under Walpole in the 1720s. In 1722, in the 'Mint Act', Parliament offered terms to remaining 'sheleterers'. When some Minters retreated to Wapping, and set up a 'New Mint' there, the sheriffs co-ordinated an assault, and some of those who fought back were tried under the Black Act.[29] Although the Rules of the high-court prisons long retained an unsavoury reputation, the authorities seem to have felt that these strong-arm efforts—coupled, presumably, with the effects of the 1726 Vexatious Arrests Act in reducing the threat and practice of imprisonment—had reduced the problem to a tolerable level.

As a final case-study in metropolitan distinctiveness, let us consider levels of poor-relief spending. As noted above, these appear to have been average or somewhat above average by national standards—but by no means high by the standards of the high-spending south-east. Once again, this pattern probably needs to be explained in terms

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[27] *CJ*, vol. XI, pp. 641–80.

[28] D. Johnson, *Southwark and the City* (London, 1969), esp. pp. 333–6.

[29] James R. Hertzler, 'The abuse and outlawing of sanctuary for debt in seventeenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, 14 (1971), 467–77; R.L. Brown, 'The Minters of Wapping: the history of a debtors' sanctuary in eighteenth-century East London', *East London Papers*, 14 (1972), 77–86.

of a combination of socio-economic and institutional circumstances. At least in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the age-structure of the metropolis may have been propitious to low poor-relief spending: it attracted many young migrants; children appear to have been relatively under-represented; and the metropolitan environment offered many means of making a living—both legal and illegal (common illegal means included begging, pilfering and prostitution).

The English statutory poor-relief system also certainly helped to keep metropolitan costs low, however—on the one hand, through its impact on the country at large and, on the other, through its impact on relief practice in the metropolis itself. Elsewhere in Europe, the deficiencies of rural provision for the poor meant that the poor tended to drift towards cities—especially in years of dearth or other crisis. Though London probably exercised some such pull, especially in crisis years (it is notable that complaints about vagrancy in the metropolis increased at such times), yet the existence of a nationwide relief system meant that this effect was relatively muted.[30]

When poor people did migrate to the metropolis and fell on hard times, the rules of the English relief system furthermore ensured that they were unlikely to receive generous treatment. Only those who had acquired a 'settlement' in their parish of residence were entitled to call upon its resources. It is true that many metropolitan parishes developed the practice of paying small amounts of temporary or casual relief to settled and non-settled alike. It was easier to do this than to embark on a course of investigation, followed perhaps by correspondence and litigation, in the face of every seeker after help; many of the non-settled, moreover, must have been potentially socially-useful servants, craftsmen or labourers, if temporarily fallen on hard times: it would have made little sense to try to deport them all.[31] Not having a right to relief, the non-settled could however be fobbed off with much less than parishioners might have been allowed— knowing that if they pressed for more, the parish was entitled to seek their removal. In 1800, it was stated in debate in the House of Commons that in a parish approximately four miles (7 km) from 'town', in the previous ten years, the expense of relieving 555 settled poor had been £3,034; of relieving 571 non-settled poor, a mere £171 3s. 4d. The MP advancing these figures suggested that they demonstrated that insecurity was a spur to industry.[32]

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[30] J.D. Post, *Food shortage, climate variability and epidemic disease in pre-industrial Europe: the mortality peak in the early 1740s* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), pp. 192–3.

[31] This has been noted by various historians (e.g. D. George, *London life in the eighteenth century* (Penguin edn, 1966), p. 154) but fully explored by none. See, however, A. Froshaug, 'Poor law administration in selected London parishes, 1750–1850' (MA thesis, University of Nottingham, 1969), pp. 68–9, 137, 259. Some non-settled poor would have got relief from their own parishes: see examples in T. Sokoll, 'Old age in poverty: the record of Essex pauper letters, 1780–1834' in T. Hitchcock *et al.*, eds, *Chronicling poverty: the voices and strategies of the poor, 1640–1840* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 127–54.

[32] *Parliamentary Register* (17 vols, London, 1781–1804), vol. XI, pp. 179–80, 3 April 1800. J.S. Taylor, *Poverty, migration and settlement in the industrial revolution: sojourners' narratives* (Palo Alto, California, 1989), *passim* but esp. ch. 5, provides miscellaneous further insights into the experiences of London immigrants at the hands of poor-law authorities.

For those poor people who did have settlements, two deterrents to claiming relief remained. Firstly, as already noted, especially in the larger parishes, poor people were not always clear about how to go about applying for relief—and moreover, might not be confident of their own 'settled' status, and might fear the possible consequences of calling attention to themselves.[33] Secondly, metropolitan parishes were—by national standards—unusually inclined to send the poor they did relieve to workhouses. By the end of the eighteenth century, every metropolitan parish had a workhouse (by no means the case nationally), and the proportion of those relieved in workhouses, and the proportion of spending devoted to indoor relief, were both considerably higher than average.[34] Indoor relief may have suited some of the London poor: Tim Hitchcock argues that it had special attractions for female servants out of work, or pregnant out of wedlock. But those who wanted more than casual relief, but who did not want to be confined to a workhouse either, may have thought it best to bypass the parish relief system altogether.[35]

Many of the features of the metropolitan scene that we have suggested acted to depress poor-relief spending acted equally in other towns. Indeed, in so far as we can judge on the basis of always somewhat speculative urban population estimates, per capita poor-relief spending in towns was commonly lower than in surrounding counties.[36]

II

Ian Archer suggests that in 1700 only a quarter of the metropolitan population lived within the City. By 1837, Municipal Reform Commissioners reporting on the City of London estimated that that proportion had shrunk to one-ninth. From the 1820s, a series of new 'metropolitan' authorities were established to co-ordinate aspects of the

[33] See n. 11 above.

[34] For these patterns, see PP 1803–4, XIII, pp. 717–28, Appendix on the Metropolis. City parishes did not maintain workhouses as such, but did send some of their poor to contractors who maintained houses elsewhere. I am unable to discuss here the marked variations in practice across the metropolis clearly indicated by these returns.

[35] T.V. Hitchcock, 'The English workhouse: a study in institutional poor relief in selected counties, 1695–1750' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), ch. 7, and Hitchcock, '"Unlawfully begotten on her body": illegitimacy and the parish poor in St Luke's Chelsea' in Hitchcock *et al.*, eds, *Chronicling poverty*, pp. 70–86.

