Victorian Vagrancy: A Cultural History of the Wandering Poor

Alistair John Robinson

UCL

PhD

Declaration

I, Alistair Robinson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of vagrants and vagrancy in British culture in the nineteenth century. Focused on the Victorian period, but ranging widely from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century, it explores the portrayal of vagrants through literature, the visual arts, and the periodical and newspaper press. The study is organised around three topographies – the country, the city and the colony – and the vagrants that were imagined to inhabit them. Each of these topographies forms the backdrop for two chapters that address specific types of vagrant; these are Gypsies and hawkers, poachers, casual paupers, loafers, colonial vagabonds, and beachcombers. As this taxonomic structure suggests, the type of vagrants that were represented was dependent upon the locality in which they existed or were thought to exist. On a more granular level, location also determined their aesthetic, social and political attributes. These were conditioned, and in part expressed, by the way in which vagrants moved; the manner in which their vagrancy was articulated. This, too, was dependent upon location. Topographies shaped vagrant movement through the contours of their landscape; the resources and opportunities they provided; and the degree to which they were subject to control and observation. Using literary texts ranging from Hannah More's *Black Giles* (1796) to Jack London's *The People of the Abyss* (1903), as well as photographs, paintings, illustrations, newspapers and periodicals, this thesis builds up a detailed picture of how six vagrant types were imagined to move and to mean. In the process it explores how thinking about vagrants and vagrancy changed over the nineteenth century, and why certain types of representation became particularly common during certain historical moments. These inquiries in turn shed light upon broader social, political and historical anxieties regarding urbanisation, migration and colonisation – the potentially threatening movements of the British population.

Impact Statement

This thesis is concerned with the representation of vagrants and vagrancy in the Victorian period. It aims to understand how the homeless and the dispossessed were conceptualised, and how their apparently aimless movement was understood. In doing so it offers several contributions to the study of nineteenth-century literature and culture. On a granular level, it provides a series of new critical readings of culturally important and significant texts, including works by Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Kingsley, George Borrow and H. G. Wells. Through these readings, and an extensive examination of cultural ephemera, it argues that vagrancy was a cultural preoccupation that was used to express both ethical and geopolitical concerns. The homeless and the vagrant poor posed ethical challenges regarding duty, charity and morality that were as troubling in the nineteenth century as they are today. In addition, vagrancy was used to express anxieties about a new series of phenomena: the mass movements that shaped the modern world. Urbanisation, colonisation and emigration began to take place on an unprecedented scale during the nineteenth century, and the fears of the lawlessness and demoralisation that might accompany these large-scale migrations was often expressed in terms of vagrancy, the archetypal aimless movement. This thesis therefore contributes to the cultural history of Victorian Britain by describing and analysing the ways in which the vagrant poor were used to express concerns regarding poverty, dispossession and unchecked mobility. These anxieties are not local to the Victorian period, but impact us in the twenty-first century. Not only is homelessness in Britain a persistent concern of charities, political parties and the general public; but nation states across the globe are also becoming increasingly anxious about the security of their borders as they try to deal with the 'migrant crisis'. Understanding how vagrancy was represented in the Victorian period places these contemporary debates about poverty and migration in perspective, and can help us to uncover the ideologies that influence their perception.

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Introduction

Egdon Heath, brooding and majestic, is introduced at twilight in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878). In the opening chapter, the landscape is characterised as timeless and dormant as it prepares to resume its nocturnal vigil: 'every night its Titanic form seemed to await something', the narrator confides, 'but it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries'. Our sense that Egdon is immutable intensifies as the sun sets, and Eustacia Vye appears, standing above the heath on Blackbarrow. An anonymous, sexless silhouette at this early stage in the narrative, we are told that:

> The form was so much like an organic part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon. Immobility being the chief characteristic of that whole which the person formed portion of, the discontinuance of immobility in any quarter suggested confusion.

A specific and tightly framed hypothesis, this nascent idea that mobility might entail risk matures into an unequivocal truth as the 'erratic histories' of Eustacia and Damon Wildeve, her lover, unfold.[1] Meaning 'wandering from place to place; vagrant; nomadic', the word 'erratic' captures the wanderlust that drives them into temptation and on towards death.[2] Eustacia, feeling 'like one banished', longs to trade the heath for Paris, or the fashionable resort of Budmouth, while Wildeve, who finds it 'impossible to do well here', suggests that they emigrate to America. They are, however, unable to escape, and their restiveness is released in other ways. At a dance in East Egdon, they are caught up in an 'exhilarating movement' that becomes an expression of, and a catalyst for, a metaphorical, emotional type of wandering. Disregarding their spouses and their wedding vows, they allow the dance 'to drive them back into old paths which were now no longer regular'. This waywardness, described as 'an irresistible attack upon […] social order', eventually informs their resolve to flee from Egdon Heath.[3] Unfortunately, bewildered by the night, Eustacia falls into Shadwater Weir, and Wildeve plunges after her.

Wanderlust is the fault that subtends Hardy's tragedy, but its influence spreads beyond the lost lovers. Diggory Venn is a travelling reddleman – 'a person whose vocation it was to supply farmers with redding for their sheep' – and occupies a defined place within itinerant society:

> The reddleman lived like a gipsy; but gipsies he scorned. He was about as thriving as travelling basket and mat makers; but he had nothing to do with them. He was more decently born and brought up than the cattle-drovers who passed and repassed him in

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[1] Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. Tony Slade (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 10, 17-18, 371.

[2] 'Erratic, adj. and n.2.a.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 6 September 2018].

[3] Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, pp. 70, 87, 257.

> his wanderings; but they merely nodded to him. His stock was more valuable than
> that of pedlars; but they did not think so, and passed his cart with eyes straight ahead.

However, although Venn is usefully situated within the agricultural economy, and exists within a strict community that regulates itself through prejudice and social status, his vagrant life is nonetheless an expression of wanderlust. Venn takes to 'roaming' after an unlucky love affair, but in his case, wandering is tempered by a certain nostalgia for the heath: 'his wanderings, by mere stress of old emotion, had frequently taken an Egdon direction', we are told. This pattern of movement, biased by blighted passion, has severe consequences. Encamped on the heath on 'a spot not more than two hundred yards' away, Venn watches as Christian Cantle loses one hundred guineas to Wildeve, half of which are intended for Wildeve's wife, Tamsin Yeobright, and half for her cousin, Clym. Although they are remote from any settlement, and playing in the dead of night, Venn's vagrancy ensures that they are still under observation; and once Christian's game is over, Venn successfully plays for the fortune, which he bestows wholly on Tamsin. This is an error that 'helped to cause more misfortune than treble the loss in money', including the lovers' deaths.[4] Venn's role as an unwitting agent of catastrophe confirms the perils of wanderlust, and turns itinerancy into an attendant of misfortune. This is a formula that is also articulated elsewhere in the novel. It is 'the promoter of the raffle, a packman from a distant town' who introduces Christian to gambling in the first place, and Wildeve and Eustacia dance at 'a village picnic – a gipsying'.[5] Vagrancy, then, a state identified with games, and specifically games of chance, is likewise hazardous. As we shall see, these depictions of wandering as socially and personally dangerous are not unique to *The Return of the Native*, but pervade a culture that was alarmed by both the instability and the allure of travel.

'The nineteenth century,' wrote H. G. Wells, 'will, if it needs a symbol, almost inevitably have as that symbol a steam engine running upon a railway.'[6] Writing at the turn of the century in *Anticipations* (1901), his forecast of the future, Wells is scrupulous: it is not just 'a steam engine', an image that might be mistaken for one of raw industrialisation, but one 'running upon a railway', an emblem of speed, movement and transportation. Deftly, he gestures towards one of the defining qualities of the Victorian period, and the modern era in general – increased mobility.[7] Facilitated by steam-power, nineteenth-century Britain witnessed the mass movement of people on an unprecedented scale, as new factories and transport technologies created the means and the motive to migrate into urban areas. As Wells

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[4] Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, pp. 13, 79-80, 82, 232.
[5] Ibid. pp. 218, 251.
[6] H. G. Wells, *Anticipations; or, the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902 [1901]), p. 4.
[7] Following Richard Sennett, Tim Cresswell states that the word modern 'signifies a world of increased movement of people on a global scale'. Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 15.

described it, 'the social history of the middle and later thirds of the nineteenth century […] is the history of a gigantic rush of population into the magic radius' of the city.[8] Meanwhile, the countryside became gradually depopulated as prospects for agricultural workers dwindled: as early as 1851 more than half the country's population lived in towns and cities. This pattern of internal migration was also accompanied by large-scale emigration. Attracted by the economic and social opportunities that awaited them in other lands, 44 million people departed Europe between 1821 and 1915; of these, 10 million came from Great Britain, the largest number recruited from a single nation.[9] However, this version of migration, in which relocation is determined by its fiscal and social benefits, is only a partial account.

According to Wells, trade attracted people and initiated mass movements.[10] For his contemporary Robert Louis Stevenson, however, this reasoning was nothing but bland idealism. As he wrote in his fable, 'Will o' the Mill' (1878):

> We are told by men of science that all the ventures of mariners on the sea, all that counter-marching of tribes and races that confounds old history with its dust and rumour, sprang from nothing more abstruse than the laws of supply and demand, and a certain natural instinct for cheap rations. To any one thinking deeply, this will seem a dull and pitiful explanation.[11]

For Stevenson, migration flows were not governed by utilitarian goals, or the laws of political economy; instead they expressed a desire for knowledge and revelation that was less quantifiable but much more human. As he goes on to explain, in the history of migration travellers 'were not colonists, but pilgrims', spurred on by 'divine unrest'.[12] Movement might therefore be illogical, impulsive and less predictable than scientists and writers like Wells imagined. This idea is bolstered by re-emigration figures: although 4.7 million people left England and Wales between 1853 and 1900 for extra-European territories, only 2.25 million emigrated permanently. There can be no doubt that some of these migrants came back for economically sound reasons, but this rate of return, which was far higher than Scotland's, Ireland's or that of any other European nation, also lends credence to Stevenson's notion that people moved for less tangible reasons.[13] This apparently aimless movement might be couched in terms of pilgrimage or wanderlust, but in the Victorian period it was often articulated as vagrancy.

This thesis explores the portrayal of vagrants and vagrancy in Victorian culture. Very often, these depictions were socially, economically and even geographically fixed, and did

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[8] Wells, *Anticipations*, p. 44.
[9] Robert Woods, *The Population of Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 10-11, 21-22.
[10] Wells, *Anticipations*, pp. 33-65.
[11] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Will o' the Mill', *The Merry Men & Other Tales* (London: Heinemann, 1924; repr. 1925), pp. 57-86 (p. 62).
[12] Ibid., p. 62.
[13] Woods, *The Population of Britain*, pp. 21-22.

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not reflect the true nature of the vagrant's highly mobile and transient existence. As a
consequence, I am engaged, to some extent, in the same work as Linda Woodbridge in
Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature (2001), which primarily seeks
to understand 'the discrepancy between the historical record, on the one hand, and
contemporary representations of vagrancy, on the other.'[14] That said, although such issues are
important, this study is also invested in the wider significance of these depictions. Within the
representation of Victorian vagrancy, much more is at stake than historical accuracy. The
cultural history of the wandering poor expresses anxieties about urbanisation, emigration and
colonisation; and these, in turn, are tied to concerns about riot and rebellion; the moral and
physical degeneration of the poor; and the nature of imperialism. In this study, then, I explore
the characterisation of vagrants, but I also address the ways in which they were used to
convey the social, political and moral unease that emerged from new mass movements. In this
introductory section, I situate nineteenth-century vagrants in their legal and historical
contexts, and discuss how these realities were (mis)interpreted in contemporary
representations.

Legal Definitions

The 1824 Vagrancy Act, 'An Act for the Punishment of Idle and Disorderly Persons, and
Rogues and Vagabonds, in that Part of Great Britain called England', is an important piece of
legislation for this study. Introduced to simplify the vagrancy laws, and still partially in place
today, the 1824 act was the principle legal mechanism by which vagrants were identified and
convicted throughout the Victorian period.[15] Maintaining the three vagrant classes
inaugurated under a previous act of 1740, the statute describes the behaviours and
occupations that could qualify people as 'idle and disorderly', 'a rogue and a vagabond', and
'an incorrigible rogue.'[16] The most minor offenders were idle and disorderly: they were
beggars, unlicensed pedlars and so-called 'common prostitutes', a designation that chiefly
referred to women soliciting men in public.[17] Rogues and vagabonds comprised a larger and
more distinctly criminal and/or fraudulent class. They could be fortune tellers; people armed
'with intent to commit any felonious act'; mendicants who exposed wounds in order to solicit

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[14] Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Chicago, IL:
University of Illinois Press, 2001)*,* p. 2.
[15] Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare's Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon:
Routledge-Cavendish, 2009), p. 173; Robert Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode: A History of Responses to
the Roofless and the Rootless in Britain* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 81.
[16] Audrey Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice Under the Old Poor Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012),
p. 10.
[17] Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1980; repr. 1982), p. 14.

alms; or husbands who abandoned their wives and children, leaving their support to the rate payer. However, in addition to these impostors and ruffians, this category also included:

> Every person wandering abroad and lodging in any barn or outhouse, or in any deserted or unoccupied building, or in the open air, or under a tent, or in any cart or waggon, not having any visible means of subsistence, and not giving a good account of himself or herself.

Anyone who had previously been convicted as a rogue and a vagabond, or who resisted arrest under the act, or who broke out of prison after their conviction as a rogue and a vagabond, was deemed an incorrigible rogue.[18]

The extraordinary breadth of the act is a testament to the uncertain identity of the vagrant, and the hostility of the legislature to unknown and unchecked itinerants. The expansive definitions of the three categories sought to encompass the wandering poor in all their guises, and as a result, the act turned anyone impoverished and on foot into a potential criminal. The act's capacity to criminalise was further enhanced by its administration. Like its predecessors stretching back to the Tudor period, it was the magistrates of England and Wales who enforced the 1824 Vagrancy Act (Scotland's vagrants were subject to a different body of legislation).[19] In their hands it proved a flexible tool. A rogue and a vagabond could be convicted based on their own confession, or on the evidence of 'one or more credible witness', and sentenced to up to three months hard labour. The idle and disorderly, meanwhile, could only be committed for up to one month's hard labour, but might be 'convicted before him' – the magistrate – 'by his own view'.[20] In other words, whether someone was a vagrant or not was a summary and subjective decision. The fact that magistrates needed no legal knowledge to qualify for their posts amplified the idiosyncratic climate of the courtroom: even after the passage of the 1863 Stipendiary Magistrates Act, which introduced paid and trained officials in areas with a population exceeding 25,000, many vagrants were still tried before amateurs.[21] Charles Dickens's portrayal in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) of magistrate Nupkins, who commits Sam as 'a vagabond on his own statement' but must confirm the verdict's legality with his clerk, is not so far from the truth.[22] Unpaid magistrates relied heavily on the legal knowledge of their subordinates; and no doubt in many cases, the farce of *Pickwick* turned to tragedy.[23]

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[18] 5 Geo. 4, C. 83.
[19] A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 156-157.
[20] 5 Geo. 4, C. 83.
[21] A. W. Ager, *Crime and Poverty in 19th Century England: The Economy of Makeshifts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 92.
[22] Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, intro. Peter Washington (London: Everyman, 1998), p. 340.
[23] Ager, *Crime and Poverty*, p. 92.

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Far from defining the 'vagrant' as a legal category, the law as it was written and practiced demonstrated how porous the term could be. This permeability was silently acknowledged and manipulated by the legislature throughout the nineteenth century, as the vagrancy laws were used to criminalise various other undesirables. The 1822 Vagrancy Act, a temporary statute that was replaced with the more permanent act of 1824, added prostitution and indecent exposure to the list of 'vagrant' crimes. During the rest of the century, the act was further expanded to include the following offences: displaying obscene prints in shop windows (1838); refusing to perform tasks set in the workhouse (1842); giving false information to obtain Poor Law relief (1848); gambling for money in public spaces (1867-72); and living off 'immoral earnings' (1898).[24] In addition, the act was used to punish behaviours that were not explicitly written into it. Examining the attitudes of Victorian officials to homosexuality and male prostitution, H. G. Cocks notes that vagrancy laws 'were undoubtedly used against male streetwalkers, professional or otherwise'.[25] None of these crimes were necessarily vagrant; indeed, the clauses against pornographic prints and misbehaviour in the workhouse both presupposed a degree of settlement. What they illustrate is that 'vagrant' was a commodious term that was vigorously, and usefully, resistant to definition.

The subtitle of this study defines the vagrant as 'the wandering poor'. In doing so, it remains true to the etymological root of 'vagrant', the Latin verb *vagārī*, which means 'to wander'.[26] Meanwhile, the stipulation that the vagrant are 'poor', that is, relatively impoverished compared to their contemporaries, reflects the fact that vagrancy typically entails homelessness, and echoes one of the primary assumptions of the nineteenth-century vagrancy laws; that vagrants were those who could not give 'a good account' of themselves. Here 'account' primarily refers to 'a statement or narrative', but it also rings with its more familiar meaning, 'a financial record'.[27] Nonetheless, the definition of the vagrant as 'the wandering poor' is loose, and to some extent needs to be: it registers that 'vagrancy', a word etymologically linked to the word 'vague', is an unfixed and sometimes fleeting condition.[28] This quality is evident when we examine the historical realities of vagrant life, and the sparse

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[24] Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice*, pp. 20-22; David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 198-199.
[25] H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), p. 56.
[26] 'Vagrant, n. and adj.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].
[27] 'Account, n.2.a and n.11.a.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].
[28] Matthew Beaumont, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London, Chaucer to Dickens* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 7.

statistics that sought to record it. These consistently show that 'vagrants were not amenable to counting or classification', as M. A. Crowther observes.[29]

Historical Realities

Vagrant life was always protean. From the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, itinerants have relied on various trades and strategies in order to survive. In the nineteenth century, some of these were legal, such as hawking and singing, while others were not, like begging and theft. Work, mendicancy and crime existed in a ready trinity, and were highly interchangeable.[30] To some extent, Victorian commentators were aware of this, and the slippage between some of these practices was of particular concern. Hawking and begging, for example, could be almost indistinguishable, as numerous accounts and tales concerning vagrant fraudsters attest. In the fourth volume of Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861-62), the journalist Andrew Halliday provided a catalogue of London's beggars ranging from 'Ashamed Beggars' to 'Disaster Beggars'; but the 'most numerous class of beggars' were 'Petty Trading Beggars':

> Their trading in such articles as lucifers [matches], boot-laces, cabbage-nets, tapes, cottons, shirt-buttons, and the like, is in most cases a mere 'blind' to evade the law applying to mendicants and vagrants. […] The police are obliged to respect the trader, though they know very well that under the disguise of the itinerant merchant there lurks a beggar.[31]

Presented as mere imposters, Halliday's beggars recall Arthur Conan Doyle's Neville St Clair, the disfigured mendicant in 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' (1891). Among the first cases tackled by Sherlock Holmes, it centres on a middle-class journalist who disguises himself as a cripple, and installs himself 'in the busiest part of the City, ostensibly as a match-seller, but really as a beggar.' Here he earns stupendous sums – 'seven hundred pounds a year' – and is able to keep his wife and children in luxury.[32] Although the story's interest pivots on a redoubled disguise, in which St Clair first becomes an illegitimate beggar, and then transforms himself into a legitimate hawker, it rests on Halliday's logic: that all petty traders are really cheats. What neither Halliday nor Doyle could reconcile was that these two

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[29] M. A. Crowther, 'The Tramp', *Myths of the English*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 91-113 (p. 98).

[30] This was also true for vagrants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See, Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. 89.

[31] Andrew Halliday, 'Beggars', *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those that Will Work, Those that Cannot Work, and Those that Will Not Work*, 4 vols (London: Frank Cass, 1967), IV, pp. 393-448 (p. 438).

[32] Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Man with the Twisted Lip', *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Richard Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; repr. 2008), pp. 123-148 (pp. 145-146).

identities could coexist. Just because street-sellers were beggars it did not mean that they were not also hawkers as well.[33]

The malleability of the vagrant's identity accompanies, and to some extent underpins, uncertainties about the available demographic data. We know that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the vagrant population surged. In part, this was due to acute historical factors. In 1815 an economic slump coincided with the demobilisation of soldiers after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, which together caused levels of unemployment, pauperism and vagrancy to rise.[34] However, it was also because of more permanent changes to the structure of Britain's economy. During the 1810s the expansion of the free market led to a 'dramatic increase in cyclical unemployment, vagrancy and street crime', as Gregory Dart remarks.[35] A ramification of the rise of industrial capitalism, the insecurity of the job market led to an increase in tramping throughout the nineteenth century.[36] In the Victorian period, the vagrant population – ever a measure of economic prosperity and state stability – continued to boom and bust. Spikes were registered during periods of hardship and unemployment in the 1840s, the 1860s, the early 1880s, and the mid-1890s; and these, as we shall see, were all accompanied by an influx of articles, stories, novels, paintings and illustrations that documented and interrogated the vagrant condition.[37] However, despite this general pattern, the exact size of the vagrant population remains unknown. This is because the statistics collected were either partial or imprecise.

During the Victorian period, the number of vagrants who lodged in the union workhouses was counted on the 1 January and the 1 July each year. Although they are probably fairly accurate, these figures only accounted for a fragment of the vagrant population at two points during the height of winter and summer. As Crowther argues while discussing 'the most mysterious of all workhouse inmates' (the vagrants), these headcounts 'could not show how many had slept in barns, haystacks, doorways, brickyards and railway arches, nor those who had found refuge with a charitable organization.'[38] From 1841, the national census tried to account for this dark figure, and began to record all those who slept outside or in outbuildings.[39] However, as the report for the 1871 census noted, the figures for vagrants and Gypsies 'were so imperfectly returned that no benefit could accrue from the

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[33] This was also true of street-sellers in eighteenth-century London. See, Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 50-52.

[34] John E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 9-12.

[35] Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 152.

[36] Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice*, pp. 216-217.

[37] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 181-182.

[38] M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System, 1834-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1982), p. 248.

[39] David Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 23-25.

publication of their statements'.[40] The reason for this is that vagrants did not live at known addresses, and were always on the move. The uncertainty surrounding the official statistics should make us wary of the claims of contemporaries. Assertions like those of the health reformer J. H. Stallard, who wrote in 'Paupers and Pauperism' (1869) that there were 50,000-60,000 tramps in England, should be treated as rhetorically rather than quantitatively valuable.[41] Caveats should also be applied when considering other demographic factors, particularly the gendered nature of vagrancy.

Nineteenth-century vagrancy was primarily a male phenomenon. Whereas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries women formed at least half of the vagrant population, female vagrancy became increasingly rare as the nineteenth century progressed.[42] David Jones notes that whereas at mid-century women comprised between a sixth and a quarter of vagrants, by the beginning of the twentieth century they accounted for only a tenth.[43] There are plausible reasons for this shift. Female vagrancy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was often a corollary of war; they were either wandering in search of impressed or enlisted husbands, or because they had been widowed.[44] For most of the nineteenth century, Britain avoided the major European conflicts that recurred throughout the preceding centuries, and was also untouched by the serious civil conflicts that affected many countries on the Continent. It was therefore a period of relative stability in which one of the major causes of female vagrancy was absent. Gendered responses to dearth are another reason why vagrants tended to be male: as a rule, men tramped for work, whereas women entered the workhouse. Throughout the Victorian period, women aged between 16 and 40 were far more likely to become indoor paupers than men in the same age bracket, and were often accompanied by children.[45] This suggests that women were inclined to remain in their place of settlement, the parish where they had a right to Poor Law relief, because of their domestic ties and the difficulty of travelling with children. Nonetheless, although it seems clear that most Victorian vagrants were male, it is also true that men were more likely to be categorised and recorded as vagrants.

Female vagrants were liable to be classed as prostitutes. Although the majority of prostitutes were indigenous to the areas in which they lived and worked, and were therefore part of the settled community, female itinerants were nonetheless strongly associated with the sex trade. In part, this was because prostitution was one of the many survival strategies that

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[40] Quoted by Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 26.
[41] J. H. Stallard, 'Paupers and Pauperism', *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1869, pp. 177-189 (p. 184).
[42] David Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society, 1650-1750* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016; repr. 2018), pp. 11-12; Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, p. 209.
[43] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, p. 183.
[44] Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, pp. 11, 140-143; Eccles, *Vagrancy in Law and Practice*, p. 207.
[45] Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp. 233-234.

vagrants utilised; indeed, it was a resort for many poor people, whether they were on the move or not. As Judith Walkowitz explains, most prostitutes were engaged in casual prostitution, and only relied upon it to supplement their incomes during times of economic distress.[46] However, vagrant women were also widely believed to be sexually available. This was part of an enduring legacy:[47] since Thomas Harman's *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursetors* (1566), one of the first texts purporting to detail vagrant life, promiscuity had been touted as one of their defining characteristics. According to Harman, a 'doxy', or single female vagabond, was 'common and indifferent for any that will use her', while her married equivalent, the 'autem morte', was 'as chaste as a cowe', and likewise incontinent.[48] These assumptions of licentiousness are also evident in the nomenclature of vagrancy. A 'harlot' denoted 'a vagabond, beggar, rogue' when the word was coined in the thirteenth century; it only signified 'an unchaste woman; a prostitute; a strumpet' from the fifteenth century onwards.[49] Similarly, while a 'tramp' has referred to 'one who travels from place to place on foot' since the late seventeenth century, it was not until the early twentieth century that it identified 'a sexually promiscuous woman'.[50] In the nineteenth century, many commentators treated female vagrants as *de facto* prostitutes: W. D. Boase, for example, a Poor Law official writing in 1848, noted that, 'of the female English tramps little can be said, but that they are in great part prostitutes of the lowest class.'[51]

The construction of female vagrants as prostitutes would have made their experience of vagrancy radically different to that of their male counterparts. For much of the Victorian period, they were less likely to be apprehended for vagrancy. Although common prostitution was punishable under the 1824 act, prostitutes could only be arrested if they were 'behaving in a riotous or indecent manner', which, as the Vice Chancellor of Oxford noted in the mid-1820s, meant that there would be relatively few arrests if constables followed the letter of the law.[52] Moreover, even if prostitutes were carousing in the street, it was no guarantee that the police would interfere. The poet and diarist A. J. Munby, writing in June 1859, recorded 'Hogarthian' scenes in London's Haymarket; 'several halfdrunken [*sic*] prostitutes', one of whom was 'reeling', and another 'showing her legs above the knee', were observed by a

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[46] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, pp. 13-31.

[47] Female vagrants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were also assumed to be sexually available. See, Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, pp. 123-147; Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, pp. 28, 93.

[48] Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursetors, Vulgarly Called Vagabonds, set fourth by Thomas Harman Esq. for the Utility and Profit of his Natural Country* (London: R. Triphook, 1814), p. 56.

[49] 'Harlot n.1 and n.5.c', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].

[50] 'Tramp n.4.a and 4.b', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].

[51] Quoted by Ager, *Crime and Poverty*, p. 86.

[52] 5 Geo. 4, C. 83; Ager, *Crime and Poverty*, p. 83.

passive 'peeler', or police officer, 'with dead calm face'.[53] This account of official forbearance reflects a broader truth – that the police tolerated prostitution as an inevitable aspect of urban life, unless they were forced by public opinion to supress it. That said, from 1864 when the first Contagious Diseases Act was passed, through to 1886, when the legislation was repealed, prostitutes in some garrison towns or ports were liable to be imprisoned in lock hospitals if they were found to be suffering from venereal disease. After 1869, the measures were enforced in eighteen districts, and the women could be detained for up to nine months.[54] Female vagrants in the nineteenth century, then, were exposed to a different set of dangers to male tramps, and the assumption that they were sexually available may have clouded how they were categorised. Like the vagrant who was a hawker and beggar, sliding between identities, the prostitute would have been one of many parts that the vagrant performed; however, for contemporaries, that role may have been definitive, and assigned without substantial evidence. Consequently, we should be cautious when handling both statistics and representations of Victorian vagrancy, both of which suggest that the experience was overwhelmingly male.

Representing Vagrants

The mutable quality of vagrancy made it resistant to definitions, and to the efforts of statisticians. As a social problem, then, neither its components nor its nature were fully understood, and this created a vacuum that was filled by the imagination. The uncertainties surrounding the vagrant condition provided an opportunity for writers and artists, who created concrete worlds within voids of information. In the sixteenth century a 'literature of rogues' emerged, which presented readers with a highly stratified and specialised underworld in which vagrants were split into numerous criminal orders; Harman's *Caveat*, which includes a list of 200 vagabond types, is an early example of this tradition.[55] In the seventeenth century, this genre was supplemented by what David Hitchcock has identified as the 'rogue ballad'. Printed as broadsides and accompanied by woodcuts, these were performed in public and private across the social spectrum, and portrayed a series of vagrant stereotypes that ranged from the uncanny beggar woman to the jovial tinker.[56] Later, in eighteenth-century London, pictorial representations of street-sellers known as 'Cries' became increasingly popular, and, like the rogue literature and ballads, produced an unrealistically fixed image: as Tim Hitchcock observes, these depictions 'inevitably divorce the London poor from their domestic

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[53] A. J. Munby, *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1828-1910*, ed. Derek Hudson ([London]: John Murray, 1972), p. 35.
[54] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, pp. 69-89.
[55] Beier, *Masterless Men,* pp. 7-8.
[56] Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, pp. 55-89.

context, forcing the viewer to see them in the light of their economic roles'.[57] These genres entertained the same assumption expressed by Halliday and Doyle in the Victorian period; that despite their many guises, vagrants possessed a stable identity that could be determined and classified.

The process of stereotyping and anatomisation was pursued with enthusiasm in the nineteenth century. While some categories, such as the 'Gypsy' and the 'hawker', were preserved from earlier periods, others were modern inventions. According to the *OED*, two urban vagrants, the 'loafer' and the 'casual pauper', were first recorded in 1830 and 1865 respectively; while the 'beachcomber', a vagrant type specific to the Pacific Islands, appeared around 1840.[58] In 1847, Herman Melville explained that the term 'beachcomber' was 'applied to certain roving characters […] a reckless, rollicking set, wedded to the Pacific'.[59] Although they are marginal figures within this study, the Australian 'bushranger', 'sundowner' and 'larrikin' are also of this period. The 'bushranger' dates back to the early nineteenth century, and was a convict who had taken to tramping in the outback.[60] The 'sundowner' was similarly a rural tramp, noted for being workshy, and the 'larrikin' (apparently a corruption of 'larking') was another city vagrant, not dissimilar to the 'loafer'.[61] Both of these figures surfaced in the mid-Victorian period.[62] As this nineteenth-century nomenclature suggests, vagrants were represented within particular topographies and geographies. These, in turn, influenced the aesthetic, political and social attributes of the vagrant, and the way in which they were imagined to move and to mean. The contours of the landscape, the resources and opportunities that it provided, and the degree to which it was policed, all contributed to how the vagrant was constructed, and how their movement was articulated.

This thesis engages with the stratified and localised ways in which vagrancy was imagined. It is divided into three parts, entitled 'The Country', 'The City' and 'The Colony', each of which contains two chapters that address specific vagrant types. It therefore embraces the unrealistic manner in which vagrant life was depicted, and presents a granular study of what different varieties of vagrancy meant to contemporary commentators. In doing so, it attempts to provide a useful contribution to the cultural history of vagrancy and Victorian Britain: first, by building on the existing work of critics and historians; second, by providing

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[57] Hitchcock, *Down and Out*, p. 222.
[58] 'Casual, n.3.b', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018]; 'Loafer, n.1.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018]; 'Beach-comber, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [accessed 29 September 2017].
[59] Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, ed. Mary K. Bercaw Edwards (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 89.
[60] 'Bushranger, n', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].
[61] The etymology of 'larrikin' is obscure, but 'larking' was considered a plausible root by a nineteenth-century commentator. See, 'The Scallywag', *Globe*, 14 March 1898, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).
[62] 'Sundowner, n.2', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018]; 'Larrikin, n.a', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].

new insights into neglected figures; and third, by exploring how these types interrelate. Although there is no nineteenth-century equivalent to the scholarly histories of vagrancy written by A. L. Beier, Tim Hitchcock and David Hitchcock for earlier periods, several critics of Romantic and Victorian literature have analysed one or other of the vagrant species that I address.[63] Deborah Epstein Nord and Sarah Houghton-Walker have written on the Gypsy; Vanessa Smith has examined the beachcomber; and Matthew Beaumont has analysed urban vagrants.[64] This study draws on the work of these critics, and brings the different vagrant types that they discuss into dialogue with each other. In doing so, it exposes the continuities that exist between them; the difference that topographical and historical factors made to their representation; and the ways in which vagrants were used to express social, ethical and geopolitical concerns. Achieving these latter aims is another function of the topographical arrangement.

While stressing the correlation between the landscape and the type of vagrancy it was thought to foster, the topographical structure highlights that the representation of vagrants was an expression of anxiety about new forms of movement. It is significant that the nineteenth-century neologisms cluster around urban and colonial spaces. They suggest that the nature of vagrancy in these spheres had either fundamentally changed, or was else being recognised as an entirely new phenomenon. Whereas rural vagrancy was still recorded in terms of the 'Gypsy' and the 'hawker', words that were current in the sixteenth century, in the city and the colony vagrancy required a fresh vocabulary.[65] I argue that these emergent vagrant types were responses to those mass movements that preoccupied and defined nineteenth-century Britain: urbanisation, emigration and colonisation. In doing so, I clarify what was at stake when Victorians represented vagrants; they were not only depicting a domestic problem – one of poverty, charity and morality – they were also responding to fears about the dispersal of British subjects within and beyond the empire. By situating British vagrancy within its global context I develop an understudied aspect of a phenomenon that hitherto has been addressed in national, and often only English terms. As David Hitchcock has recently written with reference to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 'a larger, transatlantic, history of vagrancy remains to be told. […] The history of vagrancy can and

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[63] Lionel Rose's *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815-1985* is the only history devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century vagrancy. However, it is not an analytical history like the others mentioned here, and the unsympathetic, moralising tone of the monograph is often troubling. See, Lionel Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815-1985* (London: Routledge, 1988).

[64] See, Beaumont, *Nightwalking*; Sarah Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006); Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[65] 'Gypsy, n.1.a', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018]; 'Hawker, n.2.a', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 August 2018].

should be concretely linked to the wider history of empire.'[66] With its chapters on the American frontier and the Pacific Islands, this study is a step in that direction.

      The six chapters that follow form a taxonomy of nineteenth-century vagrancy: they are on Gypsies, hawkers and handicraft tramps; vagrant poachers; casual paupers; loafers; colonial vagabonds; and beachcombers. At times, these categories are brittle: some are specific to an exact place, and others a certain decade. Nonetheless, given that this study is primarily concerned with representation, it is useful to read vagrancy through the form in which it was presented to, and internalised by, contemporary readers. It helps us to understand how they reacted to homelessness, poverty and mobility, and in what terms they imagined it. There are also other advantages to this method. Unlike generic, authorial or canonical arrangements, approaching the Victorian vagrant by type opens up connections between texts and traditions, and allows us to witness the ways in which they were transformed as they migrated into different forms of writing. Indeed, although the newspaper and periodical press, like earlier forms of popular print, stereotyped the vagrant, these figures were often altered in meaningful ways when they appeared in more overtly literary works. Authors including Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, George Borrow, H. G. Wells and Robert Louis Stevenson all reworked vagrant species, using them either to engage with contemporary discourses about vagrancy, or else to challenge them. Moreover, just as literary texts are valuable for a study of this kind because they revise and complicate simplistic categories, so the vagrant categories provide a context that allows us to read familiar texts afresh: vagrant types are nuanced by literature, and vice versa.

      This thesis begins in 'The Country', a topography that has historically nurtured vagrant traders, and fostered close economic and social links between settled and itinerant communities. The first chapter, on Gypsies, hawkers and handicraft tramps, records how these began to break down in the first half of the nineteenth century, and how this altered the representation of these traditionally picturesque figures. Where Chapter 1 is primarily concerned with the aesthetics of rural vagrancy, Chapter 2 is focused on its political significance. The second chapter hones in on the so-called 'Hungry Forties', and examines the vagrant poachers that became loaded with radical connotations during this period of agricultural unrest. The only category that would not have been instinctively recognised as a vagrant by most Victorians, the vagrant poacher was nonetheless readily identifiable in this decade. Part Two follows the vagrants' annual winter migration to 'The City', as well as their more permanent relocation as they participated in the national trend of urbanisation. Chapters 3 and 4, which focus on the second half of the nineteenth century, explore the political and social threat embodied by the casual and the loafer. These urban figures, which Dickens,

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[66] Hitchcock, *Vagrancy in English Culture and Society*, pp. 152-153.

Wells and others identified with social unrest and political anarchy, were the product of a persistent concern regarding the idle and unemployed who gravitated towards Britain's cities in this period. Both Parts One and Two focus on England because Scotland and Ireland each had their own unique cultures of vagrancy, and used a different set of vagrancy laws and relief mechanisms to address them. Part Three, 'The Colony', examines the portrayal of vagrancy in frontier zones. Chapter 5, on vagabonds, investigates how the American West, one of the most popular destinations for British emigrants in the Victorian period, was articulated as a site of potential vagrancy in the 1830s and 1840s.[67] The final chapter, on the Pacific beachcomber, analyses how this ambivalent figure came to represent some of the anxieties about imperialism that became prevalent in the *fin de siècle*. Both the vagabond and the beachcomber were responses to emigration and colonisation, and expressed fears that the participants of these strategic, and sometimes state sponsored movements, could be warped into the wandering poor.

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[67] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; repr. 2015), pp. 4-5.

Part One: The Country

Chapter 1: Gypsies, Hawkers and Handicraft Tramps

On 16 June 1860 readers of *All the Year Round* received another instalment from Charles Dickens's itinerant alter ego 'The Uncommercial Traveller', 'a town traveller and a country traveller […] always on the road'.[1] Written in a confidential style, the article is a seasonal paper providing 'notes of the Tramps whom I perceived on all the summer roads in all directions'. These notes are worked up into a catalogue of vagabonds that details the wiles of 'idle tramps', such as the 'slinking tramp' and the 'savage tramp'. It also describes the picturesque lives of their more industrious counterparts: 'the many tramps who go from one oasis of town or village to another, to sell a stock in trade'; 'the tramps with carts or caravans – the Gipsy-tramp, the Show-tramp, the Cheap Jack'; and 'the tramp handicraft men', who are 'all over England, in this Midsummer time'.[2] Of this class the Uncommercial Traveller asks:

> Where does the lark sing, the corn grow, the mill turn, the river run, and they are not among the lights and shadows, tinkering, chair-mending, umbrella-mending, clock-mending, knife-grinding?[3]

The answer to this question, however, is less straightforward than Dickens's rhetoric allows. By 1860 tramping artisans were becoming a rarity on the roads, as were a number of other itinerant types. Pedlars and packmen, who carried 'a stock in trade', were increasingly uncommon.[4] Likewise the 'tramps with carts or caravans', the Gypsies who hawked horses and fortunes at fairs, and the Cheap Jacks who touted tools and domestic wares from their yellow waggons, were encountered less frequently.

In the early nineteenth century itinerants had a variety of occupations and performed a vital economic role. Travelling between remote villages on familiar, premeditated and often circular routes, they provided goods and services that were otherwise unavailable. As Dickens observes, these included the repair of household objects, such as kettles, clocks and chairs, which were expensive to replace in an age before mass manufacture. Moreover, they also sold tools, fancy goods, and other occasional items that could not be bought from local retailers.[5] As G. E. Mingay relates, in the early nineteenth century there was a shortage of village shops

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[1] [Charles Dickens], 'The Uncommercial Traveller', *All the Year Round*, 28 January 1860, pp. 321-326 (p. 321).

[2] [Charles Dickens], 'The Uncommercial Traveller', *All the Year Round*, 16 June 1860, pp. 230-234 (pp. 230-234).

[3] Ibid., p. 232.

[4] G. E. Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 178.

[5] Ibid., pp. 176-177; David Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in Nineteenth Century Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 3, 46-49.

and 'household necessities were bought from travelling packmen'.[6] But itinerants did more than sell and maintain material goods; they also provided entertainment. Gypsy musicians were essential to the success of village festivities, and were hired to perform at public and private parties: 'Yetholm, and the Scottish Gipsies' (1851), an article in *Sharpe's London Magazine*, informs us that 'the favourite fiddler or piper of the district was often to be found in the gipsy village'.[7] Meanwhile, the Cheap Jacks were known as much for their bawdy patter as they were for driving a bargain. 'Cheap Jack possesses a vein of coarse humour,' records *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 'which makes all the wondering folk below think him an amazingly funny fellow.'[8]

The success of the itinerants' trade relied on the isolation of settled communities. Poor roads restricted the movement of people and goods, and turned villages into ready markets for the industrious traveller. During the eighteenth century, however, the nation's infrastructure began to improve. From the 1770s through to the 1810s canals were dug to enable the low-cost conveyance of heavy goods, and from mid-century the landowning classes began to invest in road improvements and bridge-building enterprises that increased the speed and comfort of travel.[9] Between 1750 and 1811 the journey time from London to Bristol was reduced from forty to twelve hours.[10] These improvements began to draw remote settlements into a countrywide transport network, and to break open the small markets that had once been the preserve of the Gypsy and the packman. That said, although new roads and innovations, like macadamisation, increased the speed at which people, objects and news could travel, the mail and stagecoach service was not a national system enjoyed by all. Not only did it fail to reach the more remote regions of the United Kingdom, but the expense of travelling by coach prohibited the poorer classes from enjoying its benefits.[11] As a consequence, itinerants were able to resist the encroachments made upon their social and economic functions. This opposition, however, collapsed with the advent of the railway.

The speed at which the railroad expanded is astonishing. Radiating out from Britain's major cities, 6,000 miles of track was laid between 1830 and 1850. A swift and inexpensive form of transport, the railways brought low-cost wares from cities to villages, and likewise enabled rural labourers to travel to municipal centres.[12] The markets traditionally served by

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[6] Mingay, *Rural Life*, p. 176.

[7] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 55; 'Yetholm, and the Scottish Gipsies', *Sharpe's London [Magazine]*, January 1851, pp. 321-325 (p. 322).

[8] 'Cheap Jack', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 10 October 1846, pp. 236-238 (p. 237).

[9] Ruth Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 14-15; Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?: England, 1783-1843* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 14-15, 131.

[10] Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?*, p. 15.

[11] Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation*, pp. 14-19.

[12] Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine: The Literary Response to Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 10.

itinerants, then, were exposed to competition. The influx of cheap goods threatened both the hawking and service industries practiced by tramps. The articles they sold were often more expensive than the manufactured alternative, and the availability and relative affordability of these new products decreased the demand for tinkers, knife-grinders, chair-menders, etc.[13] Meanwhile, the villagers who formed the itinerants' customer base could seek out a better bargain on their own behalf because they could travel more freely. This also decreased the demand for itinerant entertainers. Whereas previously the country fair had been the villagers' chief resort for business and pleasure, the railways ensured that the local town now took its place; vagrant fiddlers and acrobats therefore performed to an ever-dwindling audience as the fairs fell into decline.[14] The overall consequence of this, as David Mayall notes, was that Gypsies and other travellers eventually became 'an anachronistic and unwanted vestige of a past stage of economic development'.[15]

Developing economic conditions were not the only factor that impinged on itinerants: legal changes also made it increasingly difficult to maintain a life on the roads. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the second great era of enclosure, in which landholders appropriated six million acres through nearly 4,000 Enclosure Acts.[16] As Raymond Williams observes, it is important to note that two different types of land were affected by this legislation: arable fields and uncultivated wastes. Fields formed two-thirds of the land acquired, and produced the victims that we might typically associate with enclosure – agricultural labourers who were turfed out of their cottages, and stripped of their traditional grazing and foraging rites. The enclosure of wastes, meanwhile, affected a very different sort of occupant. Here, as Williams notes, it was the 'marginal independence, of cottagers, squatters, [and] isolated settlers' that was supressed.[17] Among these were vagrants who relied on the wastes in a number of ways: such wild land provided wood for fuel; food in the form of game; and workable materials, like osiers, which were used to make baskets and mend chairs. The enclosure of land, whether waste or otherwise, also reduced the number of places where travellers could pitch their tents. The broad roadside verges, or 'slangs', were incorporated into agricultural estates, as were many of the green lanes that served as campsites.[18] As a result, some itinerants were forced to abandon their traditional beats: certainly the poet John Clare, lamenting the decline of the local Gypsy population, blamed it

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[13] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, pp. 65-66.

[14] Donna Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 94; Mingay, *Rural Life*, pp. 175-176.

[15] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 3.

[16] Mingay, *Rural Life*, pp. 12-15; Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), pp. 96-102; also see, Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside*, pp. 78-79.

[17] Williams, *The Country and The City*, pp. 101-102.

[18] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 20; Mingay, *Rural Life*, p. 15.

on the fact that 'the inclosure has left nothing but narrow lanes w[h]ere they are ill provided with a lodging'.[19]

The Enclosure Acts were but one legislative challenge to itinerant existence. The 1824 Vagrancy Act, as I discussed in the Introduction, criminalised the unsettled poor: anyone sleeping 'in the open air, or under a tent, or in any cart or waggon, not having any visible means of subsistence' was liable to be punished as a rogue and a vagabond.[20] This catch-all legislation was supplemented by the 1835 Highways Act, which made anyone encamped 'upon any part of any highway' liable to a fine of forty shillings. In particular it targeted itinerant traders, specifying that 'any hawker, higgler, [or] gipsy' would be prosecuted; the 'higglers' enter this list because, aside from their legitimate trade in dairy and poultry, they were also strongly associated with the poached game trade (see Chapter 2).[21] Both magistrates and the rural police took full advantage of these laws. Indeed, although the rural police in the early nineteenth century had a reputation for incompetence, they were particularly zealous in their apprehension of vagrants.[22] Between 1839 and 1856, a period in which county policing was dramatically reformed, these amateur constables were replaced by professional police officers, and their enthusiasm coupled with more effective training. Consequently, rural vagrants were increasingly subject to harassment by the police, whose methods of surveillance and prosecution became ever more efficient.[23] One response to this was to migrate to cities. Here vagrants were less exposed and could take advantage of the economic opportunities provided by industrialisation and urbanisation. Gypsies began to settle in suburbs, and to replace their hawking trade with wholesale manufacture, selling pegs and skewers directly to shops, while packmen in the drapery line stopped trading on their own accounts and became the representatives of urban tailors, outfitters and haberdasheries.[24]

The withdrawal of itinerants from the countryside must be seen within broader patterns of migration. Despite an overall growth in the national population, the rural population remained static throughout the nineteenth century, and after 1850 there was a general movement away from the country towards cities and colonies.[25] Between 1821 and 1841, the industrial cities of Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds and Birmingham grew by more than forty per cent, while London, the globe's largest city in the nineteenth century, experienced unprecedented growth: between 1809 and 1900 its population expanded from

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[19] John Clare, *John Clare by Himself*, ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Ashington: Carcanet Press, 1996), p. 87.
[20] 5 Geo. 4, C. 83.
[21] 4 Will. 4, C. 50.
[22] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, pp. 148, 153-154; George K. Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England', *Victorian Studies*, 28.2 (1985), 231-253 (pp. 235-237).
[23] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 155; also see, Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?*, p. 607.
[24] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, pp. 19, 66; Mingay, *Rural Life*, p. 177.
[25] Mingay, *Rural Life*, pp. 19-21; Williams, *The Country and The City*, p. 188.

960,000 to 6.58 million.[26] Meanwhile, emigration to extra-European territories became a feature of ordinary life during the Victorian period. In 1832 the annual number of emigrants exceeded 100,000 for the first time, and by 1850 this figure had doubled.[27] These emigrants were drawn from the itinerant as well as the settled community, and America – known as the '"true Canaan" for all travellers' – was their favoured destination, offering new opportunities and a chance to escape police harassment.[28] The nineteenth-century Gypsiologist Charles Leland, writing about the Gypsy enclaves in the United States, recorded that 'it is astonishing how many Romanys come out of [England] over here'.[29] However, despite these migratory trends, we should not imagine that itinerants vanished from the countryside altogether; tramps and Gypsies performed seasonal agricultural work throughout the nineteenth century, travelling with the ripening harvest. What did change was the tenor of vagrant life. Whereas early in the century itinerants had been a welcome and essential part of rural existence, now they were relics of a bygone order whose fate was to be either reviled or romanticised. It is little wonder, then, that many sought their fortunes elsewhere. In Parts Two and Three of this study I will examine the ways in which the redistribution of vagrants impacted their cultural representation. This chapter, meanwhile, examines how rural vagrants were portrayed between 1830 and 1860 during this transitional period.

Although the socio-economic pressures detailed above affected several groups of rural itinerants, the impact of these changes was not represented in a uniform manner. In part, this was because various trades reacted and adapted to circumstances differently, but it was also because legacies of representation influenced how the 'decline' of the rural vagrant was figured. In particular, depictions of Gypsies were contoured according to a pastoral and picturesque tradition that did not bind other vagrant types to the same degree. During the nineteenth century, Gypsies were the most frequently portrayed group of rural itinerants, and were a popular literary subject. The recent critical studies by Deborah Epstein Nord and Sarah Houghton-Walker, which examine the characterisation of the Victorian and Romantic era Gypsy respectively, attest to this.[30] The exclusive focus of these studies is justified by the status of Gypsies as an ethnic group, and the sheer abundance of Gypsy representations; however, it also occludes important factors. Gypsies were interwoven within an itinerant economy, and shared camping grounds, resources and relatives with other groups. Indeed, for

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[26] Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 68; Williams, *The Country and The City*, p. 152.

[27] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; repr. 2015), pp. 41-43.

[28] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, p. 21.

[29] Charles Leland, *The Gypsies*, 4th edn (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1886), p. 229.

[30] See, Sarah Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006).

contemporaries, it was not easy to identify 'genuine' Gypsies from 'Giorgios', or non-Gypsies, who were engaged in similar trades.[31] By examining the representation of Gypsies alongside the other itinerant types with which they lived we can usefully unravel the ways in which they were aesthetically conditioned, and also begin to explain why they were more susceptible to this treatment than other vagrant types. In this chapter, I first analyse the portrayal of rural itinerants in the periodical press: here the breadth of material produced by diverse authors for a multiplicity of publications acts as a cultural barometer and allows us to appreciate how these figures were generally perceived. I then examine the role of the Gypsy and itinerant in the works of the travel writer and Gypsiologist George Borrow, an author whose portrayal of vagrants both exemplifies and critiques the dominant trends of representation.

Picturing Itinerants in the Periodical Press

Writers in the early Victorian period were aware that the complexion of rural vagrancy was altering. Contemporary articles in the periodical press were swift to identify that social, legal and technological changes were causing the erosion of certain itinerant trades. Charles Knight's *Penny Magazine*, a mass-market periodical containing instructive articles for the working classes, published two items on this issue.[32] 'The Tinkers of Scotland' (1836) informed readers that Scottish tinkers, 'a race closely similar to the gipsies of England', had been severely affected by 'the change in the circumstances of social life', which had 'lessened, if not destroyed, the value of their services'.[33] This diagnosis was reiterated two years later in a lengthy cover article entitled 'The English Gypsies' (1838). With an air of relief, the article anticipated that in another generation 'one may travel from Dover to Duncansby Head, and neither see nor hear of a gypsy encampment' thanks to the 'numerous inclosures of waste lands, and the diffusion of the conveniences of cities in the country'.[34] Meanwhile, the *Leisure Hour*, the periodical wing of the Religious Tract Society, noted that 'recreative vagabonds' – strolling players, acrobats and clowns – were likewise becoming 'only matters of history'.[35] This was a happy consequence of 'the extension of railways' that had dispensed with rural wakes and festivals, the markets that these vagrants relied on.[36]

[31] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, pp. 29-30.
[32] Aileen Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820-1860* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 21.
[33] 'The Tinkers of Scotland', *Penny Magazine,* 24 December 1836, pp. 502-503 (p. 502).
[34] 'The English Gypsies', *Penny Magazine,* 20 January 1838, pp. 17-19 (p. 18).
[35] Christopher Kent, 'Introduction', *British Literary Magazines: The Victorian and Edwardian Age, 1837-1913*, ed. Alvin Sullivan, 4 vols (London: Greenwood Press, 1983-1986), III, pp. xiii-xxvi (p. xv).
[36] 'Life Among the Vagabonds', *Leisure Hour*, 16 December 1858, pp. 787-790 (p. 789).

However, although periodicals acknowledged that itinerants of several stamps were disappearing due to the same historical factors, the ways in which these different wanderers were represented differs considerably.

Vagrancy was a micro-industry in the periodical press. Throughout the Victorian period taxonomic articles appeared that examined single or occasionally multiple species of tramp; Dickens's uncommercial paper is a fine example of this. Whether they claimed to be fact or fiction, these pieces were invariably a blend of myths, laws, official reports and personal recollections: in 'The Lame Pedlar, A Story' (1838), for example, the author attests to the facticity of the tale, claiming that 'in Scotland, among the lower classes, the *lame* […] often take to this [hawking] trade'.[37] However, rural itinerants were broadly split into Gypsies, who formed a mainstay of this print economy, and all other vagrant traders: as the *Leisure Hour* notes at the beginning of 'Life Among the Vagabonds' (1858):

> Independent of the gipsy race, of whom we are not going to treat in the present paper, there are in this country a numerous class, or rather a variety of classes, who […] must be ranked under the denomination of vagabonds.[38]

This sweeping division has its origins in the late eighteenth century. Although early modern Gypsies were subject to discrete laws, including several sixteenth-century acts that banished them from England, in practice they were perceived as 'vagabonds', and therefore 'remain a shadowy group in the Elizabethan period', as A. L. Beier remarks.[39] Indeed, it seems likely that in Thomas Harman's catalogue of rogues, *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursetors* (1566), the otherwise unmentioned Gypsies are elided with 'Dronken Tinkars' and 'Prigger[s] of Prauncers' (horse thieves), two occupations with which they were readily associated.[40] In the Romantic era such conflations became impossible. As Houghton-Walker argues, the Gypsies underwent a radical transformation in this period, and were reconfigured as a distinct and separate people.[41] One of the primary reasons for this was Heinrich Grellmann's influential *Dissertation on the Gipsies* (1783).

Having established a philological link between the Romani dialects used by Continental Gypsies and Sanskrit, Grellmann argued that Gypsies were a race descended from the 'Pariahs' or 'Suders', the lowest Hindustani caste. Furthermore, he believed that having fled Hindustan, this race had continued 'pure' and unaltered: 'they have remained, to

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[37] 'The Lame Pedlar, A Story', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 20 January 1838, pp. 411-412 (p. 411). Original emphasis.
[38] 'Life Among the Vagabonds', p. 787.
[39] A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 58.
[40] Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursetors, Vulgarly Called Vagabonds, set fourth by Thomas Harman Esq. for the Utility and Profit of his Natural Country* (London: R. Triphook, 1814), pp. 25-26, 41-42.
[41] Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy*, pp. 18-20.

the present time, what they were at their first arrival in Europe', he claimed.[42] This thesis inaugurated the racial (and often racist) construction of the Gypsies, and had an enormous impact on how Gypsies were represented in Britain.[43] Available in an English translation four years after its publication, Grellmann's *Dissertation* was widely accepted by the country's leading Gypsy experts, who were primarily evangelical dissenters concerned with converting travellers to Christianity. In *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits and Present State of the Gypsies* (1816), the Northampton Quaker John Hoyland claimed that the Gypsies were a unified race: whether English or Continental they shared a 'mutual descent from the Suder caste'.[44] Fifteen years later, the Wesleyan James Crabb likewise relied on Grellmann in his *The Gipsies' Advocate* (1831). Here he stated that the Gypsies were 'a distinct race of people in every possible way' and of 'Hindoo origin'.[45] Opinions such as these were widely disseminated in the Victorian period and portrayed as indisputable facts.

In *Gypsies and the British Imagination* (2006) Nord argues that despite Hoyland's promotion of Grellmann's thesis, 'those who wrote about the Gypsies seemed unwilling to relinquish the belief that their origin was ultimately still mysterious'.[46] This claim, however, is certainly not applicable to the journalists writing for the periodical press. In 'The English Gypsies', the *Penny* asserted that Grellmann's *Dissertation* was the 'first satisfactory account of the gypsies', and that it 'establish[ed] the fact of the Indian origin of the gypsies'; in 'The Gipsies' (1841) the *London Saturday Journal* noted that 'the commonly received opinion now is, that they belonged to one of the lowest castes of India'; and in 'Gatherings About Gipsies' (1848) *Reynolds's Miscellany* recorded that 'it is now, we believe, pretty generally agreed, that they came originally from Hindostan'.[47] This consensus regarding the Gypsies' origins was coupled with the portrayal of Gypsies as a race apart. This, in turn, allowed commentators to interpret their diminishing numbers in rural England as a form of racial weakness. As we shall see in later chapters, the depiction of vagrant groups as 'savage' races was not uncommon in the Victorian period; it was part of a broader narrative detailing their impending extinction, which was often blamed on their self-destructive and 'primitive' habits (see Chapter 6). In the case of Gypsies, the narrative of racial decline both assured those who welcomed their disappearance, and forestalled the lamentation of those who saw them as an

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[42] Heinrich Grellmann quoted by David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500-2000: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 153.
[43] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, pp. 152-153; Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-13.
[44] John Hoyland, *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, and Present State of the Gypsies* (York: [n.pub], 1816), p. 154.
[45] James Crabb, *The Gipsies' Advocate; or, Observations on the Origin, Character, Manner, and Habits of The English Gipsies*, 2nd edn (London: Lindsay, 1831), pp. 10, 14.
[46] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, p. 8.
[47] 'The English Gypsies', p. 19; 'The Gipsies', *London Saturday Journal*, 12 June 1841, pp. 277-279 (p. 278); 'Gatherings About Gipsies', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 17 June 1848, pp. 509-510 (p. 509).

indispensably picturesque part of the English countryside. It achieved this by portraying their inevitable demise as an aesthetic as well as genetic degeneration.

