

of 'civitas' and 'civitas'. The plays depicted a desire for worldliness, knowledge and news as means of social advancement as part of the development of the idea of 'town' life, and even contained elements of the sexual libertinism which was to be so prominent after the Restoration. Indeed, a chapter on Restoration drama and the new uses of urban space after the Great Fire would have made this marvellous book even better.

Newman seeks to expand the boundaries of metropolitan literature, using literary and cultural texts to write about urban subjectivity. She argues that the features of modernity located in the nineteenth-century industrial cities by historical sociologists existed much earlier, and argues that new configurations of time and urban space produced modern discursive figures of address and modes of subjectivity in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century London and Paris. Although both cities are discussed in equal measure across the book as a whole, this is not a comparative survey, with each capital receiving a different level of attention in specific chapters. Spatial knowledge could be obtained either by travel or private study, although travel writers sought to conflate the two categories by claiming to write from experience. The manner in which people experienced London and Paris was changing as the *flâneur* replaced the medieval *badaud* and new forms of transport such as coaches and sedan chairs provided a solution to the elite problem of how to maintain civility by avoiding filth, stench and noise. The Parisian shopping galleries frequented by the young urban elite were venues of courtship and consumption, whilst streets were widened to accommodate the flow of traffic, also providing more room for markets and hawkers.

Newman is keen to examine London and Paris both from above and below, but whether her work provides much access to plebeian experiences of the two cities is questionable. Greater use might have been made of cheap print when discussing the experiences of vagrants and prostitutes. Moreover, Newman's critique of the manner in which historians have used legal records is only partly successful, failing to engage fully with the subtlety with which Laura Gowing, Garthine Walker, Bernard Capp and Malcolm Gaskill have used such sources. Attention not just to representations of plebeian experience, but also greater consideration of what forms of evidence the lower orders may have created would have strengthened *Cultural Capitals*.

Overall historians of London and Paris will enhance their knowledge by reading these works. In terms of readership *London in Early English Drama* would provide a useful introduction to early modern playwrights for undergraduate historians whilst *Cultural Capitals* is more suited to an advanced undergraduate or postgraduate audience.

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David J. Cox, *A Certain Share of Low Cunning: A History of the Bow Street Runners, 1792–1839*. Oregon: Willan Publishing, 2010. 280pp. £45.00.
doi:10.1017/S0963926811000228

That the term 'Runner' – which carries with it overtones of menial subservience – is still used so widely to describe the forces that operated from London's famed Bow Street magistrate's office says much about our present misunderstandings of this

stout body of men. Much-maligned by contemporaries for their complicity with the criminal underworld, or otherwise disparaged for their pursuit of personal gain and prestige, the image of the patrols and officers that operated from that establishment remains a blend of corruption and blundering amateurishness; of a motley band of meddling 'myrmidons' who were viewed with suspicion by most Londoners and labelled 'pigs' by many others (p. 42). In this long overdue book (which is, surprisingly, the first authoritative volume on this fascinating subject) David Cox makes a dramatic revision to these ill-informed caricatures by offering instead a fresh portrait of the Principal Officers who operated from Bow Street. Through a meticulous examination of press reports, court cases, Home Office papers and autobiographies detailing their work, Cox has provided a far-ranging account of their complex dealings there, revealing along the way a rich description of relatively sophisticated police work, much of which has hitherto remained largely neglected by historians.

In many ways the Principal Officers were a recognizably 'modern' body of police officers, formed principally of upright and highly 'respectable' working men, a great many of whom were celebrated for their effective detection skills honed through years of dedicated service. John Townsend, for example, whose meteoric career took him from lowly costermonger to leading investigator early in the nineteenth century, was catapulted to stardom after achieving a string of detective successes (a man who, in the words of one contemporary, had 'taken more thieves than all the other Bow Street Public Officers put together'). Townsend later earned the close friendship of the prince regent and remained in popular demand among those who could afford his services (p. 171). Other Principal Officers of a similar pedigree likewise enjoyed the trappings of celebrity after cracking some of the period's most sensational cases, often achieved by employing a range of innovative forensic techniques (rudimentary ballistics and medical analyses for example). Thus the Principal Officers at Bow Street represented the 'elite' of Regency policing (only 35 Principal Officers operated during the period covered here), and their bravery in the face of considerable risk regularly drew admiration at all levels of society.

