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The "Wretched, Wily, Wandering Vagabond": The Vagrant in Sixteenth Century England

by

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John Steele was arrested and brought to Bridewell Hospital in 1602. Accused

of begging under false pretenses and with a fake begging license, he admitted to his

crimes and told the governors of Bridewell where he had purchased the counterfeit

license. Both begging licences and Bridewell Hospital were parts of the changes in

social policy occurring throughout England in the sixteenth century and into the early

seventeenth century. The begging licences were designed to make sure that only the

"deserving poor" were allowed to beg on the streets while Bridewell Hospital

functioned as a reformatory prison for the vagrant and people considered

outrageously sinful and damaging to the larger community. John Steele's actions are

recorded as such,

> John Steele a prisoner of this house sent in by Master deputie Hickman
> for Counterfettinge a false licence to begge within the cittie of london
> under coullor that hee had his house burnt in lincolne and fayninge
> himself to be named Richard Codde cleane contrarie, and therebye
> hath collected in severall parissshes the benevolence and charitie of
> diverse well disposed people, and so contrarie to the State hathe forged
> the pasport and cozened her majesties subjectes. Wich hee could not
> denye, but saithe that in ded hee bought that licence of a fellowe in
> Shordiche wich cost him ij s vj d and that in dede hee begde with that
> licence by the name of Richard Codde.[1]

John Steele admitted to pretending that his name was Richard Codde and to buying a

fake license which said that his house had burned down. In effect, Steele had taken on

another identity for financial benefit; he had, in the governor's words, "cozened her

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[1] Quoted in Martine van Elk, "The Counterfeit Vagrant: The Dynamic of Deviance in the
Bridewell Court Records and the literature of Roguery," in *Rogues and Early Modern English
Culture,* ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004),
128.

majesties subjectes." Cozenage, or cozening, were the tricks that vagabonds were thought to use in order to fool the respectable into giving them charity.

For the person familiar with sixteenth century popular literature, the word "cozened" may ring a bell. Robert Greene's work, *A Notable Discover of Cozenage*, (1591) for example, was an important piece in the genre of rogue literature. At the same time that the massive reforms in social policy such as the founding of Bridewell Hospital, were being undertaken, the popularity of rogue literature was booming. Authors like Robert Greene, Thomas Harman, and John Awdeley wrote extensively on the vagabond in a way that straddled boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, literature and quasi-sociological study. Thomas Harman's *A Caveat for Common Cursitors* categorizes vagrants by their physical appearance, gender, the tricks they perform, and their hierarchical status among other vagabonds. Under many of the descriptions of each of these categories, he includes a short story about that type of vagabond. He claims to have either witnessed each occasion himself or to have heard of it through his neighbors and friends. These short stories are entertaining and explore the vagabond as both a comic and tragic figure. For example, after describing the autem-mort as a married female vagabond with questionable sexual morals, he relates the story of Alice Milson. He writes,

> There is one of these Autem Morts – she is now a widow – of fifty
> years old. Her name is Alice Milson. She goeth about with a couple of
> great boys; the youngest of them is fast upon twenty years of age; and
> these two do lie with her every night, and she lieth in the middest. She
> saith that they be her children; that betelled be the babes born of such
> abominable belly.[2]

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[2] Thomas Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 138.

Robert Greene and John Awdeley use similar structures or conceits that make their works compelling as both examples of popular literature and observations on a specific population of people.

In this way, the sixteenth century provides an opportunity for a person interested in the figure of the vagabond. While authors like John Awdeley, Thomas Harman, and Robert Greene wrote pamphlets about the vagabond, his sins, and his stories, government officials were re-organizing the poor relief system and directly addressing the place of the vagabond in society. Both literature and government action helped to create representations of the vagabond, and attention to the vagrant throughout society was at a high point. The variety and quantity of representations of the vagabond offer a particular challenge and scholars of both English and History have taken that challenge. They have analyzed the vagabond as a part of early modern English culture, as subject to the changes in social policy, and as represented through literary genres.

Much of the scholarly research on the vagabond has been done with an eye to trends in social policy and crime. In *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (1988), Paul Slack explains how and why the English poor relief system came to exist in the way that it did. He argues that ecclesiastical poor relief decreased dramatically after the Reformation and that a secular poor relief system was constructed piecemeal in order to fulfill a function that had belonged almost entirely to the pre-Reformation church. His attention to the poor relief system helps to place the vagabond into a larger narrative about the changing structure and nature of poor relief. Although the vagabond's exceptional characteristics and conditions are not thoroughly addressed,

Slack argues that the treatment of the vagabond conforms to the general evolution of the poor relief system.

J.A. Sharpe's *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (1988) attempts to discern more about the lives of those accused of crime but also details the government apparatuses that dealt with crime. Like Slack, Sharpe only addresses the vagrant as they fit into his over-arching themes, but his book allows one to see how the vagabond was situated in patterns of crime and law enforcement. Furthermore, Sharpe helps to provide a picture of what an individual vagabond's life may have been like by using court documents to discern individual histories. Majorie Keniston McIntosh, in *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (1998), examines both crime and social infractions that were not necessarily illegal. Examining vagrancy along with sexual infractions, scolding, and other 'misbehaviors,' McIntosh proves a geographically and chronologically wide-ranging study on the definitions and treatment of undesirable behavior. McIntosh deals with issues that both Sharpe and Slack avoid, including how vagabonds were defined, how the courts dealt with them when their actions were legal, and how the courts dealt with them when their actions were illegal. In other words, McIntosh examines both the criminal aspects of the vagabond and the characteristics that were deemed simply socially unacceptable.

Some scholars have concentrated on London, its particular atmosphere, and the social policy changes, like the foundation of Bridewell Hospital, that affected London alone. Paul Griffiths's *Lost Londons* (2008) also addresses the vagabond in a larger historical narrative, but he examines the vagabond in the context of the social and cultural changes occurring in London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Rather than concentrating on a theme like poor relief, crime, or misbehavior, Griffiths investigates how the atmosphere in London contributed to the understandings of the vagrant and other social phenomena. He argues that surges in population and geographic growth contributed to a sense of instability and paranoia that helped to over-emphasize the threat that the vagabond posed. *The Pursuit of Stability* (1991) by Ian Archer supplements Griffiths work, although Archer concentrates solely on concerns of riot and unrest in London and the reasons why London remained governmentally stable during a socially unstable period. The vagabond is featured as an example of a scape-goat, and Archer argues that the vagabond received an inappropriate amount of government attention because it was possible to displace fears of riot onto the vagrant.

Other research on the vagabond concentrates on the literary and cultural dimensions of the subject. Linda Woodbridge, in *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (2001), investigates gap between the perceived and actual threats of the vagabond. Arguing that the literary representations of the vagabond owed most of their content to the popular genre of the joke-book, she concludes that rogue literature was fiction meant primarily to entertain but that it also helped to justify the mistreatment and exploitation of the vagrant population. Indeed, she argues that rogue literature influenced the changes in social policy and that there was an exchange of language, particularly the word "rogue," between rogue literature and legislative documents. The collection of essays, *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture* (2006) edited by Criag Dionne and Steve Mentz, tries to place rogue literature into larger trends in English cultural history. One essay in particular,

Martine van Elks's "The Counterfeit Vagrant: The Dynamic of Deviance in the

Bridewell Court Records and the Literature of Roguery," examines how similar

anxieties about dishonesty and identity are present in both the court documents of

Bridewell Hospital and rogue literature. By addressing both literary and archival

evidence, van Elks is able to draw conclusions about social fears about the vagabond

that are not limited by staunch boundaries between literary and archival evidence.

The balance of literary and archival evidence is crucial when attempting to

investigate the vagabond in sixteenth-century London. As Woodbridge and van Elk

have suggested, rogue literature and legislative action worked together to form

representations of the vagabond. Although the picture of the vagabond was partially

formed by the changes in social policy, it also helped to spur these changes and

influence the shape that these changes took.[3] In other words, the representations of

the vagabond helped to form the actions taken against vagrancy and the vagabond.

How the vagabond was understood affected reactions to the vagabond.

This relationship between representations and actions acts as the foundation of

this analysis of the vagabond. The vagabond was presented to the public in a variety

of ways, this presentation affected how the vagabond was understood, and this

understanding affected how the vagabond was treated. This work aims to investigate

this process by examining how the vagabond functioned as a cultural figure and the

reasons why it functioned in the manner that it did.

In order to investigate the vagabond in this way, it is necessary to address the

historical context of the vagabond. Social and cultural change affected how the

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[3] Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 4.

vagabond was understood, and chapter one will address the historical background. Chapter two will outline the characteristics assigned to the vagabond and will concentrate on the vagabond's mobility, cunning, and deviancy. Chapter three, however, will investigate the confused boundary between the vagrant and the non-vagrant and will call into question the characteristics discussed in the previous chapter. The source of this confused boundary will be discussed in chapter four, and the anxieties resulting from social and cultural change and their relationship to the picture of the vagabond will be investigated. The final chapter will address the repercussions of the particular picture of the vagabond put forward in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-centuries, focusing on the issue of the vagabond's social inclusion or exclusion.

Chapter One: Historical Context

Religious and social changed persisted throughout the mid- and late-fifteenth century, and unrest followed suit. Some of these changes effected the vagrant population directly, such as changes in social policy. Other changes, however, simply contributed to notions of instability, which affected how people thought about themselves and others, vagabonds included. Although direct and indirect factors in vagrancy and the perceptions of the vagrant need to be defined as such they are both important and need to be analyzed. Famine, plague, economic concerns, population fluctuations, and the Reformation provided challenges with which all people needed to contend.

Many of these changes affected the entirety of England, but some were concentrated in London. London increased in size throughout this period, at an almost startling rate, and visual signs of this growth were similarly increasing. Through the sixteenth-century, the population grew from 50,000 to 200,000, and by 1650, there were 375,000 people living in London.[4] Symptoms of population growth, like increased stress on the poor relief system and the city's infrastructure, created problems for city leaders. Complaints about over-population resounded, and complaints about a growth in the number of vagabonds, foreigners, and fishwives were particularly abundant.[5] Although parishes were growing, the number of

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[4] Mark S.R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths, "Introduction," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London,* ed. Mark S.R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths (Manchester, UK; New York, USA: Manchester U.P.; distributed exclusively in the USA by ST. Martin's Press, 2000), 2.

[5] Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660,* (Cambridge, UK; New York, USA: Cambridge U.P., 2009), 36, 38.

constables remained constant, and the relatively small number of justices was also considered to be a problem.[6] Hospitals and other poor relief apparatuses were strained with dwindling resources and growing need.[7] Population growth presented a large problem to city leaders and residents of the city recognized it as an issue.

The city also expanded geographically. While London's walls and the jurisdiction of the mayor and alderman defined the majority of the city in the beginning of the sixteenth-century, Westminster and the suburbs grew dramatically, putting only a minority of the population under the rule of the City.[8] Geographic growth affected how residents understood and interacted with the city. Navigating the city and dealing with one's neighbors became difficult tasks to accomplish.[9] London's changing size was thought to offer convenient hiding places, and concerns about the possible proximity of vagabonds and other unsavory characters grew.[10] Living in London and experiencing these social changes could be an unsettling experience, and many residents voiced concerns about the growth of the city.[11]

Change was not limited to London, as sixteenth-century England experienced rapid religious change. The Reformation, which was officially underway in England between 1529 and 1559, reacted to and spurred significant changes in religious beliefs. Changes in religious belief are more difficult to trace and the chronological boundaries of the 'popular' Reformation are far more vague than those of the official

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[6] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 38.
[7] Ibid, 40.
[8] Jenner and Griffiths, "Introduction," 2.
[9] Griffiths, *Lost Londons*, 67-70, 76-77.
[10]Ibid, 70.
[11] Margaret Pelling, "Skirting the city? Disease, social change, and divided households in the seventeenth century," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London,* ed. Mark S.R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths (Manchester, UK; New York, USA: Manchester U.P.; distributed exclusively in the USA by ST. Martin's Press, 2000), 158-159.

Reformation.[12] Similar ambiguity can be found in the terminology for different

religious groups. "Catholic" and "Protestant" are not historically clear categories,

especially when people like Henry VIII claimed to be Catholic even as they rejected

Rome's authority. Furthermore divisions between "Protestant" groups can be difficult

to quantify because these positions were loosely defined throughout the period. The

ambiguity of these definitions helps to illustrate an ambiguity, and confusion, of

beliefs.[13]

    The establishment of the Henrician Supremacy in 1534 was the first and most

important event of Henry VIII's Reformation, and it made the church subservient to

the Crown. Many historians understand the supremacy as part of a trend in the growth

of monarchical power that began under the first two Tudor kings.[14] Henry VII's

Coronation Oath, for example, had been altered from that of his father's in order to

express an increase in power.[15] Justified through the use of Scripture, Henry VIII was

compared to Old Testament leaders like David, Solomon, and Josiah to cement his

place of power over the clergy and to demand obedience in religious matters.[16]

Indeed, the Henrician Supremacy was generally met with obedience, with the

possible exception of the Pilgrimage of Grace, although the supremacy was only an

interest, not a cause, of this group.[17]

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[12] D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty, 1530-70," in *The English Reformation Revised,* ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge, UK; New York, USA: Cambridge U.P.,1987), 94.

[13] Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge, UK; New York, USE: Cambridge U.P., 2003) xv-i, 3.

[14] Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1993), 1-14.

[15] Glyn Redworth, "Whatever Happened to the English Reformation," *History Today* 37, no. 10 (1987): 30

[16] D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty," 29.

[17] Ibid, 31.

Much of the resistance to the Reformation was generally to the dissolution of the monasteries and the reorganization of the parochial system. The Pilgrimage of Grace, a organized rising in 1536 against the Reformation, occurred the same year as the first dissolutions. The Pilgrimage of Grace was the largest internal threat, but smaller incidents express a similar hostility to the dissolution of the monasteries. In Exeter in 1537, local women attacked workmen who had been ordered to suppress St. Nicholas's Priory.[18]

This reaction may be, in part, due to the fact that the dissolution of the monasteries affected many day-to-day activities for the English, especially because of the role of the monasteries in poor relief. Prior to the dissolution, monasteries played a large role in caring for the poor, a responsibility which fell to the church. After the dissolution in 1535 and 1539, alms fell dramatically and the living conditions of the poor deteriorated. While secularized poor relief began to be put into place, there was a lag between the growth of secularized poor relief and the decline of ecclesiastical poor relief. Furthermore, monks and friars who used to live in the monasteries were left homeless and added strain to an already strained system. Robert Copland's *Highway to the Spital House* was published in the year of the second wave of dissolutions, and was an early piece of rogue literature that depicted such a scenario, describing the dialogue between now homeless clergy and the official of a spital house.[19]

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[18] D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty," 26. C.S.L. Davies, "Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace," in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England,* ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge U.P., 1987), 58.

[19] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 274.

