



FIN





## WHY ARE BEGGARS DESPISED?

It is worth saying something about the social position of beggars, for when one has consorted with them, and found that they are ordinary human beings, one cannot help being struck by the curious attitude that society takes towards them. People seem to feel that there is some essential difference between beggars and ordinary "working" men. They are a race apart - outcasts, like criminals and prostitutes. Working men "work," beggars do not "work"; they are parasites, worthless in their very nature. It is taken for granted that a beggar does not "earn" his living, as a bricklayer or a literary critic "earns" his. He is a mere social excrescence, tolerated because we live in a humane age, but essentially despicable.

Yet if one looks closely one sees that there is no essential difference between a beggar's livelihood and that of numberless respectable people. Beggars do not work, it is said; but, then, what is work? A navy works by swinging a pick. An accountant works by adding up figures. A beggar works by standing out of doors in all weathers and getting varicose veins, chronic bronchitis, etc. It is a trade like any other; quite useless, of course - but, then, many reputable trades are quite useless. And as a social type a beggar compares well with scores of others. He is honest compared with the sellers of most patent medicines, high-minded compared with a Sunday newspaper proprietor, amiable compared with a hire-purchase tout - in short, a parasite, but a fairly harmless parasite. He seldom extracts more than a bare living from the community, and, what should justify him according to our ethical ideas, he pays for it over and over in suffering. I do not think there is anything about a beggar that sets him in a different class from other people, or gives most modern men the right to despise him.

Then the question arises, Why are beggars despised? - for they are despised, universally. I believe it is for the simple reason that they fail to earn a decent living. In practice nobody cares whether work is useful or useless, productive or parasitic; the sole thing demanded is that it shall be profitable. In all the modern talk about energy, efficiency, social service and the rest of it, what meaning is there except "Get money, get it legally, and get a lot of it"? Money has become the grand test of virtue. By this test beggars fail, and for this they are despised. If one could earn even ten pounds a week at begging, it would become a respectable profession immediately.

A beggar, looked at realistically, is simply a businessman, getting his living, like other businessmen, in the way that comes to hand. He has not, more than most modern people, sold his honor; he has merely made the mistake of choosing a trade at which it is impossible to grow rich.

**(Down and Out in Paris and London, George Orwell, 1933)**

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In memory of David Hutchison 1963-2012

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# VAGRANCY IN QUOTATIONS: A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT



*"I refer to the large and ever-growing class of idlers who differ from the genuinely unemployed in that they will neither seek work nor accept it when offered: the drones of the social hive, the habitual loafers. We may distinguish in this parasitic class several clearly defined types:*

*There is the first type with which we are most familiar – the nomad of the highway, who is always in motion yet never gets to his journey's end, the unmitigated vagabond, who lives by begging and blackmailing and pillaging.*

*There is also the settled resident loafer – an urban type in the main, though the country village knows likewise – who haunts the streets year in year out from morning until evening, living no one knows how, and whose only purpose in life might seem to be to offer disproof in his own obtrusive person of that saying by Adam Smith: 'As it is ridiculous not to dress, so it is in some measure not to be employed, like other persons.'*

*There is also the intermittent loafer, three quarters idler, one quarter worker of a sort and altogether good-for-nothing, who is almost invariably an inebriate and often has taken upon himself domestic responsibilities which he saddles upon the shoulders of a too-willing community.*

*Think what we do for professional idlers. Take the urban type. While honest men are working we give him free run of our thoroughfares and set apart for him the best of our street corners. Should he be a vagrant we make it possible for him to travel through England from the Channel to the Tweed without doing one hour's serious work save for the labour tasks which are imposed by some of the workhouses at which he may call. In these institutions - erected at intervals not too distant to overtask his strength – food is placed before him night and morning, with a bed thrown in, while outside he is able to draw alms from the pockets of the unwisely charitable whom he deceives with his tales of misery, or the unwillingly charitable whom he terrifies into compliance with his demands."*

**(The Vagrancy Problem, William Harbutt Dawson, 1910)**

"The origins of vagrancy legislation are complex, but arguably a central principle in most laws is the obligation to labor. Two of the chief characteristics of alleged vagrancy – being able-bodied and out of work – assumed there was a duty to work."

**("A New Serfdom: Labor Laws, Vagrancy Statutes, and Labor Discipline in England, 1350-1800" A. L. Beier in, Cast Out: Vagrancy and Homelessness in Global and Historical Perspective, A. L. Beier & Paul W. Ocozbek eds., 2008)**

*"Begging is an economic activity. It may not resemble employment, but it is a sort of 'work' and it entails a money transaction. This is recognised not only in those who beg, but in the public notices that adorn, for example, some tube stations, warning that 'professional' beggars operate in the vicinity. As a profession, however, begging is extremely hazardous. There is ample evidence that people who beg risk violence and predation, not only from passersby, but from others who get their living on the street."*

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**



"Begging is an offence under the 1824 Vagrancy Act, which condemns 'every person wandering abroad, or placing himself or herself in any public place, street, highway, court or passage, to beg or gather alms'. People who are begging can also be arrested on other grounds such as feigning poverty to obtain money (the 1968 Theft Act) or for disorderly and threatening behaviour (1968 Public Order Act).

**(We are human too: a study of people who beg, A. Murdoch, 1974)**

*"Until further resources are devoted to the problem of vagrancy it is likely to remain with us. The criminal law is unlikely to have any deterrent effect and the larger it retains jurisdiction over such matters, the more it will be regarded as creating the crime of homelessness. It is suggested that no benefit accrues either to the individual or to society by defining a homeless person, even if unwashed, as a criminal."*

**(Vagrancy: an Archaic Law – a memorandum of evidence to the Home Office Working Party on vagrancy and street offences from the National Council for Civil Liberties, May 1975)**

"An Act of 1495 (11 Henry VII) ordered local authorities to search for all 'vagabonds, idell and suspect persones lyying suspiciously', to put them into the stocks for three days, giving them bread and water only, and then to turn them out of the town or township; failing that they were to be put in the stocks for six days more, yet they still had to go.

An Act of 1530 (22 Henry VIII) enjoined whipping as an alternative to the stocks, and extended the statute to fortune tellers; a second offence by the latter was made punishable by whipping on two successive days, three hours in the pillory, and the loss of an ear.

An Act of 1535 (27 Henry VIII) made further provision for the infirm poor, but meted out severer punishment to the ruffler, sturdy vagabond or valiant beggar, who on a second apprehension might have the upper part of the right ear cut off, and on conviction at Quarter Sessions of 'wandering, loitering and idleness' might be sentenced to death as felons.

The preamble to the Act of 1547 (1 Edward VI) lamented that earlier legislation on the subject of vagrancy 'hath not had the successe which hath been wished, accordingly this act provided that those who would not work with whoever would take them or for food and drink, or who ran away from their employment, should be taken as vagabonds before two justices of the peace, who might order them to be branded on the breast with a V and 'adjudged the said personne living so idelye to such presentour to be his slave' for two years. Should the slave run away he was liable on recapture to be branded on the cheek and forehead with an S and be adjudged slave forever, while to run away a second time was felony punishable by death.

In 1572 (14 Elizabeth) a law was passed enjoining that sturdy beggars found begging should be 'grevously whipped and burnte through the gristle of the right ear with a hot iron', unless someone would take them into service for a year.

An Amending Act of 1597 omitted provisions as to branding and ear-marking, but branding with an R in left shoulder was reintroduced for incorrigible or dangerous rogues in 1603 (branding continued until 1713). In 1702 justices of the peace were empowered to send rogues and vagabonds to 'Her Majesty's Service at Sea'."

**(The Vagrancy Problem, W.H. Dawson, 1910)**





*"During the High Middle Ages there was a tendency to idealise poverty. St Francis, for instance, thought that beggars were holy, and that the holy should live as beggars. It was an age of charitable outpourings to the destitute ... By 1400 many humanists believed that some types of poverty, far from leading to holiness, caused social disorders and therefore should be suppressed."*

**(Masterless Men: the Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640, A.L. Beier, 1985)**

"The beggars of Germany rejoiced in their Golden Age: it extended throughout nearly two centuries, from the invasions of the Turks until after the conclusion of the Swedish war (1450-1650). During this long period it was frequently the case that begging was practiced less over necessity than for pleasure – indeed it was pursued like a regular calling. For poetry had estranged herself from the nobility; knights no longer went out on adventures to seek giants and dragons, or to liberate the Holy Tomb; she had likewise become more and more alien to the citizen, since he considered it unwise to brood over verses and rhymes, when he was called upon to calculate his profits in hard coin. Even the 'Sons of the Muses', the Scholars, had become more prosaic, since there was so much to learn and so many universities to visit and the masters could no longer wander from one country to another with thousands of pupils.

The poetry (as everything in human life gradually descends) began to ally herself with beggars and vagrants. That which formerly had been misfortune and misery became soon a sort of free art, which only retained the mask of misery in order to pursue its course more safely and undisturbed. Mendacity became a distinct institution, was divided into various branches and was provided with a language of its own. Doubtless, besides the frequent wars, it was the gypsies – appearing in Germany at the beginning of the fifteenth century in larger swarms than ever – who contributed greatly to this state of things. They formed entire tribes of wanderers, as free as the birds in the air, now dispersing themselves, now reuniting, resting wherever forests, moors pleased, or stupidity and superstition allured them, possessing nothing, but appropriating to themselves the property of everybody by strategy or rude force."

**(Taschenbuch fur Geschichte Alterthum in Sud-Deutschland, Heinrich Schreiber, 1839)**

*"One mythmaking engine was the literary genre that has come to be called 'rogue literature' flourishing all over Europe but especially in England, with Robert Copeland's 'Highway to the Spitalhouse' (1536), Gilbert Walker's 'Manifest Detection of the Most Vile and Detestable Use of Dice Play' (1555), John Audeley's 'Fraternity of Vagabonds' (1561), Thomas Harman's 'Caveat for Common Cursetors, Vulgarly Known as Vagabonds' (1567) – partly just because they inhabited the same literary genre, destitute vagrants became guilty by association with criminal scam artists."*

**(Vagrancy Homelessness and English Renaissance Literature, Linda Woodbridge, 2001)**

"I think it can be said that the majority of them are practically as happy and contented in their squalor and poverty as is the aristocrat in his palace. In Whitechapel as well as the worst parts of New York I have met entire families who could not be persuaded to exchange places with the rich provided the exchange carried with it the duties and manners which wealth presupposes; they even pity the rich and express wonder at their contentment 'in such a straight-jacket life'."

