

Unsettled Strangers: Early Modern Construction of Self and Gender in Foreign Spaces

ORGANIZERS

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OVERVIEW

This workshop will explore the ways that travel as a trope in early modern English literature situates women in new geographical and cultural spaces. With relocation comes both the necessity and opportunity to construct and present oneself within new social norms.

Characters frequently take advantage of this situation to remake themselves in a way that revises or even directly confronts the limitations of life at “home.” We welcome discussion of a wide variety of texts that test the boundaries of individual agency in these processes (including, but not limited to, Romances, travel narratives, and dramatic texts).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What is the impetus for these women’s travel to new lands?

How do these “strange” women choose to change themselves? How do their new identities empower or limit them?

Most importantly, what do these choices communicate about the societal structures in which these women are living and/or traveling to?

In addition, since these works were created at a time when issues of religion and race were becoming more paramount, if present, how do different cultural appropriations influence the portrayal of women in foreign lands?

How are women a contested and liminal body for defining and redefining nationalistic ideals?

How do these works challenge or reinforce developing perceptions as they (at times) act in domestic roles while outside of inherently domestic spaces?

How do we understand identity/identities without place (without the anchor of home/land)? Or perhaps, how do we understand an identity of space, not place?

Women travel to pastoral havens as seen in *Winter’s Tale* or *Arcadia*, or to hostile territory as in *Fair Maid of the West*. Does the nature of the departure impact the new identity taken on?

How does the location impact the genre conventions of these texts?

Does situating women in an uncommon genre achieve the same thing as geographical location?

READINGS

Patricia Fumerton’s book *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (2006) focuses on the unique social position (or positions) held by the working and itinerant poor. In her fourth chapter “Unsettled Subjectivity,” she outlines a theory of

identity that she calls “multividualism.” Drawing on Judith Butler’s idea of performativity, this posits subjectivity as dependent on place—whether that is physical, social, cultural, or religious. Although her argument works specifically with issues of class, can we employ Fumerton’s schema to understand issues of gender and/or social position for women travelers? Helen Hackett’s, “Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?” provides a literary counterbalance to Fumerton’s *Unsettled*, focusing exclusively on fictional female travelers. It too delves into the limitations and freedoms afforded the traveling woman and the possibility for identity (or identities) transformation.

Hackett, Helen. “Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant? Women Who Travel for Love in Renaissance Prose Fiction.” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 41.1 (2011): 126-140.

Fumerton, Patricia. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*. University of Chicago Press, 2006
Chapter 4: Unsettled Subjectivity (47-62)

SUGGESTED READINGS

We recommend, should time permit, reading Chapter 3 of Fumerton’s *Unsettled* first, as it has many examples of mobile/itinerant/traveling women that are both fascinating and relevant to our workshop. The rest of the readings offer different approaches to travel itself, and to women’s barriers and opportunities to travel.

Baker, David J. “My Liquid Journey”: The Frontispiece to *Coryat’s Crudities* (1611).” *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*. Ed. Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 118-136.

Davis, Lloyd. “Self Representation and Travel Autobiographies in Early Modern England.” *Mapping the Self: Space, Identity, Discourse in British Auto/Biography*. Ed. Frederic Regard. Saint-Etienne, France: Publications de l’Universite de Saint-Etienne, 2003. 55-72.

Fumerton, Patricia. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*. University of Chicago Press, 2006: Chapter 3: Disguising the Working Poor (33-46)

McRae, Andrew. “Tourism: Celia Fiennes and Her Context.” *Literature and Domestic Travel in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 174-209.

Quoss-Moore, Rebecca M. “Domestic Economy and Domestic Security: The English Housewife and her Nation.” *Appositions: Studies in Renaissance/Early Modern Literature and Culture*, vol. 9, 2016, pp. 21-34.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

After distributing the common and suggested readings, we will ask participants to submit the titles of primary texts that they would like to discuss in light of the essays. Based on

responses, we will create smaller groups around related text for initial discussion. Using a platform like WordPress, we will give each group a set of guiding questions, and ask them to structure their responses in blog posts preceding the dates of the conference. During the workshop meeting in June, we will use these post as jumping off places to begin our discussion and engage the larger trends.

OUTCOME AND PURPOSE

We hope our discussion will help us better understand how much flexibility ideas like gender, class, and nationality had for Tudor/Stuart audience and how much agency individuals had with regard to them, especially when divorced from the restrictions of home communities. This will also give us insight into the anxieties and hopes they held for an expanding age of global trade and travel.

Our proposal's focus on women in foreign lands intersects a multitude of Attending to Early Modern Women's thematic concerns, including exploring women embedded in foreign/cultural conflicts, reframing, establishing, and expressing their identities, constraints on women in foreign spaces and how those women might articulate their sexuality, and mercantile and consumer practices. This topic invites further exploration of non-human or super-human foreign settings and considerations of material culture for women who travel or settle in foreign spaces.

LIKELY TEXTS FOR DISCUSSION

Sidney, *Arcadia*

Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*

Shakespeare, *Othello*

Pericles

The Winter's Tale

Merchant of Venice

Twelfth Night

Tempest

Heywood, *The Fair Maid of the West*

More, *Utopia*

Jonson, *Volpone*

Cavendish, *The Blazing World*

Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*

speculation in the singing of the various parts, which was vicariously experienced by their audience in the very process of listening and, especially, singing along. Through these popular songs that were also ownable texts—the only works of the period that could really be afforded, and thus made their own, by the lower orders who were so prone to physical, economic, and psychological displacement—the voice of the unsettled subject becomes truly spacious. And if not always seen, it could be heard, *undisguised*. It is to such lowly street literature, not to rogue pamphlets or drama, that we must turn if we are to inhabit fully the aesthetic space of the itinerant working poor. This literature will be the concluding focus of this book.

But before making that aesthetic turn to the low, I would like to revisit the notion of the “subject” and think more fully about what it means to talk of unsettled subjectivity. Clearly, a subject who is physically unsettled in the most extreme sense—homeless—is different from a householder or a member of a household who experiences the unsettledness of multiple, occasional, and/or marginal employment, or the psychological unsettledness of simply feeling out of place, not fully accepted, or vulnerable (to physical displacement, economic instability, legal accusations, or social opprobrium). In the next chapter, I would like to begin thinking about unsettled subjectivity in its most radical form—physical displacement and serial labor—by employing other forms of unsettledness evident in housed laborers as a window for defining our terms. In the end, I hope to define not simply a range or spectrum of unsettled “low” subjectivity, but also a notion of subjectivity more generally that is itself unsettled, that is, multiple, intermittent, occasional, and displaced. We will then be in a position to look at a case study of one kind of unsettled subject—the displaced poor wage laborer—who becomes a type for an emerging proletariat in the seventeenth century, by quite literally going to sea.

Unsettled Subjectivity The Virtual “I”

One can legitimately ask how we can pretend to “know” the lowly unsettled subject when such a subject is virtually invisible and incomprehensible not only to us, but even to many of his or her contemporaries. This is especially the case with the dispossessed itinerant poor, whether unemployed vagabonds or mobile workers, such as wage laborers, peddlers, or dabblers in serial, makeshift trades. Few such transients left written records of their thoughts or feelings. Furthermore, authorities who investigated those arrested for vagrancy tended to gather only bare-bones accounts: “Most records of vagrants,” A. L. Beier observes, “give no more than a name, place of origin, date and place of arrest.”¹ Rare are fleshed-out accounts of the homeless or the nomadic laboring poor—such as the petition by the wage laborer Anthony Adams, housed in Bewdley but working in Stockton, whose family teetered on the brink of nowhere (threatened with eviction by one town and refused a home in the other); or the lengthy story of the runaway Richard Fletcher, shifting from apprenticeship to apprenticeship. Even in these cases, we are not on sure, unmediated ground. In Adams’s case, we cannot trust that the letter was written by Adams himself, since, as a wage laborer, he was likely illiterate or only barely literate. He thus may well have followed the common practice at the time of hiring a local person with learning to write for him. In other words, what few feelings are expressed by Adams may well have been mediated by another. This was certainly the case with Fletcher, whose story is told by the Warwick town recorder, John Fisher. At moments we seem to hear the voice of Fletcher through his mediator—as in the insistent declaration “I will never serve him”—but such seemingly authentic voicings offer only glimpses into the boy’s personality. So restricted is our vision of Fletcher that, as with Adams, we don’t even know his fate.

Given the kinds of “evidence” we are dealing with, then, one could argue that any notion of what such an unsettled subject actually experienced is largely conjectural, an imaginative creation of a virtual “I.” To a certain extent, this is true. In fact, one of the defining features of the vagrant outlined in the statutes of the period was an inability to give a proper “reckoning” of his or her life. In delineating legally vagrant occupations, the 1572 statute, for instance, includes as vagrants those who “can give no reckoning how he or

she doth lawfully get his or her living.”²² The Salisbury records of arrested vagrants often take pains to note this particular failing. We might recall that when the pregnant Margaret Legg (alias Jackson alias Smyth) “was found wandering as a vagrant,” the report confirmed her vagrancy with the addition “not giving any account or reason of her wandering.” Similarly, the entry for April 8, 1605, regarding “Dorothy Grene *alias* Percye, a wanderer” concludes, “She is not able to give account of her life.” And the record for April 7, 1606, of “one naming himself Thomas Carter” declares that he is “an idle person and a vagrant not able to yield any account of his idle course of life”; he was thus “punished.”²³ Yet another woman, Martha Maddox, was put to labor at Bridewell in 1642 because, the Lord Mayor decided, “she is a vagrant woman [who] is out of service and can give no good account.”²⁴ It is as if, in the minds of early modern authorities, an “account” or “reckoning” of one’s life—what we might call “autobiography”—could belong only to the respectably settled. To be unable to give such an account labeled one as criminal.

Lacking such “legitimate,” autobiographical accounts, we cannot penetrate the introspections of the early modern homeless and itinerant laborer. But that does not mean we are reduced to the simply imaginary. Indeed, the scarcity of introspective accounts by lower-order subjects might point not only to a lack of evidence or writing skills but also to a subjectivity that was by nature not introspective or inward-turning. The major exceptions, of course, are spiritual autobiographies by lowly Puritan nonconformists, such as Roger Lowe and John Bunyan, who were instructed by their spiritual leaders to keep a daily account of their thoughts “as a means to cultivate a holy life by the discipline of self-examination and self-revelation.”²⁵ Even so, most religious autobiographers, as Paul Delany observes, “were priests, ministers, elders, or persons holding some kind of clerical office,” that is, members of “a militant elite.”²⁶

Moreover, a godly definition of self—though capable of promoting a sense of introspection or inwardness, as Katharine Eisamen Maus has argued—is by its very definition not radically unsettled. Or, rather, such a subject evinces a different kind of unsettledness than is the focus of this study. The devout subject is in one way, at least, very placed: he or she is securely housed or anchored by God.²⁷ The inward-searching Bunyan, for instance, though often appearing to be hopelessly and damnably afloat in a secular world, is in fact by virtue of his tireless soul-searching at all times placed, however agonizingly, by the godly eye/I. At the risk of following—or being thrown down—one of Bunyan’s errant paths to damnation, I would further question whether subjectivity defined primarily in theological terms may not be subjectivity at all from our modern, and an emergent early modern, perspective. Of course,

one could counter that such a notion of God-based subjectivity was precisely what contemporaries were encouraged by their culture to find, which cannot be denied. But a new kind of subjectivity was simultaneously emerging in the period that speaks more to a modern notion of singularity and disconnection—a detached “I”—and unsettled poor subjects may well have had greater access to it than did their better-off contemporaries. In any case, early modern authorities may have been on to something in describing the vagrant as godless. Whether or not the itinerant or otherwise unsettled poor embraced a particular religion—and many undoubtedly did—unsettled subjects were products and producers of a secular economy that resisted any centering, not even, as we have seen, on London. If we are devoted to seeking out truly unplaced or unsettled subjectivity in an emerging modern sense of the term as it might have been experienced by the mobile poor, we had best then look to a secular autobiography. This is precisely the direction we shall take in part 2, in turning to the journal-cum-autobiography of Edward Barlow, the son of a poor husbandman who defined himself quite literally as a subject “at sea.” Barlow’s unsettled story of himself is a rare find among the plethora of sea journals of the time: though there are many extant secular sea journals made by officers in seventeenth-century England, Barlow’s is the only surviving such self-accounting made from the perspective of a poor seaman.²⁸

But before turning to Barlow’s journal, I propose we follow the unsettled who are “of no account” a few steps further. For although we cannot hear directly from most of these dispossessed dead, we are not reduced to silence. We can at least catch momentary voicings (as in the cases of Adams and Fletcher); and on the basis of our mappings of their disconnected, unstable, and spatially dispersed positionings within early modern society, we can begin to sketch an outline, however tentative, of what identity such unsettled poor might have formed. With the goal of reaching such a hypothesis, I propose we revisit two well-documented “groups” of the period whom we have found to be metonymically, if not identically, akin to displaced laborers: youths and apprentices. With the help of studies of these unsettled housed workers, we might gain a fuller picture of the homeless laborer, which will then enable us to return with new vision to contemplate more fully the tendrils of connection between the unsettled subject and poor householders of varied status, including women.