[36] My calculations, based on poor-law returns in *Reports from committees*, vol. IX, pp. 64–78, and population figures in C.M. Law, 'Local censuses in the eighteenth century', *Population Studies*, 23 (1969), 87–100. Constraints of space prevent me from continuing to discuss here such other metropolitan social problems as petty crime and 'vice' generally, prostitution and vagrancy. For these see R.B. Shoemaker, *Prosecution and punishment: petty crime and the law in London and rural Middlesex, c.1660–1725* (Cambridge, 1991) ; F. Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and police in London, *c*.1660–1760' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1995); Tony Henderson, *Disorderly women in eighteenth-century London: prostitution and control in the metropolis, 1730–1830* (London, 1999); N. Rogers, 'Policing the poor in eighteenth-century London: the vagrancy laws and their administration', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 24 (1991), 127–47; M.J.D. Roberts, 'Public and private in early nineteenth-century London: the Vagrant Act of 1822 and its enforcement', *Social History*, 13 (1988), 273–94.

government of the urban sprawl: the commissioners of metropolitan turnpikes (1827); the metropolitan police commission (1829); the metropolitan sewers commission (1847); the metropolitan board of works (1855), and the metropolitan common poor fund and asylums board (1861). From the 1870s, the term 'London' was given expanded meaning, and we find the London school board (1870) and finally—subsuming some but by no means all of these other bodies—the London County Council (1888).[37] Many of these projects had had their proponents for years, often decades, before they came to fruition. Battling to establish their case, proponents of metropolitan unification repeatedly surveyed, illustrated and denigrated the fragmentation of metropolitan government. Their vision has helped to shape the views of subsequent historians.

Clearly there was enough support for the view that unification was better than fragmentation for these projects ultimately to be realised. Still, we should be wary of simply endorsing their views. Proponents of unification believed that they had better alternatives to offer. Yet theorists of metropolitan government argue that the task of designing adequate structures for large urban regions is in principle hard to discharge effectively. There is a case for keeping some governmental and administrative systems neighbourhood-orientated: not too vast in scale, nor distant from the populations they serve. This might seem to indicate a two-tier ideal: with an overarching metropolitan body co-ordinating neighbourhood-orientated subdivisions.

That notion merely prompts another question, however: should there be one, multi-functional metropolitan co-ordinating body? Or a multitude of functionally specific bodies, perhaps with differing jurisdictions, depending on the functions they perform? If the latter, new co-ordination issues arise. The City of London in its day was a multi-functional overarching body—often held up as a model by proponents of unification. To the 1812 parliamentary select committee on metropolitan watch forces it represented 'an example of that dependence of parts on each other, without which no well constructed and efficient system of Police can ever be expected.'[38] What was in practice brought into being in the course of the nineteenth century, however, was not an expanded version of the multi-functional City Corporation, but an array of functionally specific bodies. Even the London County Council had a limited brief: it controlled neither policing nor the relief and regulation of the poor—nor, initially, education.

London metropolitan government of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not, of course, represent anyone's considered views as to how the metropolis was best governed. It might be characterised rather as a deposit left by history: a series of fossilised structures left by the various communities that had from

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[37] See below, p. 133; D. Owen, *The government of Victorian London, 1855–1889: the Metropolitan Board of Works, the vestries, and the City Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); J. Davis, *Reforming London: the London government problem, 1855–1900* (Oxford, 1988).

[38] Cited in Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, p. 98.

time to time occupied this space. Yet 'fossil' is not quite the right term, for these were evolving structures. Inhabitants of the metropolis strove to ensure that these structures served their purposes. If the structures remained for many decades fragmented and at best loosely co-ordinated, that was in part because people chose to keep them that way. Eighteenth-century government, it is true, was not very adept at co-ordinating solutions to local problems; failing a strong lead from the centre, efforts sometimes remained unco-ordinated not so much because that best suited even local officers or élites, as because changing the framework was beyond their means. Yet, as we shall note, various means of transcending fragmentation were found, even before the new metropolitan bodies made their appearance. Assessments of the balance of advantage between fragmentation and unification changed over time. The ultimate shift towards the creation of metropolitan bodies should be seen not only as the achievement of a more ambitious and capable central government but also as the product of such changing assessments.

The early modern metropolis can be separated into three main zones, in terms of its governmental structures: the City, Westminster, and the districts beyond these. The Corporation of the City of London presided over an infrastructure of 26 wards, further subdivided into 240 precincts; the City was also divided into 108 parishes—not necessarily corresponding to wards or precincts, though inner-city wards and parishes both tended to be small; outer-city wards and parishes tended to be large and populous. The mayor and some among the aldermen served as magistrates; together with the common council, they passed multitudinous by-laws to regulate many aspects of urban life.[39] At least until the mid-eighteenth century the City was commonly represented as the best governed part of the metropolis: the district in which new ideas about urban government were best implemented. As late as 1789, the German visitor Archenholz wrote that, in the City, the government 'is more severe and exact; the love of order and industry is also more perceptible'.[40]

The City of Westminster on the City's western flank was an anomaly: a city without a corporation, though it did have both its own bench of magistrates and a 'court of burgesses' which discharged the regulatory functions of a court leet.[41] A problem in recruiting magistrates for Westminster, as for urban Middlesex, was that these posts did not offer the prestige which accrued to London's mayor and aldermen. It was accordingly harder to persuade leading citizens to undertake the inevitably heavy workload; appointments had to be made from men of lower social status, who were not

[39] S. and B. Webb, *The manor and the borough* (2 vols, London, 1908) vol. II, ch. 10 remains the most general overview of City government in this period. The huge scale of the corporation's activities, and records, has determined that subsequent, more detailed studies have been limited in scope. I.G. Doolittle, 'The government of the City of London, 1694–1767' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1979) treats office-holding, finance and relations with city companies; Brown, 'Politics, commerce' deals with personnel, attitudes to economic issues, and the regulation of policing and carceral institutions.

[40] J.W. von Archenholz, *Picture of England* (2 vols, London, 1789), vol. I, p. 123.