**(Studies and Sketches of Vagabond Life, Josiah Flynt Willard, 1899)**



*"Every town and village should know their own paupers and assist only them."*

**(taken from Martin Luther's preface to the Liber Vagatorium [Book of Beggars], 1528)**



*"Pensioners' Tea Party Invaded ... a number of tramps, who, after staging a mock brawl, were eventually chased away, was one of the features of a tea party held for old age pensioners."*

**(Derby Daily Telegraph, 1950)**

*"Unhappily in the prosperity of free-trade there were the germs of future poverty. The people did not become more prudent; the additional wealth which was then obtained did not generally lead to more saving; a greater amount was spent on drink and the number of marriages increased."*

**(Pauperism: its causes and remedies, Henry Fawcett, 1871)**



*"What the 16th century branded as immoral feckless wanderers, Marx regarded as a class of property-less workers, the sine qua non of capitalism."*

**(Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England, Paul Slack, 1988)**

*"The Midland Rising of 1607 attracted apprentices, artisans and labourers ... riots did not justify the fear of the wandering rogue. Although a vagrant was said to have spread information about a projected corn riot in Kent in 1587, at root popular disturbances were community affairs, not the work of strangers."*

**(Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England, Paul Slack, 1988)**

*"The distinction to be made between deserving and undeserving classes of supplicant was fundamental to the operation of the Poor Laws and remains so in countless subtle ways, in modern social security systems. It is the distinction that at various times between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries informed the process of licensing, certification or 'badging' of certain beggars (a practice of which the authorisation or 'badging' of contemporary Big Issue vendors is strongly redolent.)"*

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**



*"The Stroller or Master of the Black Art is yet occasionally heard of in rural districts. The simple farmer believes him to be weather and cattle wise, and should his crops be backward, or his cow 'spot', not let down her milk with her accustomed readiness, he crosses the fellow's hand with a piece of silver, in order that things might be righted. Card sharpeners or Joners are unfortunately for the pockets of the simple, still to be met with on public race courses and at fairs.*

*The Over-Sonzen-Goers, or pretended distressed gentry, who went about neatly dressed with false letters, would seem to have been the original of the modern 'begging letter writers'. Those half-famished looking imposters, with clean aprons, or carefully brushed threadbare coats, who stand on the curbs of our public thoroughfres, and beg with a few sticks of sealing wax, were known in Luther's time as Goose-shearers.*

*Those wretches who are occasionally brought before the police magistrates accused of maiming children on purpose that they may better excite pity and obtain money, are unfortunately, not peculiar to our civilized age. These fellows committed like cruelties centuries ago.*

*Te trick of placing soap in the mouth to produce froth and falling down before passersby as though in a fit, common enough in London streets a few years ago, is also described as one of the old manoeuvres of beggars.*

*Traveling quack doctors, against whom Luther cautions his readers were common in this country up to the beginning of the present century. And it is not long ago since the credulous countryman in our rural districts were checked by fellows – 'wife men' they preferred being termed – who pretended to divine dreams and say under which tree or wall hidden treasure, so plainly seen in his sleep carefully deposited in a crock, was to be found.*

*And lastly, the traveling tinkers - who appear to have had no better name for honesty in the 15th century they have now – going about breaking holes in people's kettles to give work to a multitude of others."*

**(taken from the 1870 introduction to Liber Vagatorium)**



"In place of indiscriminate alms-giving in the medieval era, industrial societies developed more or less elaborate social security systems. Whereas once the relief of destitution was dependent upon the largesse conspicuously donated by the rich in response to the entreaties of the anonymous poor. Modernity required that such largesse be garnered anonymously through taxes, and distributed by way of an administrative process which conspicuously documents each recipient. The transition has involved a relational inversion: social redistribution is no longer associated with the gaze of the multitudinous poor upon the spectacle of their masters' riches, so much as the gaze of the state upon its multitudinous administrative subjects."

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**

*"The beggar who suns himself by the side of the highway, possess that security which kings are fighting for."*

**(A Theory of Modern Sentiments, Adam Smith, 1757)**

"Why is it better to give money to an organised charity than to a street beggar?"

**(Wenschler Children's IQ Test, USA, 1949)**

*"It is not possible to be a person who simply 'does' begging: rather one 'becomes' a beggar."*

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**



**Q:** What do you teach your kids about homeless people or the underclass? Have you ever had to explain to them why someone is on the street?

**A:** Yes, and I've explained to them that there are problems with young people. I think it's appalling that there are young people sleeping in doorways. That's what we need to tackle. Society in the end will want to try and deal with this problem. And should want to deal with it. Not by saying this is something we tolerate, we give a pound or two to a beggar whenever we feel like it. That to me is not a solution."

**(Tony Blair being interviewed about homelessness, The Big Issue, January 1997)**

"In a first world country and especially in a welfare state, relatively high taxes and social insurance contributions are the price paid by mainstream citizens for the right to treat their fellow citizens with civic indifference."

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**



*"Perhaps the diffusion of linear time into the street subculture is best symbolized in Salt City by the digital time and temperature display atop the city's highest building. Most homeless men don't wear watches; the display is known as the 'poor man's wrist watch'. It is a primary link to the larger culture's linear time."*

**(Time in the Streets, Harry Murray, 1984 in 'Human Organisation' vol 43)**

"The idea of the disciplinary treatment of vagrants and loafers in general took root, leading in time to the institution all over the country of special houses of detention not inaptly called Labour Houses, for the reception of these offenders, of the workshy of every description and of certain other classes who followed a disorderly mode of life. Labour House treatment is now the recognised mode of correcting sloth, loafing and habitual intemperance and immorality throughout Germany."

**(“German Labour Houses and Tramp Prisons”, from The Vagrancy Problem, W.H. Dawson, 1910)**

*"I want to bury myself."*

**(We are human too: a study of people who beg, Crisis, 1994)**



"The over 60's seemed to beg for longer at a time: either a full day, or half-day, or 'until I have enough'. The most popular time for begging was from 6pm to midnight or else between 4-6pm. Nearly half used a variety of begging pitches in a variety of areas, suggesting that they were mobile and non-territorial. About a quarter used a variety of pitches within the same area. There were 30 people (one fifth) who only used one pitch, which suggests habit, lack of mobility and possibly a sense of 'owning' the pitch."

**(We are human too: a study of people who beg, Crisis, 1994)**



*"Tourist buses slow down now: we're becoming a tourist attraction."*

**(We are human too: a study of people who beg, Crisis, 1994)**

"What is less often recognised, at least in the conventional wisdom, is that poverty also makes possible the existence or expansion of 'respectable' professions and occupations, for example, penology, criminology, social work and public health. More recently, the poor have provided jobs for professional and para-professional 'poverty warriors', as well as journalists and social scientists, this author included, who have supplied the information demanded when public curiosity about the poor developed in the 1960s."

**(“The positive functions of poverty”, Herbert Gans, The American Journal of Sociology, 1972, vol 78, no 2)**



*"Other activities which flourish because of the existence of poverty are the numbers game, the sale of heroin and cheap wines and liquors, pentecostal ministers, faith healers, pawn shops, prostitutes and the peace time army, which recruits its enlisted men mainly from among the poor."*

**(“The positive functions of poverty”, Herbert Gans, 1972)**

"...service providers tended to be characterised either as the unwitting handmaidens of a punitive state, or as groups of people principally interested in 'moral selving' – responding to charitable impulses that are self-serving and identity building rather than constitutive of any progressive response to the plight of homeless people."

**(Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community, Rebecca Allahyar, 2000)**



*"They [welfare services] provide outlets for the expression of liberal or sentimental ideology, presenting opportunities for volunteers to feel good about themselves while upholding the underlying political structures of bipolarization. They even open potential opportunities for the religious to proselytize to a captive audience ... victims of neoliberal excess."*

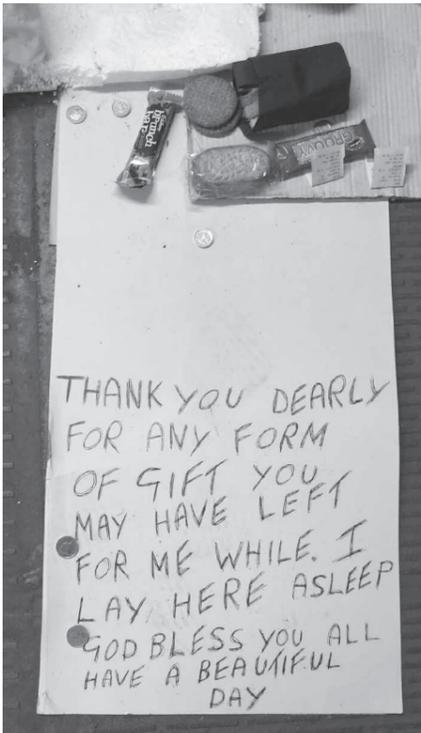
**(Swept up Lives: Re-envisioning the Homeless City, Paul Cloke, Jon May, Sarah Johnsen, 2010)**

"You wanna get down the Embankment. There's schizophrenics down there that are so paranoid they won't walk up to a van to get food. Outreach workers have to wrap sandwiches in newspaper and put them rubbish bins – that's the only way they can be sure they'll get them."

**(Homeless man, The Strand, London)**

*"Vagrancy is perhaps the classic crime of status, the social crime par excellence. Offenders were arrested not because of their actions but because of their position in society. Their status was a criminal one because it was at odds with the established order. Who determines that someone's status is a crime?"*

**(Masterless Men: the Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640, A.L. Beier, 1985)**



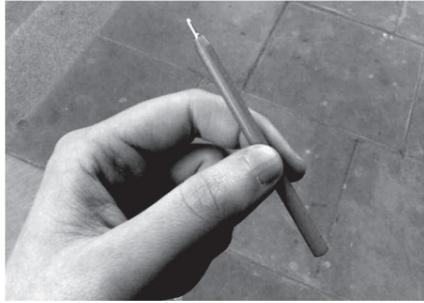
THANK YOU DEARLY  
FOR ANY FORM  
OF GIFT YOU  
MAY HAVE LEFT  
FOR ME WHILE I  
LAY HERE ASLEEP  
GOD BLESS YOU ALL  
HAVE A BEAUIFUL  
DAY



# GRAFTING

"Henry VIII personally amended a provision regarding charity in the Bishop's Book (first published in 1537) to exclude persons living 'by the graft of begging slothfully'."

**(Swept up Lives: Re-envisioning the Homeless City, Paul Cloke, Jon May, Sarah Johnsen, 2010)**



**Store detectives operating**



## The Oyster Card Catastrophe

In July 2003 the first Oyster cards were issued to the public, effectively ending a staple source of income for much of London's street population: the classic travel-card graft.

Before Oyster cards, anyone could ask tube travellers if they were finished with their daily travel pass, with a view to selling it on to someone for the price of a single journey. It was a graft with a beautiful symmetry to it: recycling implicit value; helping the needy and saving you some cash on your next journey.

Of course Transport for London would probably say it was costing the city "X" amount, which in turn leads to an increase in fares for everyone – but we know those fucking fares go up no matter what happens. Moreover, an Evening Standard news report from last month revealed that £53 million is languishing on unused Oyster cards – that figure represents some of the money that would have changed hands, helping desperate people outside tube stations.

Jason from Homerton told us: You hardly see used travel-cards these days, and anyway people don't think they are worth anything now. They are reluctant to buy them, even with the date on them.

## Watch the Parking Meters

Doing parking meters and drilling phone boxes used to be an alright graft. We used to do the big, square ticket machines in the West End, added Jason.

You need to take a long piece of wire and bend it in half and then make sure there are little barbs at each end, which are going to hold it in place once it has been threaded upwards through the coin return mechanism until it eventually blocks the cash being fed inside. You come back later and remove the wire and the trapped money falls out.

It was good for a while but they catch on quick especially with cameras everywhere. They got some people for doing it recently and they were bang in trouble, he said.

A similar trick can be done by jamming the eject system of a pay phone; we used to do it with one of those little betting slip pens from William Hill, noted one man. But it doesn't really work no more; it's only junkies use these phones today, he said.

Mark, London, commented: I'm more of a beggar; I don't really do criminal activities, a little bit of drug dealing is all really. But a few years back we used to do parking meters – me, and a Scottish guy called Rab. He used a chisel and a hammer or a bit of two-by-four and would knock the front of the coin mechanism right in, then you could pull it out. You could get anything from a tenner to £100. We both got done for it on the Strand. There's CCTV everywhere and cops are ten-a-penny.



I knew a guy called George, a crazy crack-head. He used to saw the tops off individual meters. He used a pipe-cutting machine, like what a plumber would use, not an electrical device but like something people use to cut glass with. It would take him an hour, turning the thing until he'd cut right through. Then he'd put the top in a bag and be off with it. He used to take them up to the roof of some tall flats in Kings Cross and smash them to pieces. He'd hit them with a lump-hammer, bits of scaffold pole, and it would take a while and a lot of effort. Man he was mad on the crack.

## Corporate Crime

Mark added: the only other thing I can think of is shop lifting. I know the boys for that. Say you woke up and felt, you know, a bit pink – they could go out and steal to order: pink paint; pink curtains; pillow cases, cushions, lamp shades; you name it ... They used to do Heals near Oxford Circus.

I spoke to a brass in Soho the other day who had acquired a handbag worth £1000, you know, a Jimmy Choo or whatever, and all she got for it was £40. You used to be able to get say £150 for something like that, but not anymore, he said.