The work of Steven R. Smith on apprentices (whom we have found to be always precariously placed, often psychically dislocated, and frequently becoming literally displaced) is especially helpful. Drawing on Erik Erikson, Smith observes that the long and uncertain terms of apprenticeship created something of a “lifestyle” of adolescence: a “way of life between childhood

and adulthood.” Such an adolescent lifestyle involves a period of “free role experimentation” whereby youths search for a niche or identity in adult society and in the process establish “an adolescent subculture with what looks like a final rather than a transitory or, in fact, initial identity formation.” Smith finds such role experimentation in the ballads and stories of apprentices, which depict a spectrum of characters from riotous youths to manly heroes, and sees it as being facilitated by “the vast range of opportunities in London.” It was out of such role experimentation, Smith argues, that apprentices developed a subculture—replete with rituals, creeds, and programs—that assumed a permanent rather than transitory status.⁹

Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos and other historians have since questioned the extent to which apprentices or youths in general formed any organized subculture, countering this theory in the same way that the theory of a vagrant subculture has been undermined. Paul Griffiths, however, has recently countered the counter by claiming that “subculture” is too restrictive a notion. That is, he posits, we need not argue for a youth “subculture” in order to recognize a common character to the age of youth. Such an age, he argues, amounted to a complex, ambiguous, and contested territory signposted and shaped by shared formative experiences. Two such formative experiences that both Griffiths and Ben-Amos agree on were service or apprenticeship and mobility. Indeed, Ben-Amos (concurring with Martin Ingram on this subject as well) asserts that “the spatial mobility of young people was itself perhaps the most important feature of an adolescent culture in early modern English society.”¹⁰ For Griffiths, such mobility was a significant factor that allowed youths creative expression in the face of repressive households and local communities: “The high rate of migration,” he contends, “was one way in which young people crossed these alleged obstacles.” Griffiths further extends the notion of liberating spatial mobility to include the many “shared cultural and social moments” experienced by youths outside the constricting place of the household where they lived and served—roaming the streets, playing games on the green, indulging in alehouse pleasures, and so on—activities that adults often condoned and in which they also sometimes participated.¹¹

Griffiths’s flexible and open-ended characterization of the youth experience can help us further understand the experience of unsettledness as well. Rather than thinking of the unsettled poor as constituting an organized subculture or specific class, we might best think of them as sharing an array of practices or habits—foremost being economic, interpersonal, and spatial mobility. Thinking along these lines, we can return to Smith’s notion of role experimentation. The common experience of mobility among the unsettled laboring poor would itself have allowed for—or, more probably, required—role experimentation

similar to the kind Smith discusses, even if it did not produce a categorical subculture. Repeatedly moving from place to place (both geographic and socio-economic), mobile workers would most likely have adopted a casual and provisional attitude toward the variously undertaken jobs and relationships along the way. Furthermore, if we take away the ultimate “niche” in society that such experimentation could temporarily fill (which happened in over half of apprenticeship cases) we have the potential for open-ended role-playing—or, perhaps more accurately, role *speculation*, since it involved serious economic investment.

Such was certainly the situation of the radically unsettled subject—the dispossessed wanderer—in early modern England. Traveling the byways of urban and rural England, the displaced subject was at all times, one might say, an “apprentice” or “journeyman.” As with apprentices embarked upon serial role speculation, the unsettled subject—shifting from place to place, relationship to relationship, and job to job—“apprenticed” in a range of different identities or roles without ever attaining the “freedom” of formulating an integrated and singular subjectivity. This perpetually speculative subject would have little resembled Stephen Greenblatt’s notion of a self born out of masterful acts of “fashioning” or “rehearsal.” Such conceived self-determination (however ultimately illusory and culturally defined, as Greenblatt shows) is grounded in a power structure by which the dominant creates himself—or, in the case of a class, itself—through assertion over an imagined Other.¹² The unsettled had no such empowering “place,” either physical, social, or economic. This is not to say that the displaced subject would have lacked any sense of autonomous subjectivity. Indeed, displacement approximated in many ways what we have come to think of as a kind of free individualism. The itinerant was detached, solitary, and independent. To quote a male-biased cliché (though we should never forget that women could be independent as well), he was “his own man”—hence the reiterated fear that Richard Fletcher, if released from his apprenticeship, would “roam at liberty.” But at the same time, the unplaced subject occupied a spaciousness that was provisional (subjected to the vagaries of an unpredictable marketing network), multiple, and anonymous. He was “no man,” or, perhaps more accurately, “many men.” In the spirit of unsettledness, we might best characterize such a subject by a deviant coinage of our own: “multividualism.”

The multividual unsettled subject in the early modern period who occupied the most extreme form of unsettledness (extensive physical displacement) can thus be seen as being composed of dispersed, serial “selves”—variously defined occupationally, relationally, or spatially—that could be taken up, adjusted, and cast off as occasion demanded. One might be tempted to equate

this notion of subjectivit(ies) with theatrical role-playing (as we discussed in the previous chapter), especially because unlicensed actors were included among those listed in the vagrancy acts of 1572 and 1598, and players cohabited with the migrant and laboring poor in the suburbs and liberties of London. Jean-Christophe Agnew has made just such a connection in his excellent study of the market, the theater, and the self. For Agnew, the new, liquid money market unmoored traditional market relationships, creating a sense of distance and theatricality—even mis-representation or disguising—and a consequent feeling of the protean character of man. This argument is in many ways compelling. But it proves problematic on two counts: (1) Agnew does not take into consideration status differences, so that in his view, every early modern subject (with the partial exception of Puritans) shares the same kind of theatrical subjectivity; and (2) at the same time, he obfuscates the kind of subject such role-playing would actually represent. Sometimes persons so invested in the market appear utterly ungrounded: “liminaries poised forever on the threshold of their own exchange.” But most of the time, they appear to be stable persons in disguise, that is, private individuals hiding behind an exterior “second” face, like actors on the stage.¹³

Disguise and theatricality do figure prominently in contemporary beggar and rogue literature, as we have seen. And certainly the itinerant poor engaged in undertakings or speculations that involved subtly changing guises, as well as even adopting aliases to hide their unsettled identity (ironically, thus underscoring it at the same time). But to label as “theatrical” such moment-to-moment or day-to-day shifts in identity, occasioned by spatial and occupational unsettledness, seems as askew as to apply the term “disguise” to the different roles we all must undertake in our various (and varyingly unsettled) everyday capacities as parent, spouse, child, consumer, teacher, and so on. The problem is that the term “theatrical” implies a level of disguise or fakery not necessarily a part of everyday role-playing, whether that role-playing is perceived by the practicers to be “normal” or—as I am arguing would have been the case for many of the early modern mobile poor—“unsettling.” Indeed, as we try to focus on the shifting “I” of actual vagabonds and their laboring fellow itinerants, the notion of theatricality proves dangerously misleading. As demonstrated in our discussion of Harman’s tract, the idea of theatrical disguising not only cloaked the harsh fact of serial or multiple labor, but allowed for official accusations of fakery and consequent punishments. Furthermore, it should be stressed that the itinerant poor could not have afforded to engage in role-playing in any theatrical sense of the word. Too much was at stake—too much was *invested*—in their variously adopted identities, however transitional, occasional, or casual they might have been.

Such role investment, enacted as it was through displacement, would have manifested not one or the other of Agnew’s two seemingly irreconcilable senses of subjectivity, but *both*. That is, the unsettled subject was simultaneously grounded and ungrounded, independent and transient, there and not there. He or she (and I deliberately include women here, as discussed below) was an individually multiple “I.” We might best think of such a subject as “performative” in an intensive and extensive version of Judith Butler’s sense of the term: as variably constructed in and through acts of continual displacement.¹⁴ This nontheatrical notion of performativity is helpful to our thinking about the unsettled poor, with the proviso that we do not lose sight of the harsh economic impositions under which the dispossessed suffered.

It is in light of such a multiply displaced identity formation that we can further expand Christopher Hill’s notion of lower-order “mobility and freedom.” In a section under this heading in *The World Turned Upside Down*, Hill emphasizes the independence and liberty that characterized the life of transients: whether squatters in woodland and pasture areas or, more typically, frequenters of the suburbs of towns, the homeless sought out places that were free from established and coercive authority. Hill does not ignore the high cost of such liberty—in the form of alienation and insecurity—but he nevertheless sees a certain truth in the playwright Richard Brome’s description of the placeless as “the only freemen of a commonwealth.”¹⁵ Thinking less enthusiastically along similar lines, one contemporary complained that in London’s suburbs, “many vicious persons get liberty to live as they please, for want of some heedful eye.” Such liberty may have been the special attraction of these liminal places for “wayward” women—such as those cited by the authorities of Salisbury—who sought emancipation from the prying eyes and strong arm of their local villagers.¹⁶

Other cultural critics have since further focused on the “place” of liberty, most notably Steven Mullaney in his study of the theater and London’s suburbs, *The Place of the Stage*.¹⁷ But I would argue that it was not simply the *placement* of woodlands or suburbs—or, for that matter, of the open streets of London—that bestowed liberty. It was also, and perhaps even more importantly, the unattachedness and dispersal of the displaced persons who frequented them. In other words, to reemphasize my earlier point, unsettled freedom is more a matter of *space* than place. Sociological and philosophical studies ranging from the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Space and Place* to more postmodern works, such as Michel de Certeau’s *Practice of Everyday Life* and Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*, help us to conceptualize this distinction.¹⁸ Together, these studies unmoor conventional place to make room for space: as a state of consciousness, as constructed, as mobile, and as free.

A modern example of place, in these terms, would be one's home or workplace, where familiar and predictable activities occur. Space is more strange, shifting, and malleable, more open to being differently inhabited or used, like an airport lounge area. Of course, these terms are not mutually exclusive: places can become spaces and vice versa, depending on their use.

Pursuing this notion of interchangeability, recent historical studies of women's "place" in early modern society have noted the permeability and ambiguous liminality of the feminized household, calling into question the model of "separate spheres." In the words of Laura Gowing, "The historical model of 'separate spheres,' which dates a transformation in gender relations to a reinforcement or reconstitution of the distinction between male/public and female/private to between 1650 and 1850, has been challenged in both its chronology and its terms . . . it has become quite clear that the period before 1650 did not see a 'golden age' of shared public worlds and more equal gender roles in politics, economy or housework." She adds that "there are [also] some problematic elisions of meanings in the model of separate spheres. One of these is the confusion between public or private *issues* and *events* and public and private *spaces*. Public events might take place in private spaces; women's participation in one kind of public realm did not give them a place in others. Nor is the relationship between separate spheres and the distribution of power clear."¹⁹ Certainly, despite affirmations of women's right to control household space—which was especially articulated in the popular culture of the time—when push came to shove in this patriarchal society, the man owned the house and the woman's labor (in terms of both childbirth and work). Indeed, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have coined the phrase "public housewifery" to underscore that married women from the middling and upper ranks often performed a significant portion of the labor for which their husbands were paid.²⁰ It would seem that the term "public housewifery" is equally applicable to lower-order housewives, whose income supplemented the householder's but also was not their own, even though they labored extensively in occasional and makeshift by-employments.

Finally, it should be stressed that women's work extended the domestic space outside the walls of the house to their liminal doorsteps—where they often worked at domestic industries, such as lace-making—and even beyond: "The town conduit or public well, the bakehouse, and the riverbank where clothes were washed were patronized mainly by women, and treated by them almost as an extension of their dwellings," Mendelson and Crawford observe.²¹ Women also took goods to market and sold wares on the street. But, of course, all such extensions of the confined domestic space, though part of women's—especially poor women's—daily lives, challenged traditional notions of the

female realm. Women outside the physical place of the home and especially those "at large" on the street were always vulnerable to censure, as in the 1582 complaint against "vagrant women such as commonly go up and down in the streets carrying and selling of apparel."²² "Vagrant" is here a loaded term, suggesting the association of female labor out of the home, or as an extension of the home, with the most radical of unsettled subjects, the vagabond. The "home" was indeed an unsettled space, and extensions of the home by women through their daily chores as well as their officially unrecognized makeshift labors could be very unsettling for their male (and probably even some of their female) counterparts. The period tried to delineate the place of women, but in reality women occupied an unstable and open space.

The early modern period, I would add, understood (however suspiciously, cautiously, or enthusiastically) the kind of distinction I am making here between place and space, as Andrew McRae has shown in his study of changing attitudes toward travel in England from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries.²³ Furthermore, the actual terms by which we are construing this distinction would not have been foreign to contemporaries of the period. This can be seen in the common use of the word *space* in the period to designate the passage of time—as, for example, in the phrase "the space of two days." Such temporal usage of the term *space* appears regularly in the successive statutes against vagrancy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in descriptions of lengths of various punishments to be meted out to apprehended itinerants. The term *space* in these acts is associated with transience, as was the vagrant himself or herself. In official and common contemporary parlance, time is space without place; it moves.