[41] Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 10–11.

well-regarded by the more élite residents of the West End, nor, indeed, by their City counterparts, who refused to allow them to sit alongside them on the Old Bailey bench.[42]

Governmental arrangements in Westminster were further complicated by the presence of the royal Court, most of the offices of executive government, parliament, the high courts, and the dean and chapter of Westminster. Several of these bodies had local jurisdictions of their own, as we have noted in the case of suits for debt. The court of king's bench, moreover, exercised oyer and terminer jurisdiction over not only Westminster but the whole of Middlesex. Until the law was changed in 1785, the quarter sessions were not supposed to meet while the king's bench was in session.[43] The presence of these august institutions caused other complications too. The royal commissioners of 1837 noted that it was debatable whether the metropolis *should* be governed by an elected body, of the kind then recently established in many other large towns. Given its role as the seat of government, there was a case for putting it under the immediate control of a secretary of state (the arrangement put in place in 1829 in the case of the metropolitan police).[44]

Those parts of the metropolis not within the cities of London or Westminster were supervised by county magistrates—of Middlesex, Surrey or Kent—and by parish officers accountable to them: constables, overseers of the poor and surveyors of the highways.[45] At least in the early eighteenth century, manorial lords, stewards and courts also retained some importance. In Marylebone, the steward of the manor was also a key figure in the vestry—but the shifting balance of power between manorial and other local government institutions was symbolically registered in the lord of the manor's 1737 agreement that local magistrates might use his courthouse for their petty sessions.[46] In both urban Middlesex and Westminster —as in this Marylebone instance—it was common for magisterial and parish government to be closely aligned, with the parish doubling as a petty sessional

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[42] R. Paley, 'The Middlesex Justices Act of 1792: its origins and effects' (PhD thesis, University of Reading, 1985); Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 1.

[43] R. Paley, 'The Crown side of the court of king's bench: litigants and litigation in Hanoverian London' (unpublished paper: I am grateful to Dr Paley for permission to cite this informative paper, which she is currently reworking for publication). For a study of prosecuting patterns which includes high as well as local courts, see Dabhoiwala, 'Prostitution and police', pp. 101–2, 121–9, 196.

[44] PP 1837, xxv, pp. 8–9.

[45] For Middlesex JPs as administrators, see E.G. Dowdell, *A hundred years of quarter sessions: the government of Middlesex, 1660–1760* (Cambridge, 1932), and I. Forrester, 'The Middlesex magistrate, 1760–1820' (MA thesis, University of London, 1934). For their judicial and police work, see Paley, 'The Middlesex Justices Act'; Shoemaker, *Prosecution and punishment*; N. Landau, 'Appearances at the quarter sessions of Middlesex', *London Journal*, 23 (1998), 30–52, and 'Indictment for fun and profit: a prosecutor's reward at eighteenth-century quarter sessions', *Law and History Review,* 17 (1999), 507–36, both of which correct Shoemaker in some respects. For magistrates in urban Surrey, see J.M. Beattie, *Crime and the courts in England, 1660–1800* (Oxford, 1986), esp. pp. 63–6 on personnel and patterns of activity.

[46] F.W.H. Sheppard, *Local government in St Marylebone, 1688–1835: a study of the vestry and the turnpike trust* (London, 1958), pp. 18, 26.

jurisdiction.[47] Dorothy George suggests that, together with the extension of vestry powers by local acts (which we will turn to shortly), this helped to give metropolitan vestries something of the character of municipal corporations, with parish magistrates 'corresponding to the charter justices of boroughs'.[48]

The degree of fragmentation in metropolitan government clearly varied from one level and function to another. Criminal justice was least fragmented, inasmuch as in London and Middlesex serious crimes (including all felonies) were tried in a single court, and there were only five benches of magistrates, processing charges and dealing with lesser infractions (some individuals, moreover, were members of more than one commission of the peace).[49] There was potentially much more 'fragmentation' in relation to functions discharged at parish or ward level, though in some of these instances there were at least common regulations—whether supplied by statute law, as in the case of poor relief, or by local bodies, as in the case of watch and ward, which was co-ordinated by the City corporation in the case of the City; in Westminster (at least until the early eighteenth century) by the court of burgesses.[50]

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many metropolitan districts obtained local acts of parliament, to regulate such matters as paving and street cleaning, lighting, watching and poor relief. These potentially complicated the picture further, since different districts often adopted different regulations. Moreover, while early such acts generally took a whole parish as their unit, some later acts covered only a small part of a parish, most notoriously in the case of St Pancras where, by the 1830s, nineteen different paving boards held sway. Companies supplying such utilities as water, and later gas, meanwhile, had their own territories, usually not coinciding with local government boundaries.[51]

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, all these various forms of fragmentation began to attract complaint. Inasmuch as the tasks of co-ordinating criminal justice and street policing were addressed first, mid-nineteenth-century complaints focused chiefly on other forms of fragmentation—which were in any case worse than they had been even a few decades before, because the built-up area had continued to

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[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20 on this relationship—cf. p. 189, on the more difficult relationship with the later stipendiary magistrate; R. Paley, ed., *Justice in eighteenth-century Hackney: the justicing notebook of Henry Norris and the Hackney Petty Sessions book* (London, 1991).

[48] George, *London life*, p. 22. The Webbs write more censorially of this as a usurpation of power: S. and B. Webb, *The parish and the county* (London, 1906), pp. 230–1. There is much material on London vestries scattered throughout the Webbs' volume; see esp. pp. 227–76 on metropolitan select vestries. See also Sheppard, *Local government*, pp. 7–9, 80, 102–3, 119–28, 224–5, 275–304, and Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 34, 140–5.

[49] The distinctiveness of the London/Middlesex arrangements is emphasised by Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 1.

[50] See n. 22 above.

[51] For general surveys: F. Clifford, *History of private bill legislation* (2 vols, London, 1885–7); F. Spencer, *Muncipal origins* (London, 1911). Sheppard, *Local government*, emphasises the distinctiveness of St Pancras, which he explains in part in terms of the feeble control exercised by its open vestry (pp. 102, 158–60). See also Owen, *Government of Victorian London*, p. 33, on use of St Pancras as an 'object lesson' in mid-nineteenth-century debate.

expand incrementally outwards into ever larger suburban parishes, and utility companies had proliferated. Concern both to promote economy in government and to protect public health suggested the need to rationalise increasingly complex arrangements.

It would always have been legally possible, whether or not politically possible, to create new overarching bodies, whether multi-functional or functionally specific. Some such bodies could be brought into being by simple executive action or Crown commission. The most powerful legal instrument available for this purpose was, however, the act of parliament. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the developing 'fiscal-military' state concentrated control over some of its metropolitan operations in the hands of a single body. Thus the excise, for example: there were separate London and provincial excise administrations (the 'London' division in practice comprising most of Middlesex); in London, moreover, excise prosecutions were dealt with by the excise commissioners, whereas in the provinces they were adjudicated by local JPs.[52] Similarly, if with less significant impact, the pressures of war in 1710 prompted the imposition of what was intended to be a revenue-yielding system of licensing and regulating hackney coaches throughout London, Westminster and all parishes 'within the weekly bills of mortality'. Commissioners in a new hackney-coach office were to issue licences and hear complaints against coach drivers.[53]

In the seventeenth century, statute law was sometimes used to create new bodies to promote good government in the metropolis. In the sixteenth century, London's 'royal hospitals' had been established by royal charter. In the seventeenth century, it was Parliament that authorised the formation of what were in effect new hospital boards, charged with establishing workhouses for the metropolitan poor. A clause in the Settlement Act of 1662 authorised the establishment of workhouses in London, Westminster, and parts of Middlesex and Surrey 'within the bills of mortality' (with boards to be presided over by the lord mayor, a nominee of the lord chancellor, and persons chosen by the majority of Middlesex and Surrey JPs, respectively). Short-lived Westminster and Surrey workhouses were established under this act. The City of London, by contrast, waited until the 1690s (which brought a new upsurge of enthusiasm for such institutions) before establishing a City Workhouse.[54] Post-Restoration

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[52] J. Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688–1783* (London, 1989), pp. 102–4. I am grateful to Paul Langford for advice on the extent of the excise's 'London' division.