## Simply Theft

You steal something like a bra from M&S; you return this item to a different branch. If you've "lost" the receipt they will reimburse you with an M&S voucher to the value of the item. You can then attempt to sell this voucher at a discount to paying shoppers.

## Any Old Iron

Dan, London, confided: One time I was living in this squat, a commercial premises near Euston and we gradually ripped everything out of there. There was a kitchen and when I ripped out the pipes leading to this old sink water started spurting everywhere. I just pushed the sink back against the wall. But later on that day they had closed the whole street and got the fire brigade out to deal with the flood.

## Ham and Egging

Jason, Homerton, said: I generally go to the big Tesco car park at Mare Street. You can do the trolleys there: people that are returning a trolley for a pound deposit you ask them for price of a cup of tea and often, especially if they are in a bit of a hurry, they will just give you the trolley and you collect the pound. I might do this until ive got enough to score, provided I don't get moved on by security.

Also, some places where you get a lot of black cabbies lined up, on a one way street, you can start at the back and ask them for enough for a cup of tea – 60p. Cabbies are from here and they are often sympathetic – I have been given a quid or sometimes two by each cab in a line, sometimes five or six of them. It's a good one if you are feeling a bit rough and don't want to walk around too much.

Over the years I've noticed that a lot of black people are reluctant to give us any money. The ones around Hackney have got an attitude – I don't care what you say. But if I see a black guy with a girl friend I always make a B-line for them because nine times out of ten they will give you a couple of quid because they always want to be seen as the "Big Un" and it would embarrass them not to be seen giving it away large, he said.

## Posh Cunts

Jonathan of Pimlico said: Grafting, yes, I mean I can always sell my script if I wanted to. It's worth £20. I used to know this old addict and he had the gift man, and he used to dress in suits and stuff as well. We woke in Kensington one Sunday morning, sick as pigs. What could we do? He went and picked up a selection of Sunday papers – ten issues of The Times, ten Telegraphs and so on - from outside a shop – he said we shouldn't take too many coz they are heavy and you could get nicked.

He had the unadulterated front to go round posh people's houses and flats, door-to-door, touting this new free newspaper deliver service – first one free; reverse psychology; place your next order now; croissant-type stuff. Only two people turned him away and one guy got angry. He raised £50 in 45 minutes and had orders placed for next week – classy.

# MANCHESTER

Alighting at Deansgate train station and walking down on to Whitworth Street West below, the adjacent **1** railway arches are regularly used as a shelter by the homeless.



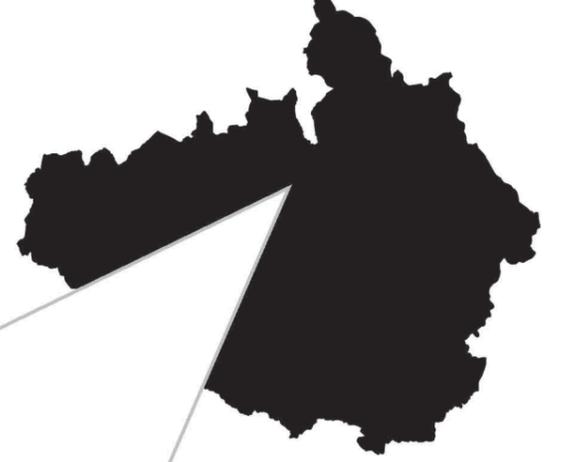
Moving away from the train station and along Deansgate, the **2** Alliance and Leicester bank is a regular space for begging. The new business district, **3** Spinningfields, was popular with beggars before its redevelopment; they have effectively been eradicated today.



The **11** alcoved doorways behind the Corn Exchange on occasion provide shelter from cold weather for rough sleepers



At the top-end of Market Street beyond Piccadilly Gardens the pavement leads to Piccadilly Station approach. At the junction of Piccadilly and Ducie Street is **12**. 111 Piccadilly where **13** regular beggars can be found at the foot of the buildings. Nervemeter can be bought here.



Turning left onto Ducie Street up toward the corner of Hilton Street is a ramp that leads **14** down to a pathway leading underneath the tower towards Minshull Street and the gay village. The path is concealed from public view and is a regular spot for male **15** prostitution and **16** rough sleeping.



Carrying up along Dolefield and walking left away from the Masonic Hall is an area by the Irwell called **4** Albert Bridge Gardens. People used to meet, drink and sleep here until the recent removal of plants, shrubs and trees exposed the area, largely eradicating drinkers and rough sleepers.



**5** The canopy that shelters shop fronts starting from Smithy Lane up to Southgate is also a frequent space for beggars and homeless persons.



A short distance further up the road at the junction of Deansgate and King Street is a regular area for beggars underneath the **6** House of Fraser canopy.



Where Canal Street meets with Princess Street there is a **17** path that leads off the pavement down onto the Rochdale Canal. Under the bridge, homeless people's bedding is **18** concealed within its structure.

Walking along the path towards Oxford Street the **19** canal is flanked on both sides by a defunct mill, office buildings and a car park. The St James' building forms part of a **20** shelter hanging over the canal, used by rough sleepers.

Between Cross Street and Deansgate is **7** St Anne's Square, a frequent spot for beggars where the Nervemeter can be bought. Walking on the left side of Cross Street (past the **8** spot of the 1996 IRA explosion) towards Exchange Square and the Print Works, the **9** canopy sheltering the pavement is a popular space for beggars and homeless persons seeking shelter.



Moving behind The Corn Exchange along Shambles Square is **10** Cathedral Gardens. The Cathedral's cloisters and tree-lined garden often provide shelter for rough sleepers.



Immediately to the right of the bridge is **22** All Saints Park: well-known for rough sleepers and drinkers and as a short-cut to Manchester's red light district by some prostitutes and their minders coming from the east-side of the city.



The **21** Mancunian Way is popular with a small group of homeless Polish and Russian men due to its large canopy covering the road. Nervemeter can be bought here.

# MORAL GEOGRAPHY

"The superficial inducement, the exotic, the picturesque has an effect only on the foreigner. To portray a city a native most have other deeper motives – motives of one who travels into the past instead of into the distance."

(Walter Benjamin)

"... we should do more to name the neglected spatialities of the city and to edit back into our accounts of urban space the 'strange maps' of city life ... the intermesh between flesh and stone, humans and non-humans, fixtures and flows, emotions and practices that characterise urban life."

(Cities: Re-imagining the Urban, A. Amin & N. Thrift, 2002)



"When you've been drinking for years around the East End you get to know by sight who the local people are. So you don't beg from them, only from strangers, people who you haven't seen around in the area before."

(Vagrancy, Alcoholism and Social Control, Pete Archard, 1979)

"Some street men, particularly those from mental hospitals, fill the void simply by walking. One sees them all over the city, in almost continual motion. Others simply sit."

(Time in the Streets, Harry Murray, 1984 in 'Human Organization' vol 43)



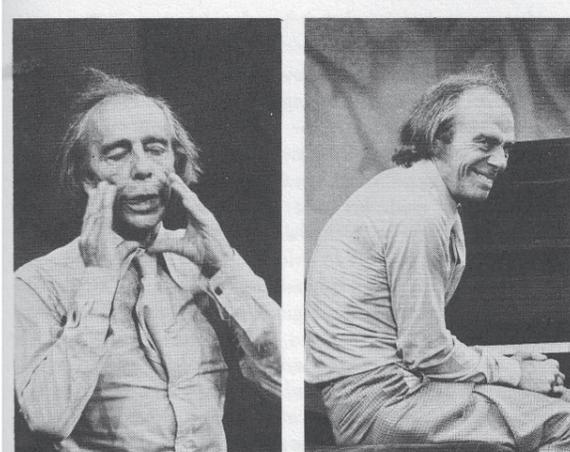
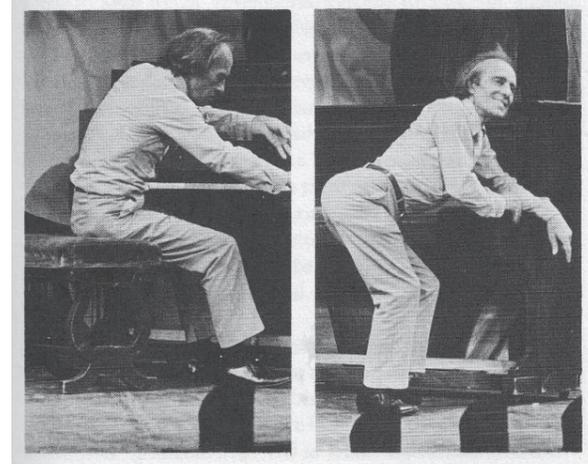
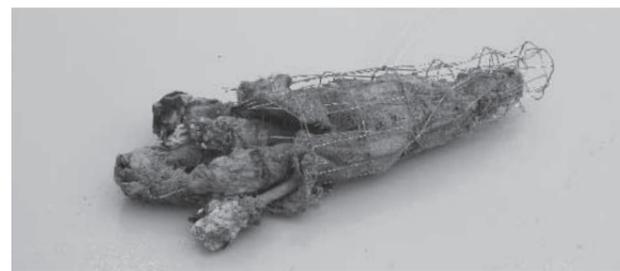
"Skid Row is a phenomena peculiar to The United States. It is that run down area in almost every American city where the homeless men can and do live. It is that collection of saloons, pawnshops, cheap restaurants, second hand shops all night movies, missions, flop houses and dilapidated hotels which cater specifically to the needs of the down-and-outer, the bum, the alcoholic, the drifter."

(Vagrancy, Alcoholism and Social Control, Pete Archard, 1979)



"Snead, a dope addict, slightly past middle-age, has been living for some time in the doorway of an unoccupied building. This doorway consists of a sort of vestibule and has plenty of room for a man to lie down. His only furniture is a broom and a box of broken glass. When he leaves he scatters the broken glass over the floor to keep others away. And when he returns he uses the broom to sweep up the glass."

(The Beggar, H.W. Gilmore, 1940)



"Shortly after a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous started holding meetings in a church near the Bowery in New York, a number of tramps congregated about the church during meetings taking advantage of the fact that members of AA are a 'soft touch' for a handout."

**(Men without property: the tramp's classification and use of urban space, James Duncan, Readings in Urban Analysis; perspectives on urban form and structure, Robert Lake ed., 1983)**



"You've got to know New York, its people, how to get around. I sleep in the subways nowadays. It works out fine ... You can't sleep there when an officer's on duty. That's from eight pm to four am. So I go there about ten minutes to four; sleep til noon, usually ... I like the Eighth Avenue line. Less stops. I sleep on one of the front or back cars; never the middle. Too many disturbances."

**(Skid Row: an Introduction to Disaffection, H.M. Bahr, 1973)**

"In Catholic countries, begging practices still evoke religious tradition in their posture (often kneeling, with head bowed) and their location (sometimes in church doorways)."

**(Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999)**



"In some urban libraries, the staff and the local bums may reach a tacit understanding that dozing is permissible as long as the dozer first draws out a book and props it up in front of his head."

**(Behaviour in public spaces: notes on the social organization of gatherings, Erving Goffman, 1963)**



"Drunks are also arrested in significant numbers before any large conventions, celebrations or fairs. This is done primarily to 'clean up' the area so it will not be necessarily offensive to visitors."

**(Skid Row as a Way of Life, S. Wallace, 1968)**

"The 'extermination' scenario is never far from the surface of the homeless experience ... constrained to exist in public spaces, the homeless are constant targets of regulation, criminalization, expulsion and erasure."