The early modern unsettled subject who was physically displaced or homeless most fully occupied just such a transient space. Tramping the streets of London (within or without the walls), speculating in a range of affective, social, and economic roles, and thus continually remaking the spaces he or she inhabited, the dispossessed made of the city itself, in de Certeau's words, "an immense social experience of lacking a place."²⁴ And, of course, this unlocalized social experience, which extended to other urban and country spaces as well, was also for such unsettled subjects a psychological experience, a state of consciousness that existed from place to place and was thus everywhere and nowhere at once. The inability of itinerants to name many of the towns they passed through, as we have seen in cases of peddlers arrested for vagrancy, underscores such unplaceable "nowhere-ness." Anne Smyth, in search of the husband who twice deserted her and stole her cloak, began her wandering relatively grounded; but increasingly, as she confessed to the examiner, she knew not her place: "And when he came not to her again, she

went out of Warwick to Kenilworth and lay there that night. The next night she lay at a town two miles beyond Coventry the name she knoweth not. And so from town to town, in and out. And one night she lay in Noneton but where she hath been ever since she knoweth not.²⁵ Such an expanding “nowhere experience”—ironically epitomized by Anne’s last sitting in “Noneton”—could finally have been at best but a “simulation” of free subjectivity in the Baudrillardian sense: an enactment for which there was no foundational reality in the background.²⁶ John Taylor, in his ambivalent paean to beggary, *The Praise, Antiquity, and Commodity of Beggary, Beggars, and Begging* (1621), momentarily captures just such an ungrounded simulation of unsettled “freedom”:

A beggar lives here in this vale of sorrow,
And travels here to day, and there tomorrow.
The next day being neither here, nor there:
But almost nowhere, and yet everywhere.²⁷

Such a free-ranging “nowhere” subject was simultaneously alienated and free. For, in the words of Tuan, “place is security, space is freedom.”²⁸ Or, put another way, space is freedom without security. It is unsettled.

The ambiguously “free” space of unsettled subjectivity, we have said, would have been most intensely occupied by perpetual itinerants in early modern England: not only wandering beggars or rogues, but also migrant wage laborers and trade-shifters (who might at any time resort to begging or theft) in the process of continually shifting from place to place, relationship to relationship, job to job. But what about those other subjects on the margins of physical displacement—those housed but socially and psychically displaced apprentices and servants; or those many poor householders just getting by (indigent husbandmen in the country, petty craftsmen and minor traders in the city) who often held more than one job, occasionally needed poor relief, and frequently were forced to move and change jobs; or those many poor single and married women who worked in various occasional and makeshift by-employments either “at their own hand” or to supplement their husband’s income, at the risk of persecution and identification with the labeled vagrant? Would not the space of unsettled subjectivity—of speculating in displaced, serial identit(ies)—have also been open, if not wholly available, to many of these poor? A percentage of such housed workers might very well have provisionally and/or partially experienced unsettled subjectivity, if not actual homelessness. Certainly not all of them; probably not all the time. But very possibly, some of them, some of the time, or at some time would have known what it meant to be an unsettled subject.

Implicit in this claim is the argument that subjectivity itself need not be consistent or singular. In other words, we need to expand our thinking about early modern subjectivity so that its conceptualization itself becomes unsettled or multiple. In recent years, many models of subjectivity have been promulgated by cultural critics of the period: from the radical debunking of the older humanistic notion of Renaissance individualism or interiority (for example, by such Marxist critics as Francis Barker, Jonathan Dollimore, and Catherine Belsey) to the currently dominant reaffirmations of subjectivity, but only as dependent on social or political constructs (as variously argued by Stephen Greenblatt, Jonathan Goldberg, and myself, among others) to the latest “born-again” visions (such as Debora Kuller Shuger’s religiously construed subjectivity—which is fragmented or interior depending on whether the subject is Protestant or Catholic—or Katharine Eisamen Maus’s God-based inwardness that cuts across denominational lines).²⁹ These works constitute an impressive corpus of investigation into the nature of early modern subjectivity and have opened up first its sociopolitical character and then, in a just reaction against such emphasized secularization, its religious character. Whatever the differences in approach, however, two problems recur: (1) these works tend to offer a universal or holistic version of the early modern subject when in fact the posited “I” derives from consideration of a select pool of early modern contemporaries who are male (Belsey’s work is the notable exception here), of the upper sort or at least the educated middling sort, and great theatergoers; and (2) such a universalized subjectivity (however differently defined) tends to be treated as if it were singular and consistent.³⁰

Might it not be more likely that, as Maus herself has suggested, subjectivity is in fact mobile and even inconsistent?³¹ To expand upon her point: depending on many variable general factors (status, wealth, age, religion, gender, and locale), as well as on diverse shifting, particular events in everyday living, might not one and the same subject experience, say, an intense withdrawal or interior wholeness at one moment, an entirely publicly or socially constructed identity at another, an overwhelmingly self-divided or internally fractured sensibility at another, and a sacral self securely grounded by a godly eye/I at yet another? Might it not even be possible to hold two or more self-conceptions at once—say, as God-centered and as completely detached from all centers, secular or divine—in the same way that a person might hold two or more jobs at once? The poor worker whose family was crammed together into a one-room cottage or who shared his or her meager urban space with strangers within a small section of a tenement may have been denied any sense of a placed interior “I”; but he or she might still have lived through (however provisionally, partially, or ambivalently) a variety of changing,

different “selves”: perhaps as socially constructed, then as God-determined, and then—in the course of job diversity and mobility—as multiple and displaced.

Indeed, to conclude with yet another hypothesis, the conception of subjectivity as itself mutable and manifold might well have been most available as a “thought” in the early modern period by those lower to lower-middling poor for whom unsettledness—provisionality, multiplicity, change, and dispersal—was in varying degrees a lived experience. In my concluding chapter, where we shall turn again toward aesthetic representations of the mobile poor, we shall see that the “lowly” broadside street ballad of the period projected just such a notion of unsettled self in imaging and voicing diverse serial personae and subject positions through an anonymous, mutating, generic form. But we first need to complete our historical investigation into the unstable poor by turning to a borderline historical/literary text, the journal-cum-autobiography of Edward Barlow. Such a “case study” will allow us to test our hypotheses about unsettled subjectivity in both senses of the term: as the felt experience of being unfixed, multiple, and displaced on the one hand; and as the inconsistent and intermittent awareness of such an unsettled experience on the other.

A mobile poor wage laborer who tried out apprenticeships on land but finally became an itinerant seaman, Barlow offers another important contribution to this study. Servants and apprentices, we have seen, presented a type of landed unsettledness; seamen presented such unsettledness fully launched. By 1700, landless wage laborers constituted some 60 percent of Britain’s people, and one of the largest groups among this displaced body of free workers were seamen. Indeed, if apprentices made up an ever-smaller proportion of this percentage, seamen constituted an increasing proportion.³² As I mentioned earlier, in the mid-sixteenth century about three to five thousand Englishmen were seamen; by 1750, that number had grown to more than sixty thousand.³³ An even larger number of persons were involved in some aspect of maritime business (building and stocking ships or disseminating their imported goods). And yet, as we shall see in chapters 6 and 8, seamen were a source of anxiety as much as of opportunity in the period. This is in large part because such “spacious” workers quintessentially represented an emerging “free” proletariat born of a new economics that was no longer anchored in traditional notions of placed market or labor. Seamen epitomized the landless wage laborer, who was always, even when housed and employed, deeply unsettled.

Edward Barlow, in his unique way, fits this bill. Despite his shifting from place to place and job to job on land, Barlow was never arrested for vagrancy

(though he was several times vulnerable to such arrest); indeed, he held to a very traditional work ethic at sea, refusing to break his apprenticeship no matter how annoyingly it “bound” him. And yet his journal displays a mind that occasionally inhabited—perhaps, deep within, at all times inhabited—and most definitely portrayed, *quite literally*, the space of unsettled subjectivity. In Barlow’s own words, “I was not well settled in my mind.”



FIGURE 1

Jost Amman, *The Peddler*, from *The Book of Trades* [*Panoplia Omnium Illiberalium Mechanicarum Aut Sedentiarum Artium Genera Continens*] (Frankfurt, 1568).



FIGURE 2.

William Hogarth, *The Idle Prentice Turn'd Away, and Sent to Sea*, plate 5 of Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness* series (1747), from *The Works of William Hogarth, from the Original Plates Restored by James Heath* (London, 1835).



FIGURE 3.

Nicholas Jennings, alias Blunt, as "Upright Man" and as "Counterfeit Crank," from Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warening for Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones*, 1573 (Q4). Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. 61292.

Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant?? Women Who Travel for Love in Renaissance Prose Fiction

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Suffering Saints or Ladies Errant? Women Who Travel for Love in Renaissance Prose Fiction

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Renaissance prose fiction needed to make women travel. How else were they to have adventures, risk sexual danger, get rescued, tempt men, or prove their virtue? Travel produces stories: it both creates encounters between characters, and separates characters to produce multiple interlaced narrative strands.

Yet the relation of women to travel was problematic. The message of many prescriptive Renaissance texts was that the virtuous woman stays at home. As the Puritan preacher Henry Smith wrote in his conduct book *A Preparative to Marriage*:

Lastly, wee call the Wife, *Huswife*, that is, house wife, not a street wife like *Thamar*, nor a field wife like *Dinah*, but a house wife, to shew that a good wife keeps her house: and therefore *Paule* biddeth *Titus* to exhort women that they be chaste, and keeping at home: presently after *Chast*, he saith, *keeping at home*, as though *Home* were Chastities keeper.¹

According to such admonitions, a woman who strays from home is one who errs, in every sense of the word. The well-known portrait of a chambermaid in Thomas Overbury's *Characters* implies that for a woman to travel even in imagination is alarmingly hazardous: she reads Greenes works over and over, but is so carried away with the *Myrroure of Knighthood*, she is many times resolved to run out of her selfe, and become a Ladie Errant. Confirming that her imagined wanderings are sexual as well as geographical, we are also told that she hath a good liking to dwell in Countrey, but she holdes London, the goodliest Forrest in England, to shelter a great Bellie; and that if she catch a clap, she divides it so equally betweene the Maister and the Servingman, as if she had cut out the getting of it by a Threed.² For a woman to travel, then, is for her to jeopardize her virtue.

How, therefore, to get women on the move? Women who travel in prose fiction frequently do so for love, a mission that simultaneously justifies their travels and renders them suspect. A woman on a love quest may be praised for her devotion and fidelity, and for her endurance of hardships in pursuit of her

¹ Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage* (London: R. Field for Thomas Man, 1591), p. 79.

² Thomas Overbury (attrib.), *New and Choise Characters of Severall Authors*, 6th edn (London: Thomas Creede for Laurence Lisle, 1615), sigs J4^v J5^r.

destined husband; but she is also morally disruptive in her determination to pursue her own sexual desires. In many cases she assumes male disguise to gain freedom of travel, and this compounds her moral ambiguity.

The two main types of cross-dressed female travellers are the warrior woman and the female page. The warrior woman is found in verse romances, such as Bradamant in *Orlando Furioso* and Britomart in *The Faerie Queene*, but also occurs in prose fictions such as *Amadis de Gaule* and *The Mirror of Knighthood*. Her masculine armour is obviously transgressive, but at the same time conforms to models of feminine propriety, as an emblem of militant chastity. As the Elder Brother says of chastity in *Comus*, 'She that has that, is clad in complete steel'.³ Moreover, the warrior woman is rarely an alarming Amazonian separatist: she is often softened by chaste love and a wifely destiny, as in the cases of Bradamant, Britomart, and Claridiana (in *The Mirror of Knighthood*). *Orlando Furioso* represents Bradamant's armour as a penance borne for love, more than a source of freedom and pleasure: 'Long travell and great paine she had endured | And rid alone her lover to have found'. It also emphasizes her exceptional virtue, anticipating that we might doubt this in a cross-dressed travelling woman: 'In whose rare minde no noble part did want, | So full of value and so voyd of vice'.⁴ Bradamant's first appearance, before we even know her to be a woman, is as a champion of female chastity, when she interrupts Sacrapant as he prepares to rape the lady in his care, and defeats him in combat (i. 60). Nevertheless, the efforts that authors made to reassure the reader of the warrior woman's femininity and virtue bespeak the fact that she always inevitably remains unsettlingly aggressive and unfeminine. Warrior women often triumph over male opponents in combat; as in the case of Bradamant's victory over Sacrapant, or that of Spenser's Radigund over Artegall,⁵ this may arise as much from a failure of masculinity as from female strength, but nevertheless it is a graphic expression of the warrior woman's disturbing inversion of the proper gender hierarchy.

The female page is an equally complex figure. As a servant, she places herself in proper submission to a man; a pageboy is already a subordinate and effeminized figure. Her disguise is often adopted as a safeguard against sexual threats, and thereby confirms her purity and unwavering dedication to her beloved, as she endures the martyrdom of being close to him yet unable to speak her love. In fact the female page, while gaining the freedom to travel with her beloved, nevertheless finds herself in an impasse wherein marriage and consummation is

³ John Milton, 'A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle', in *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey (London: Longman, 1971), p. 197, l. 420.

⁴ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by John Harington (1591), ed. by Robert McNulty (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), ii. 33, 31. Subsequent references are to this edition (designated *OF*) and will be given in the text.