In the third part of William Howitt's survey *The Rural Life of England* (1838) he addresses the 'Picturesque and Moral Features of the Country', the first section of which is entitled 'Gipsies'. As if justifying this choice, he begins by placing the Gypsies in their artistic context, declaring, 'the picture of the Rural Life of England must be woefully defective which should omit those singular and most picturesque squatters on heaths and in lanes, the Gipsies.' These, he goes on to say, have been the concern of 'all our best poets and essayists', and have thus become 'an essential portion of our poetry and literature.' Although Howitt then parrots Grellmann's 'theory that they are a Hindu tribe', and like many of his peers, comments on their dwindling numbers, what he highlights here is their literary associations with the picturesque, an aesthetic form closely allied to the pastoral that glories in the rugged, irregular and uncultivated beauty of nature.[48] Throughout the Romantic and Victorian periods Gypsies were considered native to this kind of wild landscape: as Matthew Beaumont remarks, 'the picturesque […] integrated gypsies and vagrants, but not ordinary labourers, as colourful, more or less exotic elements'.[49] In the periodical press, the familiarity and longevity of this trope was used to convey the declining state of contemporary Gypsies by contrasting their picturesque past with their degenerate present.

'The Norwood Gypsies', penned by the anonymous J. P. P. C., appeared in the *Literary Lounger* in February 1826. Striving for the same urbanity that characterised the articles in successful contemporaries, such as the *London Magazine* and the *New Monthly Magazine*, and mimicking their broadly liberal tone, this item rails against 'an improving age' that would banish the delights of rural life, like 'wakes, fairs, and festivals', and set up 'Bible societies, mechanic's [*sic*] institutions, and savings banks' in their place.[50] The eviction of the Gypsies from Norwood, a famous encampment on the outskirts of southeast London, is another unwanted symptom of this modern mentality. Known in the mid-eighteenth century as the residence of Margaret Finch, the celebrated 'Queen of the Gypsies', and patronised by the Prince and Princess of Wales at that time, this enclave had become subject to a series of

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[48] William Howitt, *The Rural Life of England*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1838), I, pp. 219-233.

[49] Matthew Beaumont, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London, Chaucer to Dickens* (London: Verso, 2015), p. 240; also see, Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside*, pp. 16-21; Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, pp. 5-7.

[50] [Anon.] J. P. P. C., 'The Norwood Gypsies', *Literary Lounger*, February 1826, pp. 88-96 (p. 88); W. Paul Elledge, 'The New Monthly Magazine', *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, ed. Alvin Sullivan, 4 vols (London: Greenwood Press, 1983-86), II, pp. 331-339; Helen B. Ellis, 'The London Magazine', *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, ed. Alvin Sullivan, 4 vols (London: Greenwood Press, 1983-86), II, pp. 288-296.

legislative and judicial attacks by the start of the nineteenth century.[51] Police launched raids in 1797, 1802 and 1803, and imprisoned Gypsies for various offences, including vagrancy; in 1808 the Norwood common was enclosed and the Gypsies forced into the woods of Dulwich College; and in 1815 the Gypsies were subjected to further raids and arrests having defied the enclosure and returned to their original pitch.[52] Such harassment inevitably encouraged Gypsies to move elsewhere, although it was not until 1830 that the area ceased to be visited entirely. By the time J. P. P. C. was writing, the population, independence and aesthetic appeal of the Norwood Gypsies had dwindled; this was the cause of lament.

Reminiscing about the Norwood Gypsies as they were in the eighteenth century, J. P. P. C. remarks, 'they were a truly pastoral people, a sort of Scythian Nomades [*sic*] – their castle was the forest, their bower the greenwood-tree.' This distinctly picturesque people, who 'knew no law but the law of Nature', and who inhabited an Arden-like landscape, are then juxtaposed with their nineteenth-century descendants:[53]

> I am told that a few disconsolate creatures still hover, like unquiet spirits, about the scenes of their former greatness; but these are no more to be compared to the parent horde, than is that attenuated bag of skin and bone, the 'Living Skeleton' to be put in competition with the flesh and blood carcase of 'Barclay and Perkins's drayman.'[54]

Far from the virile, barbaric race akin to the 'Scythian Nomades', the Norwood Gypsies are now presented as almost already extinct. Relegated to the world of hearsay by the author, whose 'I am told' abstracts the Gypsies from the world of verified facts, and described in ethereal terms as 'like unquiet spirits', the expiration of the Gypsies is presented as ongoing and inexorable; they already occupy the mystic, rumour-filled spaces that belong to mythic tribes. This narrative of extinction is enhanced by the comparison between the Gypsies of the nineteenth century and 'that attenuated bag of skin and bone, the "Living Skeleton"'. Here the image of atrophy embodies the process of extinction, and the enervation and decay that attend it. Indeed, while the eighteenth-century Gypsies are compared to a 'Barclay and Perkins's drayman', a metropolitan figure who was a byword for vigour, the contemporary Gypsy resembles a penny-gaff sideshow.[55] This also suggests that the appeal of the enfeebled Norwood Gypsies is no longer picturesque, but grotesque; they are no longer remarkable

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[51] Jerry White, *London in the Eighteenth Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (London: Bodley Head, 2012), p. 144.
[52] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers*, pp. 154-155.
[53] 'The Norwood Gypsies', p. 90.
[54] Ibid., p. 92.
[55] In 'London Draymen' (1841) the *London Saturday Journal* characterised the draymen of the brewer's Barclay and Perkins as particularly powerful: 'we went over the great establishment of Barclay, Perkins, and Co.; and certainly, while we saw much to wonder at, and much to admire, we reserved some of our admiration for the draymen […] Every thing connected with this most wonderful brewery is "stupendous" – stupendous buildings, stupendous vats, stupendous binns, stupendous stores, stupendous horses, and stupendous Draymen.' 'London Draymen', *London Saturday Journal*, 24 April 1841, pp. 193-194 (p. 194).

because of the wild way they live, but like the 'Living Skeleton', for the macabre way in which they remain alive. The extinction of the Gypsies is therefore marked by a physical and aesthetic degeneration, a pathology that was also deployed by journalists in the Victorian period – albeit less sympathetically.

At the beginning of 'The English Gypsies' the author relates their first encounter with a Gypsy encampment:

> The traveller who, with poetic fancies respecting the American Indians, first sees one wrapped up in his blanket in a log-hut tavern, can scarcely be more disappointed and mortified than the writer when he first saw a gypsy encampment […] familiar with their appearance from some of the numerous descriptions that our poets and novelists have given of them, he had fancied that there would be at least picturesque wildness in the aspect of a genuine gypsy encampment. There was this drawback to the appearance of the encampment alluded to – it was neither on a 'furze-clad common,' nor on the skirts of a wood, but on the sides of a narrow lane, which could scarcely be termed 'bosky.' The tents looked like dog-kennels, the men had a scowling aspect, the women seemed weather-beaten and miserable.[56]

Here picturesque expectations garnered from a literary tradition break down beneath the weight of reality as the pastoral encampment turns out to be makeshift slum. Making mock of a slightly tired poetic discourse, the article contrasts the illusive luxuriance of the 'furze-clad common' and 'bosky' wood with matter-of-fact reportage: the Gypsies' camp is precisely positioned at the 'sides' of the lane and the simile of the tents 'like dog-kennels' presents us not only with an image of squalor, but also gives us a sense of the tents' restricted dimensions. This sordid and aesthetically disappointing scene later becomes associated with racial degeneration, making us question how 'genuine' this Gypsy encampment really is. Strongly recalling the tents 'like dog-kennels', the author informs us how the Gypsies on the Scottish border 'intermarried' with 'sturdy and idle vagrants' to produce 'a race of mongrels', and similarly, that 'London is more frequented by mongrel and degenerate gypsies, and by mere imposters, than by those who still retain the lineaments of the tribe.'[57] The *Penny*'s alignment of the ethnic and the aesthetic is also expressed here by the word 'lineaments'; used primarily to mean 'distinctive features or characteristics' (i.e. racial markers), 'lineaments' in its original sense also means 'a delineation, diagram, outline, sketch'.[58] It therefore captures the idea that genetic purity is at heart an aesthetic issue.

'The Gipsies', a contemporaneous article published in the *London Saturday Journal*, adopts a similar stance. Here we are told that English Gypsies:

> Are still to be found, though in diminishing numbers, wandering here and there, and pitching their camps in rural places; and still there is to be seen in rural scenes […] 'the kettle slung,' as Cowper calls it, 'on two sticks transverse.' But an increasing

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[56] 'The English Gypsies', p. 17.
[57] Ibid., pp. 18-19.
[58] 'Lineament n.1.a and 2.b.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 12 April 2018].

> population, and a vigilant police, keep them subdued and dejected – the gipsies of England will probably soon waste away and disappear.

Although this article retains a commitment to the poetic vision of Gypsies painted by poets like Thomas Cowper, it nonetheless evokes this pastoral legacy in order to signal the collapse of their existence. It is significant that while the article identifies police interference as an infringement upon itinerant life, the disappearance of the Gypsies is nonetheless couched in terms of degeneration. Like the diminished population at Norwood likened to a 'Living Skeleton', these Gypsies will 'soon waste away' as if afflicted by a disease. This connection between extinction and racial weakness is reiterated later in the article when the *London Saturday Journal* states, 'in Great Britain [Gypsies] have greatly diminished, and those who still remain are but the dregs of the race.'[59] Once more we encounter the language of waste, which is used to imply that the Gypsies' picturesque wildness, their central place within 'rural scenes', has also been compromised.

'The Gipsies' and 'The English Gypsies' highlight that in the wake of Grellmann, whose opinions they both promote, concerns about the decline of the Gypsy race began to emerge. The narratives that recorded this deterioration were underwritten by two major assumptions. First, that it was a consequence of their licentiousness and their habit of interbreeding with vagrants. This was one of the 'savage' qualities for which they were notorious;[60] as *Sharpe's London Magazine* reports in 'Gipsies' (1848), 'the gipsy ranks […] have ever been swelled by the idle and dissolute of the communities near which they have sojourned', which has led to the creation of 'half-breed[s]' who do not belong to the 'pure sybilline race', but are closer to 'the mere wandering vagrant'.[61] Second, that the nineteenth-century Gypsies were the sad remnants of a populous and pastoral people. As we have seen, the picturesque tradition haunted the Gypsies' 'degraded' state; it was the first point of reference for journalists and was used to stand in for an authentic past. As a consequence of these factors, the historical narrative produced about Gypsies was rooted in racist suppositions and governed by an aesthetic trajectory. It is this that made their depiction in the Victorian period distinct from that of other itinerant traders, hawkers and entertainers who pursued similar lives on the road.

Those who wrote about 'vagabonds' tended to treat their subjects more leniently than those writing about Gypsies. Hawkers and tramping artisans were portrayed generously, and were often incorporated into wistful visions of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, where they belonged to a pre-railway era of ease, amusement and contemplation. As the

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[59] 'The Gipsies', p. 278.
[60] Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy*, p. 19; Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, p. 3.
[61] 'Gipsies', *Sharpe's London Magazine*, July 1848, pp. 169-172 (pp. 170-171).

narrator of George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) laments, 'leisure is gone – gone where the spinning-wheels are gone, and the pack-horses, and the slow waggons, and the pedlars who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons': all of these have been overturned by 'the great work of the steam-engine'.[62] Meanwhile, in 'Larry Lee the Pedlar' (1857), Edric Hewson's murder-mystery set 'rather more than a century ago', Lee is associated as much with convivial entertainment as he is with the 'treasures in his pack': he 'could sing a capital song', was 'abounding in jest and anecdote', and 'acted as a kind of human news-letter, conveying by word of mouth, the gossip and scandal of the day.'[63] This combination of performer and dealer is also brought vividly to life in *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions* (1865), a bestselling Christmas number of *All the Year Round*.[64] Mimicking the 'Cheap Jack style', Dickens's framing narrative captures all the flair of the pedlars' patter as Marigold rushes through his helter-skelter history.[65] Such celebratory depictions were by no means ubiquitous: 'Life Among the Vagabonds', for example, condemns the Cheap Jack 'who bawls and lies' and cheats villagers of their hard-earned wages. Nonetheless, itinerant traders generally remained free from such censure.

There are several possible reasons for this. The most obvious is that itinerant traders were not racially constructed. They originated from within and belonged to the settled population, albeit only peripherally, and therefore were not subject to the same powerful othering as Gypsies. In addition, although vagrants en masse were considered idle in this period, the travelling salesman or handicraft tramp could be perceived as industrious, whereas Gypsies, despite the fact that they engaged in the same occupations, were predominantly associated with the criminal trade of fortune telling. Finally, artisans and pedlars were not bound by the same literary legacy that hampered the narratives of Victorian Gypsies. Intensely imagined as a pastoral and nomadic people, contemporaries struggled to picture an alternative fate to extinction in an era where enclosures, railways and police legislation were causing a visible reduction in the rural population of Gypsies. As Nord observes:

> Even though London and its environs attracted the bulk of the Gypsy population, at least during the nineteenth century, Gypsies most often were cast in literary texts as pastoral figures, allied with an aesthetic of picturesque.[66]

Meanwhile, as we have already seen, those that were acknowledged to be in and around London were not considered 'genuine'. This conforms to a broader pattern of cultural

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[62] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Carol A. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 459.

[63] Edric Hewson, 'Larry Lee the Pedlar', *Sharpe's London Magazine*, January 1857, pp. 231-238 (p. 231).

[64] It sold 200,000 copies in its first few weeks. Melissa Valiska and Melisa Klimaszewski, 'Introduction', *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions,* ed. Melissa Valiska and Melisa Klimaszewski (London: Hesperus Press, 2007), pp. xi-xvi (p. xi).

[65] Charles Dickens, *Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions,* ed. Melissa Valiska and Melisa Klimaszewski (London: Hesperus Press, 2007), p. 15.

[66] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, p. 6.

misinterpretation identified by the social anthropologist Judith Okely. Discussing the ways in which Gypsiologists have been instrumental in producing toxic assumptions about Gypsies, she observes that in their work 'any cultural similarity between Gypsy and Giorgio is explained away and denigrated as "contamination"'.[67] This is the logic of Victorian journalists who, seeing Gypsies participate in a nationwide trend of urbanisation, interpreted this as a sign of corruption. Other itinerants, however, did not suffer from such a constipated tradition of representation.

Contemporaries recognised that as itinerant trades became less practicable in the country, pedlars and artisans migrated to cities. *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, a rival of the *Penny Magazine*, and a competitor for the same working-class readership, portrayed 'The Umbrella Pedler [*sic*]' (1851) as a thoroughly metropolitan type.[68] This one-time rustic, whom Dickens clubs together with the chair-mender and knife-grinder, does good business in foul weather at the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall and Cremone, where he sells his stock to the 'thousands of callow Cockneys' caught out in the rain. Indeed, 'the trade in second-hand umbrellas', we are told, 'is one which is very industriously pursued in every part of the metropolis', and chiefly consists of hawking. In addition, like the Gypsies who sold pegs and skewers wholesale, these artisans are also engaged to larger retailers, for whom they repair umbrellas at a rate of 'two shillings per dozen'.[69] Free from aesthetic expectations, *Chambers's* presents the umbrella-mender as a resourceful and adaptive figure who belongs very much to the mid-century cityscape. A similar example of the urbanised itinerant is the book-hawker, or 'literary packman', as the *Leisure Hour* calls him.

Reminiscing about the early nineteenth century in a manner similar to Eliot, the author of 'Literary "Packmen"' (1860) observes:

> The profession of the pedlar, or travelling packman, has dwindled down to comparative insignificance since the days when pack-horses were an institution in this country. We have made most marvellous changes since then – from a plodding jade of a horse […] at the rate of twenty miles a day, to a train of twenty or thirty baggage vans, each loaded with its six or seven tons, and following the great iron horse at the rate of twenty or thirty miles an hour.[70]

This introduction of the railway has caused the demise of the 'literary packman', who up until the 1820s pursued a 'profitable trade in book-hawking' in hamlets, villages and small market towns that had no other source of literature. Now, however, the trade has become defunct, and 'the most characteristic literary hawker of the present day is the trash packman of London'. The shift from the 'literary packman' of the early nineteenth century to the 'trash packman' of

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[67] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, p. 10.
[68] Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, pp. 21-24.
[69] 'The Umbrella Pedler', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 16 August 1851, pp. 102-104 (p. 102).
[70] 'Literary "Packmen"', *Leisure Hour*, 5 April 1860, pp. 212-214 (p. 212).

1860 might suggest a narrative of degeneration akin to that of the Gypsies. This is certainly the case in terms of the literary quality of his goods: whereas the 'literary packman' traded in the 'English Classics', the 'trash packman' deals in 'cheap serial literature'. To prevent misunderstanding, however, the article assures us that 'nothing derogatory is signified by the word "trash"', and that it is but a trade term. Indeed, the image we are given of the trash packman is one of lively industry; he is depicted as 'unwearied and punctual […] pelting along on his route, laden with the ponderous reams' that he sells wholesale to retailers of sweets, trinkets and tobacco.[71]

Itinerant pedlars and hawkers, then, enjoyed a more hopeful prognosis than their Gypsy counterparts. This was because they were more ambiguous; less susceptible to racial construction; and, as a consequence, had a less proscribed future. In addition, the literary burden of pedlars was much lighter. Admittedly, the travel writer Robert Heron claimed that hawkers possessed 'habits of reflection and of sublime contemplation', and this in turn influenced William Wordsworth's construction of the 'venerable Armytage', the philosophic pedlar who tells the tale of 'The Ruined Cottage' (1814).[72] Such a representation, however, never became a mainstay of English literature; pedlars were never monotonously depicted as fulfilling this sagacious role. Meanwhile, authors generally presented Gypsies as either picturesque or as having been picturesque. George Borrow, however, was an exception to this rule, which makes his work worthy of attention. As we shall see, although Borrow engaged with the picturesque presentation of both Gypsies and other itinerants, the texts that he produced subvert, manipulate and confound this aesthetic schema.

George Borrow

George Borrow was a writer, missionary and philologist, and is credited with being Britain's first Gypsiologist.[73] His two-volume study *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (1841) established Borrow's expertise, and reveals that he was receptive to the popular theories pioneered by Grellmann. Here he acknowledges that philological studies of the Romani dialects found in Germany, Hungary and England have led to 'the establishment of the fact, that the Gypsies of those countries are the descendants of a tribe of Hindus'. In addition, like his contemporaries writing for the periodical press, he was also convinced that the English Gypsies were destined for extinction: 'the English Gypsies at the present day are

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[71] 'Literary "Packmen"', pp. 213-214.

[72] Robert Heron quoted by Celeste Langan *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; repr. 2006), p. 256. On Heron's influence on Wordsworth see, Langan, pp. 256-258.

[73] Behlmer, 'The Gypsy Problem', pp. 239-243; Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, pp. 156-162; Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, pp. 7-8.

far from being a numerous race', he wrote, 'it is probable that, ere the conclusion of the present century, they will have entirely disappeared.'[74] Borrow's writings, then, were influenced by, and contributed to, many of the beliefs that shaped the representation of Gypsies in the early Victorian period. However, they were also informed by a detailed knowledge of the itinerant economy, and the ways in which Gypsies and 'vagabonds' coexisted on the roads. I argue that this nuanced Borrow's depictions of vagrant life in ways that have thus far been overlooked by his critics.

Although he often capitalised on his reputation as an authority on Gypsies, Borrow was a keen observer of itinerants in general. In *Romano Lavo-lil: Word-Book of the Romany* (1874) he included an account of his 1866 visit to Kirk Yetholm, a famous Gypsy village in Scotland. In this formal version of his venture he claims that he went 'hunting after Gypsies whom I could not find'.[75] However, as his expeditionary notebook makes clear, while his purpose may have been to track down Gypsies, his interest extended to all vagrants. On the 18 July he recorded that he was overtaken by a 'man who had a pack on his back – [a] scotch pedlar'; on the 21 July he noted a pair of balladeers, a 'vagabond and girl, regular tramps, singing before the door' of a hotel; and on the 2 August a 'vagrant weaver'.[76] These splinters of observation, which remain unexplored within the notebook, speak of an instinctive urge to record such figures. It is also significant that Borrow reflexively noted their occupations. As he revealed in his travelogue *Wild Wales* (1862), the itinerant economy was of particular interest to him. While recalling his 1854 tour of that principality, Borrow makes repeated reference to the displacement of the Gypsies by Irish tramps. Prompted by some scorch marks on the roadside, the signs of a recent encampment, Borrow's Welsh guide, John Jones, informs him that 'the Gwyddelod [Irish] made their appearance in these parts about twenty years ago, and since then the Gipsiaid [Gypsies] have been rarely seen.' These Irish migrants have not only taken over the Gypsies' campsites, but also their traditional occupations: 'the men tinker a little, sir', Jones explains, and 'the women tell fortunes'. This is confirmed by Bosvile, a Gypsy that Borrow meets on the road to Birmingham, retreating from the 'woild Irish': 'the fellows underwork me at tinkering, and the women outscream my wife at telling fortunes', he laments, 'what can a poor little Roman family do but flee away before them?'[77] One reason why Borrow was at pains to detail this economic shift was because his interest in itinerants was at once artistic and occupational.

[74] George Borrow, *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*, 9th edn (London: John Murray, 1901; repr. 1907), pp. 316, 32.

[75] George Borrow, *Romano Lavo-lil: Word-Book of the Romany* (London: John Murray, 1874), p. 314.

[76] George Borrow, *George Borrow's Tour of Galloway and the Borders 1866*, ed. Angus Fraser (Wallingford: Lavengro Press, 2015), pp. 11, 16, 29.

[77] George Borrow, *Wild Wales: Its People, Language and Scenery* (London: Collins, 1965), pp. 78, 479.

Like many of his peers, Borrow depicted rural vagrancy as a picturesque mode of living. However, he also sporadically took part in the itinerant economy himself, and this gave him an insight into functional forms of vagrancy that were not shared by many of his contemporaries. Although he was deliberately evasive about much of his life, especially the so-called 'veiled years' between 1824 and 1833, it is nonetheless easy to surmise that during his twenties and thirties he spent some time on tramp, pursuing various trades on the road. This is most clearly evinced in the texts I discuss below, his picaresque autobiographies *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), where he gives a detailed account of his life as a tinker and horse trader during the late 1820s. But his itinerant experience is a theme that emerges in his other works as well. In *The Zincali* his recollections of Gypsy encounters are bound up with a tramping past: for example, he notes that in Italy he met a band of Hungarian Gypsies while resting 'at nightfall by the side of a kiln', a snug refuge from the 'piercingly cold' air.[78] Later, in his travelogue *The Bible in Spain* (1843), he depicted a more prosperous itinerant existence. Between 1835 and 1840 Borrow was engaged by the British and Foreign Bible Society to print and distribute a Spanish New Testament on the Iberian Peninsula. In the process, he became something of a hawker as he travelled from village to village, selling copies of the Testament to the Spanish peasantry. When he returned to the major cities, where he kept his stock of Bibles, he employed locals to peddle these books on his behalf: in Lisbon, for example, he hired 'colporteurs' – or literary packmen – 'to hawk the books about the streets'.[79]

While *The Zincali* established Borrow as a Gypsy-fancier, *The Bible in Spain* made him a household name. In its first year alone it sold nearly twenty thousand copies, underwent numerous reprints, and went on to become the first book in John Murray III's 'Colonial and Home Library', a collection of popular works published in cheap editions. Borrow's next book, *Lavengro*, did not fare so well. Slow to sell, it took John Murray eighteen years to rid himself of the 3,000 copies that formed the first edition.[80] Although *Lavengro* and its sequel *The Romany Rye* went on to become popular texts in the early twentieth century, they divided critics and proved unappetising to the book-buying public. One reason for this was the intensely pictorial and fragmentary nature of the work: as Ann M. Ridler argues, 'it needed […] Cubism in painting and Modernism in literature to begin to habituate some of the public

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[78] Borrow, *The Zincali*, p. 11.

[79] George Borrow, *The Bible in Spain; or, the Journeys, Adventures, and Imprisonments of an Englishman in an Attempt to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula*, ed. Ulick Ralph Burke (London: John Murray, 1905; repr. 1928), p. 16.

[80] Michael Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 179-183, 209-210; David Williams, *A World of his Own: The Double Life of George Borrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. ix.

to the idea of a multivalent, multi-faceted portrait image' of the kind Borrow produced.[81] A review of *Lavengro* published in the *Athenaeum* speaks to this, complaining that the 'long-talked of biography' (it had been prematurely advertised in 1848 and 1849) could 'scarcely be called a book at all: – being more like a portfolio of sketches'.[82] Other critics, however, welcomed this pictorialism. In an otherwise condemnatory review, *Fraser's Magazine* complimented Borrow on his 'vivid' and 'picturesque' style, while the *New Monthly Magazine* compared him to Michaelangelo and Raphael, and praised the manner in which 'every sketch is lightly touched, and with a master's hand'.[83] This formal aspect of *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, their sketch-like quality, also governed their later critical reception.

The picturesque vignettes that form the autobiographies have been consistently interpreted as signs of Borrow's nostalgia. Ian Duncan argues that Borrow's England is 'pre-modern, pre-industrial, unreformed and unenclosed'; Monika Mazurek likewise notes that he presents 'a nostalgic image of Georgian England'; and, according to Houghton-Walker, Borrow populates this landscape with a 'nostalgic, romanticized gypsy form'.[84] Such claims do not bear up under scrutiny. Although Borrow did not chronicle the rural poverty of the 1820s in the manner of William Cobbett, his England is still far from bucolic. Of particular concern to Borrow, as we might expect, are the socio-economic changes that threaten certain itinerant trades. In *The Romany Rye*, Borrow articulates these anxieties through his Gypsy companion Jasper Petulengro, who frets over the ways in which his livelihood will be compromised. In an anachronistic reference to the professionalisation of the rural police force, which only commenced in 1839, Jasper first relates how: 'all the old-fashioned good-tempered constables are going to be set aside, and a paid body of men to be established, who are not to permit a tramper or vagabond on the roads of England.' And if this were not bad enough, he goes on to disclose the whisperings that he has heard about the railway, an invention that will:

> Set aside all the old roads, which in a little time would be ploughed up, and sowed with corn, and cause all England to be laid down with iron roads, on which people would go thundering along in vehicles, pushed forward by fire and smoke.

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[81] Ann M. Ridler, *George Borrow as a Linguist: Images and Contexts* (Wallingford: A. M. Ridler, 1996), p. 413; also see, Monika Mazurek, 'George Borrow: The Scholar, The Gipsy, The Priest', *Victorian Fiction Beyond the Canon*, ed. Daragh Downes and Trish Ferguson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 71-86 (pp. 73-74).
[82] Collie, *George Borrow*, pp. 196-197; 'Lavengro: The Scholar – the Gypsy – the Priest', *Athenaeum*, 8 Februrary 1851, pp. 159-160 (p. 159).
[83] 'Lavengro – "The Master of Words"', *Fraser's Magazine*, March 1851, pp. 272-283 (p. 280); 'Borrow and Lavengro', *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1851, pp. 455-461 (p. 455).
[84] Ian Duncan, 'Wild England: George Borrow's Nomadology', *Victorian Studies*, 41.3 (1998), 381-403 (p. 391); Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy*, pp. 12-13; Mazurek, 'George Borrow', p. 75.

In this apocalyptic vision of universal enclosure, where all the 'old roads' have been turned into corn fields, the only spaces that Jasper might occupy are the dangerous 'iron roads', where he foresees 'my tent being overturned by a flying vehicle; my wife's leg injured; and all my affairs put into great confusion.'[85] Such a prediction, while comic in its naive literalism, is a symbolic rendering of a socio-economic fact: that the railways will displace the Gypsies.

Borrow's England, then, is uneasy – pregnant with incipient change. Moreover, although the laws, technologies and enclosures that Jasper fears are yet to be implemented, they belong to a succession of similar efforts: as Borrow reminds us later in *The Romany Rye*, the downfall of the highwaymen, 'the heroes of the road', was a result of 'the inclosure of many a wild heath in the country' and the establishment 'of a well-armed mounted patrol'.[86] The difficulties that the Gypsies face, then, are the product of a concerted historical effort to exert control over the English landscape and its people. As a consequence, nineteenth-century England does not exist *before* a fundamental change, but is already in the *midst* of that change. This outlook can also be detected in Borrow's presentation of Gypsies. As Nord argues, throughout *Lavengro* and its sequel Borrow 'neither makes a fetish of [the Gypsies] allegedly primitive way of life nor romanticizes their pristine associations with an older, rural Englishness.' Proof of this is his depiction of them as subject to historical forces, which distinguishes him 'from those who persisted in regarding the Gypsies as frozen in time, an indelible reminder of a forgotten age.'[87] But Borrow's awareness of the pressures that Gypsies faced was not just historical; it was also aesthetic. Although he engages with the picturesque representation of Gypsies, he does not produce a 'romanticized gypsy form', as Houghton-Walker argues. Instead, his descriptions are often the very moments when he is at his most critically aware, not only of the England he is depicting, but also of the ways in which writers interpret it. Indeed, in his descriptions of Gypsies and other itinerant classes, Borrow repeatedly ironises the picturesque, and highlights the slippage between fact and fantasy.

Lavengro and the Picturesque

In opening chapters of *Lavengro*, Borrow recounts his childhood, growing up in the Napoleonic Wars. His father, Thomas Borrow, was a Captain in the West Norfolk Militia, and

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[85] George Borrow, *The Romany Rye* (London: Heron Books, 1970), pp. 38-39.
[86] Ibid., pp. 145-146.
[87] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, pp. 93-95.

his family followed 'the "route" of the regiment'.[88] In *Lavengro* it is not long before the soldiers come to Norman Cross in Huntingdonshire, where they are employed guarding a prisoner of war camp. While the regiment keeps watch, Borrow wanders across the 'flat and somewhat fenny' countryside, 'a district more of pasture than agriculture, and not very thickly inhabited' (24). It is within this wilderness that he meets an anonymous vagrant viper-catcher and herbalist, who 'do[es] not live in this neighbourhood in particular' but 'travel[s] about' (26). He is described as follows:

> I frequently passed a tall elderly individual, dressed in rather a quaint fashion, with a skin cap on his head and stout gaiters on his legs; on his shoulders hung a moderate sized leathern sack; he seemed fond of loitering near sunny banks, and of groping amidst furze and low scrubby bramble bushes, of which there were plenty in the neighbourhood of Norman Cross. (25)

Borrow's description of this figure is picturesque. The 'stout gaiters' point to a roaming life on fen and marshland, and the 'skin cap' – perhaps a poaching trophy – suggests wild and lawless habits. Indeed, it might even remind us of Matthew Arnold's Peran Wisa, the savage Tartar from *Sohrab and Rustum* (1853) who wears a 'skin cap, | Black, glossy, curl'd'.[89] Meanwhile, Borrow's description of his idle 'loitering' beside the 'sunny banks' speaks of a leisurely and pastoral existence that chimes with the uncultivated and sparsely populated landscape. This pastoral interpretation of the trapper intensifies when they become better acquainted, and we are given further details about his life:

> He generally carried a viper with him which he had made quite tame, and from which he had extracted the poisonous fangs; it would dance and perform tricks. He was fond of telling me anecdotes connected with his adventures with the reptile species. (27)

Recalling Doctor Marigold or Larry Lee, the itinerant is associated with entertainment as much – if not more – than his trade. Instead of exploiting natural resources for monetary gain, the viper-catcher converts them into an amusing but profitless distraction. And instead of always grubbing away in the bush, he takes time to gossip; just as he 'seemed fond of loitering' he is also 'fond of telling me anecdotes'. Disporting in the wilderness, idleness is the vagrant's mode; this is certainly a figure that would belong in 'a nostalgic image of Georgian England'. However, the conversations between Borrow and the hunter undermine this picturesque image, opening up ironies within Borrow's description.

The discrepancies between Borrow's perspective and that of the viper-catcher are swift to emerge. For example, when Borrow first sees him thrust a viper into his leathern sack he describes it as 'far from empty', and yet, we are more or less immediately told by the

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[88] George Borrow, *Lavengro* (London: Heron Books, 1969), p. 13. Furthur references to *Lavengro* will be made to this edition and in the text.

[89] Matthew Arnold, *Sohrab and Rustum*, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold,* ed. Miriam Allott, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1979) pp. 319-355 (ll. 100-1).

hunter that vipers 'are getting scarce, though this used to be a great neighbourhood for them' (26). Similarly, the single anecdote he relates about 'his adventures with the reptile species', which concerns an encounter with 'the king of the vipers' (27), is only elicited by Borrow's incessant questioning; far from being eager with the tale, the hunter explicitly states, 'I don't like talking about the matter' (27). Finally, it becomes apparent that although Borrow depicts him as living a life of ease, the livelihood of the viper-catcher is far from secure. Reflecting on his age and his inability to continue in his trade, the hunter informs Borrow: 'I must shortly give up this business, I am no longer the man I was, I am become timid, and when a person is timid in viper-hunting he had better leave off' (27). By the end of this episode Borrow's pastoral vision has broken down, and in its place is an image of hardship that begins to resonate with Wordsworth's description of an itinerant leech-gatherer: 'From Pond to Pond he roamed, from moor to moor, | Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance'.[90]

Itinerant life was precarious at all times, but for herbalists or 'simplers', like the viper-catcher and leech-gatherer, this was perhaps especially true at the turn of the nineteenth century when Borrow and Wordsworth report encountering them. There is an obvious symmetry between these figures, both of whom are elderly vagrants whose grip seems to falter on a failing trade; the leech-gatherer also complains that 'Once I could meet with [leeches] on every side; | But they have dwindled long by slow decay'.[91] Although Duncan and George Hyde suggest that Borrow's trapper is patterned on the leech-gatherer, their similarities might also be rooted in a shared historical reality.[92] In 1817, a few years after Borrow's scene is set, the antiquarian John Thomas Smith chose to include William Friday in his *Vagabondiana*, a pictorial record of the vanishing beggars of London. Friday, as Smith observes, illustrates that 'the environs produce characters equally curious with those of London, particularly among that order of people called Simplers'; these rustics 'supply the city-markets with physical [i.e. medicinal] herbs' and are 'alternately snail-picker, leech-bather, and viper catcher.'[93] Neither a Londoner nor one of the 'mendicant wanderers' that Smith initially seeks to document, it is telling that Friday is included among his departing beggars, because it signals that he and his fellow simplers are likewise endangered. No doubt their chief threat came from the building of suburbs – London's bourgeois spread – which as Jerry White relates, ate up the squatters' wastes that surrounded the capital in the early

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[90] William Wordsworth, 'Resolution and Independence', *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 260-264 (ll. 110-111).

[91] Ibid., ll. 131-132.

[92] Duncan, 'Wild England', p. 391; George Hyde, 'Borrow and the Vanity of Dogmatising: "Lavengro" as Self-portrait', *Cambridge Quarterly,* 32.2 (2003), 161–173 (p. 164).

[93] John Thomas Smith, *Vagabondiana; or, Anecdotes of Mendicant Wanderers Through the Streets of London: with Portraits of the Most Remarkable, Drawn from the Life by John Thomas Smith, Keeper of the Prints in the British Museum* (London: [n.pub], 1817), p. 44.

nineteenth century. Choked with weeds and bordered by mud-banks, these would have once provided a rich supply of resources for the herbalist.[94]

Similar environmental changes endanger the viper-catcher. It is significant that Borrow's encounter occurs in Huntingdonshire, a county whose fenland was improved and drained in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[95] Although in 'The Fens of England' (1854) *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* welcomed the drainage of such 'fenny waste', claiming that its only inhabitants are 'frogs and moorhens', in fact the livelihood of some trappers depended on these wild spaces.[96] Drainage necessarily altered the ecosystem of the fens, destroying the conditions that allowed many species to successfully breed. Although Borrow does not directly address this issue, it is reasonable to assume that the viper-hunter's complaint that the snakes 'are getting scarce' is an allusion to it. However, while the disruption of Borrow's picturesque vision allows social concerns to bubble to the surface, he was nonetheless primarily concerned with critiquing the manner in which itinerants were portrayed. As we have seen in the periodicals, the authenticity of Gypsies in particular was determined by whether they fulfilled the aesthetic expectations of Giorgio commentators. Borrow challenges this practice here by highlighting the simple fact that the picturesque is a question of perspective; it is superimposed on the itinerant from without. This critique becomes further nuanced in *Lavengro* when Borrow recalls his first encounter with Gypsies. In this episode the gulf between romance and realism is fully realised as Borrow engages with, and actively refutes, the pastoral tropes used to depict (and define) Gypsy life.

Still residing at Norman Cross after the viper-catcher's departure, Borrow recalls his discovery of a Gypsy camp:

> One day it happened that, being on my rambles, I entered a green lane which I had never seen before; at first it was rather narrow, but as I advanced it became considerably wider; in the middle was a drift-way with deep ruts, but right and left was a space carpeted with a sward of trefoil and clover; there was no lack of trees, chiefly ancient oaks, which, flinging out their arms from either side, nearly formed a canopy, and afforded a pleasing shelter from the rays of the sun, which was burning fiercely above. Suddenly a group of objects attracted my attention. Beneath the largest of the trees upon the grass, was a kind of low tent or booth, from the top of which a thin smoke was curling; beside it stood a couple of light carts, whilst two or three lean horses or ponies were cropping the herbage which was growing nigh. (30)

The scene depicted here is burdened with the kind of tired poetic clichés that were derided in 'The English Gypsies'. The familiar location of the 'green lane', the pastoralism of the ground 'carpeted with a sward', and the natural arbour formed 'chiefly [of] ancient oaks' would have seemed hackneyed to contemporaries. To some readers, they no doubt felt

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[94] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 67-77.

[95] H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956; repr. 1968), p. 242.

[96] 'The Fens of England', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 18 November 1854, pp. 321-324 (pp. 321-322).

familiar from Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* (1824-32), an extremely popular series of 122 essays, vignettes and tales of rural life: its first volume went into fourteen editions in eleven years, while the fifth (and last) sold out on the day of its publication.[97] In the second volume Mitford included a sketch entitled 'The Old Gipsy'. Here the narrator, much like Borrow, ventures down a 'seldom-trodden path' and eventually comes to 'a little green' where she finds a group of Gypsies who 'had pitched their tent under one of the oak trees': 'it was a pretty picture', she notes, 'its rich woodiness, its sunshine, its verdure, the light smoke curling from the fire'.[98] Perhaps without Mitford in mind, Borrow mirrors this encounter, which as Houghton-Walker observes, is itself 'structured according to traditions and clichés'.[99] The setting in the remote green lane studded with oaks, the tent under the trees, and the smoke 'curling' from the fire are all held in common.

However, here the similarities end. As the narrator of 'The Old Gipsy' looks on at the encampment, she describes it in terms of a static tableaux: there is 'an old crone, in a tattered red cloak', 'a pretty black-eyed girl', a 'sun-burnt urchin', and another, 'slender lad […] basking in the sun […] in all the joy of idleness'.[100] Each figure is easily seen from outside of the camp, and can be immediately identified as a stereotype that belongs to the poetic Gypsy scene. Indeed, the comparison that the narrator draws between the matriarchal crone and Walter Scott's Meg Merrilies suggests that literary depictions of Gypsies are not only accurate, but can become an able substitute for actual experience, enabling the reader to successfully negotiate real-life engagements. Borrow's encounter is far more unsettling. Instead of being able to espy the occupants from a distance, he has to 'advance[] till I was close' in order to see the Gypsies, in this case a husband and wife (30). He is therefore within the circumference of the camp before he lays eyes on them, and once he does he is forced into a rapid retreat as they come 'rushing out upon me' (30). At a glance, he sees that the woman has 'dark and swarthy' skin 'like that of a toad', and is dressed in unbecoming rags: 'her bosom was but half concealed by a slight boddice [*sic*]', we are told (31). Meanwhile, the man is a 'figure equally wild': 'his frame was long and lathy, but his arms were remarkably short, his neck was rather bent, he squinted slightly, and his mouth was much awry' (31). In contrast to Mitford's static frieze, Borrow presents us with a scene full of wild motion and charged with potential violence. By drawing near the Gypsies, Borrow exposes the threat that they might pose and their appearance under closer inspection. While the 'tattered red cloak' might look pretty from afar, the ragged bodice is irredeemably seedy. Similarly, although the

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[97] Kevin A. Morrison, 'Foregrounding Nationalism: Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village* and the Effects of Publication Context', *European Romantic Review*, 19.3 (2008), 275-287 (p. 276).
[98] Mary Russell Mitford, 'The Old Gipsy', *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery*, 2 vols (London: George Bell, 1876), I, pp. 436-444 (p. 438).
[99] Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy*, pp. 41-44.
[100] Mitford, 'The Old Gipsy', p. 438.

man is 'long and lathy', not unlike the lounging 'slender lad', in fact his body proves a crabbed and truncated vehicle. Such Gypsies form a grotesque version of the picturesque in which the wild ruggedness native to that aesthetic is pushed to comic and feral extremes: rags become eye-sores; olive skins turn to toad hides; and languid bodies are twisted up into something faintly ogreish.

The uncomfortable absurdity of the Gypsies is exaggerated throughout the remainder of Borrow's confrontation. At first, the Gypsy woman suggests murdering him: 'I'll drown him in the sludge in the toad-pond over the hedge' (31), she tells her misshapen partner. However, as soon as he reveals his tame snake, a gift from the viper-catcher, they begin to worship him as 'a goblin – a devilkin' (35). He swiftly disabuses them of this notion, but nonetheless, when they discover that he can read, they insist that he should go with them: 'be our God Almighty, or at any rate our clergyman', the woman wheedles, 'live in a tilted cart by yourself and say prayers to us night and morning' (35). Here, it is of course ironic that a people renowned for fortune telling, and thereby playing on the credulity of others, should be so superstitious themselves; this is part of Borrow's effort to ridicule the picturesque, which would portray Gypsies as all-knowing and all-seeing: a 'pure sybilline race', in the words of *Sharpe's London Magazine*. Just as he constructs and then disrupts an idyllic vision of the viper-hunter's life, so Borrow upsets the stereotypical Gypsy encampment. By portraying their violence, volatility and ugliness he attempts to dispel the Gypsy dream, and to expose the gulf between pastoral clichés and raw reality. In this way, Borrow is engaged in the same aesthetic endeavour as Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), a novel that contains perhaps the most famous Gypsy encounter in Victorian literature.

Clever, spirited, but chronically misunderstood, Maggie Tulliver runs away to join the Gypsies on Dunlow Common. Having been 'so often told she was like a gypsy' by her mother, she naturally assumes that they will 'gladly receive her'. She even believes that they might make her their Queen because of her book learning and 'superior knowledge'. However, once she reaches their shabby camp, 'a little semicircular black tent' pitched on the verge of a lane, her romantic 'picture of gypsy life' undergoes a dramatic reversal. Having had her pockets riffled, and observed the dirt and discomfort in which they live, Maggie begins to believe that 'they meant perhaps to kill her', and that the 'fierce-eyed' Gypsy patriarch is 'the devil' himself. This melodramatic reading of the Gypsies, in which the fairy tale of adoption collapses into an equally fantastical nightmare, is a product of Maggie's 'active imagination'.[101] In a bathetic conclusion, one of the Gypsies takes her home, hoping for half a crown.

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[101] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. A. S. Byatt (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 112-120.

Eliot's portrayal of a child's encounter with Gypsies is an exemplification of the argument made in her essay 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856); that the bourgeois mind is still 'under the influence of idyllic literature', and that as a consequence peasants – or in this case itinerants – are constantly misrepresented in artistic and literary works.[102] Maggie, although still a girl, possesses this mentality. Her 'picture of gypsy life' is a result of the same middle-class instincts that inform her resolve to teach 'the gypsies to use a washing-basin'.[103] It is even tempting to see this episode as a riposte to *Lavengro*, and to imagine that Borrow was one of the writers who Eliot deemed a pernicious influence on the public for idealising the poor.[104] After all, Maggie's belief that her literacy will prove a source of prestige, and her unfounded fear that the Gypsies mean to murder her, both belong to the reality of the boy Borrow. Whether Eliot knew *Lavengro* or not is a point of speculation, although it is a tantalizing possibility given that she was familiar with his earlier work. During the three and a half years in which she researched and wrote her dramatic poem *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), *The Zincali* became a key resource.[105] Later, she referred to it in *Middlemarch* (1871-72), describing the idiotic young Cranch as 'squinting, as if he did it with design, like the gypsies when Borrow read the New Testament to them'.[106] But to see Maggie's adventure as a realistic reworking of *Lavengro* risks misinterpreting Borrow, and missing the fact that these authors, at least to some extent, shared an aesthetic agenda.

The opening scenes of *Lavengro* serve to establish a trend that runs through both of Borrow's autobiographies. Although he presents itinerant life in idyllic terms, it is often with a view of overturning this sentiment. When confronted by the tear-stained Slingsby family, for example, who have been forced off their tinker's beat by a rival brazier, he launches into a paean on the tinker's existence: what could be finer, he wonders, than 'pitching your tent under the pleasant hedge-rows, listening to the song of the feathered tribes' (344). However, having bought Slingsby's equipage, and become a tinker himself, it is not long before these enthusiasms become dulled and ironised. After spending several days making horseshoes and mending kettles, he admits that he was grimy with the 'squalor produced by my late hard life' (382), and in a similar vein, having found a place to encamp in a dingle, he records:

> I will not say that I was awakened in the morning by the carolling of birds, as I
> perhaps might if I were writing a novel; I awoke because, to use vulgar language, I

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[102] George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. A. S. Byatt (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 107-139 (p. 109).
[103] Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, p. 116.
[104] Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', pp. 110-111.
[105] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, p. 121; Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), p. 292.
[106] George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (London: Penguin, 1994; repr. 2003), p. 305. On the origin of this reference see, Ann M. Ridler, 'George Eliot and George Borrow – A Note on Middlemarch', *George Eliot – George Henry Lewes Newsletter*, 5 (1984), 3-4.

> had slept my sleep out, not because the birds were carolling around me in numbers, as they probably had been for hours without my hearing them. (355)

Here Borrow's insistence that 'the carolling of birds' was a matter of indifference to him jars with his original conception of the tinker's life: what of 'the feathered tribes'? we might ask. By the time Borrow leaves the dingle in *The Romany Rye* this disjunction between fantasy and reality has not only become a meaningful aesthetic critique on the portrayal of itinerancy, but has also become a shaping force in Borrow's narrative of his own development. Deliberating how to proceed, he contemplates his options:

> Had I not better become in reality what I had hitherto been merely playing at – a tinker or a gypsy? But I soon saw that I was not fitted to become either in reality. It was much more agreeable to play the gypsy or the tinker than to become either in reality. I had seen enough of gypsying and tinkering to be convinced of that.[107]

It is easy to imagine Borrow's vagrants as victims: victims of enclosure, technology and police interference; even the picturesque, an aesthetic that defines and distorts itinerant life, is coercive. But the Gypsies, hawkers and handicraft tramps in *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye* are also active agents who resist the settled community. The Gypsy couple that Borrow meets as a child are counterfeiters, engaged in making 'bad money' (32). In doing so, they leach the value from the currency on which capitalism relies, and compromise the latticework of payments, debts and investments that keeps British commerce in motion. Forgery of this kind is parasitical, but it is also an act of protest that opposes the system that enabled industrialisation and the spread of the railways. Acts of self-interested resistance such as this are also evident in *The Romany Rye*, in which we are introduced to Old Fulcher, an itinerant basket-maker who travels among 'gypsies and trampers, and all kinds of strange characters.' As his name suggests, Old Fulcher is a filcher: 'besides being an industrious basket-maker, [he] was an out-and-out thief'. In particular, he targets the natural produce grown by landowners: we are told that he organised 'a fruit robbery' in 'a gentleman's garden'; 'stole [a] carp' belonging to 'a melancholy gentleman'; and that he 'went to an osier car in order to steal some osiers for his basket-making', which was rented by 'a young gentleman, a great hand for preserving game'.[108] Although Borrow does not acknowledge it, these thefts have a political significance: they dismiss the claims made by the landowning classes to fish, fruit and willows growing on their land. Crimes such as these deny the logic of enclosure by asserting (however silently) that natural resources belong to all, not just to the elite. The radical importance of these political acts becomes particularly evident in representations of the vagrant poacher, a highly contested figure in the 1840s.

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[107] Borrow, *The Romany Rye,* p. 83.
[108] Ibid., pp. 258-260.

Chapter 2: Poachers

Mary Russell Mitford's 'The Old Gipsy' (1826) first appeared in the *Monthly Magazine*, a periodical that specialised in short fiction.[1] It was one of two stories published in January and February 1826, both of which dealt with the same Gypsy encampment. Where the first number relates the antics of the sly 'old crone', its sequel – 'The Young Gipsy' – turns to the matriarch's granddaughter – 'pretty black-eyed' Fanny. Full of maternal concern for her younger brother, Fanny is eager to 'have a house over him in the cold winter nights', and sets about finding employment for him in the village. Eventually, she places him with the upright Thomas Lamb, 'my lord's head gamekeeper', who is responsible for protecting the pheasants, hares, and partridges that live on his master's estate. Such official duties, however, are neglected once he falls in love with Fanny, and begins to overlook the nightly predations of her other brother, Dick, who ransacks his coveys. This sign of the keeper's infatuation becomes the cause of gentle mirth at the end of the tale when Lamb petitions the magistrate for 'a summons for some poachers': 'how can you expect', quips the gleeful magistrate, 'to keep your pheasants, when that gipsy boy with his finders [dogs] has pitched his tent just in the midst of your best coppices?'[2] This figure of the poaching Gypsy would have been familiar to Mitford's readers. During the eighteenth century Gypsies had become strongly associated with poaching, so much so that being caught in their company could lead to the serious charge of night poaching.[3] Such assumptions were maintained well into the nineteenth century.

Writing in the mid-Victorian period, the journalist and naturalist Richard Jefferies recorded the cat-and-mouse routine played by gamekeepers and Gypsies. In *The Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), a collection of essays detailing the delicate ecosystem of the preserves, and the woodcraft needed to sustain them, he captures the frustrations that keepers experienced while trying to patrol their estates.

> The gipsies, who travel the road in caravans, give him endless trouble; they are adepts at poaching, and each van is usually accompanied by a couple of dogs. The movements of these people are so irregular that it is impossible to be always ready for them. […] Under pretence of cutting skewer-wood, often called dog-wood, which

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[1] Kenneth Curry, 'The Monthly Magazine', *British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836*, ed. Alvin Sillivan, 4 vols (London: Greenwood Press, 1983-86), II, pp. 314-319; Signed under 'M', Mitford's stories appeared in the following issues: M., 'An Old Gipsy: A Village Sketch', *Monthly Magazine*, January 1826, pp. 13-17; M., 'The Young Gipsy: A Village Sketch', *Monthly Magazine*, February 1826, pp. 129-134.

[2] Mary Russell Mitford, 'The Young Gipsy', *Our Village: Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery*, 2 vols (London: George Bell, 1876), I, pp. 449-458 (pp. 453-454, 457).

[3] Donna Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside: Hunting, Walking and Ecology in English Literature, 1671-1831* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 82; also see, Sarah Houghton-Walker, *Representations of the Gypsy in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 24.

> they split and sharpen for the butchers, they wander across the open downs where it grows, camping in wild, unfrequented places, and finding plenty of opportunities for poaching.[4]

Of course, Gypsies were not the only people who found 'opportunities for poaching'. Poaching was practiced extensively among settled and itinerant populations because hunting was the exclusive privilege of the landowning elite. Under the 1671 Game Act only those with a property worth £100 per year, or those who held a ninety-nine year lease property worth £150 per year, had the right to kill game. This statute, which remained in force until the 1831 Game Law Bill, excluded all but 0.5% of the population from the sport. After 1831 the property qualification was replaced by a game certificate, priced at a relatively moderate £3 13*s*. 6*d*.; this was intended to enable more (middle-class) sportsmen to enjoy the legitimate chase. However, because the certificate holder could only hunt with the landowners' consent, it was largely ineffective. Jealous of their woods and warrens, landlords acted as a bulwark to the democratising aims of the act, and denied even their tenant farmers permission to kill the game that damaged their crops.[5] Moreover, the landowners' power over game intensified as the nineteenth century progressed. Throughout the century there was a general tendency towards the consolidation of land and the creation of larger farms. This meant that by 1873, when the rural population was ten million, fifty per cent of the land was owned by 7,000 people.[6] Such inequality in land ownership, and therefore access to game, sustained the widespread poaching that was endemic in nineteenth-century England. As the union leader Joseph Arch wrote, recalling Warwickshire in the 1830s, 'it was hardly an exaggeration to say that every other man you met was a poacher'.[7]

'Poaching was a national pastime', as Donna Landry observes, but the reasons for it varied.[8] Some poached for pleasure: poaching is, after all, just hunting by another name. Others were politically motivated: James Hawker, for example, a lifelong poacher from the 1840s onwards, recorded, 'I have poached more for Revenge than Gain. Because the [game preserving] Class poached upon my liberty when I was not able to defend myself.'[9] The historian Harry Hopkins remarks that 'bred-in-the-bone, do-it-yourself radicals', like Hawker,

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[4] Richard Jefferies, *The Gamekeeper at Home: Sketches of Natural History and Rural Life*, *The Gamekeeper at Home/The Amateur Poacher*, ed. Richard Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1948; repr. 1978), pp. 1-168 (p. 135).

[5] Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain Since 1066* (London: Yale University Press, 2007; repr. 2008), pp. 110-111, 153-154; Harry Hopkins, *The Long Affray: The Poaching Wars in Britain* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985; repr. London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 62-64, 197-199.

[6] Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), pp. 185-186.

[7] Joseph Arch, *The Story of his Life: Told by Himself* (London: Hutchinson, 1898; repr. London: Garland, 1984), p. 13.

[8] Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside*, p. 73.

[9] James Hawker, *A Victorian Poacher: James Hawker's Journal*, ed. Garth Christian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr. 1978), p. 95.

formed a particularly resilient poaching class.[10] The majority, however, poached as a cure for

hunger, and to supplement inadequate diets. A spike in the number of poaching convictions

often accompanied national food shortages, and, more generally, game provided an important

source of protein for working people, the majority of whom could not afford farmed meat

until it became readily available in the mid-1880s.[11] In a similar vein, poaching could also

provide an additional revenue stream. There had long been a thriving trade in poached game

that continued throughout the nineteenth century, even after the sale of game was made legal

in 1831. Centred on London's Newgate and Leadenhall Street, this black market had once

been exclusively served by itinerants. 'Higglers', hedge-side pedlars who nominally traded in

poultry and dairy, bought game in the country to hawk in the city; and Gypsies, as Jefferies

informs us, were always 'suspected of being recipients of poached game'.[12] Like the other

itinerant trades discussed in Chapter 1, this monopoly was broken by the advent of the

stagecoach and the railways, whose employees acquired a significant share in the poached-

game trade. Nonetheless, while the coachman was replaced by the engine driver, higglers

continued to participate in this illicit economy.[13]

      The association between poachers and these vagrants preoccupied lawmakers.

Higglers were prohibited from purchasing the £2 licence required to deal legally in game by

the 1831 Bill, and they were one of the itinerant groups specifically targeted by the 1835

Highways Act (see Chapter 1).[14] Officials, then, sought to legislate vagrant receivers out of

business. But the connection between the vagrant and the poacher was not simply

transactional. At a fundamental level, these two figures were perceived as cognate, something

which has already been suggested by the enduring link made between Gypsies and poachers.

When trying to identify poachers, authorities often suspected migrants, including harvesters

and itinerant handicraft men, like mole-catchers.[15] Moreover, once they had caught them,

poachers were conflated with vagrants within the legal system. Both were subject to summary

justice, and the majority of poaching cases would have been addressed in the magistrates'

court, a space in which distinctions between the poacher, vagrant, trespasser and mendicant

could all begin to blur. As Timothy Shakesheff notes, if a poaching offence could not be

proved, then suspects were often convicted for trespassing instead.[16] Given the catch-all

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[10] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, p. 265.

[11] David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 69; Harvey Osborne and Michael Winstanley, 'Rural and Urban Poaching in Victorian England', *Rural History*, 17.2 (2006), 187-212 (pp. 204-206).

[12] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, p. 89; Jefferies, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, p. 135.

[13] P. B. Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws, 1671-1831* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 59-60.

[14] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, p. 197.

[15] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 73-74.