[53] Statute of 9 Anne c. 23. See also S. Lambert, *House of Commons sessional papers of the eighteenth century*, 147 vols (Wilmington, Delaware, 1975–6); vol. CVIII, pp. 337–59 (Eleventh Report of the Select Committee on Finance, on the Hackney-Coach Office). Subsequent statutes extended those police powers to metropolitan magistrates. Partly in consequence, the office did not transact a great deal of business. For Patrick Colquhoun's 1798 proposal to expand it into a board of police revenue, see Lambert, *House of Commons sessional papers*, vol. CXII, pp. 5–7, 31–2 and 39–63.

[54] Statute of 14 Chas. II c. 12; V. Pearl, 'The puritans and poor relief: the London Workhouse, 1649–60; in D. Pennington and K.V. Thomas, eds, *Puritans and revolutionaries: essays in seventeenth-century history presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 206–32; S. Macfarlane, 'Social policy and the poor in the later seventeenth century' in A.L. Beier and R. Finlay, eds, *The making of the metropolis: London, 1500–1700* (London, 1986), pp. 258–63.

royal and parliamentary efforts to improve the state of metropolitan streets eventuated in 1662 in an act establishing a commission to improve the streets and passageways of the City, Westminster, and all parishes 'within the bills of mortality'.[55]

Such initiatives were not echoed in the early eighteenth century, when instead fragmentation was the order of the day. The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw several metropolitan parishes subdivided, so as better to cater for their growing populations. In all, seventeen new parishes appeared between 1660 and 1743, of which six were carved out of Stepney, one out of Whitechapel, one each out of Holborn and Cripplegate, four out of St Martin in the Fields, one out of St Martin's Westminster, and two out of Southwark parishes. While three of these parishes remained united with their mother parishes for the purposes of poor relief and local government, the majority became fully autonomous.[56] In the early eighteenth century, City parishes showed their mettle by fighting off the centralising endeavours of the City's new corporation of the poor, refusing to place the proceeds of parish rates at its disposal. In Westminster, meanwhile, parishes strove to shrug off the court of burgesses, resisting its attempts to strengthen its power to co-ordinate the Westminster watch. A number of forces were at work here. Parishes often resented direction from outside. Richer parishes were not keen to share their resources with poorer parishes. Some disputes had a religious or political colouring. It is not surprising to find Westminster parishes growing in ambition, at a time when they were growing so rapidly in population and wealth.[57]

If the early and mid-eighteenth century saw little enthusiasm for the establishment of overarching bodies, they did see the development of new versions of good practice in local government, and the diffusion of these practices among existing bodies. In the words of Dorothy George, 'Although there was a chaos of authorities, there was also a healthy rivalry between district and district and their variety gave opportunities for experiment'.[58] Many metropolitan districts proved responsive to new governmental fashions.

Much innovation in local government in this period involved the supersession of systems that obliged households to provide services in kind—for example, by taking a turn at the watch, or by lighting or paving the street—with an obligation to contribute in the form of rates to fund the co-ordinated provision of services. Systems of payment for service were clearly developing in an *ad hoc* way in the later seventeenth century. Initial attempts to empower local authorities to collect rates for such purposes foundered because legislation was too broadly conceived, requiring the consent of too many local

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[55] S. and B. Webb, *Statutory authorities for special purposes* (London, 1922), pp. 239–41; M. Jenner, 'The politics of London air: John Evelyn's *Fumifugium* and the Restoration', *Historical Journal*, 38 (1995), 549. I am grateful to Mark Jenner for making available to me the longer account of this contained in his thesis 'Early modern English conceptions of 'cleanliness' and 'dirt' as reflected in the environmental regulation of London, *c*.1530–*c*.1700' (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1991), pp. 50–1, 303–8.

[56] George, *London life*, pp. 406–7.

[57] Macfarlane, 'Social policy', pp. 266–70; Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 11–19.

[58] George, *London life*, p. 22.

bodies: so, bills to allow for the raising of rates to fund a nightly watch in Westminster and the bills of mortality failed in the first decade of the eighteenth century, and again in the early and late 1720s. But the common council of the City moved to co-ordinate City arrangements in 1705, and in 1735 two Westminster parishes—St George Hanover Square and St James Piccadilly—brought to parliament proposals for a rate-based nightly watch to apply only to themselves.

This piecemeal approach provided a model that other districts swiftly followed, including the City and other parishes in Westminster, Holborn, Spitalfields and Shoreditch. In subsequent decades the same model was followed by other parishes around the City, then in turn by those one step further out.[59] Similarly parish-specific acts governing the relief of the poor, usually entailing the creation of new boards to control spending and to oversee the management of a parish workhouse, were passed at mid-century, starting with acts for St Martin in the Fields and St Margaret and St John Westminster, and thereafter issuing in a steady stream. By 1780, most Westminster parishes, and parishes immediately to the north and east of the City had obtained such acts, as also had Hackney, Marylebone and Kensington.[60]

At the level of the magistracy, City practices were imitated elsewhere in the metropolis during the 1750s and 1760s. The lord mayor had long been expected to make himself routinely available as a magistrate, to deal with petty cases summarily and to commit felons for trial. By the late seventeenth century, lord mayors usually sat to discharge judicial business at Guildhall several days a week, their efforts being supplemented by those of qualified aldermen. Increasing reluctance on the part of city magistrates to bear these burdens was addressed in 1737 by the drawing up of a rota to ensure that at least one among them appeared at the Guildhall daily. John Beattie suggests that one cause of this increased reluctance was that the burden of the job was increasing as the nature of committal proceedings changed. Increasingly, they took the form of a preliminary trial, after which the accused might be discharged—thus presumably reducing the number of cases needing to be dealt with further along the system.[61] From 1740, leading Westminster magistrates seem to have followed both parts of the London model, making themselves more available, and sifting cases in mini-trials. Sir Thomas de Veil, Henry Fielding and his half-brother Sir John successively manned an office in Bow Street, which in due course was furnished as a little courtroom. In 1763, Middlesex magistrates also followed city practice, organising themselves to staff a number of 'rotation offices'.[62]

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[59] Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 4; Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 2–3. Southwark parishes, unusually, combined together to establish a new, common watch authority in 1766 (Reynolds, pp. 38–40).