⁵ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A. C. Hamilton (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), v. 5.

impossible. Even so, the intimacy that the female page achieves with her beloved may compromise her chastity, and often mobilizes unruly love confusions and homoerotic desires, as the beloved develops feelings for his boy page and women are attracted to this pretty boy. Moreover, although the female page may seek to protect and assert her virginity, her disguise and her travel render this a disturbing active virginity, as Richard Halpern has termed it. He writes that Amazons and nymphs of Diana, with whom we might group the female page in her pursuit of sexual autonomy,

withhold their sexuality in ways that make them independent, strange, and frightening to men. All of these figures mark the point at which virginity ceases to denote submission and begins to denote revolt, at which purification becomes danger. In all of these cases, moreover, active virginity is marked by wandering, which contrasts with the stasis of domestic life.⁶

Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie confirm that the virgin [. . .] can be seen alternately or even simultaneously as menaced and menacing. This ambivalence is intensified when a woman takes her virginity on the road.⁷

Both the warrior woman and the female page, then, are transgressive and morally ambiguous. These disguises also associate travelling women with duplicity, as manifested in their participation in plots involving doubles and mistaken identity. The cross-dressing female traveller combines geographical mobility with mobility of gender and identity, and thereby contributes to the general moral complexity and instability of much Renaissance prose fiction. She is at once troubling and essential to the genre.

The page-heroine of Barnabe Riche's *Of Apolonius and Silla* is a good example. She leaves home because she is outraged with the extremity of her passion for the indifferent Apolonius, and so pursues him from her father's court on Cyprus to his own at Constantinople.⁸ Thus far she appears to be a figure of disobedience—secretly leaving her father's house with a servant whom she makes a co-conspirator—and of unchastity and rashness. The sexual vulnerability into which desire has led her is confirmed when a ship's captain attempts to rape her at sea. However, from this point on, her virtue increasingly comes to the fore. She resists the captain because of her chastity and the purity of her love for Apolonius, and she rue[s] her rash attempt in running away, accepting her culpability. She understands the captain's assault as divine retribution for

⁶ Richard Halpern, 'Puritanism and Maenadism in *A Mask*', in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 88–105 (p. 94).

⁷ Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie, 'Introduction: The Epistemology of Virginity', in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Kelly and Leslie (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), pp. 15–30 (p. 16).

⁸ Barnabe Riche, *His Farewell to Military Profession* (1581), ed. by Donald Beecher (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1992), p. 183. Subsequent references are to this edition (designated *FMP*) and will be given in the text.

her misdeed, and seeks to make atonement: she prepares to kill herself rather than yield, and prays to God, craving pardon for her sins (pp. 185–86). God responds with a storm and shipwreck that preserve both her virginity and her life, and hereafter she becomes a martyr for love. Her motive for adopting male disguise is much clearer than that of Viola in Shakespeare's treatment of the story in *Twelfth Night*: it is that, being taken for a man, she might pass through the country in the better safety (pp. 186–87). Her male disguise, then, is almost like a suit of armour to protect her virginity. And when, after long vicissitudes and love confusions at the court of Apolonius, her true sex is finally revealed, Apolonius acclaims her self-displacement and self-abasement in the cause of love as a miracle and an act of martyrdom. Despite her courtly upbringing, she has:

prodigally adventure[d] yourself, neither fearing mishaps nor misliking to take such pains as I know you have not been accustomed unto [. . .] O liberality never heard of before! O fact that can never be sufficiently rewarded! O true love most pure and unfeigned! (p. 200)

Silla in her boy disguise calls herself after her brother Silvio, and attracts Julina, the equivalent of Shakespeare's Olivia. When the real Silvio arrives in town and Julina mistakes him for the disguised Silla, Riche has them sleep together, with the result that Julina, feeding too much of some one dish above the rest, received a surfeit whereof she could not be cured in forty weeks after (*FMP*, p. 191) — a remark typical of the insinuating asides that Riche addresses to gentlewomen readers throughout *His Farewell to Military Profession*, the volume in which *Of Apolonius and Silla* appeared. Julina charges Silla with paternity, and is deeply shamed when the putative father reveals her true sex: And herewithal, loosing his garments down to his stomach, [. . .] showed Julina his breasts and pretty teats surmounting the whiteness of snow itself (*FMP*, p. 199). Readers familiar with the story from *Twelfth Night* are often startled by the prominence of the body and sexuality in Riche's narration. Yet this plot motif — the false accusation of paternity — confirms that behind the characterization of Silla lies a long tradition of female hagiography.

The *Golden Legend* or *Legenda Aurea*, the medieval anthology of saints' lives, continued to be known after the Reformation through Caxton's widely circulating edition of 1483. It was regarded as a source of improbable actions: the actor and playwright Nathan Field derided an unlikely tale as like something out of *Legenda Aurea*.⁹ For a post-Reformation readership, then, these saints' lives were primarily entertaining stories of fantastical events; and for authors of secular prose fiction they were a rich source available for plunder. They offered a

⁹ Quoted in Antonia Southern, *Player, Playwright and Preacher's Kid: The Story of Nathan Field, 1587–1620* (London: Athena, 2009), p. 178.

number of examples of women who adopted male disguise to travel. Saints Marina, Theodora, Eugenia, Pelagia, and Margaret (known as Pelagius) all left their homes and assumed masculine dress and identity in order to become monks; three of these (Marina, Theodora, and Margaret Pelagius) were each accused of fathering a child.¹⁰ St Eugenia was charged with rape by a woman who had unsuccessfully tried to seduce him/her, and proved his/her innocence with a gesture clearly imitated by Silla: And thenne she tooke her cote | and rente it unto her gyrdel above | and sayd | that she was a woman | as it apperyd (*LA*, fol. 289^r).

St Eugenia's dramatic gesture is unique to her story, but there are several other motifs that recur in these saints' lives. The initial flight from home and adoption of male disguise is always a mark of piety and virtue. St Margaret Pelagius is compelled by her family to marry, but flees from the wedding night and becomes a monk to preserve her virginity:

And at mydnyght she commaunded her to god | And cut of her heer | | and clad her in thabyte of a man And dedde fro thennes to a monasterye of Monkes | And dyd so calle her broder pelagyen | and ther was receyved of thabbot | and dylygently instruct and tauyt | And she helde her self there holyly | and relygyously. (*LA*, fol. 318^r)

St Theodora, a married woman, flees and adopts male disguise as a penance for adultery; St Pelagia does so to atone for her former life as a wealthy courtesan. The three cross-dressed saints who are charged with fathering children meekly accept the accusation and welcome the opportunity for further penance, maintaining their disguise until death. Even St Eugenia, who so arrestingly reveals her female body, at first seems inclined to suffer ignominy: she says of the woman who has falsely accused her of rape, it is better to us to suffre | than she sholde be vaynquysshed and pugnysshed | And that the fruyt of our pacyence perysshe not (fol. 289^r).

All these saintly figures, suffering in silence, stand behind Silla, and in turn behind the imaginary sister of Shakespeare's Viola, who famously never told her love, but sat like patience on a monument, | Smiling at grief.¹¹ Women who travelled and cross-dressed because of their love of Christ mutate, in the

¹⁰ Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, trans. by William Caxton (London: Caxton, 1483), fols 97^v, 180^v, 181^r, 210^f, 211^r, 288^v, 289^v, 317^r, 318^v. Subsequent references to the *Legenda Aurea* are to this version (designated *LA*) and will be given in the text. On the continuing influence of medieval hagiography on female heroism in Renaissance literature see Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983), pp. 187–89; Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 207–09; Helen Hackett, 'The Torture of Limena: Sex and Violence in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*', in *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, ed. by Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), pp. 93–110; Lorraine Helms, 'The Saint in the Brothel', in *Seneca by Candlelight and Other Stories of Renaissance Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 76–100; and Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), passim.

¹¹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York: Norton, 1997), II. 5. 109–14.

wake of the Reformation, into women who travel and cross-dress because of their love of a man. This at once elevates true love to the level of a religious calling, rendering the female pages of secular Fiction saintlike, and casts over them a shadow of worldly sinfulness, since it is, after all, erotic love, not religious devotion, that drives them on.

Indeed, the cross-dressing women of the *Legenda Aurea* had a contemporary countertype, who is also a vestigial presence in Renaissance Fictions of cross-dressed female travellers. This is Pope Joan, the apocryphal woman, who, according to Boccaccio's account, began as a female page:

eam virginem a scolastico iuvene dilectam, quem adeo dilexisse ferunt ut, posita verecundia virginali atque pavore femineo, clam e domo patris effugeret, et amasium adolescentis in habitu et mutato sequeretur nomine.

while still a maiden, she became the sweetheart of a youthful student. Reportedly she loved him so much that, casting aside virginal modesty and feminine timidity, she fled in secret from her father's house. Changing her name and dressing as a young man, she followed her lover.¹²

Her lover dies, but she is so enamoured of the student life that she retains her disguise as a male scholar and rises to become pope, only to succumb to female lust, fall pregnant, and give birth suddenly in the midst of a papal procession. Her male disguise sets her on a downward slope to sacrilege, fornication, and shameful public exposure.¹³ The difference between Joan and her saintly sisters in the *Legenda Aurea*, of course, is that she adopts male disguise for love of a man, not love of God—but this is the case too with her descendants like Silla in Renaissance prose Fiction. Just as their martyrdom for love is elevated by association with their saintly antecedents, so at the same time it is potentially sullied by association with the deplorable example of Pope Joan.

John Donne emphasizes the erotic appeal of the female page in *Elegy 11*, where the speaker dissuades his mistress from disguising herself to travel abroad with him. He argues that outward disguise might lead to inner inconstancy, then contends that her true femaleness will reveal itself anyway:

Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind's; be not strange
To thy self only; all will spy in thy face
A blushing womanly discovering grace.

In fact, whether her true sex becomes apparent or not, she will be a sexual magnet:

¹² Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women [De mulieribus claris]*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 438–39.

¹³ See Alain Boureau, *The Myth of Saint Joan*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

Men of France
 [. . .]
 Will quickly know thee, and know thee; and alas
 Th indifferent Italian, as we pass
 His warm land, well content to think thee page,
 Will haunt thee, with such lust and hideous rage
 As Lot s fair guests were vexed.¹⁴

We may sense the speaker s own arousal at the erotic ambiguity of his imagined female page, anticipating Sebastian s words of relish to his cross-dressed eloping mistress in *The Roaring Girl*: Methinks a woman s lip tastes well in a doublet.¹⁵

Hence it follows that when Sidney introduces cross-dressed female travellers in the *New Arcadia*, he works hard to emphasize their virtue. Parthenia becomes a warrior woman only to avenge the death of her husband Argalus. Although she is mortally defeated in the combat with his killer Amphialus, she wins the moral victory through the beauty of her death. First her helmet is taken off to reveal her true sex:

But the headpiece was no sooner off but that there fell about the shoulders of the overcome knight the treasure of fair golden hair which, with the face (soon known by the badge of excellency) witnessed that it was Parthenia, the unfortunately virtuous wife of Argalus.¹⁶

This recalls the revelation of Bradamant s sex in *Orlando Furioso*:

Now when the Ladie did disarme her hed,
 Off with her helmet came her little call,
 And all her haire her shoulders over spred,
 And both her sex and name was knowne withal
 And wonder great and admiration bred
 In them that saw her make three Princes fall;
 For why, she shewd to be in all their sight
 As faire in face as she was Perce in Pght.
 [. . .]
 as the Sunne that in a cloud did bide
 When that is gone doth clearer seeme to growe,
 So *Bradamant* when as her head was barest
 Her culler and her beutie seemed rarest. (*OF*, xxxii. 74 75)¹⁷

In both cases the release of the golden hair and dazzling beauty from the encasement of armour is experienced by onlookers as an astonishing and miraculous revelation of truth.

¹⁴ John Donne, Elegy 11: On his Mistress, in *Selected Poetry*, ed. by John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 33.

¹⁵ Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girl* (1611), ed. by Paul A. Mulholland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), IV. 1. 47.

¹⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke s Arcadia*, ed. by Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 528. Hereafter this work will be referred to as the *New Arcadia* (designated *NA*) and page numbers will be given in the text.

¹⁷ Sidney could not have known Harington s 1591 translation, but it is worth comparing as a near-contemporary interpretation.

In Parthenia's case, since her female body is revealed only in death, there is another antecedent too: the *Legenda Aurea*. St Marina's death is typical for a cross-dressed female martyr:

alle thynges he dyd pacyently and devoutely | and at the laste beyng ful of vertuous lyf she deyed and departed out of this world | Whan they shold take up the body and wasshe it for to dispose hyt to be buryed | they sawe that she was a woman.

The response of onlookers is shock, then refection on their own sinfulness, then penitence:

alle they were astonyed and aferde | and knowleched that they had tr[e]spaced greteley in the servaunte of god | Thenne they ranne alle for to see the syght & asked foryevenness of theyr ygnoraunce and trespaas. (*LA*, fol. 181^r)

Likewise at the death of St Margaret Pelagius, the monks and nuns who discovered her to be a female virgin were penytente | & hadde grete repentaunce of that whiche they had done (fol. 318^v).¹⁸ The unmasking and death of Parthenia in *New Arcadia* have a similar effect. Amphialus, her unwitting vanquisher, was astonished with grief, compassion and shame, detesting his fortune that made him unfortunate in victory, and withdraws from the scene with a heart oppressed with grief. Her waiting-women, too, fell to cast dust upon their heads, to tear their garments; all falling upon the earth and crying upon their sweet mistress (*NA*, pp. 528–29).