[16] Timothy Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest: Herefordshire, 1800-1860* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 146-148.

nature of the vagrancy laws, it seems likely that these were also used to force successful prosecutions. Meanwhile, even if a poacher was referred to the assizes court for a more serious offence, like night poaching, the vagrant could still emerge as their legal double. Those convicted under the 1800 Night Poaching Act could be punished under the pre-1824 vagrancy laws as incorrigible rogues, the sentence for which was two years hard labour or transportation: the 1828 Night Poaching Act, which remained in force until the end of the century, also carried these penalties.[17] This legal kinship between the vagrant and the poacher was not without justification; professional poachers possessed many vagrant qualities.

Professional poaching was a nomadic occupation. To a greater or lesser extent, those who poached regularly were on the move. Local preserves had a limited amount of game, and moreover, might be guarded by armed keepers entrusted with the power of arrest. As a consequence, poachers would often travel great distances to secure a larger or safer haul. In 1828, for example, John Smith and William Morris, two Herefordshire labourers, were discovered poaching twenty-three miles from their homes.[18] In the pre-railway era this was not an inconsiderable distance; even internal migrants resettling elsewhere in the country typically travelled less than thirty miles.[19] Moreover, it is highly unlikely that two labourers would have crossed it in luxury by stagecoach, and they would therefore probably have tramped. Poachers were also sometimes compelled to take to the road. Although Hawker claims that he sometimes became vagrant by choice, giving up his factory job in Leicester so that he could 'Have a Ramble', he also notes that a fine levied for poaching, or an outstanding warrant for his arrest, sometimes forced him to flee: 'often it was Game what Drove me from my Home', he admits.[20] Jefferies also records a vagrant type among the 'three kinds of poachers' that he catalogues in *The Gamekeeper at Home*; the so-called 'mouchers' who 'loiter along the roads and hedges picking up whatever they can lay hands on.'[21] Although he quickly dismisses them here, he gives a more detailed and sympathetic account of these outcast figures in *The Amateur Poacher* (1879), another collection of essays, this time dealing with shooting, snaring and – of course – poaching. Here he describes the moucher as a homeless figure who lingers on roadside verges and on the outskirts of suburbs. He 'sleeps on the heaps of disused tan' by the river, or else 'sleeps in some shed or under a straw-rick.' If the weather gets too severe then the constable arrests him, but only for his own good: 'in sheer pity he is committed every now and then to prison for vagabondage – not for

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[17] Munsche, *Gentlemen and Poachers*, pp. 25-26.
[18] Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict*, p. 150.
[19] Josephine McDonagh, 'Urban Migration and Mobility', *Charles Dickens in Context*, ed. Sally Ledger and Holly Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 268-275 (p. 271).
[20] Hawker, *A Victorian Poacher*, pp. 16, 19.
[21] Jefferies, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, p. 112.

punishment, but in order to save him from himself.'[22] Confined under the vagrancy laws, sleeping in the open, and relying on his woodcraft to filch what he can, the moucher is a type with which we will meet again, albeit in a literary context.

The literary poacher, whether vagrant or otherwise, has been neglected by critics. While historians like Hopkins, David Jones, and Harvey Osborne have asserted the prevalence and importance of poaching in the nineteenth century, discussions regarding the representation of poachers has been limited to a few chance observations. Landry, for example, vaguely notes that 'the literary poacher of the nineteenth century was more romantic' than its eighteenth-century predecessors, while Shakesheff argues that the Victorian poacher was instead portrayed as an idle drunkard.[23] Both of these views have their place, but they oversimplify a complex and deeply contested figure. As we have already seen through the testimony of Hawker, poaching in the nineteenth century had the potential to be a political act. This had historical precedent: in her survey of hunting from 1066 to the twenty-first century, Emma Griffin records that poachers in the early modern period decapitated and disembowelled deer as acts of protest; that during the Civil War, deer were again slaughtered in defiance of the king; and that in the early eighteenth century, deer were once more targeted by political dissidents in Windsor Forest.[24] These were poached and mutilated in an atmosphere of 'Robin Hoodery', as Hopkins observes.[25] By the nineteenth century, then, poaching was politically charged and aligned with radicalism. What made poachers even more threatening was the fact that they were committing what has been termed a 'social crime': an illegal act that was deemed a crime by the state but not by the labouring community in which it was performed.[26] As a consequence, the perpetrators of these offences accrued popular support and protection from the local populace. This heightened what was at stake when condemning poachers, or else turned them into readily identifiable and sympathetic figures who could be exploited for radical purposes. It is within this context that this chapter will explore the relationship between poaching and vagrancy in early Victorian literature.

Although the majority of nineteenth-century poachers were not vagrant, a significant number of literary poachers are. In this chapter I argue that the reasons for this were political. Writers of pro-establishment morality tales, like Hannah More and John Nicholson, emphasised the immorality of poaching, and its potential to become a 'gateway' crime to capital offences. Here vagrancy becomes a sign of the poacher's dissipation and social

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[22] Richard Jefferies, *The Amateur Poacher*, *The Gamekeeper at Home/The Amateur Poacher*, ed. Richard Fitter (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1948; repr. 1978), pp. 169-352 (pp. 270, 272).
[23] Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside*, p. 85; Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict*, pp. 153-154.
[24] Griffin, *Blood Sport*, pp. 74-75, 100.
[25] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, p. 66.
[26] John E. Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest in England, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14; also see, Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict*, pp. 156-160.

alienation. Meanwhile, radical writers co-opted the poacher for their own ends. Authors such as Charles Dickens and Charles Kingsley used the vagrant poacher to condemn permissive laws, which included the vagrancy and game laws, and to highlight social inequalities. Often deploying the techniques of melodrama in which the oppressed and impoverished are pitted against the powerful and malign, these texts depict vagrant poachers as the victims of unjust magistrates, the representatives of an arbitrary legal system. It is worth noting here that in both pro-establishment and radical texts the poachers are always male, which is a consequence of the fact that poaching was considered a 'male crime'. As Osborne has recently shown, women were active within the poaching industry, and were heavily involved in the transportation and snaring of game. When they were caught, however, officials repeatedly met them with bewilderment, and often treated their offences as singular and bizarre.[27] The activity of female poachers also went unrecognised in literary texts, where women, as we shall see, were exclusively portrayed as passive wives or widows; the victims of either the poacher's vice or the law's iniquity.

The Poacher's Progress

Hannah More's pamphlet *Black Giles, the Poacher* (1796) is an important antecedent to the anti-poaching morality tales of the nineteenth century. It is one of the 114 texts that form the *Cheap Repository* (1795-98), a collection of songs, allegories and tales that were organised and edited by More for the moral improvement of the poor. Modelled on popular literary forms like the broadside ballad and the chap-book, and priced within the means of working families (between ½ and 1½*d.* per instalment), the *Cheap Repository* sought to instruct, entertain, and uphold the values of the church and the crown: as More's biographer Charles Howard Ford comments, one of the *Cheap Repository*'s aims was to counter 'the critiques of monarchy and aristocracy by radical reformers'.[28] *Black Giles* was part of this general programme, but it was also a timely intervention in itself.

Published in two parts in 1796, the tale was a response to an annual issue. Poaching crimes occurred year on year, but they tended to be concentrated between October and March. In part, this was because winter was a period when employment opportunities were scarce, and household expenditure on food, fuel and clothing increased. Labourers therefore poached for the pot and to earn an extra income.[29] In addition, it was also because game was in season during these months: as Osborne has convincingly argued, it was *natural* rather than

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[27] Harvey Osborne, '"Unwomanly practices": Poaching Crime, Gender and the Female Offender in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Rural History*, 27.2 (2016), 149-168 (*passim*).
[28] Charles Howard Ford, *Hannah More: A Critical Biography* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 127-129.
[29] Shakesheff, *Rural Conflict*, pp. 151-153.

economic rhythms that primarily determined the pattern of offending.[30] Such a predictable cycle no doubt influenced the publication of *Black Giles* in November and December, a time when poaching would have been most conspicuous, especially among the working communities that protected their poachers from official inquiries with a careful and ubiquitous silence. But More's morality tale also engages with an immediate concern – the surge in violent affrays between armed poaching gangs and gamekeepers that occurred during the 1790s. A period of bad harvests and economic hardship, the Napoleonic era saw an intensification in the number of raids made on the nation's game preserves.[31] Given the recent revolution in France, and the ensuing Reign of Terror, such blatant defiance of the land-owning elite seemed like a possible prelude to revolution.[32] As a staunch advocate of hierarchy and paternalism, More was eager to quash such radical attitudes.[33]

In *Black Giles*, the poacher is portrayed as a social outlaw. This is signalled from the beginning of the first instalment when the reader is introduced to Giles and his 'vagrant family'. Living as squatters in a 'mud cottage, with broken windows' on a moorland 'common', the children earn a living by begging at the wayside, and his wife – Tawney Rachel – by travelling 'about the country telling fortunes'. Here, again, we see the connection between Gypsies and poaching. Indeed, although Rachel is never explicitly identified as a Gypsy, her occupation, her 'red cloak', and her epithet all work to suggest the stereotype of the becloaked matriarch that I discussed in Chapter 1. The family's vagrant status places them physically and legally outside of the village community and the paternalism that gives it structure. It is also an attribute that allows More to construct Giles as an indiscriminate predator. His theft of the Widow Brown's apple crop, which she relies on as a safeguard from poverty, is the main instance of this.[34] Far from being the harmless perpetrator of a 'social crime', then, the poacher is a true criminal who targets the vulnerable. This is a view that More clearly articulates through the righteous parson-magistrate Mr Wilson.

Described as 'not only a pious clergyman, but an upright justice', Wilson condemns poaching on moral grounds, and in doing so upholds the rights of the landed elite. In the midst of sentencing the poacher Jack Weston, an 'honest fellow' who has gone astray, he reiterates the narrator's earlier claim that 'there is hardly any petty mischief that is not connected with the life of a poacher'. Preaching from the bench, he warns Weston that 'poaching is a regular apprenticeship to bolder crimes. He whom I may commit as a boy to sit

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[30] Harvey Osborne, 'The Seasonality of Nineteenth-Century Poaching', *Agricultural History Review*, 48.1 (2000), 27-41 (pp. 27-28, *passim*).
[31] Landry, *The Invention of the Countryside*, p. 6.
[32] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 76-79, 163-164.
[33] Ford, *Hannah More*, p. 129.
[34] Hannah More, *Black Giles, the Poacher: with some Account of a Family who had Rather Live by their Wits than their Work* (London: C. J. G. & F. Rivington, 1830), pp. 6, 3, 8-9.

in the stocks for killing a partridge, may be likely to end at the gallows for killing a man.'[35]
Not only does Wilson support the national hierarchy, but the paternalistic ethos that orders it.
As a parson and a magistrate, and therefore a representative of church and state, he embodies
the two institutions that sought to guard and guide the populace; the ignorant masses over
whom they claimed authority for the betterment of society. This is literally shown by
Wilson's attempts to reclaim Giles's son, Dick. Throughout the narrative Wilson, the spiritual
father, wrestles for Dick's obedience with Giles, the boy's worthless biological father. This is
paternalism writ large. In the end, Wilson is victorious when Dick, whom the parson has
encouraged to attend Sunday School, confesses before his class that he and his father robbed
Widow Brown of her apples. Dick's public repentance is a vindication of the parson and his
politics. Meanwhile, Giles is radically depoliticised.

      'Black' is a significant epithet in the history of poaching. In the early 1720s a gang of
poachers with blackened faces began to mutilate the deer in Waltham Chase and Farnham
Park at a time when Sir Jonathan Trelawny, the Bishop of Winchester, was trying to replenish
them. Their motives were political: the extensive forests that deer require occupied valuable
land that could be used to feed and enrich ordinary labourers. The bishop's attempt to restore
the herds, most of which had been killed during the Civil War, was therefore seen as an act of
local impoverishment. The gang became known as the 'Waltham Blacks', and other groups,
such as the 'Berkshire Blacks', followed their example.[36] The result was the passage of the
infamous 1723 Black Act, named after them, which wrote over 200 capital offences into law:
the first of these was to be armed and near game with a blackened face.[37] This act was still in
force when More was writing, and the political significance of being a blackened poacher
must have lingered on. Even in the late nineteenth century there was still a notorious poaching
gang called the 'Isleham Blacks' who operated in East Anglia.[38] However, when More
describes Giles as 'Black' she obscures its political significance by using it as a mere emblem
of his depravity.

      As we might expect of a morality tale, *Black Giles* ends in just deserts: Giles crushes
himself beneath the rubble of a wall while attempting to steal a net that lies on top of it. When
Wilson arrives, Giles is mortally wounded and confesses his crimes. However, as the stern
narrator informs us, 'people cannot repent when they will', and his salvation is far from
assured. In the meantime, Wilson has reclaimed Dick: at the end of the story there is every
hope that he will 'leave off his vagabond life', as the parson-magistrate suggests, and become

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[35] More, *Black Giles,* pp. 9-11.
[36] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 65-67.
[37] E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), pp.
21-24.
[38] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 80, 84.

a member of the settled community.[39] Several elements of More's tale became the stock-in-trade of the nineteenth-century 'poacher's progress', a form of morality tale that charts the moral, physical and material decline of the poacher, and terminates in a judicial sentence or death. These texts similarly portray poaching in ethical rather than political terms, and in doing so emphasise the principal message of *Black Giles*, that 'poaching is a regular apprenticeship to bolder crimes.' Vagrancy is also a central theme in these texts. As in *Black Giles*, it is a physical manifestation of the poacher's outcast status, but it also signals a key moment of dislocation when the poacher ceases to be part of settled society. Unlike More's text, the poacher's progress typically begins by depicting the poacher as part of a community, and narrates his estrangement from it. In addition, they tend to be written as much to entertain as to instruct. Perhaps as a consequence, while they depict the corrupt poacher, they do not offer a moral pattern in the form of a Mr Wilson.

John Nicholson's narrative poem *The Poacher: A Tale from Real Life* was another timely response to widespread concerns about poaching. Published in 1825 along with his most famous poem, *Airedale in Ancient Times*, it appeared during an agricultural depression that lasted from 1822 until the Swing Riots of 1830.[40] Like most periods of economic hardship, it was accompanied by a surge in poaching activity, and a spate of discussions about it. In parliament the ethics of mantraps and spring-guns, which had been widely deployed to protect the preserves, were being debated (they were banned in 1827).[41] Meanwhile, the poaching ballad was undergoing a revival, and songs such as 'Van Diemen's Land' (c.1828) were enjoying a wide circulation.[42] Printed as broadsides, they offered up a heroic vision of poaching: as James Hepburn notes, in more than fifty ballads composed on this theme during the nineteenth century, all of them 'are preoccupied with the melodrama or daring of the activity.'[43] The opening lines of 'Van Diemen's Land' provide an instance of this: 'Come all you gallant poachers, that ramble void of care, | That walk out on a moonlight night with your dogs and gun and snare.'[44] It is tempting to see Nicholson's poem, written in the mock-epic form, as a riposte to such carefree heroics.

[39] More, *Black Giles,* pp. 24, 19.
[40] Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest*, pp. 15-20.
[41] Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p. 153; Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 25, 171-175.
[42] Roy Palmer notes that 'Van Diemen's Land' attained huge popularity in the early 1830s when it was being printed in Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland, and Preston, Manchester, Birmingham and London in England. It was circulated orally until at least the 1970s. Roy Palmer, 'Birmingham Broadsides and Oral Traditions', *Street Ballads in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and North America*, ed. David Atkinson and Steve Roud (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 37-58 (pp. 55-58).
[43] James Hepburn, *A Book of Scattered Leaves: Poetry and Poverty in Broadside Ballads in Nineteenth-Century England: Study and Anthology*, 2 vols (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2000-2001), II, p. 337.
[44] Roy Palmer, *The Painful Plough: A Portrait of the Agricultural Labourer in the Nineteenth Century from Folk Songs and Ballads and Contemporary Accounts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 35 (ll. 1-2).

From the first lines of *The Poacher* it is clear that it will contain little in the way of gallantry. Shunning that traditional opening feature of epic, the invocation of the muse, the speaker declares:

> This subject wants no Muse the breast t'inspire,
> Deep learning, – nor the Apollonian lyre;
> Fine tropes and figures here can nought avail,
> 'Tis but a plain and simple rustic tale, –
> A tale of poachers, partridge, grouse, and hares,
> Gamekeepers' acts, their dangers and their fears;
> And who the persons that are most too blame,
> Or those who buy, or those who steal the game.

The speaker then embarks on the history of the 'Prince of Poachers', a man whose name – Ignotus (meaning 'unknown') – swiftly ironises his royal and potentially heroic status. Ignotus begins his career killing rabbits, and when 'his parents chide him not […] but praise his skill', goes on to hunt partridges and pheasants. It is not long before the amateur becomes a professional and, recalling Shakesheff's observation, a drunkard as well. Like the ballads, *The Poacher* also contains scenes of conflict between poachers and gamekeepers, their 'superior foes'; but any valiant action on the part of 'strong Ignotus' is undermined by his neglected wife and children whose poverty provides a tragic backdrop to the poem. As he wades further into sinful courses, his wife dies from starvation, and Ignotus becomes a vagrant roaming through Yorkshire:

> Loos'd from his wife, with whom he jarring liv'd,
> His children bread thro' charity receiv'd.
> One night he spent where lies fam'd Robin Hood,
> The next where Harewood's ancient castle stood;
> The beauteous vale of Wharf he wander'd o'er, –
> Expecting wealth, but still was always poor.

The distances that Ignotus travels here are significant; Kirklees Park, which claims the grave of Robin Hood, is some twenty miles distant from Harewood's castle. Ignotus's extensive wandering, and his abandonment of his children, signal that he has reached the nadir of his dissipation. His vagrancy marks his divorce from all familial, social and geographic ties. For Nicholson it is the last stage of the poacher's progress before death sweeps him away: drunk one winter night, and carrying his 'pilfer'd load', he steps out onto some river-ice, and falls into the water.[45] Sadly, Nicholson was to meet a similar fate. An alcoholic in his fifties, he took a drunken tumble when crossing the River Aire, and died of exposure having crawled onto the bank.[46]

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[45] John Nicholson, *The Poacher: A Tale from Real Life*, *Airedale in Ancient Times* (London: [n.pub.], 1825), pp. 63-92 (pp. 63, 65, 80, 89-90).
[46] James Ogden, 'Nicholson, John (1790-1843)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 15 February 2018].

Nicholson was a staunch royalist and was writing for patronage. After the publication of *Airedale in Ancient Times*, he tried to earn his living by peddling pamphlets of his poems to the squires and gentlemen of Yorkshire.[47] With this customer base in mind, it is no surprise that he condemned the 'rustic plunderers, who sport by night, | And fearlessly invade another's right'.[48] Indeed, this is the audience that the poacher's progress tends to address. While More tried to warn labourers away from the evils of poaching, later narratives are not driven by the same moral impetus. This can be seen in Edmund Phipps's 'The Poacher's Progress' (1841). Like Nicholson's poem, the narrative relates the moral decline of Addis, a Herefordshire labourer, who falls into poaching by slow degrees, and gives up 'honest industry for idleness and debauchery'; again the theme of drunkenness is evident. Having become a 'determined poacher' Addis turns thief and ends up in prison for stealing some chickens. While he serves his sentence, his wife dies and his children are taken in by 'some humane ladies'. After his release he is ostracised by his village, and forced to become a vagrant:

> He was driven to the most wretched expedients, and would then be absent for months from his native village, dark whisperings being current that at those times he was associated with gangs of gipsies and others, committing depredations through the country at large.

Once more, vagrancy is a staging post on the road to dissolution; a sign and symptom of moral laxity. In the end, Addis reaches his lowest depths when he is arrested and sentenced to death for murdering a gamekeeper. Phipps concludes with a moral exhortation addressed to the 'Peasants of England': 'avoid poaching as ye value your temporal and eternal happiness'.[49] However, such a warning printed in the *New Monthly Magazine*, an expensive periodical priced at 3*s*. 6*d*. in 1841, was unlikely to have any reformative power.[50]

'The Poacher' (1841), written by the anonymous N. W. as a two-part serial for the *New Sporting Magazine*, is also addressed to a wealthy readership. Although it uses the same structure, 'The Poacher' is less dour than the narratives of Nicholson or Phipps, and both instalments revel in Tom Scott the poacher's skill at dodging the gentry in both the field and the courtroom. The first number recounts a trial in which Tom, a seasoned hedge-lawyer, 'pull[s] out a little dirty book, which turned out to be the new [game] act', in order to overturn the magistrates' conviction; and the second recalls a gallant poaching affray in which a friend of the narrator finds himself locked in combat with the redoubtable Tom.[51] However, having celebrated Tom's fighting spirit in the second number, the narrative nonetheless ends on a

[47] Ogden, 'Nicholson, John'.
[48] Nicholson, *The Poacher*, p. 89.
[49] [Edmund Phipps], 'The Poacher's Progress', *New Monthly Magazine*, April 1841, pp. 487-497 (pp. 493, 497).
[50] See, [Advertisements], *Examiner*, 25 December 1841, pp. 630-632 (p. 632).
[51] [Anon.] N. W., 'The Poacher', *New Sporting Magazine*, February 1841, pp. 127-130 (p. 128).

condemnatory note as the humorous anecdotes give way to a truncated poacher's progress. Confined to the final page, the narrator informs us that Tom absconded from his village and 'went a gipsying' before being arrested for theft, and sentenced to transportation for life. Like the other progress narratives, then, 'The Poacher' eventually emphasises that poaching is a gateway crime: as the narrator observes in the final paragraph, 'there is no question that poaching leads to theft, and that he who goes out by night to fill his pockets with game, will fill them with other things if that fails.'[52] But although 'The Poacher' concludes with this familiar moral, it is nonetheless delayed and subordinated to the reader's enjoyment. This indicates that the nineteenth-century poacher was not just a cautionary figure, but could also be attractive, exciting and, as Landry notes, romantic.

It is significant that N. W.'s 'The Poacher' and Phipps's 'The Poacher's Progress' appeared in 1841, the start of the so-called 'Hungry Forties'. This was a decade in which poaching and the game laws re-emerged as an issue of contention. In 1839 John Bright and Richard Cobden established the Anti-Corn Law League, a radical political faction that sought the abolition of the corn laws, which prohibited the importation of foreign grain and therefore kept the price of bread artificially high. The game laws were another of their targets for reform. They argued that by laying out land in preservations, and not allowing tenants to kill the game that damaged their crops, the land-owning elite were actively reducing the stock of wheat that could be turned into bread, which further inflated its price.[53] More generally, the suitability of the 1831 Game Law Bill was also being questioned at this time. Although the bill was designed to reduce the number of poaching offences, in fact they were rapidly rising. Between 1831 and 1844 the annual number of successful prosecutions had doubled, reaching 4,500.[54] Pamela Horn puts this growth into perspective: she notes that during 1843 at least a quarter of the summary convictions made by the magistrates of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland and Wiltshire were executed under the game laws.[55] But it was not just that the conviction rate was rising. There were also fears about the mounting violence of the affrays between heavily armed poachers and keepers: forty-one gamekeepers were murdered between 1833 and 1843.[56] It is therefore not surprising that the poacher's progress should have re-emerged as a narrative form, or that an abridged version of Nicholson's poem was printed in the *Mirror of Literature* in January 1845.[57] That said, despite the violence and criminality that some writers attached to the poacher, he was nonetheless an ambivalent figure.

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[52] [Anon.] N. W., 'The Poacher', *New Sporting Magazine*, April 1841, pp. 257-262 (p. 262).
[53] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 210-212; Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 62-64.
[54] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, p. 208.
[55] Pamela Horn, *Life and Labour in Rural England, 1760-1850* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 141. Jones notes that this is also true of Suffolk, see, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, p. 62.
[56] Griffin, *Blood Sport*, p. 157.
[57] See, 'The Poacher: A Tale from Real Life', *Mirror of Literature*, 18 January 1845, pp. 56-58.

Poachers

Remembering 'the dark days of protection', Hawker gives a vivid sense of what the
1840s were like for labouring communities:

> The mid-1840s were wretched times. Sheep Stealing, Highway Robbery and Burglary
> were common. It was not Safe to go out after Dark. If a Man stole a Sheep he Had 14
> years Transportation. If hunger made a man go into the woods to get a pheasant, he
> too would get fourteen years. Two men in Oadby Had 14 years – Jack Baurn, Bill
> Devonport – for attempting to take Pheasants in Tugley Wood, in 1847, so this is No
> Dream.[58]

The indignation evident in Hawker's account of Baurn and Devonport was felt by many
writers during this period. Charles Dickens, Charlton Carew and Charles Kingsley all shared
Hawker's sympathy for the poacher. Far from being a villainous renegade, the poacher – in
their eyes – was a victim of the legislature. The laws that provoked particular contempt were
those that seemed to punish poverty – the New Poor Law, the game laws and the vagrancy
laws. During the 1840s, the poacher became a symbol of their injustice, and his vagrancy took
on a new set of meanings. Instead of signalling his dislocation from settled society, and the
selfish abandonment of his duties, it began to be interpreted as a symptom of society's
failings, and the inefficacy of the laws that governed it.

Radical Poachers

During October 1844 a steady stream of letters issued from the best bedroom of the Peschiere,
a sixteenth-century palazzo in Genoa where Dickens was at work on *The Chimes* (1844).
Principally addressed to John Forster, his friend and literary agent, these capture the violent
energy with which he wrote it. Possessed by a 'fierce writing humour', he would take up his
pen early in the morning and 'blaze away, wrathful and red-hot' until three o'clock in the
afternoon. The immediacy with which Dickens describes the writing process reflects an
urgent need to see his story published. In part, no doubt, this was for commercial reasons:
Dickens was writing a Christmas Book, and was hoping for significant sales come December.
But another reason was that *The Chimes* – as the title implies – was itself timely. Dickens
emphasises this in his letters: writing on 8 October, he declared, 'it has a grip upon the very
throat of the time'; and a fortnight later, now in a more reflective mood, he claimed, 'I think it
well-timed and a good thought'.[59] He was not wrong. It is the assertive and radical stance that
Dickens takes on several contemporary issues that has made *The Chimes* such a rich text for
readers and critics alike.

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[58] Hawker, *A Victorian Poacher*, pp. 2, 95.
[59] Charles Dickens, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House,
Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), IV, pp.
200-201, 206.

To some extent, Dickens was always a radical. Although his commitment vacillated, and he was never allied to any political party, he was nonetheless a firm advocate of 'root-and-branch reform', as Sally Ledger has observed.[60] *The Chimes* is the fullest expression of this belief. Since Robert Peel's re-election in 1841, several anti-Tory squibs and satires had escaped from his pen, finding homes in the liberal pages of the *Examiner* and the *Morning Chronicle*.[61] By October 1844 Dickens was the proponent of a number of radical beliefs, and these have been fruitfully explored by critics. Josephine McDonagh reveals the relationship between Meg's act of near-infanticide, the faeries that swarm throughout the story's illustrations, and Dickens's hostility towards Malthusianism, one of the key tenets of the New Poor Law. In doing so she firmly roots *The Chimes* in a tradition of anti-New Poor Law writing.[62] Ledger similarly discusses *The Chimes* as part of this tradition, noting that it rejects the precepts of political economy upon which the New Poor Law was based. In addition, she argues that it likewise refuses the New Poor Law's predecessor and ready alternative – paternalism. *The Chimes* is therefore a truly incendiary text that is both anti-Tory and anti-New Poor Law.[63] Michael Sheldon also places *The Chimes* within an anti-Tory context, claiming that it expresses Dickens's 'free trade radicalism' and his Anti-Corn Law principles.[64] Together, these readings support Michael Slater's verdict, that *The Chimes* was 'the most overtly radical fiction [Dickens] ever wrote.'[65] However, despite the fact that this has become a dominant interpretation, Dickens's most radical symbol – Will Fern, the vagrant poacher – has generally passed without remark. Through Will, Dickens launches an acerbic attack on the permissive laws that persecuted poverty, and the paternalistic logic that underwrote them.

Will is a foil for Sir Joseph Bowley MP, the self-styled 'Poor Man's Friend and Father'.[66] Possibly based on the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, Sir Joseph is a caricature of paternalists and protectionists, as his early victimisation of Will reveals.[67] Their antagonistic relationship is established in the Second Quarter when Trotty Veck, the wizened porter-protagonist, is ushered into Sir Joseph's library bearing a letter from Alderman Cute. Requesting advice, Cute informs Sir Joseph that Will has tramped up to London from Dorset

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[60] Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 6.

[61] Michael Sheldon gives an overview of these publications. See, Michael Sheldon, '*The Chimes* and the Anti-Corn Law League', *Victorian Studies*, 25.3 (1982), 328-353 (pp. 330-337).

[62] Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 118-122.

[63] Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, pp. 124-132.

[64] Sheldon, '*The Chimes* and the Anti-Corn Law League', p. 330, *passim*.

[65] Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 229.

[66] Charles Dickens, *The Chimes: A Goblin Story; or, Some Bells that Rang an Old Year Out and a New One In*, *Christmas Books*, intro. Eleanor Farjeon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954; repr. 1997), pp. 77-154 (p. 106)

[67] Sheldon, '*The Chimes* and the Anti-Corn Law League', pp. 339-341.

to 'look for employment', and was 'found at night asleep in a shed'; the constables arrested
him, and he is due to appear before the justice-alderman in the morning. In his swift reply Sir
Joseph states that Will has a 'turbulent and rebellious spirit' and 'his committal for some
short term as a Vagabond, would be a service to society.'[68] This clearly underscores the irony
of Sir Joseph's claim that he is the 'Poor Man's Friend', a critique made all the more piquant
by the fact that he is Will's Dorset landlord. In addition, this moment also introduces the
permissive laws as one of the political targets of the text. In this first encounter between
labourer and gentleman, Dickens makes it clear that such laws – in this case the 1824
Vagrancy Act – can be easily misused by petty tyrants such as Bowley, who can condemn
from afar without even facing the accused. Dickens goes on to make this point even more
forcibly in the next Quarter.

Having left Sir Joseph's mansion bearing the Alderman's instructions, Trotty literally
bumps into Will. He is 'jaded and foot-sore', and bubbling with radical sentiments. Setting
himself firmly against the humbug paternalism of 'gentlefolks', he decries the way they
'search and search, and pry and pry' into the lives of the poor, but do nothing to relieve their
poverty. His tirade ends on a dejected note with a foreboding image of the class divide: 'I
only want to live like one of the Almighty's creatures', he tells Trotty, 'I can't, I don't; and so
there's a pit dug between me, and them that can and do.' This discontent remerges during
Trotty's New Year's vision when Will confronts Sir Joseph at a birthday gala held at Bowley
Hall. No longer the 'sun-browned, sinewy, country-looking man' that Trotty met in the street,
Will is 'old, and grey, and bent' and has 'just come from jail'. 'Beyond all hurt or harm', and
back on the estate where he 'lived many a year', he makes a bold address, challenging the
gathered gentlefolks with the iniquities of their permissive laws:

> 'Now, gentlemen,' said Will Fern, holding out his hands, and flushing for an instant
> in his haggard face, 'see how your laws are made to trap and hunt us when we're
> brought to this. I tries to live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. To jail with him! I
> comes back here. I goes a-nutting in your woods, and breaks – who don't? – a limber
> branch or two. To jail with him! One of your keepers sees me in the broad day, near
> my own patch of garden, with a gun. To jail with him! I has a nat'ral angry word with
> that man, when I'm free again. To jail with him! I cuts a stick. To jail with him! I eats
> a rotten apple or a turnip. To jail with him! It's twenty mile away; and coming back I
> begs a trifle on the road. To jail with him! At last, the constable, the keeper –
> anybody – finds me anywhere, a-doing anything. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant,
> and a jail-bird known; and jail's the only home he's got.'[69]

In this melodramatic set piece, the labourer is depicted as the innocent victim of a malignant
legal system. As we shall see, the Manichean opposition between good and evil upon which

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[68] Dickens, *The Chimes*, pp. 106-108.
[69] Ibid., pp. 110-112, 131-133.

melodrama relies became a favoured technique among radical writers.[70] However, whereas they often juxtaposed the persecuted poacher and his dependents against a wicked landlord, Dickens is careful to highlight that the problem is systemic, not individual. Although Bowley is Will's ideological antagonist, and has been identified by Sheldon as the story's 'central villain', it is nonetheless 'your *laws* [that] are made to trap and hunt us'.[71] Here the metaphor recalls the privileged blood sports of the upper classes, but it refuses to identify any individual as specifically at fault. Meanwhile, Will's register of offences carves out and re-orientates a criminal trajectory with which we are already familiar: the poacher's progress.

Will is not the vagrant poacher of the morality tale. For a start, his first conviction is under the Vagrancy Act after he leaves Sir Joseph's estate. Indeed, his use of the legal term 'vagabond' at the beginning of his catalogue, the same term that Sir Joseph uses in his instructions to Alderman Cute, suggests that the reader was a witness to the start of Will's criminal career. Convictions for trespassing, poaching and vagrancy then seem to follow indiscriminately as Will becomes a target for officials, and assumes the miserable condition of Jefferies's moucher, living off whatever he can forage among fields and hedgerows. Nonetheless, there is a careful logic to Will's progress through the courts. He does not graduate to 'bolder crimes', but consistently remains a petty offender. In fact, in an inversion of the traditional poacher's progress, Will's crimes become pettier and pettier, until he cannot be found 'anywhere, a-doing anything' without being prosecuted. This succession of offences highlights the injustice of the permissive laws and the bias inherent in the magisterial system; however, it is still significant that a succession of smaller crimes, like a series of bolder ones, ultimately leads to the committal of a felony – arson.

In the Fourth Quarter, still in the midst of Trotty's vision, Fern steals up to Meg Veck's garret, and confesses to her that 'there'll be a Fire to-night.':

> There'll be Fires this winter-time, to light the dark nights, East, West, North, and South. When you see the distant sky red, they'll be blazing. When you see the distant sky red, think of me no more; or if you do, remember what a Hell was lighted up inside of me, and think you see its Flames reflected in the clouds.[72]

Fern's narrative arc, then, ultimately fulfils More's precept. However, it is significant that it concludes with incendiarism. Unlike the murders or thefts committed by Addis and Scott, arson was a common act of protest. From the end of the Swing Riots until the 1860s it was the most popular form of agricultural dissent.[73] Will's felony is therefore not a sign of moral debasement, but a symbol of political vengeance. The apocalyptic, all-encompassing fire

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[70] There is a long history of melodrama being used in popular radical culture; a tradition that Ledger argues *The Chimes* is part of. See, Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, pp. 6-7, 38, 117-132.
[71] Sheldon, '*The Chimes* and the Anti-Corn Law League', p. 338.
[72] Dickens, *The Chimes*, pp. 147-148.
[73] Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest*, p. 21.

burning 'East, West, North, and South', an image of revolution that ironises the 'service to society' Sir Joseph performed when he ordered Will's imprisonment, would also have had an immediacy for contemporary readers: 1844 was the second worst year for incendiarism in the nineteenth century.[74] Through Will the vagrant poacher, Dickens suggests that the fires of that year are but a prelude to an even more destructive wave of political dissent, led by those who suffer most from society's iniquitous laws. In other words, if the legal system that punishes poverty is not reformed, then revolution is inevitable.[75]

Revolution never came, although the rift between labourers and landowners, workers and capitalists, continued to grow throughout the 1840s. This period typically evokes factory disputes and Chartist demonstrations, scenes that have been memorialised in Condition-of-England novels like Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848). The industrial tenor of the workers' discontent, however, has been emphasised by historians and critics who have generally overlooked agricultural protests, including the acts of incendiarism and poaching that were endemic throughout the decade.[76] These acts of resistance against landowners caused radical and conservative MPs considerable anxiety. During 1845-46 John Bright led a parliamentary inquiry into the game laws as part of his broader crusade against protectionism. However, although the select committee concluded that starvation wages and a fear of the workhouse were the primary causes of poaching, these findings had little impact. The surprise repeal of the corn laws in 1846 by the Tory Prime Minister Robert Peel took the impetus out of further investigation, and the introduction of the 1848 Hares Act was the only perceptible difference it made; this allowed tenants to kill hares without a game licence, although they still needed their landlord's permission.[77] Meanwhile, the government, concerned by the violence of poaching affrays, began to compile lists of serious poaching infractions in 1843-44, and continued this work in 1848-49.[78] Poaching also remained a preoccupation of radical writers during these years. In two neglected Condition-of-England novels, Charlton Carew's *The Poacher's Wife: A Story of the Times* (1847) and Charles Kingsley's *Yeast: A Problem* (1848), the poacher is used once more to critique permissive laws and the landlords' monopoly on game.

The reception of Carew's *The Poacher's Wife* was polarised. Like *The Chimes*, which had been lauded by the Chartist *Northern Star* and condemned by the ultra-Tory *John Bull*,

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[74] In total 245 arsonists were convicted, but the number of fires lit was at least 1,000 according to Jones. Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 33-35; also see, Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest*, pp. 21-21, 27; Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 193-194.

[75] Slater notes that both Carlyle and Dickens thought that if society did not reform then it would be consumed by a destructive revolution. See, Michael Slater, 'Carlyle and Jerrold into Dickens: A Study of *The Chimes*', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 24.4 (1970), 506-526 (pp. 507-508).

[76] Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest*, p. 27; Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 54-67, 82.

[77] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 217-226, 232.

[78] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, p. 64.

the reviews were divided along partisan lines.[79] Right-wing reviewers were overwhelmingly unimpressed. The conservative *Spectator* dismissed it as belonging to 'the humanity and clap-trap school', a view that was echoed a month later in an article in the *Critic*, where the novel was pronounced a 'ludicrous failure', and included in 'the worst school of namby-pamby'.[80] Meanwhile, left-leaning journalists welcomed it with enthusiasm. The review in *Lloyd's Weekly* praised the 'powerfully told' novel because it 'display[ed] vividly the horrors that arise from the present system [of game laws]', and the reviewer for the *Mirror of Literature* prophesised that it 'will last when more ephemeral publications are forgotten, because it illustrates a great social question.'[81] Undoubtedly one of the most contentious elements of the novel was its portrayal of the aristocracy and the squirearchy, who are represented by the effeminate Lord Plaistic and the mumbling Sir Ralph Oldham: the *Spectator*, for example, resented Carew's 'attacks upon the aristocracy and country gentlemen', while *Lloyd's Weekly* noted that sadly they were 'true specimens of the hard-hearted class of landlords'.[82] It is these that furnish *The Poacher's Wife* with villains, and instigate the persecution of the poacher, Gilbert Locksley, and Dinah, his wife.

The Poacher's Wife* is ghosted by a poacher's progress in which Locksley is framed for a series of crimes that escalate in severity and force him to assume a vagrant existence. At the beginning of the novel he is one of Sir Ralph's tenant farmers who, having been denied permission to shoot game, is forced to watch the squire's hares and pheasants 'destroy his labour and his crops'. With a wife and baby to support, and reduced to the point of starvation, he joins a gang of drunken poachers. Together they execute a moonlight raid in one of Sir Ralph's coveys; however, having secured the game, Locksley's renegade companions abandon him and ambush the squire's carriage. Although he is innocent of the crime, Locksley is arrested for highway robbery and sent to prison by Sir Ralph; he then escapes only to be framed for the murder of Snipe, Sir Ralph's gamekeeper. Forced to flee from the constables, he is depicted in the final chapters of volume one as a 'care-worn fugitive', and does not reappear until the end of the novel. Before his disappearance, however, Carew emphasises his fugitive position with a visceral description of his blood-stained visage: the narrator informs us that 'his white face was streaked with blood', and then elaborates, saying, 'his blood-besmeared face seemed of the grave'.[83] As I discuss in Chapter 5, such bloody

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[79] Slater, *Charles Dickens*, pp. 231-232.

[80] 'Cleveland – The Poacher's Wife', *Spectator*, 13 March 1847, pp. 256-257 (p. 257); 'The Poacher's Wife: A Story of the Times', *Critic*, 3 April 1847, p. 265.

[81] 'The Poacher's Wife', *Lloyd's Weekly*, 25 April 1847, p. 8; 'The Poacher's Wife', *Mirror of Literature*, 1 March 1847, pp. 206-210 (p. 210).

[82] 'Cleveland – The Poacher's Wife', p. 257; 'The Poacher's Wife', *Lloyd's Weekly*, p. 8.

[83] Charlton Carew, *The Poacher's Wife: A Story of the Times*, 2 vols (London: Charles Ollier, 1847), I, pp. 168, 176.

marks are the emblems of Cain, the archetypal outlaw who was condemned in Genesis to be 'a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth'.[84]

The fugitive quality of Locksley's vagrancy is significant. Strongly reminiscent of the final phase of Will Fern's saga, in which he cannot be 'anywhere, a-doing anything' without being harassed by gamekeepers or the police, it conditions his movement. Wild and anxious, the fugitive is reactionary as he flies from his pursuers. He is therefore like a hunted animal, a fitting symbol for the poacher who occupies the uncomfortable middle ground between predator and prey. Indeed, we might remember that Will Fern characterises himself as a form of quarry when he describes the permissive laws as tools to 'trap and hunt us'; and likewise Locksley, while being chased by constables, is described as a 'cunning fox', a metaphor that similarly evokes a hunting culture.[85] Such imagery reinforces the vagrant poachers' vulnerability. Moreover, it also inscribes their movement with a haphazard quality. Although they are not aimless, because they practice purposeful evasion, their route (or rout) shifts with the conditions of the chase, and physical reflexes rather than logical reasoning guide them through the landscape. This helter-skelter movement is very different to that which belongs to vagrant poachers of the morality tale tradition. Black Giles, Addis and Tom Scott are all associated with Gypsies, and are therefore allied to the circulatory and premeditated movement that I outlined in Chapter 1. Such movement is articulated by More and others as methodical and opportunistic: their vagrant poachers therefore exist on the other side of the predator-prey equation.

Locksley, however, is not the only one who assumes a vagrant condition in *The Poacher's Wife*. As soon as he becomes a fugitive, the odious Sir Ralph evicts Dinah from her cottage with a baby at her breast. Using a stock trope from domestic melodrama, Carew emphasises the destitution of the suffering wife and child in order to emphasise the squire's villainy: Dinah is described as 'a woman who is driven from house and home, wandering about the country'; and later, as 'wandering into the world without the prospect of relief, either bodily or mental'.[86] It is significant that Carew characterises Dinah as 'wandering', a term which suggests a different and even more authentic form of vagrancy to that practiced by her husband. As the *OED* informs us, to wander is 'to move hither and thither without fixed course or certain aim; to be (in motion) without control or direction; to roam, ramble, go idly or restlessly about; to have no fixed abode or station.'[87] In addition, 'wander' smuggles its cognate, the verb 'to err', which means to physically 'ramble, roam, [or] stray', but also 'to

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[84] Genesis 14.4.
[85] Carew, *The Poacher's Wife*, I, p. 187.
[86] Ibid., I, p. 239; Ibid., II, p. 16. On melodrama, see Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 7.
[87] 'Wander, v.1.a.' *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 20 February 2018].

go wrong in judgement', or 'to go astray morally; to sin'.[88] Both of these ulterior meanings are stressed in the depiction of Dinah's vagrant condition. She does not know where she is going because she knows 'very little of the country', and this repeatedly places her in sexual danger and moral jeopardy. On the first night of her vagrant life she takes refuge in a barn. In the morning a labourer wakes her, and 'seize[s] the poor woman round the waist'. Rape is narrowly averted by the arrival of the farmer, but Dinah is nonetheless robbed and turned out into the road. Later, she is summoned to London by her husband, but upon arrival is lured into a brothel; a 'house [that] is damnatory to any woman'.[89] Although Dinah ultimately proves a wealthy heiress, is successfully reunited with Locksley, and is reabsorbed into the bourgeois milieu to which she belongs, these sexual threats emphasise her helplessness, and reinforce Sir Ralph's cruelty.

From the above it is perhaps evident that the plot of *The Poacher's Wife* is inconsistent with its political message. As the *Spectator* observed, the plotline in which Locksley and Dinah become outcasts is only loosely bound to Carew's polemic against the game laws, which emerges during the narrator's lengthy asides.[90] Locksley becomes a fugitive because of false accusations, not because of poaching; and similarly, Sir Ralph's eviction of Dinah has nothing to do with his preservation of game. This dislocation perhaps arose because the melodramatic plot, which relies on the simple opposition of good and evil, struggled to carry Carew's own ambivalence about poachers. Although the narrator castigates the game laws and poor laws as 'selfish laws' that persecute poverty, Carew nonetheless iterates More's notion that poaching is 'the first step in the long road of crime', and that the poacher inevitably 'finishes a career of wretchedness' at 'the gallows'. Moreover, although Locksley might be one of 'the wretched victims of those power-begotten edicts', Carew's portrayal of other poachers is far less sympathetic.[91] The gang that Locksley joins is made up of desperadoes who are not only poachers but also highwaymen and housebreakers. Later, he also depicts a poacher turned arsonist, Jackson, whose incendiarism is condemned as a wanton act of personal vengeance. As Jackson explains to his compatriot Granby:

> If they *will* make me a jail-bird, they must stand the consequence. […] As well be called a rick-burner as a poacher, and have revenge into the bargain – ah, revenge as shall make the rich man quake, and pay for his game law with his corn and his hay.

Here, although Jackson himself emphasises that arson is a form of reprisal, Carew nonetheless goes on to explicitly denounce it as a selfish undertaking committed in the 'blind

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[88] 'Err, v.1., v.3.a., v.4.a.' *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 20 February 2018].
[89] Carew, *The Poacher's Wife*, II, pp. 25, 31, 271.
[90] 'Cleveland – The Poacher's Wife', p. 257.
[91] Carew, *The Poacher's Wife*, I, pp. 85-87.

spirit of revenge'.[92] In doing so he depoliticises what Dickens recognised as a meaningful form of protest. Consequently, although Carew ostensibly lobbies for the reform of permissive laws through the persecution of Locksley and Dinah, the poacher is not always a victim, but a complex and often undesirable figure. This is also evident in Kingsley's novel *Yeast*.

Kingsley was a clergyman, a novelist and a radical. Although his biographer Brenda Colloms identifies him as a radical Tory, in the summer of 1848 he declared himself a Chartist.[93] He then became the assistant editor of the weekly periodical *Politics for the People*, the short-lived organ of Christian Socialism (it only lasted for seventeen issues).[94] However, despite his radical sentiments Kingsley was conflicted about poaching and the game laws. Towards the end of his life he remarked in a collection of essays, *Prose Idylls* (1873), that he had always lived in 'poaching counties, and on the edges of one forest after another'.[95] When he moved to Eversley in 1842, the same parish in which he would eventually be buried, he was settling in such a place. Located in Hampshire, and comprising of two hamlets on the borders of Windsor Forest, the ancient haunt of the Waltham Blacks, Kingsley's congregation was formed of farming and labouring families.[96] Consequently, there was more than one poacher in his weekly audience, and these figures inspired a number of sermons, at least one of which was preached in 1848.[97] If this was anything like 'The Value of Law', published six years later in his second series of *Sermons on National Subjects* (1854), then he warned his parishioners to 'avoid poaching, even once in a way', because 'the beginning of sin is like the letting out of water; no one can tell where it will stop.'[98] However, while he admonished poachers from the pulpit, his attitude changed when writing for the periodical press; this is evident in *Yeast*, which was first serialised in *Fraser's Magazine* between July and December 1848.

Established in 1830, *Fraser's* was published by James Fraser; financed by Hugh Fraser; and edited by William Maginn, a once prolific writer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. The venture was Maginn's idea: he wanted to provide himself with a periodical outlet for his radical Tory sentiments that no longer meshed with the more staid conservatism

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[92] Carew, *The Poacher's Wife*, II, pp. 55-56. Original emphasis.

[93] Brenda Colloms, *Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley* (London: Constable, 1975), p. 19; Thomas Hughes, 'Prefatory Memoire', *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1885), pp. ix-lxi (p. xix).

[94] Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), pp. 109-110.

[95] Charles Kingsley, *Prose Idylls: New and Old*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1874), p. 245.

[96] Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, p. 67.

[97] Charles Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. Frances Kingsley, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London: Henry S. King, 1877), I, p. 154.

[98] Charles Kingsley, 'The Value of Law', *Sermons on National Subjects* (London: Richard Griffin, 1854), pp. 32-44 (p. 42).

of *Blackwood's*.[99] From the beginning, then, *Fraser's* was calculated to appeal to Tories and, with a sale price of half a crown, competed with the likes of *Blackwood's* and the *New Monthly Magazine* for a middle- and upper-class readership. Its initial circulation is difficult to estimate: after its first year it boasted 8,700 subscribers, but this seems unlikely given that Fraser declared that it was a money loss as late as 1834.[100] A few years later, *The American Almanac* (1839) estimated that *Fraser's* monthly 'circulation [was] little short of 1,500' during 1838, which would place it respectably on par with periodicals like the *Gentleman's Magazine* and Frederick Marryat's *Metropolitan Magazine*.[101] In 1847 it passed into the hands of John William Parker whose son, John Parker, had attended King's College London with Kingsley.[102] He was made the new editor of *Fraser's*, and determined to abandon Maginn's acerbic, rollicking style; however, although he wanted to cultivate a more sophisticated tone, he still sought to maintain the magazine's country-house readership.[103] Kingsley's novel then, in which squires are satirised and poachers justified, was never calculated to please either the readers, or his friend and editor. Throughout the autumn instalments, Parker received an ever-increasing number of complaints, and asked Kingsley to terminate the novel early.[104]

The September number of *Yeast* featured an affray between 'a large gang of poachers, who had come down from London', and a posse of gamekeepers and villagers led by Lancelot, Kingsley's gentleman protagonist. Like the gang in *The Poacher's Wife*, these men are thorough criminals: 'when they had swept the county pretty clean of game,' we are told, 'they would just finish off the season by a stray highway-robbery or two.' However, although Kingsley condemns these urban poachers, he is sympathetic towards their rural counterparts; the labourers who kill a hare or pheasant to feed their families. This sentiment is voiced by Tregarva, a local gamekeeper and spiritual sage who guides Lancelot throughout the novel:

> I have no mercy on these Londoners. If it was these poor, half-starved labourers, that snare the same hares that have been eating up their garden-stuff all the week, I can't touch them, sir, and that's the truth.[105]

Through Tregarva Kingsley dichotomises the poacher, presenting him as either an outright criminal or a victim of the landowners' greed. This opposition is reinforced in the novel's

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[99] Rebecca Edwards Newman, '"Prosecuting the Onus Criminus": Early Criticism of the Novel in *Fraser's Magazine'*, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35.4 (2002), 401-419 (pp. 402-403).

[100] Patrick Leary, '*Fraser's Magazine* and the Literary Life, 1830-1847', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 27.2 (1994), 105-126 (p. 107).

[101] *The American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge, for the Year 1838* (Boston, MA: Charles Bowen, [1839]), p. 95.

[102] Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, p. 104.

[103] Leary, '*Fraser's Magazine* and the Literary Life', p. 120.

[104] Colloms, *Charles Kingsley*, pp. 108-109.

[105] Charles Kingsley, 'Yeast; or, The Thoughts, Sayings, and Doings of Lancelot Smith, Gentleman', *Fraser's Magazine*, September 1848, pp. 284-300 (pp. 296-297).

next instalment when Lavington, a caricature of the bluff and gouty squire, discovers one of Tregarva's 'filthy, rascally, Radical ballads'.[106]

Presented as the lament of 'a poacher's widow', the ballad is an apostrophe addressed to the local landlord. Bemoaning the loss of her husband, she condemns the squire who 'made him a poacher […] when you'd give neither work nor meat', and blames him for his death: 'There's blood on the game you sell, squire, | And there's blood on the game you eat!' By the end of the poem it is clear that the squire, an advocate of 'the gaol and the workhouse', is also responsible for the break-up of the family and the vagrant status of the now outcast widow. In the penultimate stanza the widow rises from her spot in 'the gloomy fir-woods', where she has been weeping, and 'wearily over the rough flints | Went wandering into the night.'[107] Here the 'wandering' condition of the poacher's wife is reminiscent of Dinah's fate, while the fact that she is going 'into the night' suggests that she, too, is directionless, disorientated and at risk of going astray. This melodramatic narrative further polarises the presentation of poachers in *Yeast*, emphasising the ignorance and cruelty of squires, and confirming the rural poachers' victimhood. This, of course, renders the poacher one-dimensional, and smothers the complexity of poachers and poaching with melancholy sentiment. After the foreshortened serial was brought to a close, Kingsley seems to have recognised this, and sought to redress it as part of his extensive revisions to the novel.

Following the success of his second Condition-of-England novel, *Alton Locke* (1850), Kingsley persuaded Parker to publish *Yeast* in book form in 1851. In the intervening years he had made several alterations to the serialised text, the most significant of which was the insertion of a new chapter before the poaching affray. In this episode Kingsley introduces the character of Crawy, a poacher only briefly referred to in *Fraser's Magazine*, who is arrested by Lancelot and Tregarva while setting nightlines to catch Squire Lavington's fish. He is a much more ambiguous figure than either the metropolitan poacher or the victimised labourer. A moucher living off hedge-rows, he is a 'scarecrow of rags and bones' with 'such a visage as only worn-out poachers, or tramping drovers, or London chiffoniers [scavengers] carry'. An impoverished vagrant figure he spends his time, like Will Fern, in and out of gaol for petty offences. As he confesses to Tregarva while begging to be released: ''taint a month now as I'm out o' prizzum along o' they fir-toppings […] I should like to ha' a spell o' fresh air, like, afore I goes in again.'[108] Arrested for the common crime of wood theft, having stolen the 'fir-toppings' pruned for fuel, and resigned to another term in prison, Crawy lives a dogged life between the constable and the gamekeeper.[109] Moreover, again like Will Fern (or Gilbert

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[106] Charles Kingsley, 'Yeast No. IV', *Fraser's Magazine*, October 1848, pp. 447-460 (p. 457).
[107] Ibid., p. 458.
[108] Charles Kingsley, *Yeast: A Problem* (London: John W. Parker, 1851), pp. 142, 144.
[109] Archer, *Social Unrest and Popular Protest*, pp. 13-15.

Locksley) there is something fugitive about his existence. Watching him from afar, Lancelot remembers that 'time was when he had looked on a poacher as a Pariah "hostem humani generis" [enemy of mankind] – and only deplored that the law forbid him to shoot them down, like cats and otters.'[110] Here Lancelot's simile, drawn from contemporary hunting culture, makes Crawy's position as an outlaw explicit; cats and otters, along with stoats, crows, hawks, buzzards, rats, owls, magpies and foxes, could be legally killed by anybody, anywhere and without a licence because they were classified as 'vermin'.[111]

Crawy possesses many of the traits that mark Fern and Locksley out as victims of an iniquitous system. Poaching and prison, we are told, are his only alternatives to starvation. Within the 'limited labour-field' of southern England he cannot get field-work, and 'the rights of property' ensure that he cannot farm because the wastes 'belong to poor old Lavington', and are preserved for the growth of 'game and timber'. However, although Kingsley portrays the vagrant poacher as a victim of legal and social inequalities, he also emphasises that his miserable existence is a punishment for past sins. As Tregarva tells Lancelot, Crawy began his poaching career as a boy 'miching away in church-time'.[112] Here 'miching' locates Crawy at the junction between poaching and vagrancy. As Linda Woodbridge remarks, the term belongs within 'the discourse of vagrancy', denoting 'not only a simple truant but specifically one who pretends to poverty'.[113] Meanwhile, Jefferies notes that there is 'a resemblance between the present provincial word "mouching" and Shakespeare's "mitcher"', a reference to *1 Henry IV* (1598), in which Falstaff asks if Prince Hal shall 'prove a micher and eat blackberries?'[114] This alignment of the vagrant and the poacher in the micher is augmented by Thomas Hood's digressive sketch, 'The Friend in Need' (1841). Here we are informed that 'when a young micher plays truant, it is not for a lounge about the homestead, but to roam in forbidden paths, or to visit places that are tabooed, the poacher's hut, or the gipsy's tent.'[115] Crawy's outcast condition, then, is not just dependent on systemic forces, but is also a product of personal transgressions; in the first instance, neglect of his spiritual welfare in favour of poaching and wandering. This is confirmed by the description of Crawy's 'bleared cheeks and drooping lips, and peering purblind eyes' – the sagging badges of drunkenness – and his 'perplexed, hopeless, defiant, and yet sneaking' expression.[116] Here the face of the moucher emblematises the warning that Kingsley gives would-be poachers in 'The Value of Law':

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[110] Kingsley, *Yeast*, p. 145.
[111] Hopkins, *The Long Affray*, pp. 42-44.
[112] Kingsley, *Yeast,* pp. 146, 149.
[113] Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), p. 35.
[114] Jefferies, *The Gamekeeper at Home*, p. 112; William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2002; repr. 2004), II. 4. 397-398.
[115] Thomas Hood, 'The Friend in Need', *New Monthly Magazine*, March 1841, pp. 389-399 (p. 397).
[116] Kingsley, *Yeast,* p. 142.

'hand in hand with poaching go lying, and deceit, and sneaking, and fear, and boasting, and swearing, and drinking, and the company of bad men and bad women.'[117] In the revised version of *Yeast* published in the early 1850s, Kingsley presents us with a far more ambivalent vagrant poacher then either Dickens or Carew. This perhaps reflects the bourgeoning conservatism that would eventually turn him into a Tory, but it is also dependent on changing attitudes towards poaching, and a de-escalation of social tensions after the 1840s.

