'I come of to highe a bloode to be a roague for I am kynge of the Realme.'

Representations and perceptions of impostors in early modern England

Tobias Benedikt Hug

CONTENTS

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I owe my greatest debts to my parents, Markus and Mirjam, for their continuous support and love, to my family, Florian and David, Pascal, Patrick, Monika, Floreana and Rafael, and most of all, to my wife, Katja.

DECLARATION

The story of William Morrell has been very briefly explored in: Tobias Hug, 'An Early

Modern Impostor', *The Center & Clark Newsletter*, 42 (2003), pp. 5-6.

Some material in chapters 7 and 8 has been used in a different form in my MA thesis '"I

am easily perswaded to write a true Narrative of My Life." Zur Selbstdarstellung des

englischen Betrügers und Hochstaplers William Fuller (1670-1733)', submitted at the

University of Zurich, Switzerland in 2001.

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores changes and continuities in the impostor phenomenon in England over the period c.1500-c.1770. Several historical developments can be said to have fostered a climate of social dislocation in which the language of deception and fraud became an important cultural phenomenon. Rather than following the discourse of imposture primarily through intellectual debates, the thesis focuses on social experience in a range of contemporary contexts. Drawing upon sources ranging from judicial archives and other official sources to chronicles, newspapers, pamphlets and autobiographical writings, the thesis investigates why someone might be considered an impostor and how he or she was perceived and represented. It asks too how the self-perception and fashioning of impostors – the shaping of their identities and stories, understood as a cultural practice – was influenced by their social environment. Part One focuses on the variety of impostors and their wider significance within the specific contexts of social, political, religious, institutional or cultural change. Part Two links the themes of imposture and autobiographical writing, and provides a micro-historical analysis of a notorious late seventeenth/early eighteenth-century impostor who during his lifetime assumed several different roles.

By exploring these episodes as autobiographical practices, the thesis also contributes to the interdisciplinary debate on the nature of self-expression and individualism in early modern England.

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MS   Additional Manuscripts in the British Library

APC   *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed. John Roche Dasent
                             (London, 1890-1974)

ARS   Archive of the Royal Society, London

BL   British Library, London

CKS   Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone, Kent

CJ   *House of Commons Journal*

Cockburn, *CAR*   *Calendar of Assize Records*, ed. James S. Cockburn, 15
                             Vols. (London, 1975-97)

CSPD   *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*

CTB   *Calendar of Treasury Books*

DNB   *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, rev. Geoffrey
                             Holt (Oxford, 2004-6) (http://www.oxforddnb.com)

GL   Guildhall Library, London

Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance-Self-Fashioning. From
                             More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1984)

HJ   *The Historical Journal*

HMC   *Historical Manuscripts Commission*

Jeaffreson MCR   *Middlesex County Records*, ed. John C. Jeaffreson, 4
                             Vols. (London, 1886-92)

Letters & Papers   *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign
                             of Henry VIII*

LJ   *House of Lords Journal*

LMA   London Metropolitan Archive

Luttrell, *HR*	Narcisuss Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714*, 6 Vols. (Oxford, 1857; rep. Farnborough, 1969)
Luttrell, *Diary*	*The Parliamentary Diary of Narcissus Luttrell, 1691-1693*, ed. Henry Horwitz (Oxford, 1972)
MSR	*Middlesex Sessions Records*, ed. William Le Hardy, 4 Vols. (London, 1935-41)
NA	National Archives (formerly PRO), Kew Garden, London
OBP	*Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (London, 2003-6) (http://www.oldbaileyonline.org)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 2005-6) (http://dictionary.oed.com)
P&P	*Past & Present*
Pepys Ballads	*The Pepys Ballads*, ed. W. Geoffrey Day, 5 Vols. (Cambridge, 1987)
SP	State Papers
Span. Cal. Eliz.	*Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs preserved principally in the Archives of Simancas*
State Trials	William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State-Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London, 1809-26)
Thomas, *Religion*	Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991)
WA	Westminster Archives, London
Wood, *Life*	Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by Himself.*

Collected from his Diaries and other Papers, ed. Andrew
Clark, 5 Vols. (Oxford Historical Society, 19, 21, 26, 30,
40, Oxford, 1891-1900)

All citations remain grammatically and orthographically as they are in the originals.