The most important aspect of Cox's book, however, lies in his description of the 'Runners' as a truly national police force, at a time when much of the provincial constabulary was dogged by inefficiency and chronic manpower shortages. With public opinion highly resistant to the imposition of a French-style militaristic body of law enforcement (feared by many to be the potential agency of state coercion) the men of Bow Street operated as the only *de facto* nationwide detective force, regularly summoned by a whole range of employers from across the country. The provincial magistracy in particular – frequently hard-pressed and ill-equipped to deal with serious felonies – regularly called on Bow Street officers to assist in the hunt for suspected offenders, with many Principal Officers travelling remarkable distances in pursuit of their quarry. As part of the investigation of a bloody highway robbery committed at Dunsley in Staffordshire in 1812, for example, Principal Officers Harry Adkins and Samuel Taunton covered some 400 miles in just one month while tracking a suspect, in a case also made famous for the use of ballistics evidence at the ensuing trial (p. 182). Such expertise defined the Principal Officers as a prototype 'Flying Squad' who were free to operate in most districts without fear of local reprisal, and whose unmatched detective skills ensured their survival well beyond the formation of the Metropolitan Police in 1829.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Cox also demonstrates that it was mainly wealthy private individuals and institutions who were most likely to summon help from Bow Street, usually in the investigation of crimes considered damaging to commercial interests (forgery, arson and fraud, for example). As such there is a strong case to be made that the Principal Officers did indeed operate as an agency of class interests. So-called 'social crimes' in particular – offences such as poaching and the plundering of wrecks considered by many to be purely customary activities driven by economic opportunity – were prosecuted more frequently by the commercial elite from the late eighteenth century onwards, which has been judged subsequently by some historians to mark a transition in the power relationship that existed between the social classes. In 1838, for example, Lloyd's of London were quick to employ Bow Street officers in order to prevent the plunder of the merchant ship *Adamant* after she foundered on the Wirral peninsula, apparently achieved through the creation of 'fear of retribution among the perpetrators of such an offence' (p. 188). Similarly, the men of Bow Street were employed as surveillance officers during the Luddite activity of the 1810s and later conducted covert investigations into the 'Captain Swing' riots of the 1830s. Such detail offers important insights into the nature of policing and class relations early in the nineteenth century and it is therefore a great shame that Cox fails to locate his findings more firmly within the historiography that has dealt with this much-debated topic. Overall, however, this is an extremely important book which should be particularly recommended for the depth of research that Cox presents. By the final page one is left with a great deal of admiration for this fine body of men, to whom history it seems has done a great deal of disservice.

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Robert J. Bennett, *The Voice of Liverpool Business: The First Chamber of Commerce and the Atlantic Economy, 1774 – c. 1796*. Liverpool: Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, 2010. viii + 172pp. 18 tables. £15.00.
doi:10.1017/S096392681100023X

This book has to be the urban history bargain of the year: a nicely produced, well-illustrated hardback by an eminent scholar about an important port city for a mere £15. The book uses recently discovered documents to chart in some detail the proceedings of the Liverpool Chamber at a time between the American War of Independence and the start of the Napoleonic Wars. The Chamber failed about 1796 and was only re-established many years later. This study, funded by the successor organization, focuses purely on these early years.

The book summarizes the constitution and governance of the Chamber, and the activities of its committee members and secretary over a 23-year period. It examines in detail the issues on which the Chamber lobbied government, and its conflicts with the Corporation. Its members were a subset of the merchant elite, who were concerned about the taxes, tariffs and fees imposed upon them, both by the Corporation and by other organizations at home and abroad. Like several other organized groups in Liverpool, they resented the Corporation, and in particular its Common Council, as a corrupt organization serving the vested interests of a closed property-owning elite. Members of the Chamber were not exactly imbued with an interest in the public good themselves, however. They resented paying a duty on