Whether it occurred within the woods or on the page, poaching was often political. In this chapter I have traced how vagrancy was incorporated into poaching narratives for didactic and political ends, especially during the 1840s. In this decade radical writers re-appropriated the poacher's progress, and inscribed vagrancy with new meaning. Whereas in the morality tales it had been a symptom of the poacher's immorality, it now became a symbol of systemic injustice and the abuse of power. It would be a mistake, however, to think of these radical writers as belonging to a cohesive 'tradition'. Although Dickens, Carew and Kingsley shared similar principles, and utilised the same vagrant figure in their narratives, the aims of their texts vary enormously. *The Chimes*, with its wholesale rejection of all incumbent and alternative political orders, is much more extreme than either *The Poacher's Wife*, which is comparatively limited in its complaint, or *Yeast*, an equivocal text that often attempts to reconcile opposing parties. Moreover, it should also be recognised that the vagrant poacher was not solely used for didactic purposes during this period. From December 1840 to May 1841 Marryat serialised his novel *The Poacher* in the Sunday newspaper the *Era*, and published it the following year as *Joseph Rushbrook* (1841). In this boys' adventure, Joey, the child-hero, lives a 'vagrant life' poaching in Dorset, and is forced onto the road when his father kills a double-crossing higgler.[118] What follows is a picaresque adventure in which Joey becomes a street urchin, servant and country tinker. The novel has no overt political agenda, or even a moral. As the *New Monthly Magazine* remarked, readers will 'look for a moral' in vain as 'extraordinary good fortune attends nearly all those who least deserve it'.[119] Partisan politics are also notably absent from later depictions of the vagrant poacher.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *My Lady Ludlow* was serialised by Dickens, then the editor of *Household Words*, between June and September 1858. Like the other texts that I have examined in this chapter, it was published during a surge in poaching offences and features a vagrant poacher, Job Gregson.[120] He lives on the outskirts of Hanbury, where the novel takes place, 'squatting on Hareman's Common'. Reminiscent of More's Black Giles, who is likewise a squatter and 'never followed the same trade long', Gregson is a 'wild man of the

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[117] Kingsley, 'The Value of Law', p. 43.
[118] Frederick Marryat, *Joseph Rushbrook; or, The Poacher*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, 1841), I, p. 34.
[119] 'Joseph Rushbrook', *New Monthly Magazine*, August 1841, pp. 561-563 (p. 563).
[120] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 64-67.

woods, poacher, tinker, jack-of-all-trades'.[121] Moreover, Gregson is also strongly associated with Gypsies; his son, Harry, is 'half gipsy and whole poacher' and 'a gipsy-tinker'.[122] However, despite the fact that they emerge from the tradition of the morality tale, there is no sense that the Gregsons' poaching habits necessarily entail death or the commitment of a felony. In what Jenny Uglow describes as a 'gentle, rural, wished-for revision of history', the novel presents us with a process of gradual reform in which the autocracy of the Ludlows is replaced with a more harmonious, integrated society.[123] The Gregsons are incorporated into this vision; Job becomes the gamekeeper of the Hanbury estate, and Harry eventually assumes a more socially and culturally distinguished place as the village rector. In this narrative the tumultuous political process, which Dickens, Carew and Kingsley engage with, is replaced by an organic social evolution that assimilates the outcast and the indigent. Here the vagrant poacher still represents social inequalities, but his existence is a result of moral failings within the community, rather than flaws in the national political system. As a result, when efforts are made by the inhabitants of Hanbury to acknowledge Job 'it attracted him to the people, and attached him to the spot on which he had but squatted for a time.'[124]

In the decades following *My Lady Ludlow*, the depiction of the vagrant poacher became less common. Indeed, in Gaskell's text, set in the early nineteenth century, there is already a sense that he had become a distinctly historical figure. Writing in 1883 for the *Contemporary Review*, the journalist James Purves noted the absence of the poacher in fiction:

> It is somewhat surprising that none of our present-day novelists, like Charles Reade or Thomas Hardy, who are always on the outlook for romantic realism, whether it be in incident or in fact, have had their eyes directed to the rural poachers who abound in every shire.[125]

This observation holds a partial truth. The major novelists of the late nineteenth century did eschew the poacher. Even in Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (1886-87), which is set within forests with a rich poaching history, they are pushed to the margins. The single reference to contemporary poaching occurs during Winterborne's nighttime ride, when he hears the occasional 'report of a gun'; an unlocated pot-shot fired at 'pheasants at roost'. Apart from this, poaching is placed firmly in the past. Hintock's 'renowned poachers' are only mentioned during the narrator's antiquarian discourse on the various species of mantrap

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[121] Elizabeth Gaskell, *My Lady Ludlow, The Cranford Chronicles* (London: Vintage, 2007), pp. 281-484 (pp. 303, 433); More, *Black Giles,* p. 6.
[122] Gaskell, *My Lady Ludlow*, pp. 423, 425.
[123] Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993; repr. 1994), p. 472; also see, Cathrine O. Frank, 'Revolution and Reform in Elizabeth Gaskell's Fiction', *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 10.3 (2014), 421-439 (pp. 435-439).
[124] Gaskell, *My Lady Ludlow*, p. 433.
[125] James Purves, 'Poachers and Poaching', *Contemporary Review*, September 1883, pp. 350-359 (p. 350).

that were 'in use during those centuries which we are accustomed to look back upon as the true and only period of merry England.'[126] In the late Victorian period, when the events of the novel take place, these mechanisms, and the poachers they ensnared, seem to belong to a very different and distant time. This reflects the fact that, contrary to Purves's claim, poachers did not 'abound in every shire'; indeed, poaching for both sport and necessity were in decline. From the 1880s, cheap food imported from abroad made meat more accessible, and reduced the market for poached game. At the same time, trade unionism displaced poaching as an outlet for political discontent, and the diversification of working-class culture, which included the advent of pigeon fancying, dog racing and cycling, provided alternatives to poaching as a form of recreation.[127] Who controlled the land, its wildlife and the right to access it remained an issue of contention, but the protest against landowners became a more public affair as ramblers organised mass-trespasses.[128] The tenor of poaching, then, had undergone a dramatic shift by the late nineteenth century. Even Purves recognised this: 'the great strides of agriculture,' he opined, 'have driven it [poaching] into sneaking ways, and robbed it of its robust picturesque adventures.'[129]

[126] Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (London: Everyman, 1997), pp. 128, 392-393.

[127] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 83-84; Osborne and Winstanley, pp. 202-206.

[128] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Verso, 2001; repr. London: Granta, 2014), pp. 164-165.

[129] Purves, 'Poachers and Poaching', p. 351.

Part Two: The City

Chapter 3: Casuals

In *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861-62), his stupendous 'cyclopaedia of the industry, the want, and the vice of the great Metropolis', Henry Mayhew recorded that there was an annual influx of vagrants into London.[1] 'They come up to London in the winter,' he wrote, 'not to look for any regular work or employment, but because they know that they can have a nightly shelter, and bread night and morning for nothing, during that season'.[2] Although couched within the discourse of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor, this observation made at mid-century remained true throughout the rest of the Victorian period.[3] Writing in 1899 the journalist and one-time tramp T. W. Wilkinson noted that there was 'a general exodus from the road in the autumn': Gypsies moved to winter lodgings when the leaves began to fall, 'leaving their moveable homes dirty and tenantless', while the 'rank and file of the army – the unmitigated roadsters' followed them 'after all chance of obtaining work in the fields [was] gone.'[4] These vagrants arrived when the municipal refuges opened in November. There they would join the local homeless population, the native beggars of the town whose numbers would swell in winter as unemployed labourers and their dependents were forced onto the streets. The vitality of many trades was determined by the weather, and bricklayers, carpenters, painters and dockworkers could be frozen out of work for weeks at a time, while sailors were sometimes weather-bound throughout the coldest months.[5] The vagrant population of 'The City' was diverse.

Mayhew suggested that when vagrants retreated from the country during winter it was because:

> If they remained in the provinces at that period of the year they would be forced to have recourse to the unions, and as they can only stay one night in each place they would be obliged to travel from ten to fifteen miles per day, to which in the winter they have a strong objection.[6]

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[1] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those that Will Work, Those that Cannot Work, and Those that Will Not Work*, 4 vols (London: Frank Cass, 1967), I, p. iii.

[2] Ibid., II, p. 138.

[3] Indeed, it had been true since at least the sixteenth century, when vagrants likewise took advantage of the shelter and relief offered by towns and cities during the winter. See, A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 76-78.

[4] T. W. Wilkinson, 'Vagrants in Winter', *Good Words*, December 1899, pp. 31-36 (pp. 31-33); also see, Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 116.

[5] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; repr. London: Verso, 2013), pp. 36-37, 44; Raphael Samuel, 'Comers and Goers', *The Victorian City: Images and Realities,* ed. H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), I, pp. 123-160 (pp. 142-143, 146).

[6] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, II, p. 138.

This was not without justification. Journeys such as these were perilous. Without reliable food and shelter, exposure and starvation would have been imminent threats. Even if they managed to tramp from one workhouse to the next without being stranded by illness or the elements, then there was still no surety they would be received. In 'Told by a Tramp' (1866), a letter written to *All the Year Round*, an anonymous informant claimed that rural workhouses refused to admit wayfarers into the 'casual' or 'vagrant' ward if another union was within reach: he recorded that one time, having 'got to a place named Orsett', in Essex, the relieving officer ordered him to 'get on to Billericay, which was nine miles further.'[7] Understandably, then, tactics were used to avoid the open road in winter. One of these was 'retiring into the workhouse', as Wilkinson remarked.[8] Any destitute person with a settlement could admit themselves into their parish's workhouse, and leave again at will. Another strategy was to secure a gaol sentence. David Jones has identified a seasonal pattern to the petty crimes committed in the casual wards. The colder months witnessed an escalation in the number of workhouse offences, such as window breaking and vandalism, because the reliable shelter afforded by a term in prison was preferable to the single night's lodging provided by the casual ward.[9]

By far the most common policy, however, was to move to a town or city: there were several possible reasons for this. As Mayhew cynically observed, municipal charities attracted vagrants, but there were other advantages as well. When harvest work was unavailable, the city provided alternative sources of casual or short-term employment that unskilled and semi-skilled vagrants could perform. Although the winter might put bricklayers and dockers out of a job, it provided work for woodchoppers, gas-stokers, lightermen and sweeps. Iron and steel works also took on more labour during the winter.[10] Moreover, towns and cities had an assortment of accommodation that could be used flexibly according to the means and wants of the indigent. As well as night refuges run by philanthropists, and casual wards managed by Poor Law Guardians, there were also a range of common lodging-houses that varied in terms of price, comfort and cleanliness. These features were shared to a greater or lesser extent by all towns and cities. That said, Part II of this study focuses almost exclusively on London. Whereas Part I ranged from Yorkshire in the northeast to Devonshire in the southwest, in this section I have focused on one locality. London had the most workhouses, the greatest expenditure of charity, and the largest casual workforce of any city in Britain. As a result, it also had the largest vagrant population: as the American journalist Daniel Kirwan remarked

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[7] 'Told by a Tramp', *All the Year Round*, 28 April 1866, pp. 371-374 (p. 372).
[8] Wilkinson, 'Vagrants in Winter', p. 34; also see, Simon Fowler, *Workhouse: The People, the Place, the Life Behind Doors* (Richmond: The National Archives, 2007), pp. 21-23.
[9] David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 201-202.
[10] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 35-36; Samuel, 'Comers and Goers', p. 148.

in his metropolitan travelogue, *Palace and Hovel; or, Phases of London Life* (1870), 'there is not such a city in the world as London for vagrancy and vagabondism'.[11]

In this chapter, I first explore the resources available to vagrants in the metropolis, and the strictures imposed upon them by the law. These, I argue, conditioned the way in which vagrants walked the city, and produced a particular type of 'metropolitan vagrancy'. In the second part of the chapter I examine an understudied depiction of urban homelessness that runs like a motif throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: the queue outside the casual ward. An image common to novels, articles, paintings, illustrations and photographs, the queue of tramps or 'casual paupers' is an ambiguous emblem that expresses many of the concerns that were evoked by the anonymous and often impassive vagrant. It articulates anxieties about the difficult distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, and the indiscriminate charity that this gave rise to; and also conveys fears about the illiberality of the Poor Law, and the potentially revolutionary response that it might provoke from the vagrant crowd.

Metropolitan Vagrancy

It is impossible to determine the actual number of vagrants in nineteenth-century London. Like the national statistics that I discussed in the Introduction, those produced for the capital were equally inaccurate. These figures, while providing a general indication of the vagrant population, are therefore most useful as a barometer of public feeling. In 1851 the journalist George Augustus Sala, a colleague and friend of Charles Dickens, recorded that out of three million Londoners, seventy thousand were commonly thought to be homeless.[12] A decade later in 1861, the *London City Press* concluded that in addition to the 'immense number of delocalized outcasts' who occasionally relied on public and parochial relief when unemployed, there were '12,000 to 15,000 wandering vagabonds in the metropolis'. These habitual tramps, it suggested, accounted for five per cent of the total vagrant population, which hovered between 240,000 and 300,000.[13] Such enormous figures also featured in James Greenwood's survey of vice, *The Seven Curses of London* (1869). Here he claimed that the capital harboured an 'immense army of juvenile vagrants' numbering 100,000.[14] Meanwhile, Kirwan estimated that there were 'thousands of casuals who receive lodgings in the work-

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[11] Daniel Joseph Kirwan, *Palace and Hovel; or, Phases of London Life*, ed. A. Allan (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1963), p. 64.

[12] [George Augustus Sala], 'The Key of the Street', *Household Words*, 6 September 1851, pp. 565-572 (p. 565).

[13] 'The Casual Poor', *London City Press*, 9 November 1861, p. 4.

[14] James Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London*, ed. Jeffrey Richards (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 3.

houses' and a further '15,000 vagrants who do not frequent the work-houses' at all.[15] Taken singly these accounts do not tell us much, but as a body they present the capital as the enduring home of the homeless poor, a large and unnerving citizenry.

The extent of vagrancy in London was reflected by the number of its charities. As Jerry White has noted, philanthropy became prevalent in the nineteenth-century metropolis: out of 911 charities active at the century's end only 169 predated 1800.[16] Moreover, compared to the nation as a whole, 'the charities of London in extent, variety, and amount, [were] perfectly stupendous', as the reformer J. H. Stallard remarked. Writing in 1868, he recorded that out of £3.8 million given to charities each year, £2.7 million was distributed in the capital, and that £2.1 million of this was spent on 'the relief of bodily wants, [such] as food, dwelling, clothes': these were the necessities that vagrants lacked, and as a result they went to London.[17] In *Ragged London in 1861* (1861) the journalist John Hollingshead recorded that during the previous winter the 'soup-kitchens, ragged-schools, asylums, refuges, and all the varied machinery of British charity, [had] been strained to the utmost.'[18] In truth these outlets of relief always had an eager and extensive clientele. In 1856 Sala visited London's first refuge, Playhouse Yard, Cripplegate, which was opened in 1819.[19] In a lead article in *Household Words* entitled 'Houseless and Hungry', he reported that 'the average number of destitute persons admitted nightly is five hundred and fifty', but that 'as many as six hundred have been accommodated.'[20] Meanwhile, in her pamphlet *Our Homeless Poor* (1860), the reformer Ellen Barlie claimed that during 1859 the Field Lane Refuge had sheltered 12,000 people, and helped 1,200 into employment.[21] These were two of the largest asylums in the 1860s; others included Boar's Head Yard, South London Refuge, Newport Market Refuge, and Dudley Stuart's Refuge. Later in the century, the Salvation Army also established refuges throughout the city, first at Limehouse in 1888, and then in Clerkenwell, Westminster and Whitechapel, all of which had been opened by 1891.[22]

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[15] Kirwan, *Palace and Hovel*, p. 65.

[16] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 422.

[17] J. H. Stallard, *Pauperism, Charity, & Poor Laws: Being an Inquiry into the Present State of the Poorer Classes in the Metropolis, the Resources and Effects of Charity, and the Influence of the Poor-Law System of Relief: with Suggestions for an Improved Administration* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), pp. 15-16.

[18] John Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861*, ed. Anthony S. Wohl (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), p. 6; Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 45-46.

[19] Lionel Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds': Vagrant Underworld in Britain, 1815-1985* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 88.

[20] [George Augustus Sala], 'Houseless and Hungry', *Household Words,* 23 February 1856, pp. 121-126 (p. 125).

[21] Ellen Barlie, *Our Homeless Poor: and What We Can do to Help Them* (London: James Nisbet, 1860), p. 22.

[22] Robert Sandall, *The History of the Salvation Army*, 7 vols (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1947-86), III, p. 105.

Casuals

       The accommodation provided by refuges was deliberately austere. Throughout the
Victorian period philanthropists were concerned that the public's generosity would
demoralise the poor by encouraging them to rely on charity. Conditions in the refuges, where
a vagrant could typically stay for a week, were therefore spartan, as Sala's account testifies:

> We ascended a wooden staircase, and came into a range of long, lofty, barn-like
> rooms, divided into sections by wooden pillars […] Ranged on either side were long
> rows of bedplaces, trough-like, grave-like, each holding one sleeper.[23]

This description of the dormitories at Playhouse Yard, where the inmates slept on straw
mattresses and under leather covers, could also be applied to those at Field Lane, where
Barlie describes identical conditions.[24] Both reporters welcomed these circumstances,
assuring their readers that the wards provided no attractions for the idle vagabond. For the
vagrant poor, however, these refuges were sometimes far less satisfactory. In 1866 'A Real
Casual' wrote a series of letters to the journalist and civil servant J. C. Parkinson, who
published them in *Temple Bar: A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers*. The Real
Casual complained that in Field Lane the inmates slept on 'bare boards without straw or
anything', and that 'the whole place had a strong smell of tramps'; while the South London
Refuge, which slept up to a hundred and fifty men, was 'much worse than the casual wards',
the most unpopular form of accommodation readily available to vagrants.[25]

       In 1900 London was seventeen miles across and contained twenty-four casual
wards.[26] Ominously known as 'the spike' by its habitués, the casual ward was the official
mechanism of Poor Law relief for vagrants. Here they could spend a night in the workhouse
in exchange for a morning's labour, but the conditions within were unpleasant; as the
workhouse historian Simon Fowler notes:

> The worst-treated people in the workhouse were undoubtedly the vagrants or
> 'casuals' […] while conditions improved in the rest of the workhouse, in the casual
> wards they remained largely unchanged during the 90 years of the New Poor Law.[27]

As we shall see throughout this chapter, this is not entirely true: circumstances did change,
but they became more draconian. For the houseless poor, however, London's grid of casual
wards formed an important if unforgiving safety net; they were a barrier between the vagrant
and dire privation. Moreover, although applicants were not allowed to apply for relief at any
given casual ward more than once a month, the large number of both tramps and workhouses
within the metropolis meant that vagrants could nonetheless subsist off the Poor Law

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[23] [Sala], 'Houseless and Hungry', p. 124.
[24] Barlie, *Our Homeless Poor*, pp. 13-14.
[25] 'A Real Casual on Refuges: with Introduction and Notes by J. C. Parkinson', *Temple Bar*, April
1866, pp. 32-44 (pp. 34-35, 37).
[26] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 68; Josiah Flynt, *Tramping with Tramps: Studies and
Sketches of Vagabond Life* (New York, NY: The Century Co., 1899), pp. 260-262.
[27] Fowler, *Workhouse*, p. 182.

authorities for long periods of time. Indeed, Wilkinson informs us that the term 'spike-ranger' was used to describe those tramps who managed to rely exclusively on the casual wards; these vagrants were hardened to rough weather and workhouse conditions, and were predominantly male.[28] Women, it seems, rarely used the wards.

In 1845 only fifteen per cent of the casual paupers registered in workhouses were female, and by 1906 this figure had dropped to just nine per cent.[29] As we saw in the Introduction, women were more likely than men to enter the workhouse as permanent inmates, and this is certainly one factor that accounts for this low number. However, other causes may also have played a part. There may have simply been less beds available for female casuals; the new casual ward at St. Olave's Workhouse in Rotherhithe, which opened in the 1870s, had forty sleeping cells for men but only twelve for women.[30] Or else women were more adept at earning money by hawking, begging and prostitution; if accompanied by children, women were likely to be successful beggars, while the assumption that female vagrants were sexually available (see Introduction) may have made procuring custom easier for them than their male counterparts.[31] Certainly the anonymous author of *Indoor Paupers: by One of Them* (1885) believed that it was easy for women to escape the hardships of the casual ward. Speaking of his own experiences within the workhouse system, he declared that 'women given to haunting casual wards are, without exception, the most shiftless and stupid of their sex; for there are a hundred methods of avoiding these places open to women which are denied to men.'[32] He does not elaborate what these methods are. Nonetheless, the truth of his statement is borne out by reports that London's common lodging-houses, the most desirable form of accommodation, sheltered a more even number of men and women. Although the statistics for such places are sparse compared with those of the parish-run casual wards, it seems significant that when Kirwan visited one, he recorded that 'among the sixty persons present, there were at least twenty-five women, composed of female tramps, prostitutes, and peddlers of different kinds of commodities'.[33]

There are many reasons why vagrants would want to exchange the workhouse or refuge for the common lodging-house. Otherwise known as the 'rope shop', because as Sam Weller tells Mr Pickwick, 'the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking' pulled over 'two

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[28] Wilkinson, 'Vagrants in Winter', p. 31.
[29] Fowler, *Workhouse*, p. 189.
[30] Ibid., p. 59.
[31] Tim Hitchcock notes that begging with children was a common strategy for female beggars in eighteenth-century London. Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 117-119.
[32] *Indoor Paupers: by One of Them* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1885), p. 102.
[33] Kirwan, *Palace and Hovel*, pp. 202-203.

ropes', the lodging-house gave freedom to the tramp.[34] Although the accommodation might

not be much better, they provided an escape from the rules and requirements of the wards and

refuges. The most frequent objection to the refuges was their evangelical atmosphere. In the

1890s Josiah Flynt, a social investigator who became a tramp incognito, visited the Salvation

Army shelter in Whitechapel; there he met an inmate who wearily complained that the

Salvationists 'want us to sing 's loud 's ef we'd just got out of bed [*sic*]' after a day walking

the streets.[35] This urgent desire to convert the vagrant poor was likewise a grievance of the

Real Casual: Field Lane Refuge, he asserted, was 'governed by religious fanatics', while the

preachers at the South London Refuge 'would cram you full of religion and allow you to

starve.'[36] Meanwhile, in the casual wards conditions were worse: tramps would have their

clothes and possessions confiscated, and had to perform a work task in the morning. Typically

this was oakum picking or stone breaking, a job that required practice and skill: as the Real

Casual relates, when he was 'set to break two bushels' of granite in St. Giles Workhouse his

palms quickly became 'sore and blistered'.[37] Moreover, the casuals were subject to

intimidation by the workhouse porters. When Flynt was questioned by the porter at Poplar

Workhouse, 'I was so frightened that I would have told him anything he wanted.'[38] And Mary

Higgs, another incognito investigator, reported that she was sexually threatened. In her study

Glimpses into the Abyss (1906), she wrote, 'I had never realised before that a lady's dress, or

even that of a respectable working-woman, was a *protection*. The bold, free look of a man at a

destitute woman must be felt to be realised.'[39]

The common lodging-house, then, was a welcome alternative to philanthropic or

parochial relief, but it cost money. The lodging-house nomenclature suggests that the standard

price for a bed might be as low as 2*d*. When a policeman catches Alton out at night in Charles

Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850), he advises him to go to 'a twopenny-rope shop'.[40] Similarly,

in Dickens's last and uncompleted novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), the lodging-

house in the cathedral city of Cloisterham, a 'crazy wooden house […] all warped and

distorted', is called the Travellers' Twopenny.[41] In London, however, the price of a single bed

was typically 4*d*. (8*d*. for a double). This would grant access to one of the capital's numerous

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[34] Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, intro. Peter Washington (London: Everyman, 1998), p. 210.
[35] Flynt, *Tramping with Tramps*, p. 259.
[36] 'A Real Casual on Refuges', pp. 37-38.
[37] 'A Real Casual on Casual Wards: with an Introduction and Notes by J. C. Parkinson', *Temple Bar*, March 1866, pp. 497-517 (p. 512); Fowler, *Workhouse*, p. 196.
[38] Flynt, *Tramping with Tramps*, p. 261.
[39] Mary Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss* (London: P. S. King, 1906), p. 94. Original emphasis.
[40] Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. 60.
[41] Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, ed. Matthew Pearl (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 47.

lodging-houses, which numbered 1,241 in 1875.[42] Customers would get a bed in a dormitory, occasionally separated by sex, and would have access to a kitchen where they could cook and socialise. The conditions within, however, were notoriously unhygienic. Writing in 1842 the reformer and civil servant Edwin Chadwick argued that only police inspection could halt 'the continued impartation, if not the generation, of epidemic disease by the vagrant population who frequent' lodging-houses.[43] However, although his caution was heeded, and they were placed under police supervision from 1851, they continued to be hotbeds of dirt and disease.[44] Higgs's extensive investigation into lodging-house life contains numerous anecdotes about their uncleanliness: to spend a night in a 4*d*. bed was to be 'investigated by an uncertain number of "insect pests"', she assures us.[45]

The prevalence of the rope shop attracted the vagrant to London as much as the casual ward, the refuge, and the soup kitchen. It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that the vagrant poor could always afford to stay within these lodgings. As Raphael Samuel suggests, 'there was a good deal of interchange between the lodging-houses, on the one hand, where accommodation had to be paid for, and the Casual Wards and Refuges, on the other, where it was free.'[46] This interchange largely depended on the availability of casual labour, and the ability of the vagrant to perform it. Casual labour was made up of short engagements; was often unskilled; and was almost always seasonal. As Gareth Stedman Jones argues in his seminal study *Outcast London* (1971), metropolitan industries relied upon a large reservoir of labour that could be drawn upon during periods of peak production, and left to stagnate throughout the rest of the year: 'almost every major trade in London', he explains, 'attracted a surplus of underemployed workers who could be said to live on casual earnings.' By 1891 this workforce included 400,000 people, a tenth of the population of London, but in addition to this there were also thousands of vagrants who were also willing to take on occasional work.[47]

While defining the importance and the scope of London's casual labour market, Jones is keen to draw a distinction between the casual pauper and the casual worker: 'vagrants were quite distinct from ordinary casual labourers, both in their habits and their economic attitudes', he states. Nonetheless, there is an unavoidable slippage between these two figures. As he goes on to admit, for both contemporaries and historians 'it is difficult to draw a precise line of demarcation between the two groups.'[48] This is hardly surprising. Both classes relied

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[42] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 324-325, 331.
[43] Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, ed. David Gadstone (London: Routeledge/Thoemmes, 1997), p. 356.
[44] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 331.
[45] Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss*, p. 242.
[46] Samuel, 'Comers and Goers', p. 128.
[47] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 52-66.
[48] Ibid., p. 88.

on the same systems of relief; they were both dependent on seasonal fluctuations in trade; and they both lived in the same over-crowded areas of the city. Moreover, although the more prosperous casual labourers were relatively static, entrapped within communities where shopkeepers would give them credit, and where they had established relationships with local foremen, at the bottom end of the scale there was greater mobility, and a regular exchange of occupations between vagrants and casual labourers. While vagrants struggled alongside labourers for early morning work at the docks or on building sites, the poorest labourers took up itinerant occupations, including scavenging and hawking.[49] These could involve travelling long distances within the city, and had a distinctly vagrant complexion: as Mayhew reports, 'it usually takes the bone-picker from seven to nine hours to go over his rounds, during which time he travels from 20 to 30 miles'. Earning 8*d.* would be an 'excellent day's work' for the scavenger, just enough for food and a single-bed in a lodging-house. Those who were elderly or very young, however, only earned 2*d.* or 3*d.*[50] Such days might end in the refuge, the casual ward, or out on the street.

The permeability of the labour market, and the insecurity of jobs, often escaped contemporary commentators. With their desire to taxonomise, Victorians would depict a stratified social order in which everyone had a permanent place. In *In the Slums* (1884), an account of his missionary work in St. Giles, the Anglican priest D. Rice-Jones described his parishioners as:

> Costermongers, bricklayers' labourers, scavengers, dealers in rags and bones, sandwich-men, chimney-sweeps, odd men from Covent Garden market, scene-shifters and hangers-on of the theatre, artisans who are always out of work, women and girls who earn a poor living in all sorts of ways, and a migratory people without visible means of living.[51]

Here Rice-Jones obscures the fact that the 'migratory people without visible means of living' belong to the same class as those who have identifiable occupations, and appear to be fixed within his parish. In fact, all of these classes were mobile and interchangeable. Some may well have confined themselves to St. Giles all the year round, but others would be seasonal visitors coming for the winter, and would have moved from parish to parish. This movement through London was shaped by the resources and opportunities afforded by the city, and resulted in what I have called 'metropolitan vagrancy'. This movement was typified by vibration and oscillation; occurred mainly during the winter; and was guided and to some extent controlled by the city's legislature and its structures of relief.

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[49] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 61, 81-88, 172-173.
[50] Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, II, p. 139.
[51] D. Rice-Jones, *In the Slums: Pages from the Note-Book of a London Diocesan Home Missionary* (London: James Nisbet, 1884), p. 2.

Casuals

In her account of London's modernisation, Lynda Nead has identified circulation as the major concern of the Victorian urban planner. Metropolitan improvements sought to create 'purposeful movement: of water, air, traffic, people and commodities'; this can be seen in the construction of London's railways, roads, suburbs and sewers, all of which served to decongest the city in various ways. Movement, it seemed, was the key to countering the problems caused by urbanisation. But not all movement was good: as Nead has argued, 'the urban ideal was not irrational velocity or indiscriminate mobility, but ordered circulation through networks of streets, pipes and tunnels.'[52] Vagrancy, which was perceived as another consequence of urbanisation, as I shall discuss in Chapter 4, was therefore a disruptive force within the city. Erratic and aimless, it needed to be controlled; and throughout the Victorian period legislation was used to curtail it. Just as sewers were built to channel human excrement, the substance with which the vagrant 'residuum' were often compared, so laws were passed and casual wards established in order to funnel the very poorest through the city. These attempts to circumscribe the 'irrational' movement of outcasts should be seen as part of the same programme of modernisation that caused slums to be cleared and the Underground to be built. It is also through them that the origins and the quality of metropolitan vagrancy can be described.

The 1824 Vagrancy Act had already ensured that sleeping out in the open was a crime; but Robert Peel's 1829 Metropolitan Police Act assigned the apprehension of the homeless perpetrators as one of the specific duties of London's new modern police force. Under the act, police officers, or 'peelers' as they were known, were empowered to arrest 'all persons whom he shall find between sunset and the hour of eight in the forenoon lying in any highway, yard, or other place, or loitering therein, and not giving a satisfactory account of themselves.'[53] In theory, this meant that the vagrant could not sleep in the street, but had to keep moving all night: it is on the basis of this legislation that Jo, the luckless crossing sweeper in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53), is 'moved on as fur as ever I could go and couldn't be moved no furder' by Inspector Bucket and his colleagues.[54] In practice, however, there were stopping points where the police permitted vagrants to rest. The Indoor Pauper, who spent a month as a London casual before he admitted himself into a workhouse, noted that although some vagrants dozed in parks during the day to refresh themselves for a 'nightly prowl', others slept at night within the arches of London Bridge and Blackfriars Bridge, and on the benches in Trafalgar Square and on the Embankment.[55] The effect of this was to ghettoise the vagrant, at least during the hours of darkness, which made them easier to locate,

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[52] Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 9, 13.
[53] 10 Geo. 4, C. 44.
[54] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Nicola Bradbury (London: Penguin, 1996; repr. 2003), p. 731.
[55] *Indoor Paupers*, pp. 2-4.

to question, and to apprehend. It is no coincidence that a detective unerringly escorted Kirwan to London Bridge, where he was shown 'a perfect gypsy encampment' under the first arch.[56]

The Metropolitan Police Force, an integral part of the modernising city, was therefore engaged in promoting healthy circulation: rather than allowing vagrants to block the streets, they kept them on the move, and channelled them in particular directions. The casual wards performed similar work. As the historians and Fabians Sydney and Beatrice Webb pointed out, the 1834 New Poor Law made no special provision for vagrants, and it was not until the early 1840s that the casual ward was instituted. A 'separate semi-penal establishment', the casual ward was designed to segregate immoral tramps from indoor paupers, and to ensure that their work was harder and their dietary poorer than the permanent inmates: in no way was wandering to be encouraged.[57] The metropolitan wards also restricted and directed movement in insidious ways. In their original form casual wards provided one night's shelter to the vagrant in return for a morning's labour. This meant that having entered the workhouse the vagrant would not be released until late in the morning the following day; as Robert Humphreys notes, this precluded them from the casual job market, which recruited workers early, and typically only for the day.[58] Casual paupers were therefore prevented from working and earning the few pence required for a lodging-house, which was the easiest escape route from the casual-ward system. Reliance on the casual ward was further encouraged by the fact that beds were limited, and the queue for admission therefore began to form early in the afternoon. As a result, the vagrant who wanted to be sure of shelter often left one casual ward only to line up outside another a few hours later. This restricted the time in which they could find work or beg money, and this limitation was compounded by the fact that a single ward could only be used once a month, which – in theory – compelled the houseless to walk to the next available refuge. The structure of casual ward relief therefore enforced a reliance on the Poor Law and conditioned the movement of vagrants, obliging them to tramp between workhouses.

As the nineteenth century progressed, legislation ensured that the metropolitan casual wards became more coercive. In 1864 and 1865 the Metropolitan Houseless Poor Acts were introduced: ostensibly liberal measures, they required that all vagrants must be admitted to the workhouse regardless of their character or place of settlement. However, as Seth Koven notes, they also aimed to clear the streets of a public nuisance; they guaranteed that there was no excuse for sleeping out, which was, of course, already a criminal offence.[59] After the Local

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[56] Kirwan, *Palace and Hovel*, p. 65.
[57] Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law Policy* (London: Longmans, 1910), pp. 33-36.
[58] Robert Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode: A History of Responses to the Roofless and the Rootless in Britain* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 101.
[59] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 33-34.

Government Board began to administer the Poor Law in 1870 the workhouses were increasingly used as a deterrent, and later casual ward statutes were more overtly draconian.[60] The 1871 Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulations Acts mandated that casuals could not be released until 11 o'clock on the morning after their admission. More importantly, they insisted that all metropolitan workhouses be treated as a single institution, and increased the penalty for using a casual ward more than once in a given month to three days confinement. Of course, for vagrants living in London this drastically restricted their chances of abiding by the law, and increased their chances of being incarcerated. The new acts can therefore been seen as a method of slowing down the movement of vagrants by turning casual wards into holding stations that would gradually capture and release the houseless, and thus ensure that they filtered through the metropolis at a regular rate. This intensified the casual ward's penal atmosphere, which was again augmented by the 1882 Casual Poor Act. Under this statute, vagrants were now held for a minimum of two nights, and if they used the same ward within a month, then they were held until the fourth morning after their admission. The London workhouses were still considered one institution. Although in 1892 an amendment was made allowing vagrants to be released at 5.30 am in summer and 6.30 am in winter, these acts remained in force well into the twentieth century.[61]

From a legislative standpoint, we witness the development of a hermetically sealed system in which casuals are guided by police and Poor Law officials from one holding area to the next. Their movement is limited by the location of these sites of detention, and controlled by a procedure of capture and release; the power of this system would have been particularly apparent during winter when vagrants used the capital as a bolthole to shelter against the elements. What emerges from this is what Michel Foucault called a carceral archipelago; a network of penal and semi-penal institutions from which there is no escape, only an endless exchange of one form of detention for another.[62] The Poor Law, it could be argued, therefore created tramps and perpetuated their vagrant existence. This was certainly the view of some contemporaries: Greenwood complained in *On Tramp* (1883) that 'the existing system of poor laws are responsible for the plague of tramps with which the country is afflicted', while Higgs called the casual wards National Tramp Manufactories.[63] However, although the legislature created a distinct 'metropolitan vagrancy' in which vagrants, confined to the capital for winter, were steered through workhouses, tramping from one to the next, it would be a mistake to think that this was inescapable and non-negotiable.

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[60] Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (1994; repr. London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 300-301.

[61] Humphreys, *No Fixed Abode*, pp. 99-107; Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 272-273; Rose, *'Rogues and Vagabonds'*, pp. 83-84.

[62] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 293-308.

[63] James Greenwood, *On Tramp* (London: Diprose & Bateman, [1883]), p. 65; Higgs, *Glimpses into the Abyss*, p. 172.

Casuals

Although the senior civil servants who managed the Poor Law wanted the casual wards to work in concert, this never actually happened. Workhouses were parochial affairs at the mercy of local politics. Their Masters and Poor Law Guardians determined how vagrants were treated, and conditions were unequal throughout the metropolis.[64] As A Real Casual attests, each ward had a reputation: Marylebone Workhouse is 'a very decent place' and the casuals are allowed to smoke in bed, 'a luxury denied at every other place in London', whereas the ward in Holborn Workhouse 'is perfectly without fire, and might as well be in the open air'.[65] Consequently, although vagrants did move from one workhouse to the next, their movement was determined, to some extent, by the conditions that they expected to meet there; they were not without volition. Moreover, vagrants could negotiate the system. A Real Casual was able to enter Lambeth at least six times during his month as a casual because 'it [was] scarcely likely [the porter] would recognize one among the many he takes in every night'; and Greenwood, who spent a night in the same ward in 1866, noted that one juvenile vagrant there bragged that he had been in the same ward for 'three successive nights'.[66] The porter was not omniscient. This was well known to both officials and the public, and anxieties about how the wards were being used, and whether or not the applicants were deserving, surfaced throughout the period. These are captured in the actions and writings of incognito social investigators, like Greenwood, Flynt, Higgs and Jack London, all of whom went into the casual wards 'to learn and make known the truth'.[67] They are also powerfully expressed by the numerous depictions of the casual queue, which as London noted in his undercover exposé of the East End, *The People of the Abyss* (1903), was a common sight in the Victorian metropolis. Speaking of the line outside Whitechapel Workhouse, he recorded that for the workers who lived opposite: 'each and every day, from one in the afternoon till six, our ragged spike line is the principal feature of the view commanded by their front doors and windows.'[68] In depictions of these waiting and often passive vagrants, writers and artists forced their audience to confront the illegibility of the city's homeless and the political, social and spiritual fears that they provoked.

Casuals Rejected: Kingsley 1848 and Dickens 1856

In 1847, the worst year of the Irish Famine (1846-49) coincided with a severe financial crisis. The famine resulted in the death and displacement of millions of labourers. One million died in the Irish workhouses from disease and starvation; 2.1 million emigrated to America; and

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[64] Fowler, *Workhouse*, pp. 12-13.
[65] 'A Real Casual on Casual Wards', pp. 508, 514.
[66] Ibid., p. 504; Greenwood, *Seven Curses of London*, p. 155.
[67] James Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 January 1866, pp. 9-10 (p. 10).
[68] Jack London, *The People of the Abyss*, 2nd edn (London: Hesperus Press, 2013), p. 71.

tens of thousands crossed the Irish Sea to England.[69] The majority of these ended up in London's slums: Whitechapel, Leyton, Saffron Hill and West Ham all had Irish 'colonies', while the Rookery of St. Giles was known as 'Little Ireland'. By 1851 there were 109,000 Irish-born Londoners living in the metropolis.[70] Meanwhile, over-speculation in grain imports and railway companies caused what contemporaries considered the worst economic crash of the century; it triggered the collapse of many firms and banks, leading to the widespread loss of savings and livelihoods.[71] During this period the vagrant population was already riding high, as it had been throughout most of the 1840s, but the famine and financial crisis together caused it to surge. In 'The Pauper Hotels of England' (1848), *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* reported that between 1846 and 1847 the aggregate number of English vagrants relieved by seventy-nine unions had more than doubled, reaching 32,683. These same workhouses had also admitted 11,548 Irish casuals, an increase of 574 per cent on the previous year. As the article's title implies, *Bell's* was unsympathetic towards the wandering poor; 'the number of crafty rogues is rapidly increasing', was the conclusion that it drew from the statistics.[72] This attitude became a mainstay of public opinion.

Throughout the summer of 1848, MPs called upon Charles Buller, the President of the Poor Law Board, to respond to 'the great increase of vagrant poor' throughout England. In particular, they were anxious about the number of Irish casuals claiming relief, and the influx of tramps into cities: Leeds, Manchester and Norwich had all seen a significant growth in vagrancy, 'whilst in the City of London it had increased to an enormous extent.'[73] At the root of these petitions were concerns about the poor rate, and the amount that voters would have to pay. In the period of economic uncertainty that followed the financial crash, the middle and upper classes were looking to retrench; to repair losses acquired when stocks plummeted, and to secure the remainder of their capital. They were therefore reluctant to pay for an apparently ever-increasing vagrant population. In August that year, Buller responded to these concerns by issuing a Minute to the Poor Law Guardians. Here he claimed 'that the system which has of late years been adopted in the relief of [the] casual poor has been the principal cause of the extension of vagrancy.' Tougher measures would be required if vagrants were to be deterred: the work task should be enforced in every union; the police should be used as Assistant Relieving Officers; and the deserving poor should be issued with official tickets detailing their character and verifying their destination. His main policy, however, was that casuals

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[69] Gordon Bigelow, *Fiction, Famine, and the Rise of Economics in Victorian Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 81; Jude Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 7-8.

[70] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 132-134.

[71] Bigelow, *Fiction*, p. 81.

[72] 'The Pauper Hotels of England', *Bell's New Weekly Messenger,* 24 September 1848, p. 4.

[73] 'Vagrancy', *Evening Mail*, 12 June 1848, p. 1; 'The Increase in Vagrancy', *Morning Chronicle*, 9 August 1848, p. 2.

should no longer be given indiscriminate relief. The able-bodied and undeserving should be denied succour:

> A sound and vigilant discrimination in respect of the objects of relief, and the steady refusal of aid to all who are not ascertained to be in a state of destitution, are obviously the most effectual remedies against the continued increase of vagrancy and mendicancy.[74]

This strategy was underpinned by Buller's belief that it was 'the thief, the mendicant, and the prostitute, who crowd the vagrant wards'.[75] The press, too, adopted this conviction.

Although the upsurge in vagrancy was a theme of parliamentary debates throughout the summer, it was not until the autumn that the newspapers seized upon it. As journalists quipped throughout the period, this was a habit of the Victorian press: 'discussions in the newspapers about the homeless poor are a standing order of the day at this season', remarked one reporter in November 1863.[76] This year, however, this annual topic was treated with particular bitterness. Taking Buller's lead, the press portrayed vagrants as fraudsters. In September, *Bell's* declared that the 'wicked rogues who obtain relief at the unions under false pretences […] fatten upon the means provided for honest persons'.[77] The following month the *Staffordshire Advertiser*, reporting on a meeting of the midland Guardians, opened its account with the assertion, 'there is no doubt that vast numbers of persons travel from Union-house to Union-house in the most systematic manner, and make this description of vagrancy their *profession*.' It also quoted the *Medical Times*, which diagnosed 'the pie-bald multitude' of tramps as 'chiefly composed of professional beggars, thieves, thimble-riggers, poachers, prostitutes, and scoundrels of the very worst description.'[78] A few days later, the *Spectator* referred to tramps as the 'parasitical enemy' and 'human vermin'.[79] The casual wards, then, were full of undeserving imposters. However, although this assumption dovetailed with Buller's Minute, the newspapers were far more severe when it came to their treatment. While Buller refused to specify 'any additional test or punishment that shall prevent the abuse of relief', right-wing newspapers cried out for harsher penalties.[80] The *Spectator* recommended 'a special form of punishment, such as *travaux forces* [hard labour]'; *Bell's* wanted to enforce whipping, a sentence that could be served to male incorrigible rogues under the 1824

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[74] Charles Buller, 'Official Enforcement of the Distinction between Vagrancy and Destitution', *The Spectator*, 4 November 1848, pp. 1059-1060.

[75] Ibid., p. 1060.

[76] 'The Homeless Poor', *Saturday Review*, 21 November 1863, pp. 664-665 (p. 665). Nearly forty years later T. W. Wilkinson remarked that 'that hardy annual, the increase of vagrancy, crops up for discussion in the newspapers about October or November.' See, Wilkinson, 'Vagrants in Winter', p. 32.

[77] 'The Pauper Hotels of England', p. 4.

[78] 'The Vagrancy Question: Important Meeting of Union Clerks and Guardians at Stoke-on-Trent', *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 28 October 1848, p. 8. Original emphasis.

[79] 'Improved Treatment of the Poor', *Spectator,* 4 November 1848, p. 1062.

[80] Buller, 'Official Enforcement', p. 1059.

Vagrancy Act; and *Fraser's Magazine* wished to extend the applicability of this punishment 'by flogging every man or boy convicted of begging'.[81] It was within this cut-throat milieu that Kingsley serialised *Yeast*, also in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Kingsley's chief concern was the agricultural poor. As we saw in Chapter 2, *Yeast* is a Condition-of-England novel that addresses rural poverty and the sins that it engendered. However, Kingsley was never chained to Hampshire: London was only an hour and a half away by train, and as the assistant editor of *Politics for the People*, and an attendant at F. D. Maurice's weekly meeting of Christian Socialists, he made the journey frequently. During his visits to Maurice and John Parker, who was the publisher of both *Fraser's* and *Politics for the People*, it is easy to imagine that he passed the queues outside the casual wards as he travelled north from Waterloo to their rooms in Lincoln's Inn and the Strand.[82] But whether he regularly encountered these sights or not, in the November instalment of *Yeast* he included a workhouse scene that both captures and critiques the hostility then felt towards the casual poor.

Bearing a note from London for Lancelot, whose fortune has been imperilled by the collapse of his uncle's bank, the vicar of Whitford stops 'at the city of A——' in order to dissuade Lancelot's cousin, Luke, from joining the Catholic Church. After an unsuccessful interview he leaves Luke's lodgings and begins to fret over his conversion, and whether his own High-Church principles pushed Luke from Anglicanism. As he paces through the night he steps into a gothic nightmare: 'grey clouds were rushing past the moon like terrified ghosts'; 'the wind was sweeping and howling down the lonely streets'; and the 'gaunt poplars groaned and bent, like giants cowering from the wrath of Heaven'. In this apocalyptic and supernatural cityscape the only people left are the houseless poor who have been rejected from the casual ward:

> As he went on, talking wildly to himself, he passed the Union Workhouse. Opposite the gate, under the lee of a wall, some twenty men, women, and children, were huddled together on the bare ground. They had been refused lodging in the workhouse, and were going to pass the night in that situation. As he came up to them, coarse jests, and snatches of low drinking-songs, ghastly as the laughter of lost spirits in the pit, mingled with the feeble wailings of some child of shame. The vicar recollected how he had seen the same sight at the door of Kensington Workhouse, walking home one night in company with Luke Smith; and how, too, he had commented to him on that fearful sign of the times, and had somewhat unfairly drawn

[81] 'The Pauper Hotels of England', p. 4; 'Improved Treatment of the Poor', p. 1062; 'The Plague of Beggars', *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1848, pp. 395-402 (p. 402). On the vagrancy laws see, Lorie Charlesworth, *Welfare's Forgotten Past: A Socio-Legal History of the Poor Law* (Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish, 2009), p. 171.
[82] Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), pp. 110-111; Thomas Hughes, 'Prefatory Memoire', *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet: An Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1885), pp. ix-lxi (p. xi).

a contrast between 'the niggard cruelty of popular Protestantism,' and the fancied 'liberality of the middle age.'[83]

Outside this workhouse we see the vagrants whom Buller would reject from the casual ward: the idle vagabonds with their 'coarse jests' and vulgar 'drinking-songs'. Intermixed with these reprobates, however, are wailing children, their innocent dependents. Here Kingsley presents us with a critique of Buller's system, and his belief in the power of the discriminating eye that belongs to everyone of 'ordinary intelligence'.[84] Not only does the composition of the crowd highlight a lack of discernment, but the vagrants' presentation seems to deny the possibility that the deserving and the undeserving can be separated. Passing the workhouse, the vicar sees only the vague forms of 'some twenty' casuals 'huddled together', and even when he draws near they do not become more visible. Likewise, although the vicar's ear picks up the noise of jests, songs, laughter and crying, all of these sounds are 'mingled' in a general cacophony. The vagrants, then, are impervious to the discriminating senses; this resistance to differentiation leads to an irresolvable ethical conundrum.

Although Kingsley condemns the severity of Poor Law relief, he also acknowledges that there is no ready alternative. His general censure of the system is articulated by the vicar's diagnosis of the casual line as a 'fearful sign of the times'. One of several references made to Thomas Carlyle during the course of the novel, this rubric directs us to his 1829 essay 'Signs of the Times'. Here Carlyle characterises the nineteenth century as 'the Mechanical Age'; a period in which efficiency, profit and production govern the spiritual and material aspirations of England. One consequence of this is that 'men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand.'[85] For Kingsley and likeminded contemporaries, Buller's stringent Minute, designed to reduce the poor rate and the number of idle persons, was yet more evidence of this unfeeling attitude. As *The Times* opined in a contemporary article, also published in November 1848, those who 'are most competent to scrutinize a mendicant's case' – which presumably included Workhouse Masters and Poor Law Guardians – 'are so convinced of extensive imposture that they pass by and become hardened against everything that begs.'[86] However, the alternative to this, which Kingsley identifies as indiscriminate almsgiving, is equally abhorrent. In a parody of the 'liberality of the middle age', the vicar, finding he has 'no silver', gives away 'some fifteen or twenty sovereigns' to the casuals. Such haphazard acts of charity were severely censured in this period: in 'Beggars and Almsgivers' (1849), for example, an article published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, they

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[83] Charles Kingsley, 'Yeast No. V', *Fraser's Magazine*, November 1848, pp. 530-547 (pp. 533-534)
[84] Buller, 'Official Enforcement', p. 1060.
[85] Thomas Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times', *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, ed. Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 59-85 (pp. 64, 67).
[86] *The Times*, 7 November 1848, p. 5.

are castigated as 'the seeds of demoralisation, debauchery, and crime'.[87] Kingsley likewise condemns the vicar's actions. His recklessness is signalled by the 'whining and flattery, wrangling and ribaldry' of the vagrants; postures that confirm their greed and moral degradation. Meanwhile, the fact that the vicar 'hurried off', 'not daring to wait and see the use to which his money would be put', captures the shame he feels at his improvidence.

Kingsley uses the image of the casual line to address a problem of the modern metropolis, the 'deformation' or depersonalisation of the gift. In human societies the act of gift-giving, or charity, has historically been made between known participants. In the modern city, however, such exchanges often take place between strangers: urbanisation breeds alienation. One consequence of this anonymity, which is of course exaggerated in the case of the mobile vagrant, is that benefactors cannot be sure of who they are giving to, and whether the charity that they are dispensing is appropriate. As a result, within Victorian London, 'the gift relationship [was] replaced by a promiscuous compound of indiscriminate almsgiving and careless Poor Law relief', as Gareth Stedman Jones explains.[88] Kingsley, setting his casual scene in the city of A——, but likening it to one outside Kensington Workhouse, implies that these metropolitan conditions are also in evidence elsewhere. The inadequacy of Poor Law relief on the one hand, and the complexities of personal philanthropy on the other, coalesced in the figure of the outcast casual. Unknown and strongly associated with vice and crime, their often pitiable physical condition evoked the inner conflict between liberality and reticence that accompanied charity in the streets. This was an abiding concern throughout the Victorian period, and can be seen in Dickens's 'A Nightly Scene in London' (1856), an article which is also set on a November night, 'very dark, very muddy, and raining hard.'[89]

While walking with a friend, Dickens 'accidently strayed into Whitechapel' on 5 November 1855. There he was arrested by the sight of five vagrants 'crouched against the wall of the Workhouse':

> They were motionless, and had no resemblance to the human form. Five great beehives, covered with rags – five dead bodies taken out of graves, tied neck and heels, and covered with rags – would have looked like those five bundles upon which the rain rained down in the public street.
>   'What is this!' said my companion. 'What *is* this!'
>   'Some miserable people shut out of the Casual Ward, I think,' said I.
>   We had stopped before the five ragged mounds, and were quite rooted to the spot by their appearance. Five awful Sphinxes by the wayside, crying to every passer-by 'Stop and guess! What is to be the end of a state of society that leaves us here!'[90]

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[87] 'Beggars and Almsgivers', *New Monthly Magazine,* March 1849*,* pp. 301-306 (p. 301).
[88] Jones, *Outcast London*, p. 252.
[89] Charles Dickens, 'A Nightly Scene in London', *Household Words*, 26 January 1856, pp. 25-27 (p. 25).
[90] Ibid., p. 25.

Faced with five featureless and genderless heaps, Dickens gropes for an apt simile to explain the static forms. The vagrants, however, resist interpretation. Veering between agrarian 'beehives' and profane corpses, each attempt that Dickens makes to be figurative collapses and becomes a reassertion of the vagrants' literal condition: they are 'covered with rags'. This is an obvious symbol of poverty that nonetheless baffles Dickens and acts as a bulwark to further analysis. Their illegibility is also registered by Dickens's companion. His repeated query, 'what is this!', a question that slurs into an exclamation, speaks of a panic induced by alienation as much as it does of humanitarian outrage. The uncertainty that these immobile and anonymous figures create in this first encounter is elaborated throughout the article.

Having been granted an interview by the Master of Whitechapel Workhouse, Dickens questions him about the characters and histories of the outcasts: 'they are not shelterless because they are thieves for instance. – You don't know them to be thieves?', he asks. His concern is philanthropic; he wants to know whether it would be responsible to 'give them a trifle'. All he can glean from the Master, however, is that they are 'women, I suppose' and that the workhouse has rejected them because the casual ward is full. Other than that, the local authorities 'don't know anything about them.' This anonymous condition is maintained even when Dickens interviews them. Walled behind an impassive mien, a product of their poverty, they are 'all dull and languid': 'no one cared to look at me; no one thanked me', Dickens remarks. This unworldly detachment is translated into a supernatural quality at the end of the article as Dickens watches them shuffle out of sight. They 'faded away' he notes, 'melted away into the night in the strangest manner I ever saw'.[91] The muddy, rain-swept streets absorb their impenetrable and ragged forms, and the article concludes with a profound sense of their inscrutability.

In this editorial for *Household Words*, Dickens models responsible charity. Placed within the same philanthropic framework outlined by Kingsley, Dickens tries to negotiate between the two extremes; the indifference of the Poor Law and indiscriminate giving. He questions the Workhouse Master, he questions the vagrant poor, and – unlike the vicar of Whitford – he goes to a public house to 'get change for a sovereign' when he finds himself 'without silver': in the context of an anonymous stranger gold would be too great a gift.[92] However, despite these measures the vagrants are still unknown, and Dickens's charity is ultimately still impartial. Moreover, neither Dickens's questions nor his shillings provide a satisfactory response to the riddle of the 'awful Sphinxes'; 'what is to be the end of a state of society that leaves us here!' Although the sphinx is a pervasive symbol in the history of art and literature, and is saturated with significance, it seems likely that this is a reference to Carlyle, who poses and answers a similar question in *Past and Present* (1843). Speaking of a

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[91] Dickens, 'A Nightly Scene in London', pp. 25-26.
[92] Ibid., p. 26.

protest performed by Manchester Chartists, another passive assemblage of the 'hungry' and the 'desperate' who 'came all out into the streets, and – stood there', Carlyle says that although they were dumb, 'they put their huge inarticulate question, "What do you mean to do with us?"'; this, Carlyle intones, 'is the first practical form of *our* Sphinx-riddle. England will answer it; or, on the whole, England will perish'.[93] The five vagrants outside the workhouse, then, embody the revolutionary potential of the outcast and the indigent. This capacity is, of course, emphasised by the fact that Dickens encounters them on the fifth of November, a day well remembered for 'gunpowder, treason and plot.'

In *Flâneuse* (2016) Lauren Elkin describes the *flâneur*, the privileged man of wealth with the leisure to walk about the city:

> Both surveyor and surveyed, the *flâneur* is a beguiling but empty vessel, a blank canvas onto which different eras have projected their own desires and anxieties. He appears when and how we want him to.[94]

Dickens's female casuals subtly alter this proposition. In some ways they function as analogues for the *flâneur*, of which Dickens, a compulsive urban walker and observer, was one.[95] They too are strangely abstracted, a physical presence that is nonetheless a profound absence of history, hopes and intentions. Moreover, they also serve as receptacles of anxiety and desire. This becomes most apparent at the end of the article when Dickens, having concluded his tale, relates why he chose to record it in the first place:

> My companion wrote to me, next day, that the five ragged bundles had been upon his bed all night. I debated how to add our testimony to that of many other persons who from time to time are impelled to write to the newspapers, by having come upon some shameful and shocking sight of this description. I resolved to write in these pages an exact account of what we had seen.[96]

Obviously a metaphor for restless angst, we are encouraged to read the companion's sleepless night as a testament to the importance of the social concerns explored in Dickens's narrative. Nonetheless, the uneasy bed has a seedy underbelly that gestures towards the sexual vulnerability, and perhaps availability, of such women. Here the female casual blends with the London streetwalker, a figure that was long considered the sole female counterpart to the *flâneur*.[97] However, although the casuals possess some of Elkin's *flâneurial* traits, they also resist her definition in useful ways. The homeless cannot be summoned like the *flâneur*, and

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[93] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, ed. Chris R. Vanden Bossche (London: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 18-20. Original emphasis.
[94] Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice and London* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), pp. 10-11.
[95] See, Matthew Beaumont, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London, Chaucer to Dickens* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 347-373.
[96] Dickens, 'A Nightly Scene in London', p. 27.
[97] Elkin's monograph has done much to dispel this idea, but she writes in the wake of feminist critics such as Janet Wolff, Mary P. Ryan, Elizabeth Wilson and Lynda Nead. See Nead for a critique and summary of this discussion, pp. 67-73.

they are not nearly so accommodating. Their presence, unwanted and sometimes unexpected, encountered – perhaps – when one has gone astray, demands an interpretation and an immediate response. This is the confrontation that Dickens and other artists forced themselves and their audiences to have.