Titles of pamphlets are often given in full in order to convey their informative character.

Dates are in old style, but the year is taken as starting on 1 January rather than 25 March.

'I hope this Narrative will be so plain, as to convince every ingenuous Man's understanding of the Truth.'

William Fuller, *The Whole Life* (London, 1703), Preface

INTRODUCTION

On 10 May 1676, an unnamed man was tried for bigamy at the Old Bailey. Although indicted for four marriages, he was 'charged by common Fame with having Seventeen Wives'. For several years, he had 'made it his business to ramble up and down most parts of England pretending himself a person of quality, and assuming the names of good families, and that he had a considerable Estate per Annum', though he was in fact of moderate social origin.[1]

This thesis explores many other stories of individuals who pretended to be someone else or of a higher social status. It investigates changes and continuities within the impostor phenomenon in England over the period c.1500-c.1770, in particular the variety of representations and perceptions of impostors and their deeper meanings within the specific contexts of social, political, religious, institutional or cultural change. Assuming that the meaning the act itself had for the agent was not the same as that constructed by those who exposed and then recorded the imposture, the thesis examines, on the one hand, how impostors and impostures were perceived and represented; on the other, how impostors perceived themselves, and how their self-presentation – the shaping of their identities and stories, understood as a cultural practice – was influenced by their social, religious, political, intellectual and cultural contexts.

My approach has been inspired by historical anthropology, which explores how individuals relate to others and their surroundings, and how they interpret them.[2] The questions why and with what cultural elements individuals fashion and make sense of

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[1] *OBP* (23 May 2005), May 1676, trial of 'person' (t16760510-1).
[2] Since Historical Anthropology involves no single research programme, the guiding principles come among many others from the following works: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected essays* (New York, 1973); Rebecca Habermas and Lars Minkmar (eds), *Das Schwein des Häuptlings. Sechs Aufsätze zur Historischen Anthropologie* (Berlin, 1992); Hans Medick, '"Missionare im Ruderboot'? Ethnologische Erkenntnisweisen als Herausforderung an die Sozialgeschichte', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 10 (1984), pp. 295-313; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (London, 1980).

their selves and contexts are at the centre of this study. As Clifford Geertz noted, culture

is not solely the legitimising superstructure of some substructure, just as it is not a

'power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be

causally attributed'; it should be considered as a context, 'something within which they

can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described'.[3] Yet impostors are not only vessels of

meaning. Culture and cultural expressions should thus not merely be treated as a system

of norms, values and symbols that form everyday life, but as elements and means with

which experiences and social relations are represented and constructed.[4] Such an

approach is closely related to an analysis of society, its political processes, as well as to

the reconstruction of interpersonal relations, or as Gabrielle Spiegel proposes, 'the social

logic of text'.[5]

We cannot ignore Stephen Greenblatt's seminal work *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and the interpretive practice applied therein. However, this is not a literary

work of a New Historicist and its sources are predominantly not literary texts; in what

follows, the word 'self-fashioning' does not imply Greenblatt's concept, but is meant in a

broad sense of self-expression. I have reservations about his assumption that self-

fashioning 'involves submission to an absolute power or authority', for that implies the

idea of a hegemonic political culture and results in considering the self as a product of

cultural forces, such as political or religious institutions and beliefs.[6] The view of power

and politics embraced in this analytical tool to explore an individual in his cultural

surroundings is as restrictive as the Foucauldian idea of the subject as a product of

specific 'epistemological and institutional forces'. Such a view expresses a too dominant

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[3] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description. Toward an interpretive theory of culture', in idem,
Interpretation, pp. 3-30, at p. 14.
[4] Medick, 'Missionare', p. 309.
[5] Gabrielle Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', in
Keith Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader* (London, 1997), pp. 180-203, at p. 198;
idem, 'History and Postmodernism', in ibid., pp. 260-73, at p. 266.
[6] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 9. In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, however, in which Greenblatt
inquires into the relation between Renaissance theatre and society, he assumes a more complicated
exchange between subjects and authority. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations. The
circulation of social energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, 1988), esp. pp. 1-20.