Changes to the Church of England continued to be enacted after the
dissolution, but by 1559, the Elizabethan Settlement brought some stability to the
Church.[20] Religious sentiments, however, were by no means uniform. While radical
Protestants called for further reforms, more conservative believers were occasionally
left to their own devices because the government did not rigorously enforce the
Settlement.[21] Furthermore, patterns of religious belief seem to illustrate a difference
between clerical and lay belief, generational differences, and geographic differences.
The laity tended to be less traditional, quickly abandoning Catholic formulae under
Edward VI and re-adopting them more slowly under Mary I.[22] Religious beliefs also
differed by generation. Susan Brigden has argued that many of the Marian martyrs
were young people who had not experienced a non-reformed religion and that the
martyrs were trying to follow the religion with which they had been raised.
Generational conflict seems to have been a part of the Reformation in England, and
religious beliefs also seem to have varied by geographic place.[23]

The Reformation helps to illustrate the importance of obedience and authority.
D.M. Palliser writes, "The truly astonishing feature of the Henrician revolution is that
a manifestly unpopular and unwanted policy was imposed so successfully and with so
little public disturbance."[24] The Henrician Supremacy successfully shifted an
important site of religious obedience. The placing of the royal arms in all churches

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[20] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County, 1500-1600* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1986), 171; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampsire: Macmillan, 1990), 30.
[21] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors,* 191; MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England,* 178.
[22] Susan Brigden, "Youth and the English Reformation" *Past and Present* 95 (1982): 37-67; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 161.
[23] MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England*, 38.
[24] Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty," 35.

demonstrates how the Reformation changed the relationship between the Church and the Crown. On the whole, the people of England respected and followed this shift of authority and followed the state's religious statutes with little questioning.[25] Of course, there was some resistance and the Pilgrimage of Grace is perhaps the most obvious example.[26] Furthermore, recalcitrance may have not been reported in areas where a majority of people refrained from attending services.[27]

Resistance was, however, minimal, and this may be, at least in part, due to the fact that obedience had its merits. Obedience to the Crown was safer and less challenging, but, as Patrick Collinson has suggested, it also emphasized the importance of community. For example, in 1559, Bishop Scott of Chester was slow to speak of his more traditionalist religious beliefs because of his respect for Queen Elizabeth, "unto whom I do acknowledge that I owe obedience, not only for wrath and displeasure's sake, but for conscience sake, and that by the Scriptures of God."[28] This quote demonstrates how reverence for a higher ecclesiastical and governmental authority could cause someone to be more hesitant to voice his personal beliefs. Not only did it allow someone to escape "wrath and displeasure," but it also served the "conscience" and God. The importance of social inclusion, a key aspect of understanding the place of the vagabond in the larger community, is also exhibited in this quote. Individual religious beliefs were sometimes seen as less important than inclusion in a continuous and whole community, and obedience was an integral aspect of social inclusion.

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[25] Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998), 201.
[26] Davies, "Popular Religion and the Pilgrimage of Grace," 76.
[27] MacCulloch, Diarmaid, *Suffolk and the Tudors.*
[28] Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England,* 203.

It is important to place the Reformation within the larger context of governmental power and authority. Tudor England was a relatively centralized state, especially for the early modern period, and the importance of the central government cannot be ignored. Although the central government generally had to mediate its wishes through local bureaucracies, the central policies could still make a large impact in the localities, as is demonstrated through the implementation of religious policies by Henry VIII, Edward IV, Mary I, and Elizabeth I.[29] The Crown, however, needed the help of Parliament because only Parliament could legislate penal actions that could enforce obedience. Each of these monarchs needed parliamentary approval in order to put their positions forward in earnest.[30]

Of course, it was not simply penal action that encouraged people to be obedient to the central government. Proclamations and the manipulation of media, such as the printing press and painted portraits, were used to enforce and legitimize the authority of the central government. Both the effectiveness and the topics of proclamations varied. Through them, the Crown attempted to control wages, food supplies, plague precautions, and many other aspects of social and economic life.[31] Proclamations were similarly used to address the problem of vagrancy and the changes in social policy. One such proclamation states, "all the parts of this realm of England and Wales, be presently with rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars exceedingly pestered, by means of which daily happeneth in the same realm horrible

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[29] Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII,* 8.

[30] Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 52.

[31] D.M. Palliser, *The Age of Elizabeth: England under the Later Tudors, 1547-1603* (London: Longman, 1992), 377.

murders, thefts, and other outrages."[32] This example attests to the strong language that was used in these proclamations, and through these types of proclamations, the Crown was able to express disdain for the vagrant population as well as attempt to garner support for its own policies.

Media, like drama, could also be used and manipulated for the benefit of the Crown. Although this tactic was not used to deal explicitly with vagrants and social policy, it was used to influence public representations of the Crown. This control was imperfect, and it may be more accurate to say that the Crown simply enforced limitations onto its own image. Rather than carefully constructing its own image in all public representations, officials could only destroy representations deemed inappropriate or offensive.[33] Official portraiture, of course, could be controlled, and was used to help perpetuate certain ideas, such the sacralization of the monarchy under Henry VIII.[34] The frequent use of visual comparisons between Henry VIII and biblical figures like David helped to strengthen claims of a sacred leader, and this occurrence helps to suggest the power of the Crown to manipulate its image.

Just as control of the press and various forms of media was imperfect, so was central control of local governments and elites. The central government relied on local officials to enforce their policies, and this reliance was a definite weakness. As an example, visitation procedures, meant to enforce religious change, could only cope with minority problems because, if the majority of the local population held a certain religious belief, the local officials would not be inclined to enforce the decisions of

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[32] Quoted in Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 62.
[33] Susan Doran, "Virginity, Divinity, and Power: The Portraits of Elizabeth I," in *The Myth of Elizabeth,* ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke, UK; New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 129.
[34] D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty," 28-9.

the central government.[35] Furthermore, through tax strikes, local governments could

threaten the resources of the central government.[36] No matter the ways in which the

central government claimed they could control governance across England, it

remained dependent on local governments and elites to enforce laws and collect

taxes. Tensions between local and central governments also affected how social

inclusion could function. Chapter five will detail this issue as it relates to the

vagabond.

Economic problems persisted throughout the late sixteenth-century, and the

success of attempts to deal with those problems varied. Anglo-Dutch trade was vital

to the English economy and helped to form Tudor foreign policy from the late

fifteenth-century and into the late sixteenth century. English cloth was exported in

mass to the Low Countries, and at the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, it is estimated

that two-thirds of English trade was with Antwerp.[37] Maintaining good relations with

the Habsburgs, rulers of seventeen provinces in the Low Countries was a major

concern for the English government because the importance of the Anglo-Netherlands

trade was a weakness for the English government.[38] Disruptions to international trade,

as occurred intermittently throughout the late sixteenth-century, weakened the

domestic economy due to this dependency on the cloth trade.[39] Wars with Spain,

France, and the Netherlands as well as trade embargoes in 1563-4 and 1568-7 had

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[35] D.M. Palliser, "Popular Reactions to the Reformation During the Years of Uncertainty," 110.
[36] Patrick Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I," in *Elizabethan Essays,* ed. Patrick Collinson (London, UK: Hambledon Press, 1994), 34.
[37] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Third Anstey Memorial Lectures in the University of Kent at Canterbury 12-15 May, 1986,* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991), 330.
[38] Ibid, 323.
[39] Ibid.

particularly devastating effects for English exports.[40] Although the English market

eventually widened to Germany, outside of the Habsburgs control, the inherent

weakness in international trade negatively affected the English economy.[41]

    The nature of international trade, poor harvests, disease, and inflation

encouraged domestic economic problems. Inflation was a near constant problem, and

currency reform in 1560 was only mildly successful.[42] Famine, spurred by poor

harvests, occurred in 1586-8, 1596-8, and 1622-3.[43] Affording adequate food and

housing became a problem for many people through this period, and economic

problems contributed to the number of people in need of and reliant on poor relief.

Enclosures further aggravated these problems because less and less public land was

becoming available to scavenge for firewood and graze farm animals. Food and

enclosure riots became a problem, and the interests of the poor were occasionally

voiced in terms of rebellion.[44] Without adequate food or shelter, begging and

wandering became options worth considering, and economic problems, therefore,

helped to encourage migration to London and throughout England as well as concerns

about riot and rebellion.

    Migration and subsequent population fluctuations in London acted as de-

stabilizing forces, but disease also contributed to a sense of uncertainty: plague came

to London in 1554-5, 1579-80, 1584-5, 1589-92, and 1603-4.[45] Outbreaks of disease

were occasionally blamed on vagabonds because they were thought to carry disease

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[40] Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England,* 330.
[41] Ibid, 331.
[42] Ibid, 174.
[43] Ibid, 57.
[44] Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England,* 3. impr. ed. (London: Longman, 1995), 100.
[45] Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England,* 60.

from place to place. The loose and sparse clothing generally worn by vagabonds contributed to this understand since it was thought that tight clothing could prevent disease transmission.[46] The vagabond, as well as other travelers, became associated with concerns about disease and health. The vagabond was similarly associated with the food and enclosure riots. Although their participation in these riots is debatable, they were sometimes blamed for encouraging the riots.[47]

In this way, the vagabond existed in a challenging historical period. Blamed for some of the de-stabilizing aspects of the period, the vagabond was subject to changes in religion, changes in social policy, population fluctuations, and a central government that was growing but was still subject to some of the powers held by local government. The exact picture of the vagabond, however, needs to be outlined in order to understand the place of the vagabond in this changing society. The following chapter will examine the dominant characteristics of the vagabond as portrayed in both literature and court documents.

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[46] Pelling, "Skirting the city?" 158.
[47] Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England,* 100.

Chapter Two: Anatomizing the Vagabond

The early modern English vagabond was a figure that could occasionally elude identification. The minutes of the Governors of Bridewell Hospital illustrate the difficulties that contemporaries could have when attempting to identify a vagabond. In his essay "The Counterfeit Vagrant: The Dynamic of Deviance in the Bridewell Court Records and the Literature of Roguery," Martin van Elk describes Mall Newberry's (or Newborowe) plot to escape from Bridewell Hospital in December 1602. The conspiracy was foiled, and she was sentenced to hard labor. In January 1603, however, she was brought before the governors again; she had apparently been rehabilitated and had converted. The records states, "Newborowe in outward shewe seemed to have the more repentinge and meltinge hart as partlie by her teares appeared."[48] Van Elk notes that, "the language of the record describing Mall's rehabilitation suggests a degree of unease: the use of 'outward show,' 'seemed,' and even 'partly' tells us that the governors are aware of the possibility of histrionic manipulation."[49] Although it was the job of the governors to be able to distinguish a vagabond in a crowd, they still had difficulties doing so and were aware of those difficulties. For the governors of Bridewell Hospital, a vagabond was not necessarily easy to spot.

Similar difficulties can be found in rogue literature. Although writers of rogue literature frequently claimed to be experts in identifying vagabonds, they admitted to having difficulties doing so from time to time. In *A Caveat for Common Cursitors*,

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[48] Quoted in van Elk, "The Counterfeit Vagrant," 122-3.
[49] Ibid, 123.

Thomas Harman describes his own experience with a counterfeit crank, someone who

begs and pretends to have "the falling sickness." He writes:

> This crank there, lamentably lamenting and pitifully crying to be
> relieved, declared to diverse there his painful and miserable disease. I,
> being risen and not half ready, heard his doleful words and rueful
> mournings; hearing him name the falling sickness, thought assuredly
> to myself that he was a deep dissembler; so, coming out at a sudden
> and beholding his ugly and irksome attire, his loathsome and horrible
> countenance, it made me in a marvelous perplexity what to think of
> him – whether it were feigned or truth – for after this manner went he:
> he was naked from the waist upward, saving he had an old jerkin of
> leather patched and that was loose about him, that all his body lay out
> bare... Surely the sight was monstrous and terrible.[50]

Like the governors of Bridewell, Harman had difficulty deciding if this man was or

was not a vagabond. It is important to note that both the governors and Harman

frequently needed to rely on sight in order to decide who was a vagabond, especially

when knowledge of the suspected vagabond was limited. In both of the previous

examples, sight was a necessity. Mall Newberry makes an "outward shewe," and the

sight of the counterfeit crank is "monstrous and terrible," leaving Harman in a

"marvelous perplexity." Visual clues were an important part of identifying the

vagabond.

   While this reliance on sight could make vagabonds difficult to identify for

contemporaries, the descriptions and stories of vagabonds highlight three major

characteristics: mobility, cleverness, and depravity. Although there is a fair amount of

variation in the sources, these three characteristics can act as a rough definition of the

vagabond. To give an idea of how authors and legislators understood the vagabond,

each of these characteristics will be illustrated through stories and descriptions.

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[50] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 129.

<u>Mobility</u>

John Awdeley in *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, gives definitions for approximately fifty different types of vagabonds. Each of these types used different schemes in order to be able to support themselves, and many of these tricks relied on their mobility. Mobility was an attribute that is assumed in many of Awdely's descriptions of the different kinds of vagabonds, and this fact is demonstrated through his frequent use of the word "goeth." The only description that he gives of a swigman is, "A Swigman goeth with a Peddler's pack."[51] Movement is thus an important aspect of even the shortest descriptions and may only be inferred or implicit in these descriptions.

Occasionally, a vagabond may be described as having loose ties to one place. The tinkard, in Awdely's description, is an example of such an occurrence: "A Tinkard leaveth his bag a-sweating at the Alehouse, which they term their 'Bousing Inn,' and in the meanseason goeth abroad a-begging."[52] Although the tinkard had loose connections to a specific place, it was only to store his things while he moves about the country. The only reason that the tinkard had ties to the alehouse was because his mobility necessitated such a relationship.

The vagabond could also have ties to certain people within a community. In his description of the walking mort, Thomas Harman explains how householders would sometimes help a vagabond. Walking morts, who were older female

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[51] John Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 93.
[52] Ibid, 93.

vagabonds, were thought to be robbed frequently by upright men and other powerful male vagabonds. Because of this, walking morts generally left their valuables with a householder. Harman writes,

> When these get aught, either with begging, bitchery, or bribery, as money or apparel, they are quickly shaken out of all by the upright men that they are in marvelous fear to carry anything about them that is of some value. Wherefore this policy they use: they leave their money now with one and then with another trust householder, either with the good man of goodwife, sometimes in one shire, and then in another, as they travel.[53]

The walking mort could have a social connection to a householder, but it is important that this householder changed according to what shire the walking mort was travelling in. As with the tinkard, the walking mort's relationship with the householder was predicated on their mobility.

The importance of mobility is made most explicit in Awdely's description of the wild rogue, for which he writes, "A Wild Rogue is he that hath no abiding place but by his color of going abroad to beg is commonly to seek some kinsman of his, and all that be of his corporation be properly called Rogues."[54] This description highlights two important aspects of mobility. Being mobile not only limited ties to a specific place, but it also limited ties to certain people. If a person moved from place to place constantly, they were far more likely to have relationships with other mobile people than they were with people who stayed in one place. Thus, mobility played a role in understandings of the vagabond as a member of a larger community of vagrants.

Indeed, although vagabonds were thought to be mobile, they were also thought to sometimes travel in groups. In the dedication to *A Caveat for Common*

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[53] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 139.
[54] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, 93

Cursitors, Thomas Harman describes a group of vagabonds travelling together to a funeral for the doles that were given out at the burials of notable men. He writes,

> At his burial there was such a number of beggars, besides poor householders dwelling thereabouts, that uneath [underneath] they might lie or stand about the House. Then was there prepared for them a great and a large barn, and a great fat ox sod out in Frumenty for them, with bread and drink abundantly to furnish out the premises; and every person had two pence, for such was the dole. When Night approached, the poor householders repaired home to their houses; the other wayfaring bold beggars remained all night in the barn; and the same barn being searched with light in the night by this old man (and then young), with others, they told sevenscore persons of men, every of them having his woman, except it were two women that lay alone together for some especial cause. Thus having their makes to make merry withal, the burial was turned to bousing and belly-cheer…[55]

This group of vagrants had been travelling in order to beg and support themselves. While this may not be considered a 'trick' like some of the other ways that vagabonds got money, it is established that their behavior is dishonest: where the poor householders went home and used the dole appropriately, the vagabonds used the doles to celebrate inappropriately. Indeed, this passage allows for a direct comparison between the poor householders and the vagrants. The poor householders, by name, had a physical place for which they were responsible. After receiving their dole, they returned home to care for their families and use the donations responsibly. The vagabonds, on the other hand, did not have the same responsibilities or a place to which to return. Their lack of a home encouraged them to pervert the funeral into a festival, and travelling as a group, they acted together to dishonor the dead.