Casuals Relieved: Fildes 1869 and 1874

The passage of the 1865 Metropolitan Houseless Poor Act met with a mixed response. Its promise to provide food and shelter to every vagrant who applied to the casual ward, no matter their character or past conduct, was welcomed by the liberal press: the *Daily News* announced that the new act would 'be thoroughly satisfactory to all real well-wishers of the homeless poor', and the *Illustrated Times*, while acknowledging that some casuals were 'not altogether saints', nonetheless asserted that this was 'no reason why they should be left to starve.'[98] The Poor Law Guardians, however, were dissatisfied with the new measure on two counts. First, the act revoked the power of workhouse officials to reject the undeserving poor; second, they believed that expanding the provision made for casuals would lead to an increase in vagrancy. The Bermondsey Guardian Mr Mars was convinced that it would 'increase vagrancy one hundred fold' and 'make nothing but a nation of vagabondism', while Mr Tubbs, a Marylebone Workhouse official, claimed that England seemed to be 'reverting to the times of Queen Elizabeth, when vagrants roamed about with impunity.'[99] The attitude of Tubbs and Mars was shared by many of their colleagues, and as a consequence the act was unevenly enforced. Reporting in late October 1865, the *Illustrated Times* discovered that 142 casuals had been rejected from the Bermondsey Workhouse during the course of a week, and 'left to find refuge in other parishes or to pass the night in the streets.'[100] Such defiance meant that by January 1866 'an impression had gone abroad that the Houseless Poor Act had broken down and was a failure', as the Metropolitan Inspector of the Poor Law Board acknowledged.[101] It was at this fraught moment that Frederick Greenwood, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (*PMG*), instigated an undercover exposé of life in a metropolitan casual ward: 'A Night in a Workhouse' (1866).

Greenwood's investigation was opportunistic. As the Guardians baulked against the Houseless Poor Act, a severe winter closed over London, placing its homeless at risk.[102] Meanwhile, the *PMG*, an evening newspaper for West End gentlemen, had begun to flounder

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[98] 'Marylebone Workhouse and the Casual Poor', *Daily News*, 25 October 1865, p. 4; 'Poor-law Guardians in Rebellion', *Illustrated Times*, 28 October 1865, p. 262.

[99] 'The Houseless Poor', *South London Press,* 21 October 1865, p. 5; 'Marylebone Workhouse and the Casual Poor', p. 4.

[100] 'Poor-law Guardians in Rebellion', p. 262.

[101] 'The Houseless Poor Act', *Morning Post,* 1 January 1866, p. 3.

[102] Koven, *Slumming*, p. 33.

and needed a boost in sales. Greenwood therefore decided to commission his brother, James Greenwood, to report on the topical issue of the casual poor, much as Dickens had done in 'A Nightly Scene in London'.[103] The difference would be that James would dress himself as a 'sly ruffianly figure' and enter the ward himself. Choosing Lambeth Workhouse as his destination, James set out in January 1866 to test whether the Guardians were obeying the Houseless Poor Act. However, he also had an ulterior motive: to uncover the truth about the casual poor. As he explains in the first number of his three-part series, he aimed:

> To learn by actual experience how casual paupers are lodged and fed, and what the 'casual' is like, and what the porter who admits him, and the master who rules over him; and how the night passes with the outcasts whom we have all seen crowding about workhouse doors on cold rainy nights.[104]

Here Greenwood promises to surmount the anonymity of the vagrant, emblematised by the familiar sight of the casual line, the outcasts 'crowding about workhouse doors'. What he discovered was that the ward – a cold, three-walled shed with a floor 'encrusted with filth' – was populated by a 'ruffian majority' who were 'at liberty to do just as they liked'; they swore, smoked and sang, and bullied the 'peaceable decent men' who formed the 'industrious few'.[105]

The influence of 'A Night in a Workhouse' should not be underestimated. It directly impacted the *PMG*'s sales, earning it anywhere between 1,500 and 9,000 new subscribers (sources vary), and thus saved the paper from bankruptcy.[106] Moreover, it sparked a series of copycat investigations commissioned by the metropolitan press: in the following days and weeks, the *Observer*, *The Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Daily News*, the *Saturday Review*, and the *Morning Star* all sent their reporters on midnight excursions to the casual wards of London.[107] These homages to 'A Night in a Workhouse' helped to establish its legacy. James Greenwood enjoyed enduring fame as 'The Amateur Casual', the pseudonym he adopted in the aftermath of the investigation: twenty years on, references to 'The Amateur Casual' could still go unglossed in the newspaper and periodical press, while undercover exposés, like C. W. Craven's 1887 'A Night in the Workhouse', capitalised on Greenwood's success and celebrity. Indeed, as Luke Seaber has recently argued, 'A Night in a Workhouse' inaugurated a 'half-century Golden Age of Greenwoodian incognito social investigation' in which a

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[103] Koven identifies Dickens's night walks in the *Uncommercial Traveller* as an influence on Greenwood; 'A Nightly Scene in London' is very similar to these. See, Koven, *Slumming*, p. 35.
[104] Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', 12 January 1866, pp. 9-10.
[105] Ibid., p. 10; James Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 January 1866, p. 10; James Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 January 1866, pp. 9-10 (p. 10).
[106] J. W. Robertson Scott, *The Story of the 'Pall Mall Gazette'* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 169; B. I. Diamond, J. O. Baylen, and J. P. Baylen, 'James Greenwood's London: A Precursor of Charles Booth', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 17.1-2 (1984), 34-43 (p. 39).
[107] Koven, *Slumming*, p. 49.

number of other 'amateurs' infiltrated casual wards across the country for both the copy and the thrill.[108] For this study, however, the most important consequence of the Greenwoods' investigation was the way that it altered perceptions of the casual poor.

Having revealed the deplorable condition of both the casual ward and its inmates, Greenwood signs off his report: 'the moral of all this I leave to you.'[109] A few chose to interpret it as a confirmation that the Poor Law was uncharitable. In 'A Night in the Casual Ward of the Work-House, in Rhyme' (1866), the anonymous M. A. versified Greenwood's narrative, and took on his invitation: the penultimate stanza, boldly entitled 'MORAL', reads: 'John Bull will now most plainly see | The want of Christian charity; | Or e'en of that philanthropy | That ought to rule the Workhouse!'[110] Many more, however, latched onto the depraved nature of Greenwood's casuals, complaining that the Houseless Poor Act, and the inadequate organisation of the casual wards, had led to the indiscriminate admission and interaction of both the deserving and the undeserving, and that this would lead to the demoralisation of the innocent. Those who adopted this position took their cue from Frederick. On 16 January, the day following the final instalment, the editor placed the following conundrum before his enlarged readership:

> Take thirty or forty tramps of the worst kind, make them herd together in an empty shed naked and miserable throughout the whole of a long winter's night, and what can you expect except to produce a sort of chapel of ease to the Cities of the Plain for the hideous enjoyment of those who are already bad, and the utter corruption of those who are obliged to hear what they cannot prevent?[111]

This account of how vicious 'tramps of the worst kind' are allowed to mingle in an indiscriminate 'herd' with the innocent, who are in turn corrupted by what they are 'obliged to hear', became the standard narrative of the casual ward. In 'The Houseless Poor in Stepney' (1866), *The Times* disclosed that female casuals are 'pigged' together, 'the fever-smitten London tramp with the healthy girl from the country, and the clean wayfarer with the parasite-covered denizen of the street'; moreover, as in The Amateur Casual's account, 'the quiet and helpless, the young and the old, are left to the mercy of the ruffians'.[112] Similarly, in 'The Lambeth Guardians and the Casual Poor' (1866), the *Daily News* revealed that when they also visited the Lambeth Workhouse they discovered that the vagrants were still 'clustered together for the sake of animal heat', and that 'the weak and feeble were at the

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[108] Luke Seaber, *Incognito Social Investigation in British Literature: Certainties in Degradation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 46.

[109] Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', 15 January 1866, p. 10.

[110] [Anon.] M. A., 'A Night in the Casual Ward of the Work-House, in Rhyme: Dedicated to the Million', *Vicarious Vagrants: Incognito Social Explorers and the Homeless in England, 1860-1910*, ed. Mark Freeman and Gillian Nelson (Lambertville, NJ: True Bill Press, 2008) pp. 76-80 (p. 80).

[111] 'Casual Wards', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 January 1866, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

[112] 'The Houseless Poor in Stepney', *The Times*, 27 January 1866, p. 12.

complete mercy of the strong and ruffianly'.[113] And the social reformer Stallard, writing in
The Female Casual and her Lodging (1866), argued that the Houseless Poor Act had resulted
in 'an indiscriminate herding together of the hardiest and most impudent vagrants in the
Metropolis', and that the deplorable organisation of the workhouses had turned the casual
ward into 'a school of vagrancy and petty crime'.[114]

We should, however, be wary of these homogenous narratives. In the summer of
1866 Stallard himself orchestrated an incognito investigation into female casual wards,
having been persuaded by Greenwood's notion that disguise could uncover the character of
the vagrant poor, a class whose 'confidence is not easily obtained by strangers'. But the
testimony of the anonymous 'pauper widow' whom he sent into the wards contradicts his
claim that casuals are fierce vagabonds: she tentatively declares that they are 'not altogether
bad.'[115] Likewise, the Indoor Pauper, who describes 'A Night in a Workhouse' as a 'clever
and highly coloured sketch', reports: 'strange tales have been told of the recklessness and
ruffianism of the wretches who haunt casual wards. So far as I could see, there is little
foundation for them.'[116] Nonetheless, the potency of the Greenwoods' narrative exposes a
cultural anxiety. No matter their political allegiance, commentators were universally
concerned by the indiscriminate nature of relief and the kind of casuals that were being
allowed into London's workhouses. At the root of this was a fear that the 'herding' of casuals
would engross the vagrant population by enabling the old stagers to entrap innocents in a life
of vagabondage; this suspicion appeared all but confirmed as the number of vagrants began to
escalate between 1866 and 1869.[117] Within this context the significance of the casual queue
altered: it no longer represented the problem of who to relieve because everyone (in theory)
would be received; instead, it marked the threat of contamination and demoralisation, and this
raised what was at stake when it came to differentiating the habitual tramp and the honest
wayfarer. Only by identifying, monitoring and controlling the professional vagrant could the
innocent be in some measure protected.

Fildes's illustration 'Houseless and Hungry' (1869) (figure 3.1) both broached and
assuaged concerns about discrimination. Appearing on 4 December 1869 in the first issue of
the *Graphic*, a magazine that targeted the same upper- and middle-class market as the *PMG*,
Fildes's woodcut portrays a line of casuals queuing outside a police station waiting to claim

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[113] 'The Lambeth Guardians and the Casual Poor', *Daily News*, 26 January 1866, p. 8.
[114] J. H. Stallard, *The Female Casual and her Lodging: with a Complete Scheme for the Regulation of Workhouse Infirmaries* (London: Saunders, Otley, 1866), pp. 5, 66.
[115] Ibid., pp. 2, 4, 58.
[116] *Indoor Paupers*, p. 10.
[117] Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police*, pp. 181-182.

Casuals

Figure 3.1. Luke Fildes, 'Houseless and Hungry' (1869), engraving © Mary Evans Picture Library

their tickets for admission to the ward.[118] With a shallow foreground, the illustration brings the casuals close, which allows the audience to inspect the vagrants and enforces a sense of intimacy; these qualities are enhanced by 'the journal's portable character', as the art historian Caroline Arscott notes, and the fact that the picture took up a full-page.[119] Viewers are consequently placed in an empowered position similar to that of the upright police officer, whose piercing eyes and hawk-like visage suggest that he is a minute and careful observer as he stares down the casual line. Like him, they are discriminating spectators who watch the crowd without being watched; apart from a sinewy youth, lowering at the audience beneath the brim of his cap, nearly all the casuals are turned away. This association between policeman and viewer is further intensified by the text accompanying the picture. A catalogue of the vagrants arrayed before us, it reveals that the old man on the far left 'has only been in London three days, and purposes to leave in the morning'; that the next two men 'are vagabonds'; that the central figure with 'the quasi-respectable air' is an alcoholic and a

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[118] For a thorough account of the *Graphic* see, Andrea Korda, *Printing and Painting the News in Victorian London: 'The Graphic' and Social Realism, 1869-1891* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 49-56.
[119] Caroline Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Raphael Cardoso Denis and Colin Trodd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 102-116 (p. 110).

radical; and that the 'mechanic' holding his child 'has been ill' and is now looking for work. Just like the policeman, who will tell you that the vagabond in the slouched hat is a 'well-known beggar', and that the drunkard 'is a character', the audience becomes privy to information that enables them to identify imposters.[120] The text and image together, then, are a comforting combination: as Arscott remarks, they allow the viewer to 'enact the procedure assigned to the police' of surveying and interpreting the casual poor.[121]

Nonetheless, both the article and illustration also point to the anxieties evoked by the casual line. What Fildes portrays is the model of vagrant relief. The police officer is being used as an Assistant Relieving Officer for the casual ward, a policy that was recommended in Buller's August Minute and which became common practice after Greenwood's investigation.[122] Moreover, it is clear that the officer is an able monitor, and that he can control the vagrant ruffians, all of whom are subdued in his presence. Despite this, there is still a sense that the system is ineffective. The itemised description of the casuals concludes with a confirmation that the Houseless Poor Act is in force: 'all these people, with many others, received tickets, and were admitted into the casual ward of one of our great workhouses'. This assurance, however, is tainted by the fact that while some of the casuals will 'carry out their professed intention of seeking work', the rest will 'spend another idle, shiftless day in the streets or parks, and […] present themselves next night at another metropolitan police office, to be examined and certificated, and subsequently bathed, sheltered, and fed.'[123] In other words, they are spike-rangers, preying on the poor rates. The picture also has qualities that might have made contemporaries uneasy.

Entitled 'Houseless and Hungry', like Sala's compassionate article on the Asylum for the Houseless Poor, the illustration might be calculated, as Andrea Korda argues, 'to evoke sympathy, even indiscriminate sympathy'.[124] The image itself, however, complicates this reading. While some groupings are intensely pitiable, like the mother bearing her babe and ticket in the foreground, and the self-contained family standing by the drunkard, the others are ambiguous, or even sinister. As Arscott notes, when viewing the casuals without the guiding text, we are confronted with 'a rank of rigid expressions' that baffle moral judgements.[125] Like Dickens's five bundles, many of the vagrants are immobile and impassive, their intentions and histories a disconcerting blank. Meanwhile, the youth standing on the right is menacing as he glares at the viewer: although his bare feet indicate his wretched want, his expression is full of a wrathful accusation that makes the viewer uncomfortable. For

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[120] 'Houseless and Hungry', *Graphic*, 4 December 1869, pp. 9-10 (p. 10).
[121] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', p. 109.
[122] Koven, *Slumming*, p. 49.
[123] 'Houseless and Hungry', p. 10.
[124] Korda, *Printing and Painting*, p. 60.
[125] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', p. 110.

audiences coming to the first issue of the *Graphic* the pitiable, illegible and disturbing aspects of Fildes's illustration would have been particularly piquant: assuming that they read the pages consecutively, they would first be confronted with the illustration, and only once they had studied it, and turned the page, would they encounter the explanatory text.

Fildes's illustration was met with approbation: according to his son and biographer L. V. Fildes, the work earned him the commission to illustrate Dickens's *Edwin Drood*.[126] The power of the picture lay in the fact that, although it was ultimately reassuring, it expressed a popular concern that the houseless poor might be really unknown, despite the involvement of the police. These fears were exacerbated by the growth in the vagrant population. By the end of the 1860s it was thought to have risen from 30,000 at the beginning of the decade to around 80,000.[127] Contemporaries were alarmed, and many agreed with Stallard that vagrancy was 'reaching gigantic proportions and need[ed] immediate attention'.[128] Stallard himself advocated the need for surveillance: in a lecture in 1870 made to the Chalmers Association in Edinburgh, he declared that 'it is only by continuous observation, and not always then, that malingering is exposed'; and in his pamphlet *Pauperism, Charity, & Poor Laws* (1869) he proposed that each vagrant should be registered and photographed in order to 'trace the habits of the individual and prove the act of vagrancy'.[129] Stallard's convictions were shared by many charities, the most influential of which was the Charity Organisation Society (COS).

Established in 1869, COS sought to stop the demoralisation of the poor by putting an end to their reliance on charity. Self-dependence was the key to spiritual and social prosperity, it argued. It therefore lobbied against charities that gave clothing to children because they reduced parental responsibility, and against soup kitchens and refuges that gave succour to the houseless poor.[130] Moreover, it used 'technologies of information collection, surveillance, and investigation' both to ensure that applicants for relief were genuine, and to prove acts of vagrancy. Throughout the 1870s it enjoyed a groundswell of popular support, which was the consequence of a generally prosperous decade. In 1882 their campaign for the passage of the Casual Poor Act was successful; this was the act that increased the severity of the casual ward, and assured that claiming relief from the Poor Law was akin to penal punishment.[131] It was within this unpleasant atmosphere of animosity towards the vagrant

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[126] L. V. Fildes, *Luke Fildes, R. A.: A Victorian Painter* (London: Michael Joseph, 1968), pp. 13-14.
[127] Jeffrey Richards, 'Introduction', *The Seven Curses of London*, ed. Jeffrey Richards (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. v-xxi (p. xi).
[128] Stallard, *Pauperism, Charity, & Poor Laws*, p. 33.
[129] Ibid., p. 34; J. H. Stallard, 'The Scottish Poor Law, Examined in its Relation to Vagrancy', *Pauperism and the Poor Laws: The Lectures Delivered in Edinburgh Under the Auspices of the Chalmers Association in 1869-70 with Kindred Papers*, ed. Thomas Ivory (Edinburgh: Seton & Mackenzie, 1870), pp. 1-22 (p. 21).
[130] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 271-280.
[131] Koven, *Slumming*, p. 98.

Figure 3.2. Luke Fildes, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward* (1874), oil on canvas ©
Royal Holloway, University of London

poor that Fildes reappraised 'Houseless and Hungry', and reconfigured it in his 1874
Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward (figure 3.2).

  Applicants for Admission was one of four oil paintings submitted to the Royal
Academy Exhibition between 1873 and 1875 that were based on illustrations drawn for the
Graphic. All four, which alongside Fildes's work included *Leaving Home* (1873) and
Deserted (1874) by Frank Holl, and Hubert Herkomer's *Last Muster* (1875), are examples of
what has since been called Social Realism, a form in which investigation and documentation
are blended with artistry: Fildes, for example, employed vagrants that he 'discovered in his
nightly wanderings round the London streets' to model for him.[132] Art historians have noted
that when Fildes reworked 'Houseless and Hungry' he made several significant changes. The
use of oils, of course, allowed him to introduce colour to the casual line: what was the
'mechanic's' family (now sporting two extra children) is picked out in yellows, pinks and
turquoise-greens; the woman in the foreground, her child at her side, is highlighted with
touches of red; and a cripple on the far-right, a new addition to the scene, adds a streak of
scarlet with his soldier's coat. These gleams of colour, worked into an otherwise
monochromatic canvas, indicate the moral worth of these applicants and highlight the most
distressing groups. Fildes also altered the composition of his panorama, introducing more

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[132] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', p. 104; Fildes, *Luke Fildes*, p. 25; Korda, *Printing and
Painting*, pp. 1-7.

women and children to the painting. He replaced one of the sturdy vagabonds, for example, with a mother and her daughter; like the mechanic's children and the child in the foreground, she, too, is picked out in virtuous green. These additions help to make the casuals more pitiable as a whole, and draw thoughts of the *deserving* poor to the forefront of the viewer's mind. The most striking alteration, however, is the narrativisation of the picture.[133]

Narrative, or genre painting, was popular in the Victorian period. These were paintings that invited 'reading', and shared several features with the Victorian novel, including serialisation and a reliance on physiognomy.[134] The appeal of these pictures was that they encouraged audiences to piece together the narrative of the painting's subjects by examining the details of their faces, frames, postures and clothes. In the case of city scenes, like John Ritchie's *A Summer Day in Hyde Park* (1858) or William Powell Frith's *Derby Day* (1856-58), the canvas was crowded with 'serried rows or self-contained clumps of figures, each with its own story to tell', as Alan Robinson explains.[135] In *Applicants for Admission*, Fildes turned 'Houseless and Hungry' into a narrative painting by reworking the rigid physiognomies of the applicants into faces that might be more easily interpreted.[136] More than that, he invited close visual reading by painting his panorama on an eight-foot canvas; like the casuals on the page of the *Graphic* that were pressed up close, the sheer size of those in the painting forces us to look at them, and allows us to examine them in detail. *Applicants*, however, is not as straightforward as the cityscapes by Ritchie and Frith. As Arscott comments, it 'equivocates between the anecdotal and the illegible', and in this way it both solicits and frustrates our attempts to read it.[137]

Faced with the gallery of casuals, many seem easy to interpret. Most of the deserving poor have legible postures and faces that speak of their need or their virtue. Within the family group the father is tender with his child, while the boy's gaunt and pallid face attests to their hunger. Similarly, the woman walking away is looking down towards her baby in a manner that suggests compassion, while her little girl, peaky round the cheeks and leaning in towards her mother, testifies to their want and isolation. Another figure easily interpreted is the applicant talking to the police officer. Like a vision of the boy grown up, he is also pale and haggard, his hands knotted together in a skeletal gesture that exposes several tendons. And if the message was not clear that this man is starving, Fildes includes a stringy dog at his feet attacking a scrap of bone: as Sala wrote to Fildes in a congratulatory note, his only reservation was 'that *dog* of yours, gnawing a bone: he is not wanted: You have written up

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[133] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', pp. 113-115; Korda, *Printing and Painting*, pp. 120-121.
[134] Alan Robinson, *Imagining London, 1770-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 127; Julia Thomas, *Victorian Narrative Painting* (London: Tate Gallery, 2000), pp. 12-15.
[135] Robinson, *Imagining London*, p. 137.
[136] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', pp. 113-115.
[137] Ibid., p. 114.

"Hunger" plainly enough on your canvas'.[138] But some of the other casuals are not so easy to read. The men talking to the solider, whose face is turned away, are shrouded in shadow, while the old man in the doorway of the police station is an enigma: his face is just a blur. These figures have unreadable motives, histories and affections, and none of them are clearly undeserving. This is not, however, where the legibility of *Applicants for Admission* ends, because one of the main features of this painting, which has hitherto been ignored, is its clear critique of the casual-ward system.

Critics past and present have focused on the casuals. When *Applicants for Admission* appeared in the Royal Academy Exhibition it received a mixed response from reviewers, but these were primarily focused on the string of wayfarers and whether they were a fit subject for art: some, like the *Saturday Review*, determined that they were 'too revolting for an art which should seek to please, refine, and elevate', while others, like the *Athenaeum*, declared them a success, saying, 'there is not a figure that is not genuine in design or faithful and true in sentiment'.[139] Later critics, including Korda, Arscott and Robinson, have noted that we are meant to pity the casuals.[140] What has been overlooked is that we are also meant to criticise the police officer. The officer is another figure that Fildes altered. Whereas in 'Houseless and Hungry' he was a stock-still observer, critically surveying and held apart from the crowd, he is now grouped with the starving casual, his portly figure and ruddy face contrasting sharply with the vagrant. Indeed, as he leans back to peer at the relief ticket, the brim of his helmet drawn over his eyes, he mirrors the slumped drunk in the centre of the painting, the only casual we are encouraged to condemn. He, too, has a rubicund face, indicating his alcoholism, while his broad paunch identifies him as a successful scrounger who has mooched off charities and the poor rate. Moreover, his belly, like that of the police officer, is juxtaposed with the empty guts of the man to his right, who cringes into his innards like the starving vagrant. The parallels between these two groups, I would suggest, is an indictment of casual-ward system, and the officers who administered to it. After all, both the police officer and the drunkard feed off the rates, and appear to do so at the expense of others.

The muster of blank and unreadable casuals presented in 'Houseless and Hungry' raised anxieties about discrimination, but soothed these by providing a textual guide that aligned the reader with the observant and knowing official. In *Applicants for Admission* Fildes reworked his illustration for opposite ends. Through his presentation of the police officer he raised uncomfortable questions; not about the character of the casuals, many of whom were made more legible through the process of narrativisation, but about the nature of

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[138] Quoted by Fildes, *Luke Fildes*, p. 27. Original emphasis.
[139] 'The Royal Academy', *Saturday Review*, 2 May 1874, pp. 561-562 (p. 562); 'The Royal Academy', *The Athenaeum*, 2 May 1874, pp. 599-602 (p. 602).
[140] Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', pp. 113-115; Korda, *Printing and Painting*, pp. 120-121; Robinson, *Imagining London*, p. 151.

the administration. It is no longer only the casuals who we are supposed to critically assess, but also the police, the casual ward and the Poor Law Board (by now the Local Government Board). Meanwhile, the relationship between text and image has been reversed. Whereas in 'Houseless and Hungry' the text was a source of comfort and clarification, in *Applicants for Admission* its presence is disconcerting, complicating the easy legibility of the virtuous poor. In the 1874 Royal Academy Catalogue the following quotation was partnered with the painting:

> Dumb, wet, silent horrors! Sphinxes set up against the dead wall, *and none likely to be at the pains of solving them until the general overthrow*:
>> Charles Dickens, extract from a letter in the third volume of Forster's *Life of Dickens*.[141]

Without knowing 'A Nightly Scene in London', or having read the (as yet) unpublished volume of John Forster's *Life of Dickens* (1872-74), Fildes selected this extract from a letter Forster showed him in which Dickens describes the workhouse scene in Whitechapel.[142] His choice, of course, solidified his connection with Dickens. His illustrations for *Edwin Drood* were a turning point in his career and, like Forster and Sala, he was involved in the author's memorialisation:[143] his illustration '"The Empty Chair" – Gads Hill, Ninth of June, 1870' (1870) bears the date of Dickens's death in its title, and depicts his vacant study in his country house in Kent.[144] However, the quotation does more than that. It emphasises that the casuals harbour a potential insurrection no matter how wretched and pathetic they look: indeed, in light of the catalogue, the soldier and his companions in particular may have been granted a conspiratorial, even mutinous air. It is this revolutionary potential of the metropolitan vagrant that I discuss in the next chapter. There I address the London 'loafers', a locus of anxiety throughout the 1880s and 1890s, whose poverty and 'savagery' marked them out as a source of social danger.

London 1902

The significance of the casual line altered over the course of the Victorian period. Changes in legislation, like the Houseless Poor Act, inevitably shifted what was at stake when it came to depicting the houseless queuing for relief. It also changed to fit with the political and social

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[141] Quoted by Arscott, 'From Graphic to Academic', p. 111. Added emphasis.
[142] Fildes describes how he came by the quotation in an interview with the *Magazine of Art*. See, W. W. Fenn, 'Our Living Artists', *Magazine of Art*, January 1880, pp. 49-52. For the letter see, Charles Dickens, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), VII, p. 742.
[143] Sala was the author of *Charles Dickens* (1870), a short biographical pamphlet.
[144] Fildes, *Luke Fildes*, pp. 13-16.

Figure 3.3. Jack London, 'Girl Waiting Before Whitechapel Workhouse' (1902), photograph © Huntington Library

views of artists; this is clearly shown by Fildes's reorientation of the same scene between 1869 and 1874. As is the case throughout this study, it is rare that 'authentic' vagrants are able to represent themselves: even the letters by A Real Casual, or a text like *Indoor Paupers: by One of Them*, are made suspect by their anonymity. A rare exception to this is a photograph taken by Jack London in 1902 of a line of casuals outside Whitechapel Workhouse (see figure 3.3). The sepia image, taken during the summer on a sunny afternoon, shows us a string of men, nearly all of whom are turned away from the camera. The act is deliberate. They are nearly all facing in the opposite direction to the workhouse doors, and the two men who are sat on the ground are purposefully covering themselves; one with an arm cast up, the other with a newspaper. Underneath the photograph, which was pasted into one of London's photograph albums, the investigator writes: 'casuals have a distinct objection to being photographed, & turn their bodies directly they see the camera.' He did not include the photograph in *The People of the Abyss*, but chose instead an unpopulated picture of Poplar Workhouse, taken from the outside, and an empty casual ward; two blank canvases onto which the reader could project the casuals that London described. These were perhaps

selected because they support the text, whereas 'Girl Waiting Before Whitechapel Workhouse' challenges its narrative. First, it highlights the tension that existed between the bourgeois spectator and the vagrant, and undermines London's claim that he was accepted by the East End casuals and labourers: 'when loungers and workmen, on street corners and in public houses, talked with me, they talked as one man to another, and they talked as natural men should talk.' Second, and of greater significance, the casuals' acute sensitivity, their desire to be unobserved and to maintain some privacy despite their exposed position, gainsays his written analysis of the casual line: that it was comprised of 'poor, wretched beasts, inarticulate and callous'.[145]

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[145] London, *The People of the Abyss*, pp. 13, 68.

Chapter 4: Loafers

The term 'loafer' refers to 'one who spends his time in idleness', according to the *OED*.[1]

However, it also signifies a species of vagrancy, a fact that is borne out in its derivation.

Although its etymology is obscure, the *OED* speculates that loafer comes from the German

landläufer, which can be translated as 'land-loper'; 'one who runs up and down the land; a

vagabond'.[2] The American Gypsiologist Charles Leland also noted this connection in *The

English Gypsies and Their Language* (1873), but in addition he specified that the verb 'to

loaf' originally meant 'to steal':

> When the term first began to be popular in 1834 or 1835, I can distinctly remember
> that it meant to *pilfer*. Such, at least, is my earliest recollection, and of hearing school
> boys ask one another in jest, of their acquisitions or gifts, 'Where did you loaf that
> from?' A petty pilferer was a loafer, but in a very short time all of the tribe of
> loungers in the sun, and disreputable pickers up of unconsidered trifles, now known
> as bummers, were called loafers.[3]

Loafers, then, are vagrants, idlers and petty criminals. Moreover, as Leland suggests by

aligning them with 'bummers', they do not belong specifically to the metropolis. As Leland

records in *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant* (1889), 'bummer' is an American

expression of 'Pennsylvania origin' meaning 'a slow, lazy fellow […] a loafer'.[4] Whereas the

casual was almost invariably placed within the British city, the loafer was a more mobile

figure within the collective imagination. In 'Vagrants and Vagrancy' (1888), for example, the

London Quarterly Review noted that 'in India the loafer is only too well known'.[5] This is

attested to by Flora Annie Steel in 'In the Permanent Way' (1898), a short story set in British

India in which the dissipated protagonist, Nathaniel Craddock, is described as 'a loafer in

many a bazaar and *serai* [caravanserai]'; similarly, in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901),

Kim's father, who stayed in India after his regiment returned to Britain, 'fell to drinking and

loafing'.[6] More generally, an article 'On Loafers' (1890) recorded that gentlemen who fail to

secure success in Britain are often sent abroad by relatives: 'loafers of this class are shovelled

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[1] 'Loafer, n.1', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 May 2018].

[2] 'Loaf, v.2', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 May 2018]; 'Land-loper | Land-louper, n.1', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 8 May 2018].

[3] Charles Leland, *The English Gypsies and Their Language* (London: Trübner, 1873), p. 89. Original emphasis.

[4] Albert Barrère and Charles Leland, *A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon & Cant, Embracing English, American, and Anglo-Indian Slang, Pidgin English, Tinkers' Jargon and Other Irregular Phraseology*, 2 vols ([Edinburgh]: Ballantyne Press, 1889), I, p. 200.

[5] 'Vagrants and Vagrancy', *London Quarterly Review*, January 1888, pp. 321-342 (p. 338).

[6] Flora Annie Steel, 'In the Permanent Way', *In the Permanent Way and Other Stories* (London: Heinemann, 1898), pp. 27-42 (p. 32); Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, ed. Harish Trivedi (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 3.

off in heaps to the colonies', the author playfully explains.[7] We shall meet some of these in Chapter 6 beached upon Pacific islands.

However, although loafers had a presence in the United States and the British Empire, they were also prominent within the metropolis. In 'Homeless at Night' (1892), an article published in the *English Illustrated Magazine*, the journalist Leonard Noble states that 'the loafing class' comprise 'the largest class of [homeless] men' in London.[8] Likewise, in 'The Abodes of the Homeless' (1899), the Anglican clergyman and founder of Toynbee Hall, Samuel Barnett, records that loafers, 'because they are idle', are one of the city's three vagrant types; the other two are 'single men who have either refused or thrown off familial obligations', and those who 'can do no regular work'.[9] These categories, along with the city's criminals, formed what was popularly known as the 'residuum'; a term coined in 1867 by the radical politician John Bright to refer to the ineffectual, underemployed and sometimes malevolent community that lingered below the working-class.[10] Although loafers were consistently depicted as a single, typically male element within this group, the distinctions between its several members often blurred. In Barnett's division of the homeless, for example, the difference between the indifferent loafer and the man who ignores his obligations is unclear, as is the material difference between the loafer who won't work and the unemployed labourer who can't. In Francis Peek's 'The Workless, the Thriftless, and the Worthless' (1888), an article that similarly sought to categorise the unemployed, we are told that the lowest of the three classes, 'the Worthless', is 'for the most part composed of vagrants and mendicants', but that it is also 'practically one' with 'the absolutely criminal': 'the two classes melt into one another.'[11]

The loafers' undefined boundaries frustrated late Victorian commentators. Their habit of seeping into both the criminal class below, and the out-of-work labourers above, made them disconcertingly anonymous. It is, however, this capacity of the loafer to absorb and express the varied and sometimes conflicting traits of the unemployed that makes 'loafer' a useful term. In this chapter, I have used it to signify members of the residuum; the mobile and recalcitrant underclass that lurked in the city's slums, and whose presence in the metropolis became an enduring concern in the late nineteenth century. This anxiety was incited by the publication of Andrew Mearns's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883). Only a 'little pamphlet', it turned the 'smouldering question' about housing the poor into a 'brightly

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[7] 'On Loafers', *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1890, pp. 398-408 (p. 400).
[8] Leonard Noble, 'Homeless at Night', *English Illustrated Magazine*, April 1892, pp. 572-576 (p. 572).
[9] Samuel Barnett, 'The Abodes of the Homeless', *Cornhill Magazine*, July 1899, pp. 58-64 (p. 58).
[10] Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 127.
[11] Francis Peek, 'The Workless, the Thriftless, and the Worthless', *Contemporary Review*, 1 January 1888, pp. 39-52 (pp. 42-43).

burning one', bringing the horrors of overcrowded slum-life to light.[12] 'Incest is common',

testifies Mearns, 'and no form of vice and sensuality causes surprise or attracts attention.'

Ruthless in its pursuit of sordid poverty, this account sparked several imitations, including

George Sims's *Horrible London* (1883).[13] Together, these led to a radical reshaping of how

the urban poor were imagined: as Judith Walkowitz explains, in the wake of Mearns and

Sims:

> The presence of the 'residuum' immensely expanded as a generalized problem:
> instead of a small number of idle and casual poor living in a few pockets of poverty,
> the chronically poor residuum now appeared to be a substantial portion of the
> population.[14]

This was the rediscovery of the poor; the acknowledgement that London secreted not one or

two slums, but harboured what came to be known in the early 1880s as 'slumdom', a maze of

courts and alleys through which the residuum prowled.[15] Anxieties about this class continued

to mount in the last decades of the nineteenth century as a severe economic depression, and a

wave of ill-advised slum clearances, dislocated thousands of workers from their jobs and

homes; this caused a growth in the residuum that prompted middle-class commentators to

reimagine the 'loafer' as a serious social and political threat, a fact that is reflected in the

unprecedented use of this term in the 1880s and 1890s.[16]

London's slums were strategically eliminated throughout the nineteenth century,

often under the guise of necessary infrastructure projects, like the construction of streets or

railways. In the last quarter of the century, however, slum clearance became an object in and

of itself. The consequence was a series of mass evictions: between 1876 and 1900, 39,000

people were expelled from their homes, nearly half of which were made homeless between

1878 and 1881. Although there were plans to rehouse the evicted tenants in more sanitary

accommodation, these rarely provided a satisfactory alternative. Often built after demolition

had taken place, they not only charged higher rents, but also imposed codes of conduct that

alienated the urban poor. As a result, those evicted sought shelter in the remaining slums,

which became increasingly overcrowded. By the 1880s this situation had become severe:

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[12] George R. Sims, *Horrible London, How the Poor Live and Horrible London* (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), pp. 111-150 (p. 113).

[13] Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, The Metropolitan Poor: Semi-Factual Accounts, 1795-1910,* ed. John Marriott and Masaie Matsumura, 6 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), VI, pp. 80-100 (p. 87).

[14] Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (London: Virago Press, 1992), p. 27.

[15] The *OED Online* records the first use of 'slumdom' in 1882. 'Slumdom, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) [accessed 27 December 2016].

[16] A key word search in the *ProQuest British Periodicals* database reveals that from 1830, when according to the *OED* the term was coined, to 1879, the word 'loafer' was used 1742 times, whereas between 1880 and 1899 it was used 2,942. This surge in usage is also reflected in the *British Newspaper Archive*; this database records that the term was used 13,349 times between 1830 and 1879, and 23,294 between 1880 and 1899. These searches were performed by the author on 13 June 2018.

congested tenements created deplorable living conditions, and kept the residuum circulating through the metropolis.[17] The housing of the urban poor, and the loafers among them, was precarious because many of them did not have a steady or reliable income, and their lodgings were held on the most tenuous terms. Rooms and beds were rented by the week or night, and competition among prospective tenants meant that slum landlords could afford to evict tardy residents. As Sims explained in his pamphlet *How the Poor Live* (1883), if a lodger 'does not get enough during the day to pay his rent, out he goes into the street with his wife and children, and enter another family forthwith'.[18] Slum clearances therefore dislocated the very poor, forcing them to move from one impermanent residence to the next.

Often this involved exchanging one lodging-house for another. As Sims recorded, and as I discussed in the previous chapter, the clientele of these lodging-houses were vagrant:

> Some of them are tramps and hawkers, but most of them are professional loafers, picking up in any way that presents itself the price of a night's lodging. They are a shifting population, and rarely remain in one house long. Some of them only get a night in now and then as a luxury, and look upon it as a Grand Hotel episode. They sleep habitually in the open, on the staircases, or in the casual ward.[19]

This nomadic community, which had been enlarged by the housing crisis, became further engrossed during the depression of 1884-87, the worst of the nineteenth century.[20] Where previous economic downturns had been relatively trade specific, with this slump went a whole gamut of industries and their workers.[21] As the most dispensable and economically vulnerable class, many casual labourers found themselves without a job or home. The result was an engorged and menacing homeless population in which the 'deserving' out-of-works mingled indiscriminately with 'undeserving' loafers; it was the problem of the casual queue writ large. The crisis came in 1887, during the exceptionally hot summer of Queen Victoria's jubilee, when hundreds of houseless men, women and children decamped from the slums and moved into Trafalgar Square. According to the liberal politician and journalist Bennet Burleigh, these people were unemployed labourers and artisans who were tramping about the city in a desperate search for work; they were 'not all vagabonds, from choice, but leading a nomadic life within the confines of the metropolis'.[22] Other commentators, however, were less sympathetic.

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[17] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; repr. London: Verso, 2013) pp. 159-235; Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), pp. 57-58.

[18] George R. Sims, *How the Poor Live, How the Poor Live and Horrible London* (London: Garland Publishing, 1984), pp. 1-110 (p. 20).

[19] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[20] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 374.

[21] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 281-282.

[22] Bennet Burleigh, 'The Unemployed', *Contemporary Review*, July 1887, pp. 771-780 (p. 772).

Loafers

As summer edged into autumn the vagrant camp remained, and began to pose a serious threat to social order, at least according to the mainstream press. In part, this was because the '300 tramps and vagrants in Trafalgar Square', who remained in the open throughout a chill October, represented the fearful desperation that had arisen from the depression.[23] But it was also because these vagrants were identified as the main participants in the socialist and anarchist rallies that gathered throughout October and November that year. In 'Five Nights in the Streets of London' (1887), the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s undercover correspondent interviewed several tramps, one of whom informed him that 'if it was a severe winter, like the last was, there would be "ructions" in London.'[24] This indication of disruptive intent was confirmed a month later in an editorial in the *PMG*, which informed readers that the demonstrators, then gathering several times a week in Trafalgar Square, were mostly 'professional vagrants'.[25] The police also made this connection between the political disturbances and London's loafers. In a bid to reclaim Trafalgar Square, by now an epicenter of homelessness and radicalism, the Commissioner of Police, Sir Charles Warren, tried to secure the contested territory. In late October he published a notice ordering all philanthropists to stop distributing food to the houseless in the Square, and warned that any person 'found wandering or sleeping in the open air at night' would be arrested under the Vagrancy Act.[26] Less than two weeks later he went further, and banned all public meetings. This order led to an escalation in social and political tensions, which eventually culminated on 13 November in 'Bloody Sunday', a police-induced riot in and around the square in which 200 were injured and at least two people died.[27] Eleanor Marx, a socialist writer and activist, was present that day: 'I have never seen anything like the brutality of the police', she recorded.[28]

The press coverage and the events that built up to Bloody Sunday highlight that London's loafers, its 'professional vagrants', were perceived as a potentially revolutionary force. We should not, however, imagine that the residuum was envisaged as a unified class with a distinct political agenda. Indeed, although Peek described the 'Worthless' as 'a powerful weapon in the hands of the anarchist' this is not because they were ideological adherents, but because they were 'the idle and the vicious', and therefore delighted in destruction.[29] Instead of a distinct class with a common cause, the residuum was an error of urbanisation, a tangle of inefficient casual workers, criminals and idlers who had been

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[23] 'Police Intelligence', *Standard*, 28 October 1887, p. 2.
[24] 'Five Nights in the Streets of London', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 September 1887, p. 5.
[25] 'Under the Black Flag', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 October 1887, p. 1.
[26] 'The Vagrants in Trafalgar Square', *Standard*, 26 October 1887, p. 2.
[27] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 377-378.
[28] Quoted by Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 20.
[29] Peek, 'The Workless', pp. 43, 51.

attracted by the opportunities and atmosphere of the city. As the *Saturday Review* noted in
'The Slum and the Cellar' (1883):

> London is a gigantic Cave of Adullam, which constantly draws to itself every one
> who is in need, and who not only has no work to do, but would not, or could not, do it
> if work lay ready to his hand. [...] Such men are the large class of cab-touts, all the
> people who hang about theatre doors, all the countless loafers who gather in a
> moment round every street spectacle and street accident. They and their wives and
> their large families will be always and irresistibly attracted to London, in the hope of
> chance earnings, charity, and a life of emotion and adventure.[30]

The loafers therefore comprised a disorderly class, the fate of which was puzzled out in the
'social problem', a reformulation of the Condition-of-England Question that Charles Dickens,
Charlton Carew and Charles Kingsley tried to address in the 1840s (see Chapter 2). Thinkers
confronting the social problem wanted to make the unemployed productive, and to raise the
moral and social standards of the very poor. In order to do so, however, it was felt that the
most hopeless members of the residuum would need to be sifted out. These people were
identified by Charles Booth, the statistician and social reformer, as 'Class A'.

Class A, as Booth explains in the first volume of *Life and Labour of the People of
London* (1892-1902), is 'the lowest class, which consists of some occasional labourers, street-
sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals'. Along with the 'homeless outcasts' that Booth
also includes in this group, these people are an attendant problem of urbanisation, 'a
necessary evil in every large city', and amount to about 11,000 or 1.25 per cent of the
population of East London.[31] Booth's classification and statistics proved immensely
influential after they were first published in 1889. The following year William Booth, the
founder of the Salvation Army, published his evangelical battle cry, *In Darkest England and
the Way Out* (1890), and extrapolated Charles Booth's figures in order to generate his famous
'Submerged Tenth'. He reasoned that if there were 11,000 homeless people in East London
then there were 165,000 in the United Kingdom. Similarly, if there were 100,000 starving
casual labourers, whom Charles Booth designated Class B, then there were 1,550,000 in the
country. If the paupers, criminals and lunatics were added to this figure then this created a
population of two million, to which a further million should be added in order to represent
their dependents.[32] This three million people, ten per cent of the United Kingdom's
population, formed what one contemporary called 'the Devil's Tithe', and comprised the 'vast
despairing multitude' that William Booth vowed to save.[33] What he did not mention,
however, was that Charles Booth's figure for Class A was itself 'a very rough estimate';

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[30] 'The Slum and the Cellar', *Saturday Review*, 27 October 1883, pp. 521-522 (p. 521).
[31] Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: First Series: Poverty*, revised edn, 5 vols
(London: Macmillan, 1902; repr. Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), I, pp. 37-38.
[32] William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International Headquarters of the
Salvation Army, 1890; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 21-23.
[33] Ibid., p. 23; 'London – Black and Blue', *Speaker*, 28 March 1891, pp. 365-366 (p. 366).

Loafers

'these people are beyond enumeration', the statistician acknowledged.[34] Like other figures claiming to detail the number of vagrants, then, these should be approached with caution. Nonetheless, for contemporaries they gave a convincing sense of the scale of the social problem, and further clarified its class structure.

In this chapter I explore responses to Class A in fact and fiction, and the representations of the loafer that these generated. First I discuss the 'practical' solutions that were made to separate the worthy casual labourer and the unworthy loafer in the 1880s. Published as articles and book-length reports, these proposals were made by social reformers from both the left and the right and overwhelmingly advocated the use of hard labour as a means of discrimination: the idle loafers, it was imagined, would readily reveal themselves when faced with this task, which would allow reformers to segregate the most disorderly and degenerate part of the unemployed. Having assessed these schemes, I then explore how the anxieties they express about the loafer were reflected in fiction. Here I examine the ways in which H. G. Wells's early dystopia *The Time Machine* (1895) was influenced by the slum novel and social investigation. Although the impact of this latter genre has long been noted, Wells's engagement with the realist slum novel, and what he perceived to be its failings, has hitherto been unexplored. Examining Wells alongside the slum novelists Arthur Morrison and Margaret Harkness, I argue that these writers identified the residuum as a site of social fear and artistic exploration, but whereas the slum novelists were preoccupied with its present state, Wells investigated its capacity for future revolution. In doing so, he created the Morlocks, an enduring image of the biological and political threat that the residuum appeared to harbour.

Solutions to the Social Problem

The anonymity of the unemployed was a concern of social reformers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the unemployment crisis in the 1880s it elicited a series of 'coercive and interventionist' schemes to deal with the urban poor, as Gareth Stedman Jones has noted.[35] These were aired in authoritative studies of the social problem, and in the periodical press. In particular, they found a home in the *Contemporary Review* and its rival the *Nineteenth Century*. Founded in 1866 and 1877 respectively, these belonged to a new generation of periodical reviews that were established from the late 1860s onwards. Unlike their journalistic peers, such as the *Review of Reviews*, they were resolute in their seriousness, as is indicated by their complete exclusion of fiction, and their focus on

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[34] Booth, *Life and Labour*, p. 37.

[35] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 303-304; also see, Rachel Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the New Poor Law in late-Victorian and Edwardian England', *English Historical Review*, 92.363 (1977), 59-81 (pp. 75-81).

topical and theological issues. The *Contemporary Review*, in particular, had a strong religious leaning, exchanging the political stance adopted by the older reviews, like the Tory *Quarterly Review*, for a Christian one; the *Nineteenth Century* had a similar political neutrality but a more secular outlook. In 1887 and 1888 they both published lengthy articles on the unemployed by writers as divergent in their opinions as the radical Burleigh and the right-wing imperialist Arnold White. In doing so they used what the print-culture historian Laurel Brake identifies as the 'symposium format', in which one issue was scrutinised by political antagonists for the edification and excitement of the readership; in both cases this was imagined to be male and decidedly middle-class.[36] What is perhaps surprising about this highly organised debate is that there was little disagreement between the commentators: all agreed that the residuum was a menace that needed to be segregated and eliminated.

As Peek opined in 'The Workless, the Thriftless, and the Worthless', which appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, the unemployment problem was one of identification: the honest out-of-work labourers, who formed 'probably not two per cent. of the destitute', were intermixed with the 'incapable or inefficient' 'Thriftless', and the vagrant 'Worthless'. His solution was a rigorous work test of the kind that should, in theory, have been administered by the Poor Law authorities. He argued that 'the requirement of hard work as a condition of relief will speedily separate the deserving from the vicious', thus reducing the social problem to the 'problem of dealing with the worthless, the mass of vagrants, mendicants, drunkards and hopeless loafers who infest our streets'.[37] Peek's reasoning was mirrored by many of his peers. In 'The Unemployed' (1887), which likewise featured in the *Contemporary Review*, Burleigh argued that 'relief works' should be established in London that would occupy the unemployed in 'repairing roads, erecting baths, wash-houses, and a better class of artisans' dwellings'. Not only would this solve the unemployment situation, but it would allow society to eradicate the loafer: 'once ensure that no deserving man or woman shall want, and the sturdy beggars and vagabonds need receive no mercy', he proclaimed.[38] Barnett made similar proposals in 'A Scheme for the Unemployed' (1888), published in the *Nineteenth Century*. Here he lobbied for a series of home colonies, or 'training-farms', that would equip the unemployed with useful agricultural skills. Moreover, like Burleigh's relief works, the farm would winkle out the undeserving: he asks:

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[36] Laurel Brake, 'Periodical Formats: The Changing Review', *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 47-65 (pp. 50, 55, 58-61, 63).
[37] Peek, 'The Workless', pp. 41, 50, 53.
[38] Burleigh, 'The Unemployed', pp. 775, 779.

> What loafer would endure to be sent out of London to occupy a hut apart from his family and his friends, to do dull work in the fields, to submit to continual training of mind and body, to be deprived even of the excitement of gas-light.[39]

William Booth and Charles Booth also advocated the creation of home colonies.[40] However, unlike the Salvationist, who was bent on rescuing each spare soul that the residuum offered, Charles Booth foresaw that the stringent work demanded in these colonies would cause Class A to expose itself, and that this could be advantageous: 'Class A, no longer confounded with "the unemployed," could be gradually harried out of existence'.[41]

Sinister and exacting, these solutions to the unemployment crisis reveal how the residuum was imagined. In the first place, they emphasise that idleness, the cardinal feature of the loafer, is the hallmark of the residuum as a whole. Ingrained and ineradicable, it will force this class to disclose itself. Second, they identify that the residuum is a by-product of urbanisation: these schemes are invested in the idea that city conditions cause deprivation and demoralisation, hence the work of reclamation is often imagined as a process of deurbanisation. This logic is also at work in William Booth's emigration scheme: it was his hope that having removed the indigent from the city to the country, converts to the Salvation Army might be sent abroad to Africa, there 'laying the foundations, perchance, of another Empire to swell to vast proportions in later times.'[42] Finally, given that all of these schemes are ultimately voluntary, they also assume that once the honestly unemployed have migrated, the residuum will be all that remains in the metropolis. This depiction of the residuum as unalterably idle and wedded to the city – enthralled to 'the excitement of gas-light' – is underwritten by popular theories of degeneration, a biological and moral disease that possessed a distinctly urban complexion.

As William Greenslade explains, the slums had long been cited as the source of physical and moral degeneration. In the 1880s, however, a new pessimism began to steer how this social disease was conceptualised. The degeneration that afflicted the urban poor was no longer linked solely with poverty, as it had been in previous decades, but was increasingly identified as hereditary. The degenerate fault was thought to arise from urban conditions, and to infect the clean and healthy; then it slipped into the pool of inherited traits and was passed on to the next generation. Such explanations of degeneration were informed by 'the Lamarckian idea that the characteristics of an organism could be acquired from the environment and then passed on.'[43] It was this biologically driven narrative that informed the

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[39] Samuel Barnett, 'A Scheme for the Unemployed', *Nineteenth Century*, November 1888, pp. 753-763 (pp. 759-760).
[40] Booth, *Life and Labour*, pp. 167-168; Booth, *In Darkest England*, pp. 90-93.
[41] Booth, *Life and Labour*, p. 169.
[42] Booth, *In Darkest England*, p. 93.
[43] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 17.

above proposals. The reformers' emphasis on deurbanisation arose from the fear that prolonged exposure to slum conditions would taint worthy members of the unemployed. At the same time, they also imagined that the degenerate residuum would be intractable outside the slums, and unwilling to leave their tenements: as Sims opined while lobbying for a more gradual approach to slum clearance, 'leave the poor wretches who are impossible in any but rookeries a rookery or two to finish their careers in.'[44] Meanwhile, eugenics, a nascent science pioneered by Francis Galton, played an increasingly dominant role in the discourse of degeneration, and justified the separation, even the extermination, of the residuum. According to eugenicists, it was humankind's duty to 'deliberately and systematically' improve the species through selective breeding.[45] For them, the idleness of the residuum was not just a moral failing, but was also a sign of their unalterable physical and mental incapacity. This was a population that simply could not be saved.

For many social reformers, the residuum had no native place bar the grave. In the 'The English Workers as They Are' (1887), an article in the *Contemporary Review*, the socialist leader H. M. Hyndman, wrote that the degenerate 'can but die out, leaving, it is to be hoped, no progeny as a burden on a better state of things.'[46] This was a view adopted by both socialists and imperialists. Writing two years earlier, again in the *Contemporary Review*, the prominent eugenicist and right-wing journalist Arnold White likewise insisted that:

> [There] are men from whom the grace of humanity has almost disappeared. Physically, mentally, and morally unfit, there is nothing that the nation can do for these men, except to let them die out by leaving them alone.[47]

Somewhat melancholy, but utterly sincere, the feeling that the residuum would be better extinct was intensified by the fear that the degenerate were 'rapidly increasing.'[48] This was thought to lead to what Karl Pearson, a socialist and eugenicist, described as 'race suicide'; as the critics Dan Bivona and Roger B. Henkle describe it, this was the process by which the middle classes were 'demographically engulfed by unfit lower class people'.[49] Responses to this anxiety were ubiquitously extreme. In the 1880s, as bourgeois London sweated out the unemployment crisis, White suggested that society should 'sterilize the vicious by refusing aid to the unthrifty and the idle'.[50] Such policies designed to control the reproduction of the 'degenerate' later issued from White's pen during the Boer War (1899-1902), when panic

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[44] Sims, *Horrible London*, pp. 124-125.
[45] Francis Galton quoted by Greenslade, *Degeneration*, p. 26.
[46] H. M. Hyndman, 'The English Workers as They Are', *Contemporary Review*, 1 July 1887, pp. 122-136 (p. 129).
[47] Arnold White, 'The Nomad Poor of London', *Contemporary Review*, 1 January 1885, pp. 714-726 (p. 715).
[48] Peek, 'The Workless', p. 50.
[49] Dan Bivona and Roger B. Henkle, *The Imagination of Class: Masculinity and the Victorian Urban Poor* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 146.
[50] White, 'The Nomad Poor of London', pp. 721-722.

flared because working-class troops were deemed mentally and physically unfit.[51] 'If we are to become a healthy people,' he wrote in *Empire and Efficiency* (1901), 'the permanent segregation of habitual criminals, paupers, drunkards, maniacs, and tramps must be deliberately undertaken.'[52] These ideas were readily adopted by other thinkers who were likewise both alarmed by the social destruction that could be caused by the degenerate, and bewitched by the long-term promises of eugenics. H. G. Wells, a writer who would later try to distance himself from Galton's theories, was one of these.[53]

In his forecast of the future, *Anticipations* (1901), Wells coined the phrase 'People of the Abyss'. An echo of William Booth's 'Submerged Tenth', this was a synonym for the residuum: 'its individuals are either criminal, immoral, [or] parasitic in more or less irregular ways upon the more successful classes', Wells explained. These people hinder the progress of society and the efficiency of its members. As Wells described it, modern society had no distinct structure, but was a 'molten mass' in which individuals sunk or swam: in the nineteenth century:

> There has appeared a vast intricate confusion of different sorts of people, some sailing about upon floating masses of irresponsible property, some buoyed by smaller fragments, some clinging desperately enough to insignificant atoms, a great and varied multitude swimming successfully without aid, or with an amount of aid that is negligible in relation to their own efforts, and an equally varied multitude of less capable ones clinging to the swimmers, clinging to the floating rich, or clutching empty-handed and thrust and sinking down.[54]

Within this image of society in motion, it is significant that Wells characterises the People of the Abyss as clutching and sinking, a description that rearticulates the commonplace depiction of loafers as idly drifting, either through choice or hopeless enervation. In 'On Loafers', for example, they are described as 'helplessly drifting'; in 'Homeless at Night', they perform 'an easy downward drift'; and in *In Darkest England*, homeless men are portrayed as having 'drifted about for years', and 'drifted to destitution'.[55] In *Anticipations*, Wells takes this well-worn image of idleness, and converts it into one of panicked asphyxiation. Perversely, this is part of his hopeful prognosis for society. Although he predicts that the global superpower of the year 2000 will be the nation that 'picks over, educates, sterilizes, exports, or poisons its People of the Abyss', he nonetheless assures us that they are 'not a breeding multitude', and are bound for 'extinction'.[56]

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[51] Jones, *Outcast London*, pp. 330-333.