relationship between subject and authority, and leaves no room for an individual's dissent.[7] Moreover, contrary to the subjects of Greenblatt's study, most individuals to be considered here were not exceptionally gifted and did not fashion themselves by means of sophisticated texts, yet they communicated their desires and ambitions by means of language in a wider sense. They came from a wide range of social strata, and are of different ages and genders. I have also abandoned the distinction still often made between élite and popular culture, and set aside the idea of a clear division between different cultures, and of cultural consensus or homogenous culture.[8] This yields insights into the various ways in which people from different backgrounds might address the same problems, or phenomena. Social upstarts, and those who had declined in social status, demonstrate the continuous mobility that existed between different milieux. Impostors, however, are even a paradigm of 'perfect' acquisition of the behavioural codes of the culture into which they have temporarily intruded.

It is thus our task to investigate the continuous cultural exchanges between the individual and his contexts. That the individual has to be understood in relation to his context, has long been suggested by various scholars,[9] and is now widely accepted by modern historians.[10] Imposture can seldom be explained as a wholly self-initiated act. I

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[7] John Martin, 'Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence. The discovery of the individual in Renaissance Europe', *The American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), pp. 1309-42, at p. 1316. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The birth of the prison* (London, 1975); idem, *The Order of Things. An archeology of the human sciences* (London, 1966).

[8] See Robert Muchembled, *Culture populaire et culture des élites dans la France moderne (XVe- XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1978). For a new approach, see Jean Wirth, 'Against the Acculturation Thesis', in Kaspar von Greyerz (ed.), *Religion and Society in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800* (London, 1984), pp. 66-78; Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in Early Modern England 1550-1750* (London, 1998); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978).

[9] Among others, see George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society. From the standpoint of a social behaviourist*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago, 1934); Norbert Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 2000); Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Self. Anthropology, philosophy, history* (Cambridge, 1985); Alois Hahn, 'Identität und Selbstthematisierung', in idem and Volker Kapp (eds), *Selbstthematisierung und Selbstzeugnis. Bekenntnis und Geständnis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp. 9-24.

[10] Among others, see James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus. Artisan autobiography in early modern Europe* (Stanford, 1998); Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London, 1997); Kaspar von Greyerz, 'Spuren eines vormodernen Individualismus', in Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 131-45; Natalie Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); idem, 'Boundaries of the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France', in

suggest that it should be regarded as an autobiographical practice, even if a text in material form does not exist.[11] Hence, we need not only to investigate the intention of the agent, but all other forces and constituents which lie behind the impostor's story and his successful imitation of other behavioural codes, and ascertain by what means he managed to deceive the society.

The term 'identity' has many meanings and is thus as an analytical tool not very useful. It generally refers to continuity of individuality or personality throughout its existence; however, there are different views on the criteria which constitute identity.[12] To name only one, the bodily criterion, in our context a manifest criterion, does not convince for several persons can share the same body. I do not stick to particular concepts of 'identity', the 'person' or 'self'.[13] However, the following consideration underlines my approach. The identity (and also the self) of a person is never fixed, but involves as Erving Goffman suggests, a performative aspect, changing over time and space. He notes that behaviour alters according to context. An individual may 'act in a thoroughly calculating manner ... in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain', or 'because the tradition of his group or social status requires this kind of expression'.[14] This is an important observation for it forces us to look for the specific factors which constitute identity in a particular context, and find out the reasons why certain factors of an allegedly false

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Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna and David E. Wellbury (eds), *Reconstructing Individualism. Autonomy, individuality, and the self in Western thought* (Stanford, 1986), pp. 53-63.

[11] This follows Michael Mascuch's concept of autobiography which 'designates not only conventional "literary" texts, but other – possibly non-verbal as well as non-writerly – texts'. Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self. Autobiography and self-identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 18.