Sidney dwells upon the painful wounds inflicted upon Parthenia's body:

her neck, a neck indeed of alabaster, displaying the wound, which with most dainty blood laboured to drown his own beauties, so as here was a river of purest red, there an island of perfectest white, each giving lustre to the other; with the sweet countenance, God knows, full of an unaffected languishing. (*NA*, p. 528)

By the time he was writing, there were Protestant martyrs as well as medieval saints, and Parthenia's willingness to undergo bodily suffering in pursuit of her vocation recalls not only precursors from the *Legenda Aurea*, but also more recent post-Reformation heroines. Anne Askew was tortured and burned to death in 1546 for her adherence to doctrines too Protestant for the later Henrician regime. John Foxe emphasizes the vulnerability of Askew's female body as he recounts how one official torturer refused to go on, tendering the weakness of the woman, whereupon two others took over. Askew told them to do you[r] willes upon me: and so quietly and patiently prayeng unto the Lord: she aboade their tyranny, till her bones and joints almost were pluckt a sunder, in such sort, as she was caried away in a chaire. Foxe quotes a confession of faith made by Askew before her execution, in which she depicts herself as a warrior for God, and prays for her death to inspire penitence in her oppressors:

¹⁸ Cf. the deaths of St Theodora (fol. 211^r) and St Pelagia (fol. 318^r).

O Lord, I have mo enemies now, then there be haire on my head. Yet Lord, let them never overcome me with vaine words, but Pght thou Lord in my stead, for on thee cast I my care [. . .] Open also thou their blynd hartes, that they may hereafter doe that thing in thy sight, which is only acceptable before thee, and to set forth thy veritie aright, without all vaine fantasies of sinnefull men.¹⁹

Parthenia's tragic fate recalls such Protestant martyrdoms as well as earlier precursors, but seems particularly close to the medieval examples in the way that Sidney aestheticizes her suffering and dying body. In the passage quoted above, her alabaster neck and bloody wound, each giving lustre to the other, produce a kind of blazon, fragmenting her body and dwelling on each feature fetishistically. Sidney exhorts us to respond to her injuries with aesthetic appreciation and even pleasure: though these things to a grossly conceiving sense might seem disgraces, yet indeed were they but apparelling beauty in a new fashion which, all-looked-upon through the spectacles of pity, did even increase the lines of her natural fairness (*NA*, p. 528). Indeed, Parthenia first entered the *New Arcadia* as one scarred by love, when the jealous Demagoras rubbed all over her face a most horrible poison, the effect whereof was such that never leper looked more ugly than she did (p. 90). In the medieval martyrologies the female body is similarly used as a text of suffering and virtue, and its tenderness and beauty are accentuated in displaced sexual assaults (the plucking out of St Lucy's eyes, the twisting off of St Agatha's breasts, and so on). A medieval account of the torture of St Margaret of Antioch particularly anticipates the demise of Parthenia:

Pa awariede widerlahen leiden se luðerliche on hire leo iche lich þet hit bree overall ant liðerede o blode [. . .] Þe cwelleres leiden se luðerliche on hire lich þet tet blod beart ut ant strac adun of hire bodi as stream deð of welle [. . .] Alle þe þear weren, wepmen ba ant wummen, remden of reowðe and meanden þes meiden, and summe of ham seiden: Margarete, Margarete [. . .] wa is us þet we seoð þi softe leo iche lich toluken se ladliche!

The accursed villains laid on so violently that her fair skin was broken all over and streamed with blood [. . .] The executioners laid on so cruelly that the blood burst out and ran down her body like a stream from a spring [. . .] All those who were there, both men and women, wept for compassion and pitied this maiden, and some of them said: Margaret, Margaret [. . .] we are sorry to see your soft, lovely body so cruelly torn to pieces!²⁰

Parthenia's virtue is never seriously in question, partly because of these many echoes of female martyrdoms both pre- and post-Reformation, and partly because she is an example of chaste wifehood, a female role particularly commended by Protestant ideology. Medieval virgin saints often declare themselves to be the bride of Christ, and go to their deaths as to a marriage. When

¹⁹ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 2 vols (London: John Daye, 1583), II, 1239–40.

²⁰ Sainte Margarete (early thirteenth century), in *Medieval English Prose for Women*, ed. by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 44–85 (pp. 52–53).

St Agnes in the *Legenda Aurea* is wooed by a young man, she rebuffs him on the grounds of her pre-contract to Christ:

knowe thou that I am prevented | and am loved of another lover | whych hath gyven to me many better Iewellis | whych hath fyanced me by his fayth [. . .] yf I abyde wyth hym | I wyl have none other spowse but hym | I wyl seche none other | In no maner may I leve hym | wyth hym am I ferme and fastned in love [. . .] I am now embraced of hym [. . .] whos love is chastyte | To hym I have gyven my faith | To hym I haue comanded my herte. (*LA*, fol. 119^v)

Parthenia, at her death, confirms her devotion to her husband Argalus with her devotion to God, and in so doing casts her eyes up to heaven in saintlike fashion:

O life, O death, answer for me, that my thoughts have not so much as in a dream tasted any comfort since they were deprived of Argalus. I come, my Argalus, I come, and, O God, hide my faults in thy mercies, and grant, as I feel thou dost grant, that in thy eternal love, we may love each other eternally. And this, O Lord — but there Atropos cut off her sentence: for with that, casting up both eyes and hands to the skies, the noble soul departed (one might well assure himself) to heaven, which left the body in so heavenly a demeanour. (*NA*, p. 529)

Protestantism has raised human marriage itself to a sacred vocation, and transferred to it the pre-Reformation rhetoric of the bride of Christ.

However, when an *unmarried* woman travels and cross-dresses in pursuit of the man she loves, authors of Fiction have to work harder to assert their virtue, as in the case of Sidney's Zelmane. In the *New Arcadia* Pyrocles as warrior woman chooses his name in homage to a deceased female page. He recounts how, when this real Zelmane fell sick and made a dying confession, her main concern was that she should not be deemed immodest:

For your sake myself have become of a princess, a page, and for your sake have put off the apparel of a woman, and (if you judge not more mercifully) the modesty [. . .] It sufficeth me that the strange course I have taken shall to your remembrance witness my love; and yet this breaking of my heart, before I would discover my pain, will make you, I hope, think that I was not altogether unmodest [. . .] often desiring me not to condemn her of lightness, in mine arms she delivered her pure soul to the purest place. (*NA*, p. 367)

The narrative contends with the assumption that a cross-dressing female traveller is immodest and light. Atonement is made not only through Zelmane's death, but also through emphasis on her self-abasement and sacrifice. Even as she lies dying in her beloved's arms, she calls him master; and she calls attention to these polled locks of mine (which, while they were long, were the ornament of my sex, now in their short curls, the testimony of my servitude), and to the service I have done you (which God knows hath been full of love) (p. 366).

Mary Wroth's treatment of women who travel for love in the *Urania*, as with many features of that work, is intriguingly similar to, yet different from, that of her uncle in the *Arcadia*. When Nereana arrives to visit and inspect Pamphilia, her rival for the love of Steriamus, Pamphilia is politely disparaging:

in truth I am sorry, that such a Lady should take so great and painfull a voyage, to so fond an end, being the First that ever I heard of, who took so Knight-like a search in hand; men being us'd to follow scornfull Ladies, but you to wander after a passionate, or disdainfull Prince, it is great pitie for you [. . .] These words were spoken so, as, though proud Nereana were nettled with them, yet could she not in her judgement Pnde fault openly with them, but rather sufferd them with double force to bite, inwardly working upon her pride-Old heart, and that in her eyes she a little shewed, though she suffered her knees somewhat to bow in reverence to her.²¹

Pamphilia's remarks may seem to the reader to be somewhat inconsistent; after all, Pamphilia herself travels widely through far-ung realms, encountering diverse adventures along the way. It seems that Nereana's misconduct is in openly announcing herself to be travelling in quest of a man, and in failing to disguise herself and embrace suffering in order to do so.

Although Pamphilia never demeans herself by adopting male disguise, she is certainly committed to the role of martyr for love, remaining constant and enduring in silence as her beloved, Amphilanthus, repeatedly deserts her for adventures that often involve amorous entanglements with other women. Meanwhile other women in inset narratives of the *Urania* do dress as men to travel for love. At one point an unnamed melancholy gentleman describes to Ollorandus how he foolishly abandoned his First love, who subsequently disguised herself as a youth to help him escape from prison. She was mortally injured in a fall from a horse, and revealed herself and her constancy as she died in his arms, echoing Sidney's Zelmane:

I am to tell now the cause of my service: Love (my Lord) hath brought me to this [. . .] censure me then a lover and not immodest, no disguise could ever disguise me, but still I lov'd you, nor put I any on but for your good, and so forced to alter my habits, what have I taken but habits of the much worthier Sexe? The noblier to serve you, not out of any wantonnesse, which heaven can witnesse. (*Ur*, pp. 446–47)

This female page achieves only brief companionship with her beloved; more successful in her quest is Isabella in the manuscript continuation of the *Urania*. Having been abandoned by her lover, Drusio, she sets off in quest of him, is attacked by robbers in a wood, and disguises herself as a youth named Lusio. Her virtuous suffering is marked on her body: Polarchos, one of the central characters of the *Urania*, comes across Lusio and describes him as 'this battered youth who is soe sunn-burnt and love-beaten in hart as broken the boundes of civilitie to torment soe sweete a loving creature'.²² For a time Lusio travels with

²¹ Mary Wroth, *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621), ed. by Josephine A. Roberts, 2nd edn (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 194. Subsequent references are to this edition (designated *Ur*) and will be given in the text.

²² Mary Wroth, *The Second Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, ed. by Josephine A. Roberts, with Suzanne Gossett and Janel Mueller (Tempe, AZ: Renaissance English Text Society with Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), p. 283. Subsequent references are to this edition (designated *U2*) and will be given in the text.

Polarchos as his page, until events conspire to bring her to be imprisoned with Drusio, her faithless lover, then in turn to accompany him as his page. A sequence of typical romance events—a storm at sea, an encounter with pirates—leads Lusio and Drusio to be separated and to find themselves fighting on opposing sides in a war, which throws them into one-to-one combat. Drusio has not yet recognized Lusio, yet finds himself strangely unable to raise his hand against his unknown young adversary. Seeing this, the youth questions him intently about the abandoned Isabella. Drusio eloquently protests his remorse and his love for Isabella, adopting the religious rhetoric of the Petrarchan lover: What doe I here, a hope that she may live? O! were she on earthe, to meane a bidding for such a Saint-like creature [. . .] My hart and soule heer offers sacriPce unto her holy shrine (*U2*, p. 375). The youth throws off his helmet, revealing that he is Lusio, and that Lusio in turn is Isabella. For once all ends happily, not in martyr-like death but in marriage.²³

The concluding shift of this tale from a tragic to a comic register is somewhat abrupt, and is made even more unstable in tone by the responses of Polarchos and Amphilanthus, to whom Drusio narrates his story. Amphilanthus indulges in some comradely teasing of Polarchos about the failure of his usual power to sniff out and seduce women, as he travelled with his female page Lusio in ignorance and innocence. Polarchos, he insinuates, could have provided Lusio/Isabella with some comfort of a decidedly physical kind:

how comes itt that you, accounted the onely skillfull knight to ravish Ladys harts to his owne boe, cowld nott finde out this secret? Butt keepe soe faire a Lady in disguise without enjoying the meanes to bring her to comfort, though nott by seeking harme to her, butt sooner to bring her to hapines by beeing knowne. (*U2*, p. 376)

This jocular and somewhat leering evaluation of the female page as sexual object and sexual opportunity is more like Donne than Sidney. Polarchos agrees that the story would have ended differently if he had detected Isabella's true sex: truly such beauty would have tempted mee shrewdly, and I must confess I did bear the youthe more then an usuall affection to mankinde. Her virginity was preserved, he explains, because heaven protected her, leading us back towards the familiar conventions of the Renaissance romances, which are, in effect, secularized saints' tales. Yet the tone shifts unsettlingly again as Polarchos gives further reasons for his failure as a ravisher that are more banal and even comical: such was the rareness of accidents that still fell out as I had scarce leasure to think on any thing butt business. Beesids I ame olde now and youthfull pass[ions] very much moderated (though against my will) in mee. So, he wishes he had seduced Isabella, but having acknowledged his fading virility he turns to wish Drusio all happiness with her. The reader is unsure how to react as the

²³ For the full story of Isabella and Drusio see *U2*, pp. 283–86, 289–93, 296, 369–76.

fortunate nuptial outcome is bathetically attributed to Polarchos's wilting potency more than to Isabella's saintlike purity (*U2*, p. 376). This recognition that the central characters of the *Urania* are ageing and failing in their powers is typical of its manuscript continuation, which has a general air of amused maturity and wry nostalgia. Also typical is the treatment of conventional romance motifs in a decadent and parodic manner, as seems to be the case here in this idiosyncratic and tragicomic treatment of a female page narrative.