Mobility offered the vagrant some important tools to use in their various cozening schemes. The first of these tools was anonymity. Awdley's description of an

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[55] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 111.

abraham man serves as an example: "An Abraham Man is he that walketh bare-armed and bare-legged, and feigheth himself mad, and carryeth a pack of wool, or a stick with bacon on it, or suchlike toy, and nameth himself Poor Tom."[56] Because the Abraham man did not stay in one place, he was able to maintain the illusion of madness. If he stayed in one place for too long, villagers might have suspected his trick. The ruffler is described in a similar manner and also used anonymity to his advantage. Awdely writes, "A Ruffler goeth with a weapon to seek service, saying he hath been a Servitor in the wars, and beggeth for his relief. But his chiefest trade is to rob poor wayfaring men and market women."[57] As with the abraham man, if the ruffler were not mobile, he would not be able to pretend to be a veteran. Staying in one place for too long threatened the vagabond's anonymity, a useful tool in his cozening schemes.

Another important tool that mobility gave to the vagrant was experience with a wide variety of people and knowledge of regional accents. Robert Greene, in *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage,* describes how a vagabond could recognize accents and use this knowledge to his advantage. This vagabond, referred to as a "setter," a "verser" or a "barnacle," would approache a "cony," and greet him as if they knew each other. A "cony" was the victim of a vagabond's trick, and the word was derived from a word for "rabbit." After the greeting, the exchange between the setter and the cony is described as such:

> "There is a cony," saith one [vagabond]. At that word out flies the
> Stter, and overtaking the man, begins to salute him thus: "Sir, God
> save you, you are heartily welcome to London! How doth all our good
> friends in the country? I hope they be all in health!" The Countryman

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[56] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, 91.
[57] Ibid, 92.

> seeing a man so courteous that he knows not, half in a brown study at
> this strange salutation, perhaps makes him this answer, 'Sir, all our
> friends in the country are well, thanks be to God, but, truly, I know
> you not. You must pardon me.' 'Why, sir,' saith the Setter, guessing
> by his tongue what countryman he is, 'are you not a Yorkshire man?'[58]

By guessing from where the cony came, the setter was able to gain his trust and begin

his trick in earnest. While knowing accents was certainly not limited to the vagabond,

their mobility made them more likely to be able to distinguish accents. Of course,

implementing this knowledge called for a certain expertise, but it was at least partially

through mobility that this knowledge was gained.

Cunning

Many of the cony-catching schemes that are a part of the representations of

the vagabond require the vagabond to be cunning. Even if the vagabonds share their

schemes with one another, the execution of these schemes requires forethought and

intelligence. It is important that the vagabond is never described as cunning; it is

simply demonstrated through the stories. Perhaps it was thought too flattering to

mention this trait outright, but the trait is easily discernable nonetheless.

Robert Greene's *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage* explicates some of the

more detailed schemes featured in rogue literature. In the section "The Art of

Crosbiting," Greene details several schemes involving female vagabonds baiting

cony's into taverns and alley-ways while male vagabonds, known here as

"crosbiters," waited in the background. The women would wander the streets,

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[58] Robert Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 167.

waiting for a cony to approach them. He describes the simplest of these schemes as

such:

> Some unruly mates that place their consent in lust, letting slip the
> liberty of their eyes on their painted faces, feed upon their unchaste
> beautices till their hearts be set on fire. Then come they to these
> minions, and court them with many sweet words. Alas, their loves
> need no long suits, for they are forthwith entertained, and either they
> go to the Taven to seal up the match with a pottle of Hippocras, or
> straight she carries him to some bad place, and there picks his pocket,
> or else the crosbiters [come] swearing in, and so outface the dismayed
> companion, that, rather than he would be brought in question, he
> would disburse all that he hath present.[59]

This scheme is clever for two reasons. By using female vagabonds as bait, it was

possible to lure the cony out a public eye. Furthermore, because the cony had entered

the alleyway or tavern with a woman of ill repute, they were less likely to tell anyone

what had happened. In another example, the vagabonds use the threat of Bridewell in

order to blackmail the cony. Greene writes,

> Now comes by a country farmer, walking from his inn to perform
> some business, and seeing such a gorgeous damsel, he, wondering at
> such a brave wench, stands staring her on the face, or perhaps doth but
> cast a glance and bid her goodspeed; as plain simple swains have their
> lusting humors as well as others. The trull straight beginning her
> *exordium* with a smile, saith, "How now, my friend, what want you?
> Would you speak with anybody here?" If the fellow hath any bold
> spirit, perhaps he will offer the wine, and then he is caught, tis enough:
> in he goes and they are chambered. Then sends she for her husband, or
> her friend, and there either the farmer's pocket is stripped or else the
> crosbiters fall upon him and threaten him with bridewell and the law.
> Then, for fear, he gives them all in his purse, and makes them some
> bill to pay a sum of money at a certain day.[60]

In this example, the vagabonds were able to use the law and Bridewell in order to get

more money from the cony than what he carried in his purse. These vagabonds were

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[59] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 178.
[60] Ibid, 179.

able to use the structure meant to curb their behavior for their own benefit. Their

cunning leaves the cony not only poor but also afraid for his reputation.

While Harman's text places more emphasis on the deviant and violent

behaviors of the vagabond, cunning is still perceptible in his depiction of the

vagabond. In his section on the rogue, he describes a similar scheme, although he

describes a specific instance when the scheme was used whereas Greene described

the scheme in general. He writes of two rogues who managed to get information

about a parson and his house from the goodwife of an alehouse in East Kent by telling

her that the parson was their long lost uncle. With this information, the two rogues

knew how much money the parson hand and how best to steal it. Knowing that the

parson would only give alms to one person and also knowing that the parson would

open his window to give the alms, the two vagabonds planned accordingly. Harman

describes their scheme,

> The parson openeth his window and thrusteth out his arm to give his
> alms to this Rogue that came whining to receive it, and quickly taketh
> hold of his hand and calleth his fellow to him, which was ready at
> hand with the horselock and clappeth the same about the wrist of his
> arm, that the mullions standing so close together for strength that for
> his life he could not pluck his arm again, and made him believe unless
> he would at the least give them three pounds, they would smite off his
> arm from the body. So that this poor parson, in fear to lose his hand,
> called up his old woman that lay in the loft over him, and willed her to
> take out all the money he had…[61]

The vagabonds were able to use the information, which they had tricked the goodwife

into giving them, in order to get all of the money that the parson had. Their cunning is

thus exhibited in their ability to get information as well as their ability to use that

information. After robbing the parson, the rogues tell the parson to "drink

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[61] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 122.

twelvepence for our sakes tomorrow at the alehouse where we found you and thank the goodwife for the good cheer she made us."[62] The parson followed their instructions, and the next day, when the parson went to see the goodwife, he told her about what had happened. Their conversation ends with the goodwife advising the parson never to speak of what had happened. She states, "By my troth, never speak more of it. When they shall understand of it in the parish, they will but laugh you to scorn."[63] Here, the vagabond's cunning was placed in contrast with the simplicity of the townspeople, including the supposedly well education priest. Greene similarly compares the vagabond with the cony. He writes,

> Perhaps the man [cony] is very simple and patient and whatsoever he thinks, for fear goes his way quiet with his loss, while the Cony-catchers laugh and divide the spoil. And being out of doors, poor man, goeth to his lodging with a heavy heart and watery eyes, pensive and sorrowful, but too late, for perhaps the man's state did depend on that money, and so he, his wife, his children, and his family are brought to extreme misery.[64]

Through these comparisons, the vagabond's cunning was amplified and became a defining characteristic. They conys did not, and perhaps could not, outsmart the vagabond.

While the vagabond's schemes, as described in rogue literature, attest to his cunning, so do the tools and technologies reported in the Bridewell court books. While George Wilmott was suspected of being a pickpocket because he had "the engines of a thiefe about him," other cases feature examples of specific tools.[65] John Whetson was caught with "many cutpurse knives," and there are accounts of

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[62] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 122.
[63] Ibid, 123.
[64] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 172.
[65] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 168.

"picklocks" and "picklock keyes."[66] A locksmith in Southwark was punished for

making keys for thieves in 1618, one for the Earl of Lincoln's lock.[67] Counterfeit

keys suggest another aspect of the vagabond's cunning. Not only was the vagabond

able to gain and use information to steal, they were also able to manipulate

technology to steal. Harman's description of the two rogues alludes to this fact; they

do, after all, use the window and the lock to their advantage. Obtaining, perhaps

creating, and using counterfeit keys, however, was a more advanced and complicated

process than slamming a parson's hand in a window and locking it. The Bridewell

court books also contain reports of false pockets used to store stolen goods. Barbara

Orton was arrested and found to have a "false pocket in her petticoat" where she hid

stolen cloth.[68] Along with the cony-catching schemes, which also appear in the

Bridewell court books, these tools demonstrate how vagabonds were thought to be

cunning as well as occasionally criminal. They could use charm, deception, force, and

technology in order to get what they wanted, and the cony would be left looking, and

feeling, like a fool.

Deviancy

     Deviancy was an important component in understandings of the vagabond.

Here, it is necessary to return to Harman's story of the funeral and the mass gathering

of vagrants. The vagabonds in this story did not act the way they did simply because

they were mobile; deviancy also plays an important role in the story as well as in

other representations of the vagabond. Descriptions and stories of the vagabond

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid, 169.

frequently assume that the vagabond is more likely to commit deviant actions than other people. The reasons why the vagabonds in Harman's story celebrated in the barn with their newly acquired funds are not described. Instead, Harman simply emphasizes the impropriety of their behavior. The story continues thus: "… the burial was turned to bousing and belly-cheer, mourning to mirth, fasting to feasting, prayer to pastime and pressing of paps, and lamenting to lechery. So that it may appear this uncomely company hath had a long continuance, but then nothing given so much to pilfering, picking, and spoiling…"[69] Harman did not feel that it is necessary to explain why the vagabonds acted in this way, and seems to have considered it acceptable to merely assert that vagabonds were more given to this sort of behavior without supplying his reasoning. This fact suggests that the readers of rogue literature may have assumed the deviancy of the vagabond rather than needing it explained to them.

Whether or not deviancy was assumed, differences between male and female deviancy need to be addressed. Sex, of course, played a role in the portrayal of the vagabond, and it was an important factor in understandings of deviancy. The Governors of Bridewell Hospital punished sexual offences along with the many other types of offences. Of the 35,399 cases processed at Bridewell Hospital between 1605 and 1657, 2,411 cases, or 6.81%, were sexual offences.[70] Indeed, as will be discussed later, depictions of the vagabond tied idleness to a wide variety of sins, but the concern for sexual offences was closely tied to concerns of gender and the proper place for both men and women.

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[69] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 111.
[70] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 459.

The authors of rogue literature frequently defined the role and status of male vagabonds by the number of females they have or have had. In his section on the upright man, Awdeley writes, "He may also command any of their women, which they call "doxies," to serve his turn."[71] Male vagrants were also categorized by their skill sets, with such categories as "counterfeit cranks," "jarkmen," and "priggers of prancers." The descriptions of these categories may mention sexual habits, but the name of the category itself is a direct reference to their skill set or role within a cozening scheme.

Female vagabonds, however, were defined almost entirely by their sexuality, and their virginity is a large factor in their status among other vagabonds. For example, when Awdeley describes a kitchin morts, he writes, "A Kitchin Morts is a Girl; she is brought at her full age to the Upright Man to be broken, and so she is called a Doxy until she comes to the honor of an Altham."[72] Harman's description of the antem-morts is more explicit in its reference to sexual behavior: "These antem-morts be married women, as there be but a few. For antem in their language is a church. So she is a wife married at the church. And they be as chaste as a cow I have, that goeth to bull every moon, but which bull she careth not."[73] Here, the name of the category itself references the woman's sexual status as wife, although Harman is quick to dismiss any positive implications this status may have by questioning the fidelity and virtue of the antem-morts.

Furthermore, the role given to women in cozening schemes highlights their sexuality. Robert Greene description of "crosbiting" deals with such schemes. He

[71] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, 92.
[72] Ibid, 94.
[73] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 99.

writes, "The Crosbiting law is a public profession of shameless cozenage mixed with incestuous whoredomes, as ill as was practiced in Gomorrah or Sodom, though not after the same unnatural manner."[74] Greene goes on to explain how a "simpler," which is a man "fondly and wantonly given," is tempted into following a women into an alley-way where she picks his pocket.[75] Yet, Greene makes sure to emphasize the importance of sexuality and sin in this exchange, even if it ends only in pickpocketing. He writes, "In summer evenings and in the winter nights these traffics (these common trulls, I mean), walk abroad either in the fields or streets that are commonly haunted, as stales to draw men into hell."[76] The women and the suggestion of sex serve as bait for a cozening trick, but the repercussions of sex are discussed in more fiery rhetoric than the trick itself. Luke Hutton, in *The Black Dog of Newgate,* describes female vagabonds employing similar tactics.[77] It is important to note, however, that in both Greene's and Hutton's writings the women generally acted at the behest of the men; it was the men who devised and implemented the schemes and the women acted merely as tools.

In all of these schemes the woman is always depicted as a sexual temptation. Unlike male cony-catchers, who may be depicted as clever, the most useful skill of a female vagabond is depicted as being their sexuality. In this way, rogue literature put a deeper emphasis on the sexuality of women, even though the sexuality of all vagabonds was questioned.

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[74] Robert Greene. *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 177.
[75] Ibid, 178.
[76] Ibid, 178.
[77] Luke Hutton, *The Blacke Dogge of Newgate both pithie and profitable for all readers* (London: G. Simon and W. White, 1596), 6.

A similar pattern can be found in the court documents of Bridewell Hospital. When the governors of Bridewell questioned the people who had been arrested, they were frequently given labels to describe their crimes. Examples of these labels are 'vagrant,' 'idle,' 'lewd,' and 'nightwalker.' While some labels, like 'pickpocket,' were assigned nearly equally to men and women, others were more gender specific. It is first important to recognize that women accounted for around 40% of the people labeled between 1559 and 1658. Therefore, even if women were assigned a certain label fewer times than men, the label still may have been given to women in a higher percentage.

Women were far more likely to be labeled in a sexual manner, although the label "lusty" was given only to men. The labels, "audacious," "bawd," "lascivious," "lewd," and "loose" were given more frequently to women than to men. Two issues, however, need to be taken into account. Some of these adjective, like "base," occur extremely infrequently over this fifty year period while others, like "lewd," occur more frequently. Furthermore, variations in this fifty year period of the popularity of each work also exist, which can possibly be explained by changes in leadership at the hospital as well as changes in the word's popularity in the broader population. Yet, even with these issues in mind, a pattern is still perceivable: women were more likely to be given sexually related labels.[78]

Exceptions, however, need to be addressed. As stated earlier, it was only men who were described as "lusty," although it was a label used frequently by the governor of Bridewell. This fact may tie into the idea of women as temptations. As also explained earlier, women, in cozening schemes, were used as bait to get

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[78] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 460-464.

unsuspecting men to put themselves into vulnerable situations. Of course, in order for

this sort of scheme to work, the man had to be susceptible to temptation and weak-

willed. In Robert Greene's portrayal, in order for a man to fall victim to a crosbiting

scheme, they have to first be "fondly and wantonly given."[79] In other words, they

have to be naturally inclined to commit the sin of fornication or adultery. Green

writes, "Some unruly mates that place their consent in lust, letting slip the liberty of

their eyes on their painted faces, feed upon their unchaste beauties till their hearts be

set on fire."[80] Women can only act as temptations; the men have to consent to their

own baser inclinations.