**(Patterns of Exclusion, Randall Amster, 2003)**

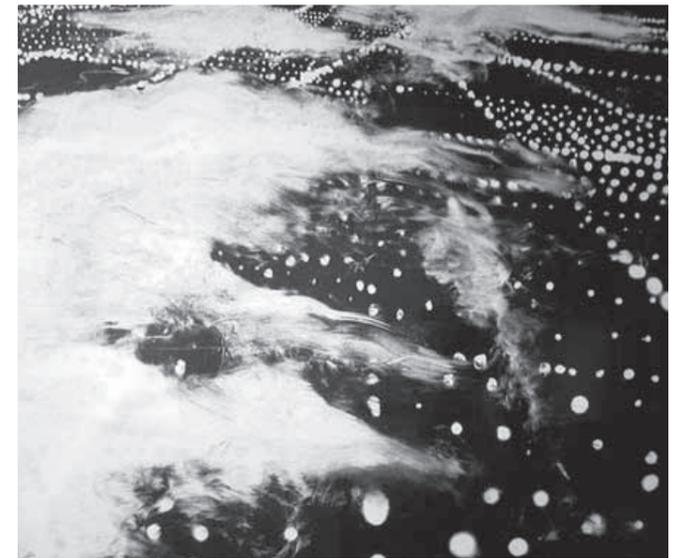


"In fact, in the British context there is ample evidence of transatlantic policy transfer in the homelessness field. Thus, just as the nineteenth century saw the export of anti-vagrancy legislation from Britain to the United States, for example, so the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries saw the importation into Britain from the USA of a number of technologies and techniques designed to 'manage' a problematic 'street culture' - the primary subjects of which even if not always the originally intended targets, have been street homeless people. Such technologies include, but are not restricted to, variations of zero tolerance policing, making begging a 'recordable offence', the 'designing out' of certain street activities, the introduction of 'diverted giving schemes' and the introduction of Designated Public Places Orders (to restrict consumption of alcohol in public places) and of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders."

**(Revanchist sanitization or coercive care? the use of enforcement to combat begging, street drinking and rough sleeping in England, S. Johnsen & S. Fitzpatrick, 2010, Urban Studies, 47)**

"... it is illegal not to own the right of access to some private place. Every person who wanders about without access to a private place to sleep, who can show no means of support, shall be deemed a tramp and shall be subject to imprisonment."

**(Men without property: the tramp's classification and use of urban space, James Duncan, Readings in Urban Analysis; perspectives on urban form and structure, Robert Lake ed., 1983)**



"Tramps have a certain working relationship with homosexuals who exchange food, shelter, a chance to get cleaned up, clothes and occasionally money, for sexual relations. A third party to this relationship is often the police who tolerate such activity if it remains unobtrusive. Tramps whistle to get the attention of homosexuals who are 'cruising' the park."

**(Waiting for Nothing, T. Kromer, 1935)**



"... homeless people in early 1990s Los Angeles were increasingly disciplined by policies of exclusion and containment ... including more vigorous policing and the deployment of defensive city architecture (such as sprinkler systems used to repel rough sleepers and panhandlers as well as to nourish vegetation). As a result Los Angeles homeless were apparently increasingly hemmed into a shrinking skid row, or reduced to an existence of urban Bedouins - wandering fugitives fleeing from official policing and culturally sadistic repression."

**(Cities of Quartz, Mike Davies, 1990)**



*"The powerful are now able to insulate themselves in hermetically sealed enclaves, where gated communities and sophisticated modes of surveillance are the order of the day ... in the closely surveilled spaces of leisure and mass consumption malls and in their suburban housing estates. Concurrently, the rich and powerful can decant and steer the poor into clearly demarcated zones in the city, where implicit and explicit forms of social and bodily control keep them in place."*

**(The making of "glocal" urban modernities: exploring the cracks in the mirror, E. Swyngedouw & M. Kaika, 2003, Art-e-Fact, 4)**

"It's important not to just take someone from one area and dump them in another, but to make sure the facilities are there so that people can be dealt with properly, given a roof over their heads. You wouldn't say it's satisfactory to leave them where they are."

**(Tony Blair being interviewed about homelessness, The Big Issue, January 1997)**



"I go there, establish my PO Box and storage, and I've already been hired by Emporium Body Work, not far from the shelter ... I stay there until I can't stand it any more, I'm working, but I'm not getting enough sleep, it's a place popular with people who have no desire to work, and a lot of the staff, all the staff, are felons and literally couldn't get jobs anywhere else..." Ellie's institutionalized cycling combines a calculated strategy to avoid literal homelessness ... the public sector costs of institutionalized cycling is an increasingly prominent issue in large US cities, as a recent article in the New York Times attests.

'Homelessness does not come cheap'. Based on records for eight city and state agencies [within New York City], it costs \$90,000 in public money for a mentally ill person to be homeless in the city for a year, including emergency medical care and jail costs.' (Bernstein, 2002, p29)

Might it not be more fiscally sound for governments simply to provide affordable housing?"

**(Homeless mobility, institutional settings, and the new poverty management, Geoffrey De Verteuil, 2003, Environment and Planning)**



"The benign neglect of the 'other half' ... has been superseded by a more active viciousness that attempts to criminalise a whole range of 'behaviour' individually defined, and to blame the failure of post-1968 urban policy on the population it was supposed to assist."

**(The New Urban Frontier, Neil Smith, 1996)**

*"... we hope we have avoided the all too common tendency in some recent writings on homelessness to present homeless people as passive victims of forces beyond their control and/or as the standard bearers of resistance to a revanchist politics; that is, as convenient ciphers around which to build a wider critique of gentrification, public space and so on."*

**(Complexity not collapse: recasting the geographies of homelessness in a 'punitive' age, Geoffrey De Verteuil & Jon May, Progress in Human Geography, 2001, 33, 5)**



"From 1947 to around the mid-1970s British welfare was characterised by a system of government: an epoch when governing was basically regarded as one-way traffic from those governing to those governed, with the majority of welfare service providers provided directly by the state. From about the mid-1970s, however, a shift towards a system of governance became apparent, as 'the number of actors in the policy arena multiplied, the boundaries between the public and private sector ... blurred and central government's command over a more complex policy process receded."

**Governance and Public Policy in the United Kingdom, D. Richards & M.J. Smith, 2002)**



"... the providers of night shelter and hostel accommodation sought to respond to the needs of new client groups, the shift towards smaller units offering single rooms and increased levels of support rather than basic dormitory style arrangements resulted in a steady decline in the total number of emergency beds available to homeless people across Britain and a dramatic rise in levels of homelessness. Indeed by summer of 1990 the sight of some 3000 people sleeping rough in central London provided the British public with a potent symbol of the costs of Thatcherism and, in combination with that summer's pool tax riots, a serious legitimisation crisis for the government."

**(Local governance, the crisis of Fordism and the changing geographies of regulation, M. Goodwin & J. Painter, 1996, Transactions, 21, Institute of British Geographers)**



“The Rough Sleepers Initiative’, launched in June 1990 and managed by the then Department of Environment with an initial budget of £15m rising to £179m through phases two and three (1993-9) ... enabled central government to point to a visible response to the problems of street homelessness (namely the increased provisions of emergency accommodation), without challenging the position of single homeless people more generally as a residual group within the British welfare system – denied the same rights to social housing afforded families.”

**(Single Homelessness: an Overview of Research in Britain, S. Fitzpatrick, 2000)**



“Following the failure of phase 1 of the Rough Sleepers Initiative to significantly reduce the levels of rough sleeping in key areas of central London, for example, in August 1991 the Department of Environment called upon Britain’s homeless charities to work with the Metropolitan Police to clear what they termed a ‘hard core’ of rough sleepers from a number of the capital’s ‘black spots’. When these requests were turned down, the police embarked upon clearance campaigns of their own, increasing the number of people arrested under the power of Britain’s Vagrancy Act from 192 in 1991 to 1445 in 1992 in central London alone.

**(The Independent, 1992)**



“In September [1994] the then secretary to the Treasury, Peter Lilly, called for the suspension of benefit payments to people selling the street newspaper, *The Big Issue*.”

**(Swept up Lives: Re-envisioning the Homeless City, Paul Cloke, Jon May, Sarah Johnsen, 2010)**



“I think we’ve been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it’s the government’s job to cope with it. ‘I have a problem, I’ll get a grant.’ ‘I’m homeless, the government must house me.’ They’re casting their problems on society. And you know, there is no such thing as society.”

**(Margaret Thatcher, Woman’s Own Magazine, 3, October, 1987)**

“By means of the notion of governmentality, the neo-liberal agenda for the withdrawal of the state can be deciphered as a technique for government ... Neoliberalism encourages individuals to give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form ... the possibility of actively participating in the solution of specific matters and problems which had hitherto been the domain of socialised state agencies specifically empowered to undertake such tasks.”

**(The birth of bio-politics - Michel Foucault’s lecture at the college de France on neo-liberal governmentality, 1975-76, T. Lemke, Economy and Science, 30)**

“One of the most notable aspects of the ‘Change a Life’ campaign was the limited criticism it attracted from those working in the field. Certainly, where similar moves by the previous Conservative government had quickly attracted the wrath of Britain’s homelessness pressure groups, ‘Change a Life’ generated little overt criticism from organisations that seemed loath to publicly criticise the Rough Sleepers Unit lest they jeopardise their ability to influence government thinking on forthcoming legislation: notably the then forthcoming Homelessness Act.”

**(Interview with Shelter, 2002)**



I Am a pcso for the British Transport Police on Monday the 14th I saw a male selling your magazines he had a laminated A4 size piece of paper typed on it was NERVEMETER MAGAZINE minimum donation £2 all money stays with the vendor the Nevermeter takes an alternative view of art and culture this issue is about mental health art and the anti-psychiatry movement. I spoke to this male and asked him if he had any ID to say that he was permitted to sell the magazine like the BIG ISSUE vendor’s carry, he told me that they are not given them they are just given the magazines and poster. On attending a homeless persons meeting on Thursday a MET officer said that he came across another male who was selling the magazine and had the same poster he also never had an ID badge. Could you please enlighten us about the magazine, and how your vendors show the public that they are legal vendors of the magazine.

Kind Regards  
Kay PLUMMER

**PC 6760**

“Technologies of citizenship [are defined as] ... the multiple techniques of self-esteem, of empowerment and the consultation and registration that are used in activities as diverse as community development, social and environmental impact assessment, health promotion campaigns, teaching at all levels, community policing, the combating of various kinds of dependency and so on.”

**(Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society, M. Dean 1999)**

“What we observe today is not a diminishment or reduction of state sovereignty and planning capabilities, but a displacement from formal to informal techniques of government and the appearance of new actors on the scene of government (e.g NGOs).”

**(Governance Innovation and the Citizen: the Janus face of Governance-beyond-the-state, Erik Swyngedouw, Urban Studies, vol 42, 11, 2005)**



“Some such outsider organisations are often subjectivised as deviant and unprofessional because their activities involve serving homeless people on the streets, and therefore effectively oppose government-led orthodoxies geared towards removing homeless people from sight. Actually existing neoliberalism, then, works in parallel to enact ethical codes and subjectivities of welfare for compliant insiders while imposing more punitive codes of deviancy on in-compliant outsiders.”

**(Governance Innovation and the Citizen: the Janus face of Governance-beyond-the-state, E. Swyngedouw, 2005)**



# DIVERTED GIVING

"To the extent that money, with its colourlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values it becomes the frightful leveller – it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way that is beyond repair. They all float with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money."

(The Philosophy of Money, George Simmel, 1907)

## Moving Beggars From Streets

*AUTHORITIES in Winchester are re-launching a scheme to help rid beggars from the streets of the city centre. Police are working with partners to re-launch the 'Diverted Giving' initiative in Winchester, which encourages people to give to homeless charities, rather than directly to beggars. Together with Winchester City Centre Partnership, they are urging residents, workers and visitors to place their money into special red boxes placed across the city centre, the donations from which are specifically targeted to help those genuinely in need across Winchester.*  
 Major Teresa Harris, officer in charge of the Salvation Army in Winchester, said: "It's a great scheme and it'll be a great help to us - I think it's going to make sure the money goes where it needs to go."

This is the introduction from a story in the Hampshire Chronicle of August 2008. The scheme being re-launched in the story was first rolled out in Winchester in the late 1990s. The early stages of Winchester's "Diverted Giving" programme became the subject of an essay by Joe Hermer, a sociology professor from the University of Toronto, who specialises in criminology and social exclusion. We have provided a shortened version of Professor Hermer's original article\*, and, following on from that, we have added a brief update from him on diverted giving schemes.