[12] See E. Jonathan Lowe, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 270-77; idem, 'What Is a Criterion of Identity?', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 39 (1989), pp. 1-21. According to the *OED*, 'identity' meaning 'individuality', 'personality' developed in the seventeenth century. *OED*.

[13] See Peter Burke, 'The Self from Petrarch to Descartes', in Porter (ed.), *Rewriting*, pp. 17-28, esp. pp. 18-20; Ian Burkitt, *Social Selves. Theories of the social formation of personality* (London, 1991); Charles Taylor, 'The Person', in Carrithers et al. (eds), *Category*, pp. 257-81; idem, 'The Concept of a Person', in idem, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 97-114.

[14] Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Harmondsworth, 1990), pp. 17-8. For a similar perspective, see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth. Civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 127-28.

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identity were regarded as fake. However, Goffman's metaphor of the stage implied also that all was artifice, which creates problems of interpretation and does not help to explain imposture. Where do we have to set the boundary between acting and 'being'? Can we determine the motivation behind someone's performance with certainty? What about those called 'impostors' who deeply believed in themselves? Did they feel like actors?

While imposture gives us an idea of certain social roles, behavioural codes as well as social boundaries, it reflects too another dimension: the tension and 'permanent duality' between individual and society which Emile Durkheim described.[15] Jean Baptiste de Rocoles called ambition a 'restless Passion', and the pretended German Princess Mary Carleton asked, 'What harme have I done in pretending to great Titles? Ambition and Affection of Greatness to good and just purposes was always esteemed and accounted laudable and praiseworthy'.[16] Both referred to this major issue: the boundaries between the appropriate/legal and deviant/illegal means of climbing the social ladder. Indeed, we know of impostors because they clashed with authority. The labelling theory as originally proposed by Howard Becker encourages to focus to the contexts in which the label 'impostor' was applied and offers some useful thoughts to examine the relationship between 'impostor' and community and the process of social definition. So, why is someone labelled an impostor, and equally important, by whom? Is it because a person claimed certain attitudes, which, according to the social behavioural codes of a specific context, were not appropriate to adopt? What effects does the label for the individual have? Although the theory is not primarily understood here in a Foucauldian sense that authorities create deviant behaviour, there is clearly a difference between being labelled

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[15] Steven Lukes, 'Conclusion', in Carrithers et al. (eds), *Category*, pp. 284-301, at p. 286.
[16] Jean Baptiste de Rocoles, *The History of infamous Impostors or, The Lives & Actions of Several Notorious Counterfeits. Who from the Abject, and Meanest of the People, have Usurped the Titles of Emperours, Kings and Princes* (London, 1683), sig. A2r; Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately Stiled the German Princess, truely Stated: With an Historical Relation of Her Birth, Education, and Fortunes; In An Appeal To His Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert* (London, 1663), sig. C6v.

an impostor and deliberate imposture.[17] Hence, it will become clear that not all individuals considered in this thesis, who had the label 'impostor' placed upon them by a group with a socially more powerful position or status, are impostors in the strict sense. If imposture has a wider social function, is it similar to that of a criminal?[18] Does the unmasking of an imposture mean reaffirming social boundaries as with the detection and punishment of criminals? Furthermore, supposing that imposture is concerned with social classifications, how is it related to more institutionalised forms of inversions also concerned with social classification? Does it belong to what Barbara Babcock has broadly defined as 'symbolic inversion', is it a world upside-down?[19]

Ultimately, there cannot be a single concept of imposture. 'An Impostor is a Person that represents another Person that really he is not', explained an early eighteenth-century pamphlet.[20] However, the meaning of 'impostor' in early modern England was much broader, and indicates the vastness and complexity of the phenomenon.[21] According to the *OED* the words 'impostor' and 'imposture' first occur in the sixteenth century, in 1586 and 1537 respectively.[22] At about the same time they were introduced from Latin to Romanic languages such as French (l'imposteur, l'imposture), Italian (impostore, impostura) and Spanish (impostor, impostura). The *OED* defines 'impostor'

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[17] See Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders. Studies in the sociology of deviance* (New York, 1963); idem (ed.), *The Other Side. Perspectives on deviance* (New York, 1964). For a deeper discussion, see Part II, p. 265 passim.