[52] Arnold White, *Efficiency and Empire* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 120.

[53] John S. Partington, *Building Cosmopolis: The Political Thought of H. G. Wells* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 54-57.

[54] H. G. Wells, *Anticipations; or, the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress upon Human Life and Thought* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1902 [1901]), pp. 79, 82-83.

[55] Booth, *In Darkest England*, pp. 101, 104; Noble, 'Homeless at Night', p. 572; 'On Loafers', p. 401.

[56] Wells, *Anticipations*, pp. 212, 80.

Wells's unnervingly optimistic tone is indicative of the utopian outlook of *Anticipations*. As he looked forward to the New Republic, a 'one world-state at peace within itself', the problem of degeneration receded. Whereas commentators like White and Peek vociferated over the social and political threat posed by the degenerate residuum, Wells treated 'the people of no account whatever, the classes of extinction, the People of the Abyss' as a problem that would solve itself.[57] This, however, was not always the case. In his first book-length foray into the future, *The Time Machine*, he envisaged a much more troubling destiny for mankind. Here degeneration had worked through the ages and split humanity into two races, the effete Eloi and the cannibalistic Morlocks. In the rest of this chapter I contend that the Morlocks represent the future of the residuum, and that they constitute not only the biological nightmare that was already identified as lurking within this underclass, but that they also probe its revolutionary potential as well.

H. G. Wells and *The Time Machine*

'I was born at a place called Bromley, in Kent, a suburb of the damnedest, in 1866,' wrote Wells to Grant Richards, the editor of *Phil May's Annual*. Scrawled in November 1895, the letter is a jaunty biographical sketch that tumbles through a list of failure, illness, rejection, success and – finally – public approbation, the glory of which is the 'fuss' being made over *The Time Machine*.[58] Wells's buoyancy also reflects a newfound financial security, likewise bought to him by the novella, and an escape from the petty-bourgeois struggle for respectability, which he had been engaged with for most of his life. The Bromley of his boyhood was one in which flagging middle-class families tried desperately to differentiate themselves from their poorer neighbours. Like many areas that had been opened up by the new railways, Bromley had become a victim of the uncontrolled suburbanisation that characterised London's growth from the 1840s through to the 1870s.[59] Throughout this period jerry-built developments became popular speculations for investors, and it was in one of these that the Wells lived. 'Shops and dwellings of the type of my home', Wells tells us, 'were "run up" anyhow.'[60] Unfortunately, these speculations often proved unremunerative because the market they were meant to accommodate, the bulging middle classes, did not exist in the required quantity.[61] Consequently, as Wells goes on to note of Bromley, 'slum conditions

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[57] Wells, *Anticipations*, pp. 245, 228-229.
[58] H. G. Wells, *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells*, ed. David C. Smith, 4 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), I, pp. 249.
[59] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 77-79.
[60] H. G. Wells, *An Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)*, 2 vols (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), I, p. 84.
[61] White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 81, 87-88.

appeared almost at once in courts and muddy by-ways.'[62] This is why Bromley was 'a suburb of the damnedest', because Wells had to live cheek-by-jowl with 'inferior' people, a people he despised but was separated from by the narrowest of margins.

Wells's proximity and early prejudice towards the 'lower classes' is exhibited in his *An Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), in which he recounts his days as a schoolboy at Bromley Academy. A throwback to the eighteenth century, Bromley Academy was run by Thomas Morley, a fantastically pompous man of the Turveydrop type who would 'carry himself with invariable dignity and make a frequent use of the word "Sir"'; he also made frequent use of the cane, 'books, rulers and anything else that came handy' to discipline his charges. Despite this, and the fact that he fitted a 'Dickens-like caricature', Wells was adamant that the antiquated Academy provided a better education than the free National School. Indeed, although his parents could barely afford it, he insisted that they were right to eke out the fees for as long as they could rather than throw him among the 'Bromley Water Rats', as he and his peers called the National School pupils. At the root of this was a firm belief: 'just as my mother was obliged to believe in Hell, but hoped that no one would go there, so did I believe there was and had to be a lower stratum, though I was disgusted to find that anyone belonged to it.'[63] The reality of this 'lower stratum', the social hell that haunted Wells, must have seemed to draw nearer and nearer as the family's fortunes declined. Already living in a house-cum-crockery-shop 'run up' like a slum, the Wells family were soon hampered with unhappy debts. Awkward bills began to accumulate until those school fees that marked the slippage between Wells and the 'Water Rats' could no longer be squeezed from the household finances. For a moment it looked like Wells would have to join the 'inferior' classes in the National School, but fortunately Morley let him stay on *gratis* while his parents searched for a suitable apprenticeship.[64] Despite this escape, however, Wells remained in a financially precarious position; and this continued to trouble him even after the success of *The Time Machine*. On meeting George Gissing in 1896 he remarked that when he first read *New Grub Street* (1891) he had compared himself to Edwin Reardon, who 'lived like myself as a struggling writer in Mornington Road with a wife named Amy.'[65] Mercifully, Wells avoided the fate that Reardon predicts for himself: '"The abyss." He pointed downwards. "Penury and despair and a miserable death."'[66] Nonetheless, Wells's prolonged existence on the brink of poverty, and his fear of the 'lower stratum', had a significant influence on his social and political thought, and found expression in his early fiction.

[62] Wells, *Autobiography*, I, p. 84.
[63] Ibid., I, pp. 85-86, 93-94.
[64] Michael Sherborne, *H. G. Wells: Another Kind of Life*, (London: Peter Owen, 2010; repr. 2012), pp. 24, 34-37.
[65] Wells, *Autobiography*, II, p. 567.
[66] George Gissing, *New Grub Street,* ed. John Goode (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993: repr. 2008), p. 198.

Wells became one of the many writers who brooded over the residuum during the *fin de siècle*. As we have seen, some of these lobbied for governmental intervention, and manufactured supporting statistics; others, meanwhile, addressed the problem primarily through fiction, as Wells did in the early years of his career. This is particularly true of the slum novelists Margaret Harkness and Arthur Morrison. The 'ordinary East End loafer type' recurs in the four slum novels that Harkness reeled off between 1887 and 1890, and became a preoccupation both on and off the page.[67] As she recorded in 'A Year of My Life' (1891), an autobiographical article written under her pseudonym 'John Law', she undertook an investigation into how the residuum were managed on the Continent and in the colonies because 'my principal interest is with a class below the unskilled labourers: I mean the scum of our population that haunts the slums of our great cities.'[68] For Morrison, too, the residuum was an artistic and social concern. In his most famous novel, *A Child of the Jago* (1896), he populates his East End slumscape with loafers: 'there were loafers near Mother Gapp's, loafers at the Luck Row corner – at every corner – and loafers by the "Posties", all laggard of limb and alert of eye.'[69] When the *Daily News* interviewed him following his novel's successful reception, he proposed what should be done with these ne'er-do-wells: 'I believe', he said, 'in penal settlement; […] Why not confine them as lunatics are confined? Let the weed die out, and then proceed to raise the raisable.'[70] Such sentiments were also echoed by Harkness. In her article 'The Loafer: What Shall We Do with Him?' (1889), she bemoaned the fact that 'we let these drunkards and vagabonds infest our streets', and argued that 'the State should send him to a Home Colony, where he will be kindly treated, but not allowed to do mischief by propagating.'[71] In both these schemes we encounter the solution of sterilisation later promoted by Wells and White.

The 'lower stratum', then, exerted a fascination over Harkness and Morrison, as well as Wells. Despite this, the enduring threat that it seemed to pose never emerged as a dominant theme in their fiction. This was because the social and historical scope of their novels was too limited; at least, this was the failing that Wells identified while reviewing Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* for the *Saturday Review*. Although he was full of praise for what he called 'one of the most interesting novels this year has produced', he noted that its 'design, it must be confessed, is a little narrow.' As he went on to explain, by this he meant:

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[67] Margaret Harkness, *A City Girl*, ed. Deborah Mutch (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2015), p. 49.

[68] [Margaret Harkness] John Law, 'A Year of My Life', *New Review,* October 1891, pp. 375-384 (p. 377).

[69] Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, ed. Peter Miles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 56.

[70] 'The Children of the Jago: Slum-Life at Close Quarters: A Talk with Mr Arthur Morrison', *A Child of the Jago*, ed. Peter Miles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 171-172 (p. 172).

[71] [Margaret Harkness] John Law, 'The Loafer: What Shall We Do with Him?', *Labour Elector*, 21 September 1889, p. 180.

Loafers

> It is as if Mr. Morrison had determined to write of the Jago and nothing but the Jago. It is the Jago without relativity. […] He sees the Jago, is profoundly impressed by the appearance of the Jago, renders its appearance with extraordinary skill. But the origin of the Jago, the place of the Jago in the general scheme of things, the trend of change in it, its probable destiny – such matters are not in his mind.[72]

The myopia with which Wells charged Morrison might also be applied to Harkness. Her novels, similarly, tend to be embedded within the late nineteenth-century slumscape, and to attend to little else. Her novel *In Darkest London* (1889), for example, grinds through the slums of Whitechapel, Seven Dials and Bethnal Green, but the didactic tours conducted by her characters do not venture beyond these impoverished districts, bar a brief excursion in which Captain Lobe, an officer in the Salvation Army, goes hop-picking in Kent. Even here, however, it is the ubiquity of misery and degradation that Harkness emphasises: as Lobe muses while watching the slummers of Whitechapel, 'the serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field; he is here just as much as in the East End of London.'[73]

The relentless emphasis that Harkness placed on slum conditions must be understood as part of her commitment to social reform. Her novels were 'tracts to move the heart', and their value lay in their philanthropic power: 'I care nothing for art', she declared in an interview in 1890, 'my purpose is all'.[74] For Harkness, the novel functioned as an urgent and timely intervention that was only successful if it provoked an emotional response within the reader. A restricted social, geographical and historical focus might help to achieve this objective by forcing readers to confront contemporary realities; meanwhile, speculations regarding the slums' 'trend of change' and 'probable destiny' would create space in which readers could become emotionally detached, and might be profitless in themselves. The idea that such theorisations are futile is expressed Harkness's novel *A Manchester Shirtmaker* (1890), in which she introduces an anonymous 'philanthropist (or economist?) who spent his time in "making enquiries"'. Dilating upon 'the loafer' to a lodging-house keeper, the philanthropist argues that this 'hereditary class of vagabonds' should be 'enclosed in a home colony […] where they cannot do harm by propagating.' This is, of course, the same measure that Harkness suggested in 'On Loafers', published the previous year, but the manner in which it is framed is very different: in the article it is a pragmatic solution to a social problem, whereas in the novel it is presented as an ineffectual hypothesis. Indeed, from the moment he is introduced, the narrator encourages us to distrust the competence of the philanthropist. The query about whether he is a 'philanthropist (or economist?)', and the wry quotation marks that encompass 'making enquiries', stress the vagueness of his occupation, and gesture towards an unproductive amateurism. Meanwhile, the phlegmatic keeper, who has 'not heard

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[72] [H. G. Wells], 'A Slum Novel', *Saturday Review*, 28 November 1896, p. 573.
[73] Margaret Harkness, *In Darkest London* (Cambridge: Black Apollo Press, 2003), p. 159.
[74] 'A Slum Story Writer', *Evening News and Post*, 17 April 1890, p. 2.

of home colonies', but gently refutes their adoption by asserting that 'England is a free country', suggests that such theories are fanciful. In *A Manchester Shirtmaker*, then, Harkness discredits the conjectural stance of the philanthropist who looks on loafers as 'the "Problem of the Future"', but cannot propose an effective or acceptable solution for dealing with them today.[75] Meanwhile, Wells, who had no philanthropic pretentions or desires to 'move the heart', favoured the prophetic approach.

When Wells wrote his review of *A Child of the Jago*, he had already addressed the blinkered design of the slum novel by writing about the residuum from the perspective of the dystopian future. As in utopia, the chief aim of dystopia is to excavate the shaping forces of the future that lie hidden in the present.[76] In *The Time Machine* Wells attempts just that: he traces the development of the idle loafers from the late nineteenth century through to 'the sunset of mankind', and reveals the dramatic impact that they will have upon social dynamics.[77] That said, it would be misleading to say that Wells portrays the vagrant loafer per se. As the Time Traveller observes towards the end of his narrative, the London of 802,701 emerged from a society that had solved the social problem: 'there had been no unemployed problem, no social question left unsolved' (73). Such a state might arise from the society that Wells would depict a few years later in his metropolitan dystopia *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). In this London of the twenty-second century the Labour Company, a successor of the Salvation Army, has guaranteed 'work to starving homeless people', and ensured that they can go nowhere else for succour. As Helen informs Graham, the Victorian protagonist who has slept into the future:

> Nowadays there are no workhouses, no refuges and charities, nothing but that Company. Its offices are everywhere. […] And any man, woman or child who comes to be hungry and weary and with neither home nor friend nor resort, must go to the Company in the end – or seek some way of death.[78]

However, although the nineteenth-century loafer is absent from Wells's text, the revolutionary and evolutionary threat that this degenerate vagrant represented is nonetheless portrayed. It is captured in the Morlocks, the nocturnal and cannibalistic workers of the underworld who feed on the Eloi, their one-time masters.

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[75] Margaret Harkness, *A Manchester Shirtmaker: A Realistic Story of Today*, intro. Trefor Thomas (Brighouse: Northern Herald, 2002), p. 70.

[76] Matthew Beaumont, *Utopia Ltd.: Ideologies in Social Dreaming in England, 1870-1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 33-39.

[77] H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine: An Invention*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 32. Future references will be made to this edition and in the main text.

[78] H. G. Wells, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, ed. John Lawton (London: Everyman, 1994), p. 159.

Loafers

In his seminal study, *The Early H. G. Wells* (1961), Bernard Bergonzi argued that the Morlocks 'represent an exaggerated fear of the nineteenth century proletariat'.[79] Stemming from the Time Traveller's hypothesis that the Morlocks are descended from the nineteenth-century 'Labourer' (47), this interpretation has been widely adopted by critics, many of whom have perceived a connection not only between the Morlocks and the Victorian proletariat, but between the Morlocks and the middle-class Time Traveller: as Bivona and Henkle argue, Wells identified the Morlocks with the Time Traveller through their shared passion for technology, hence the Morlocks 'have hidden away his time machine in hope of learning how it works'.[80] But the Morlocks' act of theft at the beginning of the Traveller's narrative speaks less of the proletarian interest in mechanics, than the criminality of what Karl Marx called the *lumpenproletariat*; the 'ragged' or 'knavish' workers.[81] This class, which according to Marx was a 'recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all sorts, living off the garbage of society […] vagabonds, *gens sans feu et sans aveu'*, was the residuum.[82] I argue that Wells encourages us to read the Morlocks as the descendants of the *lumpenproletariat*: the London of the future is one in which the residuum reigns.

The correspondence between the Morlocks and the residuum is evident on a formal level. Social investigation is one of the many genres that *The Time Machine* evokes, and is alluded to from the beginning of the novella when the Traveller returns from his journey, interrupting his guests in a theatrical fashion.[83] The company has gathered for dinner at his request and started without him, following the instructions of a mysterious note informing them that he is 'unavoidably detained' (16). When he enters the dining room he appears 'dusty and dirty' (17) and distinctly travel-worn; as the narrator observes, he bore 'just such a limp as I have seen in foot-sore tramps' (17) and attacked his meal with 'the appetite of a tramp' (19). This early correspondence between the bourgeois Traveller and the shabby, seamy vagrant nods toward the middle-class practice of 'slumming', which as Seth Koven relates, was a commonplace in Victorian Britain, and at its extremes involved an element of 'cross-class dress', which became essential to the exploits of investigators like James Greenwood and Jack London.[84] The allusions made to this practice by the unwitting and

[79] Bernard Bergonzi, *The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 53.

[80] Bivona and Henkle, *The Imagination of Class*, p. 161.

[81] Nicholas Thoburn, 'Difference in Marx: The Lumpenproletariat and the Proletarian Unnamable', *Economy and Society*, 31.3 (2002), 434-460 (pp. 439-40).

[82] Quoted by John Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded since 1880*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 20.

[83] For a survey of the genres that Wells deploys in *The Time Machine* see, Roger Luckhurst, 'Introduction', *The Time Machine: An Invention*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. vii-xxv (pp. xii-xviii).

[84] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 1, 26.

concerned narrator are made explicit by more gregarious guests, who proceed to make light of the Traveller's dishevelled aspect.

Once the Traveller has left the room to make himself respectable, the voluble Journalist bursts out, 'has he been doing the Amateur Cadger?' (18) And the Editor, countering this quiz with one of his own, asks 'does our friend eke out his modest income with a crossing?' (18). The Journalist's reference to the 'Amateur Cadger' recalls Greenwood 'The Amateur Casual', and his steady throng of followers who masqueraded as vagrants. Indeed, a 'cadger' was originally a hawker or itinerant dealer, but in the nineteenth century the word increasingly came to denote a beggar or loafer: as Daniel Kirwan recorded in 1870, '"Cadger" is a Cockney term for people who will not work and have no habitation, but go from one place to another, roaming loosely'.[85] 'Amateur Cadger' could also refer to a more nefarious form of slumming, like that practiced by Arthur Conan Doyle's Neville St Clair, or the 'Amateur Mendicant Society' in his story 'The Five Orange Pips' (1891): a band of middle-class imposters who are eventually foiled by Sherlock Holmes, these 'amateurs' fund 'a luxurious club' with the alms they elicit from the indiscriminate public.[86] The Editor also suggests this remunerative form of cadging when he asks if the Traveller sweeps a street crossing. As the American journalist Elizabeth Banks relates in 'Sweeping a Crossing' (1894), her exposé of that (almost mythically) 'remunerative profession', 'wonderful tales have been told of members of the craft who have grown wealthy with plying the broom'; if this feat was ever performed then it was achieved by begging and ploys 'invented to reach the sympathies of the public'.[87] The slumming of social investigation, then, as well its seedier side, is a presence from the outset, and only becomes more evident when the Traveller tells his tale of the future.

Several critics have detected elements of social investigation in *The Time Machine*. Some of these have been general, as with Carlo Pagetti's speculation that Wells modelled his Eloi and Morlocks on the slum-savages that William Booth depicted in *In Darkest England*.[88] Most, however, have been more specific, identifying the Traveller with the investigator when he descends into the subterranean lair of the Morlocks. Indeed, this is a persona that the Traveller himself briefly adopts, interrupting his narrative to declare, 'even now, does not an

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[85] 'Cadger, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) [accessed 9 February 2017]; Daniel Joseph Kirwan, *Palace and Hovel; or, Phases of London Life*, ed. A. Allan (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1963), p. 70.

[86] Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Five Orange Pips', *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Richard Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; repr. 2008), pp. 102-22 (p. 102).

[87] Elizabeth L. Banks, 'Sweeping a Crossing', *Campaigns of Curosity: Journalistic Adventures of an American Girl in Late Victorian London* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 129-138 (pp. 130, 138).

[88] Carlo Pagetti, 'Changes in the City: The Time Traveller's London and the "Baseless Fabric" of His Vision', *H. G. Wells's Perennial Time Machine: Selected Essays from the Centenary Conference '"The Time Machine": Past, Present, and Future' Imperial College, London July 26-29, 1995* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2001), pp. 122-134 (p. 123).

East-end worker live in such artificial conditions as practically to be cut off from the natural surface of the earth?' (47). Steven McLean argues that this outburst of social zeal aligns the Traveller with contemporary reformers like Charles Booth. He also notes the similarities between the portrayal of the dark and stagnant underworld, 'stuffy and oppressive' (52) and flavoured with the 'halitus of freshly shed blood' (52), and Mearns's description of the urban poor.[89] Matthew Beaumont likewise remarks on the similarity between this episode and the scenes of urban poverty traditionally found in social investigations, arguing that Wells 'exploits the uncanny thrills enjoyed by middle-class readers' of slum explorations by 'pushing them to an unbearable extreme.'[90] To these observations can also be added the contrast between the 'heavy smell' (52) of the Morlocks' den and the soil of the Upperworld, which 'smelt sweet and clean' (54) upon the Traveller's re-emergence. This juxtaposition of stagnant corruption with healthful cleanliness is, as Kevin R. Swafford notes, a classic trope of slum literature; a means of heightening our sense of the disorder and degeneration of the urban poor.[91]

The Time Traveller's stilted progress through the Morlocks' cavern also aligns him with the urban investigator. As he narrates how he stumbled through the dark, guided only by the light of a few safety matches, he interrupts himself again, exclaiming, 'if only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second, and examined it at leisure' (53). The comparison here between the spluttering matches and flash photography, the latest technology to be appropriated by social explorers, is at once significant and strange.[92] The advantage of the camera that the Traveller identifies is that it would provide the *same* 'glimpse of the Underworld' as the matches, only faster. By making the comparison on these terms the Traveller implicitly claims that the light of the safety match is equivalent to the camera's flash. To the discerning reader this, of course, does not make sense: the radiance and power of a match is weaker than that of a Kodak. Nonetheless, in the Traveller's description of the Morlocks' lair he silently persists in his claim, presenting the cavern in a series of snapshots in which the match-light acts as an able substitute for the magnesium glare of the missing flash.

When the Traveller enters a 'large open space' (52) in the subterranean world, his vision is both sharp in terms of immediate detail, for example when he pinpoints the 'little table of white metal' (52) furnished with a 'red joint' (52), and, at the same time, limited by

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[89] Steven McLean, *The Early Fiction of H. G. Wells: Fantasies of Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 21-22.
[90] Matthew Beaumont, *The Spectre of Utopia: Utopian and Science Fictions at the Fin de Siècle* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 250.
[91] Kevin R. Swafford, 'Resounding the Abyss: The Politics of Narration in Jack London's *The People of the Abyss'*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 39.5 (2006), 838-860 (p. 846).
[92] Kate Flint, 'Surround, Background, and the Overlooked', *Victorian Studies*, 57.3 (2015), 449-461 (pp. 457-59).

the 'utter darkness beyond the range of my light' (52). This is the vision of flash photography: as Kate Flint explains while reflecting on the photographs included in Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) and Jack London's *The People of the Abyss*, the flash enabled enormous amounts of detail to be revealed, but at the same time it 'created great pools of contrastive and visually impenetrable darkness'.[93] This gaze, precise but tightly bounded, is the one that the Traveller adopts in his narrative: despite the fact that he lacks the slum explorer's equipment we are still persuaded to see the Traveller inhabiting his/her role. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that when the Traveller goes back into the future at the end of *The Time Machine*, equipped with 'a small camera under one arm' (85), he is not going in the spirit of a social investigator. This correspondence between the Time Traveller and the slum explorer, especially during his adventure underground, invites a corresponding identification between the Morlocks and the residuum, their subject of study. This is encouraged by the fact that Wells draws on the imagery of slum literature in order to portray the Morlocks. Like the loafers found in the works of Harkness, Morrison and others, the Morlocks are represented as nocturnal, subterranean and cannibalistic.

The Morlocks are a submerged, nocturnal breed. Dwelling in their caverns by day, these troglodytes of the future only venture forth at night. Nocturnal habits like these have long been associated with aimlessness and idleness, and have been proscribed historically not only as crimes in themselves but also as evidence of other crimes and vices.[94] This antique, culturally ingrained bias wormed its way into depictions of the residuum who, like the Morlocks, were portrayed as a class of basement-skulkers that hid away in what Burleigh called their 'slum burrows', and only sallied forth to carouse at night.[95] In his short story 'In the Heart of London' (1886) D. Rice-Jones recalls his search in St. Giles for a homeless waif called Jack. One of his first ports of call is a cellar where an illicit raffle is known to be held. A nest of 'subterranean caverns', it is home to the 'lowest type that could be found or imagined in the form of man' and the heroic slum-priest, like the Time Traveller, has to battle through an 'underground London' thick with a stench that 'makes [him] feel sick and faint'.[96] Unfortunately, he is too late; night has fallen and his quarry scattered. Similarly, in Harkness's *In Darkest London* we are told that, once casual labourers have sunk 'into the scum of London, and become paupers, gaol-birds and vagrants', they take up residence in lodging-houses, or 'thieves' kitchens'. To enter these crypts of iniquity the intrepid explorer has to go 'down a steep flight of steps to an underground place at the end of a long passage'.

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[93] Flint, 'Surround', p. 457.
[94] Matthew Beaumont, *Nightwalking: A Nocturnal History of London, Chaucer to Dickens* (London: Verso, 2015), pp. 15, 27-28, 42.
[95] Burleigh, 'The Unemployed', p. 772.
[96] D. Rice-Jones, 'In the Heart of London', *The English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1886, pp. 208-233 (pp. 220-223).

These, however, are only daytime retreats: 'at night the slummers show themselves to be worse than savages. They come out of the holes they call homes, and the public-houses, to enjoy themselves in truly bestial fashion'.[97]

Such depictions of the urban poor as subterranean night-prowlers persisted into the early twentieth century. Working-class participants of the raucous CIV demonstrations on 27 and 29 October 1901 were portrayed by the journalist and liberal politician C. F. G. Masterman in similar terms. Held in honour of London's Imperial Volunteers, who were returning home from the Boer War, a mood of celebration deteriorated into one of dissipation. According to one paper the 'slum classes, and throngs of immoral women' flooded the streets, and by nightfall 'scenes of riot and uproar' were everywhere.[98] Not everyone blamed the urban poor for what was considered a lewd display; one eyewitness writing to the *Outlook* described how: 'one old gentleman – I am sure he was *a real* gentleman because he wore diamond rings on his fingers – chased a crowd of girls with a gilded bladder on a stick.'[99] Masterman, however, adopted the former interpretation and depicted the working classes – the 'dense black masses' – as the sole perpetrators of the commotion.[100] Perhaps drawing on Wells himself, whom he called a 'brilliant speculator' in an article of 1902, Masterman depicts the working classes in Morlockian terms.[101] 'Denizens of another universe', the crowd is composed of nocturnal creatures who dwell in dark, cramped conditions. Consequently, they are 'unaccustomed [to] daylight and squares and open spaces' and only reveal their true natures with the onset of night. In a scene in which the urban poor almost visibly degenerate, Masterman describes how 'as the darkness drew on they relapsed more and more into bizarre and barbaric revelry.' Eventually, like a pack of predators, they are left 'howling under the quiet stars' while the remnants of the respectable public retire in indignation.[102]

The other defining trait of the Morlock's is cannibalism. As the Time Traveller hypothesises, having traversed their cavern, 'these Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon' (59). This taste for human flesh is also inherited from the East End. Reformers, slum novelists and journalists readily portrayed the residuum as cannibalistic. At times this was figurative. This is the case in Sims's *How the Poor Live*, in which he compares the slums to the 'Cannibal Islands', and in William Booth's *In Darkest*

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[97] Harkness, *In Darkest London*, pp. 49, 41-42, 175.

[98] 'Carnival or Pandemonium', *Hampshire Advertiser,* 3 November 1900, p. 5.

[99] 'An Experience on C. I. V. Day', *Outlook*, 3 November 1900, p. 429.

[100] [C. F. G. Masterman], *From the Abyss: Of its Inhabitants by One of Them* (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1902), p. 2.

[101] C. F. G. Masterman, 'The Social Abyss', *Contemporary Review*, 1 January 1902, pp. 23-35 (p. 34). David L. Pike has also noted the influence that Wells's Morlocks had on Masterman's depictions of the urban poor in his later work *The Condition of England* (1909). See, David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800-1945* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 83.

[102] Masterman, *From the Abyss*, pp. 2-3.

England, which opens with an in-depth analogy between the metropolitan residuum and the 'human beings dwarfed into pygmies and brutalised into cannibals' that Henry Morton Stanley claimed to have discovered in Africa.[103] But often the East End cannibal was represented in more literal terms. Indeed, although in *A Child of the Jago* the narrator scorns the idea, mocking those who believe in 'slums packed with starving human organisms without minds and without morals, preying on each other alive', this is the very scene that Morrison describes in a subsequent chapter. During a faction fight between the Ranns and the Learys, two rival clans within the Jago, Dicky Perrot comes across his mother being savaged by Sally Green, a woman notorious for 'gnawing and worrying' her opponents. 'Sprawled on her face in the foul road lay a writhing woman […] and spread over all, clutching her prey by hair and wrist, Sally Green hung on the nape like a terrier, jaws clenched, head shaking.' In a bid to protect his mother Dicky, too, turns cannibal: he attacks Sally, and his 'sharp teeth were meeting in the shoulder-flesh, when help came'.[104] Although these attacks are ostensibly driven by anger rather than hunger, the anthropophagic motive can scarcely be escaped in a novel where food is often noted by its absence. Indeed, it is emphasised through the description of Dicky's mother as Sally's 'prey', the word used to ridicule those who believe that the slummers are 'preying on each other'.

The Jago is not the only London slum where cannibal appetites are at work. In two of Harkness's novels, *Out of Work* (1888) and *In Darkest London*, cannibalism becomes a symptom of the most degraded form of slum-life. In *Out of Work* she describes a common lodging-house in which two homeless people are kept like dogs, 'quarrell[ing] together for crusts and potatoes' thrown to them by the lodgers. One of these wretches, 'a shrivelled hag', sees a baby dying on its mother's knee. The mother's eyes are closed, silently seeping tears, and the woman takes her chance. Shuffling forward she 'drew near to touch the baby's rounded knee with a claw-like finger' and then retreats, muttering.[105] Harkness does not state what the woman's intentions are, but the implication is clear; that the meaty joint of a baby near to death looked, perhaps only for an instant, like a promising meal. In *In Darkest London*, Harkness is more explicit. Here Captain Lobe is called to a slum in Bethnal Green where he finds a Christian man who has squirrelled himself away amongst the Jewry, a pariah community during this period.[106] A former slaughterman, he confesses to Lobe that having 'to kill and kill makes a man like a cannibal' and that one day, possessed by a 'thirst' for 'human blood, human flesh' he struck down a vagrant woman and killed her.[107] In the end, we are

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[103] Booth, *In Darkest England*, p. 9; Sims, *How the Poor Live*, p. 69.

[104] Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, pp. 28, 33.

[105] Margaret Harkness, *Out of Work*, ed. John Lucas (London: Merlin Press, 1990), pp. 111-112.

[106] In the 1880s and 1890s an influx of Jewish migrants generated an intense hostility towards the Jewish community. See, White, *London in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 156.

[107] Harkness, *In Darkest London*, p. 150.

told, he did not eat her, too horrified by what he had done. In both these instances cannibalism proves beyond the pale even for the desperate and degenerate; however, it is nonetheless attractive. For the first readers of these novels, written at the end of the 1880s, these anthropophagic episodes may have recalled Jack the Ripper, an East End murderer suspected of cannibalism.

In the autumn of 1888 five women were eviscerated by Jack the Ripper. Four of the murders took place in the slums of Whitechapel and Spitalfields, and the murderer's anonymity opened a rich and imaginative seam of conjecture about who he was: he could be a vagrant – a down-and-outer – or a mad doctor, or a Gypsy, or a Jew, or an upper-class libertine. All of these theories had their advocates. The police favoured the notion that he was a casual or loafer, and disregarded the possibility of a West End perpetrator.[108] Although they varied in tone and style, the influx of letters purporting to be from the Ripper propped up this assumption because many of them were 'barely literate'. Most if not all of the letters (there are 210 of them in the Public Record Office) turned out to be hoaxes, but in those fear-filled months of 1888 they shaped and projected how the East End's most notorious murderer was imagined.[109] Of these, the letter 'From Hell' was one of the most gruesome and widely discussed.

On Tuesday 16 October George Lusk, the president and chairman of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee, received a parcel. Inside the package was half a human kidney and a letter; it was transcribed in the *Daily News* as follows:

> From Hell. – Mr. Lusk. – Sir, I send you half the kidne I took from one woman. Prasarved it for you. Tother piece I fried and ate; it was very nice. I may send you the bloody knife that took it out, if you only wate whil longer – (Signed.) Catch Me When You Can, Mr. Lusk.[110]

A particularly grisly episode in the Ripper correspondence, the partial kidney and the letter caused widespread speculation in the press. Although some papers entertained the idea that it might be a 'disgusting trick' or 'a student's antic', most 'recollected that the left kidney was missing from the woman [Catherine] Eddowes', one of the victims of the so-called 'double event' in which two women were murdered on 30 September in Mitre Square, Whitechapel.[111] This speculation was supported by the fact that it was a 'ginny' kidney; it 'belonged to a person who had drunk heavily'.[112] As a sometime tramp and an East End

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[108] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, pp. 2-3, 202-12.
[109] Stewart P. Evans and Keith Skinner, *Jack the Ripper: Letters from Hell* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 2001), p. 8.
[110] 'The East-End Murders', *Daily News*, 19 October 1888, p. 3.
[111] 'The Whitechapel Murders', *St. James's Gazette*, 22 October 1888, p. 14; 'The East-End Murders: A Ghastly Incident', *Lloyd's Weekly*, 21 October 1888, p. 3; 'The Murders in the East-End: An Extraordinary Parcel', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 October 1888, p. 7.
[112] 'The East-End Murders', *Reynolds's Newspaper,* 21 October 1888, p. 8.

charwoman, it would have been a matter of course that Eddowes was a drunkard.[113] Whose the kidney was, or whether it was a prank, is not at issue here. What is important is the fact that the author's claims to cannibalism were grounded in a Cockney personality, and that this was readily accepted by the press (at least for a time). With its truncated clauses and phonetic spelling, the letter reflects the slurred ignorance thought to belong to the slums, and frames the criminal's identity as that of a loafer. This was also the undisguised suspicion of the authorities, who at the time the kidney was sent were committing a 'thorough house-to-house search' in Whitechapel, an area 'notorious for its transient and homeless poor', as Walkowitz observes.[114] The letter, then, contributed to the notion that the Ripper, along with his carnal and carnivorous appetites, belonged to the residuum.

By aligning the Time Traveller with the social investigator Wells invited readers to interpret the Morlocks as the residuum; a reading that he further encouraged by supplying the Morlocks with the character traits of the loafer. The most degraded form of humanity to be found in the nineteenth century became the model for humanity in its most degraded form. However, although Wells's narrative is primarily one of biological degeneration, this is coupled with a political deterioration. As Beaumont has argued, the Morlocks' slaughter of the Eloi represents a form of socio-political degeneration in which Marx's proletarian uprising has come to fruition; this revolution was presented by Marx as already secretly seeded within the works of Victorian capitalism. Like the physical decline of the human race that was feared by contemporary commentators, the socialist revolution was a corruption that was already at work.[115] Powered by what Beaumont identifies as Wells's 'exclusively evolutionary understanding of history', *The Time Machine* weds society's political trajectory to that of humanity's biological degeneration.[116]

The cannibalistic practice adopted by the Morlocks marks the advent of revolution: the anthropophagous act is the literal and symbolic overthrow of the bourgeoisie (or at least its remains). As Katherine Hume has noted in her psychoanalytic reading of the text:

> Haves normally exploit, 'eat,' or consume Havenots in a capitalist system; that is how the image [of cannibalism] usually enters socio-economic discourse. In *The Time Machine*, however, the cannibalistic urges are instead projected onto the Havenots.[117]

The reversal of the cannibalistic image is therefore emblematic of capitalism overturned. However, this is not the revolution that Marx predicted. Rather than the communist world that the Traveller initially believes he might have discovered, he instead unearths a society that

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[113] 'The Identification of the Mitre-Square Victim', *St. James's Gazette*, 4 October 1888, p. 8.
[114] 'The East-End Murders', *Morning Post,* 18 October 1888, p. 5; Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 193.
[115] Beaumont, *Spectre of Utopia*, pp. 221-252.
[116] Ibid., p. 243.
[117] Kathryn Hume, 'Eat or be Eaten: H. G. Wells's *Time Machine*', *Philological Quarterly*, 69.2 (1990), 233-251 (p. 244).

has collapsed into anarchism. This is also signified by the act of cannibalism. Recording the final days of the First French Revolution, Thomas Carlyle pungently describes how 'the Revolutionary Tribunal, after all it has devoured, has now only, as Anarchic things do, to devour itself.'[118] Wells would have been familiar with Carlyle's cannibalistic construction of revolution gone-wrong: as he notes in his *Autobiography*, in 1887 he 'discovered the heady brew of Carlyle's *French Revolution* [1837]'.[119] It is also particularly fitting that a world dominated by the residuum should be anarchic: as we have seen, in the 1880s Peek and his contemporaries feared that loafers would be 'used by the anarchists to further their own ends', while for Marx, anarchy was the class ideology of the *lumpenproletariat*.[120]

This interpretation of the Morlocks' revolution as anarchic is one of the many narratives that Wells encourages us to read through the symbolism of *The Time Machine*. Indeed, the relationship between the Morlock and the anarchic vagrant is one of the associations that the White Sphinx, the dominant symbol of the novella, holds in tension. Embossed on the front cover of the first edition at Wells's suggestion, the sphinx looms large throughout the narrative: it is the first object that the Traveller contemplates when he arrives in the future; it acts as a waymarker, guiding him across the estranged landscape of London; and it is within the belly of sphinx, its 'pedestal of bronze' (35), that he eventually finds the time machine. As a symbol it is 'obdurately overdetermined', as Beaumont remarks.[121] It could gesture towards other fantastic narratives, like Jules Verne's *Le Sphinx des glaces*, as Patrick Parrinder suggests;[122] or it could be a reference to the Decadent Movement, as Roger Luckhurst proposes when he observes that it might refer to Oscar Wilde's 1894 poem *The Sphinx*. Here the sphinx symbolises sensual decadence and decline, which would chime with Wells's depiction of the enervated Eloi.[123] Moreover, it would cohere with Wells's practice elsewhere: in *A Story of the Days to Come* (1899), another dystopia set in the same future as *When the Sleeper Wakes*, the phrase 'Sphinx of Sin' is used by the depraved millionaire Bindon to 'dignify certain unhealthy and undignified departures from sane conduct to which a misguided vanity and an ill-controlled curiosity had led him.'[124]

However, within the context of *The Time Machine*, the symbol of the sphinx also points to the social problem. As Luckhurst and Beaumont have remarked, the sphinx recalls Julian West's eager query at the beginning of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-*

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[118] Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, 3 vols (London: The Folio Society, 1989), III, p. 283.
[119] Wells, *Autobiography*, I, p. 241.
[120] Peek, 'The Workless', p. 51; Thoburn, 'Difference in Marx', pp. 445, 453; Welshman, *Underclass*, p. 21.
[121] Beaumont, *Spectre of Utopia*, p. 229.
[122] Patrick Parrinder, *Shadows of the Future: H. G. Wells, Science Fiction and Prophecy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 15.
[123] See Luckhurst's note in Wells, *The Time Machine*, p. 106.
[124] H. G. Wells, *A Story of the Days to Come*, *Tales of Time and Space* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1900), pp. 165-324 (p. 318).

Loafers

1887 (1888), a utopian text that *The Time Machine* directly responds to.[125] Here West, having

slumbered for a century, awakes in the future, and asks, 'what solution, if any, have you

found for the labour question? It was the Sphinx's riddle of the nineteenth century, and when

I dropped out the Sphinx was threatening to devour society, because the answer was not

forthcoming.'[126] Here the sphinx symbolises the unemployed and their capacity for

destruction. By the time Bellamy and Wells were writing, these associations were well

established. As I discussed in the previous chapter, in *Past and Present* Carlyle used the

sphinx to emblematise the Condition-of-England question, and to warn readers of the

revolutionary consequences if it were not answered.[127] Later, Dickens and Fildes likewise

portrayed London's casuals as sphinxes in order to express their potential for insurrection,

and this is a tradition that Harkness also participated in in *Out of Work.* Here she describes

two homeless women, begging in the street for halfpennies: 'there they sit day and night,

those sphinxes. And there they will stay until *Laissez-faire* and his army lose the day, until his

banners are seized by the enemy.'[128] Wells's sphinx evokes this legacy of representation; it

figures as a symbol for the unemployed, the impoverished and the vagrant that form the

residuum, and the power that they have to overthrow society and its economic order. This was

imagined by some to be the political destiny of the Victorian casual and the loafer, those

anonymous and anarchic figures who haunted the bourgeois imagination. Ironically, these

metropolitan vagrants were not threatening because of the way they moved, like the predatory

Gypsies and poachers, but because of the ways they did not. They dangled like the Sword of

Damocles, harmless in itself, but embodying a suppressed and deadly motion.

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[125] Beaumont, *Spectre of Utopia*, pp. 228-232; Luckhurst, 'Introduction', pp. xv-xvi.
[126] Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 28.
[127] Beaumont also cites Carlyle's *Past and Present* as a source for the sphinx in *The Time Machine*. See, Beaumont, *Spectre of Utopia*, p. 230.
[128] Harkness, *Out of Work*, p. 136.

Part Three: The Colony

Chapter 5: Vagabonds

In *The Expansion of England* (1883) the historian J. R. Seeley described the British Empire in these terms:

> Excluding certain small possessions, which are chiefly of the nature of naval or military stations, it consists besides the United Kingdom of four great groups of territory, inhabited either chiefly or to a large extent by Englishmen and subject to the Crown, and a fifth great territory also subject to the Crown and ruled by English officials, but inhabited by a completely foreign race.[1]

Here Seeley splits the Empire into neat territorial units: the Canadas, South Africa, the West Indies and Australasia form the four domains settled by the English, and India is the 'fifth great territory'. In this account, the Empire is presented as a unified whole, reassuringly 'subject to the Crown', while those territories whose status is less certain are ignored. For example, ramshackled under the rubric of 'certain small possessions' is Hong Kong, which was ceded to the British in 1842, and Egypt, which was invaded in 1882. These conquests were far more commercially and politically significant than Seeley allows, but could not be comfortably situated within his image of Britain as a country-continent, bound together by ties of loyalty and race. Seeley's omissions point towards a larger truth, that the British Empire, the world's largest empire throughout the nineteenth century, was not a homogenous mass, but a ragtag of loose possessions. As John Darwin argues in his comprehensive global history, *The Empire Project* (2009), the British Empire was a piecemeal creation nurtured by discrete commercial enterprises: it was a 'disparate collection of "work camps in the wilderness", mercantile agencies, mildewed plantations, treaty-ports and port-cities, coaling stations and bases, fractious semi-protectorates and one huge garrison state [India]'.[2] Business ties and governmental support were essential in keeping these territories together, as was what Darwin calls 'demographic imperialism', or emigration.[3]

Emigration was a defining feature of British life in the nineteenth century. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars, it was seen as the answer to overpopulation, and its attendant evils of unemployment, high food prices and political discontent.[4] As early as 1817 the government sponsored the emigration of pauper families, sending them to the colonies in South Africa and Canada, and later to Australia and New Zealand: it was during this period

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[1] J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883), p. 10.
[2] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; repr. 2015), p. 25.
[3] Ibid., pp. 57-63.
[4] Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988; repr. London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 24-25; Robert D. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 38-41.

that 'state-assisted emigration became for the first time a large-scale solution to social problems at home', as Josephine McDonagh remarks.[5] In addition to those who were aided overseas, there was also an increasing number of 'spontaneous' emigrants who funded themselves. In 1832 the number of people departing Britain for extra-European territories exceeded 100,000 for the first time.[6] By 1852 this annual figure had reached a record 370,000, and from then on between 100,000 and 300,000 passengers set sail each year until the end of the century.[7] Overall, an estimated 12 million Britons permanently emigrated to North America, Australasia and South Africa between 1815 and 1930.[8]

Such a large movement of people created economic opportunities and social mobility, but it also awoke anxieties. For officials and patriots, overseas travel would ideally be purposeful and sanctioned by the government: merchant vessels would sail for trade and return with marketable wares; governors would depart to rule colonies and enforce British laws; troops would be dispatched to fulfil specific military objectives; and emigrants would settle in British colonies and become productively employed. Rarely, however, were movements so strategic. Emigration in particular was a highly fluid affair. As the critic Robert D. Grant notes:

> Population flows in the mid nineteenth-century colonial world were highly dynamic. There was considerable traffic between contiguous colonies such as New Zealand and Australia, and the United States and Canada, and re-emigration was often sizeable.[9]

In 1842, for example, 51,161 people set sail for the Canadas. Many of these were pursuing the jobs promised by the Canadian Public Board of Works, which was formed the previous year. When these did not materialise, the emigrants were forced to tramp south to New York City, where they begged for their passage money home.[10] Impulsive mass-movements such as this also characterised the nineteenth and early twentieth-century phenomenon of the 'gold rush'. The first occurred in California in 1849; an estimated 80,000 people turned prospector that year, all of them hoping to make a fortune mining either gold or the 'dry-blowers' that unearthed it. Two years later, further rushes took place in the Australian colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, causing many ambitious Australians to return from California, and attracting thousands of British subjects: in 1852 Australia was the most popular emigration

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[5] Josephine McDonagh, 'Place, Region, and Migration', *The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820-1880*, ed. John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 361-376 (p. 372).

[6] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 41.

[7] Grant, *Representations of British Emigration*, pp. 62-63.

[8] James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 58.

[9] Grant, *Representations of British Emigration*, p. 59.

[10] Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 169, 176-177.

field for only the second time in history – 87,881 Britons emigrated.[11] These rush migrations concerned contemporaries.[12] They imagined that unregulated movement was fraught with economic, moral and social dangers, a belief popularised by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a colonial reformer who was instrumental in shaping official emigration policy in the early Victorian period.[13]

Wakefield's *A Letter from Sydney*, a highly influential treatise on colonisation, was written while he served a three-year prison sentence in Newgate for abduction.[14] Originally serialised in the *Morning Chronicle* between August and October 1829, Wakefield argued that colonisation should be a systematic process, and that emigrants should be prohibited from moving and settling at will within the extensive territory of Australia. If the emigrants were allowed to disperse, he opined, then they would regress, and would end up like the Americans of the United States. As he records, having related a visit to that country:

> The migrating habits of the Americans, opened my eyes. I saw a people without monuments, without history, without local attachments founded on impressions of the past, without any love of birthplace, without patriotism – unless men constantly roaming over immense regions may be called a country.[15]

Extensive and aimless movement, then, barbarised a people. Indeed, it was vagrancy, or what Wakefield called 'restlessness', that was the cardinal feature of a 'new people'; a phrase coined by Wakefield to refer to:

> A people like what the Canadians will be, and the United States' Americans are – a people who, though they continually increase in number, make no progress in the art of living; who, in respect to wealth, knowledge, skill, taste, and whatever belongs to civilization, have degenerated from their ancestors.[16]

This moral and social decay threatened British subjects in the Canadian and Australian colonies, and could only be prevented if emigrants were concentrated and controlled. To achieve this, Wakefield suggested that Australian land should be sold by the government at a premium; this would make it difficult to obtain, and would therefore force poor emigrants to work for wages before they could buy their own plot. As a result, the dispersal of emigrants would be slowed, and a stable and stratified class system, akin to that which existed in Britain, would be created.[17]

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[11] Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1988), pp. 3, 17, 25, 45.
[12] Jude Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 3.
[13] Josephine McDonagh, '*Adam Bede* and Emigration', *George Eliot Review*, 41 (2010), 35-43 (p. 37).
[14] Grant, *Representations of British Emigration*, pp. 46-49.
[15] Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney*, *A Letter from Sydney and Other Writings on Colonisation*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent, 1929), pp. 1-106 (p. 47).
[16] Ibid., p. 68.
[17] Ibid., pp. 77-86.

The reproduction of British society abroad, and the control of unregulated movement, was a preoccupation of Victorian emigration literature more generally. As critics such as Janet C. Myers, Anne McClintock and Jude Piesse have argued, the novels, articles, travelogues and guides that discussed emigration tried to modulate the process of settlement by promoting domestic ideals; these included the importance of familial duty, the separation of the public and private, and the notion that the home was a space of virtue. Essential to the conception of English identity in the Victorian period, domesticity was used by the British to marginalise and to other indigenous social structures, and to pattern settler society; in the process, it also proved useful in nurturing patriotic sympathies, and a sense of attachment to the metropole.[18] Moreover, domesticity was used to encourage careful and considered emigration: it acted as 'a corrective to the licentious and unbridled mobility associated with the "strike-it-rich-quick mentality"', as Myers remarks.[19] It was therefore a counter to unregulated movement, which was a key concern of journalists publishing in the periodical press: these writers 'stressed the importance of domesticity, affective place, and links to the metropolitan centre' in order to advocate disciplined forms of movement, which were founded on 'liberal models of movement as circulation'.[20] This ideal form of emigration was similar to the movement fostered by contemporary urban planners in London, who wanted to create an 'ordered circulation' through the city. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the vagrants' erratic wandering was incompatible with the regulated flow of people and objects within the metropolis, and likewise, their movement overseas was perceived as disruptive to sanctioned currents of migration. In this chapter I explore how this movement was presented in the transatlantic emigration literature of the 1830s and 1840s; in doing so I focus on the vagabond, a figure who was represented as the antagonist of the purposeful emigrant, and hostile to the domestic virtues that ensured their safe passage and settlement.

'Vagabond' is one of the vaguest terms in the nomenclature of vagrancy. Often simply a synonym for 'vagrant', it does not denote a specific condition, space or occupation; it does, as I shall discuss later, carry connotations of roguery, but these can be interpreted as playful or debasing, and do not serve to substantially define their character. As a colonial figure, then, the vagabond is an odd choice: there are other alternatives. The loafer, as we have seen, inhabited India as well as England, and was present in the United States in the form of the 'bummer'. Meanwhile, Australia was home to the 'bushranger', 'the freebooter of the wood'; the 'sundowner', who 'tramps the back districts of the colonies'; and the 'larrikin',

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[18] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 34-36; Janet C. Myers, *Antipodal England: Emigration and Portable Domesticity in the Victorian Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009), p. 7.

[19] Myers, *Antipodal England*, p. 9.

[20] Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print*, pp. 3, 34-47.

who 'generally confines himself and his operations to the larger towns'.[21] Most of these figures, however, were inflected with an idleness that was at variance with the exuberant if undirected energy of the early Victorian colonial vagrant. Even the 'sundowner', who travelled long distances through the Australian bush, was characterised as listless and work-shy. In 'Australian Colloquialisms' (1887), *All the Year Round* recorded that 'the "sundowner" is an able-bodied tramp with a strong disinclination to work'; while the journalist Harry Furniss noted, 'he is a loafer […] an idle, worthless, drunken ne'er-do-well'.[22] The only figure free from lassitude is the bushranger; however, although they have vagrant propensities, they truly belong to a distinct criminal class. As the former bushranger John Turner explains to Holmes and Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' (1891), while in Australia 'I got among bad companions, took to drink, had no luck with my claim, took to the bush, and, in a word became what you would call over here a highway robber.'[23] Another term that might be useful is 'sojourner'. In Wakefield's *A Letter from Sydney* he contrasted the permanent residents of Australia with the 'mere sojourners' who 'do not like the place', and critics and historians have adopted the term since as an antonym for 'settler'.[24] This word, however, does not encapsulate the apparently purposeless movement of the vagrant: indeed, the sojourners that Wakefield discussed were the colony's governors and administrators. The vagabond, then, a figure that appears in early Victorian emigration literature, and that exhibits the aimlessness and restlessness of the vagrant, has been chosen as the subject for this first chapter on 'The Colony' – another term that requires clarification.

'The Colony' is nebulous. Although 'The Country' and 'The City' contain an array of unique landscapes and urban spaces, the colony outstrips both of these, embodying a broad spectrum of climates and topographies; these include snow-capped mountains, desert plains, tropical islands and salt-marshes, as well as camps, plantations, villages, towns and cities. Moreover, each of these is in turn tempered by the degree and manner in which Western powers have intruded; they may be established settler colonies, like those in Australia, or have been subject to military conquest, as in the case of India. Furthermore, although the colony is a product of imperialism, it does not necessarily entail it: colonisation can be the creation of a white settlement that has no formal government, like the Fijian town of Levuka before British annexation in 1874. And even settlement is not an absolute requirement.

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[21] 'Sawkey, the Bush-Ranger', *Court Magazine*, April 1833, pp. 191-194 (p. 191); 'The Scallywag', *Globe*, 14 March 1898, pp. 1-2 (p. 1); 'Australian Colloquialisms', *All the Year Round*, 30 July 1887, pp. 65-68 (p. 66).

[22] 'Australian Colloquialisms', p. 66; Harry Furniss, '"The Domain," Sydney', *Windsor Magazine*, August 1898, pp. 304-306 (p. 304).

[23] Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery', *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Richard Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; repr. 2008), pp. 75-101 (p. 98).

[24] Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney*, p. 31. Grant and Belich both use 'sojourner' in this sense.

Colonisation can simply refer to the exploitation of a land and its inhabitants by a non-indigenous people, as Grant notes.[25] Vagrants emerged in fact and fiction in all these spaces, and a full treatment of colonial vagrancy could be a book-length project in itself, touching on many rich and understudied figures. In this section I focus on vagabonds and beachcombers, vagrants that emerged on the frontier zones of the American West and the Pacific Islands. Although these two figures and their associated regions differ, a few helpful generalisations can be made at the outset about their topographies, and how they were imagined.

Colonial vagrants were not imagined to be patriots, and were therefore envisaged in the frontier territories that Eric Hobsbawm describes as conducive to banditry:

> It is a commonplace that brigands flourish in remote and inaccessible areas such as mountains, trackless plains, fenland, forest or estuaries with their labyrinth of creeks and waterways, and are attracted by trade-routes and major highways, where pre-industrial travel is naturally both slow and cumbrous.[26]

Colonial vagrants, in both fantasy and reality, belonged to these landscapes, although islands can also be added to Hobsbawm's list: naturally imagined as 'remote and inaccessible', islands were likewise located along major trade routes, especially in the pre-industrial age of sail when they proved useful depots for resupply.[27] The far-flung and ungoverned nature of these regions also gave rise to another quality that is implied by Hobsbawm – lawlessness. Indeed, the frontier zones that encouraged vagrancy might be called 'colonial alsatias'. Originally a cant term coined in 1676 for Whitefriars, London, an 'alsatia' is 'a sanctuary for criminals; a lawless place.'[28] As Jerry White records, these 'self-governing places, immune from outside interference', properly belonged to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century metropolis, although their infamous reputation was remembered a century on.[29] Like their London counterparts, the colonial alsatias were branded as disease-ridden and unruly spaces in which the depraved and the criminal could move unchecked.

The vagrants who dwelt in these peripheral alsatias were imagined to be male. This was historically inaccurate. Herman Melville, for example, spotted a vagrant woman on the island of Tahiti: as he describes in his South Seas memoir, *Omoo* (1847):

> There wandered about Papeetee, at this time, a shrivelled little fright of an Englishwoman, known among sailors as 'Old Mother Trot.' From New Zealand to the Sandwich Islands, she had been all over the South Seas; keeping a rude hut of entertainment for mariners, and supplying them with rum and dice.[30]

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[25] Grant, *Representations of British Emigration*, p. xv.

[26] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (1969; repr. London: Abacus, 2001), p. 24.

[27] Gillian Beer, 'Island Bounds', *Islands in History and Representation*, ed. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 32-42 (p. 33).

[28] 'Alsatia, n.1', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [accessed 29 March 2017].

[29] Jerry White, *Mansions of Misery: A Biography of the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison* (London: Bodley Head, 2016), p. 24.

[30] Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, ed. Mary K. Bercaw Edwards (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 160.

Meanwhile, female sojourners also contributed to life on the frontier. In February 1850 a ship carrying 200 Australian women arrived in California all of whom were destined for the gold diggings.[31] However, the portrayal of vagrants as male was not wholly without justification. In the nineteenth century, men emigrated at a faster rate than women, and were far more likely to become sojourners.[32] As a result, the unsettled frontiers fostered large male communities; so much so, in fact, that they contributed to the phraseology of bachelordom. As Katherine V. Snyder observes, the term 'baching it' 'arose in the context of early nineteenth-century emigration to frontier areas of British colonies and American territories; it referred specifically to the residences and living styles of single men who were making new homes in these new worlds.'[33] This association between bachelordom and frontier spaces was also expressed in the colonial vagrant, who was almost always presented as single. As we shall see, this bachelor state was used to mark the selfish independence of the vagabond.

In the rest of this chapter I shall explore how the American West was articulated as a colonial alsatia in emigration literature, and how it was populated with the roving people imagined by Wakefield. First I examine its portrayal in the early 1830s in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. Here I identify two coexisting Wests: one that was conceived as a suitable site for emigration where the British might become prosperous, the other an unruly and unsettled place where the emigrant might fall prey to British or American vagabonds. I then discuss how this latter West emerged in Charles Dickens's novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), and how he used it to expound upon the connected themes of selfishness and vagabondage. Although *Martin Chuzzlewit* does not belong to the genre of the emigration guide discussed in the first section, its American episodes can be conceived as an anti-emigration guide. As Nancy Aycock Metz argues, these scenes were informed by emigration manuals, and comprise 'an elaborate study in the "How Not To Do It" of trans-Atlantic emigration.'[34]

Transatlantic Emigration in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*

Before 1900, two-thirds of British emigrants travelled to the United States.[35] From 1815 to 1860 the most popular destinations were the states of the 'Old Northwest' – Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin. These territories had a powerful pull for British, and

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[31] Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades*, p. 24.