In the summer of 1995 local officials and traders had become alarmed at the number and conduct of winos and drunks in the centre of Winchester. By 1997 this concern coincided with the opening of a new Tesco supermarket on the outskirts of town. Local traders and town officials decided to form a "City Centre Forum Group", which immediately turned its attention to getting rid of beggars in order to make the central pedestrian area more attractive.

The governance scenario can be briefly stated as this: "community comes together to rejuvenate declining downtown in the face of suburban super-mall competition – a routine scenario in urban regulation".

But instead of mounting a campaign to simply sweep the streets of undesirables, city officials – the police, traders, council members – turned their attention to "the problem of public compassion and tolerance, the giving habits of pedestrians". This exceptional example of begging governance demonstrates how officials attempted to intervene in the giving conduct of the pedestrian public through a specific visualisation of compassion and tolerance.

The Diverted Giving scheme would work in two ways. Deserving beggars who wanted food or a bed would no longer have to beg since they could avail themselves of the social services, which would be supported by income taken from collection boxes. Drunken aggressive beggars would simply move on and find another city that was a soft touch. Police promised "increased levels of support", i.e. those left on the street begging could be judged as unworthy and moved on. The very first posters for the scheme, entitled "City Centre Begging" stated:

"You are asked not to give money to beggars. If you have sympathy for these people make sure your donations go where you can be SURE that it will help."

Two charitable organisations were to be supported by the scheme: a night shelter and the Trinity Day Centre. The scheme was classed as an experiment, so initial start-up costs were kept low – five wooden boxes cost £20 a piece. The campaign was launched at the High Street Marks & Spencer.

The programme was immediately heralded as a great financial success with "people leaving notes rather than coins", and "boxes overflowing with money". A story appeared in the Hampshire Chronicle a week later entitled, "Shoppers' Seasonal Generosity", reporting that WHSmith had raised £100 in first two days of the scheme.

The first re-launch of the scheme took place in summer 1996. It was overseen by the "diverted giving committee", composed of the Trinity Day Shelter manager, city tourism officer, security officer for M&S and an officer from the planning department. The plan was for 15 boxes in shops and 24 external boxes. The aim was to raise £10,000 per year – an outrageously optimistic goal. A revamped poster would act to construct an aesthetic of public compassion and social responsibility. The task of redesigning the poster was given to the police inspector. Stereotyped images of tramps sitting down begging amid bottles, sleeping bags and a dog were deemed inappropriate. An image of hands reaching out to "help" was agreed upon; some coins were later added to make clear the idea of giving. The result was an image of direct exchange between two human hands, precisely the conduct that the programme was attempting to banish. The "City Centre Begging" title of the first poster was replaced with the phrase "Make it Count".



**CITY CENTRE BEGGING**

**WINCHESTER**

**MAKE IT COUNT**

By donating to the "MAKE IT COUNT" scheme you can be sure that anything you give will help.

Any money collected will be donated to local charities committed to providing direct support, accommodation and food.

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR DONATION HERE**

SUPPORTED BY WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL & WINCHESTER CITY CENTRE MANAGEMENT STEERING GROUP.

\*The article, "Policing Compassion: 'diverted giving' on the Winchester High Street, Joe Hermer, appeared in Begging Questions: street level economic activity and social policy failure, Hartley Dean ed., 1999



Next it was decided that new boxes were needed that were bigger and more secure. A security contractor called Tuskguard delivered 15 cylindrical steel boxes at a cost of £1970. This cost, along with the poster campaign was paid for by donations of £2000 from Hampshire Constabulary and £500 from M&S. Tuskguard installed boxes in M&S, Boots, McDonalds, WHSmith and Sainsbury's. The committee could only find one new box location leaving nine paid for boxes to be stored in the council basement.

How much money did the programme raise? Did money given to the programme go to those "in most need", as city officials claimed? In fact the council made no effort to actually monitor how the boxes were administered or how the charities spent the money. The council did make authoritative statements about the financial success of the scheme, however, both to the media and other councils. Some 18 months into the scheme the council had not collected any information on the amount each location was depositing. Only after the author made repeated requests to the city for information did the estates officer circulate a form asking for amounts deposited by individual store managers.

While it was presented ostensibly as a public scheme, the programme operated as a private charity: a loosely coordinated series of private charity boxes under control of retailers. Each store location had the responsibility of emptying their box, counting the money, recording the amount in a paying book and depositing money into an account shared by the treasurers of each charity. Because boxes were inside the private spaces of shops, they were exempt from public charity law.

It appeared that officials consistently overestimated the actual amount being raised by the boxes, both in public statements and private communications with other cities interested in the scheme. For example officials stated the scheme raised £500 per month, when in actual fact it averaged £258 per month in first six months, falling to £110 in last six months of 1997.

The two charities being assisted recorded negligible contribution increases. In 1996-97 the scheme accounted for 1.34% of the operating budget of the night shelter and 1.77% of the Trinity Day Centre, according to the annual reports of these organisations – it amounted to a "drop in the ocean", the night shelter manager stated in an interview.

Both shelter managers reported that shortly after the programme started individuals showed up at their centres asking for free or reduced services. The night shelter manager reported that users routinely asked if the nightly fee could be waived as the centre had received money from the diverted giving scheme. The day centre manager who kept a reserve fund to dole out money to people in emergencies found himself constantly having to say "no" to users asking for little bits of cash. They would say, "we just read in the chronicle you got £2000 from begging boxes, what have you done with the money?"

In the end the day centre decided to reduce the price of meals from 50p to 25p so that they had something to tell the users. The Trinity Day Centre insisted on having its name removed from the boxes for the re-launch of the scheme.

City officials cited a survey done by the tourism department showing how the scheme had worked. Upon close examination this survey gauged people's opinion about their safety, rather than addressing the actual absence or presence of people begging in the city centre. There is no evidence to suggest the scheme decreased the number of people begging.

The police followed a more robust "moving on" of begging types in downtown Winchester. The programme implicitly gave the police a greater moral authority to swoop down hard on those who were begging. The effect was to displace those begging from city centre to a park south of the city centre called Andover Park.

In an interview one city official conceded that to "shift our problem somewhere else ... might have to be a measurable success". Operation Diverted Giving can be understood as a private form of policing, where retailers donate money collected from their customers under the guise of public charity, and transfer it to two charities, which were seen to deal with the homeless problem in Winchester. It was aligned with the interests of city officials, retailers and the police, to target undesirables and configure public compassion in a way that made the moving on of beggars acceptable to the pedestrian conscience.

Professor Hermer commented: "First, while the first few diverted or alternative giving schemes had in part a social welfare agenda in helping people begging -even if there is not proof whatsoever that they did - the rationale behind diverted giving hardened into a more punitive direction that labelled all people begging, and thus all visibly homeless people, as drug addicted, anti-social threats. This drift can be characterized as a further effort to criminalize poor people at a time of increasing social inequality.

"Secondly, almost all diverted giving schemes are not registered as official charities, they are not accountable to charity law, and city councils generally do not actually examine how the funds are actually used. Many diverted giving schemes need to be subsidized by local councils, constabularies, and businesses in order to run. While many diverted giving schemes state that you will 'make every penny count' by giving to a box, in most cases councils don't have a clue if the money is used efficiently or is helpful to those begging.

"Thirdly, there is absolutely NO empirical evidence that diverted giving schemes change the giving patterns of the public, both in terms of giving more or less to those begging."

Joe Hermer's book, "Policing Compassion: Begging, Law and Power in Public Spaces" will be out later this year.



# LONDON'S EAST END

## Homerton Station

I get up in the morning and I've always got no money. I head to outside Homerton station which is nearby and it's a good spot to ham and egg, so far I've not been moved on from there. I get a few quid.



## Big Tesco, Mare Street

I generally go to the big Tesco car park at Mare Street. You can do the trolleys there: ask people that are returning a trolley for a pound deposit you ask them for price of a cup of tea and often, especially if they are in a bit of a hurry, they will just give you the trolley and you collect the pound. I might do this until I've got enough to score, provided I don't get moved on by security.

If I do get moved on from there – which can easily happen.



## Hackney Central Station

I head to Hackney central station and beg there.



## London Fields

If its summer and there are lots of people out on London Fields having barbecues and stuff I might go round there begging the park.

## Behind Hackney Town Hall

Also behind Hackney Town Hall people are coming and going all the time; I head to Sylvester road, like a little lane off Mare Street where lots of people work and it's not too visible. Hopefully by about 4pm I'll have got enough to score. I hit the toilets at the back of the town hall and sort myself out and I then I head to the West End.



## White Lion Street, Islington

Also, I sometimes do a street in Islington called White Lion Street, which is one way and often you get a lot of black cabbies lined up there. I start at the back and ask them for enough for a cup of tea – 60p. Cabbies are from here and they are often sympathetic – I have been given a quid or sometimes two by each cab in a line, sometimes five or six of them. It's a good one if you are feeling a bit rough and don't want to walk around too much. In my experience as a beggar black cabbies are good to us.



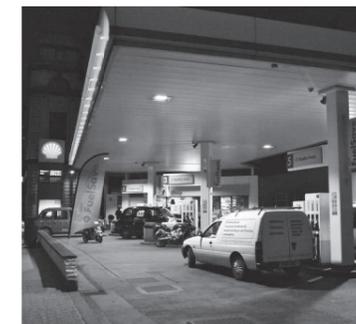
## Texaco garage, Shoreditch High Street

This is the best place right here, coz the people round here are friendly. I have regulars that know me. Me and the other Jason, we share this spot - he does the daytime and I take over the shift at six and do the night. The only trouble we get here is the police occasionally.



## City Road Texaco garage

If I wasn't here (Shoreditch) I'd do the garage at City Road. But the trouble with that is the police station is nearby and you can get moved on a lot.



## Old Street Station/Old Street roundabout Shell garage

No there are so many beggars down there now, full up it is - it's a hot spot. There are about ten beggars there at any one time. A lot of people sleep down there as well. They have even got a private security firm there now just for the beggars.

If I was down there I'd do the Shell garage at the roundabout. Garages are the best places; there is constant traffic day and night - you can't lose.



## Liverpool Street Station and the City?

No not the city. It's total zero tolerance down there. The bridge there (Shoreditch High Street/ Shoreditch Station) is the border. This here is Tower Hamlets - that there is the city; different police down there.

## Shoreditch High St Tesco/Cashpoint

There's about eight guys who share that spot. I sometimes do it if it's free and the other Jason is at this spot.