[18] Durkheim considered deviant forms of behaviour an indispensable part of social life and social organization. See Barbara Babcock, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *The Reversible World. Symbolic inversion in art and society* (London, 1978), pp. 13-36, at p. 28.

[19] '"Symbolic inversion" may be broadly defined as any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values, and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious or social and political.' Babcock, 'Introduction', p. 14.

[20] *The Mouse grown a Rat: Or the Story of the City and Country Mouse Newly Transpos'd; In a Discourse Betwixt Bays, Johnson and Smith* (London, 1702), p. 31. The pamphlet is an attack on Halifax, and also 'discusses' William Fuller's imposture, which is analysed in Part II.

[21] 'One who imposes on others; a deceiver, swindler, cheat; now chiefly one who assumes a false character, or passes himself off as some one other than he really is.' *OED*.

[22] 'The action or practice of imposing upon others; wilful or fraudulent deception.' The *OED* quotes one of Hugh Latimer's *Sermons* (1537): 'Great imposture commeth, when they that the common people take for the lyght, go aboute to take the sonne and the lyght out of the worlde.' *OED*. See Hugh Latimer, 'Second Sermon preached before the Convocation of the Clergy', in *The Works of Hugh Latimer*, ed. George E. Corrie, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, 1844), Vol. I, p. 47.

very broadly as one 'who imposes on others; a deceiver, swindler, cheat; now chiefly, one who assumes a false character, or passes himself off as some one other than he really is'.[23] The definitions of both terms are therefore fairly broad, and they emphasise the feature of deception, rather than that of 'new' identity or character. As there are many words referring to 'rogue', such as 'trickster', 'ruffian', or 'knave', there are also several words, which are semantically linked to 'impostor': fraud, pretender, faker, charlatan, mountebank, quack, sham, or cheat. They all indicate a 'person who makes pretension to being someone or something that he is not, or of being able to do something he or she cannot really do',[24] yet not necessarily an impersonator.

The fact that impostors occur in all sorts of printed and archival sources, and the lack of headings explicitly referring to impostors, make systematic research difficult. The records of courts, both ecclesiastical and secular, present serious problems familiar to most historians of crime. Judicial practice varied across the country, from village to village, from official to official. Conflicts were often resolved by agreement, so there must be a considerable 'dark figure' of cases which were neither recorded nor proceeded against. Last but not least, there were of course also a handful of successful impostors. However, this thesis is not a statistical project, scrutinising a specific body of sources, but will focus on cultural meanings. It makes use of sources ranging from judicial archives in the London area and other official sources to chronicles, newspapers, pamphlets and autobiographical writings. I have searched for people or incidents which were explicitly labelled 'impostor' or 'imposture' respectively. Yet the manifold meanings of the words as well as many other related terms convinced me to record all phenomena which corresponded to these descriptions, even if they were not explicitly labelled 'impostor' or 'imposture' in sources. The polygamist mentioned above, for example, was not labelled

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[23] *OED.*
[24] *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms* (Springfield, Mass., 1984), p. 425; *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* (London, 1982). According to the *OED*, apart from 'faker', these words all emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

an impostor, yet the description of his exploits nevertheless exposes some typical features of imposture.

What else can we conclude from this linguistic evidence? Is imposture a perennial feature or something unique to the early modern period? Should it be explained by rising individualism, or the discovery of the individual, with an age that was apparently obsessed with deceit, lying, insincerity, hypocrisy, dissimulation, illusion and so on?

In her famous study on Martin Guerre, Natalie Zemon Davis raised a wide range of intriguing issues regarding imposture and identity. Above all, she reconsidered the relation between impostor and the deceived suggesting that the victim could also be an accomplice. However, the further intriguing questions she posed about how the phenomenon is related to socio-cultural factors and expectations such as the norms, values and structures within a particular community, or the means by which people were actually identified or identified themselves, have been neglected in subsequent research on imposture.[25] Writers eager to solve great mysteries have described impostors as exotic rogues and human curiosities; popular accounts remain chiefly descriptive, confined to the agents, their deviant features and adventurous lives, or tend to see them as part of greater conspiracies. Imposture has predominantly been understood in its narrow and modern sense, and histories have thus concentrated on such cases.[26] More scholarly work

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[25] Davis, *Return*, esp. p. 40. However, the study obviously sparked off a debate. See, for instance, Stephen Greenblatt, 'Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture', in idem, *Learning to Curse* (New York, 1990), pp. 131-145; Robert Finlay, 'The Refashioning of Martin Guerre', *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 553-71; Natalie Z. Davis, 'On the Lame', ibid., pp. 572-603.