[60] This relies on my own calculations from the statute book. Returns relating to relief regimes in most parishes within the bills of mortality may be found in *Reports from committees*, vol. IX, pp. 272–87. Sheppard, *Local government*, pp. 168–71, describes the first St Marylebone act.

[61] Beattie's account in Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 2, supersedes others.

[62] For Westminster, see Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. III, pp. 29–62; J. Langbein, 'Shaping the eighteenth-century criminal trial: a view from the Ryder sources', *University of Chicago Law Review*, 50 (1983), 55–76 for Westminster. For Middlesex, see Forrester, 'The Middlesex magistrate', p. 137; Beattie, *Crime and the courts*, p. 63.

It was against the background of such informal diffusion of new versions of good practice that, from the middle of the eighteenth century, schemes to generalise such practice throughout the metropolitan area began again to be mooted. Proposals to confide the care of the poor to corporations empowered to erect giant workhouses were aired in the 1750s—among others by Sir John Fielding.[63] In the 1760s, Thomas Gilbert —who believed that such schemes should be implemented everywhere—conceded that London, Westminster and Southwark might have to be allowed a corporation each. In the event, little came of these ideas for many decades.[64] The claim that creating larger administrative units and workhouses would reduce costs often failed to convince. Given the huge numbers dealt with—and enormous sums doled out—by the existing metropolitan units, it is perhaps particularly unsurprising that there was little enthusiasm for combining them into new bodies commanding even more resources. Even under the new Poor Law, the metropolis was to remain divided into more poor-law unions than Gilbert had envisaged (including one for the City within, and two for the City without the walls)—and some parishes long insisted on continuing to operate under eighteenth-century local acts.[65]

In the sphere of law enforcement, the case for rationalisation was more successfully made. It was argued that the uneven effectiveness of the watch in different districts meant that crime was not being discouraged, but rather relocated. It was important that standards of policing should be uniform throughout the urban area. The 1774 Watch Act strove to achieve this—without undermining the structures of parish autonomy. It gave to all parishes in Westminster and 'parts adjacent' power to levy rates to maintain a night watch and to establish a watch committee; it also set minimum standards in terms of the size and remuneration of watch forces, and prescribed basic duties. Within this framework, parishes remained free to act as they saw fit.[66]

Some ten years later, the central government—alarmed by the rising tide of crime associated with demobilisation at the end of the American War, and at a loss to know how to replace the old system of American transportation—proposed rationalisation at magisterial level. Magistrates' offices across the metropolis would henceforth be staffed by stipendiaries, on the government payroll—each being equipped with their own office staff and corps of special constables. This plan was initially attacked for some of the detail of its conception, and more generally by the City of London, which

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[63] J. Innes, 'The "mixed economy of welfare" in early modern England: assessments of the options from Hale to Malthus (*c*.1683–1803) in M. Daunton, ed., *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past* (London, 1996), pp. 157–60.

[64] T. Gilbert, *A scheme for the better relief and employment of the poor* (London, 1765), p. 3.

[65] David R. Green, *From artisans to paupers: economic change and poverty in London, 1790–1870* (Aldershot, 1995), p. 10, and see also ch. 8 on the enforcement of the new Poor Law in London. It is, however, interesting that the 1818 Church Building Act provided that the creation of new ecclesiastical parishes should not entail the subdivision of existing 'civil' parishes: the opportunity to split huge urban parishes into smaller administrative units was deliberately not taken.

[66] Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 50–6.

resisted any diminution of its autonomy. But refined in detail, and omitting the City, the bill was to pass in 1792, as the Middlesex Justices Act. The act consolidated what had been for some decades a gradually evolving partnership between central government and the metropolitan magistracy. The recently created Secretary of State for the Home Department became the key linking figure.[67]

Elaine Reynolds has recently expertly disentangled the train of events that led to the creation of the metropolitan police, some thirty-five years later, within essentially the same framework. This much more radical challenge to older structures involved a transfer of control, effectively over both constables and watch forces, from parishes to a new centrally appointed set of police commissioners. The way was prepared by the growing prevalence of talk about efficiency and the importance of consistency— argued to be fully achievable only by the concentration of control in the hands of a single overarching body But parish vestries fought against this tide for some decades— surrendering only when Peel, as Home Secretary, invested several years of effort in devising a scheme which paid as much attention as possible to their concerns, and when a swing in public opinion against vestry government, now denounced as oligarchical and corrupt, deprived the vestries of erstwhile 'radical' allies.[68]

If one focuses on core structures of local government in the eighteenth-century metropolis, the devolution of power to low levels within the system—'fragmentation', indeed—may still be what most impresses, even if it is recognised that initiatives taken at low levels helped to prepare the ground for subsequent rationalisation and unification. Yet, 'core structures of local government' were not the only features on the institutional landscape.

Central government, first—the king and his ministers—often took a special interest in metropolitan problems, not least because the metropolis was the seat of court and government. Points at which pressure from the centre served as a spur to action include the early 1660s, when the restored government pressed for improvements in the appearance and upkeep of streets, and a more effective night watch;[69] the 1690s, when the Revolution government pressed for action against crime and immorality;[70] the 1720s, when the secretaries of state represented the king's concern about the prevalence of crime and disorderly houses—and, a few years later, the Walpole government acted to disband the remaining debtors' sanctuaries;[71] the 1780s, when the home secretary drafted the Middlesex Justices Bill; and the 1820s, when the home secretary, Peel, co-ordinated the discussions which resulted in the establishment of the metropolitan police.[72]

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[67] Paley, 'Middlesex Justices Act'; Devereaux, 'Convicts and the state', pp. 198–217; Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 73–6, 85–6.
[68] Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, ch. 8, 'Why 1829?'
[69] Jenner, 'Politics of London air', p. 549; Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 4.
[70] T. Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996); Shoemaker, *Prosecution and punishment*, ch. 9, Beattie, *Policing and punishment*, ch. 4.
[71] Beattie, *Policing and punishment* ch. 4, and n. 29 above.
[72] See nn. 67, 68 above.