# “IT’S A MIXTURE ISN’T IT, OF EMOTIONS.”

“Well I think years ago people didn’t have money and they made do ... They didn’t ask for all the benefits that people are getting now ... it’s lack of pride I think.”  
[woman 30s]



“I was thinking why they sit down and maybe it is because if they came to you, you might find it threatening so maybe they sit down to make you feel superior.”  
[woman 30s]

“I think a while ago beggars used to actually do things like busk and stuff and get their money but now they just sit there, and obviously they look miserable, but they just sit there.”  
[woman 40s]



“I think genuine people wouldn’t talk, they would just sit and not say anything with their head down.”  
[woman 40s]

“Em ... because I think they have a very low opinion of themselves, they don’t have any self-esteem to go and get a job and they are just absolutely desperate. Or they could be just very lazy, I don’t know and I do think that it has got a lot to do with habits as well as you know maybe drugs or maybe drink or I dunno.”  
[woman 20s]

“I just normally judge on the face ... I am more likely to give if it’s a nice, innocent face.”  
[man 20s]



“My reason for not giving to charity is ‘cos the money doesn’t go to the people who need help ... I give to them [beggars] they need help so they are using it.”  
[woman 30s]



“... we know that a lot of people who sell ‘The Big Issue’ are homeless ...”  
[woman 40s]



“...it’s like even with people’s posture, someone that sits upright or walks really upright rather than someone who slouches you tend to trust the one that’s upright ... I would tend to go for the person who is more upright.”  
[woman 20s]



“I just get the impression that it is more of a lifestyle these days than it used to be ... I really don’t believe that a lot of people begging are real cases. Yeah they may be out of a job but it might be their choice to beg because they can make more money doing that. I don’t believe they are all genuine homeless or have fallen on hard times ... I equate real begging with being desperate, having no choice but to do it.”  
[man 30s]

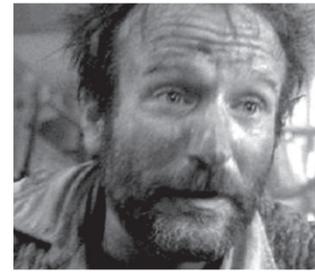
“There is a lot of people begging in this vicinity who in a lot of people’s views are not really homeless.”  
[man 20s]



“I will cross the street to avoid someone begging, to stop me feeling bad when I walk past. It’s about yourself though, you feel bad and you can imagine how they feel.”  
[woman 20s]



“Probably the older gentleman, if you can call them that, the one that’s probably weather beaten and you can see that he’s a tramp. If anything I would probably give to him.”  
[man 40s]



“No, not to beggars. I don’t mind, like, charities like the Salvation Army or whatever and people are actually gonna use the money for what they say they’re gonna use the money for.”  
[woman 30s]



“I think it is a bit of both. I think it is more that they should help themselves rather than depend on the government and all that to help them, but I think that the government should take a look and see all the people who are begging and try to do something to help them out. Because maybe if they gave them help in the end it would be alright – definitely a bit of both.”  
[woman 20s]

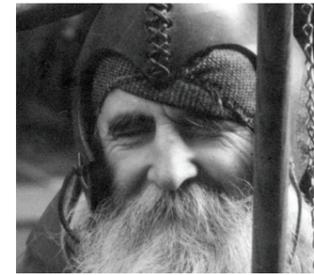
“Well you’ve only got to look at them to see. I think if you look into their eyes you can tell.”  
[man, 20s]



“...an old chap, everyone knows who he is, and I’ve gave money to him ... but I wouldn’t say that I gave money to the younger ones ‘cos you feel as if they are not doing anything.”  
[woman 30s]



“If they are putting that money to use for buying like clothes or buying food or something that is going to be of benefit to them. I mean I’m not saying that they are not entitled to a drink or a cigarette but that is maybe sort of second to, you would sort of think that they would need to do something more important first of all.”  
[man 20s]



“... the main difference is that you are getting something [The Big Issue] for it ... its selling, they are accountable for the stock so it’s definitely not begging ... people would be more open to give money if they are getting something for it.”  
[man 20s]



“I do tend to feel genuinely sorry for most of them, being in a position where they have to do that, so I don’t have a problem with people asking for it ... I feel sympathetic towards them ... I have occasionally ignored them. If you’re in a busy street and you feel a bit conscious of people around you and yeah to be honest I have ignored them on occasion ... your eyes go down ... I feel guilty.”  
[woman 30s]

# THE SIGN OF LEO

"In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there..."  
**(Theory of the *Dérive*, Guy Debord, 1958)**

We refer here to the concept known as psychogeography, but only obliquely. We are not talking about swimming in crowds, or getting lost in an unknown city, or being apprehended by the ghosts of broad daylight, or any of the range of bourgeois activities that fall under that woolly umbrella.

Here we are concerned with an excluded, unclassed, "alterior" experience of urbanism. When the city is relentlessly imposed on you, and you have nowhere else to go, your choice is either to drift around or stay put.

To illustrate this point we have chosen to write about one of Eric Rohmer's early films, "The Sign of Leo". It's a cautionary tale about a rather indolent bohemian-type called Pierre, who becomes homeless thanks to a series of unfortunate events. All his friends and acquaintances depart for the summer with the sudden onset of a heat wave and he is left to drift around the boulevards of Paris – the spiritual home of flaneurism. First his clothes, then his self-respect and eventually his sanity, begin to fall apart.

Pierre is broken by increments: a metro ticket he has saved disappears from his pocket somehow; his landlord keeps his clothes and he spills oil from a tin of sardines down his one pair of trousers; the sole of one of his shoes comes away and he is forced to tie it in place with a piece of string.

He trudges endless streets, from *arrondissement* to out-lying *arrondissement* looking for people he once knew, for a place to stay for a while. But nothing avails him of the city's sweltering stone carapace. He stares at people's picnic lunches, getting hungrier. He has no knowledge of how to survive and after trying to steal food from a market he gets a beating. He starts talking to himself and mimicking passersby as they chatter to one another. He beats the brickwork with his fists; he stands on the bank of the river contemplating drowning himself.

Rohmer pulls outwards and upwards to give a google-map-view of the city and the Seine snaking through it. Pierre has come agonisingly close to bumping into friends who could help him, but not quite. The city is too vast and intricate and he is lost within it's endless vicissitudes.

Losing oneself in the city, especially in Paris, was the aimless goal of the archetypal flaneur. We think of Walter Benjamin, the exiled intellectual-extraordinaire taking hashish with breakfast and, still full of dreams, drifting through unreal, labyrinthine passageways where he would focus on small objets d'art: his freewheeling philosophical gnosis multiplying to reach near messianic proportion – completely arcane and totally useless.

Most city dwellers would feel a vague familiarity with Charles Baudelaire's lamenting, poetic "love at last sight" - the phrase he coined to describe the fleeting, though seemingly heartfelt attraction, he experienced again and again as he traveled across Paris. The endless sense of the city's possibility also appears in the writings of Gerard de Nerval: a pouring stream of manic consciousness, as he regards the bewildering spectacle of a Parisian night market.

However, The Sign of Leo shows us only a disturbing, maladroit version of flaneurism. The hero, too intoxicated by cheap wine to walk any more, is finally pushed along in an old pram by a more experienced tramp he has fallen in with. These two gallants are like something from Samuel Beckett's imagination. Waiters laugh as they spray them from tonic siphons to stop them begging the tables at the cafes along the left bank, places where Pierre used to meet with his bohemian friends.



# LITERARY VAGRANTS: THE ANGLO-AMERICAN DIFFERENCE



"The voices of the wretched, the miserable and the alienated, weak and plaintive, have never found citizenship in the beautiful palace that is literary history."

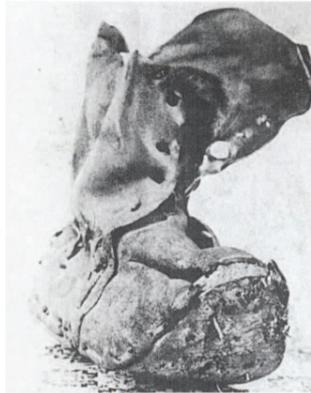
**(The Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe, Piero Camporesi, 1980)**

"... they who live  
Sheltered, and flourish in a little grove  
Of their own kindred;--all behold in him  
A silent monitor, which on their minds  
Must needs impress a transitory thought  
Of self-congratulation, to the heart  
Of each recalling his peculiar boons,  
His charters and exemptions;"

**(The Old Cumberland Beggar, William Wordsworth, 1798)**

"Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you, however long but it stretches  
and waits for you,"

**(Song of the Open Road, Walt Whitman, 1856)**



"... ill-doing . . . . or loss or lack of money . . . . or depressions or exaltations,  
They come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself."

**(Song of Myself, Walt Whitman, 1855)**

"Jeff Davis, (founder of the International Itinerant Migratory Workers' Union), sometimes known as "King of the Hoboes", claimed 1000,000 members in 1937 in addition to 40,000 hobo-ettes."

**(Hobo Hegemony, Literary Digest, CXXIII, 10 April, 1937)**



"Every paper you pick up is full of them. Tramp, tramp, TRAMP, from one end of the paper to the other. There is not a chicken purloined off a roost; a man killed; a house fired; a train ditched; virtue outraged; vice embellished; or deviltry of any kind perpetuated, but this omnipresent scape-goat of the nineteenth century appears to be at the bottom of it all. Now I want to know what a tramp is."

**(A Tight Squeeze: The Adventures of a Gentleman who, on a Wager of Ten Thousand Dollars, Undertook to go from New York to New Orleans in Three Weeks Without Money, as a Professional Tramp, George M. Baker, 1897)**



"I once tramped with fistie Jack. He had a malformed left hand. This man had once, in his prime, dug 40 bags of potatoes in a day, so no man could call him a loafer ... I offered to pay for a hotel for him for the night. He refused, saying he had not slept in a bed with sheets for 40 years."

**(Roughnecks, Rollingstones and Rouseabouts: an anthology of early swagger literature, John A. Lee, 1977)**

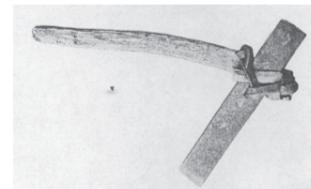


"He possessed more strength and activity than a careless observer might have supposed. In face he was open of expression and handsome in features ... His clothes were faded and patched, and were covered in dust as if he had walked far along dusty roads. Over his shoulder was a small bundle, which was supported on the end of a slender stick. His appearance might have been christened, 'The young tramp's first entrance into city life.' Yet his face was not that of a confirmed tramp."

**(Honest Harry: or, the Country Boy Adrift in the City, Charles Morris, 1882)**

"He sought a large ready-made clothing establishment on Fulton Street, and obtained a respectable-looking suit, which quite improved his appearance. He regarded his reflection in a long mirror with considerable satisfaction. He felt that he would now be taken for a respectable citizen, and that in discarding his old dress he had removed all vestiges of the tramp. In this, however, he was not wholly right. His face and general expression he could not change. A careful observer could read in them something of the life he had led."

**(Tony the Hero: a Brave Boy's Adventure with a Tramp, Horatio Alger, 1890)**



"On an elevated piece of ground ... surrounded by a large swamp ... and in turn encircled by a forest of considerable extent, were assembled some fifteen or twenty tramps. A bright fire was burning, which threw a vivid glare upward upon the dark green foliage of the trees, and brought into bold relief their trunks for a circle of twenty yards. Beyond this all was darkness, weird and intense."

**(The Man who Tramps: a Story of Today, Lee Harris, 1877)**



"Used to hobo a right smart. Back in the thirties. They wasn't no work I don't care what you could do. I was ridin through the mountains one night, state of Colorado. Dead of winter it was and bitter cold. I had just a smidgin of tobacco, bout enough for one or two smokes. I was in one of them old slatsided cars and I'd been up and down it like a dog trying to find some place where the wind wouldn't blow. Directly I scrunched up in a corner and rolled me a smoke and lit it and threwed the match down. Well, they was some sort of stuff on the floor like tinder and it caught fire. I jumped up and stomped on it but it aint done nothing but burn faster. Wasn't two minutes before the whole car was afire. I ran to the door and got it open and we was goin up this grade through the mountains in the snow with the moon on it and it was just blue lookin and dead quiet out there and them big old black pine trees going by. I jumped for it and lit in a snow bank and what I'm goin to tell you you'll think peculiar but it's the god's truth. That was in nineteen and thirty-one and if I live to be a hunnerd year old I don't think I'll ever see anything as pretty as that train on fire goin up that mountain and them flames lightin up the snow and the trees and the night."

**(Suttree, Cormack McCarthy, 1980)**

"Tramps are often called hoboes or bums, but although all three are migrants, they are not the same thing ... a hobo works and wanders, a tramp dreams and wanders, and a bum drinks and wanders."

**(Tramps and Hoboes, E.L. Baily, Forum XXVI, 217, October, 1898)**



" ... most significant of all he has lived. That is the point! He has not starved to death. Not only has he been care-free and happy, but he has lived. And from the knowledge that he has idled and is still alive, he achieves a new outlook on life."

**(Jack London American Rebel, Philip Foner ed., 1947)**

" ... thumb moves in a small arc when a car tears hissing past. Eyes seek the driver's eyes. A hundred miles down the road. Head swims, belly tightens, wants crawl over his skin like ants: went to school, books said opportunity, ads promised speed, own your home, shine bigger than your neighbour, the radiocrooner whispered girls, ghosts of platinum girls coaxed from the screen, millions in winnings were chalked up on the boards in the offices, paychecks were for hands willing to work, the cleared desk of an executive with three telephones on it; waits with swimming head, needs knot the belly, idle hands numb, beside the speeding traffic. A hundred miles down the road."