In all these diverse instances, the cross-dressed female traveller is a morally ambiguous figure: driven by desire, yet chaste in her monogamous devotion; sexually vulnerable yet fiercely assertive of her virginity; often eroticized by her masculine attire, yet also deploying that attire as a protective shield. In the case of the female page, she is brought into close intimacy with her master-lover, but at the same time divided from him by her masculine identity, a condition that she suffers self-denyingly and in silence. For many of these characters, their predicament is resolved by the introduction of a double of the opposite sex who becomes the female page's or warrior woman's substitute and thereby unlocks the erotic impasse. In *Orlando Furioso* Rogero is puzzled when his warrior-woman mistress, Bradamant, greets him as a stranger:

Rogero musing to himselfe doth say
 What meaneth this so straunge congratulation?
 In face, in shape, in gesture, in array
 This is my love: I see no alteration,
 Yet strange it is her voice should be so changed,
 More strange that she from me is so estranged. (*OF*, xxv. 14)

In fact it is Bradamant's twin brother, Richardetto, who explains,

My mother at one byrth bare her and me,
 And we be both so like that now and then
 Our servants, yea our father and our mother,
 Have tane us in exchange the tone for tother. (xxv. 16)

They were also tane [. . .] in exchange the tone for tother by a lady named Fiordesquina, who fell despairingly in love with Bradamant but was satisfied by Richardetto, who came to her disguised as Bradamant then pretended to be magically transformed into a man, on the model of Ovid's Iphis.²⁴ Similarly, the erotic entanglements of Riche's Of Apolonius and Silla are resolved when Silla's brother Silvio arrives to take her place as Julina's husband, and she is thereby revealed and released to marry Apolonius. Another story in Riche's *Farewell to Military Profession*, Of Phylotus and Emelia, follows the model of Iphis and Ianthe even more closely. Emelia flees from her father's house in male clothing to escape enforced marriage to Phylotus, a rich old man, and elope with

²⁴ *OF*, xxv. 18–61; Ovid, *The Metamorphoses: A New Verse Translation*, trans. by David Raeburn, introduction by Denis Feeney (London: Penguin, 2004), ix. 666–797.

her young lover Flanio. Her brother Phylerno, disguised as a woman, takes Emelia's place as Phylotus's bride, violently beats him into submission, and seduces his daughter Brisilla with another Iphis-like transformation, even telling the story from Ovid as part of the seduction:

receive thy loving friend that today was appointed to be thy father's wife, but now consecrated by the goddess to be thy loving husband, and herewithal embracing Brisilla in his arms, she perceived indeed that Emelia was perfectly metamorphosed, which contented her very well, thinking herself a thrice happy woman to light of such a bedfellow. (*FMP*, p. 305)

Riche offers comical narratives of sexual tricks and sexual satisfactions, drawing not only on Ovid and Ariosto but also on Italian comic drama, in which young lovers cunningly outwit foolish old fathers and husbands, and on the Italian and French novella traditions.²⁵ The substitutions in these works create complex mirrorings and multiplications before settling into satisfying symmetrical pairings-off. In the process, the fluidity of gender and of identity is called into question. Lodge's *Rosalind*, having undergone displacement and disguise, finds herself playing Ganymede playing herself; she becomes her own double.²⁶ In the *Arcadia*, by contrast, the original Zelmane is not rescued by a double; instead, her death produces a double, but whereas the true Zelmane was a devoted female page, Pyrocles as Zelmane is an Amazon, a far more aggressive and transgressive female traveller. Like Ariosto's Richardetto and Riche's Phylerno, Pyrocles uses his female disguise to gain intimacy with the woman he seeks to woo. While female travellers use male disguise to defend their chastity, men impersonate them in order to assail female chastity. Along the way, a maelstrom of multidirectional erotic forces may be unleashed, as in the case of Pyrocles/Zelmane, who is desired by Philoclea (first as a woman, then as a man), by Basilius (as a woman), and by Gynecia (as a man). Just as warrior women and female pages may excite homoerotic feelings in men (who gain intimacy with a figure they believe to be a boy) and in women (who fall for a pretty boy who is in fact of their own sex), so the cross-dressed man may inspire desire in all the potential partners of whichever sex he encounters. Desire becomes polymorphous; and identity blurs as oppositely sexed doubles substitute for one another as lovers, and individuals perform different erotic roles in different guises.

Frequently this erotic chaos is catalysed by the figure of the cross-dressed female traveller. Her moral ambiguity arises directly from her displacement from her proper location, combined with the duplicity of her disguise. She is double in identity — Silla/Silvio, Zelmane/Daiphantus, Isabella/Lusio — and double

²⁵ Beecher, Introduction to Riche, *FMP*, p. 75.

²⁶ Thomas Lodge, *Rosalind* (1590), ed. by Brian Nellist (Keele: Ryburn Publishing, 1995).

in gender, a girl boy, and often brings with her an oppositely sexed double, generating dizzying patterns of substitution and replication. These in turn generate multiple narrative strands and multiple intersecting and overlapping currents of desire. In short, the cross-dressing travelling woman is a source of moral and narrative turbulence. She disrupts the world of romance, and at the same time is central and essential to it. Indeed, in her narrative generativity, in her moral plurality, in her fusion of sacred and erotic narrative traditions, and in her mobility of all kinds, she could even be said to be a personification of the genre of romance.

such as the middling poor discussed above, who might be similarly or closely (if not identically) positioned socially, economically, and/or geographically. For, as we have seen, one did not need to be vagrant to be treated like a vagrant or to feel unsettled. The experience of unsettledness was truly spacious. But first we must unveil the middling disguise of the laboring poor in order to reveal their “true” identity.

Disguising the Working Poor Harman's *Caveat*

Assessing the stories of Nicholas Blount, alias Nicholas Jennings (or Genings), introduced in Thomas Harman's *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds* (1566, lost edition; 1568, two editions; and 1573), William C. Carroll remarks that “in the various accounts, Genings plays many roles; foremost is the Counterfeit Crank [one who feigns epilepsy] . . . but he is also an Upright Man [high in Harman's hierarchy of vagabonds], a Mariner or Whipjack, a hat-maker, a serving man, a rogue, an artificer, a parody of himself [in picture], and finally ‘a moniment’ in Bridewell.”¹ This multiply roled man—who was arrested, according to Harman, as a vagrant—captured the imaginations of Harman's audience (leading to textual and visual embellishments of his story in subsequent editions) as well as of modern cultural critics of Harman's work, including Stephen Greenblatt, Elizabeth Hanson, Paola Pugliatti, and (most fully) Carroll.² All of these critics, together with scholars of rogue pamphlets in general, focus on the various roles that named vagrants such as Jennings are said to play; and all inevitably turn to a discussion of some theatrical work, the favorites being Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Carroll in *Fat King, Lean Beggar*; Linda Woodbridge in *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*), Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* (Carroll; Pugliatti in *Beggary and Theater in Early Modern England*), and Shakespeare's *Henry V* (Greenblatt in “Invisible Bullets”).³

This is not a naive move. Although the unquestioning conflation of the history of “vagrants” with the literature of roguery characterized early writers about rogue pamphlets, later critics have attempted to separate fact from fiction. Nevertheless, they characteristically adopt a sequential pattern of analysis that itself suggests convergence: that is, they typically trace a narrative line that leads, as if necessarily, from historical vagrants to rogue pamphlets to drama or theatricality.⁴ Such would seem the logical direction to take, given the rogue pamphleteers' own obsession with the role-playing of rogues, which was bolstered by the government's 1572 inclusion of itinerant players on its list of the legally vagrant. But I urge that we resist the push toward theatricality. For so many of the “roles” that Harman says Jennings and other “vagrants” played—mariner, hat-maker, serving man, artificer—could be “played” by an unsettled laborer in earnest. These “roles” typify the newly

mobile economic network that we traced in the previous chapter: an unsettled economy, constituted out of multiple, serial, occasional, and displaced employment that unmoored traditional notions of fixed spatial and occupational identity. If the displaced workers of such an unsettled economy necessarily *speculated* in different work roles, they were not, nor could they afford to be, *role-playing*. And yet that is precisely how Thomas Harman's tract—suppressing the reality and at the same time setting legal, historical, and critical precedents—portrays them, as Pugliatti most recently underscores.⁵ In Harman's and subsequent rogue and cony-catching pamphlets, the newly emerging unsettled labor market of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England was deliberately *mis*-represented as manifold disguising.

We might once again pause to assert our own "caveat" in regard to our use of the term *new* as a descriptor of the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century economy of unsettledness. Mobility, job diversity, and displaced poor were certainly not entirely new to late sixteenth-century England, when Harman was writing. As we have seen, however, contemporaries experienced a feeling that there was a burgeoning of such phenomena around this time, which created anxieties that resulted in legislation aimed at restricting the movements as well as (somewhat ironically) the labors of the unsettled poor—especially those involved in what was perceived to be irregular employment, such as itinerant serial labor or "at-home" makeshift work, particularly by single women living independently "at their own hand." By the end of the seventeenth century, we have also seen, by-employments and job diversity had become so prevalent as to be partially, if still nervously, recognized as necessities to the nation's fluid economy; this was evidenced in the acts of settlement of the time, which, while upholding the idea of fixed place, allowed certain itinerant labor for single young men.

Harman's tract, then, marks a relatively early phase in the reaction to London's economy of unsettledness. Furthermore, Harman speaks in this work from a relatively privileged position: he was an esquire, a member of the country elite in Kent; he bore arms of heraldry (and had them stamped on his pewter dishes); and he appears to have served in the elevated office of Commissioner of the Peace. Despite his relatively high social standing, however, Harman writes in a genre—the pamphlet form—that was priced to attract not only the elite but, more importantly, the larger, though less affluent, purchasing body of the middling sort. Indeed, priced at the reasonable rate of five pence, Harman's pamphlet would have been available to all but the poor.

This is not to say that some of the middling purchasers of Harman's work would not themselves be vulnerable to poverty or unsettledness in one form or another at some point in their lives. Given the large percentage of the

middling to lower orders who did not pay into the poor rates but who also did not receive poor relief (from 30 to 50 percent of the population, as we have seen, depending on locale, economics, and age), and given the increasing need for extraordinary relief payments in the course of the seventeenth century—despite heavy investment by families in occasional by-employments to supplement household incomes—we should be careful in terming Harman's audience "comfortable." We might, indeed, recall Woodbridge's observation that there was a widespread fear in the period "that *anyone* might suddenly become poor," whatever their social or economic or moral station.⁶ Middling status was no sure sign of security. Thomas Harman's readers were thus a mixed bunch, some perhaps feeling relatively secure, others more prone to uneasy instability.

Harman, and the pamphleteers who followed him, capitalized on this fact. He in essence evoked while at the same time assuaged any fears the middling sort had about an unsettled economy in which they themselves were heavily—if uneasily—invested. Even if not vulnerable to physical or occupational unsettledness, after all, the middling sort profited from a fluid market and its displaced wage laborers. Craig Dionne, in "Fashioning Outlaws," pursues this latter connection further. He offers a more solidly middle-class perspective on how rogue literature mirrored the boundary-breaking features of emerging capitalism. Specifically, he sees rogue pamphlets as playing out an ambivalent fantasy of unlicensed urban economics for a newly emerging corporate hegemony. "These pamphlets," Dionne argues, "promoted an image of otherness that was on the surface inimical to the legal and economic practices of a new group of merchants and shareholders whose cultural affinities had yet to develop into a coherent form of class solidarity." But at the same time, he adds, "this image of outcast criminals who shared intense fraternal bonds with freedom from legal strictures provided a powerful fantasy for a group of businessmen and merchants whose own economic practices of investment and foreign trade maintained an ambivalent position in relation to the established medieval traditions of domestic production."⁷ Dionne's reading offers what one might call a "top-down" vision of the rogue pamphlets. It focuses on the affluent "corporate class,"⁸ which profited from the new economics of unsettledness. I am more interested in a lateral or angled reading of the works. My concern is the perspective of the middling sort who were more vulnerable and thus more anxiously involved in this new unsettled economy, as well as the perspective of the physically and occupationally mobile lowly workers who formed its unstable ground. The more lowly of the middling sort at times might well have identified uneasily and even fearfully with the latter unsettled poor. Precisely for this reason, I argue, unsettled labor is made virtually to

disappear in Harman's tract. Harman, that is, assuaged fears of displaced labor by transforming the *fact* of an unsettled economy grounded on a shifting mass of itinerant labor into the *fiction* of role-playing rogues. At the hands of Harman, the itinerant laborer becomes thinly disguised as a deceitful rogue. Instead of changing jobs or holding multiple jobs, the diversified worker is imaged as donning various disguises. But the itinerant laborer, and the unstable or unsettled economics that he or she serves, continually peeks out from behind Harman's role-playing masks.