[32] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 29-30.

[33] Katherine V. Snyder, *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 34.

[34] Nancy Aycock Metz, '"Fevered with Anxiety for Home": Nostalgia and the "New" Emigrant in *Martin Chuzzlewit*', *Dickens Quarterly*, 18.2 (2001), 49-61 (p. 52).

[35] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 4-5.

particularly English, emigrants: the prospect of cheap land, lower taxes and better wages made the United States appealing in general, but these agricultural districts also offered an escape to a simpler time, free from the rapid changes being wrought by the industrial revolution back home.[36] The fact that many emigrants, unused to felling trees and breaking ground, found this life too arduous to endure for long did nothing to undermine the agrarian myth. As William Van Vugt comments, for British emigrants 'the Jeffersonian ideal that farmers on their own land reaped independence and virtue along with their crops was still alive and well, and it struck a responsive chord in the heart of many Britons.'[37] However, idealism was not the only reason for choosing the Old Northwest. Between 1825 and 1837 the region experienced over a decade of growth and prosperity in which exports exceeded imports by $189 million, and the sale of land spiked: in Illinois 100,000 acres were sold in 1829, 354,000 in 1835, and 2 million in 1836.[38] It was this enormous growth that caused *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* to favour the Old Northwest as a site of emigration in its serialised emigration guide, *The Western States of America* (1833-34).

Chambers's was not the first periodical to promote emigration to America. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, radicals like William Cobbett, the editor and owner of the *Political Register*, had lauded the United States as a land of social and economic freedom.[39] Unlike its predecessors, however, *Chambers's* had no political affiliation. Established in February 1832 and priced at 1½*d*., it was one of a new generation of mass-market periodicals that sought to provide a blend of useful instruction and entertainment. Alongside other cheap publications, like the *Penny Magazine*, it competed for a working class audience, to whom it addressed articles on history, science and technology.[40] In addition, as the founding editor William Chambers announced in the inaugural edition, it was also committed to providing the 'poor man' with 'valuable and correct information for his guidance, should he be disposed or necessitated to emigrate'.[41] The publication of emigration guides, like *The Western States of America*, was no doubt a fulfilment of this pledge, but it was also part of *Chambers's* strategy to engage a global audience. During its first year of publication *Chambers's* flourished, establishing a circulation of 50,000, and imprints in Edinburgh and London; moreover, it also received 'repeated applications from different colonies of Great Britain, especially Canada

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[36] Erickson, *Leaving England*, pp. 62-63, 66.

[37] William E. Van Vugt, *Britain to America: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Immigrants to the United States* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 11.

[38] Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, pp. 224-227.

[39] Gregory Claeys, 'The Example of America a Warning to England? The Transformation of America in British Radicalism and Socialism, 1790-1850', *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J. F. C. Harrison*, ed. Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 66-80 (pp. 70-72).

[40] Aileen Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge: William Chambers and the Business of Publishing, 1820-1860* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 21-24.

[41] 'The Editor's Address to His Readers', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 4 February 1832, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

and the West Indies, respecting a reprint in those places'. Although in February 1833 the editors could not accommodate these requests, they were nonetheless conscious of their overseas appeal, assuring readers 'that innumerable copies find their way […] to individuals in almost all the dependencies of Great Britain, even in the remote fur settlements of North America.'[42] In 1835 they made sure that this was the case by sending 200,000 copies abroad.[43] The items on emigration would have appealed to *Chambers's* domestic and international readers. Some of these may have been seeking advice on emigration or re-emigration, but more generally, these articles would have provided excitement, not only by presenting Pisgah visions of the land of plenty, but also by portraying the risks of emigration. The paeans that formed *The Western States of America*, for example, were alloyed by allusions to possible dangers, which were in turn enlarged upon by intertexts that ran alongside the series. Contrary to their eulogistic neighbours, these presented a distinctly Wild West inhabited by a lawless and highly mobile population.

The first number of *The Western States of America*, which ran in seven parts from December 1833 to February 1834, is 'The Settlers of the West' (1833). An introductory overview, it provides a prospectus for the following numbers, which 'endeavour to describe each individual state, its extent, local character, and applicability to the wants of emigrants'. It then enlarges on the excellent employment and agricultural opportunities that readers will find, and details the journey that emigrants take through the Atlantic states and onto their final destinations. Each stage and site of rest is spread before the prospective traveller: at Pittsburgh they will stop and 'determine on their subsequent route', and when they journey on, they will pause within the bosky hollows of the prairie, where 'parties always make arrangements at night-fall to halt'. In this fanciful idyll, we are told that the distant sounds of 'wolves' only 'render the contrast of their society and security more sensible'.[44] This careful delineation of rest and movement makes emigration appear routine by presenting it as a habitual and rhythmic experience. The effect of this is twofold: it sanitises the 'emigrant's first encounter with a new land', as McDonagh observes, and it also counters unwanted rush movements by providing a spatio-temporal template that encourages careful planning and incorporates time for reflection.[45]

The subsequent articles, which are on West Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois, adopt the rhetorical structures of 'The Settlers of the West', and enforce its claims. Again, we hear of the superabundance of the land, the thriving labour market, and the steady independence that emigrants can achieve. Illinois is thought to 'possess the finest land

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[42] 'Chambers's Edinburgh Journal', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 2 February 1833, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).
[43] Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print*, p. 25.
[44] 'The Settlers of the West', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 7 December 1833, pp. 356-357.
[45] Josephine McDonagh, 'Space, Mobility, and the Novel: "The spirit of place is a great reality"', *Adventures in Realism*, ed. Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 50-67 (p. 56).

in the known world'.[46] Cincinnati, Ohio, is an unparalleled city: there is 'no similar example of a settlement of equal numbers, improvement, and prosperity' in the 'history of colonies'.[47] And in the backwoods of Indiana, 'a poor man, with a cabin and cornfield, may […] easily support a family in wholesome provisions'.[48] Moreover, the articles assume the perspective of the emigrant travelling west. Having detailed the conditions in West Pennsylvania, the easternmost state discussed, we are told that 'the next district which comes under the notice of the emigrant is that of Ohio'.[49] From here the series continues to travel westward, concluding with two articles on Illinois. It therefore enacts the several stages that emigrants are encouraged to take in 'The Settlers of the West' and, by carefully examining the terrain, settlement, and employment prospects in each state, it also models the shrewd attitude of the successful emigrant. The presence of this patient and methodical mindset within the series is enhanced by the pattern of publication. Spaced two or three numbers apart in the weekly journal, the reading time of the series is extended, and thus mimics the slow and 'steadying pace' that emigrants were encouraged to adopt. As Piesse argues in her discussion of serialised settlement novels like Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Caxtons* (1848-49), serialisation could produce a sense of gradual progression that was integral to Victorian conceptions of 'safe' migration.[50] Nonetheless, although the West is chiefly presented in secure, solid and affirming terms, it is not without ambivalence.

A generic feature of nineteenth-century emigration guides is that they propose a preferred destination.[51] In the case of *The Western States of America,* and *Chambers's* more generally, this was the Old Northwest: four of the six state-specific articles addressed three of the five states that eventually formed this region, and at the time of publication these states (Ohio, Indiana and Illinois) were the only ones that had been admitted into the Union. Moreover, four months before the guide was serialised, *Chambers's* published a stand-alone article on 'The Michigan Territory' (1833), which recommended it as 'among the most fertile districts, and the best adapted for the settlement of emigrants, of any part of North America.'[52] Outside of this privileged region, however, existed an unruly West. Although the introductory article claimed that emigrant 'caravans do not […] dread the incursion of barbarian robbers' as they travel across the prairie, these very same robbers lurked in the

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[46] 'Illinois', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal,* 8 February 1834, p. 15.

[47] 'Western States of America: Ohio', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 28 December 1833, pp. 381-382 (p. 382).

[48] 'The Western States of America: Indiana', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 18 January 1834, pp. 405-406 (p. 406).

[49] 'Western States of America: Ohio', p. 381.

[50] Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print*, pp. 88-90.

[51] Grant, *Representations of British Emigration*, p. 2.

[52] 'The Michigan Territory', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 31 August 1833, p. 248.

articles on West Pennsylvania and Kentucky.[53] While discussing the profusion of jobs available in West Pennsylvania, for example, the journal warned emigrants that their new employers would want references because of 'the number of disorderly characters, fraudulent bankrupts, and other fugitives from Great Britain, who flee thither to escape the arm of the law'.[54] Meanwhile, during the sketch of 'Old Kentucky' (1834), readers were told that 'there are ignorant, savage, and abandoned men among the lower classes'; echoing the views of commentators like Wakefield, who considered 'the white savages of Kentucky' to be the most degraded American citizens, this statement was no doubt a response to the state's practice of slavery, which made it the least desirable site of settlement for *Chambers's*.[55] Even within the eulogistic *The Western States of America*, then, both British and American outlaws pose a potential danger to the honest emigrant: these admissions of lawlessness and savagery were probed further in the 'American Tales' published alongside the series.

In January and March 1834 *Chambers's* published two American tales excerpted from anthologies edited by Mary Russell Mitford. Mitford's admiration of American literature began in 1820 when she read Washington Irving's *Sketch-book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1819);[56] a series of essays and tales that provided a formal precedent for *Our Village*.[57] A decade later, Mitford compiled the first of her four collections of American writing, each of which was an 'attempt to make American manners better known in England', and 'to promote kindly feelings between two nations'.[58] For *Chambers's* these provided material that could be used to bolster their advice on emigration, and to excite the readership with stories of American lawlessness. The first tale was William Leggett's 'The Rifle', which was printed with the new subtitle, 'an American Tale', signalling to readers the connection between this item and *The Western States of America*. Appearing on 4 January in the interval between the articles on Ohio and Indiana, it was taken from Mitford's first anthology, *Stories of American Life, by American Writers* (1830), and was abridged by the editors of *Chambers's*.

The text selected from Mitford's version of 'The Rifle' was designed to engender certain state partialities and prejudices. The tale is an early detective story in which an old pioneer, Silversight, is murdered in Illinois Territory by the deputy sheriff, Caleb Rumley. Although Illinois is presented as a 'wilderness country' in which the officers of the law are

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[53] 'The Settlers in the West', p. 357.

[54] 'The Western States of America: West Pennsylvania', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 14 December 1833, pp. 364-365 (p. 365).

[55] 'Old Kentucky', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal,* 25 January 1834, pp. 413-414 (p. 414); Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney*, p. 34.

[56] John L. Idol, Jr., 'Mary Russell Mitford: Champion of American Literature', *Studies in the American Renaissance*, (1983), 313-334 (p. 318).

[57] Josephine McDonagh, 'Rethinking Provincialism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Fiction: *Our Village* to *Villette*', *Victorian Studies*, 55.3 (2013), 399-424 (p. 404).

[58] Mary Russell Mitford, 'Preface', *Stories of American Life, by American Writers,* ed. Mary Russell Mitford, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), I, pp. iii-vii (pp. vi-vii).

responsible for breaking it, the reputation of this state, which *Chambers's* would later promote as 'a highly desirable region for the settlement of the emigrant', is carefully protected.[59] The story's setting 'before Illinois was admitted a sister state into the union' is maintained, as is an otherwise redundant storyline about Wentworth, an emigrant from the Atlantic seaboard who 'now enjoyed a degree of happiness that he had never known before'.[60] Meanwhile, the deputy is aligned with a 'company of Kentuck-squatters', highly mobile men who have no legal rights to the land they occupy, and who live outside of government jurisdiction.[61] The lawlessness of Illinois is therefore, to some extent, devolved upon Kentucky, and the vagabond types that live there. This was a state that *Chambers's* would later identify (along with Texas) with 'the restless citizens of the western states […] explorers, squatters, traders, and trappers'.[62] In 'The Rifle', then, the West of settlement – Illinois – is contrasted with the West of unsettlement – Kentucky. This latter association was further expounded in the next of Mitford's tales.

'The Settlers, A Story of Western America' (1834) is another item whose title was changed to chime with *The Western States of America*, and in particular its opening number, 'The Settlers of the West'. An autobiographical novel by Timothy Flint, it was published in America as *George Mason, the Young Backwoodsman* (1829), and appeared in Mitford's anthology, *Lights and Shadows of American Life* (1832), as simply *The Young Backwoodsman*. The anthologised text was heavily abridged to fit into five columns of *Chambers's*, and was also altered to reflect the advice and observations made in *The Western States of America*, which had concluded the previous month. For example, in the anthologised text the Reverend George Mason, the father of the eponymous hero, migrates to Kentucky in response to the ingratitude of his New England congregation, much as Flint did when he left his parish of Lunenburg, Massachusetts to become a missionary and pioneer in the West.[63] In the *Chambers's* text, however, Mason's religious calling is omitted, and he is simply a 'professional' man from New England who has been 'subjected to a series of unforeseen misfortunes'.[64] More significantly, although in both texts the emigrants suffer from living in a 'roofless and unfloored cabin', in which Mason eventually succumbs to 'rheumatic pains and sleepless nights', the hardships of emigration in the *Chambers's* text are attributed to the

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[59] 'More About Illinois', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 15 February 1834, p. 23.
[60] [William Leggett], 'The Rifle, an American Tale', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 4 January 1834, pp. 390-391 (p. 390).
[61] Ibid., p. 390.
[62] 'Texas', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 21 June 1834, p. 168.
[63] James K. Folsom, *Timothy Flint* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1965), pp. 27, 38-42.
[64] [Timothy Flint], 'The Settlers, A Story of Western America', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 15 March 1834, pp. 51-53 (p. 51).

family's fecklessness.[65] In a completely new addition, we are told that Mason 'took the earliest opportunity of purchasing, on report only, and without having seen it, a small lot of land, with an unfinished log-house'.[66] For those who had read *The Western States of America*, this hasty action, indicative of the unwanted rush movement, would have possessed a dramatic irony, and would have reinforced the lessons of careful and considered emigration taught by the guide. Further alterations and substantial abridgements also confirmed the Masons' error in moving specifically to Kentucky.

Where the anarchy of Illinois is softened in 'The Rifle', the lawlessness of Kentucky is exaggerated in 'The Settlers'. In the anthologised text, Kentuck society is presented as vulgar but prosperous. This can be seen in the first description of the Masons' new neighbours:

> The tall planters, dressed in deer-skin hunting-shirts, with fringed epaulets of leather on their shoulders, a knit sash, of red, green, and blue, about their waists, buckskin pantaloons and moccasins, a rifle on their shoulders, five or six dogs attending each of them, and a dozen ragged and listless negroes lounging behind them.[67]

In *Chambers's* this is reduced to: 'the tall planters, dressed in their deer-skin hunting-shirts, a rifle on their shoulders, and a dozen ragged and listless negroes lounging behind them.'[68] The omission of the 'fringed epaulets', 'knit sash' and 'buckskin pantaloons' strips the signs of material wealth from the frontier society, and divests it of the structure implied by these militaristic accoutrements. What remains is a more primitive and mobile society, in which a new emphasis is placed on the Kentucks as hunters. These omissions also change the significance of the slaves: in the anthologised text they serve as further symbols of wealth and hierarchy, and emphasise the opulence of their masters' apparel by their contrasting raggedness; in the *Chambers's* text there is little to differentiate the clothing of the slaves from that of the Kentucks, which suggests a more disorganised and less stratified society.

The stress that *Chambers's* placed on the unruly nature of Kentucky through redaction was further enhanced by additions that were made to the text. In both versions the Masons' claim to their property is disputed by another family of settlers, the Pindalls, and this misfortune is further exacerbated by the unwanted attentions of Hercules Pindall, a native Kentuck who wants to marry Mason's daughter, Eliza. In Flint's text, however, the rival claim is 'supposed to be better than that which [Mason] had purchased', and Hercules is

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[65] [Flint], 'The Settlers', p. 51; [Timothy Flint], *The Young Backwoodsman*, *Lights and Shadows of American Life*, ed. Mary Russell Mitford, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1832), II, pp. 1-196 (pp. 5, 36).
[66] [Flint], 'The Settlers', p. 51.
[67] [Flint], *The Young Backwoodsman*, p. 3.
[68] [Flint], 'The Settlers', p. 51.

presented as a comic and clumsy swain of the backwoods.[69] In *Chambers's* text the opposite is true:

> Their title to the property was, [Hercules] alleged, less valid than his, and threats or dark insinuations began to be thrown out as to the future residence of the family on the spot, although regularly bought and paid for by the Masons.[70]

Here the validity of Pindall's claim is discounted by the narrator, but within the lawless realm of Kentucky it can still be used as leverage against the Mason family. The sense of unruliness created by the meaninglessness of property rights is further heightened by the fresh portrayal of Hercules Pindall: no longer a buffoon, he is now described as 'half-savage', and adds to our sense of the anarchic frontier by making threats that are sexual as well as economic.[71] Although Mitford hoped that the 'lighter literature' in her anthologies would display 'the nicest shades of national manners', it seems likely that readers of 'The Settlers' would have inclined towards the assertions made by Frances Trollope in her contemporary travelogue, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832).[72] Here Trollope claimed that the difference between the law in England and the law in America was that 'in England the laws are acted upon, in America they are not.' She went on to qualify that this statement did not apply to the Eastern States; in the West, however, 'trespass, assault, robbery, nay, even murder, are often committed without the slightest attempt at legal interference.'[73]

The lawless West that coexists with the Arcadian Old Northwest betrays an ambivalence about Western America that would become increasingly prominent in *Chambers's* and the mainstream British press. It is significant that although the United States was by far the most popular destination for British migrants, the periodical press began to dismiss it as a desirable destination for emigrants.[74] Only radical papers and periodicals, like *Reynolds's Miscellany*, continued to promote the 'rising and flourishing hemisphere', contrasting it sardonically with the 'ill-governed colonies' and the 'decaying and misgoverned' metropole.[75] Periodicals like *Chambers's*, meanwhile, began to identify the West with unsettled and dissolute modes of life. In a jovial article entitled 'Voyage in an Emigrant Ship' (1844), for example, a 'Young Adventurer' details his journey to New York; the first stage of a westbound journey into the wilderness. Before striking out across the States, he falls asleep in an American boarding house, and takes a dream journey through a

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[69] [Flint], *The Young Backwoodsman*, p. 75.
[70] [Flint], 'The Settlers', p. 52.
[71] Ibid., p. 52.
[72] Mitford, 'Preface', p. iii.
[73] Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* ed. Elsie B. Michie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 108.
[74] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, pp. 4-5; Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print*, pp. 4-7.
[75] 'The Emigrant's Prospects in the United States', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 28 July 1849, p. 15. For a rich discussion about pro-American emigration literature in the radical periodical press see, Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print*, pp. 143-178.

thick, primeval forest, echoing with the 'whoops of Indians': when he awakes, he reaches for a clumsy epiphany, and realises for the first time that 'I was really an outcast and a vagabond in America.'[76] This interpretation of America as an adventuresome site of vagabondage also had a more ominous aspect that served as a warning for potential emigrants. In 'The United States as an Emigration Field' (1849), *Chambers's* told readers that Illinois, its one-time 'terrestrial paradise', was a place where 'grow[ing] rich in money […] is difficult, if not impossible', while the westernmost districts – Iowa and Texas by this time – had 'rude, brutal, and lawless' populations; a bastard assemblage of 'the scum and refuse, the daring, adventurous, and lawless of all other countries.'[77] This West, a product of emigration gone wrong, was the one that Dickens discovered during the early 1840s.

Dickens in America

On 4 January 1842 Dickens started on his eighteen day voyage across the Atlantic: he would have been among the first of the 118,076 passengers to travel to North America that year, the majority of whom would land, like him, in the United States.[78] Already possessed by the radical sympathies explored in Chapter 2, Dickens expected to step off the paddle steamer and onto the shore of a fair and equitable land, like that presented in *Reynolds's*. He was not disappointed – at least at first. Initially he was charmed by the reception he received in Boston – he had never been lionised to such an extent before – but as he journeyed on, he became disillusioned with the plaudits and publicity. As he proceeded from Boston to New York and down the Atlantic seaboard, he found the public attention cloying, the newspapers prying, and many of the people frankly disgusting.[79] His disenchantment became the force behind his incisive travelogue *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), which at times seems to answer Frances Trollope's call for the 'pen of a Swift' to satirise American manners.[80] Disillusion, however, did not just form the subject of the travel book; it also granted it a rhetorical structure that allowed him to claim an almost superlative authority. As Jerome Meckier argues:

> Artfully, Dickens declared himself to be the most credible because he had been most credulous; that is, upon arriving with the strongest faith, he underwent the sharpest

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[76] 'Voyage in an Emigrant Ship: By a Young Adventurer', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 13 April 1844, pp. 228-232 (p. 232).
[77] 'Illinois', p. 15; 'The United States as an Emigration Field', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 16 June 1849, pp. 374-6 (pp. 375-376).
[78] Slater, *Charles Dickens* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 177-178; Erickson, *Leaving England*, p. 169.
[79] Slater, *Charles Dickens*, pp. 195-196.
[80] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* p. 17.

disappointment, which entitled him to become the most censorious. […] gullibility is translated into authority, with hyperbole serving as a sort of character reference.[81]

We witness this in Dickens's account of the American West.

The first volume of *American Notes* closes with a sketch of Washington, a 'dull and sluggish' town full of malingering, half-accomplished buildings. Despondent, and disaffected with his journey south, Dickens turns his eyes westward, and optimistically recalls the 'old whisperings' of his boyhood, and begins to 'to dream again of cities growing up, like palaces in fairy tales, among the wilds and forests of the west.'[82] No doubt exaggerated to offset the disappointment to come, this is an amplified rendition of a vision that he shared with the Young Men of Boston at a banquet held in his honour. Here he confessed the 'more than happiness' he felt when he read letters from 'the dwellers in log-houses among the morasses, and swamps, and densest forests, and deepest solitudes of the Far West', who read his books, and confided in him the 'little history of domestic joy or sorrow' that they had reawakened.[83] However, these images of a civilised West – whether of cosy 'log-houses' replete with the latest from Boz, or inflated 'palaces' rising above the tree tops – are revealed in *American Notes* to be daydreams only.

Travelling up the Ohio River, and then along the Mississippi towards St. Louis, Dickens was appalled by the scenes of 'settlement' he encountered. The slash-and-burn American farming methods, so unlike the careful and intensive cultivation practiced back home, presented him with an 'oppressive' sight.[84] Observing the 'great tracts where settlers had been burning down the trees', he describes a scene that recalls an act of pillage rather than horticulture: the 'wounded bodies' of the woods lay strewn across the earth, 'like those of murdered creatures'. Coming to Cairo, Illinois, a place translated in *Martin Chuzzlewit* into the swamp-settlement of Eden, he encounters another scene of unsettled settlement. This is an outpost in which 'the half-built houses rot away', outcompeted by the 'rank unwholesome vegetation, in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers […] droop, and die, and lay their bones'.[85] If the scenes of American agriculture recalled roving marauders, then this attempted act of settlement evokes Wakefield's pungent description of a restless 'new people' 'who become rotten before they are ripe.'[86] Far from castle builders or bookish Arcadians, then, the

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[81] Jerome Meckier, *Innocent Abroad: Charles Dickens's American Engagements* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), p. 82.

[82] Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 2000; repr. 2004), pp. 130, 141.

[83] Charles Dickens, 'Banquet in his Honour: Boston', *The Speeches of Charles Dickens*, ed. K. J. Fielding (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), pp. 17-22 (p. 20).

[84] For an account of the differences between British and American farming methods see, Van Vugt, *Britain to America*, pp. 35-38.

[85] Dickens, *American Notes,* pp. 171, 190.

[86] Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney*, p. 69.

Vagabonds

Western 'settlers' Dickens discovered were a nomadic breed, who fired the forests and wilted in the sun. This was confirmed when Dickens reached the limit of his westward journey.

Introducing his topic by way of an old couple who kept a tavern near St. Louis, Dickens dilates on the Western character. Noting that the publicans are a 'poor lady and her vagrant spouse', a man who – if he were not bound in wedlock – 'would clean up his musket, and be off to Texas to-morrow morning', Dickens goes on to regard the husband as 'a very good sample of that kind of people in the West':

> He was one of the very many descendants of Cain proper to this continent, who seem destined from their birth to serve as pioneers in the great human army: who gladly go on from year to year extending its outposts, and leaving home after home behind them.[87]

Here America as a 'continent', and particularly its Western frontier that compels the pioneering spirit, is designated as a space for vagabonds; for the 'descendants of Cain', who was condemned in Genesis to be 'a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth'.[88] Dickens's identification of the Americans as a scion of this ancient, outcast line is perhaps slightly facetious, but it also instils this passage with a subtle menace, and introduces an ambiguity as to which 'great human army' the Americans belong to. Is this the so-called army of civilisation, which spreads virtue and knowledge from one foreign land to the next? Or is it the ravishing horde, which takes all for itself and leaves nothing for the rest? Dickens seems to push us toward this latter reading: the Americans are, after all, a people who leave 'home after home behind them', and home for Dickens, as Catherine Waters notes, was an 'icon of morality'.[89]

Vagabondage in *Martin Chuzzlewit*

Dickens was in high spirits when he set sail from New York – spirits that lasted all the way home. Although he had been taciturn and reclusive on the voyage out, he was now the genius of a floating world. He played the accordion, practiced pranks, and became the inaugural and only president of an exclusive club – the United Vagabonds.[90] A union irreverently formed aboard the *George Washington*, the 'United Vagabonds' was no doubt one of Dickens's first public satires on American manners. Played out in the ship's saloon, the 'Holy Brotherhood committed all kinds of absurdities' to 'the huge amusement of the rest of the passengers'. We have few details of what these 'absurdities' were, but it seems telling that they 'dined always,

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[87] Dickens, *American Notes,* pp. 205-206.
[88] Genesis 14.4.
[89] Catherine Waters, 'Domesticity', *Charles Dickens in Context*, ed. Ledger and Furneaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 350-357 (p. 354).
[90] Slater, *Charles Dickens*, pp. 189, 180.

with a variety of solemn forms, at one end of the table, below the mast, away from the rest'.[91] American dining, which was segregated by sex and notorious for its sloppy haste and queer customs, was a popular target for the witty Brit abroad: Frances Trollope was repeatedly shocked by the 'astonishing rapidity' with which Americans ate, and Dickens was aghast at their excess: in Boston he reports that the traveller is 'certain to see, at every dinner, […] at least two mighty bowls of hot stewed oysters, in any one of which a half-grown Duke of Clarence might be smothered easily.'[92] This reading of the club as a voyage-long farce is bolstered by the fact that the satirical union was formed of 'vagabonds', a term, as we have seen, that Dickens identified with the American character.

The word 'vagabond' has several meanings. Some of these are synonymous with 'vagrant': sense 1.a in the *OED*, for example, records that a vagabond is a person 'roaming or wandering from place to place without settled habitation or home'. But vagabond also has roguish inflections that speak not only of the doubtful morality attached to the vagrant but also the devil-may-care rascality of the playful scoundrel. Consequently, in the third sense 'vagabond' means: 'inclined to stray or gad about without proper occupation; leading an unsettled, irregular, or disreputable life; good-for-nothing, rascally, worthless.'[93] For Dickens, 'vagabond' meant something closer to this last definition. On his return from America he told Mrs Colden, his hostess in New York, that 'I every day resolve to go dreadfully to work directly after break-fas[t and] break my resolution in favour of some gentlemanly piece of vagabondism wit[h] Maclise and Forster'.[94] Here 'vagabondism' is opposed to the rigours of the working day, and wears an easy, languid, 'gentlemanly' air. More than that, however, it is also associated with bachelorhood, as Dickens's vagabond companions indicate: John Forster and the painter Daniel Maclise were both confirmed bachelors.[95] In more serious discussions of vagabondage, like those found in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the sportive independence of bachelorism is translated into selfishness. This is a connection that contemporary readers would easily have made; as Snyder records, self-concern was so readily associated with bachelordom that 'in the Victorian era, "selfish bachelor" was a redundancy.'[96] In *Martin Chuzzlewit* the selfishness of the bachelor is articulated as the wandering of the vagabond. As a consequence, although the vagabond is 'without settled habitation', this condition is often

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[91] Charles Dickens, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), III, p. 293.
[92] Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* p. 23; Dickens, *American Notes*, p. 70.
[93] 'Vagabond, adj. and n', *OED Online*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [accessed 30 March 2017].
[94] Dickens, *Letters*, III, p. 272.
[95] John Turpin, 'Maclise, Daniel (*bap.* 1806, *d.* 1870)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 10 April 2017]; James A. Davies, 'Forster, John (1812–1876)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 10 April 2017].
[96] Snyder, *Bachelors*, p. 30.

indicative of a more abstract homelessness that does not necessarily entail houselessness. This homelessness is the desertion of the domestic hearth, which was Dickens's ultimate sign for selfishness.

Martin Chuzzlewit is an anatomy of selfishness, or at least that is what Dickens wanted it to be. In the 'Preface to the Cheap Edition' (1850) he reflected, 'my main object in this story was, to exhibit in a variety of aspects the commonest of all vices; to show how Selfishness propagates itself; and to what a grim giant it may grow, from small beginnings.'[97] Judged by this prospectus, *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a success. Throughout the novel egotism and hypocrisy are tested and probed, and are rendered both sinister and ridiculous as a result. The most memorable and acerbic of these expositions comes in the American episodes, whose presence has long formed the novel's chief critical interest. According to Forster, Martin's unexpected decision to emigrate was designed to boost the sales of both *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *American Notes*; it was a canny commercial strategy 'which Dickens adopted as suddenly as his hero'.[98] Despite their apparently *ad hoc* origins, however, the American scenes enabled Dickens not only to continue the explication of his theme, but also to expand on it. Presenting readers with a nation that was 'virtually metonymic' with 'change, progress, and the future', Dickens fired his novel with a brimstone prophesy of what England might be like if the 'grim giant' was not slain.[99] This prophetic strain is emphasised by the contrast between the vigorous contemporaneity of the American episodes, set in the 1840s, and what Michael Slater describes as the '"nooks and corners" antiquarianism' of the English scenes, set in the mid-1830s.[100] As Ruth Livesey has recently argued, this 'leaching' between the past and the present was a means of alerting the present to itself, and warning readers of just how close the future had come.[101]

The opening chapter of the novel spells out the august 'pedigree' of the Chuzzlewits.[102] A genealogy of a family whose surname rings with the word 'to chisel', or to cheat, the narrator ironically enters into the pretentions of the dynasty, tracing its lineage 'in a direct line from Adam and Eve' (13).[103] Hinting that they are also descended from their son, Cain, the narrator then admits that despite its prestige, former members of the Chuzzlewit

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[97] Charles Dickens, 'Preface to the Cheap Edition', *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1999; repr. 2004), pp. 783-784 (p. 783).

[98] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. A. J. Hoppé, new edn, 2 vols (London: J. M. Dent, 1969), I, p. 285.

[99] Meckier, *Innocent Abroad*, p. 78.

[100] In the periodisation I have followed Livesey. Ruth Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 125-126; Slater, *Charles Dickens*, p. 210.

[101] Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation*, pp. 125-126.

[102] Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1999; repr. 2004), p. 13. Future references will be made to this edition and in the main text.

[103] Patricia Ingham, 'Introduction', *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1999; repr. 2004), pp. x-xxvi (p. xi).

family have earned the reputation of 'a murderer and a vagabond' (13) – but this is commonplace:

> Indeed, it may be laid down as a general principle, that the more extended the ancestry, the greater the amount of violence and vagabondism; for in ancient days, those two amusements, combining a wholesome excitement with a promising means of repairing shattered fortunes, were at once the ennobling pursuit and the healthful recreation of the Quality of this land. (13)

As the novel unfurls, it becomes increasingly apparent that 'violence and vagabondism' have not been annexed to 'ancient days', but continue to exert their influence over present generations of Chuzzlewits, and their contemporaries. These attributes, and in particular vagabondage, become the chief symptoms of the selfishness that Dickens goes on to explicate.

The term 'vagabond' is associated with all the cheats and Chuzzlewits in the story: Martin is a 'vagabond' (374); Pecksniff a 'moral vagabond' (200); Jonas a 'notable vagabond' (181); Hannibal Chollop a 'violent vagabond' (492); and Montague Tigg, the fraudster behind The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company, a 'vagabond on [his] own account' (219). In each instance 'vagabond' is indicative of selfishness and thus becomes a central tenet of the novel's nomenclature of egotism. Admittedly, the term is also applied to Tom Pinch when Pecksniff, overhearing him at the organ, contemplates that it is 'a vagabond kind of trifling […] just suited to Tom's capacity.' (461). Tom is, of course, a paragon of thoughtfulness and the use of vagabond in this context perhaps gainsays such a strict reading of the word. However, as Mark Tapley notes, 'Pecksniff is a wagabond, a scoundrel, and a willain' himself (622), and, what is more, is in the 'frequent habit of using any word that occurred to him as having a good sound, and rounding a sentence well without much care for its meaning' (25). 'Vagabond' in the mouth of Pecksniff is therefore a malapropism that underwrites his own perfidy. Within the rest of the novel Dickens is rigorous in his application of the term, and it is through ideas of vagabondism that the selfishness of Martin is explicated and eventually overturned.

The story of *Martin Chuzzlewit* has more prominent vagabonds than its eponymous hero. Indeed, by the end of the novel his cousin Jonas has become aligned with the ur-vagabond: intent on murder he pads through the London streets, only stopping to check, in a moment of unease, that his footprints are not 'already moist and clogged with the red mire that stained the naked feet of Cain!' (675). Moreover, having killed his criminal accomplice, the incorrigible Tigg, Jonas also takes a share in the fate of Cain. Wandering home along dark and unfamiliar roads, he is gripped by a fear of discovery, and is overcome by the sensation of being 'his own ghost and phantom, at once the haunting spirit and the haunted man' (681). This phrase captures the fretfulness of the fugitive (see Chapter 2) and the vagabond, who –

like a ghost – may inhabit a house, but can never belong to the home: his outcast status is not spatial, but spiritual, because his very presence renders the home unhomely.

But if Jonas has become a confirmed and 'notable vagabond' by the novel's end, then Martin is conspicuous as a potential vagabond at its beginning. Selfish, conceited and dismissive of his filial duties, Martin roams vagabond-like for most of the novel, 'from place to place without settled habitation or home'. At times, this lack of habitation seems to comprise the houseless condition of the vagrant. When Pecksniff evicts him from his house, he is described, almost like another Oliver Twist, trudging 'on the road to London' (209):

> Friendless and penniless; incensed to the last degree; deeply wounded in his pride and self-love; full of independent schemes; and perfectly destitute of any means of realizing them […] To add to his other miseries, he was by this time sensible of being wet to the skin, and cold at his very heart. (210)

Here Martin is presented as a chill and lonely vagrant; however, this passage is only a 'view *within* the solitary traveller' (210).[104] Although Martin is houseless and forced to travel on foot, the outcast condition we are presented with is one that he imagines himself, and is a reflection of his self-pity, rather than his actual bodily state: he is not really like poor Oliver, 'cold and hungry, and more alone than he had ever felt before.'[105] This soon becomes apparent, and the vagrant guise he assumes begins to unravel. Remembering Tom Pinch, the friend that proves he is not friendless, and the book that he gave him at parting, Martin finds within it half a sovereign, which promptly redeems him from poverty. It is then not long before he also remembers that he has 'a gold hunting-watch in his pocket' (211), which completely undoes his pretended destitution. Here the vagrant condition resolves into the vagabond disposition, as the wanderer, free from serious distress, indulges in 'pride and self-love', the hallmarks of the vagabond. This propensity toward vagabondage becomes all the more apparent on Martin's arrival in London.

After Pecksniff has expelled him from the shared and scantily furnished room with 'four little beds in it' (88), Martin takes a friendless chamber above a London tavern, and sallies forth into the streets, still nursing his 'independent schemes'. As the days trickle away, bearing a stream of shillings with them, we are told that although initially 'he counterfeited the walk of one who had an object in his view', this transformed into 'the sauntering, slipshod gait of listless idleness' (221). This dissolute wandering is indicative of the self-pity and truculence common to the vagabond. Indeed, the way in which he begins to 'lounge about the door' (221) of the inn, and takes to 'lounging at street corners' (221), is reminiscent of Wilkie Collins's 'hideous London vagabond', who is described in *No Name* (1862) as a London-type

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[104] Added emphasis.
[105] Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, ed. Philip Horne (London: Penguin, 2002; repr. 2003), p. 58.

who 'lounges […] at the street corner and the gin-shop'.[106] In addition, it also resonates with the vagrant behavior of the late Victorian loafer: in the Jago, it will be recalled, 'there were loafers near Mother Gapp's,' the public-house, and 'loafers at the Luck Row corner – at every corner'.[107] Of course, Martin is snatched from this degradation by his manservant, the irrepressible Tapley, and thus saved from the fate of such loafers and vagabonds. Nonetheless, this episode in which Martin 'lost his delicacy and self-respect' (220) demonstrates the purchase of his vagabond strain, and just how closely he is related to Jonas. Such a tendency is also, of course, embedded in the picaresque style of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which spurs its protagonist from place to place.

Having lived in London, Martin takes a berth aboard an emigrant ship. Confined in steerage class, he makes his way across the Atlantic in helter-skelter quarters that are 'crammed' with 'domestic suffering' (243); when he reaches New York he finds lodgings, like the Young Adventurer, in a boarding house; and finally, after a journey through the States, finds himself marooned in the American West in 'a miserable cabin, rudely constructed of the trunks of trees' (361). As this catalogue of temporary dwellings implies, although he is not quite houseless, Martin is homeless for much of the narrative. Such a condition is lent a certain piquancy by Martin's ironic ambition to establish himself as a domestic architect; and the fact that this leads him to America, as Diana C. Archibald argues, distends this irony. 'The United States of *Chuzzlewit* has houses, apartments, mansions, boarding houses, hotels and shanties, but no "homes," for the uncivilized city and the Wild West can neither construct nor maintain such a home.'[108] Nonetheless, it is Martin's journey to America that dispels his vagabond blight, and simultaneously fits him for his chosen occupation, for accompanying the spiritual conversion that attends all true picaros, is a new appreciation of just what home is.[109] It is in the West that Martin learns that a home is not 'four walls and a ceiling', as the bachelor Tackleton declares in Dickens's *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845); but is instead a 'quiet sanctuary', secured by the 'nightly sacrifice [of] some petty passion, selfishness, or care', as the Cricket explains.[110] However, before Martin can complete what becomes an apprenticeship in domesticity, he must first live among the world's chief chislers and vagabonds. As Anthony Trollope observed of the American West,

[106] Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. Mark Ford (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 210.
[107] Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, ed. Peter Miles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 56.
[108] Diana C. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration in the Victorian Novel* (London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 143.
[109] J. A. Garrido Ardila, 'Origins and Definition of the Picaresque Genre', *The Picaresque Novel in Western Literature: From the Sixteenth Century to the Neopicaresque*, ed. J. A. Garrido Ardila (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1-23 (p. 14). Although in this instance it does, *Martin Chuzzlewit* would not satisfy Garrido Ardila's definition of the picaresque, hence I have discussed it as having a 'picaresque style'.
[110] Charles Dickens, *The Cricket on the Hearth: A Fairy Tale of Home*, *Christmas Books*, intro. Eleanor Farjeon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954; repr. 1997), pp. 156-234 (pp. 176, 211).

whose people are 'slow in motion, loving to loaf about', it is 'the recognized rule of commerce in the Far West that men shall go into the world's markets prepared to cheat and to be cheated.'[111] Martin, of course, is not prepared, and is therefore banished to the swamp-settlement of Eden.

'A reg'lar little United States in itself' (490), Eden is an unhealthy township 'choked by slime' (360) and bedeviled by fever bearing fogs. As a colonial alsatia, it is also a lawless place where vagabonds ride roughshod over the weak and indigent. Dickens amply illustrates this through the grotesque presence of Hannibal Chollop. Like those pioneering descendants of Cain who leave 'home after home behind them', Chollop has no fixed residence, but is 'in the habit of emigrating from place to place' and living 'upon the outskirts of society' (493). When he turns up in Eden he is described as follows:

> Mr Chollop was a man of a roving disposition; and, in any less advanced community, might have been mistaken for a violent vagabond. But his fine qualities being perfectly understood and appreciated in those regions where his lot was cast, and where he had many kindred spirits to consort with, he may be regarded as having been born under a fortunate star. (492-493)

Here Chollop's vagabondage – his independence, mobility, and violence – is ingrained in 'those regions' that he inhabits: he was 'born under a fortunate star' both figuratively, because he lives without fear of legal retribution, and literally, because the constellations above pinpoint his place on the globe. Moreover, there is a sense in which the sludgy morasses of the West invite the vagabondism embodied by Chollop; there is a dynamic, almost conspiratorial relationship between the landscape, with its air infused with 'deadly poison' (361), and Chollop, who is 'fever-proof, and likewise agur' (i.e. ague; another febrile disease) (491). Indeed, Chollop seems to induce the very fever that results in Martin's sickbed epiphany, 'that selfishness was in his breast, and must be rooted out' (497). This causal relationship is braced not only by proximity – it is immediately after Chollop leaves Martin's hut that we discover he is 'dangerously ill' (495) – but also by the fact that, after the fever, Martin is inoculated against the very behaviour most persistently exhibited by the vagabond Chollop: selfishness.

Chollop's selfishness manifests itself in violence and boorishness. These twin abuses not only explicate Chollop's character, but also designate the West as an unruly and dangerous place. Chollop enlarges upon his ferocity himself, bragging to Mark Tapley about lynchings, beatings and the man he shot down 'in the State of Illin*oy*' (493), the place where Cairo, the model for Eden, was located. The most sinister indicators of his viciousness are his jovially nicknamed 'sword-stick, which he called his "Tickler"; and a great knife […] he called "Ripper"' (492). Suggestive of cannibal cutlery, or the clumsy instruments of an

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[111] Anthony Trollope, *North America,* ed. Robert Mason (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 95.

amateur vivisector, these tools are always at hand for 'the gratification of his tickling and ripping fancies' (493). These trinkets, and the latent butchery they hold, are reminiscent of another contemporary sadist with an American association – Heathcliff, the protagonist of Emily Brontë's *Heights* (1847). Identified at one point as a possible 'American […] castaway', and a man who may have earned his money during a stint in the Revolutionary War, 'drawing blood from his foster country', Healthcliff longs to be in a place 'where laws are less strict, and tastes less dainty' so he can 'treat [himself] with a slow vivisection' of his detested son and daughter-in-law. That the land of happy torture he contemplates could be America is not only suggested by his affiliation with the United States, but is indicated by his hapless wife, Isabella. Confiding her deplorable situation to Nelly Dean, she confesses that between Wuthering Heights, where Heathcliff torments her, and Thrushcroft Grange, where her family resides, lies an 'Atlantic to part us'; this metaphor, if only for an instant, converts the moorlands of Yorkshire into the wild prairies of the West, and exchanges the legal code of England for the run of brutal 'experiments' Heathcliff inflicts upon her.[112] Dickens's West may be both the answer and the origin of Heathcliff's bloody desires.

That said, Chollop's violence is confined to the realm of inflated, and at times ludicrous, anecdote. The most selfish behaviour that we actually witness is his imposition upon Mark and Martin's hospitality. As I have argued, a disregard of the domestic is a core vagabond trait, and this is expressed by Chollop in his bragging threats, his tall tales, and the manner in which he treats the shanty 'as if the house were his' (492) – by using it as 'a spittoon for two or three hours together' (495). It also manifests itself on a narrative level as Chollop comes to monopolise the dialogue, while his host, forced into retreat, 'close[s] his eyes, and turn[s] on his uneasy bed' (492) – Martin only uncoils after Chollop's departure. In the meantime, Chollop provokes every spate of dialogue with Mark, each of which is interspersed by a period of uncongenial silence, in which Chollop sits 'without making any attempts either to converse, or to take leave' (494-495). This dominance within both the log-hut and the text, whose direction and content he seems to despotically control, amounts to a desecration of the hearth and home. It is therefore significant that after Chollop swaggers off, and he has recovered from his fever, Martin's comprehension of his own selfishness, and his redemption from vagabondage, includes a new appreciation for domesticity. This is not just a physical longing for 'home, familiar places, houses, roads, and people' (499), but also a new understanding of the values inscribed in 'home': these include the obedience, loyalty, familial love and selflessness exhibited by Martin's fiancée, Mary Graham, and by Tom Pinch, his undervalued friend.

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[112] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. Pauline Nestor (London: Penguin, 1995; repr. 2003) pp. 50, 92, 270, 138-139,150.

Vagabonds

The Legacy of the West

In 1890 the United States census declared that the Western frontier was closed.[113] It had remained open throughout nearly the whole of the nineteenth century, and during that time British writers had used it to articulate anxieties about the mass movements overseas that were characteristic of the Victorian period. Formerly ungoverned and patriotically dubious, the West allowed commentators to probe the slippage between the emigrant and the vagabond, and to locate the heightened mobility belonging to frontier communities outside of the British settler colonies. It also allowed writers to question the value of emigration without necessarily alienating their readership, many of whom would have entertained 'the "idea" of migration as a road to self-betterment', as Darwin notes.[114] Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895) reveals both how sensitive audiences were imagined to be, and how the United States offered a field in which doubts about emigration could be raised. It is an account of Stevenson's journey from Scotland to California, where he went to marry his American wife Fanny Van de Grift. Hard up when he embarked in August 1879, Stevenson took a berth in the second-class cabin, which was located in between the steerage quarters. To earn money along the way, he decided to slum it amongst the poorest travellers, and write up his findings in a travelogue: as his biographer Claire Harman remarks, this book was intended to record 'travel both across the Atlantic *and* into another social stratum'.[115] Indeed, like the Time Traveller's epithet 'the Amateur Cadger', Stevenson's *The Amateur Emigrant* may have reminded readers of James Greenwood's sobriquet, 'The Amateur Casual'. Either way, the book was deemed too seedy for sale, and was pulled from publication in the proof stages in 1880. Although some sections appeared in 1883 and 1892, the whole was not published until after Stevenson's death, and even then in an abridged version.[116]

In its intended form, Stevenson's travelogue is unremittingly bleak about emigration. Although the steerage passengers are hopeful about their future lives in America, Stevenson is under no illusions: 'we were a shipful of failures, the broken men of England', he declares. Images of wreckage keep recurring as he describes the 'men broken by adversity', one of which has 'a soul tragically shipwrecked', and these are coupled with kindred images of retreat in which the emigrants are described as 'fleeing pitifully'. Similarly, Stevenson likens himself to the eponymous hero of Walter Scott's poem *Marmion* (1808), 'in the lost battle,

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[113] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983), p. 164.

[114] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, p. 41.

[115] Claire Harman, *Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography* (London: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 172. Original emphasis.

[116] Christopher MacLachlan, 'Introduction', *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes and The Amateur Emigrant*, ed. Christopher MacLachlan (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. xiii-xxxv (pp. xxxii-xxxiii).

borne down by the flying'.[117] As the travelogue progresses, the movement of the emigrants by land and sea seems increasingly aimless, and this quality is exacerbated by their association with vagrants. Throughout the narrative Stevenson is drawn to vagrant characters: in his account of the voyage he includes a whole chapter on 'The Stowaways', which details 'the career of these sea-tramps'; and later, while recalling his time aboard the California-bound emigrant train, he describes the 'land stowaways' – 'tramps […] who had been riding on the beams' under the carriage. In both instances it is telling that these 'outcasts' are readily accepted by Stevenson's fellow passengers. He discovers the stowaway Alick 'among a party of men who were talking in our companion', and 'several of my fellow-passengers had already seen and conversed with them [the railroad tramps]' before Stevenson became aware of them.[118] This presentation of the vagrants as blending into the emigrants' society raises fundamental questions about the nature of emigration. It suggests that these two figures – one allegedly aimless, the other purposeful – can rub into one another, and thus resurrects the anxieties current in the writings of Wakefield, Dickens and *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*: that relocation might, in fact, be dislocation. As we shall see, Stevenson's interest in vagrant types, and his scepticism about emigration, empire and settlement, were major themes in his later writings. These featured another species of broken men, the beachcombers of the Pacific Islands.

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[117] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Amateur Emigrant, Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes and The Amateur Emigrant*, ed. Christopher MacLachlan (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 97-227 (pp. 108-109, 129).
[118] Ibid., pp. 148, 150, 225.

Chapter 6: Beachcombers

Eighty per cent of the world's islands lie in the Pacific Ocean. Of these, two account for ninety per cent of the islands' total landmass, New Guinea and New Zealand. The remaining land is divided between over 20,000 other islands that form the three subregions of the Pacific Islands: Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia.[1] Often separated by hundreds of miles, such spaces do not seem to invite vagrancy. On the contrary, their tightly bounded geography, as Rod Edmond observes, makes them 'natural sites of concentration'; for this reason they have been favoured as sites of detention.[2] In the nineteenth century, several Pacific islands were elected as places of imprisonment where Western fantasies of control could be fulfilled. From 1825 to 1856 Norfolk Island, situated between the northern tip of New Zealand and the eastern coast of Australia, served as a British penal colony. A byword for brutality, it was 'one of the most extreme penal environments the modern world has known', as Sean O'Toole comments.[3] The French government put New Caledonia, one of the Melanesian archipelagos, to a similar use: between 1864 and 1897 they transported 20,000 convicts there.[4] Meanwhile, in Polynesia, the Hawaiian island of Molokai hosted a leper colony from 1865. Although Hawaii was a nominally independent kingdom until 1893, the policing of lepers (most of whom were Hawaiian) was a preoccupation of the United States government; they insisted on the need for quarantine and by 1887 were enforcing the segregation laws.[5]

However, although some islands became notorious as sites of containment, many more provided opportunities for escape. From the late eighteenth century onwards, European and North American vessels began to cruise the Pacific in search of fur seals, whales, sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer*, a Chinese delicacy also known as trepang.[6] For sailors aboard these ships, the Pacific Islands, celebrated for their perennial fruitfulness and social and sexual freedoms, were a tempting alternative to tyrannical captains and the strict rhythm of the ships' watches.[7] Indeed, they seemed like the isolated and lawless lands that I called 'colonial alsatias' in the previous chapter. Although the reality was often very different, this notion proved seductive, not only for sailors but also for fugitives who sought a refuge on the

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[1] Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), p. xvii.

[2] Rod Edmond, *Leprosy and Empire: A Medical and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 143.

[3] Sean O'Toole, *The History of Australian Corrections* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006), pp. 36-37.

[4] Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, pp. 161-162.

[5] Edmond, *Leprosy and Empire*, pp. 146-147.

[6] I. C. Campbell, *Worlds Apart: A History of the Pacific Islands*, revised edn (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2003), pp. 68-76; Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, pp. 97-104.

[7] Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 67, 73-75.

peripheries of Western civilisation. By the second half of the nineteenth century the Pacific Islands, or at least those that remained free from foreign government, had become renowned as safe havens for white renegades, just as the Western States and Territories once were. As Litton Forbes recorded in his travelogue *Two Years in Fiji* (1875), before British annexation in 1874, '"Gone to Fiji" bore the same significance in Australia as "Gone to Texas" did in America a few years ago. The colonial newspapers were accustomed to speak of Fiji as the "modern Alsatia" and not without some reason.'[8] He went on to note that 'the lawlessness of Fiji was its chief recommendation' to the 'runaway sailors, absconding tradesmen, and not a few convicted felons' who lived there.[9] These deserters belonged to a vagrant class that lived in the Pacific Islands and were collectively known as 'beachcombers'.

A 'beachcomber' was 'a settler on the islands of the Pacific, living by pearl-fishery, etc., and often by less reputable means', according to the *OED*.[10] Indigenous to the South Seas, the disreputable beachcomber had his heyday in the medial period between the discovery of the islands and the establishment of formal white settlements by traders and missionaries.[11] This period varied between the three Pacific regions and individual island groups. Polynesia was the first region to be thoroughly explored by Europeans, and proved the most receptive to them. Melanesia and Micronesia only began to have sustained contact with Westerners after the middle of the nineteenth century, and some of their archipelagos remained notoriously hostile despite this. Known for its hospitality, Hawaii was the first of the Polynesian island groups to attract a significant traffic of European vessels, many of which were whalers who stopped to re-provision on their way to hunting grounds further afield.[12] As a consequence, it was also the first to accrue a population of beachcombers. Almost exclusively male, these outsiders possessed skills that made them attractive to islanders: they could act as linguistic interpreters when Western traders arrived, thus easing the bargaining process; they provided technical training in carpentry, ironmongery and musket maintenance; and some of them were formidable warriors, in part because they were uninhibited by the indigenous taboos that checked the violence of local skirmishes.[13] Many

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[8] Litton Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji* (London: Longman, Green, 1875), p. 277.

[9] Ibid., p. 278.

[10] 'Beach-comber, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [accessed 29 September 2017].

[11] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, p. 77; Caroline Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses: Pacific Beach Communities of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, 1978; repr. St Lucia: UQ ePress, 2014), pp. 21-23, 40; Vanessa Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-Century Textual Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 19.

[12] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 68-71, 117; Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, pp. 97-98, 102-104, 167-169.

[13] In Fiji, for example, there was a prohibition on killing rival chiefs, as Linnekin notes. Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, pp. 21-23, 29-32; Jocelyn Linnekin, 'New Political Orders', *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders*, ed. Donald Denoon and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 185-217 (pp. 189-190).

acculturated by marrying islanders and allowing themselves to be tattooed, a social rite that always signified a closer integration with the community (at least for the Pacific Islanders).[14]

That said, complete integration was rarely successful and, as a result, beachcombers were seldom 'settlers' as the *OED* defines them.[15] Edward Jerningham Wakefield, the son of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, attests to this in his spritely travelogue, *Adventure in New Zealand* (1845). Writing in a chapter on whalers, hunters who had lived along the coast of North Island long before Jerningham arrived in August 1839, he noted that among these 'pioneers of civilization' lived a dissolute and roaming class of men: [16]

> Idle, drunken, vagabond, and vicious in his habits, he would become the bush-ranger of New Zealand were there temptation enough for such a class. As it is, he wanders about without any fixed object, cannot get employed by the whaler or any one else, as it is out of his power to do a day's work; and he is universally known as the 'beach-comber.'[17]

The difference between the beachcomber and the whaler was not as sharp as Jerningham suggests; but in the first half of the nineteenth century, groups of between 30 and 50 of these strays lived in Tahiti, Pohnpei, Fiji and Samoa, while up to 150 lived in New Zealand and Hawaii.[18] Whether they were castaways, deserters, fugitives or adventurers, few of these beachcombers remained longer than six months before they moved to another island or took a passage home.[19] Such movements were relatively easy. As Gillian Beer reminds us, despite their place in the Western imagination as sites of containment, islands 'are never enclosures only'; they are also markets, crossroads, and, in the age of sail, 'essential and frequent stopping-off points for re-provisioning'.[20] Travel between the islands was not limited to Europeans and Americans either. In the preface to *Omoo* (1847), Herman Melville remarked that the title:

> Is borrowed from the dialect of the Marquesas Islands, where, among other uses, the word signifies a rover, or rather, a person wandering from one island to another, like some of the natives, known among their countrymen as 'Taboo kannakers.'[21]

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[14] Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, pp. 70-72.

[15] See, Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land, Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1980), p. 155; Fischer, *A History of the Pacific Islands*, p. 114.

[16] Philip Temple, *A Sort of Conscience: The Wakefields* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002), pp. 223, 242-250.

[17] Edward Jerningham Wakefield, *Adventure in New Zealand, from 1839 to 1844: with some Account of the Beginning of the British Colonization of the Islands*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1845), I, pp. 310, 338-339.

[18] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 156-158; Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, pp. 21-23.

[19] Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, pp. 24-25.

[20] Gillian Beer, 'Island Bounds', *Islands in History and Representation*, ed. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 32-42 (p. 33).

[21] Herman Melville, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, ed. Mary K. Bercaw Edwards (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 2.

These Islanders, who might be sailors, or 'shabby, itinerant tattooers', provide an alternative and largely unrecorded history of beachcombing that I do not address here.[22] Their presence, however, along with that of the beachcombers, suggests that the islands were accustomed to hosting vagrant populations, and that inter-island travel was common for foreigners and islanders alike.[23]

There were many reasons why beachcombers might have wished to migrate. Unlike traders and missionaries they did not form cohesive enclaves separate from the indigenous population. Instead they scattered themselves among native communities and depended upon local chiefs and headmen for their survival. A chief could protect the beachcomber from harassment by other islanders, and could provide food, shelter, land, status and wives. However, they could also prove jealous lords. Considered valuable assets, beachcombers sometimes found themselves effectively imprisoned on the beach, closely watched and regulated by chiefs who feared that they would escape to another island, taking their knowledge, skills and goods with them.[24] Under such circumstances, some were prepared to exchange the idyllic-looking shore for the forecastle of a whaler. Here the rules were similarly strict, but there was at least a reprieve at the end of the voyage.