At times of extraordinary crisis, the central government might directly co-ordinate action, as it did (in conjunction with the City) in the plague of 1665 and in and after the fire of 1666, as it prepared to do at the time of the plague scare of 1720, and as it did when Gordon rioters devastated the metropolis in 1780.[73] Less dramatically, grants from one or another department of central government facilitated the implementation of a variety of policies, including the 1718 Transportation Act,[74] the establishment of foot and horse patrols at mid-century,[75] Westminster street improvements in the 1760s,[76] and maintenance of poor relief in crisis-stricken Spitalfields in the closing years of the century.[77]

Parliament—which has already figured at many points in this chapter—also served as an important forum for the discussion of metropolitan issues, and, indeed, as a metropolitan regulatory body in its own right. Almost all MPs were, of necessity, resident in the metropolis during a substantial part of the year.[78] Some were aldermen of London, a few were active Middlesex justices, some were active in parish affairs. Clearly, these élite metropolitan residents had ready access to parliament—as indeed, if more indirectly, had others active on the metropolitan scene. Given the absence of any other general forum for the discussion of metropolitan issues, it is not surprising that it was to parliament that they were often brought.

We have already noted that parliament sometimes acted to bring new metropolitan authorities into being—among them the hackney-coach office at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the stipendiary magistracy at its end. More commonly, parliament passed local acts, enhancing the powers of particular existing bodies. But, at least as commonly, it enacted regulations, applying to a large swathe of the metropolitan region, enforceable by a variegated mix of local authorities. The 1774 Watch Act provides a relatively ambitious example of this kind of legislation. In effect, in this instance, parliament acted something of the part that corporate governing bodies played in the City: laying down a set of rules for the guidance of smaller, local units.

Most sessions of parliament saw the passage of some acts applicable to some version of the metropolitan region. Sometimes the region specified was the 'bills of mortality' (meaning the area for which the Company of Parish Clerks collected annual mortality data), sometimes a zone of a given radius.[79] Sometimes the region covered

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[73] P.A. Slack, *The impact of the plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, rev. edn, 1990), pp. 222–3, 327–34; T.F. Reddaway, *The rebuilding of London after the Great Fire* (London, 1940), pp. 24–5, 51–64, 102–11; J.P. de Castro, *The Gordon riots*, 1780 (London, 1926), pp. 70, 114, 127–8.

[74] Beattie, *Crime and the courts*, p. 504, and *Policing and punishment*, ch. 9.

[75] Radzinowicz, *History*, vol. III, pp. 54–62.

[76] Webbs, *Statutory authorities*, p. 283. The commissioners were required to submit annual accounts to parliament, which survive in the House of Lords Record Office.

[77] R. Wells, *Wretched faces: famine in wartime England, 1793–1800* (Gloucester, 1988), pp. 313–14.

[78] P. Langford, 'Property and virtual representation in eighteenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 84–102, esp. 94, 96–7.

[79] For the clerks and their bills, see N.G. Brett James, *The growth of Stuart London* (London, 1935), pp. 249–64.

was extended in the course of time. The 1707 London Building Act—intended *inter alia* to minimise the danger of fire—applied to all parishes within the bills of mortality. Its 1774 successor extended also to Marylebone, Paddington, St Pancras and Chelsea—parishes outside the range of the bills, which were never extended beyond bounds set in the late seventeenth century.[80] The scope of the London assize of bread was extended in 1757 to cover all places within ten miles (16 km) of the Royal Exchange.[81]

The most famous of metropolitan measures to engage with social problems were probably Hanway's acts. Hanway's act of 1762 required all parishes within the bills of mortality to keep registers of the life histories of children in their care. In 1767, after an enquiry into what these registers revealed, parliament laid down regulations for the care of the infant poor which were to apply to fifty parishes within the bills (excepting only the City within the walls and four outlying parishes). In 1778, this act was extended to all of England and Wales.[82]

Parliament even had a special revenue source to help underwrite metropolitan improvements: revenues arising from duties on coal brought into the Port of London. These were traditionally tapped to finance improvements in and about the City. Parliament allocated coal duties to defray the cost of rebuilding public facilities after the 'Great Fire', and building new metropolitan churches in the early eighteenth century. In the 1690s, it authorised the creation of a fund, financed chiefly from such revenues, to help the City discharge its debts. Loans were raised on the security of this fund to pay for the rebuilding of Newgate gaol, to redeem bridge tolls, and for bridge and street improvements.[83]

Parliament not infrequently investigated metropolitan concerns, from which investigations legislation might or might not result. Its 1715 inquiry into poor rates in the metropolis—in effect, an inquiry into corruption in parish government—exposed abuse, though it produced no legislation.[84] Investigations ostensibly national in scope often in practice shed special or even exclusive light on the metropolis. A 1777 parliamentary inquiry into poor-relief administration sought especially full information from parishes within the bills of mortality. The 1792 inquiry into arrest and imprisonment for debt collected some information nationally, but interviewed only those operating

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[80] D. Cruickshanks and P. Wyld, *London: the art of Georgian building* (London, 1973), pp. 22–31; J. Ayres, *Building the Georgian city* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 230–1. See George, *London life*, p. 35 for stasis in the eighteenth-century bills.

[81] C. Petersen, *Bread and the British economy, 1770–1870* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 100–2.

[82] J.S. Taylor, *Jonas Hanway, founder of the Marine Society: charity and policy in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1985), ch. 8.

[83] Reddaway, *Rebuilding*, pp. 181–99; Doolittle, 'Government of the City of London', pp. 82–98; Statute of 9 Anne c. 22; PP 1837–8, v, pp. 267–70. For the later history of coal duties, Owen, *Government of Victorian London*, pp. 80, 196, 228, 243.

[84] *CJ*, XVII, pp. 392–6. For the party political context of this, see C. Rose, '"Seminarys of faction and rebellion": Jacobites, Whigs and the London charity schools, 1716–24', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), 39–44.

within the metropolis.[85] Investigation sometimes prompted action other than legislation. Thus, an 1819 parliamentary inquiry into the prevalence of fever in the metropolis in recent years—which proceeded by interrogating doctors at various metropolitan hospitals and dispensaries—produced a recommendation for an increase in the treasury grant to the metropolitan Fever Hospital.[86]

Parliament's ability to serve as a proxy metropolitan authority must have reduced pressure to create any alternative arrangement. There were however, of course, limits to parliament's capacities in this context. Most notably, it could not provide routine administrative oversight of local government operations.