Indeed, despite his agenda of suppression, Harman repeatedly points to a fluid money market in what he clearly sees as a disturbing insistence on the part of the various rogues he catalogues on *selling* the food they acquire through begging, stealing, or vending wares. If the Upright Man "be offered any meat or drink," Harman says, "he utterly refuseth scornfully, and will naught but money" (117). Others, such as Palliards and their Morts, will travel separately and beg food as well as alms, but "what they get, as bread, cheese, malt, and wool, they sell the same for ready money" (125). The Abraham Man is of like mind: "These beg money; either when they come at farmers' houses they will demand bacon, either cheese or wool, or anything that is worth money" (127). Indeed, the Demander for Glimmer—one who feigns having been made destitute by fire—sounds very much like a peddler, with her pack of mostly foodstuffs that she trades for money (although peddlers did not as a rule carry perishables). She travels, Harman informs us, "walking with a wallet on her shoulders wherein she put the devotion of such as had no money to give her; that is to say, malt, wool, bacon, bread, and cheese. And always, as the same was full, so was it ready money to her when she emptied the same, wheresoever she traveled" (134). In Harman's view, the fact that these itinerants beg for money or sell wares—especially food—for money proves them to be undeserving. The truly deserving poor would exist on a subsistence level and thus be forced to eat any food they acquired. They would not have the luxury of selling it. But the very fact of acquiring and selling food suggests that these people are products of and participants in the new money market, where money freely circulates along with goods and where value is transferable. Such a system of acquiring an income included in its ranks not only rogues but the laboring, unsettled poor who worked as well as begged and did accumulate some cash, if only in small amounts.

Indications that such laboring poor lurk behind Harman's rogues are everywhere evident in his tract. For example, Harman refers to the formerly employed life that some rogues are said to have led before they became idle wanderers: one Abraham Man was Lord Stourton's man until the lord was executed (128); and Dells (virgin young women) "go abroad young," often

because of "some sharp mistress that they serve"—so they "do run away out of service" (144). We might recall not only that abrupt termination of service was common around this time but that casual as opposed to contracted labor was coming to be preferred by masters (and mistresses) as well as by servants. Harman's tract, however, refuses to acknowledge such general economic instability and dislocation. To the extent it is portrayed here—in the running away from service of young women—it is projected as solely one-sided, as the servants' wayward desire to escape difficult work ("some sharp mistress that they serve"). But the trace of a more general economy of unsettledness can still be discerned behind such forsaking. Most significantly, for all Harman's determination to show such ex-workers as now turned roguishly idle, we also see them as laborers in the here and now.

Priggers, for instance, "will also repair to gentlemen's houses and ask their charity, and will offer their service. And, if you ask them what they can do, they will say that they can keep two or three geldings, and wait upon a gentleman" (124). Interestingly, this claim is neither denied by Harman nor turned into an act of roguery. So, too, Raffé Kyteley, although listed under "Rogues" in the appendix to Harman's tract, is described thus: "A lusty and strong man, he runneth about the country to seek work, with a big boy his son carrying his tools as a dauber and plasterer, but little work serveth him" (148). Does "little work serve" Kyteley because he cannot work or because he will not work? Harman would appear to mean the latter, but the former meaning is most prominent given the rest of his description. Even drunken tinkers are grudgingly granted work by Harman: "Thus with picking and stealing, mingled with a little work for a color, they pass the time" (133).

Peddlers are the most problematic: "These swadders and peddlers be not all evil, but of an indifferent behavior," Harman begins ambivalently. But he gains conviction:

These stand in great awe of the upright men, for they have often both wares and money of them. But forasmuch as they seek gain unlawfully against the laws and statutes of this noble realm, they are well worthy to be registered among the number of vagabonds, and undoubtedly I have had some of them brought before me when I was in Commission of the Peace as malefactors for bribing and stealing. And now of late it is a great practice of the upright man, when he hath gotten a booty, to bestow the same upon a pack full of wares, and so goeth a time for his pleasure because he would live without suspicion. (133–34)

In Harman's mind, the problem with peddlers is that they are legally vagrant, and therefore they must be in cahoots with rogues. But at the same time, Harman recognizes their "indifferent behavior"—indeed, that they "be not all evil." Woodbridge, in her essay "The Peddler and the Pawn," goes further and notes

a close connection between respectable merchants and the lowly peddler. Both, she argues, were engaged in an economics dependent upon an unsettling mobility. But the socially and economically "placed" merchants were uncomfortable with this connection, hence the scapegoating of peddlers in the service of respectable merchants.⁹ Reflecting his own ambivalence, or perhaps confusion, over the position of peddlers within his nation's mobile economy, Harman obliquely acknowledges that the potential "respectability" of these itinerant laborers could serve to sanction even the most roguish Upright Man. Working for a time as a peddler, Harman says, the Upright Man could "live without suspicion."

Women are also veiled unsettled laborers in Harman's tract. The Walking Mort (a woman who travels pretending to be a widow) defensively affirms to Harman, "How should I live? None will take me into service. But I labor in harvest-time honestly" (139). Harman himself adds that Morts "make laces upon staves and purses that they carry in their hands, and white valances for beds" (139). Most industriously, Bawdy-Baskets (a kind of female laborer/peddler) work in many of the new domestic trades. These latter women "go with baskets and capcases on their arms, wherein they have laces, pins, needles, white inkle, and round silk girdles of colors. These will buy conyskins and steal linen clothes off of hedges. And for their trifles they will procure of maiden-servants, when their mistress or dame is out of the way, either some good piece of beef, bacon, or cheese that shall be worth twelvenpence for twopence of their toys" (137). Harman goes on to note that these women also casually "trade" themselves, as was common among poor street women: "As they walk by the way, they often gain some money with their instrument, by such as they suddenly meet withal." So the trade in wares becomes, by the end of his commentary, a "trade" of "their lives in lewd, loathsome lechery" (137). His moral condemnation translates into roguery all the multifarious ways these women are invested in the new domestic economy. But clearly, the women are foremost transient workers, not rogues.

Like the unsettled men in Harman's pamphlet, these poor women laborers are on the move, physically displaced as they engage in a fluid economy of trading in different wares. Yet they also display a marked connection to the placed mobility of poor housewives, who, as we have seen, resorted to various occasional and makeshift labors within a relatively circumscribed space ("the home") in order to help support their families. Harman's tract obliquely recognizes this uncanny connection between the displaced itinerant and the placed householder in the workings of an unsettled economy. He observes that, in an effort to avoid losing everything to the rogues they meet on their travels, Walking Morts often place their money in the surety of householders: "They leave

their money now with one and then with another trusty householder, either with the goodman or goodwife, sometimes in one shire, and then in another, as they travel" (139). In the process, loose ties with the placed householder are formed. Coming "once in two years" (141) into one area, for example, a Walking Mort formed a friendship with a local wife whose husband tries to force the Mort to have sex with him in exchange for helping her get unstuck from a beach hole (into which she fell, pregnant, while looking for oysters and mussels to satiate a craving). "His wife my good dame is my very friend," protests the Mort to Harman in telling her story, "and I am much beholden to her. And she hath done me so much good ere this that I were loath now to harm her any way" (140). In the end, the Mort tells the wife all, and the wife arranges, with the help of her neighboring gossips and the Mort, to take her revenge: on the point of the husband's having his way with the Mort in the barn, the masked gossips jump out from hiding, bind the husband by his hose, blindfold him, and beat him soundly.

Harman's story of the Walking Mort is told as a humorous tale, a fine example of the jest form at work in the rogue pamphlets, which Woodbridge has so well demonstrated.¹⁰ Harman gets caught up in the fun of the events, despite his moral condemnation of the Mort, and fails to think deeply about her close ties to the other housewives in his tale—a connection to an economy of unsettledness that his tract works so hard throughout to suppress. Women on the move in Harman are funny, immoral, and enticing; they are not particularly threatening. By contrast, when Thomas Dekker writes in the early seventeenth century, his tone, while at times still ambivalent, is generally more shrill. Itinerant laboring women, in particular, are perceived to be much more dangerous than in Harman's work, perhaps reflecting the period's developing intolerance and fear of independent women who lived "at their own hand." In Dekker's *The Bellman of London* (1608), for instance, which draws heavily on Harman's catalogue of rogues (and is interspersed with stories from Robert Greene's rogue pamphlets), Dekker describes the full array of Harman's itinerant women laborers/rogues. But unlike in Harman, the Walking Mort in Dekker raises ire. Dekker begins by repeating Harman: Morts, he says, "travel from country to country, making laces (upon staves) and small purses, and now and then white valance for beds." He also repeats the idea that these women leave money with local householders—now specified as female—in order to prevent the Upright Men from stealing it: "They leave their money (sometime five shillings, / sometimes ten shillings) in several shires, with some honest farmer's wife or others whom they know they may trust, and when they travel that way again, at half year's end, or a quarter's, fetch it to serve their turns." Like Harman, Dekker notes the

vulnerability of the women to being stripped even of their clothes by the Upright Man. But while Harman is relatively mild in his judgment of the Walking Mort and clearly enjoys retelling her story, Dekker is virulent in his condemnation, so much so that the judgment seems to exceed the "crime." Directly after describing the Mort's involvement in what are essentially domestic industries, Dekker adds, "Subtle queans they are, hard-hearted, light-fingered, cunning in dissembling, and dangerous to be met if any Ruffler or Rogue be in their company. They fear neither God nor good laws, but only are kept in awe by the Upright Men, who often times spoil them of all they have."¹¹ In this sharp attack against Walking Morts, we hear the voiced suspicion of Dekker's time: that women working on their own in unsettled by-employments—and widows, which the Morts claim to be, were the most independent of such women—are to be feared, in large part because they are hard to keep under control. Such independent, unsettled laboring women are not yet imagined to be so dangerous in Harman's tract. It is rather the strong young men that he fears. But even these rogues, we notice, are often gainfully employed, despite Harman's efforts at suppression.

The case of the Upright Man is one of the most telling in Harman's tract. For a nasty rogue, he is quite a worker. Not only does he often "go a time" as a peddler with "a pack full of wares . . . because he would live without suspicion" (134), he also takes on many other jobs, if only through a slip of the tongue or a printing error. Harman declares that "of these ranging rabblement of rascals, some *be* serving-men, artificers, and laboring men, traded up in husbandry" (116; my emphasis). That is, they *are*, not *were*, practitioners of these trades. And later, Harman again notes at length that some of these so-called rogues work honestly as wage laborers:

And some of them useth this policy, that although they travel into all these shires abovesaid, yet will they have good credit, especially in one shire, where at diverse good farmers' houses they be well known, where they work a month in a place or more, and will for that time behave themselves very honestly and painfully and may at any time for their good usage have work of them. And to these at a dead lift, or last refuge, they may safely repair unto and be welcome when, in other places, for a knack of knavery that they have played, they dare not tarry. (118)

Rogue in some places, honest wage laborer in others: does not this shift approximate the situation of the itinerant laborer who is legally vagrant—a rogue—when between jobs, but respectable when locally employed?

We might now return to our Counterfeit Crank, Jennings. When we first meet Jennings in the second edition of Harman's work (Q2), he appears solely

in the guise of one who has "the falling sickness" (128) and claims to have spent a year and a half in Bedlam hospital. Suspicious, Harman checks out Jennings's story about Bedlam and discovers it is false; then, with the help of his printer and the printer's apprentices, he has Jennings followed. This leads to Jennings's arrest and literal exposure as a counterfeit. He is stripped naked (to reveal a healthy and handsome body) and, further, made to show and hand over the hefty profit from his day's begging: thirteen shillings, three and a half pence—far above a poor man's daily earnings. Though Jennings subsequently escapes naked into the night, Harman arranges to have his "earnings" equitably distributed to the poor of the parish. Notably in this story, the printer's apprentices, who aid in Jennings's arrest, are inscribed by Harman into an ideal society: they are diligently obedient servants to their master—not, as was historically the case more than half the time, themselves subjects of unsettled and unsettling labor.¹²

In the 1573 edition (Q4), the same story of Jennings starts up again on a new note of semi-respectability. We are told that Jennings "had both house and wife in the same parish" where the money that had been seized from him had been distributed to the poor, "whereof this crafty crank had part himself" (298). Harman proudly declares that his printer at length searched out Jennings's habitation; Jennings was found "dwelling in Master Hill's rents, having a pretty house, well stuffed, with a fair joint-table, and a fair cupboard garnished with pewter, having an old ancient woman to his wife" (299). The implication, of course, is that Jennings was in fact undeserving of poor relief; but then why would he have received it from the parish in which he lived? Historically, parish officers were no pushovers in handing out relief. If anything, they erred on the side of parsimony, and they were especially reluctant to relieve a householder in any way capable of work. The "garnish" of pewter in Jennings's house, which Harman underscores in an effort to stress Jennings's high comfort level, in fact tells us little. As Woodbridge points out, owning pewter was by no means a sign of affluence in the period; it was increasingly owned by the very poor.¹³

That Jennings might be "like" a poor householder worthy of relief is underscored by the other "disguises" he adopts: he appears "in mariner's apparel" and as an unemployed hat-maker. The latter is very realistically portrayed. "I came from Leicester to seek work," Jennings tells the printer when confronted by him, "and I am a hat maker by my occupation, and all my money is spent; and if I could get money to pay for my lodging this night, I would seek work tomorrow amongst the hatters" (298). This story is more than plausible, given the huge number of migrants flooding London at the time in search of work and relief (on the order of some ten thousand a year).¹⁴

And though Harman takes pains to describe Jennings as exceedingly well-dressed in “a fell black frieze coat, a new pair of white hose, a fine felt hat on his head, [and] a shirt of Flanders work esteemed to be worth sixteen shillings,” it seems odd that Jennings would attire himself so lavishly if his goal on that occasion was, as Harman’s sentence concludes, “to beg” (298). Harman is “embellishing” somewhere here.