[26] Among others, Stuart Gordon, *The Book of Hoaxes. An A-Z of famous fakes, frauds and cons* (London, 1995); Nick Yapp, *Great Hoaxes of the World. And the hoaxers behind them* (London, 1992); Carlson Wade, *Great Hoaxes and Famous Impostors* (Middle Village, N.Y., 1976); Stanley B.-R. Poole, *Royal Mysteries and Pretenders* (London, 1969); Egon Larsen, *The Deceivers* (London, 1966); Richard Aldington, *Frauds* (London, 1957); Margaret Barton and Osbert Sitwell, *Sober Truths. A collection of nineteenth-century episodes, fantastic, grotesque and mysterious* (London, 1944); Bram Stoker, *Famous Impostors* (London, 1910); M.M. Dowie (ed.), *Women Adventurers. The lives of Madam Velazquez, Hannah Snell, Mary Anne Talbott and Mrs Christian Davies* (London, 1893); Horace W. Fuller, *Impostors and Adventurers* (Boston, 1882); M. Aikin, *Memoirs of Religious Impostors from the Seventh to the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1821). Some more profound popular accounts, though of mainly post-eighteenth-century cases, are

tends to focus on its modern meaning too; yet more striking, perhaps, is the predisposition

to describe it as a phenomenon which was far more widespread in the early modern

period than in our own times. Evolutionist views have attributed it to gullible peasants,[27]

and in the popular mind it has frequently reflected the credulity and ignorance of a whole

age or nation.[28] The influence of the history of mentalities, social history and new cultural

history has brought new perspectives to the fore. Apart from Davis' study on Martin

Guerre, research has mainly focused on royal and religious impostors. In an article

published in the late 1970s, the French historian Jean-Marie Bercé examined several

pretenders to the throne in England, France and Portugal, people who claimed royal

power in response to the expectations of the masses. In *Le roi caché* he explores further

political myths in the context of a contemporary mentality that provided fertile ground for

impostures, and takes social, religious, political and emotional expectations and needs

into consideration.[29] Maureen Perrie traces the origins and careers of the Russian

pretenders who appeared in the early seventeenth century, the three False Dimitrys.[30] She

revises the image proposed by earlier Soviet scholars, who described pretenders as

'peasant tsars' and as leaders of anti-feudal uprisings, and points out that Russians of all

social strata supported the first two False Dimitrys. She considers the pretender kings in

the context of dynastic crises and the pretenders' claims to belong to the old dynasty, but

also gives weight to religious notions of a messianic ruler risen from the dead, and to

ideas and myths concerning the monarchs. There are, of course, also publications on the

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provided by Jan Bondeson, *The Great Pretenders. The true stories behind famous historical mysteries* (New York, 2004); Sarah Burton, *Impostors. Six kinds of liars. True tales of deception* (Harmondsworth, 2000).

[27] Alexandre Stroev, *Les aventuriers des Lumières* (Paris, 1997), p. 224.

[28] Aldington, *Frauds*, pp. 4-5, 31; Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499* (Stroud, 1994), p. 44; Richard Swiderski, *The False Formosan. George Psalmanazar and the eighteenth-century experiment of identity* (San Francisco, 1991), p. 1. Since Cheesman and Williams illustrate the continuity of the phenomenon up to the twentieth century, their reference to 'ignorant populations' appears rather as a slip. Clive Cheesman and Jonathan Williams, *Rebels, Pretenders & Impostors* (London, 2002), p. 12.