Finally, the fragmented landscape of local government could also be transcended by institutions whose costs were met by voluntary support, and which therefore did not need official funding. The voluntary society floating entirely free of any local-government body was largely a creation of the seventeenth century. Though it had long been possible to name a body of trustees to administer funds given for any charitable purpose, often this role was given to officers of corporations or parishes *ex officio*—in this way the City of London controlled large charitable funds. Increasingly from the late seventeenth century, however, charitable and other voluntary bodies were set up without any such formal links to local government. Some of these bodies, indeed, helped to address problems which the local government framework had produced.[87]

Voluntary benevolent and philanthropic societies, for instance, were untrammelled by settlement laws, and were therefore better placed to aid the non-settled metropolitan poor than were parish officers. These societies varied greatly in scale and ambition. They included 'box clubs'—friendly societies primarily dependent on contributions from members; bodies such as the 'county societies', which brought élite immigrants together for convivial feasting, but also collected funds to support their poorer countrymen; and the voluntary infirmaries (which multiplied from the 1720s) and charitable dispensaries (which multiplied from the 1770s)—both intended to help those temporarily disabled by accident or sickness, without regard to their status under the poor laws.[88]

Even though not formally constrained by jurisdictional boundaries, voluntary bodies often in practice had their own distinct catchment areas: characteristically they could not comfortably cope with communities beyond a certain size. Moreover, there

[85] Cited in nn. 4, 8 above.
[86] PP 1818, VII, pp. 5–7.
[87] D. Owen, *English philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965). D. Andrew, *Philanthropy and police: London charity in the eighteenth century* (Princeton, 1989). Two contemporary surveys are J. Paterson, *Pietas Londoniensis* (London, 1714) and A. Highmore, *Pietas Londoniensis* (London, 1814).
[88] P. Clark, *British clubs and societies, 1580–1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), esp. chs. 8, 10. J.H. Woodward, *To do the sick no harm: a study of the voluntary hospital movement to 1875* (London, 1974); I.S.L. Loudon, 'The origins and growth of the dispensary movement', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85 (1981), 322–42, and B. Croxson, 'The public and private faces of eighteenth-century London dispensary charity', *Medical History*, 41 (1997), 127–49.

was a case for providing services close to people's homes. Charity schools, for both these reasons, tended to serve relatively small districts: wards in the City within the walls, parishes elsewhere. By the end of the eighteenth century, not only the City and Westminster but also at least forty other metropolitan parishes were equipped with charity schools (coexisting with a bewildering variety of dame schools, private schools and Sunday Schools).[89]

Dispensary and hospital geography was rather more complicated, in that admission was commonly dependent on subscribers' recommendations. Several institutions, supported by different groups of subscribers, might therefore coexist within a single region. Nonetheless, dispensaries and hospitals were also scattered across the metropolitan region. Whereas at the start of the eighteenth century only the City foundation of St Bartholomew's and its dispensary served the needs of Londoners, by its end, there were seventeen general dispensaries and four subscription hospitals: the Westminster and the somewhat more westerly St George's subscription hospitals, both founded in the 1720s, having been joined in the 1740s by the London Hospital to the east and the Middlesex Hospital to the north-west.[90]

More specialised charities often catered to the metropolis as a whole. These included specialised hospitals, such as Guy's Hospital for incurables and the early nineteenth-century Fever Hospital; various institutions catering to populations at risk, such as the Foundling Hospital, the Marine Society (designed to funnel poor boys into maritime careers) and the Magdalen Hospital for Penitent Prostitutes, and also charities not linked with residential institutions, such as the Thatched House Society for the Relief of Small Debtors (founded 1774), whose members enquired into the cases of debtors throughout the metropolitan region. Some London-based societies, though formally national in scope, devoted special attention to metropolitan problems: these included the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (the SPCK, founded 1698), which in the early eighteenth century attempted to improve metropolitan prisons, and campaigned against the scourge of gin-drinking, and the Society for Enforcing His Majesty's Proclamation against Vice and Immorality (founded 1787), which tried to deal with problems posed to the control of the metropolitan drink trade by the privileges of the Vintners' Company, and to curb traders in pornographic literature, who were said to be corrupting the pupils of Westminster School.[91]

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[89] M.G. Jones, *The charity school movement* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 372–3.

[90] Croxson, 'Public and private faces', p. 128; Hugh Clout, ed., *The Times history of London* (rev. edn, 1999), p. 96, for a map showing hospital locations.

[91] W.O.B. Allen and E. McClure, *Two hundred years: the history of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1898), pp. 54–7; P. Clark, 'The "Mother Gin" controversy in the early eighteenth century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 38 (1988), 63–84. L. Davison, 'Experiments in the social regulation of industry: gin legislation, 1729–51' in Davison *et al.*, eds, *Stilling the grumbling hive*, pp. 25–48. For the Proclamation Society, see Innes, 'Politics and morals: the reformation of manners movement in later eighteenth-century England', in E. Hellmuth, ed., *The transformation of political culture: late eighteenth-century England and Germany* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 57–118, esp. 95–6. For the Society's belief that it had a special mission in the metropolis, *Seventh report of the Society for Putting into Effect His Majesty's Proclamation* (London, 1795), p. 20.

Some neighbourhood-based voluntary societies occasionally came together to cele-brate their collective efforts: thus the early eighteenth-century 'reformation of manners' societies, and the supporters and pupils of charity schools 'in and about the cities of London and Westminster'.[92] The SPCK made some effort to put itself at the head of both reformation of manners and charity-school movements. Its own metropolitan base determined that it was best placed to do this in the metropolis, though it also had a network of provincial correspondents. In the 1780s, the Sunday School Society simi-larly sought to rally and stimulate activity in the metropolis and elsewhere. By the early nineteenth century, a number of organisations had developed much more elaborately federal structures. Metropolitan parent bodies divided the metropolis into 'districts' and sometimes 'subdistricts', each equipped with its own subcommittee, which reported to the parent body. By the 1810s, societies organised in this way included the Strangers' Friend Society, the Bible Society, the Sunday School Union and the Juvenile Benevolent Society. The Sunday School Union divided the metropolis into five districts: central, northern, western, southern and eastern. A member of the Juvenile Benevolent Society told a parliamentary committee in 1816 that he was best acquainted with the Society's north-east district, including Spitalfields, Shoreditch and that neighbourhood. Trying to describe the bounds of the district to his interlocutors, he explained that it was 'the same district as the Auxiliary Bible Society'.[93]

If the growth of the metropolis in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries far beyond the bounds of the old City posed new challenges to those who grappled with the social problems of the metropolis, therefore, this period also saw these difficulties mitigated. Interest on the part of central government was no novelty (though central government's financial and administrative capacities were themselves increasing). More novel were prolonged, annual sittings of parliament, which made that institution peren-nially available as a place in which metropolitan issues could be considered as a whole; and the growth of the practice of voluntary association, to form organisations which were able to define the scope of their responsibility as their members saw fit.