My point is not to discount as pure invention all of Harman’s claims of roguery on the part of Jennings. As Carroll testifies, there is historical evidence that a person going by the name of Jennings’s alias, “Blunt,” was convicted of being a Counterfeit Crank (and punished in like manner to that described by Harman). Carroll further finds that a “Nicholas Jennings” was arrested and set free on bond in Harman’s home county, Kent.¹⁵ But even after acknowledging these “facts,” it would nevertheless seem that the lines between role-playing rogue and vagrant laborer continually blur in Harman’s story. And the more Harman adds to the tale, the more confusing it all gets.

Consider the woodcut that Harman placed in the chapter related to Jennings in the third and fourth editions of his book (fig. 3). This illustration was accompanied by the following verse:

These two pictures lively set out,
 One body and soul, God send him more grace:
 This monstrous dissembler, a Crank all about.
 Uncomely coveting of each to embrace,
 Money or wares, as he made his race.
 And sometime a mariner, and a serving man:
 Or else an artificer, as he would feign then.
 Such shifts he used, being well tried,
 Abandoning labor till he was espied.
 Condign punishment for his dissimulation
 He surely received with much exclamation.¹⁶

“As the verse makes clear,” Jean-Christophe Agnew remarks, “only the faintest of lines separated the multiple by-employments of the rural outworker from the multiple impostures of the professional rogue.”¹⁷ But, as we have seen, it was not only the rural outworker who was employed in such job diversity. It was the lower orders generally, including householders.

Harman’s spelling of what has been modernized as “feign” in line 7 underscores this mingling of what is pretend and what is real. He spells it “faine” in the 1568 edition (Q3) and “fayne” in the 1573 edition (Q4), both of which renderings might mean “take to gladly” (*Oxford English Dictionary*), not “feign.” That is, despite Harman’s denouncement of Jennings as a “monstrous dissembler” earlier in the poem, one might be inclined to read the serial occupations

of mariner, serving man, and artificer as jobs Jennings would be glad to have, not only as jobs he feigns. Agnew goes on to argue that “to the jaundiced Elizabethan eye, the casual laborer and the wandering rogue were virtually indistinguishable from the itinerant actor, so that few would have been entirely surprised when, in 1572, players themselves were placed under the force of the Vagabond Act.”¹⁸ But I wonder whether contemporaries seeing Harman’s verse and illustration—especially those engaged in multiple by-employments or facing physical displacement or even just undergoing a period of financial unsettledness (always a threat to the poorer of the middling sort)—might have read not the professional actor, but rather himself or herself in Jennings’s variously assumed work roles.

The accompanying picture reinforces this possible reading of the verse. As Carroll observes, Jennings here appears “as *two* people, standing side by side as mirrored images”: “A upright man, Nicolas Blunt,” whom Carroll describes as “extremely well-dressed” and “prosperous”; and “The counterfeit crank, Nicolas Genings,” who, Carroll notes, is “dressed in rags, the mud/blood visible on his face, almost precisely according to Harman’s description of him in the text.” Carroll points out that “the two figures merge in the middle, where the walking stick of ‘Blunt’ seems to pass through the hand, but behind the hat, of ‘Genings.’”¹⁹ I am not sure I see the figure on the left as “extremely well-dressed,” though he does look like someone from the middle ranks of society, such as the hat-maker Jennings claimed himself to be. He appears indeed to be an “upright” (as in “respectable”) man—someone with whom the viewer might well identify. What, then, might the viewer make of the merging of the two figures at the center of the picture? I would argue that such merging suggests not how Jennings can “play” two roles and is thus (in Agnew’s reading) equivalent to an actor; rather, it illustrates how any respectable, hardworking citizen, especially one from the lower or lower-middle ranks, can unexpectedly become unsettled, displaced, even vagrant.

Such a social and economic “declination”—which is the last word of the 1568 verse accompanying the picture (translated in 1573 into the cry of “exclamation”)—is undoubtably presented by Harman in his text as deceitful role-playing because, as many critics have noted, Harman wants to picture the sturdy beggar as willfully idle, and hence morally depraved and punishable. This vision of rogues disguising themselves seized the imagination of Harman’s pamphleteering followers—and also of the authorities. Kathleen Pories, Jodi Mikalachki, and Linda Woodbridge have also shown that rogue pamphlets affected the language of legislation against vagrants. Woodbridge and Pories specifically note that the adoption of the term *rogue* in official legislation—for example, the 1572 statute against vagrancy—came *after* Harman’s influential

pamphlet. Mikalachki, in "Women's Networks and the Female Vagrant," looks at the legal case of a female vagrant in the 1620s, in which the participants in the trial seem to have been influenced by, or at least in dialogue with, Harman's text.²⁰ I would take such an impact even further and question whether some of the historical documents frequently cited for "evidence" and "facts" of vagrancy are not, in fact, Harmanesque fiction in historical guise.

I have in mind the "facts" repeatedly cited by authorities of the period about respectable persons willfully "going over" to the "sweet liberty" of vagrancy, or about vagabonds pretending to be glassmen or servants of nobles, or about shoemakers or yeomen pretending to be Gypsies, and Gypsies pretending to be tinkers, peddlers, or jugglers, and so on.²¹ These "facts" so resemble the role-playing fictions of rogue pamphlets that the two become at times indistinguishable. We might take as an example the oft-quoted letter of 1596 by Edward Hext, a Somerset justice, to Lord Burghley. Lamenting the inability to effect justice against the "infinite numbers of the wicked wandering idle people of the land," who "multiply daily to the utter impoverishing of the poor husbandman that beareth the greatest burden of all services," Hext cites as one instance the problem that such "stout rogues . . . will be present at every assize, sessions, and assembly of justices and will so clothe themselves for that time as any should deem him to be an honest husbandman, so as nothing is spoken, done, or intended to be done but they know it."²² According to Hext, poor, honest husbandmen are done in by vagrants in disguise as poor, honest husbandmen. But as with such "disguising" in Harman's tract, and at the risk of sounding paranoid—or, rather, of accusing the early modern authorities of cultural paranoia—might not the "guise" of honest husbandman be real? Given what we know of the workings of the period's unsettled economy, might not an honest husbandman become, or even at the same time be, a transient wage earner, and thus *appear* vagrant? What might seem a guise might *in fact* be a change or shift in status or occupation. This conjecture is further supported in Hext's letter by his complaint that, unlike Gypsies, stout vagrants are hard to detect because they do not travel "visibly in one company."²³ Rogues have a certain invisibility to them (as did the laboring poor). Ironically, such invisibility is made visible when it is reimaged as a disguise.

One cannot but wonder how much Hext was influenced by Harman's similar rendering of the unsettled laboring poor. Certainly, his text ends with the familiar claim of Robert Greene and other rogue and cony-catching pamphleteers that he is writing to expose these ills although his life is thus endangered: "I will not leave it unadvertised though I should hazard my life by it," Hext boasts.²⁴ Compare this with Greene's similar vision of himself as heroic in the face of death threats in *The Second and Last Part of Cony-Catching*,

published in 1591: Greene claims that rogues have been complaining about his exposing their chicaneries in his first book and that one such villain "swears by all the shoes in his shop I shall be the next man he means to kill, for spoiling his occupation. But I laugh at his bravados."²⁵ (The occupation here, of course, is not shoemaker but the "trade" of cony-catching, though the rogue's reference to his shop recalls the multitasked laborer everywhere at work in Greene's lived economy.) By 1596, when Hext was writing, such a bravado stance on the author's part of exposing villainy even in the face of death was a worn convention in rogue pamphlets.²⁶

What is unnerving in Hext's letter, for contemporaries as well as cultural historians, is the inability to distinguish between the invisible rogue and the invisible itinerant poor. Followers of Harman imitate his double-edged reaction to this problem in extreme forms: in their works, persons who haunt the margins of placed society are always adopting some kind of disguise or role, and at the same time, they imitate the hierarchical structures of society, especially middle-class guilds. They have apprentices, laws, even their own hall where the craft members meet. In the process, the "real" unsettled laboring poor are reduced in these works to but a trace.

But there is a medium in which the unsettled poor and the culture of mobility gain a truer representation (to the extent that a representational form can in fact be "true") than in Harman's text or the later cony-catching pamphlets, which institutionalize roguery while ambivalently playing with disguise and theatricality. Such authenticity certainly cannot be found in the actual drama about beggars and rogues of the period, such as John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Beggars Bush* (likely composed between 1613 and 1622), Richard Brome's *A Jovial Crew* (performed in 1641), or Thomas Middleton and William Rowley's *The Spanish Gypsy* (1653). These plays lightheartedly embrace the opportunities of playing at being beggars or rogues, especially for those of the upper sort who seek an escape from the mundane, workaday world. All such theatricalized literary forms, by virtue of their emphasis on theatricality and disguising, reinforce the notion that the unplaced laboring poor (whether or not actually visible in these works) were also in disguise. If we are truly to *see* the mobile working poor, we must instead look to more lowly street literature. I am here thinking of broadsides, such as *The Town Crier* (1590s), and especially ballads, such as "Turner's Dish of Lenten Stuff; or, A Gallimaufry" (1612), which embraced the diverse labors of itinerant workers. Indeed, broadside ballads offer not only "realistic" representations of the unsettled laboring poor, but also undisguised voicings of their multiple role speculations (not role-playing) that were necessitated by shifting from job to job and place to place. Ballads allowed for a "no-cost," multifarious role

speculation in the singing of the various parts, which was vicariously experienced by their audience in the very process of listening and, especially, singing along. Through these popular songs that were also ownable texts—the only works of the period that could really be afforded, and thus made their own, by the lower orders who were so prone to physical, economic, and psychological displacement—the voice of the unsettled subject becomes truly spacious. And if not always seen, it could be heard, *undisguised*. It is to such lowly street literature, not to rogue pamphlets or drama, that we must turn if we are to inhabit fully the aesthetic space of the itinerant working poor. This literature will be the concluding focus of this book.

But before making that aesthetic turn to the low, I would like to revisit the notion of the “subject” and think more fully about what it means to talk of unsettled subjectivity. Clearly, a subject who is physically unsettled in the most extreme sense—homeless—is different from a householder or a member of a household who experiences the unsettledness of multiple, occasional, and/or marginal employment, or the psychological unsettledness of simply feeling out of place, not fully accepted, or vulnerable (to physical displacement, economic instability, legal accusations, or social opprobrium). In the next chapter, I would like to begin thinking about unsettled subjectivity in its most radical form—physical displacement and serial labor—by employing other forms of unsettledness evident in housed laborers as a window for defining our terms. In the end, I hope to define not simply a range or spectrum of unsettled “low” subjectivity, but also a notion of subjectivity more generally that is itself unsettled, that is, multiple, intermittent, occasional, and displaced. We will then be in a position to look at a case study of one kind of unsettled subject—the displaced poor wage laborer—who becomes a type for an emerging proletariat in the seventeenth century, by quite literally going to sea.

Unsettled Subjectivity The Virtual “I”

One can legitimately ask how we can pretend to “know” the lowly unsettled subject when such a subject is virtually invisible and incomprehensible not only to us, but even to many of his or her contemporaries. This is especially the case with the dispossessed itinerant poor, whether unemployed vagabonds or mobile workers, such as wage laborers, peddlers, or dabblers in serial, makeshift trades. Few such transients left written records of their thoughts or feelings. Furthermore, authorities who investigated those arrested for vagrancy tended to gather only bare-bones accounts: “Most records of vagrants,” A. L. Beier observes, “give no more than a name, place of origin, date and place of arrest.”¹ Rare are fleshed-out accounts of the homeless or the nomadic laboring poor—such as the petition by the wage laborer Anthony Adams, housed in Bewdley but working in Stockton, whose family teetered on the brink of nowhere (threatened with eviction by one town and refused a home in the other); or the lengthy story of the runaway Richard Fletcher, shifting from apprenticeship to apprenticeship. Even in these cases, we are not on sure, unmediated ground. In Adams’s case, we cannot trust that the letter was written by Adams himself, since, as a wage laborer, he was likely illiterate or only barely literate. He thus may well have followed the common practice at the time of hiring a local person with learning to write for him. In other words, what few feelings are expressed by Adams may well have been mediated by another. This was certainly the case with Fletcher, whose story is told by the Warwick town recorder, John Fisher. At moments we seem to hear the voice of Fletcher through his mediator—as in the insistent declaration “I will never serve him”—but such seemingly authentic voicings offer only glimpses into the boy’s personality. So restricted is our vision of Fletcher that, as with Adams, we don’t even know his fate.

Given the kinds of “evidence” we are dealing with, then, one could argue that any notion of what such an unsettled subject actually experienced is largely conjectural, an imaginative creation of a virtual “I.” To a certain extent, this is true. In fact, one of the defining features of the vagrant outlined in the statutes of the period was an inability to give a proper “reckoning” of his or her life. In delineating legally vagrant occupations, the 1572 statute, for instance, includes as vagrants those who “can give no reckoning how he or