There were also economic reasons for moving. Although beachcombers depended on local chiefs for their immediate sustenance, they were also often traders in their own right. It is no surprise, then, that the number of beachcombers tended to spike when trading opportunities became apparent. In Fiji the beachcombing community was at its most conspicuous from 1804 to 1815 and from 1822 to 1850: these periods correspond with Fiji's short-lived sandalwood trade, which lasted from 1804 to 1816, and its more lively trade in *bêche-de-mer*, which lasted from 1822 until 1850.[25] Similarly, in the Marquesas, the first influx of beachcombers occurred between 1813 and 1821, again during a brief boom in the sandalwood trade, and the second between 1832 and 1839 when whaling vessels used the islands to resupply.[26] For the beachcombers this traffic provided a market for their island wares: these included prosaic items like fruit, meat and vegetables as well as what Melville called the 'romantic articles of commerce; – beach-de-mer, the pearl-oyster, arrow-root,

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[22] Melville, *Omoo*, p. 35.

[23] The historians Dening and Linnekin have used 'beachcomber' to refer to Europeans, Americans and Pacific Islanders who migrated between the islands. In this chapter, however, I have used 'beachcomber' to refer only to Western vagrants in the Pacific; this is how other historians, including Campbell and Fischer, use the term and, more pertinently, how the Victorians understood it themselves.

[24] Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, pp. 135-136; Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, p. 27.

[25] For Fijian trades see, Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 71-76; for beachcomber populations see, Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, pp. 21-23.

[26] Dening, *Islands and Beaches*, p. 130.

ambergris, sandal-wood, cocoa-nut oil, and edible birdsnests.'[27] In particular, beachcombers were famed for the pearls and pearl shell that they collected on the islands, as we shall see.

Beachcombers were also often forced to migrate. The assumption that the Pacific Islands offered a lawless paradise meant that some beachcombers committed untenable social infractions that led to their expulsion or execution by local communities. In 1836, for example, the inhabitants of Kosrae and Pohnpei, two large islands in Micronesia, tried to exterminate their beachcomber populations because they had grown violent and unruly; this was a more than adequate incentive for them to move on.[28] Rival groups of Europeans and Americans also drove out beachcombers. Although they unwittingly formed the vanguard of Western culture in the Pacific Islands, they were almost invariably displaced by the missionaries and traders who followed them.[29] In addition, European and American authorities made efforts to purge the beachcomber presence on the pretext that it corrupted the indigenous people: in 1805, for example, the governor of Port Jackson (now Sydney, Australia) attempted to expel them from Tahiti, and compelled many of them to move to more remote islands.[30] Although beachcombers criss-crossed the Pacific throughout the nineteenth century, their overall pattern of movement was outwards, away from the archipelagos of Polynesia, which were being gradually colonised, and towards the more hostile regions of Micronesia and Melanesia. Meanwhile, many others managed to find their way back home.

The fate of most beachcombers is unknown, but some of them continued to pursue an itinerant life once they had been repatriated. As Vanessa Smith notes, those that were too old or injured to join the labour force scraped together a living by peddling 'self-representations'. Beachcombers who had become heavily tattooed during their time in the Pacific made money by exhibiting their bodies: Jean Cabri toured the fairs of France, while James O'Connell travelled with an American circus as 'The Tattooed Man' from 1835 to 1854. Meanwhile, others tried to sell their stories. Archibald Campbell, a crippled sailor, touted a poetic version of his life in the warm South Seas along the cobbled streets of Edinburgh.[31] Another beachcomber who tried to sell his autobiography was William Diapea, known by the grisly sobriquet 'Cannibal Jack'. Unable or unwilling to return to England, Diapea gave a fragment of his narrative to the missionary James Hadfield in 1889. This 'mere specimen of the whole' was an attempt to gauge the market: 'providing this is accepted and reasonably paid for', Diapea promised to publish an account of his fifty-year career as a beachcomber, in which he

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[27] Melville, *Omoo*, p. 248.
[28] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 156-158.
[29] Ibid., pp. 76-77; Ralston, *Grass Huts and Warehouses*, p. 40.
[30] Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 63.
[31] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, pp. 46-51.

had 'touched at a great many more than 1,000 islands, and resided on nearly 100'.[32] Hadfield, however, felt the Victorian public unready for Diapea's 'coarse language' and unflinching realism, and so the volume went unpublished until 1928.[33]

The focus of this chapter, however, is not on the real lives of beachcombers; instead it examines the surge of literature about them during the 1880s and 1890s. Occurring at a time when the Pacific Islands had largely undergone what I. C. Campbell calls the 'beachcomber phase', the intermediate period between first contact and white settlement, the interest exhibited in these figures is in some ways surprising.[34] They were already, as we shall see, perceived as belonging to a nearly bygone age of lawlessness and immorality, and yet they nonetheless proved fascinating for authors writing with diverse aims in a variety of genres. They are recurrent characters in travelogues, such as Forbes's *Two Years in Fiji*, where they are depicted as the remnants of a previous (dis)order. They are also the subject of several ethnographic articles that sought to entertain readers of the newspaper and periodical press with etymologies, definitions and scurrilous anecdotes about 'the jetsam and flotsam of the frontier.'[35] And by the late 1880s they were the subjects of short stories and novels, including Gilbert Bishop's *The Beachcombers* (1889) and Edward Ellis's *Lost in Samoa* (1890). As the *Daily News* informs us, these were adventure narratives written for boys that depicted plucky lads in desperate 'Fights with the vagrants of the South Seas, known by the name of "Beach Combers"'.[36] This rush of beachcomber literature, which has hitherto been unexplored, forms the context for the final part of this chapter, in which I discuss Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Ebb-Tide* (1894), a novella that recast the beachcomber as a troublingly ambivalent figure. In doing so I explore an overlooked type of vagrant and vagrancy, and also contribute to the work of Stevenson scholars, many of whom have similarly sought to trace the actual and fictional antecedents of his beachcombers.[37]

Beachcombers in Print

Beachcombers became a feature in the British periodical and newspaper press in the late nineteenth century due to two overlapping issues: imperial competition and expansion on the

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[32] William Diapea, *Cannibal Jack: The True Autobiography of a White Man in the South Seas*, ed. James Hadfield (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), pp. 90-91, 6.

[33] James Hadfield, 'Introduction', *Cannibal Jack: The True Autobiography of a White Man in the South Seas*, ed. James Hadfield (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1928), pp. xi-xxii (pp. xiii-xiv).

[34] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, p. 77.

[35] 'Beach-combers', *Standard*, 21 December 1883, p. 2.

[36] 'Gift Books for the Young', *Daily News*, 11 November 1890, p. 7.

[37] In particular, see Smith, who explores Stevenson's beachcombers in the context of those depicted by Herman Melville in *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo*, and Edmond, who likens New Island to the settlement on Pitcairn, which was founded by the beachcomber-cum-mutineers of the *Bounty*. Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, pp. 182-184; Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, pp. 157-160.

one hand, and a desire to police the Pacific on the other. Between 1880 and 1900 Britain, France, Germany and the United States partitioned the Pacific Islands so that by the end of the century there was no island left unclaimed. Even the most politically stable archipelagos – Hawaii and Tonga – were territories or protectorates of foreign powers by 1900.[38] The unification of Germany in the 1870s, and the imperial appetite it developed in the 1880s precipitated this division: as Steven Roger Fischer notes, 'Germany's aggressive Pacific policy […] forced rivals to chase after what they otherwise might have ignored.'[39] In the case of Britain this 'chase' was somewhat sluggish. Although it ended up with the largest clutch of possessions, Britain was reluctant to become involved in the Pacific, and its actions were often reactionary. Typically they were either responses to the territorial claims made by other powers, and the attendant political pressure exerted by nervous Australasian colonies, or else they were determined by the supposed and actual lawlessness of the region.[40]

Britain's annexation of New Zealand in 1840 and Fiji in 1874 was undertaken in both cases as a last resort, and chiefly because it was felt that the protection of British property, and the safety of indigenous and European residents, could not be guaranteed without the creation of legal jurisdictions.[41] Later protectorates, like those declared over the Gilbert, Ellice and southern Solomon Islands in the early 1890s, were directed by a slightly different set of concerns. Unlike New Zealand and Fiji, these archipelagos had no significant British population; however, they were targets for dubious merchants engaged in the labour trade, or 'blackbirding' as it was known. From the 1860s until the early twentieth century, labour recruiters transported a large number of islanders to work on European-owned plantations in Australia and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands: Melanesia alone supplied 100,000 of these workers. This practice, which at times obtained labour by violent or duplicitous means, was suspected of being slavery in all but name. After the failure of colonial legislation to stop abuses, the British government resolved to regulate the trade, but again could only imagine doing so through the creation of fresh jurisdictions that would give them grounds to interfere with trading vessels; this was a major contributing factor to later interventions.[42]

The portrayal of beachcombers in British print culture in the 1880s was a response to this political situation. For optimists reading about the hitherto obscure islands now entering the Empire they were the 'class of men that macadamises the world', and were seen as the forerunners of official colonial government.[43] For example, after the 1887 annexation of the

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[38] Campbell, *Worlds Apart,* pp. 100-106, 167.
[39] Fischer, *Pacific Islands*, p. 173.
[40] Campbell, *Worlds Apart,* pp. 174-180; Stuart Ward, 'Security: Defending Australia's Empire', *Australia's Empire*, ed. Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 232-258 (pp. 235-240).
[41] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 167-176.
[42] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 131, 165; Fischer, *Pacific Islands*, p. 171.
[43] 'Isles of Eden', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 18 May 1872, pp. 315-318 (p. 316).

Kermadecs, a trio of islands off the coast of New Zealand, *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* retold its history as a series of beachcomber exploits. The 'first reported occupiers' were 'American whalers, who […] took up their abode there, accompanied by their dark-skinned wives'; the next settlers were 'a Sydney man from Samoa, who was landed there with his Samoan wife'; the third pioneer was 'a solitary beachcomber from Tonga'; and the last 'a solitary beachcomber, who […] landed some sheep and claimed the island.'[44] These beachcombers are used to justify annexation by providing a record of Anglo-Saxon settlement that excludes any claim that the Pacific Islanders might have on the Kermadecs. Indeed, although they are present in the form of 'dark-skinned wives' and the 'Samoan wife', the Pacific Islanders are placed in a subordinate position that allows the article to replay the racist myth that Anglo-Saxons are superlative pioneers, and that Islanders are passive and sexually available. Here, the beachcombers are a means of making the islands legible for *Chambers's* readers.

The beachcomber's position as imperial pathfinder, however, was far from secure. In his popular survey *The Coral Lands of the Pacific* (1880), H. Stonehewer Cooper stated that 'the beachcombers would […] act as very useful pioneers'; however, he was also quick to note that 'it was on account of some of these people that a Lord High Commissioner of Western Polynesia was appointed.'[45] Here Cooper was referring to the establishment of the Western Pacific High Commission in 1877. A direct response to the labour trade, it gave the governor of Fiji extra-territorial powers, and a mandate to stop illegal activities committed by British subjects.[46] Far from being pioneers, Cooper was suggesting that beachcombers were, in fact, buccaneers, a common assumption in the late nineteenth century when the two figures were often elided. In 'The Buccaneers of the Pacific' (1882) the *Western Daily Press* railed against the European traders that abused Pacific Islanders: it denounced them as 'the modern buccaneers and "beach-combers" of the Pacific Islands.'[47] Similarly, in 'Beach-combers' (1883), the *Standard* solemnly declared that 'when not engaged in piracy or land plundering, the buccaneers were, to all intents and purposes, of the Beach-combing order of mankind.'[48] And in 'A Nineteenth-Century Pirate' (1886), a jaunty sketch of the infamous Bully Hayes, *Chambers's* recorded that 'a few years ago [he] was one of the most notorious desperadoes among the numerous "beachcombers" and other questionable characters who infested the South Pacific.'[49]

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[44] 'The Kermadecs', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 2 April 1887, pp. 214-215.

[45] H. Stonehewer Cooper, *The Coral Lands of the Pacific: Their Peoples and Their Products*, 2nd edn (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1882), pp. 261-262.

[46] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 174-176.

[47] 'The Buccaneers of the Pacific', *Western Daily Press*, 8 November 1882, p. 7.

[48] 'Beach-combers', p. 2.

[49] 'A Nineteenth-Century Pirate', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 27 November 1886, pp. 762-764 (p. 762).

Beachcombers, then, were imagined as both the pioneers who had breached the territories now being soaked up by the Empire, and the buccaneers against whom Britain's efforts were tending. These conflicting identities were further complicated by the beachcombers' vagrant habits, which were not easily accommodated by these equally purposeful figures. In response, the writers of ethnographic articles reached for other analogous characters through which the beachcomber might be defined. The 'loafer' – a vagrant figure who moved easily between centre and periphery, colony and metropole – was used for this purpose. In 'Packet Rats and Beachcombers' (1879) the *Pall Mall Gazette* called the beachcomber 'a loafer pure and simple', while the *Standard*, acknowledging his Pacific associations, defined him as 'a "loafer," or, as the San Franciscan would say, a "bummer"'.[50] The *Standard*, meanwhile, drew on another comparable figure, noting that although 'the Isles of the Pacific are […] the home of the true Beach-combers', he also resides with the American Indians as the acculturated 'squawman'.[51] This last comparison cements the beachcombers' affiliation with the buccaneer, a term that originally referred to 'one who dries and smokes flesh on a *boucan* [barbeque] after the manner of the Indians', but also qualifies his movement as nomadic.[52] Like the pioneer and the buccaneer, the loafer and the squawman are analogues that stress the beachcomber's mobility, but represent it as vagrancy. Together they emphasise that the beachcomber is 'outside of civilisation – is indeed a waif and stray not only on the ocean of life, but on the broad South Pacific', as *Chambers's* argued in 'Beachcombers' (1881).[53] This was a leading assumption that influenced contemporary commentaries about the Pacific Islands, many of which imagined beachcombers as destined for extinction with the onset of 'civilisation'.

By the last decades of the nineteenth century, extinction theory, which had been used to explain the 'decline' of the Gypsies, had become an unshakable 'fact'. Bolstered by the ideology of social Darwinism, and the burgeoning science of eugenics, it was being used to explain away the extermination of Africans, American Indians and Pacific Islanders; and was also being used by thinkers such as H. G. Wells to imagine a genetically refined future, free from the 'People of the Abyss' (see Chapter 4). As acculturated Europeans 'gone native', like the North American 'squawmen', the beachcombers were considered a species of 'white savage' who would inevitably wither away along with their adopted tribes. Contemporaries suggested that this might happen in one of two ways. The first followed the popular theory that 'savage' customs (including nomadism) and 'excessive' freedom or wildness naturally

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[50] 'Packet Rats and Beachcombers', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 July 1879, pp. 11-12 (p. 11).
[51] 'Beach-combers', p. 2.
[52] 'Buccaneer | Buccanier, n.1', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 9 April 2018].
[53] 'Beachcombers', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 5 February 1881, pp. 81-83 (p. 81).

led to extinction.[54] Forbes expressed this idea in his travelogue while recounting a visit to Rotuma, an island to the north of Fiji. Here he recalls an encounter with Bill R——, 'the sole survivor of a bygone generation' of beachcombers:

> These lawless men, freed from every restraint and inflamed by drink, abandoned themselves to every excess, […] and old Bill assured me that of all the seventy men who were on the island when he first landed, there was not one who escaped a violent death.[55]

Here the savagery of the beachcombers, signalled by their incontinence, is directly linked to their extermination. Frederick J. Moss, writing in his travelogue *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea* (1889), espouses the same idea. Although he excuses most beachcombers, saying that 'in the old days […] the white men [were] assuredly not so wicked as we have been led to believe', he nonetheless admits that there was a 'dangerous class' among them. 'The worst of these men', however, 'were short lived. They killed each other, died of their own debauchery, or were killed by the natives'.[56]

While some writers argued that the beachcombers' lawlessness would lead to self-extermination, others posited that bringing lawless territory under proper governance would produce the same result. Cooper, an avid imperialist, noted that 'if the Anglo-Saxon race is prepared to accept the responsibility that undoubtedly belongs to it in the Southern Seas, beachcombing, as beachcombing has been understood for years, will be a thing of the past.'[57] In the same vein, he also argued that if 'a powerful controlling influence of a high order [was] established in the Pacific' then the beachcombers would either become useful workers under 'rigid discipline', or they would be 'improved off the face of the earth'.[58] Meanwhile, in 'Beachcombers', *Chambers's* was less equivocal. Throughout the article beachcombers are described as survivals from a more primitive economic era who at present 'cumber the ground, and must sooner or later give way before well-organised efforts of capital'. 'In great measure their doom as a class will be sealed', *Chambers's* argued, 'the moment systematic trading is introduced'.[59] Commerce and civilisation are the antidotes to beachcombing. Forbes also expressed this notion, arguing that once capitalism has made survival dependent on labour in the Pacific, the beachcombers would cease to exist: 'work in some shape or other is becoming a universal necessity,' he assured his readers, 'and soon the genus "loafer" will

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[54] Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 2-9.
[55] Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji*, pp. 223-225.
[56] Frederick J. Moss, *Through Atolls and Islands in the Great South Sea* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1889), pp. 69, 60.
[57] Cooper, *The Coral Lands of the Pacific*, p. 262.
[58] Ibid., p. 261.
[59] 'Beachcombers', pp. 83, 81.

scarcely find a suitable habitation on the globe.'[60] Underlying these visions of impending

extinction was the idea that the beachcomber's existence was dependent upon a lawless

environment; the original and primal landscape that Neil Rennie argues was imprinted on

islands and continents as they were first discovered by European explorers.[61] Once these

environments had been tamed (or modernised) through annexation and commercial ventures,

the beachcomber would disappear. This was the logic that also governed the presentation of

beachcombers in fiction.

Beachcombers tended to be portrayed as swashbuckling rogues in the South Seas

adventures written for boys. Such is the case in Edward Ellis's *Lost in Samoa*, a book 'full of

adventure and fighting' that received scanty reviews but was praised for its 'spirited style'.[62]

Given that Ellis was a famous dime novelist, and the author of cowboy classics such as *Seth

Jones; or, the Captives of the Frontier* (1860), it is little surprise that his three beachcombing

villains – Buzz Izard, Gross Mosler and Trott Twitchell – should be desperadoes. Rigged out

in hats 'as broad as the Texan sombrero', and carrying 'loaded revolvers in their hip-pockets',

they belong as much to the Wild West as they do to Upolu, the Samoan island where the

action is set. But despite this melodramatic role, it is nonetheless apparent that for Ellis the

beachcombers are native to the realm of fact, and that in their depiction, or at least their

setting, he aims for realism. In his preface to the novel he is wholly concerned with the

'vagrants of the South Sea [who] are known in that section by the name of Beach Combers',

and gives a thorough history of their migration throughout the Pacific:

> These vagrants of the South Sea have no love for law and order, and when they find
> an island passing under the control of a strong European Government generally hunt
> for one whose natives are independent. The occupation of Tahiti by the French
> caused a stampede of these vagabonds to Fejee [*sic*], which they abandoned for
> Samoa when Fejee became an English possession. There are a large number of them
> to-day in Samoa, but if those tropical islands ever secure a stable Government they
> will be certain to hunt out some spot where they are under no legal restraint, and go
> thither.[63]

Ellis's beachcombers, then, are informed by a broader beachcomber literature that argued that

they could not thrive in lawfully governed spaces. As a consequence, he places them within a

colonial alsatia. Indeed, as Joseph Farrell relates, by the early 1890s:

> Samoa had gained a reputation as the 'hell hole of the Pacific', not because of the
> supposed violence of the native Samoans, but because of the assorted drifters and

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[60] Forbes, *Two Years in Fiji*, p. 224.

[61] Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 1-29.

[62] 'Books of the Season', *Lloyd's Weekly,* 2 November 1890, p. 7; 'Christmas Books', *Saturday Review,* 6 December 1890, pp. 657-659 (p. 658); also see, 'Gift Books for the Young', p. 7.

[63] Edward Ellis, *Lost in Samoa: A Tale of Adventure in the Navigator Islands* (London: Cassell, 1890), pp. 6, 1-3.

beachcombers who had made it their home and lived apart from the respectable Western residents.[64]

Gilbert Bishop's *The Beachcombers; or, Slave Trading Under the Union Jack* is another novel that carefully considers its setting. Written in the style of one of Charles Reade's 'matter-of-fact Romance[s] – that is, a fiction built on truths', Bishop sought to expose the evils of the labour trade by incorporating instances of labour abuse harvested from the newspapers.[65] Despite the *St. James's Gazette*'s conviction that the combination of court report and boys' adventure would 'create a considerable sensation', providing a story that 'boys may delight in […] and their fathers ponder on', *The Beachcombers* attracted little attention on publication, and the other reviews were perfunctory.[66] The beachcombers themselves are a far more varied set than Ellis's. Although Bishop describes the crew of the *Polly Hawkins*, a labour trading vessel, 'as shady a lot o' beachcombers as you ever seen', in fact the beachcombers are less intimately connected with 'slave trading' than the novel's title suggests. It opens with the disappearance of Samoan Tom, 'an old beachcomber' and harmless sot who deals in island goods, not labour; similarly, the beachcombing Judd Gridley, whose Western patter is rumpled with comic oaths like 'by the stars an' bars', is a far cry from his 'blackbirding' compatriots.[67] Nonetheless, like Ellis's beachcombers they are all swashbuckling frontiersmen, and have been placed in a lawless setting.

The Beachcombers is set in the Solomon Islands. Although the events of the novel take place around 1870, after the advent 'of that newly discovered explosive they call dynamite', the Solomon Islands were presented as superlatively savage even at the time that Bishop was writing.[68] In 'The Head-Hunters of the Solomon Islands' (1890), *All the Year Round* dwells on the islanders' 'evil reputation for man-eating' and 'their passion for head-hunting', while the MP J. F. Hogan, writing in *Chambers's* a few years later, confirmed that they are 'the most notorious cannibals in the Pacific'.[69] Such a reputation was still maintained despite the annexation of the islands in 1886 by Germany and in 1893 by Britain. In part, this was no doubt because there was no European presence there to speak of: in 1870 there were seven resident traders, and in 1890 only fourteen.[70] Even in the twentieth century they were still renowned for their hostile atmosphere. Reliving his visit there in his travelogue *The*

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[64] Joseph Farrell, *Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa* (London: MacLehose Press, 2017), pp. 93-94.

[65] Charles Reade, 'Preface' [1868], *Hard Cash: A Matter-of-Fact Romance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1898), p. 3.

[66] 'Juvenile Literature', *St. James's Gazette*, 21 November 1889, p. 20.

[67] Gilbert Bishop, *The Beachcombers; or, Slave Trading Under the Union Jack* (London: Ward & Downey, 1889), pp. 95, 11, 218, 265.

[68] Ibid., p. 288.

[69] 'The Head-Hunters of the Solomon Islands', *All The Year Round*, 20 September 1890, pp. 279-284 (p. 284); J. F. Hogan, 'A Secret of the Solomon Islands', *Chambers's [Edinburgh] Journal*, 23 September 1893, pp. 593-596 (p. 595).

[70] Campbell, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 145-148.

Cruise of the Snark (1911), Jack London remarks, 'if I were king, the worst punishment I could inflict on my enemies would be to banish them to the Solomons'.[71] In other words, the Solomon Islands remained inflexibly lawless despite European intervention. They therefore provided the ideal backdrop for Bishop's beachcombers who wanted to be 'beyond the reach of the arm of the law'.[72]

Other writers of beachcomber fiction also looked to the Solomon Islands. Guided by the assumption that beachcombers could not exist in colonised lands, and with the number of islands governed by Western powers increasing year on year, the Solomons were seen as one of the last contemporary environments where beachcombers could be plausibly imagined. In V. L. Cameron's 'How Jack Hawker Met His Bride' (1891), Jem Butcher, 'who had been bushranger, beachcomber, and probably pirate', and his criminal accomplice Bill Giles, who 'had been a beachcomber for some time', 'make for the Solomon Islands' after they steal Donald M'Alpine's schooner, along with his daughter and his fortune of a hundred thousand pounds.[73] And in Hugh Romilly's 'A Tale of the South Seas' (1891), Captain Nassau, a beachcomber-cum-trader who dwelt 'amongst the reckless Beach Combers and Mean Whites' of Fiji, 'settled to live in the Southern Solomons' rather than live in an annexed archipelago. Repeating the pattern of migration detailed by Ellis, Nassau boasts:

> For fifteen years I put up with Fiji and Fiji put up with me, and then came the British Government and the end of all good times. But I did not wait to receive the British Government. For twenty-five years I have lived in no country where the flag of any nation flies, and please God I'll do so till the end.[74]

In both of these stories, as in the novels above, the writers are concerned about using a tenable location for their beachcomber characters. Even if their narratives veer off into what Robert Louis Stevenson called the 'sugar candy sham epic' of South Seas romance, they were all anxious to place their swashbucklers within realistic landscapes that could support their lawlessness.[75] It is this that makes Stevenson's choice to place his trio of beachcombers in Tahiti, the second oldest colony in the Pacific Islands, so curious.

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[71] Jack London, *The Cruise of the Snark* (London: Kegan Paul, 2002), p. 261.

[72] Bishop, *The Beachcombers*, p. 18.

[73] V. L. Cameron, 'How Jack Hawker Met His Bride', *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 8 August 1891, p. 4.

[74] Hugh Romilly, 'A Tale of the South Seas', *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 14 February 1891, pp. 767-770 (p. 767).

[75] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (London: Yale University Press, 1995), VII, p. 161.

Beachcombers

Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Ebb-Tide*

'I should have been a beachcomber. I should have gone fifteen years ago to Samoa', Robert Louis Stevenson wistfully wrote to Edward Burlingame, his American publisher.[76] Dated May 1889 from Honolulu, just after his first South Seas voyage, the beachcomber he contemplates is touched with romance. He is not the labour recruiter or the degraded desperado of Gilbert and Ellis, but is instead like the 'gentle, soft-eyed youth from Edinburgh, now fairly on the way to become a beach-comber', that his wife Fanny encountered twelve months later on the pearl island of Penrhyn. As Fanny proclaimed, this was a 'fortunate lad!' 'His future is assured; no more hard work, no more nipping frosts and chilly winds; he will live and die in dreamland, beloved and honoured and tenderly cared for all the summer days of his life.'[77] This is the beachcomber fantasy that encouraged hundreds of sailors to abandon ship during the nineteenth century, and it is undoubtedly one that the Stevensons eventually came to realise was essentially untrue after the three lengthy cruises that they took through the Pacific along with Lloyd Osbourne, Fanny's son.

The first of these was aboard the *Casco*, a chartered yacht that set sail from San Francisco on 28 June 1888 and sailed through Polynesian waters, visiting the Marquesas, the Paumotus islands and Tahiti, before docking in Hawaii in January 1889. Six months later they took passage aboard the *Equator*, a trading schooner that toured the Gilbert Islands from June to December. As Roslyn Jolly notes, this voyage through Micronesia was a more challenging experience for the Stevenson party: the living conditions aboard the schooner were inferior to those on the luxury yacht; the trio had little say in where the ship weighed anchor because they were passengers rather than owners; and in the islands they visited 'law and order was far less secure than in the Polynesian islands', in part because they were not subject to European government.[78] The last voyage they took was aboard another trading schooner, the *Janet Nicoll*, which left Sydney on 11 April 1890. Again the Stevensons were just passengers, and were ignorant of the landfalls that they would make. In the end, they visited over thirty islands in five months, after which they settled in Samoa until Stevenson's death in December 1894.[79] In the months that preceded and followed the letter to Burlingame, then, the Stevensons were introduced to an enormous number of islands, their native communities, and the beachcombers that lived among them.

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[76] Stevenson, *Letters*, VI, p. 299.
[77] Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol' Among the South Seas: A Diary by Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 55. Although Fanny Stevenson always spelt the name of the schooner *Janet Nichol*, it was in fact spelt *Janet Nicoll*.
[78] Jolly, 'Introduction', p. 27.
[79] For accounts of the voyages see, Jolly, 'Introduction', pp. 24-32; Farrell, *Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa*, pp. 59-64.

Figure 6.1. Lloyd Osbourne, 'King of Manihiki with the Island Judge on Right Hand: In Front a Beachcomber' (1890), photograph © City of Edinburgh Council – Writers' Museum.

Writing aboard the *Equator* to his lifelong friend and one-time mentor Sidney Colvin, Stevenson remarked, 'the beachcomber is perhaps the most interesting character here'.[80] This was a sentiment that was shared by the whole party. Stevenson's posthumous travelogue, *In the South Seas* (1896), which was based on the first two voyages; Fanny's diary, *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol'* (1914), which details the third; and Osbourne's photographs that provided his mother's journal with illustrations, all enthusiastically document beachcomber life. Together they provide an invaluable resource that demonstrates the diversity of this vagrant class within the Pacific Islands. Fanny, for example, records meeting Tom Day – 'the flower of the Pacific' – who lived under an alias having 'three times deserted from men-of-

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[80] Stevenson, *Letters*, VI, p. 327.

war'. With 'a strong, alert figure and the mobile face of an actor' she found him an appealing character, despite his habitual drunkenness. She also met a less prepossessing trio of ne'er-do-wells in the form of 'an absconding produce-merchant, a runaway marine, and a young Englishman who was wrecked', all of whom she discovered on Manihiki. These 'three "beach-combers" were all well dressed' and cared for by the islanders, although they were 'under some subjection'. This somewhat inglorious position is clarified by one of Lloyd's photographs (see Figure 6.1).[81]

As the caption reads in the first edition of *The Cruise*, the photograph depicts: 'The King of Manihiki in the centre, with the Island Judge on his right and Tin Jack [a trader], seated, on his left. The man squatting in the foreground is one of the beach-combers.' In stark contrast to the 'soft-eyed' Scot destined to live in bliss, both the caption and photograph emphasise the beachcomber's humble situation. It is clear from the neat dress and self-conscious poses of the others that the taking of the photograph was an opportunity to perform themselves and to lay claim to their social status. This is especially true of the king who, dressed in a velveteen coat and 'a crown of red and white pandanus leaves', has assumed the trappings of royalty, and has adopted a stern, regal expression to accompany them. The beachcomber, meanwhile, is conspicuously incongruous. Although he features in a portrait of island dignitaries, neither his expression nor his dress projects a definite identity. His poncho-like garment renders his stance unreadable, while his slack face, the only part of his body we can see other than his feet, refuses to fill the lacuna. Indeed, earthed before the king, and positioned below all the other participants, the beachcomber seems to have the status of a prized object rather than a specific person. The caption contributes to this by recording that he 'is one of the beach-combers' (which one does not matter), but it also has its own agenda. The description of him 'squatting', despite the fact that he is sitting, resonates with stereotypically 'savage' postures, and indicates that he has 'gone native'. At the same time, it also suggests that the beachcomber is a squatter, an unauthorised or unwanted person. This would certainly dovetail with one beachcomber's admission to Fanny that 'his present way of life "had an air of loafing on the natives"' of Manihiki.[82]

Such pitiful loafers are also noted in *In the South Seas*, where Stevenson records that the Pacific Islands are full of willing interpreters, many of whom are the 'broken white folk living on the bounty of the natives'. His most striking beachcomber, however, is the one he found 'tattooed from head to foot' sitting on the pier head of Tai o Hae, the capital of the Marquesas.[83] Strongly reminiscent of Jean Cabri and James O'Connell who belonged to the

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[81] Stevenson, *Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol'*, pp. 120-121, 39-40.
[82] Ibid., p. 40.
[83] Robert Louis Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, *In the South Seas and Island Nights' Entertainments* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1925), pp. 5-230 (pp. 10, 47).

'beachcombing phase', this beachcomber exerted the fascination that all anachronisms possess, and it is with him that Stevenson and Osbourne chose to open their novel *The Wrecker* (1892). Here the same beachcomber, the 'living curiosity of Tai-o-hae [*sic*]', is presented as a socially peripheral figure that belongs to a bygone period. He is perched 'at the end of a rickety pier', a structure whose placement on a boundary between land and sea marks his outsider status, even as its fragility enhances our sense of his precarity. His liminal position is further emphasised by his vivid recollections. Dangling over the water lost in thought, we are told that 'he would hear again the drums beat for a man-eating festival'.[84] Such memories enmesh him within the pre-imperial era, because as Stevenson makes clear in his travelogue, cannibalism in the Marquesas could now only be seen 'in the cold perspective and dry light of history.'[85] The victim of a trick in time, the beachcomber's life experience belongs not simply to the past, but to the distant past, and it is this as much as his tattoos that make him a curiosity.

Although *The Wrecker* – a tale of debt, smuggling, blackmail and opium – is not about beachcombers, it is fitting that it should open with one. The first of three 'South Sea Yarns' that Stevenson and Osbourne intended to write together, *The Wrecker* and its companion pieces were planned to address the 'things that I can scarce touch upon, or even not at all, in my travel book', as Stevenson explained to Colvin: these included some of the seedier beachcombers that he had encountered.[86] Of the three, *The Wrecker* was the only one that was written in full collaboration and that did not give beachcombers a prominent part. The first section of *The Pearl Fisher*, which centres upon the exploits of 'three beachcombers', was written with Osbourne 'up to the discovery of the champagne', but the rest was written by Stevenson, who compressed the tale into a novella, and retitled it *The Ebb-Tide*.[87] The third novel was a 'more sentimental' yarn called *The Beachcombers*, but it was never written, and the project quickly fell from Stevenson's correspondence.[88] The planned trilogy, the travelogue, the photographs, and Fanny's diary, parts of which were 'intended to be a collection of hints to help my husband's memory', reveal that beachcomber life was an imaginative preoccupation for Stevenson and Osbourne.[89] This is most evident in *The Ebb-Tide*, a novella that probes the nature and nuances of beachcombing in the late nineteenth century, and engages with it on a thematic and formal level.

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[84] Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Wrecker* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 2.
[85] Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, p. 70.
[86] Stevenson, *Letters*, VI, p. 330.
[87] Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, *The Ebb-Tide: A Trio and Quartette, South Sea Tales*, ed. Roslyn Jolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; repr. 2008), pp. 123-252 (p. 136). Future references will be made to this edition and in the main text; Stevenson, *Letters*, VIII, p. 158.
[88] Stevenson, *Letters*, VI, p. 330.
[89] Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, 'Preface', *The Cruise of the 'Janet Nichol' Among the South Seas: A Diary by Mrs Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), pp. v-vii (p. v).

Where the tattooed beachcomber at the beginning of *The Wrecker* is out of place in modern Tai o Hae, the three beachcombers that we encounter in *The Ebb-Tide* in Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, belong to their surroundings. Unlike their tattooed counterpart, or their other contemporaries in Samoa and the Solomon Islands, there is nothing swashbuckling or adventurous about Robert Herrick, J. L. Huish or Captain John Davis. At the beginning of novella they are both literally and metaphorically 'on the beach' (124), a phrase of Pacific origin that means destitute or unemployed.[90] Dressed in 'flimsy cotton' with 'no breakfast to mention' (124) they recall 'the occupants of an English casual ward', as one contemporary reviewer observed. This resemblance is sharpened by their residence in the disused calaboose, a place 'littered with wreckage and the traces of vagrant occupation' (143), and imbued with the same semi-penal atmosphere familiar to the spike.[91] Although Edmond argues that these beachcombers 'could be [in] Apia, Noumea or Suva', the capitals of Samoa, New Caledonia and Fiji respectively, in fact it is significant that they are located in Papeete, one of the oldest European settlements: it strips them of the romance that might otherwise be attached to them if they were on cannibal islands, or in the 'hell hole of the Pacific', and it emphasises their similarity to the pitiful vagrants of Europe, who were likewise dependent on 'open charity upon the wayside' (126).[92]

Failure and impotence are the characteristics of these beachcombers. Herrick, we are told, could not hold a job because he was 'thoroughly incompetent' (126); Davis fled to the Pacific having allowed his ship, the *Sea Ranger*, to sink during a bout of drunkenness; and Huish, 'who had been employed in every store in Papeete', had been 'discharged from each in turn' (127). In the decade following *The Ebb-Tide*'s publication this type of beachcomber would become familiar to the reading public. As the travel writer John Foster Fraser recorded in 'Tramps, Hobbos, and Beachcombers' (1900), the beachcomber who lived in 'the sunny islands of the Pacific, where life was drowsy, [and] the natives complacent' was 'a thing of the past' by the end of the nineteenth century. In his place, was a vagrant who shuffled 'in Eastern ports, with hope bleached out of his eyes': 'he is incompetent, and a drunkard. When he picks up a job he loses it, because it is against his nature to finish it.'[93] Stevenson inaugurated this type of beachcomber with his trio 'on the beach' and their hopeless narrative of enervation and failure.

As the *Saturday Review* remarked in its article 'The Ebb-Tide' (1894), the novella's plot is remarkably disjointed: its three distinct episodes on the beach of Papeete, aboard the schooner *Farallone*, and on New Island 'seem to have been designed independently of the

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[90] 'Beach, n.3.b.' *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) [accessed 19 October 2017]
[91] 'Fiction', *The Speaker*, 29 September 1894, pp. 362-363 (p. 362).
[92] Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 180.
[93] John Foster Fraser, 'Vagabond Notes: Tramps, Hobbos, and Beachcombers', *Barnsley Chronicle*, 1 December 1900, p. 2.

end in view, and tend towards no tremendous culmination.'[94] This is an observation that has been developed by critics since. Contemplating the failure of the beachcombers' criminal enterprises – which include stealing the *Farallone*'s cargo of champagne; blackmailing the wine merchant who has replaced most of it with water; and murdering Attwater, their host on New Island – Smith remarks that 'the twists of the plot offer only a series of dead-ends'.[95] This pattern of unsuccessful schemes is essential to Stevenson's portrayal of the beachcombers as incompetent, and exists in contrast with the entrepreneurial exploits of buccaneers like Bully Hayes, who, as Davis enthusiastically recalls, 'stole vessels all the time' (148). More than that, however, it embodies on a formal level the beachcombers' vagrant movement. With each plan that collapses the momentum of the narrative dissipates and casts it adrift, or as Philip Steer puts it, 'Stevenson's broken plots build on [a] general sense of aimless mobility'.[96] Such aimlessness is compounded by the similar material conditions that the protagonists encounter in the novella's three settings. For example, the influenza epidemic that ravages Tahiti, and the outbreaks of smallpox aboard the *Farallone* and on New Island, create a ubiquity of disease that results in there being 'little sense of spatial progression in *The Ebb-Tide*', as Oliver Buckton has argued.[97] Our sense of the beachcombers' inertia is also amplified by the universal presence of the beach.

The beach is both the native environment of the beachcomber, and the visible symbol of his impoverished and immobile state in *The Ebb-Tide*. At the risk of paradox, Stevenson equates being beached with a loafer-like drifting, two conditions that capture the impotent condition of the vagrant, while expressing his futile and purposeless movement. In the first half of the novella it is the beachcombers' literal and metaphysical existence 'on the beach' that they are trying to escape. Having been hired to sail the *Farallone* from Tahiti to Australia, Davis persuades Herrick to steal the vessel and sell its consignment in Peru, because there is only 'a beach in Sydney' (148) waiting for them. Similarly, after the cargo proves worthless, he argues that they must extort money from the wine merchant in order to avoid the beach in Peru: 'don't you think you see the three of us on the beach of Callao?' (181), he asks. Nonetheless, the beach is inescapable. We are first introduced to the trio 'seated on the beach under a *purao*-tree' (123) in Tahiti, and at the end of the narrative we leave Herrick and Davis on the 'lagoon beach' (250) of New Island. In the meantime, the *Farallone* becomes a beach of their own making when they consume its small supply of champagne and most of the food aboard. Indeed, after only twelve days at sea, the

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[94] 'The Ebb-Tide', *Saturday Review*, 22 September 1894, p. 330.
[95] Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, p. 160.
[96] Philip Steer, 'Romances of Uneven Development: Spatiality, Trade, and Form in Robert Louis Stevenson's Pacific Novels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 43 (2015), 343-356 (p. 351).
[97] Oliver S. Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson: Travel, Narrative, and the Colonial Body* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 268.

Farallone's promise of fruitful mobility is nullified. As Davis admits having examined the stores, 'we can't look near Samoa. I don't know as we could get to Peru.' (182). At this stage in the narrative, the beachcombers are adrift aboard an empty larder, and are once more metaphorically beached. As if to enforce the inescapable nature of this position, it is at this point that they sight New Island, an atoll whose 'excellently white' (187) beach literalises their position.

New Island is a paradigmatic, almost allegorical version of the beach. The island's 'presiding genius', the 'figure-head of a ship' (190), announces it as a place of inescapable deprivation as the beachcombers enter the lagoon. Fixed 'at the pier-end, with its perpetual gesture and its leprous whiteness' (190), it is an analogue for the outcast 'curiosity of Tai-o-hae', but it also serves as a more overtly symbolic and universal reminder of the beachcombers' condition. Its 'leprous whiteness' suggests that the island is a place of entrapment and exile like 'the Place Dolorous – Molokai', the Hawaiian leper colony that Stevenson visited for a week in May 1889 and briefly recalls in *In the South Seas*.[98] Meanwhile, its 'perpetual gesture' suggests that the island is a place of immobilisation, especially given that its present and eternal posture is juxtaposed with a history of mobility: before becoming salvage, 'the figure-head […] had long hovered and plunged into so many running billows' (190). Acting now as the 'ensign' for New Island, however, the figurehead prepares the way for the beachcombers' discovery that the island has been marooned in a state of inactivity by smallpox. Although it is the site of Attwater's homestead, complete with 'sheds and store-houses' (189), 'a deep-veranda'ed dwelling-house' (189), a 'dozen native huts' (190) and a chapel-like 'building with a belfry' (190), the whole estate is virtually deserted. 'The house is empty and the graveyard full' (194), explains the beachcombers' sinister host, a man whose name – Att-water – suggests that he, too, shares in the beachcombers' condition of being beached, which is also, paradoxically, being adrift.

Upon publication, critics responded to Attwater with consternation. Writing for the *Bookman*, the anonymous critic Y. Y. recorded that he is, 'a compound of beach-comber, fine gentleman, cynic, missionary, covenanting fanatic, and desperado', and concluded by saying, 'he is simply impossible'.[99] Several other reviewers agreed, and noted that he was completely unrealistic.[100] Since then, critics have tried to decipher what Attwater represents. For Buckton he is the English colonist 'gone native'; for Edmond he is a 'modern imperialist'; for Smith

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[98] Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, p. 78; for an account of the visit, see, Stevenson, *Letters*, VI, pp. 310-311; also see, Farrell, *Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa*, p. 213.
[99] [Anon.] Y. Y., 'The Ebb-Tide', *Bookman*, October 1894, pp. 19-20 (p. 20).
[100] See, 'Richard le Gallienne', *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Paul Maixner (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 455-457 (p. 456); Percy Addleshaw, 'The Ebb-Tide', *Academy*, 13 October 1894, p. 272.

he is 'the figure of the missionary'; and for Farrell he is a beachcomber.[101] This last interpretation, which Edmond also finds plausible, is based on Attwater's religious fanaticism. Farrell suggests that 'R. L. S. may have drawn on the lives and deeds of beachcombers [who…] had established pseudo-Christian cults on islands in the South Seas', while Edmond goes further, arguing that Attwater is a 'fascistic version' of John Adams, one of the beachcombing mutineers of the *Bounty* who established a devout Christian colony on the Pacific island of Pitcairn.[102] Although none of these readings manage to fully encompass the deliberately elusive Attwater, they do seem to coalesce around the figure of the beachcomber. Smith's reading of Attwater as a missionary becomes effectively incorporated into Farrell and Edmond's interpretations, while Buckton's extensive treatment of Attwater as the Englishman 'gone native', again speaks to a figure who was frequently depicted as acculturated, like the 'squatting' beachcomber in Osbourne's photograph. There are also other indications that we are invited to read Attwater as a type of beachcomber.

Introduced in a chapter entitled 'The Pearl-Fisher', the original title for the novella, the trio assume that Attwater's main business on the island is retrieving pearls and pearl-shell from the lagoon. Indeed, their plan to either kidnap or kill him is based on Davis's surmise that he has 'pearls – a ten years' collection of them' (198). This is the stock occupation of the beachcomber. It will be recalled that as the *OED* defines them beachcombers obtain their 'living by pearl-fishery, etc.' For contemporaries as well there was a clear correlation. Cooper in his survey addresses both under the chapter heading 'Pearl Fishing and "Beachcombers"', and records that beachcombers (or 'pearl robbers') cheated islanders out of their 'finest pearls for a mere song' in the pre-imperial era.[103] Meanwhile, Attwater's 'curiosity-shop of sea-curios' garnered from 'two wrecks at least' (201), also identifies him as a 'wrecker' – a person who salvages ships' fittings and cargo. This is another occupation that associates him with the beachcomber. As *Chambers's* notes in their etymology of the term:

> Beachcomber is a word of American coinage. Primarily, it is applied to a long wave rolling in from the ocean, and from this it has come to be applied to those whose occupation it is to pick up, as pirates or wreckers, whatever these long waves wash in to them.[104]

Attwater's island employments, like his religious practice, align him with beachcombers.

That said, Attwater is clearly not a true beachcomber – he is neither a wretched vagrant nor a buccaneer. Moreover, although like the trio he is still physically 'on the beach', he is not helpless or destitute. Indeed, the beach has empowered him socially and

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[101] Buckton, *Cruising with Robert Louis Stevenson*, pp. 171-179, 246; Smith, *Literary Culture and the Pacific*, pp. 161; Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, p. 182.
[102] Farrell, *Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa*, p. 301; Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific*, pp. 182-184.
[103] Cooper, *The Coral Lands of the Pacific*, p. 252.
[104] 'Beachcombers', p. 81.

economically by allowing him to carve out his own private fiefdom, and to exploit its raw materials. Then again, this is only because, unlike the trio who try to escape, Attwater embraces the beach. There is in fact a symmetry between Attwater and his chosen situation on an atoll, a geographical formation that comprises a strip of beach, raised upon a coral ring, which encloses a lagoon: or as Stevenson describes them, 'water within, water without – you have the image of a perfect atoll'.[105] The atoll, then, is also Att-water, and neatly emblematises the paradoxical position of the beachcomber who is both beached and adrift. In the end, it seems that resignation to one's place on the beach becomes the means by which one transcends beachcombing existence. This is certainly the realisation that Davis has in *The Ebb-Tide*'s final chapter. Following his 'conversion' by Attwater, and dreading the approach of the *Trinity Hall*, Attwater's ship that has been erstwhile delayed, he confides to Herrick that he would like to permanently settle on the island. 'I'd most rather stay here upon this island. I found peace here, peace in believing. Yes, I guess this island is about good enough for John Davis.' (251-252).

Through Attwater and Davis, Stevenson collapses the boundary between the migratory beachcomber and the settler. In doing so, he challenges an essential tenet of the imperial ideology that was applied to the Pacific: that incoming missionaries and traders would displace the immoral and degraded beachcombers, and become a civilising force within island communities. In the meantime, the beachcombers would be driven further afield, and eventually become extinct. Stevenson replaces this process of eradication and renewal with one of transformation and continuation. In what can be seen as a reappraisal of the beachcombers' pioneering status, he suggests that beachcombing is but the larval stage out of which settlement emerges. The pitiful and wretched beachcomber is the precursor of the colonist, and the moral difference between them, assumed to be so wide, is, in fact, negligible. *The Ebb-Tide*, then, offers a re-evaluation of the beachcomber, even though it steadily refuses to redeem his character. Such revisions of beachcomber life became more common in the late 1890s and the early twentieth century as novelists and short story writers began to recast the buccaneering beachcomber. These included Louis Becke, Jack London, W. Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad. In their writings, as in Stevenson's, beachcombing was no longer freighted with the same melodrama and romance that characterised earlier representations, but was depicted in a more realistic, and sometimes sordid fashion.

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[105] Stevenson, *In the South Seas*, p. 100.

Beachcombers

Coda

Stevenson never met or read Conrad. Conrad's first novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895)*,* was

published the year after his death. Nonetheless, they had several friends in common, including

Colvin, J. M. Barrie and Henry James, and they shared a prevailing interest in tropical islands

and the eccentric characters that resided on them.[106] Conrad's second novel, *An Outcast of the*

Islands (1896), for example, was inspired by a 'worn-out European living on the reluctant

toleration' of the islanders on Borneo; he was 'almost as dumb as an animal and apparently

much more homeless.'[107] Although this man is reminiscent of the vagrants that the Stevenson

party encountered on their voyages, the term 'beachcomber' does not appear in the novel, and

rarely features in Conrad's corpus. When it does, it is applied with a sense of its geographic

specificity. In *Lord Jim* (1900) we are told that a member of Gentleman Brown's piratical

crew is 'a lame ex-beachcomber of Levuka', a settlement in the Fijian archipelago; and in

Nostromo (1904), set in the fictional South American state of Costaguana, Captain Mitchell

looks on Doctor Monygham 'as a sort of beachcomber of superior intelligence'.[108] In the first

instance, the record of the beachcomber's origin establishes Conrad's awareness that the

beachcomber type belonged to the Pacific, and in the second instance, it is telling that he only

uses 'beachcomber' as a simile, and a highly conditioned one at that. Given that Conrad

tended to restrict himself to the 'Malay Archipelago' in his island fiction, there was little

room for him to insert the figure of the beachcomber as he understood it.[109]

That said, readers of Conrad's early fiction, and particularly *Lord Jim*, might

recognise the beachcomber that Fraser describes. This is the man who lives 'in the Eastern

ports, with hope bleached out of his eyes, and known usually by another name than was given

him at his baptism.'[110] He is the character that Jim becomes after he abandons the *Patna*, and,

cowed by shame, embarks upon 'the circle of his wanderings': 'he was known successively in

Bombay, in Calcutta, in Rangoon, in Penang, in Batavia – and in each of these halting-places

was just Jim the water-clerk.' Although Jim eventually redeems himself when he settles on

Patusan, this roaming life is demoralising, and Marlowe – the narrator – begins to fear that he

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[106] Linda Dryden, 'Introduction', *Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad: Writers of Transition*, ed. Linda Dryden, Stephen Arata and Eric Massie (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2009), pp. 1-12 (pp. 1-3).
[107] Joseph Conrad, 'Author's Note', *An Outcast of the Islands* (London: Penguin, 1975), pp. 7-10 (pp. 8-9).
[108] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim: A Tale*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2008), p.267; Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard*, ed. Jacques Berthoud and Mara Kalnins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 248.
[109] Andrew Francis notes that the 'Malay Archipelago' of Conrad's fiction was known variously as the Malay, Eastern or Indian Archipelago at the time of writing. Andrew Francis, *Culture and Commerce in Conrad's Asian Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 3.
[110] Fraser, 'Vagabond Notes', p. 2.

will 'lose his name of an inoffensive, if aggravating, fool, and acquire that of a common loafer'. More specifically, he imagines Jim as 'a blear-eyed, swollen-faced, besmirched loafer, with no soles to his canvas shoes, and with a flutter of rags about the elbows, who, on the strength of old acquaintance, would ask for a loan of five dollars.'[111] This vagrant, as we have seen, also belongs to 'The Country' and 'The City'.

Conrad's loafer populates the slumscapes of Arthur Morrison and Margaret Harkness; he appears in the casual queues depicted by Luke Fildes, cheek-by-jowl with the deserving poor; and he recalls mouchers, like Charles Kingsley's Crawy, who is similarly a 'scarecrow of rags' with 'bleared cheeks and drooping lips'.[112] In each case aimless movement has caused these figures to physically and morally deteriorate: a state that is sometimes signalled by their 'swollen', 'drooping' or 'bleared' flesh, wayward features that are the emblems of their wandering ways. This degeneration expresses anxieties about urbanisation, colonisation and emigration. It is the pathology that serves as both an analogy for, and a symptom of, the unregulated and unsanctioned movements that might warp the body and the soul. We see this in the debased Gypsies who live in towns and cities; in the casuals and loafers who are the by-products of urbanisation; in Wakefield's 'new people' who are 'rotten before they are ripe'; and in the beachcomber 'gone native'.[113] However, although degeneration influences many of the representations of vagrancy that were produced in the Victorian period, it was by no means the only way of imagining this phenomenon.

Vagrancy was also depicted as a form of liberation. We will remember the Stevenson party meeting beachcombers who 'live and die in dreamland'; Dickens enjoying some 'gentlemanly piece of vagabondism wit[h] Maclise and Forster'; and George Borrow praising the tinker's 'true Eden life'.[114] Their contemporary, the poet and essayist Alexander Smith, also imagined vagrancy in these terms in his collection of essays, *Dreamthorp* (1863). The first and titular essay begins with an act of settlement as he describes how, having 'pitched a tent' in 'several towns and villages', he finally became 'a denizen of Dreamthorp.' This settlement, however, is facetious. The village is fictional, as its name implies, and it soon becomes apparent that Smith has only exchanged physical vagrancy for a much more radical, imaginative form of wandering. 'Here I can live as I please,' he confides, 'here I can throw the reins on the neck of my whim.'[115] This metaphor of fanciful thought as travel is refined in

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[111] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, pp. 142, 4, 144, 162.

[112] Charles Kingsley, *Yeast: A Problem* (London: John W. Parker, 1851), p. 142.

[113] Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A Letter from Sydney*, A Letter from Sydney and Other Writings on *Colonisation*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: J. M. Dent, 1929), pp. 1-106 (p. 69).

[114] Charles Dickens, *The Pilgrim Edition of the Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965-2002), III, p. 272; George Borrow, *Lavengro* (London: Heron Books, 1969), p. 344.

[115] Alexander Smith, 'Dreamthorp', *Dreamthorp: A Book of Essays Written in the Country*, ed. Hugh Walker (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 1-18 (pp. 1, 18).

his next piece, 'On the Writing of Essays', in which the ideal essayist is portrayed not only as a traveller but as a vagrant as well. 'A chartered libertine, and a law unto himself', the essayist refuses to use logic to 'build pathways through metaphysical morasses', and is guided instead by what Smith calls 'suggestiveness' – the associations and analogies that connect otherwise disparate things. This engenders a meandering and digressive form of prose that makes the very best essays 'the most vagrant, surprising, and, to many minds, illogical.'[116] Smith's metaphorical conception of vagrancy reconstitutes the vagrant as a symbol of unfettered thought and speech, and belongs to the liberal discourse of 'Romantic vagrancy'. As Celeste Langan explains, within this discourse 'the vagrant's mobility and expressivity are abstracted from their determining social conditions', and it is for this reason that this idea only appears on the margins of this historical and materialist thesis.[117] Nonetheless, this alternative and metaphysical model is a useful addendum, helping to recover and reinforce what was at stake when commentators described vagrants and vagrancy. This is illustrated by the last essay in Smith's collection, 'On Vagabonds'.

Described as a 'catalogue of vagabonds', the essay shares a slight formal and thematic resemblance to this thesis. However, as Smith makes clear, the vagrant he discusses is wholly different from the ones that I have addressed. 'By vagabond, I do not mean a tramp, or a gipsy, or a thimblerigger, or a brawler who is brought up with a black eye before a magistrate of a morning.' Instead, he means someone who is eccentric, individual and free from constraints. Someone, in other words, like his ideal essayist. Flitting between diverse topics, including the professions, poetry, education, theatre, science and portraiture, the essay positions vagabondage as the antithesis of rigid respectability, while also claiming that it is a core national trait. The essays of Lamb, the novels of Dickens, the plays of Shakespeare and the rambling architecture of Elizabethan England all exhibit a vagabond strain. Moreover, and perhaps more troublingly, so do Victorians themselves. In a patriotic passage that addresses conquest and exploration, Smith argues that:

> The English are eminently a nation of vagabonds. The sun paints English faces with all the colours of his climes. The Englishman is ubiquitous. He shakes with fever and ague in the swampy valley of the Mississippi; he is drowned in the sand pillars as they waltz across the desert on the purple breath of the simoom; he stands on the icy scalp of Mont Blanc; his fly falls in the sullen Norwegian fiords; he invades the solitude of the Cape lion; he rides on his donkey through the uncausewayed Cairo streets.

Here Smith's use of vagabondage as a metaphor for eccentricity becomes uncomfortably literal. While celebrating 'the indomitable pluck and spirit of the race', which sends the

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[116] Alexander Smith, 'On the Writing of Essays', *Dreamthorp: A Book of Essays Written in the Country*, ed. Hugh Walker (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 19-40 (pp. 22, 34).
[117] Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; repr. 2006), p. 17.

English to the swamp, the desert and the highest peak in Europe, he alludes to the types of global movement that caused anxiety among his contemporaries.[118] After all, these hostile landscapes do not encourage settlement, and nor is that necessarily the aim of those who travel across them. Here the 'eccentric' temperament of the English, which is 'odd, whimsical', might become the 'eccentric' movement of the actual vagabond, 'irregular, anomalous, proceeding by no known method'.[119] This latent pun discloses an idea that the narratives of degeneration are arguably struggling against. That wandering expresses an inherent capriciousness common to all. That aimlessness is a natural condition. And that vagrancy, perhaps, might constitute a form of pleasure.

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[118] Alexander Smith, 'On Vagabonds', *Dreamthorp: A Book of Essays Written in the Country*, ed. Hugh Walker (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), pp. 239-263 (pp. 257, 241, 246-247).
[119] 'Eccentric, adj. and n.6.a. and 6.b.', *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) [accessed 7 September 2018].

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