With these gender differences in mind, it is important to remember that both

male and female vagabonds were thought to live together, beg together, and die

together. Although these differences existed, vagabonds of both genders were

addressed together and their deviancy was addressed together. Harman, in the

dedication of *A Caveat for Common Cursitors*, describes the process of learning

about vagabonds and their origins. He writes,

> …as far as I can learn or understand by the examination of a number
> of them, their language, which they term peddler's French or canting,
> began but within these thirty years, little above; and that the first
> inventor thereof was hanged, all save the head; for that is the final end
> of them all, or else to die of some filthy and horrible disease.[81]

Here, he seems to suggest that, from their origins, vagabonds, both male and female,

were deviant and they will continue to be so. While an originating vagabond is not

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[79] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 178.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 111-112.

mentioned again, in Harman or any other text, the absolute pervasiveness of deviancy suggested in this passage is unexceptional to Harman's text.

Furthermore, the reasons why a person would become a vagabond are rarely enumerated. Robert Greene's *The Black Book's Messenger* is the story of Ned Browne, a cut-purse and cony-catcher. Written in the voice of Browne in a confessional style, the story begins as such, "Know therefore, Gentlemen, that my parents were honest, of good report, and no little esteem amongst their neighbors, and sought (if good nurture and education would have served) to have made me an honest man. But as one self-same ground brings forth flowers and thistles, so of a sound stock proved an untoward Scion, and of a virtuous father, a most vicious son."[82] The root of Ned Browne's base desires and actions do not have an explanation. His "viciousness" only needs to be stated in order to be understood.

Some of the stories of rogue literature occasionally undercut this assumed relationship between deviancy and vagrancy. In his description of the walking mort, Thomas Harman relays the story of a walking mort who almost drowns but is saved by a man who will only save her if she agrees to have sex with him. When he helps her out of the water, she refuses to have sex with him and tells his family who respond by beating him. Although the walking mort is portrayed as being morally superior to the man who she 'tricks' into helping her, Harman still announces her deviant behavior. He writes, "I began to rebuke her for her lewd life and beastly behavior, declaring to her what punishment was prepared and heaped up for her in the

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[82] Robert Greene, *The Black Book's Messenger*, in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature,* ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 194.

world to come for her filthy living and wretched conversation."[83] No matter the actions of the vagabond or the people around them, it seems that they are always defined as deviant, even if they are more sympathetic characters than the people they trick.

It would be a mistake, however, not to more closely examine the ethics of the vagabond and the inconsistencies that exist in rogue literature and court documents. Defining the vagabond as morally bankrupt is not as straightforward as some of these authors attest. Although the deviancy of vagabonds may be assumed, the relationship between vagrancy and deviancy is more complicated and nuanced than this assumption implies. The following chapter will examine this relationship and the boundary between the vagrant and the non-vagrant.

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[83] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 139.

Chapter Three: The Confused Boundaries of the Vagabond

While the characteristics assigned to the vagrant are relatively straightforward, how were the vagrant and non-vagrant distinguished? Mobility, cunning, and deviancy do not necessarily make a person a vagabond; a quick-witted but badly-inclined tradesman might be able to fill the same descriptions. In order to better understand the vagabond, then, it is necessary to analyze where the boundaries between the vagrant and the non-vagrant were and which of the vagrant's characteristics were unique to him. Yet, it is also necessary to accept that a clear boundary might not emerge. The representations of the vagabond, as will be discussed in chapter four, were closely connected to anxieties about changing social and cultural norms, and the amorphous nature of anxiety and cultural change decrease the likelihood of a concrete boundary.

Perhaps the most reviled characteristic of the vagabond was his idleness. Bridewell Hospital was founded in an effort to combat idleness through forced labor. Work was considered to be more than simply a way to support oneself. In the sermons "Against Idleness," work is said to be one of the punishments for eating from the tree of knowledge and a divinely mandated task for all people although exceptions are made for the disabled.[84] Bridewell Hospital was intended to "cure" those who did not work but were not disabled and, by extension, to help the community. The Letters Patent of Edward VI for Christ's, Bridewell, and St. Thomas's Hospitals states, "nor that the sick or diseased when they shall be recovered

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[84] "Against Idleness," in *Certaine Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queene Elizabeth I (1547-1571),* ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainsville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), 249.

and restored to health may remain idle and lazy vagabonds of the state, but that they

in like manner by placed and compelled to labor and honest and wholesome

employments…"[85] The phrase, "vagabonds of the state" emphasizes the strain that the

vagabond placed on the state, and the people of England, when they were in the care

of the hospital and, therefore, suggests the communal benefit of "honest and

wholesome employments."

In "Against Idleness," the practical necessity of work was also understood

both in terms of the community and the individual. Idleness was a sin for four

reasons: the idle person was not able to support himself honestly, the idle person was

not able to support needy members of his community, the idle person relied on

diligent members of the community for support, and the idle person was more

inclined to mischief and evil.[86] Bridewell Hospital was designed to contend with the

understanding of idleness as a sin. The Hospital was intended to be self-sufficient,

relying only on the work of the people confined to it. Of course, this goal was never

fulfilled, but it does illustrate that the concerns of supporting oneself and not relying

on the community were as important to the founders as to those who wrote the

sermons.

Furthermore, understandings of charity were closely connected to the

understandings of idleness. A sermon on charity featured in *Certaine Sermons or*

Homilies Appointed to be Read in Church in the time of Queene Elizabeth I explains

the seemingly contrary views on charity and the vagrant. In the first part of the

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[85] "The Letters Patent of Edward VI for Christ's, Bridewell, and St. Thomas's Hospitals." In
Memoranda, References, and Documents Relating to the Royal Hospitals of the City of London,
ed. Committee of the Court of Common Council Appointed in Relation to the Said Hospitals
(London: Arthur Taylor, 1836), 65.
[86] "Against Idleness," 251.

sermon, the importance of charity to all people is emphasized: "Of all things that be good to bee taught unto Christian people, there is nothing more necessary to be spoken of and daily called upon, then charity..."[87] Charity is then defined as "to love God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our powers and strength," as well as "also to love every man, good and evil, friend and foe, and whatsoever cause be given to the contrary, yet nevertheless to bear good will and heart unto every man..."[88] Here, loving God and all people was the hallmark of charity.

The second part of the sermon severely alters this definition of charity through two qualifications. The first is that charity has two "offices," one for the person of good disposition and one for the person of evil disposition. The goal of charity then becomes "to raise good men for well doing, that they may continue therein, and to rebuke and correct by the word of God, the offences and crimes of all evil disposed persons."[89] These two offices mimic the categories of the deserving and undeserving poor. The deserving poor, being the "good men" deserved aid in times of need whereas the undeserving poor, being the "evil disposed persons," never worked even when they were capable and therefore did not deserve aid. This first qualification of the definition of charity helps to explain government policy towards the undeserving poor, including the vagrant. Bridewell Hospital belongs to this second office of charity. The second but related qualification is that charity can be used as a tool "to fight against the kingdom of the Devil..."[90] Executed by "the Preacher with the word,

[87] "A Sermon of Christian Love and Charity," in *Certaine Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queene Elizabeth I (1547-1571),* ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainsville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), 40.
[88] Ibid.
[89] "A Sermon of Christian Love and Charity," 44.
[90] Ibid.

and the Governors with the sword," charity becomes a weapon that can be used "against" a person in the same way that it can be used "for" a person.

Of course, it would be naïve to suggest that the prisoners at Bridewell were only told to work for their own good. The people confined to Bridewell Hospital were members of the "undeserving" poor and were subject to little sympathy. The Chamberlain's Accounts indicate that the wounded, sick, and children were of a far higher concern and received more aid. Although the treasurer of Bridewell was sporadically given money "for the diet of such masterless and vagrant persons," orphans, as an example, tended to receive aid more frequently and in higher amounts.[91] Although imposed labor could be understood as a type of charity, used to help the reformation of "evil disposed persons" it was, in practice, a way to diminish costs and to impose punishment.

Because the idle person was thought to be more inclined to mischief and evil, idleness could be tied to a variety of other sins. In "Against Idleness," the wandering widow is given as an example of an idle person inclined to other sins: "Saint Paul exhorteth Timothie to eschew and refuse idle widowes, which goes about from house to house, because they are not idle, but prattlers also, and busibodies, speaking things which are not comely."[92] Speaking inappropriately and spreading gossip were tied to idleness because widows would only have time to gossip when they were idle.

The structure of Bridewell Hospital also encouraged connections between vagabondage and other misdeeds. While the written intent of the hospital was to reform vagabonds, the governors of Bridewell also attempted to combat prostitution,

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[91] "The Chamberlain's Account, 1584-6: No. 1-281," *Chamber accounts of the sixteenth century: London Record Society,* 20 (1984), No. 265.
[92] "Against Idleness," 250.

sexual immorality, and dishonest financial interactions. The connection made here is less explicit than the ones made in the sermons and in rogue literature, but Bridewell's role as a tool for the enforcement of proper morals in London affected how people understood those confined to the hospital. Paul Griffiths, in *Lost Londons*, has compiled a list of the offenses for which people were sent to Bridewell and the frequency with which they occurred. His data covers the years 1605 to 1675, and he has separated it into four-year increments. Although this data is slightly later than the majority of this study, it provides a picture of the breadth of offenses that Bridewell was used to correct. For example, between 1605 and 1657, 2,411 people were convicted of sexual offenses like incest, bigamy, incontinent living, and lodging lewd people.[93] Other types of offences included abandoning children, being drunk, disrupting a divine service, and attempting suicide.[94] On the other hand, offences characteristic of vagrancy such as begging, counterfeiting madness, and being idle, account for 24,592 people.[95] While it is clear that the large majority of cases at Bridewell dealt with vagrancy, it is also clear that Bridewell was utilized to control sexual, religious, and household misbehavior.

Like the sermons, rogue literature tied idleness to other sinful acts by claiming that the idle had more time to commit crimes and that they are more inclined to commit those crimes. In this way, idleness and other sins became intertwined., and the vagrant were thought to have pre-existing tendencies towards sinful behaviors. Idleness was not just a sin; it was also a cause of sinful behavior. In the sermons, the sins associated with idleness tend to be those that a person would commit to entertain

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[93] Griffiths, 451.
[94] Ibid, 449, 452-3.
[95] Ibid, 454, 456.

himself, such as the idle widows who were said to prattle. Rogue literature features similar allegations, although the sins highlighted tend to be gambling and drinking. In *The Fraternity of Vagabonds* (1561), John Awdely describes a Prigman: "A Pringman goeth with a stick in his hand like an idle person. His property is to steal clothes off the hedge, which they call "storing of the Rogueman," or else to filch Poultry, carrying them to the Alehouse, which they call the "Bousing Inn," and there sit playing at cards and dice, till that is spent which they have so filched."[96] Idleness contributed to the Prigman's gambling and drinking, but unlike in the sermons, there is a second complicating factor. The Prigman not only drank because he was idle, but he also needed to be idle in order to steal the clothes and poultry to afford his drinking. Thus, idleness contributed to sinful behavior and helped to finance it.

Robert Greene, in *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage* (1591), makes a similar allegation. He writes, "The Cony-catchers, appareled like honest civil Gentlemen, or good fellows, with a smooth face, as if butter would not melt in their mouths, after dinner when the Clients are come down from Westminster hall, and are somewhat at leisure to walk up and down Paul's, Fleet Street, Holborn, the Strand, and such common haunted places…"[97] While they walked up and down the street, the cony-catchers looked for targets and completed their scams. Unlike the Prigman, this cony-catcher was able to mimic the higher classes, using the money he cheated from honest men. In this way, Greene further emphasizes the usefulness of idleness, demonstrating that it is not only capable of helping to finance drinking and gambling, but also able to finance the illusion of class.

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[96] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 92.
[97] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 167.

Indeed, class distinctions were not always so distinct. Idleness can belong to the upper as well as the lower classes. The sermon "Against Idleness" states, "hee taketh Idlenesse to bee no euill at all, but rather a commendable thyng, semmely for those that be wealthy..."[98] The sermon continues by exhorting every man's obligation to work and does not exempt the wealthy. The wealthy, like the able-bodied poor, had no excuse to be idle, and the sins that belonged to the able-bodied poor may just as easily have belonged to the able-bodied wealthy. Awdeley expresses similar concerns in his description of the jarkman: "A Jarkman is he that can write and read, and sometimes speak Latin. He useth to make counterfeit licenses which they call "Gibes," and sets to Seals, in their language called "Jarks.""[99] Education, something generally denied to the poor, can also belong to the vagabond, thus suggesting that the boundaries between the vagrant and the respectable may not have been entirely clear.

It is important to remember, however, that not all portrayals of the vagrant were in agreement. One important example of a contradiction concerns the issue of education. Although Awdely asserts that there were educated vagrants, Thomas Harman disagrees. Referencing Awdely's earlier work, he writes,

> For as much as these two names, a Jarkman and a Patrico, be in the old brief of vagabonds, and set forth as two kinds of evildoers, you shall understand that a Jarkman hath his name of a Jark, which is a seal in their Language, as one should make writings and set seals for licenses and passports. And, for truth, there is none that goeth about the country of them that can either write so good and fair a hand... so that I will not blot my book with these two that be not.[100]

Here, it is apparent that no matter the patterns in portrayals of the vagrant, consensus did not always exist.

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[98] "Against Idleness," 249.
[99] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 93.
[100] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 134.

While some authors disagreed about certain aspects of wealth, privilege, and the vagabond, concerns about class were present in the representations of the vagrant. Idleness played a direct role in understandings of vagrancy, but class played a more implicit role, lingering among discussions of clothing, language, and behavior. Robert Greene refers to cony-catchers as "apparelled like honest civil Gentlemen,"[101] and he suggests that vagabonds had the ability to move between classes by changing their clothes and their use of language. Greene describes how cony-catchers were particularly apt at discerning accents and how they could alter their own speech to gain the trust of their target.[102] John Awdely makes a similar claim when he describes a Cheater or a Fingerer: "These commonly be such a kind of idle Vagabond as scarcely a man shall discern, they go so gorgeously, sometimes with waiting men and sometimes without."[103] The boundaries of class were violated when the vagabonds pretended to belong to a class other than it own.

Vagrants were thought to pretend to be people that they were not, and Paul Griffiths has observed 21 cases of vagrants carrying counterfeit passes and two cases of vagrants pretending to be insane between 1605 and 1657.[104] These counterfeit passes were fraudulent copies of the begging passes given to the disabled and deserving poor. Furthermore, there are 257 charges of cozening and cheating between 1605 and 1657.[105] Considering that there were 35,399 total recorded arrests between 1605 and 1657, these numbers are quite small, but concerns about the identity of

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[101] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 167.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 95.
[104] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 456.
[105] Ibid, 458.

vagrants abounded.[106] Although there were accusations of the vagrant pretending to be of a higher class, it was much more likely for the vagrant to be accused of pretending to be a sickly member of the deserving poor. Thomas Harman describes an Abraham man, a Fresh-Water Mariner, and a Counterfeit Crank, all of whom pretended to be one of the deserving poor, either by pretending to be mad, pretending to be sick-wrecked sailors, or pretending to have the "falling sickness."[107] The key aspect of concerns about class mobility center around the fact that the vagabond was not obligated to one identity, and they could take on new identities as it pleased them and suited their needs. In 1602, the Bridewell governors accused John Steele of carrying a counterfeit license and pretending that his house had burnt down and that his name was Richard Codde.[108] John Steele had acquired a fake history and a fake name in order to be able to beg within the constraints of early modern charity.

Vagrants were thought to use several tools, not simply physical appearances, in order to pretend to be someone who they were not. Place played an important role in identity, just as clothing and language did. Place, like clothing and language, helped comprise identity, and place names were used in insults, like "a Turnmill streete whore." Turnmill, one of the seediest places in London, made a frequent appearance in the insults featured in scolding and libel cases.[109] Awdely's description of the Fingerer continues as such: "Their trade is to walk in such places, where as gentlemen and other worshipful Citizens do resort, as at St. Paul's, or at Christ's

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[106] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 459.
[107] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 127-9.
[108] Quoted in van Elk, "The Counterfeit Vagrant," 128.
[109] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 78.