**(The Big Money, John Dos Passos, 1936)**



"I counted minutes and subtracted miles. Just ahead, over the rolling wheatfields all golden beneath the distant snows of Estes, I'd be seeing old Denver at last. I pictured myself in a Denver bar that night, with all the gang, and in their eyes I would be strange and ragged and like the Prophet who has walked across the land to bring the dark Word, and the only Word I had was 'Wow!'"

**(On the Road, Jack Kerouac, 1957)**

"The only alternative to sleeping out, hopping freights and doing what I wanted, I saw in a vision would be to just sit with a hundred other patients in front of a nice television set in a madhouse, where we could be 'supervised'."

**(The Dharma Bums, Jack Kerouac, 1962)**

"But hey, look down there in the night thar, hup, hup, a buncha old bums by a fire by the rail, damn me. He almost slowed down. 'You see, I never know whether my father's there or not.' There were some figures by the tracks, reeling in front of a wood pile. 'I never know whether to ask. He might be anywhere.' We drove on. Somewhere behind us or in front of us in the huge night his father lay drunk under a bush and no doubt about it – spittle on his chin, water on his pants, molasses in his ears, scabs on his nose, maybe blood in his hair and the moon shining down on him."

**(On the Road, Jack Kerouac, 1957)**



"Watt wore, on his feet, a boot, brown in colour, and a shoe, happily of a brownish colour also. This boot Watt had bought, for eight pence, from a one-legged man who, having lost his leg, and a fortiori his foot, in an accident, was happy to realise, on his discharge from hospital, for such a sum, his unique remaining marketable asset. He little suspected that he owed this good fortune to Watt's having found, some days before, on the sea-shore, the shoe, stiff with brine, but otherwise shipshape ...

In this boot, a twelve, and in this shoe, a ten, Watt, whose size was eleven, suffered, if not agony, at least pain, with his feet, of which each would willingly have changed places with each other, if only for a moment.

By wearing, on the foot that was too small, not the one sock of his pair of socks, but both, and on the foot that was too large, not the other, but none, Watt strove in vain to correct this asymmetry.

**(Watt, Samuel Beckett, 1953)**



"Who may tell the tale of the old man? weigh absence in a scale? mete want with a span? the sum assess of the world's woes? nothingness in words enclose?"

**(Watt, [Addenda] Samuel Beckett, 1953)**



"It's a decade of crack and homelessness. It's the decade of the tunnels ... People've been down and out since the beginning of time, but we's the first to actually live in the tunnels. There's been nowhere else to go ... There was too many of us."

**(The Mole People: Life in the Tunnels Beneath New York City, Jennifer Toth, 1993)**

" ... a rat man who lived in level six under Grand Central ... and cooked and ate a rat a week – track rabbits, they were called."

**(Underworld, Don DeLillo, 1997)**

"My face I'll grime with filth, Blanket my loins, elf my hairs in knots And with presented nakedness outface The winds and persecutions of the sky The country gives me proof and precedent Of Bedlam beggars who with roaring voices Strike in their numbed and mortified arms Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary; And with this horrible object, From low farms, Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills, Sometimes with lunatic bans, Sometimes with prayers, Enforce their charity."

**(King Lear, William Shakespeare, [2.3 5-20])**

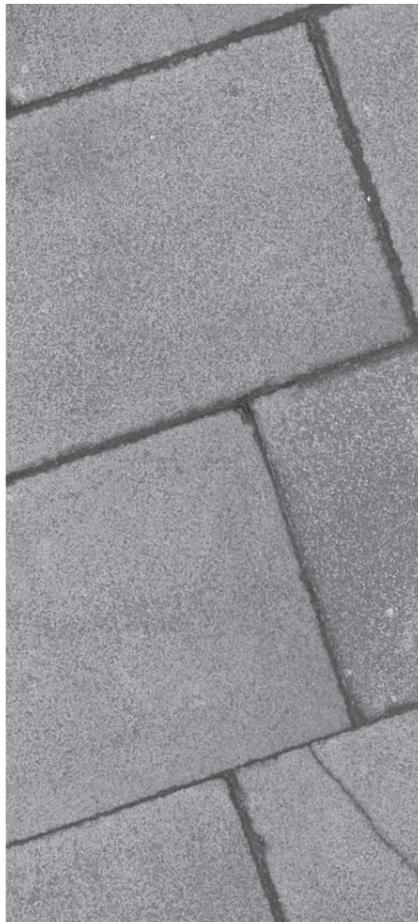


"At last I got right down, hobbled down to a ditch and lay down beside my bicycle. I lay at full stretch with out-spread arms. The white hawthorn stopped towards me, unfortunately I don't like the smell of hawthorn. In the ditch the grass was thick and high, I took off my hat and pressed about my face the long leafy stalks. Then I could smell the earth, the smell of the earth was in the grass that my hands wove round my face till I was blinded. I ate a little too, a little grass ... And in winter, under my great coat, I wrapped myself in swathes of newspaper, and did not shed then until the earth awoke, for good, in April. The Times Literary Supplement was admirably adapted to this purpose, of a never failing toughness and impermeability. Even farts made no impression on it."

**(Molloy, Samuel Beckett, 1966)**



# HOW IS HOMELESSNESS?



*“What do we do now?  
Vladimir: While waiting.  
Estragon: While waiting.  
[Silence]  
V: We could do our exercises.  
E: Our movements.  
V: Our elevations.  
E: Our relaxations.  
V: Our elongations.  
E: Our relaxations.  
V: To warm us up.  
E: To calm us down.  
V: Off we go.”*

**(Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, 1953)**

## Objects, codes, and poetry to re-imagine homelessness

by Michele Lancione

Let me kick-off with some friendly advice to my beloved readers. Part of this text is written in “academish”. Academish is my way of naming the language that academics (people working and doing research in universities) have developed to talk between themselves. It is like your language, only more complicated. It uses more or less the same words, but usually with different meanings. Essentially, it is all an exercise of meaning: most academics build their careers and success associating new meanings to disused words, or inventing brand new ones. The problem with academish is that it often makes simple things difficult. The cool thing is that sometimes, but only sometimes, it makes complex things slightly more accessible. I hope the latter is going to be the case with this text. If it’s not, my advice is don’t worry and move on. The fault is in the writer’s, not the reader’s.

## Framing homelessness

In the last forty years there has been a proliferation of data and studies on what can be called, in a foucauldian way, the “economy of homelessness” - hence the “knowledge of all the processes related to population in its larger sense” (Foucault, 2000:216-217). Researches have been undertaken on the most disparate topics, ranging from the causes of homelessness, or the gender differences among homeless people, to very specific accounts on housing stock or, for instance, the health and mental conditions of homeless and vagrants individuals. However, despite the variety of topics and contributions, it is possible to recognise a commonality in the approaches adopted in studying homelessness: namely that homeless people are often “framed” *a-priori*, hence prior to the investigation of this or that aspect of their life. This framing takes place at least at two levels. First, homeless people are framed by canonical definitions of who they are: “the poor”; “the drunk”; “the addicts”; “the dispossessed”; and so on. Second, they are framed by means of rigid theoretical frameworks that, although supposedly developed to enhance our understanding of the homeless phenomenon, often lead to classifications, compartmentalisation, reification - in a word, to analytical abstractions. Studying a social phenomenon (like homelessness and vagrancy) on the basis of these framings is problematic for at least three reasons. First, because it does not allow one to take into consideration the nuances of the people. If, for instance, I take-for-granted that homeless people are “the poor”, and hence I also take-for-granted the bare notion of poverty, my study (and my ideas) will be shaped by that basic pre-conception. For instance, if I start from a strict economical



understanding of poverty (like many institutions have done for decades) I won’t be looking at the emotional dimensions of “the poor”, or at their wishes and desires. Despite all my efforts and my ability to mixing approaches, I will never be able to see the nuanced details that exceeds and escape the definition of poverty on which I rely upon. To frame and to define are, hence, interconnected - and not neutral. They are an exercise of power, if you want: I decide what, I define who, and I set apart all the things/events/materials that do not belong to that definition. This is mostly unavoidable - what I can manage is the degree by which I choose to define/frame something or someone. Second, framings are not only problematic because they may obscure important details, but because they stick in the social imagination and they are hard to remove. Vagrancy is connoted in negative terms because of the accumulation of discourses, practices, and symbolic values that have strengthen a particular (stigmatising) definition of this practice.

Let’s open The Oxford Dictionary of English:

vagrancy | ve gr( )nsi|

noun [ mass noun ]

the state of living as a vagrant; homelessness: a descent into vagrancy and drug abuse.

Terms like “descent” and “drug abuse” are not neutral. They codify what vagrancy is under a particularly negative light: you descent there (ascent: to heaven; descent: to hell), and the given consequence is that you become a drug abuser. Social “realities”, like homelessness and vagrancy, are always defined by means of symbolic values, discourses and practices. But definitions, as a form of discourse, are in turn going to reinforce the perception of that social reality. It is like a never-ending, relational circle where everything you do (and everything you say) has a consequence. To put it simply: definitions and framings aren’t neutral and the way we talk about something is, in the end, going to affect both the phenomenon and our understanding of it. Third, these framings are relevant for reasons that encompass academic or social debate: that’s because they are translated into the politics enacted to face/combat/arrest/confront the phenomena in question. Urban policies on homelessness and vagrancy are indeed written and enacted on the basis of academic researches and the social imagination. The consequence is that policies often reflect the limit stated above: being constructed around frames that reduce, rather than unfold, complexity, they are not usually able to deal with the specificity of each case. And this is the most positive instance - we all know the uncountable occurrences in which policies have been implemented not to face the causes, and the effects, of homelessness, but to eradicate homeless subjects themselves (usually wiping them out of the inner city).

## How is homelessness?

The bottom line of all this academish waffling is simple: traditionally, homelessness and vagrancy have been studied and understood starting from problematic framings and definitions. Despite this generalisation, it is fair to say that canonical understanding of these phenomena had profound repercussion on the way things have been understood, on the knowledge produced, and on the politics enacted on their basis. But how may it be possible to move forward? If discourses, practices and symbolic values are the agents that make up social research and imaginary, they should most obviously become our starting point. However, changing them is not easy. Take for instance the fact that nowadays, if we want to be politically correct, we use the terminology “waste collector”, instead of the more prosaic “rubbish man”, to identify someone employed to collect and remove refuse from the street. The change follows an increased attention paid to avoiding detrimental terminologies when it comes to the identifications of particular jobs, or group of people, in order to reduce the social stigmatisation surrounding them. Having said this, waste collection is still largely seen as poor-skilled labour, often regarded as the least appealing job that the market can offer. This is because “waste collector” is not only a term, but it is first and foremost a set of poorly paid practices that involve dealing with rubbish, getting dirty, inhaling terrible smells, and so on, which all have a negative connotation to the vast majority of us. The overall symbolic values attached to waste collection are therefore mostly negative, like with homelessness and vagrancy. It seems, in the