III

Contemporaries saw large towns as having both distinctive merits and distinctive prob-lems. On the one hand, they were centres of wealth, splendour and 'politeness'. On the

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[92] It was customary to print the sermons delivered on these occasions, together with the societies' annual reports.
[93] PP 1816, IV, pp. 1–324, *passim*, esp. 6, 53, 76, 104, 119–21, 152–3, 207–8. The passage quoted is at p. 152. For the district system and its usual correlate, house-to-house visiting, see also H.D. Rack, 'Domestic visitation: a chapter in early nineteenth-century evangelism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 24 (1973), 357–76, and F.K. Prochaska, *Women and philanthropy in the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1980), ch. 4. The London Mendicity Society, founded 1818, revealed its policing orientation by its initial adoption of the eight metropolitan police districts as the basis of its organisation: see M.J.D. Roberts, 'Reshaping the gift relationship: The London Mendicity Society and the repression of begging in England, 1818–69', *International Review of Social History*, 36 (1991), 211.

other they were unhealthy and crime-ridden, scenes of such debauchery as heavy drink-ing, whoring and gaming, their streets too often pestered with vagrants, prostitutes and beggars. Giovanni Botero, whose tract *The Magnificencie and Greatness of Cities* was published in English translation in 1606, suggested that some of the defects of great cities acted to limit their growth, to make them less great in terms of sheer size than they would otherwise have been: he instanced especially their vulnerability to epidemic disease, and difficulties in supplying them with food.[94]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, British commentators took it for granted that London, the metropolis, was Britain's 'great city', with the characteristic virtues and vices of the type. However, after the 1665–6 plague and fire, there were no further cataclysms but instead a period of steady development, including the first open-ing-up of the West End. By contrast, the second quarter of the eighteenth century proved to be a period of relatively slow metropolitan growth. Some commentators sug-gested that this was a classic instance of a city's greatness being limited by the debauch-ery it fostered: the culprit fingered in this case being gin-drinking.[95] In the second half of the century, the metropolis expanded with new vigour. Yet renewed growth only pro-vided an opportunity for the renewed airing of traditional themes. Great cities were unhealthy: it was not surprising therefore that London was eating up the nation's pop-ulation. Cities fostered vice and crime.[96]

Much early nineteenth-century comment can be seen as largely set within this tra-ditional frame. But these themes were elaborated in new ways, and—perhaps more sig-nificantly—London began to be seen as only one among a larger number of British 'great cities'. Children became a special focus for concern. There was concern at the numbers of poor children being carted off to labour in northern factories (this practice was made illegal in 1816), and about the sufferings of chimney sweeps' boys within London itself. There was concern about juvenile crime, and about the numbers of chil-dren begging in London streets. The way forward was thought to lie in better educa-tional and religious provision: parliamentary committees explored provision for 'the education of the lower orders in the metropolis', and the relationship between the num-bers of church seats and local populations (the metropolis was discovered to account for a majority of grossly underprovided parishes: parishes in which inhabitants out-numbered seats by more than 20,000). Concern about epidemic disease in an urban set-ting resurfaced, and its roots began to be sought in poor housing conditions: street improvements began to target areas where 'vice and misery' congregated.[97]

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[94] G. Botero, *The magnificencie and greatness of cities* (orig. pub. London, 1606, repr. Amsterdam, 1979).

[95] D.V. Glass, *Numbering the people: the eighteenth-century population controversy and the development of the cen-sus and vital statistics in Britain* (Farnborough, 1973), p. 47.

[96] J. McFarlan, *Thoughts on subjects of national importance. I: On the advantage of manufactures, commerce and great towns to the population and prosperity of a country . . .* (London, 1786) surveyed and challenged the arguments of recent critics.

[97] PP 1814–15, v, pp. 1569–74; PP 1816, iv, pp. 1–324; PP 1817, vi, pp. 7–34, and also the philanthropic *Report of the committee for investigating the causes of the alarming increase of juvenile delinquency in the metropolis* (London,

The 1810s saw parliament address itself to all these issues, usually initially—sometimes exclusively—considered as features of the metropolitan urban scene.[98] But inquiries revealed that similar if not greater problems existed in the cities of the north: church provision, thus, was judged most inadequate in the dioceses of London, Chester and York; and, after London, it was Liverpool and Manchester that were the worst provided cities. Child labour was a normal feature of life in industrial towns; educational provision was also inadequate there, housing standards poor and 'fevers' equally prevalent. By the 1830s, parliament was grappling with the problems of 'great cities', decidedly in the plural.[99] Municipal government reforms opened the way to a more co-ordinated approach to problems of urban living.[100] In this new context, metropolitan social problems appeared less remarkable. Instead, absence of unitary governing structures emerged as the most distinctive feature of the metropolitan scene.

1816). For fever, PP 1818, VII, pp. 3–7; and for environmental concerns: H.J. Dyos, 'Urban transformation: a note on the objects of street improvement in Regency and early Victorian London', *International Review of Social History*, 2 (1957), 259–65. For church provision, *Parliamentary Debates* (London, 1812–), vol. XXXVII, 1118–30.

[98] See also committees on the night watch (PP 1812, II), on mendicity (PP 1814–15, III; PP 1816, V), on the police of the metropolis (PP 1816, V; 1817, VII; 1818, VIII); and on metropolitan prisons (PP 1818, VIII). In addition, there were inquiries into metropolitan water supply 1821, and metropolitan sewers 1823.

[99] P. Richards, 'R.A. Slaney, the industrial town and early Victorian social policy', *Social History* 4 (1979), 85–101.

[100] These reforms only opened the way because those towns not already incorporated still had to apply for incorporation in order for the act to apply to them. D. Fraser, *Power and authority in the Victorian city* (Oxford, 1979), p. 150, lists the towns incorporated in the two decades following the act.

List of Abbreviations

APC	*Acts of the Privy Council*
BL	British Library
CARD	*Calendar of the Ancient Records of Dublin*, ed. J.T. and R.M. Gilbert, 19 vols (Dublin, 1889–1944)
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CJ	*House of Common Journals, England*
CSP	*Calendar of State Papers*
Ec.HR	*Economic History Review*
HCJI	*Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*
GL	Guildhall Library
HMC	*Historical Manuscripts Commission*
Lambeth PL	Lambeth Palace Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
PP	Parliamentary Papers
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew
PRONI	Public Record Office, Northern Ireland
RCB	Representative Church Body Library, Dublin
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
WAC	Westminster Archives Centre