Hospital, and sometimes at the Royal Exchange."[110] The places where the upper

classes resided and worked are closely tied to their identity and membership in that

class. As place could play a similar role for other classes, the vagrant also used place

when pretending to be a member of the deserving poor. Vagabonds were thought to

beg near hospitals and spital-houses in order to suggest their status as one of the

deserving poor.

In *A Caveat for Common Cursitors,* Harman notes the vagabond's location

more frequently than he recounts their names. For example, when telling the story of

one man who fell prey to two vagabonds, Harman writes, "And as he was coming

homeward on Blackheath, at the end therof next to Shooter's Hill, he overtook two

rufflers…"[111] The names of the rufflers and their victim are not given, but Harman

pays close attention to place. Furthermore, Harman notes the shires that vagabonds

are most likely to populate. He writes, "[they will wander through] Somersetshire,

Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk,

Sussex, Surrey, and Kent, as the chief and best shires of relief."[112] These shires were

among the wealthier shires, and due to the centrally organized but locally funded

nature of the poor laws, they were the best places to seek charity. Yet, the concept of

place in this text is more complex than the constant description of specific areas. As

established earlier, a key characteristic of the vagabond was his mobility. Unlike

lawful people, they were not held to or defined by one parish or shire, and they were

able to exist outside of the parochial structure. It is possible to interpret Harman's

emphasis on location as an effort to combat the elusive place of the vagabond.

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[110] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 95.
[111] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 116.
[112] Ibid, 117.

Names could also be elusive, and the taking down of names in the court document also demonstrates a need to solidify the identities of vagrants. People who were brought into Bridewell as prisoners would occasionally give names of other vagrants, thieves, or other deviants to help their own case.[113] Yet, as the counterfeit passes attest, names could also be changed, although perhaps not as easily as clothing. In an effort to combat this fact, the governors of Bridewell frequently note physical characteristics that could help others identify vagrants. An extreme example is Nicholas Jennings who is featured in Harman's description of a counterfeit crank and can be found in court documentation. Nicholas Jennings is referred to in several different ways, including Nicholas Blunt and simply Blunt. He used a variety of cozening schemes in order to get money from, the public, including pretending to have the falling sickness and pretending to be a ship wrecked sailor. He rendered his own identity flexible, and in response, he was sent to Bridewell and his portrait was drawn and placed in front of the hospital as a warning to others. This portrait was an attempt to cement Nicholas Jennings's identity when names and personal histories no longer sufficed.[114]

Of course, the ability to move between identities required certain skills, some of which have been touched upon already. Being able to alter dress and speech was an important aspect of these skills, but more important is the supposed dishonesty necessary to utilize these skills for this purpose. The upstart man was considered to be an educated man who had used his education and wit to improve his place at court,

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[113] BCB, Vol. 4, 38.

[114] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 128 – 132; A.L. Beier, "New Historicism, Historical Context, and the Literature of Roguery: The Case of Thomas Harman Reopened," in *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture*, ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

generally in a manner that was thought to be inappropriate or assuming. Ridiculed for their ambition and occasional lack of noble birth, some of the more successful men of this time period, like Thomas Nashe, were called "upstart men." Interestingly, Robert Greene wrote about upstart men at the same time that he was writing about vagabonds. In *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592), he writes, "the world was never in quiet, devotion, neighbourhood nor hospitaltie never flourished in this land since such upstart boies and shittle [shuttle] witted fools becam of the ministerie, such I mean as Greenwood Martin, Barrow, Wigginton, and such rakehells."[115] In a similar manner to the vagabond, the upstart man was thought to use his intellect to move outside the appropriate social channels, and for this, they were ridiculed.

Although there were similarities in the characteristics of the vagrant and the upstart man, the upstart man was never accused of being a member of a malevolent underworld. The vagabond underworld was frequently discussed in rogue literature. While Harman describes each type of vagabond, he tends to define them relationally, emphasizing the importance of the community over that of the individual. For example, Harman defines a doxy as a female vagrant who has had sex with an upright man, another type of vagrant.[116] This criminal society was also thought to have different sexual mores from legitimate society. When describing the wild rogue, Harman writes, "…and before ripeness of years doth permit, [they] wallow in lewd lechery, but that is counted amongst them no sin."[117] Harman also notes that orgies

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[115] Edwin Haviland Miller, "Deletions in Robert Greene's *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592)," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (May 1952): 279.
[116] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 143.
[117] Ibid, 123.

and polygamy were not against societal norms for the vagabond, although the judgment of God generally looms in these passages.[118]

Yet, what defined the vagrant underworld most was their language, called either "canting" or "peddlar's French."[119] Knowledge of this language was supposedly limited to vagrants and those who have special access to them. Much of *A Caveat for Common Cursitors* deals with this language, and provides definitions for many of the terms used. When describing priggers of prancers, Harman writes, "A Prigger of Prancers be horse stelers, for to prig signifieth in their language to steal, and a Prancer is a horse, so, being put together, the matter is plain."[120] The text even includes a dictionary for commonly used vagrant words. Harman calls their language "lewd," and expresses disgust when defining the meaning of certain words.[121]

The vagabond, in this way, was thought to participate in a deviant counter-culture, complete with its own language, social hierarchy, and mores. This theme was repeated in rogue literature through much of the late sixteenth-century, and hints of this theme can be found in other kinds of sources.[122]

Parallels between the "kingdom of the Devil," comprised in part by the undeserving poor, in the sermon "On Christian love and charity" and the underground society of rogues in rogue literature seem obvious. Both seemed to exist alongside the larger, "good" community. Furthermore, the processes of gaining membership into these "evil" communities were similarly nuanced. The undeserving poor are referred

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[118] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 112.
[119] Ibid, 123.
[120] Ibid, 124.
[121] Ibid, 112.
[122] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,*137-147.

to, in "On Christian love and charity," as "evil disposed people."[123] There is a certain

air of predetermination in this phrasing, but it would be inaccurate to suggest such an

analysis. This particular sermon does not detail how one becomes a person of evil

disposition, but other sermons like, "Against Gluttony and Drunkenness," "Against

Excess of Apparel," and "Against Idleness" describe how people come to commit sin.

Generally, people were described as passively allowing themselves to sin. For

example, in "Against Gluttony and Drunkenness," gluttons are described as "them

that inordinately give up themselves to be carried headlong with such pleasures."[124]

Sin was not something actively pursued but rather something that should be actively

avoided.

Rogue literature, however, adds another dimension to the issue of membership

in the vagabond community. Membership may have been gained through sinning, but

it could also be hereditary. John Awdeley describes the wild rogue: "A Wild Rogue is

he that hath no abiding place but by his color of going abroad to beg is commonly to

seek some kinsman of his, and all that be of his corporation be properly called

Rogues."[125] Awdeley suggests that rogue families existed and that the vagabond

world could be one of blood relations. Thomas Harman also describes the wild rogue,

but his description varies from Awdeley's. Where Awdeley writes of families,

Harman writes of sex. He writes, "A Wild Rogues is he that is born a Rogue. He is

more subtle and more given by nature to all kind of knavery than the other, as beastly

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[123] "Against Gluttony and Drunkenness," in *Certaine Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queene Elizabeth I (1547-1571),* ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainsville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), 44.
[124] "Against Idleness," 94.
[125] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 93.

begotten in barn or bushes, and from his infancy traded up in treachery…"[126] For both

authors, membership into the vagabond world could be hereditary. The issue of

heredity was not frequently made explicit, but concerns about young vagrants, as will

be discussed in chapter five, related closely to the idea that one could be born a

vagabond.

Sex, of course, played an important role in the understandings of the vagabond

and deviancy. It is important to remember, however, that the understandings of

sexuality that applied to the vagabond also applied to others. The sermon "Against

Whoredome and uncleannesse" begins by asserting that the commandment, "Thou

shalt not commit adultery," includes those who are not married. It goes on to state,

"And that none of us all shall think himself excepted from this commandement,

whether wee bee old or yong, married, or unmarried, man or woman…"[127] This

universal definition of adultery is modified when it states, "Whosoever seeth a

Woman, to have his lust of her, hath committed adultery with her already in his

heart."[128] Here, as opposed to rogue literature, the woman is not necessarily tempting

the man on purpose, and the man is the more active participant. Yet, the woman is

still portrayed as a sexual temptation and as offering the possibility of sin.

The sin of adultery, as it is described in the sermon, was the same sin that the

weak-willed man makes when he was tricked with the crosbiting law: he allowed

himself to be tempted. It is important to remember that male vagrants were equally

weak-willed as their crosbiting victims because of their promiscuity. It seems that the

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[126] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 123.
[127] "Against Whoredome and Uncleannesse," in *Certaine Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queene Elizabeth I (1547-1571)*, ed. Mary Ellen Rickey and Thomas B. Stroup (Gainsville, Florida: Schoalrs Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), 78.
[128] Ibid, 79.

weakness and wickedness assigned to vagabonds may have existed in the more respectable members of society and that part of the vagabond's skill was being able to discern this weakness in others.

Many of the cozening tricks depended on the fact that their victim was susceptible to temptation, if not always sexual temptation. John Awdeley describes the trick of the ringfaller. The ringfaller was a vagabond who carried around "fair copper rings, some made like signets and some after other fashions, very fair gilded, and walketh up and down the streets, til he spyeth some man of the country of some other simple body whom he thinketh he may deceive."[129] When he found such a person, the ringfaller drooped one of his rings and waited for the other person to pick it up. At this point, the ringfaller claimed "half part," meaning that he also had seen the ring and rightfully owned half of it. The ringfaller then demanded that the other person pay him for half the value of the ring, which the other person eventually does only to find out that the ring was a fake.[130] The person who fell prey to this trick was, of course, a victim, but they were victimized through their ignorance and their greed. The cony-catching tricks that Robert Greene describes also tended to rely on the greed of their victims. Greene described a trick in which a group of vagabonds would invite a cony to a betting game, let him win for awhile, and then play in earnest and win. This tactic encouraged the cony to bet more money than he normally would, thinking that he is a natural at the game and, therefore, helped the vagabond to win as much money as possible.[131] In order for this scheme to work, the victim needed to sin twice. First, he needed to agree to gamble, and second, he needed to be greedy when

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[129] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, 97.
[130] Ibid, 97-98.
[131] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 166-176.

he thought that he was winning. Both Greene and Awdeley, although defining the vagrant as a figure unique in his sinfulness, blur the lines between the cony and the cony-catcher in their depictions of these crimes. The Bridewell court records also betray the increasing complexities of the boundaries of the vagabond. One prisoner, Elizabeth Evans, was brought to Bridewell on charges of living in London without a home and living loosely with several men. To the surprise of the governors, however, Evans was a gentlewoman from London, and the governors were pressured to release her to her family, although not before forcing her to sign a confession detailing her actions. [132]

One of the most surprising stories of this kind in rogue literature is Thomas Harman's story of the walking mort. Walking morts were women who were not married but would "say their husbands died either at Newhaven, Ireland, or in some service of the Prince," frequently had or have had children, supported themselves "either with begging, bitchery, or bribery," and were "quickly shaken out of all [their belongings] by the upright men." [133] Because they are robbed by other vagabonds, Harman says that walking morts generally left their more valuable belongings "with one and then with another trusty householder… sometimes in one shire, and then in another, as they travel."[134] Before the story begins, the walking mort is established as one of the more sympathetic types of vagabonds: she, like more respectable members of society, was victimized by vagabonds and had ties to certain members of the community, even if these ties were fleeting.

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[132] Elk, "The Counterfeit Vagrant," 135.
[133] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 138-9.
[134] Ibid, 139.

Harman tells the story of meeting a walking mort and condemning her behavior, only to be surprised by the story that she had to tell him. He describes the story that this woman told him in which a man saved her from drowning only after she promised him sexual favors in return. He writes, in the narrative voice of the mort:

> He heard me and repaired as fast to me as he might, and, finding me in there fast sticking, I required for god's sake his help, and whether it was with striving and forcing myself out, or for Joy I had of his coming to me, I had a great color in my face and looked red and well-colored. And to be plain with you, he liked me so well, as he said, that I should there lie still, and I would not grant him that he might lie with me. And, by my troth, I wist not what to answer, I was in such perplexity, for I knew that man well. He had a very honest woman to his wife and was of some wealth; and, on the other side, if I were not helped out, I should there have perished.[135]

After he helped her out of the water, she refused to have sex with him and told his wife about what he did. His family and neighbors responded by beating him. Although the walking mort's morality was already questionable, the man's wife chose to believe her over her husband, a supposedly respectable man. The story of the walking mort is exceptional. It is rare that the vagabond was portrayed so sympathetically and that the vagabond's victim appears so distasteful.

Yet, even as this story is exceptional, it alludes to the main tension in source material about the vagrant in sixteenth-century England. Although all of these sources attempted to clearly define the boundaries of the vagrant and vagrant society, these boundaries remained cloudy. The sins and evil tendencies attributed to the vagrant could be found in the more respectable members of society, and the characteristics of

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[135] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 139.

the respectable could sometimes be found, if only sparingly, in the vagrant. Where,

then, did the boundary between the vagrant and the respectable lie?

Chapter Four: Anxiety and the Vagabond

Although the characteristics of the vagabond were presented as relatively straightforward in rogue literature and court documents, the confused boundary between the vagrant and the non-vagrant complicates the picture. In this context, one must ask, is it better to attempt to discern a clear boundary between the vagrant and the non-vagrant or is it better to investigate why these representations of the vagabond utilize these confused definitions? Following the second line of questioning allows one to investigate the effects of these representations and to place the analysis of these representations into larger historical trends and social concerns. Basically, through the second line of questioning, it is possible to come to a better understanding of sixteenth-century London.

While it is the second line of questioning that will be pursued in this chapter, it is important to acknowledge how government officials and the authors of rogue literature claimed to separate the vagrant from the non-vagrant. While the boundaries between the vagrant and the non-vagrant were not clear, these men needed to separate the vagrant on a daily basis. Some of these men claimed to be able to identify a vagabond by sight on the street. Thomas Harman, for example, claimed to have suspected that Nicholas Jennings was a counterfeit crank, or a person pretending to have the "falling sickness," on sight, despite the fact that Jennings was "naked from the waist upward, saving he had an old jerkin leather patched and wore on his

head..."[136] Harman was so suspicious of Jennings that he questioned him until his suspicions were confirmed. Furthermore, many of the vagrants who were placed in Bridewell Hospital were picked off the street by men appointed by the governors. These men must have functioned mostly, if not solely, on sight. A Bridge watchman, for example, claimed that he kept watch for suspicious people, waited to see if a person passed him multiple times, and if this occurred and the person was not able to explain themselves quickly, he would bring that person to Bridewell.[137]

Yet, this Bridge watchman was accused of dragging the wrong people to Bridewell on no charge, and, as the previous chapters show, this process of identification may not have been so easy.[138] The vagabond was reputed to be a master of disguise and deceit, and, furthermore, the negative behaviors assigned to the vagrant were easily found in non-vagrant members of the population. Indeed, although sight was relied on in order to decide who was brought to Bridewell Hospital, the governors questioned each person brought to Bridewell about where they worked and lived.[139] Through this questioning, the governors would decide if the person was or was not vagrant. In this way, the governors of Bridewell undermined the claims that a vagabond could be identified by sight and provided a straight-forward way to determine who could or could not be imprisoned in the hospital. Yet, the governors' overly practically approach oversimplifies the representations of the vagabonds and did address the nuances in the understanding of the vagabond that they functioned under and helped to create.

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[136] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 129.
[137] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 88.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid, 180.