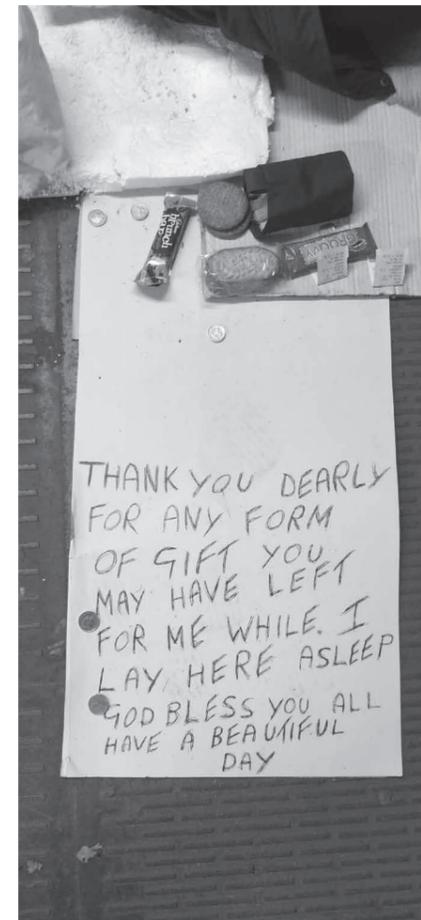
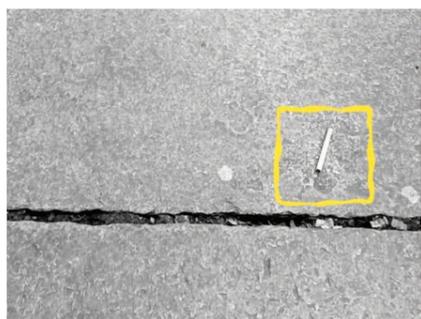
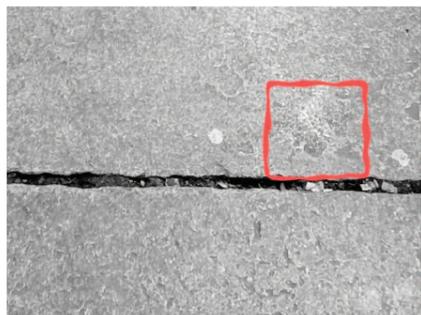


end, that we are back to square one. Can we find a way to better understand these phenomena, in order to re-imagine them and the policies attached to them? A starting point may be stopping to question "what" homelessness, vagrancy, and waste collection are - in a sense, stopping to look for a definition, for an explanation, for a new terminology - and moving toward a different kind of question. Not what, but how. Instead of re-naming, or better defining, what rubbish men (and women) are, we should look at how they are: how they do what they do; how they speak about what they do; how they think what they think etc. Looking within their practices, and the relations that they have with their own work, will throw a new light also on what they are. That's because we will be able to see things previously unseen; to let people speak for themselves; and to acknowledge the role of factors like emotions, or the rise of unexpected events, in the daily life of each individual. The same is with homeless and vagrant people.

The thing that strikes me most about canonical approaches to homelessness is their inability to really grasp, and understand, the relationships that take place between homeless people and the city. Urban homelessness, as well as vagrancy, is co-constituted with the urban fabric - sidewalks, shelters, soup kitchens, public parks, markets, benches, trains, buses, cafes, pubs, public policies, weather, schedules, dust, rust, syringes, lights, fires, shit, empty boxes, trees, etc. The thing is so obvious to become almost forgotten. We are too focused on talking about what homelessness is, and how to "solve" it, that we are missing an understanding of how homelessness is. There are, of course, excellent exceptions and the overall story is much more complex than the one just sketched (Bonadonna, 2005; Desjarlais, 1997; Duneier, 1999; Liebow, 1993; Robinson, 2011; Ruddick, 1996; Snow and Anderson, 1993; Vennes, 1993). However, lots can be said and done in this direction - in the direction of avoiding the framings to get back to raw core of the matter.

In what follows I want to give three examples taken from ethnographic research that I did in Turin, Italy (Lancione, 2011). The examples show the importance of objects, codes and poetry in making up how homeless people are. Objects make up everyone's lives. They have agencies, in the sense that they have the ability of changing the condition of something: they allow, interrupt, channel, mix, etc. A traffic light allows you to cross, and makes you stop. A coat protects you from the cold. A bench provides you with a place to sit, sleep, and make love. Objects have been mostly forgotten - but they are central (Latour, 2005). The way they are disposed, in a shelter, or a soup kitchen, and their own material quality, contribute to making what a place is. Codes are diagrams that govern what you do - not in a strict way, you can escape them and you create codes too. A law is a basic code. The way you feel that you have to behave, while queuing to access a drop in centre, is a code. The discourse embedded in a service of care (for instance, the religious discourse around "the poor") is another powerful code. They are dispersed in everyday practices, and they are relational (in the sense that they relate with you, and you relate with them).

Poetry is the fluid of life, a fluid of emotions, of unexpected situations, of encounters with l'autre, of power and effects. More than being a specific thing, poetry is a way at looking at reality being ready to accept what exceeds the ordinary and the established meaning (and course) of things in other words, it is all about non-representation, (Anderson and Harrison, 2010). In order to understand how homeless and vagrant people are, it is essential to implement *poiesis* - a free state of mind, ready to grasp the most extravagant capabilities they may express. Objects, codes, and poetry are not separated: they come and go together, assembling and de-assembling with the human subject (Guattari, 1995). The vignettes introducing these non-static concepts (Deleuze, 1994 [1968]) are short and they do not intend to be exhaustive (much more can, indeed, be said, Lancione, 2013). They provide, however, an initial ground to grasp the political relevance of approaching homelessness from a relational perspective, taking into accounts human and non-human; diagrams and codes; poetry, capabilities, and the unexpected - as well as possibly many other things that I'm not able (and I don't want) to enumerate/classify/define.



## Objects

Turin, a cold rainy afternoon in November 2009

I am walking on a sidewalk with one of the first homeless people that I've met on the streets. The sidewalk is tiny. I'm walking in front of him, without any particular direction to follow. At one point, still walking, nobody around us, I feel him stopping behind me. I stop too, turn in his direction and ask: "So, what's going on?" "Look", he replies. Between us there is just an empty space, a small portion of sidewalk. "What should I see? There is nothing here", I say looking at him and pointing with my hand at the ground. "You are crazy", he answers. Then he bends down, puts something in his pocket, and tells me: "Let's go now". I look again at the ground, seeing the same empty space as before. We keep on walking without a precise destination

The city is full of things. They lay in the street, they beep, they go around driven or not driven - who knows. You collect them and you fill your pockets. You drink, and sometimes you shit under them. You select in a trashcan which are good and which not. You assemble, de-assemble, mostly unconsciously. It just happens. Some of them open doors - the shelter, the train, the Vincenziani's breakfast. Some others close doors: you are still the owner of a car that you don't possess anymore and boom, the social worker tells you that you are not allowed to have your monthly subsidy. Things have the power of buying other things; to prevent you freezing; to make you sad, happy, stressed, angry. You barter: a pack of cigarettes for some money, a jacket for a mobile phone, and so on. You always barter.

## Codes

Turin, someday, April 2010

I'm a volunteer. I do good stuff for poor people and I mean it, the idea in itself is good. Free distribution of food. I give butter, someone is approaching.

Homeless person: "Don't you have any other butter?"

Me: "No, I'm sorry"

Homeless person: "That one is expired"

Me: "..."

Homeless person: [Looking at the butter] "..."

Me: "Do you still want one?"

Homeless person: [Keeping on looking at the butter] "Yes"

(Note that every single package is market with the label "Prodotto CE" – European Community Product – and that the expiry date was removed from each container – the scratches on the packages indicate the points where the indication was stripped away. The butter was expired but distributed anyway, implying a certain charitable discourse very common in approaching the "poor": the poor as dispossessed, hence willing to accept anything is given to him/her)

The city is full of codes. They are in things, they carry them. They shape space and yourself; they create the foundation for what you think you are and for what people think of you. "Universal social welfarism", the-same-kind-of-help for everybody, it's one kind of code. "Agape", "Caritas", and all the discourses surrounding the way help is given are other kinds of code. They are discourses on you, about you: a code is a device. After a while you learn how to play the game. But the game plays you too. It makes you move from one Church to another. It makes you accept out of date food. It tells you when you have to wake up, where you are supposed to sleep, how and what you are supposed to eat. You would like people to be more careful about what's important to you, but you don't fit, and the discourse doesn't change. What do you do? We need to challenge the codes. When codes are broken, a line of flight opens and you find another way of doing things. Space moulds, time unfolds, and new things happen. But that's not easy. Codes rarely break alone; they need some kind of help. First, we need to reveal them, and then we need to re-imagine them, re-align. You, homeless fellow, taught me this: we need to be somehow poetic.



## Poetry

It could be anywhere, anyhow, now.  
He brings me to the train station. We are in front of a traffic light now.  
He smells, I do too. "It's green" I say, "let's cross".  
"Nope", he replies. "Red is better".  
The cars stop, and he starts to beg.  
The city is filled by poetry. Sometimes it's good, most of the time it's cold, harsh, and vicious. But you already know what I'm talking about. Because you live on the street, you merge with it. Poetry is what you don't expect. It is the unknown that emerges, on a daily basis. It's the thing that lets you down when you are almost there. It's the thing that boosts you up when you are fucking done. It's speed and it's asleep. It's a joke, it's light, it's the manhole where the white rabbit is fighting with rats. And the amazing thing is... that you learn how to deal with it. That you, maybe unconsciously, know all about poetry. You know how to turn it at your advantage - not always, but most of time, yes-you-do. How to smile in order to get alms: that's a poetry-code-expressed through a smile, a coin, a label stating, "I am hungry". How to remember the entire bus schedule in order to get in time at the shelter. How to play, how to speak, how to know when it's the time to shut up and run away. You know how to get cheap alcohol, you organise for it. You receive a coat and you sell it at the black market. You move and hide, and then come up with an idea of how to pass the night. Poetry is there, in the objects and the codes, and in being so entangled with them you learn how to deal with it. Poetry is bad, poetry is death. It is not the posh, bright, naive thing people think about. But it's also hope, it's how you cope with things and how you reveal capabilities, in doing so, that nobody has noticed.

## Openings

You might tell me: "Objects, codes, poetry - How am I supposed to use this?"  
Well, ... you are not - or not strictly. Talking about objects, codes, and poetry, is not a way of creating another theory of homelessness, but a way of better tracing the numerous components that make up how homelessness is. The aim is not to explain - one explanation, one model, one logical path to follow - but to trace bits and pieces, and then eventually (and provisionally) try to sew them together (Law and Mol, 1994). The outcome is not and cannot be, once again, the solution, or the perfect policy. Rather, the outcome is a set of propositions that can inspire both different ways of understanding homelessness and vagrancy and less normative policies to deal with them. As a way of concluding this, and opening it up to your reflections, I'll highlight three of them. First, we need to re-write the discourse surrounding homeless and vagrant people. The exercises, for the reasons stated above, cannot be only terminological. In other words, "it is crucial to construct habits of seeing and being that restore an oppositional value system affirming that one can live a life of dignity and integrity in the midst of poverty" (Hooks, 1994:170). Talking and listening with a very open mind to homeless and vagrant people could be the first thing worth doing. Lots can be learnt if we let them talk about their life, through grassroots initiative like this journal or public debate initiated/ hosted by local communities and councils. Second, we need a politics of re-framing the service, germinating from and extending the previous point. To begin with, we need to state the obvious: the quality of the contexts in which homeless people have their relational encounters matter. This quality, however, should be measured not from pre-assumed discursive frameworks but from what we could call the politics-of-experience. And the politics-of-experiencing homelessness derives from homeless people encounter with the things and the codes at play in shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centres and so on. The agency of objects need to be taken fully into consideration: from the kind of food that gets distributed (which may make people feel abnormal and dissociated), to the way counselling services are provided (are they redundant and, therefore, stressful?), to the settings where social services take place (are they respectful of difference, in terms of culture, religion, and personal views?), and so on. The micro-politics of the encounter between homeless people and social services is the arena of challenge (Amin, 2012). Social services providers should be open to new, eclectic, ideas. A contamination is necessary: they need to open their doors to external parties, which may help in re-envisioning services from the standpoints enumerated in this



text and beyond. Third, the main challenge that homelessness theory and practice will have to face in the future is how to liberate the extravagant capacities and resources that homeless and vagrant people do possess. If one observes their life at the street level these capacities will become clear in the moment: they organise themselves (cognitive abilities); produce artefacts and play (artistic abilities); make jokes and keep on living with very few means, and through deep suffering (coping abilities). They, most of all, are able to turn the street into different sets of opportunities that, although mostly in the informal economy, need to be fully acknowledged. Liberation starts from those things, from the design of low-level and bottom-up policies able to grasp the specificities of each individual. I don't know if homelessness could be terminated. What I know is that it could be turned around: understanding it better will illuminate policies that we still need to imagine, pathways that we could learn to walk differently.

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## Short bio

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