Rather than attempting to separate the vagrant from the non-vagrant, it seems better to ask why the representation of the vagrant, including the blurred ethical boundaries, would appear as it did. Two explanations for the confused ethical status of the vagabond immediately come to mind: it allows for the possibility that anyone could be or become vagrant, and it allows for the vagrant, or at least vagrant-like behavior, to be present anywhere and at any time. As vagabonds were understood to be an important threat to respectable society, threats to respectable society could thus be perceived anywhere if this picture of the vagabond was believed. In other words, it contributed to a paranoid atmosphere. Suspicious people could be found in all sorts of suspicious places, and safety was not always, and perhaps was rarely, a possibility. [140]

Paranoid concerns about the vagrant and his anonymity were acute in London. Due to the growing size and changing shape of London, anxieties about anonymity, dishonesty, and morality were also growing.[141] Population fluctuations and changes in the physical design of London strained social structures and changed how people related to one another.[142] In densely populated London, "strangers" could be found next door and the tight-knit parish was threatened. London, although large, was thought to be made of "many little worlds," where neighbors would have been well acquainted with one another. Yet, Paul Griffiths, author of *Lost Londons*, explains,

> So many migrants made the city somewhat faceless, letting people
> sink into crowds and back streets. Anonymity always troubled
> London's rulers who wanted to find out as much as possible about
> people in their midst. Population surges could certainly increase
> anonymity and alienation, turning London into a city of passing
> strangers, short-lived relationships and loneliness.[143]

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[140] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 146.
[141] Ibid, 70.
[142] Ibid, 67.
[143] Ibid.

These urban concerns are clearly visible in representations of the vagabond. Indeed, even as the blurred boundary between the vagrant and the respectable added to the paranoid atmosphere, the representations of the vagabond themselves helped to contribute to this same atmosphere.

These concerns translated into anxieties, and the most obvious of these anxieties related to anonymity and questions of identity. Because the structure and size of London was changing, it was no longer possible to always know your neighbor. The vast majority of the vagabond's tricks were based on the fact that their victim did not know who the vagabond actually was. In the preface to his *A Caveat for Common Cursitors, Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* Harman writes, "I have of late years gathered great suspicion than all should not be well, and, as the proverb saith, 'Something lurk and lay hid that did not plainly appear.'"[144] When he describes a fresh-water mariner or a whipjack, he writes,

> These Fresh-Water Mariners and their ships were drowned in the Plain
> of Salisbury. These kind of Caterpillars counterfeit great losses on the
> sear; these be some Western men, and most be Irishmen. These will
> run about the country with counterfeit license, feigning either
> shipwreck, or spoiled by Pirates, near the coast of Cornwall or
> Devonshire, and set a-land at some haven town there..."[145]

The fresh-water mariner, by pretending to be someone he was not, was able to beg for charity that was not rightfully his. In Awdeley's description of a cheater, tactics based on anonymity are also used. He writes, "These commonly be such kind of idle Vagabonds as scarcely a man shall discern, they do so gorgeously, sometimes with

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[144] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 109.
[145] Ibid, 128.

waiting men, and sometimes without."[146] By pretending to be wealthy, the cheater

would be able to gain the trust of his cony and cheat him out of money through a card

game.[147] The Bridewell court documents also feature stories of "common decoyes and

deceavers of people" luring people from the country into alehouses, only to cheat

them at cards and dice. Some were even accused of making "theire living by cheating

with false cardes."[148] These examples emphasize how not knowing one's neighbor

could be a threatening experience; a person could pretend to be anyone and

dishonestly gain for his anonymity.

Connected to these concerns of anonymity were anxieties about dishonesty

and morality. With his anonymity, the vagabond was capable of pretending to be

anyone who he chose to be, but it was the vagabond's dishonesty and lack of moral

order that allowed him to use his anonymity to his advantage. The fresh-water

mariner may have been able to pretend to be a ship-wrecked sailor because of his

anonymity, but he would not have pretended to do so if he was morally sound. The

vagabond, it seems was portrayed as being able to evolve to the changing state of

London. Whereas others may have struggled with the social changes in London, the

vagabond was able to benefit from them.

It is also important to recognize that their membership in the "vagabond

underworld," related to these anxieties. Belonging to a parasitic and oppositional

community, as the vagabond world was portrayed, was a negative characteristic

assigned to other maligned groups. Witches, for example, were frequently accused of

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[146] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds*, 95.
[147] Ibid, 96.
[148] Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 169-170.

working together, under the direction of Satan.[149] Another example of such a group

was Catholics. Although religious change was ongoing, Catholics were frequently

maligned for their loyalty to the Vatican.[150] For both of these groups, their

membership in another community brought their loyalty to England in question.

The vagabond underworld was understood in a similar way. Although there

was never one figure to whom all vagabonds were thought to be subject, relationships

between some vagabonds were understood to be hierarchical. Harman frequently

describes how the majority of vagrants need to listen to the upright man. The upright

man was thought to be a type of vagabond who used physical force and intelligence

to cheat both the respectable and the vagrant.[151] It is important to remember, however,

that upright men were only a category, and vagabonds were not thought to have one

leader. While the vagabonds may not have been united under one leader, their

language, "Pedlar's cant" or "French cant" acted as one unifying characteristic.

Although it does not appear in the court documents, certain pieces of rogue literature,

like Harman's *A Caveat for Common Cursitors,* contains entire conversations in

cant.[152] The vagabond underworld was thus inscribed with anxieties about community

membership and loyalty to England.

These anxieties suggest a possible reason why the literary representations of

the vagabond were so popular. Rogue literature was topical, discussing social

phenomena that many people had to contend with on a frequent basis, but because it

also touched upon these anxieties, it provided ways to understand these social

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[149] J.A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* 2. ed. (London: Longman, 1999).
[150] MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England.*
[151] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 116.
[152] Ibid, 150-153.

phenomena. Indeed, the exchange of language between rogue literature and governmental proclamations suggests that rogue literature may have played a large role in how the population and the government understood vagabonds and their role within society. While the use of word "rogue" in royal proclamations has been traced to rogue literature, it has also been suggested that the emphasis on "counterfeiting" and faking identities in official law also stemmed from rogue literature.[153]

Of course, it would be a mistake when discussing the popularity of rogue literature not to mention their entertainment value. Linda Woodbridge, in *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, argues that rogue literature was a sub-genre within renaissance joke books. She argues that the comic nature of rogue literature is its most important characteristic and that these pieces of literature should be read with that in mind.[154] Yet, even when considering rogue literature as a sub-genre of the joke book, anxiety about changing social structures still come into play. Many of these joke books deal with class and contend with issues similar to those in rogue literature. Indeed, it is possible that the entire genre was involved with social concerns. *Merry Hests of a Man that was called Howlglas* (1519), a translation of a German text by the pseudonymous Till Eulenspiegel, recounts one tale of the hero, Howlglas, 'curing' an entire hospital full of people by telling them that the last person out of the hospital would be burned in order to make a powder to cure the rest. All of the patients then fled the hospital and were, by Howlglas's logic, cured. Despite the dark story-line, this book is a jest book, was considered to be quite comic, and was

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[153] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature,* 4.
[154] Ibid, 17-22.

quite popular.[155] Indeed, it seems that the entertainment value of rogue literature may be, in part, built upon the fact that it deals with psychologically sensitive and topical issues.

These anxieties may also help explain why representations of the vagabond took the shape that they did. Just as the general public had to contend with social change, so did the authors of rogue literature, the governors of Bridewell Hospital, and other government officials. It seems to follow that these anxieties would manifest in the representations of the vagabond that these men helped to establish. Anxiety about social change may not have simply contributed to the popularity of rogue literature; it may also have helped to shape the picture of the vagabond established in literature and court documents.

Yet, these anxieties do not explain how representations of the vagabond functioned within the larger cultural context. Yes, representations of the vagabond touch upon common concerns, but how do the representations interact with these concerns?

The vagabond, as he was represented in rogue literature and court documents, served as an extreme example of undesirable behavior. Through these representations of the vagabond, authors of rogue literature and various governmental officials were able to establish and propagate a model of improper behavior. If a person needed to know how not to behave, he could just look towards the vagabond for an answer. Every story of rogue literature and every case in the Bridewell court books served as an example of condemnable and wicked behavior. For example, Joan Garroll was a phenomenal example of how a person should not have behaved. She appears in the

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[155] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature,* 133.

Bridewell court books over thirty times between 1628 and 1841 on charges of

vagrancy, night-walking, pilfering, pick-pocketing, illegitimacy, sex, sulking,

breaking out of prison, and mocking "a gent of good fashion."[156] If one needed to

know how not to behave, Anne Goodier served as an important model of

inappropriate behavior.

Yet, the vagabond could also act as a threat to those considering undesirable

behavior. It was possible for the vagabond to be anywhere and at anytime, looking to

take advantage of the people around them. Many of the tricks that vagabonds' used,

however, required that the cony also behave poorly, whether it is by following a

prostitute into an alley or agreeing to gamble. For example, in Robert Greene's

description of crosbiting law, a type of cony-catching scheme, vagabond women

would lure men to a back alley. Once in that alley, an upright man would supposedly

rough up the victim and take his money.[157] Here, the vagabond serves to enforce

proper behavior. The vagrant did not simply act as a model of how not to behave, but

they also helped to police the behavior of the supposedly respectable.

This function of the vagabond corresponds to the interests of the people who

helped to create and shape this picture of the vagabond. These men were of the

middling sort, living in independent households and generally trained in a

professional skill.[158] The authors of rogue literature and governmental officials were

generally well-educated and of the middling class. Thomas Harman was a

Commissioner of the Peace in Kent, although poor health frequently required him to

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[156] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 155-156.
[157] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage,* 177.
[158] Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2.

work from home. Much of the information in *A Caveat for Common Curistors* was supposedly gathered when he, sick at home, questioned vagabonds who walked by his home. He spent the majority of his life on the estates of Ellam, Maystreet, and Mayton in Kent.[159] While Robert Greene was not as wealthy, he was well-educated. He had an M.A. from Cambridge and an honorary M.A. from Oxford. Greene, however, was not considered as respectable as Harman and had a reputation for living in a less-than-reputable manner.[160] John Awdeley, the earliest of these three writers, was also a successful printer and was active in government to protect his business interests.[161] These three authors, the most influential of rogue literature authors, were similarly educated and active in the world around them. The governors of Bridewell Hospital had similar backgrounds, were educated, and invested in politics and poor relief.[162] These men, who all contributed heavily to the representations of the vagabond and functioned under it, were of the middling sort.

It is important to remember, however, that these men did not necessarily produce their vision of the vagabond with this goal in mind. This picture of the vagabond was rooted in reality, attempted to describe real people, and was not entirely a creation. Also, concerns about social change weighed upon these men in the same way that it weighed upon others, and the effects of these anxieties on representations of the vagabond, while difficult to quantify, are impossible to ignore.

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[159] Arthur F. Kinney, biographical information of Thomas Harman in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 105.

[160] Arthur F. Kinney, biographical information of Robert Greene in *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars: A New Gallery of Tudor and Early Stuart Rogue Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 157.

[161] Arthur F. Kinney, biographical information of Robert Greene, 87.

[162] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 15.

Although the vagabond served as a model for improper behavior, this phenomenon may have been an unforeseeable consequence of social change and was not done in a calculated effort.

One might ask, however, why did the figure of the vagabond work so well as a model of improper behavior? Certainly, other groups of people acted in ways that were contrary to the sensibilities of the educated and middling class, and the vagabond was not the only figure used as a cautionary tale. Ordinary criminals could fill the same role. Robert Greene's *The Black Book Messenger* is the confession of Ned Browne, a notorious criminal who was accused of "cutting purses, stealing of horses, lifting, picking of locks, and all other notable cozenages."[163] Written in the first person, it is relatively unique as a piece of rogue literature because it details only with the crimes of one man. Every one of Ned Browne's crimes could have justified the use of this story as a cautionary tale, but it is his vagrancy that becomes the most important characteristic. His mobility allows him to escape capture throughout the story. Greene writes, "...when he had nipped a Bung or cut a good purse, he would steal over the Low Countries, there to taste three of four Stoupes of Rhenish wines, and then come over forsooth a brave Soilder."[164] Browne's vagrancy allowed him to escape the law, and his cunning and disguises allowed him to travel between countries without a problem. While Browne's vagrancy does not play a central role in the text in the same way that his cony-catching schemes do, his vagrancy is implied throughout the story through his travels and mobility. Indeed, while other cultural archetypes were used in cautionary tales in literature, it was the vagabond that spurred

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[163] Greene, *The Black Books Messenger,* 194.
[164] Ibid, 193.

drastic governmental change. Why does it seem that this cultural archetype carried such weight?

Part of the answer to this question may be discerned in conceptions of the household. An important part of the value structure of the men who helped to create the representations of the vagabond was the household, which was laden with ethical and religious significance. The household, as an ethical and religious concept, is examined in Cynthia Herrup's book, *A House in Gross Disorder*. In this book, Herrup investigates the trial of the earl of Castlehaven, who was accused and convicted of sodomy. The charge was that he had committed sodomy with several of his servants, had helped one of the servants rape his wife, helped another servant sleep with his adolescent daughter-in-law, and that he intended to disinherit his heir in order to give his estate to his low-born favorites. He and his servants were executed for these crimes.[165] Herrup argues that Castlehaven's inability to maintain order in himself and in his home was more important to the case than the crimes themselves. As the head of the house, Castlehaven was supposed to keep himself in order, as well as his servants and the members of his family. Yet, unable to control his desires, his personal disorder spread and brought chaos to his home.

The household acted as a symbol for the larger community and for all of England. The father acted as king, the servants and children acted as subjects, and the household itself was an understandable microcosm for all of England. The head of the household was in charge of administrative duties but was also charged with the civil, spiritual, and moral welfare of his family and servants. The head of the household

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[165] Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1999), 1.

was meant to instruct and protect the members of their household, instilling the importance of obedience and moral behavior. If the head of the household was unable to fulfill these duties, this microcosm of England would fall into disorder, causing disorder in the household to be symbolically problematic for the larger community.[166]

When discussing vagabonds, the household itself does not play the same role as it did in Castlehaven's trial, but the value structure implicit in the conception of the household exhibited in this trial are present in the representations of the vagabond. The vagabond, by definition, was without a home. Transient, they could move from place to place without the obligations, responsibilities, and values associated with the household. The household provided a place for the practice of obedience and a way to cements one's membership in a small community that was tied to the larger community and to England. In this way, the vagabond's homelessness presented a problem to people who imbued the home with moral values. Without a home, obedience and loyalty could not be taught and enforced on a daily basis and starting at a young age.

Indeed, there was a large amount of concern for young vagabonds and their lack of a familial and moral structure. Harman lists several young vagabonds and explains how they are destined to lead terrible lives. One example of this is a dell, which "is a young wench able for generation and not yet known or broken by the upright man. These go abroad young, either by the death of their parents and nobody to look unto them, or else by some sharp mistress that they serve, do run away from service..."[167] Another example is a kinchin mort, which is a little girl that "their

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[166] Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder,* 13-14.
[167] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 144.

mothers carry them at their backs in their slates, which is their sheets, and bring them up safely, till they grow to be ripe, and soon ripe, soon rotten."[168] Young boys were also thought to be at risk. Harman writes, "A Kinchen Co is a young boy, traden up to such peevish purposes as you have heard of other young imps before, that when he groweth two years, he is better to hang than to draw forth."[169] Harman illustrates how the familial structure and the household were considered to be of the utmost importance for the raising of children. Even in cases where parents were involved, like in the case of the kinchin mort, a lack of proper parenting directed the child towards an improper life.

The financial records of the Star Chamber reflect a similar concern. Orphans received a large portion of the money given out by the Star Chamber, and money was frequently given to those people who had 'found' orphans and cared for them.[170] One can see how more money was spent on young vagabonds and orphans than older ones and how government officials were attempting to decide how to deal with young people who had no familial structure. This concern was, of course, partially for the well-being of these young people, but it was also for how these young people would mature and affect the world around them. The sermon "Against Idleness" illustrates this fact. It states:

> And in this Realme of England, good and godly laws have bin divers
> times made, that no idle vagabonds and loitering runagates, should be
> suffered to go from Towne to Towne… which neither serve God nor
> their Prince, but devour the sweet fruits of other mens labor, being
> common lyers, drunkards, sweareres, theeves, whooremasters, and
> murderers, refusing all honest labor, and give themselves to nothing

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[168] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 144.
[169] Ibid.
[170] "The Chamberlain's Account 1584-1586: Nos. 1-281," Nos. 11c, 11e, 11f, 27d, 122, 123, 159, 252, 253, and 280c.

> else, but to invent and doe mischief…. To remedy this inconviencies, let all parents and others which have the care and governancy of youth to bring them up either in good learning, labor, or some honest occupation to trade…[171]

Here, we can see how familial structure was thought to prevent the development of bad behavior and that the emphasis placed on the household and the family could be understood as a preventative measure. Young people, in this way, were thought to develop bad behaviors, vagrancy included, when their lives lacked the order and discipline of the household.

It seems that the vagabond was particularly apt figure to be a model for undesirable behavior because of their mobility. The importance of the home translates to uncertainty about the vagrant, and this uncertainty helps to establish the vagabond as an extreme example of negative behavior. Without the stabilizing and disciplining structure of the home, the bad behaviors assigned to the vagrant were more plausible. In this way, government reactions to the vagabond, which were both shaped by representations of the vagabond and helped to shape them, are sensible problem-solving maneuvers.

In this way, it becomes clear that anxieties about social change helped to shape the picture of the vagabond, affected how the representations of the vagabond functioned in society, and influenced the cultural importance of the vagabond. Yet, what were the effects of the representations of the vagabond? The extreme changes in social policy only begin to make sense when viewed in the light of these representations. If the vagabond was understood to be such a menace, tremendous

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[171] "Against Idleness," 253.

government reaction becomes understandable. An in-depth exploration of the

repercussions of this picture of the vagabond is necessary in order to understand the

scope of the vagabond's influence.

Chapter Five: Repercussions

In beginning to discuss the repercussions of the representations of the vagabond, it is first necessary to recognize that the government was reacting to the representations of the vagabond. Because social anxieties had been grafted onto the vagabond and because he had begun to serve as an extreme example of improper behavior, government reaction to the vagabond was similarly extreme. As stated earlier, rogue literature influenced some of the language of royal proclamations, and an exchange of information between literature and policy has been documented.[172] Of course, proclamations and social policy helped to form representations of the vagabond, but it is important to remember that the government actions simultaneously responded to and helped to create these images of the vagrant. Each proclamation, new law, or change in policy was built upon earlier ideas of the vagrant while they also added to them. Nonetheless, the fear and anxiety exhibited in the understandings of the vagabond helped to encourage large-scale government action.

At the same time, however, these laws concerning the vagabond were enacted along with changes in social policy that filled holes in poor relief. A dire need for poor relief after the deterioration of ecclesiastical poor relief spurred, in part, the wide-reaching administrative changes. Government-organized secular poor relief needed to fill a void left after the dissolution of the monasteries, hospitals, and fraternities and the end of medieval styles of charity. With this increase in state sponsored charity came an insistence that the every-day man was incapable of

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[172] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature,* 4.

discerning who deserved charity, a sentiment encouraged by the depictions of "counterfeiting" vagrants. Even the literary representations of the vagabond, as established by Linda Woodbridge, played a large role in how state sponsored poor relief was structured.[173]

The creation of the Poor Laws, which occurred throughout the sixteenth century, overhauled the poor relief system and was the most over-arching government reaction to the vagrant. Although the Poor Laws dealt with both the respectable and non-respectable poor, many of the changes enacted under the Poor Laws dealt with vagabonds exclusively. These laws mainly attempted to force the vagrant to stay in one parish.[174]

The five hospital system in London, of which Bridewell Hospital was a part, was formed under the Poor Laws. Unlike other aspects of the Poor Law, however, the five hospital system was enacted only in London. Each hospital was intended to care for a certain category of the poor, like veterans or orphans. Bridewell Hospital was the last of the hospitals to be founded and differed slightly from the other four because it cared for the vagrant poor. Where the other hospitals concentrated on relief, Bridewell concentrated on reform. The governors of Bridewell had the jurisdiction to force a person from the street, interrogate them, and imprison them in order to achieve this goal of reform. The founders of the hospital took this goal seriously and hoped that the reform of vagrants could have wide-ranging effects. [175] In essence, Bridewell's founders considered the reform of vagabonds to be the 'relief'

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[173] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature,* 273-275.
[174] Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England.*
[175] Joanna Innes, "Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555-1800," in *Labour, Law, and Crime: An Historical Perspective,* ed. Francis G. Snyder and Douglas Hay (London, UK; New York, USA: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 56.

necessary for the vagrant's specific condition.

Unlike other aspects of the Poor Law which simply encouraged or mandated the vagrant to remain in one parish, Bridewell's reformatory measures were originally intended to teach vagrants a trade and the importance of work and obedience through forced labor. Blurring boundaries between punishment and reform, imprisoning the vagabond and forcing him to work were thought to be the most appropriate reaction to the vagabond's wrong-doings. By having the vagabonds perform work in Bridewell, the founders hoped to make the institution self-sustainable and to teach the vagabonds how to behave properly and support themselves. This goal may never have been realized, but it remains important that the founders of Bridewell intended it to act as a reformatory and teaching institution.[176] The importance of the household, however, still played a role in the hospital, and vagabonds were frequently asked where they resided or would reside if they were released. For example, in 1630, Anne Goodier, a frequent resident of Bridewell, was recorded as having 'lived in good sort' for eighteen months after being released from Bridewell, although she returned to vagrancy and 'loose living' after those months.[177]

Yet, reform was not the only function of Bridewell; it also served to accumulate knowledge about the vagrant. Both before and after Bridewell's creation, vagabonds were displayed to the public for their crimes through a variety of punishments.[178] The diary of Henry Machyn, a citizen of London, takes note of some of these punishments. This diary describes only what Machyn himself witnessed and

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[176] Innes, "Prisons for the Poor," 52-56.
[177] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 155.
[178] Innes, "Prisons for the Poor," 52.

deemed important, so one can imagine that these public punishments were notable.[179]

On the first day of July in 1552, Machyn noted, "ther was a man and a woman on the

pelere in Chepe-syd… the man nam ys Grege; sum-tyme he con[terfeited] ym selffe a

profett…"[180] Through these modes of punishment, an individual's crime became

public knowledge, and the individual was, in effect, forced to acknowledge their

crimes to the public. Punishment, therefore, acted as an exchange of information

between the public and the accused, and this exchange of information could be an

ongoing process when branding or mutilation was practiced.

The interrogations at Bridewell assisted in and added to this exchange of

information. Vagrants at Bridewell were subjected to many kinds of punishment

including imprisonment, forced labor, and the corporal and public punishments

described above. It was only through these interrogations that the governors could

decide who was vagrant and could subsequently punish the vagrant in a public forum,

if that was the particular punishment assigned.[181] In this way, the interrogations at

Bridewell fed directly into the exchange of information that occurred during public,

corporeal punishments. Yet, in questioning an individual, the governors generally

learned more information than simply whether that person was vagrant or not, and

large portions of several people's lives, mostly recidivists, are recorded in the

Bridewell court books.[182] Furthermore, this more detailed knowledge was not

necessarily kept private. There are accounts of vagabond's portraits being placed in

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[179] John Gough Nichols, Preface to "The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London," (London: Center for Metropolitan History, 2006).

[180] Henry Machyn, "Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London," (London: Center for Metropolitan History, 2006), sec. July-Dec. 1552.

[181] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 154.

[182] Ibid.

front of Bridewell so that the public, regardless of the vagabond's cozening scheme or counterfeit identity, would be able to identify him.[183]

Although this collection of knowledge served a purpose in the reformatory intentions of Bridewell, knowledge about the vagabond was also sought elsewhere. Rogue literature participated in the investigation of the vagabond and accomplished the most to spread the ensuing knowledge to the public. The author's motivations for learning about the vagabond seem to have been quite similar to those of the governors of Bridewell. Thomas Harman explains why he questioned the vagabonds near his home and why he published his writings. He states, "But faithfully for the profit and benefit of my country I have done it, that the whole body of the realm may see and understand their lewd life and pernicious practices, that all may speedily help to amend that is amiss."[184] Here, one can discern how similar the motivations of Harman were to the governors of Bridewell. This fact is not terribly surprising considering that Harman worked as a Commissioner of the Peace, but it does help to illustrate how literature and government institutions could function in similar ways. Gaining knowledge about the vagrant, as completed by literary authors and government officials, encouraged the reform and control of vagrants inside of Bridewell Hospital and society at large.

The possibility of reform implies future inclusion into the larger community, but the decision to include or exclude the vagrant was an underlying source of tension in the reflections on the vagabond. Although many of the changes in social policy suggested that vagabonds were capable of reform, rhetoric in rogue literature,

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[183] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 128-132.
[184] Ibid, 114.

sermons, polemics, and some royal proclamations rejected the this possibility. The tension between inclusion and exclusion played an important role in how the vagabond was understood, how representations of the vagabond were being continually formed and adapted, and how the changes in social policy affected and reacted to these representations.

First, it is necessary to outline the processes of inclusion and exclusion, how they were enacted, and how they were related. In this particular analysis, to be included does not mean to have an equal place in society, but instead it simply means to have a place in that society. While the landed gentry had a place in society and were, therefore, included, the non-vagrant poor also had a place. Although they did not have the same social or political privileges as the gentry, they had prescribed roles and responsibilities and were accounted for in the larger system of governance and poor relief system. Responsible to their families and to their parishes, the non-vagrant poor may have struggled, but their struggles and membership in a larger community were acknowledged through charity and the secular poor relief system.

The vagrant, on the other hand, did not have a place in society and were, thus, excluded. They lacked a place, a role, or responsibilities because, unlike the non-vagrant poor, they did not have families, homes, or communities to help and support. This lack of place in society is most obvious in the way that the vagabond was not accounted for in the structure of the poor relief system. Because poor relief was organized by parish, the mobile vagabond was not in a position to receive government aid. Furthermore, because they were represented as belonging to a vagabond underworld, it was theoretically possible for them to exist entirely outside of society.

Understood to be subject to a foreign moral code which emphasized the power of the upright man rather than the power of the Crown or Church, they were not truly a part of larger society. Also, due to their anonymity and mobility, vagabonds were thought to be unrecognizable. Without knowledge of the vagabond's identity, it would be difficult to include him, and many representations of the vagabond presented him as absent and excluded from society.

Exclusion was, in this way, both a structural failure of the government and a representational phenomenon. The role of social and cultural anxieties in shaping the understandings of the vagabond have already been explained, but the repercussions of these representations as they relate to the processes of inclusion and exclusion have not. Exclusion, as it was partially established through the representations of the vagrant, was the necessary precondition for the process of inclusion to begin. The process of inclusion was the process of either creating a new place for a person in society or attempting to mold that person to a pre-existing place. For the vagabond, the process of inclusion generally meant reform. If the vagabond was properly reformed so that they became an acceptable member of the non-vagrant poor, their inclusion would be possible. In this way, the exclusionary picture of the vagabond as a member of the vagrant underworld was actively battled by the efforts of reform and inclusion. While the different modes of reform can complicate this analysis, the general picture remains the same: the imperative of the governing system was the inclusion of all people, and inclusion, for the vagrant, was created through reform.

The founders of Bridewell Hospital hoped to accomplish this sort of reform so that the vagrant could become productive members of society. In the Letters Patent of

Edward VI for Christ's, Bridewell, and St. Thomas's Hospitals written in 1553, it

states that these hospitals were created so that,

> …they [the poor] may honestly exercise themselves in some good
> faculty and science for the advantage and utility of the commonwealth,
> nor that the sick or diseased when they shall be recovered and restored
> to health may remain idle and lazy vagabonds of the state, but that they
> in like manner be placed and compelled to labor and honest and
> wholesome employments…[185]

Here, one can see how the administrators of Bridewell Hospital, as well as those of

the other hospitals in London, aimed to include the poor in broader society. Yes, the

vagabond may have needed to be reformed in order for this aim to be possible and

other members of the poor may have needed to be healed, but inclusion was the

desired end. Indeed, inclusion was not only good for the vagabond, but it was also

good for the larger community. Only by including the vagrant could they contribute

to and labor for "the commonwealth." The forced labor which occurred in Bridewell

further emphasized this particular benefit of inclusion. While forced labor was rarely

performed and it was never to the degree that was desired, the possibility of

financially benefitting from vagabonds was an alluring one.[186]

The administrators of Bridewell and other hospitals were not the only people

who wanted to put vagabonds to work. Captain Robert Hitchcock, in his 1580

polemic *Pollitique platt for the honor of the Prince, the great profit of the public

state, relief of the poor, preservation of the riche, reformation of rogues and idle

persons, and the wealth of thousands that knows not how to live*, argues that

vagabonds should be placed into the service of sea captains. Under the captain's

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[185] "The Letters Patent of Edward VI for Christ's, Bridewell, and St. Thomas's Hospitals," 65.
[186] Innes, "Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555-1800."

watch, the vagabonds would help sail fishing boats, thereby increasing profit. When

introducing his idea, he writes,

> For remedy, whereof, almighty God by the most commodious situation
> of this Land (and his blessings both of the Land thereof, and of the Sea
> wherewith it is environed) hath provided a most convenient mean,
> both for the labor: and for food, benefit, and riches for the inhabitants,
> whereby the lustie Vagabonds and Idle persons (the foots, buds, and
> seeds of idleness) shall at all hands and in all places be set on worke,
> and labor willingly, and thereby prove good subjects, and profitable
> members of this Commonweale.[187]

Hitchcock makes explicit what the Letters Patent of Christ's, Bridewell, and St.

Thomas's Hospital only allude to: vagabonds could be considered a God-given tool to

benefit England. Although Hitchcock's proposal was never enacted, his vision of

forcing the vagrant to work and benefitting from their labor was shared with those

who enacted changes in social policy.

Later administrators of Bridewell also pursued the goal of reform and the

subsequent possibility of inclusion, and the governor's minute books provide

examples of how the goal of reform affected individuals brought to Bridewell.

Elizabeth Evans, for example, was brought to Bridewell in 1598 but was soon

released. Evans was a gentlewoman, and Sir William Howard, brother to the Lord

Admiral, had demanded her release. While the governors did release her on Howard's

command, they refused to allow her to leave until she signed a confession. While

other scholars have argued that this action illustrates the governors' hypocrisy, it is

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[187] Robert Hitchcock, *A pollitique platt for the honour of the Prince, the greate profite of the publique state, relief of the poor, perseruation of the riche, reformation of rogues and idle persons, and the wealthe of thousands that knoews not howe to lieu. Written for an Newyeres gift to Englande, and the inhavitantes thereof* (London: Ihon Kyngston, 1580), 8.

also possible that the forced confession illustrates a commitment to reform.[188]

Although the governors did bend to political pressure, they ensured that Evans

admitted her crimes, thereby encouraging her towards reform and proving that they

were correct to incarcerate her in the first place. The confession states,

> I Elizabeth Evans… do confess I have been about London three or four
> years and I do acknowledge that I have lived with loss of my body
> with diverse persons diverse and sundry times for which I am heartily
> sorry and do ask God and Her Majesty and all Her Majesty's subjects
> whom I have offended thereby forgiveness for the same and do
> promise by God his Grace never hereafter to offend in the like fault
> again.[189]

This confession does not appear to be another part of the political concession; it

includes scandalous details which Sir William Howard probably did not want to be

recorded. Reform, even in cases of political pressure, was an important goal for the

governors of Bridewell Hospital.

Due to the strange circumstances of Evans's case, however, the Bridewell

governor's actions were not entirely necessary for her future inclusion in society.

Although genuine reform that the governors encouraged would help her to avoid

relapses into bad behavior, her status nearly guaranteed her inclusion in society. Yet,

it is important to note that Evans's inclusion was still dependent on her reform.

Evans's status afforded her a reformatory experience that was different from, but

theoretically akin to, the experience of those imprisoned in Bridewell. Whereas Evans

was intended to live with her family, under their roof, and obeying their orders, most

vagabonds would live in Bridewell, obeying the order of the governors until they

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[188] Elk, "The Counterfeiting Vagrant," 134.
[189] Ibid, 135.

were reformed.[190] While Evans's case was exceptional, the roles of reform and

inclusion remained the same.

Bridewell Hospital was perhaps the most inclusionary tactic employed in

response to the vagabond, but other changes in social policy had similar aims.

Updates in the Poor Laws mandated that people living in a parish for more than three

years had the right to claim poor relief.[191] The change could encourage vagrants to

settle in order to receive aid, and although the three-year waiting period made this

practice unreasonable, vagrants were feared because of the strain they could put on

the parish poor relief system if they decided to settle there and weren't native to the

area.[192] Indeed, other changes in poor relief further encouraged vagabonds to remain

in one place. The Act of 1531 approved the licensing of local beggars, again placing

emphasis on the importance of having one living place.[193] The Statute of 1536

mandated regular searches for vagrants in order to bring them to the attention of the

justice system.[194] Only when vagabonds were found, after all, could they be punished

and reformed.

Here, one can see a tension between local and national governance. While the

goal of the government of England was to find a place and include all people, the goal

of local government was not necessarily the same. Both the national and local

government understood those who were born on their land as members of their

community, and they acted accordingly. A problem arose when the national

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[190] Elk, "The Counterfeiting Vagrant," 135.
[191] Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, UK; New York, USA: Cambridge U.P., 1998), 45.
[192] Ibid, 46.
[193] Slack, *Poverty and Policy,* 118.
[194] Ibid.

government wanted people to settle locally in places where they may not have originated. The national government was forcing local governments to recognize and provide poor relief for people who, although having lived in an area for three or more years, were not native to that area. Exclusion from the local community could have therefore occurred simultaneously with inclusion in the national community because these concentric communities did not always agree about which people belonged in which parishes. In this way, the processes of local and national inclusion were two separate but related processes that could conflict.

The modes of reform also complicated the picture of inclusion. Although Bridewell Hospital was intended to reform the vagrant, the incarceration which was thought to encourage reform actually excluded the vagrant from society, both literally for a limited period of time and figuratively for a longer period. Being incarcerated at Bridewell could irreparably damage a person's reputation, causing continued social exclusion.[195] Corporeal punishments could have an even longer-lasting effect. Punishment by whipping, standardized after 1531, as well as boring through the ear and branding, made a person's past vagrancy visible and encouraged the non-vagrant to distrust the person visibly marked.[196] As addressed earlier, these types of punishments helped to spread knowledge about the individual vagabond to larger society, but this knowledge was generally used in order to exclude the vagrant from daily life. The physical markings, some specific to the vagabond and others more general to criminal behaviors, served as identifiers that could not be escaped.[197]

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[195] Griffiths, *Lost Londons,* 214.
[196] Slack, *Poverty and Policy,* 100.
[197] Ibid.

At this point, it is important to return to the particular understanding of inclusion being used in this analysis. Although incarceration and corporeal punishments could mark an individual as vagrant, they also worked to place the individual into a category that had a place within larger society. The unmarked vagabond could be unknown and would not always be subject to the laws of England. The marked and theoretically reformed vagabond would be known and, importantly, so would his forced obedience to the law. While these forms of punishment could result in the vagabond's exclusion from every-day life, they worked towards inclusion by both attempting to reform the vagrant and by helping to make his identity and criminal status known. The vagabond as a member of the underworld may not have had a place in society, but the vagabond, known as a vagabond, punished, and possible reformed, did.

Calls for exclusion, however, seem to appear in the rhetoric in rogue literature, polemics, sermons and some royal proclamations. Robert Greene, in *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage,* writes, "And so, desiring both honorable and worshipful, as well Justices as other officers, and all estates from the Prince to the beggar, to rest professed enemies to these base-minded Cony-catchers, I take my leave."[198] Greene asserts that the cony-catcher, a term used for vagabonds who performed con tricks to take the money of honest men, need to be the enemy of all people, including beggars. This, indeed, seems to call for the exclusion of the vagabond. Rogue literature did have the occasional positive portrayal of the vagabond, even if it was hidden behind this rhetoric. Thomas Harman's story of the walking-mort is perhaps the most shocking example, where the supposed 'victim' of

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[198] Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, 175.

a cony-catching trick demands sex from the walking-mort and is then ostracized from his own community.[199] Here, one can see an example of the vagabond being included into the society where the supposedly honest man was excluded. This story, however, is exceptional, and the vast majority of stories about the vagabond depicts the vagabond as wicked and suggests that society would be better off without the him.

In the "Against Idleness" featured in *Certain Sermons of Homilies, 1547-1571*, vagabonds are tied to every conceivable sinful behavior and no remedy for their behavior is given. The only solution offered in the sermon is the preventative education of children. It states, "Let them [masters of households] use the authority that God hath given them, let them not maintain vagabonds and idle persons, but deliver the Realm and their households from such noise-some loiterers…"[200] As in *A Notable Discovery of Cozenage*, this sermons calls for the banishment of vagabonds from the 'Realm of England' in order to ensure England's health.

The role of the reformed vagabond, as opposed to the vagabond described in these examples, can help to explain how these calls for the exclusion of the vagabond were, in actuality, complementary to the calls for inclusion. In order to understand how these calls for exclusion worked in conjunction with the calls for inclusion and reform, one must separate the individual vagabond from the category of "vagabond." In the two given examples, the vagabond threatened the health of England; a category of people threatened the whole nation. The "group" of vagabonds was the issue, and the individual vagabond was left unmentioned. There seems to be a pattern in the representations of the vagabond where the whole was condemned and the individual

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[199] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds*, 138-142.
[200] "Against Idleness," 253.

was allowed the possibility of reform. Harman, for example, writes, "the first inventor [of peddler's French or canting] thereof was hanged, all save the head; for that is the final end of them all, or else to die of some filthy and horrible disease."[201] Yet, he allows for the possibility of reform of the individual vagabond, and many of his stories detail his attempts to reform the vagabonds who found their way to his door.[202] To compare, in Awdeley's *Fraternity of Vagabonds,* the individual vagabond is ignored entirely in favor of a list of different types of vagrants. Instead of names, vagrants are given labels, and in this text, the possibilities of reform or inclusion are ignored entirely.[203]

Separating the individual vagabond from the group was frequently a part of the effort of information-gathering that the governors of Bridewell and the authors of rogue literature performed. With knowledge of the individual, it was possible to address each person's history and to consider them outside of the label of "vagabond." Once the individual was examined, their supposed membership in the vagabond underworld could become less integral to their identity, and the possibility of reform and inclusion could arise. The individual, once understood as such, was less subject to the broad-strokes of the representations of the vagabond. It was possible, at least theoretically, for the individual to escape the label of 'vagrant' through the investigatory actions of Bridewell or rogue literature, and through the reformatory actions of Bridewell, to be included in the larger community. While the knowledge of the individual vagabond could help the governors of Bridewell and other officials determine a place for that individual and include him in society, this knowledge

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[201] Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds,* 112.
[202] Ibid*,* 110.
[203] Awdeley, *The Fraternity of Vagabonds,* 91 – 101.

simultaneously acted to raise doubts about the individual's likeness to the picture of the vagabond.

In many ways, this pattern is unsurprising: when knowledge about an individual is gained, stereotypes and prejudices tend to wear away. When considering the vagabond, however, this pattern relates to the anxieties that had been grafted onto vagabond. These anxieties, concerning issues like anonymity and morality, were closely connected to societal and cultural changes, as explained in chapter three. The representations of the vagabond were thus inscribed with some of the predominant fears of the English people. To include the "group" of vagabonds, still burdened with the totality of the representations of the vagabond, was, in a sense, to allow a place for these anxiety-producing changes in society. If the vagabond was allowed a place in society in the way that merchants or other groups were, it would be necessary to accept the changes and concerns that had become tangled in the representations of the vagabond. The individual vagabond, however, could be included because they could be separated from the group, from the representations of the vagabond, and from the anxieties that had become a part of those representations. The inclusion of the individual and the exclusion of the group, therefore, stems from the anxieties that were an integral part of the representations of the vagabond.

Conclusion

No matter how inclusionary and reformatory the rhetoric or goals of Bridewell Hospital were, the vagabond did not generally have a pleasant life. Disease, poverty, and starvation compounded with incarceration, corporeal punishment, and social stigma brought the vast majority of vagabonds to an end that no one would envy.[204] Yet, considering the circumstances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leading an unpleasant life was not unique to the vagabond: disease, famine, social unrest, and war negatively impacted living conditions for the majority of people in England. London, growing both in terms of population and land mass, was particularly subject to social unrest. Life, especially in London, was changing, and not always in enjoyable ways.

Social change helped to spur widespread concerns and anxieties about anonymity, morality, and identity. These anxieties were grafted onto the vagabond, who served as an apt target because he was mobile and not tied to the disciplining structure of the household. The household, as a reminder, served as an important means of instilling order into each individual's behavior. In turn, these anxieties are perceivable in how vagabonds were described, the characteristics attributed to them, and the government actions that responded to them, such as the founding of Bridewell Hospital. The "counterfeiting vagrant," for example, helps to illustrate concerns of anonymity in a growing and changing city. Accused of everything from willful

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[204] Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*, 12-17.

idleness, sexual depravity, dishonesty, to amorality, the vagabond was treated with disdain and disgust, even when similar behaviors may have been overlooked in non-vagrant people.

Indeed, the blurred boundaries between the vagrant and the non-vagrant can be, in part, attributed to the social anxieties that played such an integral role in the representations of the vagabond. When the vagabond was difficult to identify, when any person could be a vagabond, and when a vagabond could be anywhere, a threatening and paranoid atmosphere, one already encouraged in London by its growing and changing population, could form.

This paranoid atmosphere played into the pre-existing anxieties about social change, but it also helped to establish the vagabond as a model of and threat against improper behavior. Many of the vagabond's tricks took advantage of other people's sinful behaviors, such as stealing money from men who, fueled by lust, followed women of ill-repute into alleyways and taverns. When the vagabond could be anywhere at any time, behaving improperly became more of a risk. Furthermore, if one was unsure how to behave properly, they could simply behave as the vagabond would not; the vagabond was the ultimate model of how not to act. With so little information about the vagrant available, the vagrant could inspire fear and paranoia that other categories of people could not.

Gathering information about the vagabond was an important goal of both Bridewell Hospital and the authors of rogue literature. The investigations performed at Bridewell and by some writers, such as Thomas Harman, were attempts to learn about the vagabond, give him a concrete identity, and give him a place in society. In

other words, information-gathering was the first step in the attempted social inclusion of the vagabond. Inclusion meant having a prescribed place in society, although that place was not necessarily an equal one. Inclusion required that the vagabond be separated from the "vagrant underworld" and be provided with an individuality that the label "vagabond" did not allow. Separating the individual from the group was, in part, accomplished through information-gathering because it would give the vagabond a personal history and a past. Reform, however, would complete the individual's separation from the "vagrant underworld," by giving the individual a proper home and the order that a home can provide. Bridewell would function as this "home," providing the vagabond with a place to live, orders to follow, and work to do. After enough time in Bridewell, the reformed vagabond could go back into society and re-create this proper way of living.

The picture of the vagabond presented in rogue literature and the court documents of Bridwell Hospital is entirely contextual, reflecting the historical situation in sixteenth century England. The characteristics of the vagabond, how they were treated, and how their inclusion or exclusion in society was conceived was dependent on social anxieties, understandings of the undeserving poor, and the structure of the poor relief system. A fascinating figure of the sixteenth century, the vagabond sheds light on one of the ways that a society can contend with social and cultural change.

Glossary	
Abraham man:	a person who pretends to be mad, possibly pretends to have spent time in Bedlam Hospital, the government sponsored insane asylum, and may have carried a counterfeit begging license
Autem-mort:	a married female vagabond who may or may not remain faithful to her husband
Barnacle:	the person, in a card-based cony-catching scheme, who loses the card game for several hands until he takes the cony for all the money he has
Bawdy-basket:	female vagabonds who steal trinkets and clothes from hedges and who would work with upright men in their schemes.
Bousing Inn:	an inn that vagabonds would frequent to drink and to play dice and cards and would occasionally store their belongings there
Canting:	see "Peddler's French"; speaking in the vagabond language;
Cheater:	sometimes called a fingerer, a vagabond who gains the trust of other by dressing as a wealthy man
Cozener:	a vagabond who practices cozenage or cony-catching
Counterfeit crank:	a vagabond who pretends to have the 'falling sickness,' and will sometimes carry a counterfeit begging license
Courtesy man:	a male vagabond who gains the trust of other by dressing as a wealthy man
Cony-catching:	also called cozenage; the vagabond art of tricking people into either giving them money or losing money to them in a game of cards or dice
Cony:	the non-vagrant victim of a vagabond's scheme; the word 'cony' was also slang for 'rabbit'

Crosbiting: a type of cony-catching scheme that usually involves using women as bait

Doxy: a female vagabond who has lost her virginity to an upright man

Dummerer: a vagabond who pretends to be mute in order to convince passers-by to give him alms

Drunken tinker: a male vagabond who uses all the charity given to him to buy alcohol

Demander for Glimmer: a female vagabond who pretends to be a burn victim

Dell: a young, female vagabond capable of reproduction but still a virgin

Frater: a male vagabond who has a counterfeit license to beg from spital-houses and also tend to steal from women as they walk to and from the market

Hooker: also called an angler; a male vagabond who uses a long stick with a hood to steal clothes from hedges

Jarkman: a male vagabond that can read and write Latin and uses this skill to counterfeit begging licenses

Kintchin co: a young, male vagabond

Kintchin morts: a young, female, virgin vagabond

Prigger of prancers: also called a prigger of palfreys; a horse thief

Palliard: also called a clapperdudgeon; a male vagabond who dresses like a poor person but sells all the food he is given and uses any alms he receives in order to drink and play dice

Prigman: a male vagabond who steals clothes off of hedges, steals poultry, and can frequently be found playing cards and dice while drinking at an inn

Patriach co: also called a patrico; a male vagabond who presides over vagabond marriages, no matter how infrequent of an occurrence this may have been

Peddlar's French:	the vagabond's language
Queerbird:	a male vagabond who recently was released from prison
Ruffler:	a male vagabond who wanders saying he is in search of a job, but in truth he steals from poor men or women working in the markets
Ringfaller:	a male vagabond who drops copper rings that look expensive, pretends that found the ring in conjunction with a cony, and then gets the cony to pay for half of the price of the ring so that the cony can take the ring home
Rogue:	occasionally used to refer in vagabonds in general, but it can also mean a physically fit male vagabond
Setter:	a male vagabond who, in a card-based cony-catching scheme, gains information about the cony by claiming to have met him before
Swigman:	a male vagabond who "goes with a Peddler's pack"
Tinkard:	a male vagabond that leaves his belongings at a Bousing Inn and wanders begging
Upright man:	a male vagabond that has authority over other vagabonds by virtue of his physical strength and penchant for violence
Verser:	a male vagabond in a card-based cony-catching scheme who, using the information gained through the Setter, gains the trust of a cony
Whipjack:	also called a fresh-water mariner; male vagabonds who would claim to be ship-wrecked sailors and would sometimes carry counterfeit begging licenses
Wild rogue:	a rogue who was born a rogue and knows only other rogues
Walking mort:	a female vagabond who is not married, wanders to beg, and hides their belongings at a Bousing Inn or with a sympathetic householder

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