[29] Yves-Marie Bercé, 'Les Rois d'imposture aux XVIe siècle', *L'histoire*, 14 (1979), pp. 6-13; *Le roi caché. Sauveurs et imposteurs. Mythes politiques populaires dans l'Europe moderne* (Paris, 1990).

[30] Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and popular monarchism in early modern Russia. The false tsars of the time of troubles* (Cambridge, 1995).

English pretenders. Michael Bennett explores English dynastic politics, rivalries and intrigue, seeking to contextualise Lambert Simnel's bid for the throne in 1487. Besides focusing on the conspiracy and rebellion, he endeavours to shed light on Simnel's identity, his imposture and the roots and dynamics of the rebellious movement around him.[31] Among others, Ann Wroe and Ian Arthurson have published detailed studies on Perkin Warbeck, who impersonated Richard, Duke of York from 1494 to 1499. Both emphasise the involvement of a wide patronage network and the international scale of the episode.[32] Paul Strohm scrutinises another important aspect which sheds light upon self-fashioning strategies. He explores the way the Lancastrian dynasty sought legitimacy after the murder of Richard II. He emphasises the importance of symbolic activity in the making of kingship, and points out how opinion could be manipulated by invented chronicles, false prophecies, and bogus genealogies.[33]

Although not explicitly on imposture, Keith Thomas' *Religion and Decline of Magic* still provides an indispensable work for the contexts of political prophecy, astrology and magical healing. His meticulous research brought to light a number of 'minor' figures of impostors which yield insights into the complex mental world. Religious belief obviously plays an important role in all kinds of impostures throughout the early modern period.[34] Alan Neame and Diane Watt have investigated the sixteenth-century female impostor Elizabeth Barton, who gained support by proclaiming that she

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[31] Michael Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester, 1987). On Simnel, see also Jeremy Potter, *Pretenders* (London, 1986), pp. 80-91.
[32] Ann Wroe, *Perkin. A story of deception* (London, 2003); Arthurson, *Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy*. See also Diana Kleyn, *Richard of England* (Oxford, 1990); Potter, *Pretenders*, pp. 91-112. While Potter gives a simplified picture of Warbeck, Kleyn claims that Warbeck was really the Duke.
[33] Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne. Usurpation and the language of legitimation, 1399-1422* (London, 1998).
[34] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1973). See also, Justin A.I. Champion, 'Legislators, Impostors, and the Political Origins of Religion. English theories of 'imposture' from Stubbe to Toland', in Silvia Berti, Françoises Charles-Daubert and Richard Popkin (eds), *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Free Thought in Early-Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Dordrecht, 1996), pp. 333-56.

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had been chosen by God to preach that the people should oppose King Henry.[35] And although beyond the period considered here, the later prophet, Joanna Southcott, has been studied by James K. Hopkins, who explains Southcott and her supporters in 'a meaningful social and intellectual setting', paying attention to the millenarian influences on radical politics in the 1790s.[36] A different dimension of imposture is revealed in the early eighteenth-century case of the 'false Formosan', who has received the attention of scholars in various disciplines. Michael Keevak and Richard Foley make clear the complexity of the case, so that only a deep knowledge of the immediate context can explain the episode.[37] Mary Jo Kietzman offers a further case study on Mary Carleton, a remarkable English woman who has received surprisingly little academic attention so far. One of the greatest achievements of the book is her close reading of the subtle ways in which Carleton responded and reacted in different performance contexts, to both threats and opportunities. Kietzman shows, from various angles, how and to what extent individuals might select pieces from surrounding contexts to give their own lives greater meaning and to fashion their own identities.[38] Alexandre Stroev, another literary scholar, subsumes under the heading of 'adventuriers' various characters – impostors such as Gagliostro, travellers such as Casanova, spies such as Chevalier d'Eon – through whom he endeavours to gain access to eighteenth-century 'psychologie sociale' and 'l'inconscient culturel'. Although his literary approach, attempting to discover in adventurers' writings recurrent *topoi* of contemporary literature such as pamphlets, novels or philosophical texts, is stimulating,[39] his definition of adventurers, who play, and

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[35] Diane Watt, 'Reconstructing the Word. The political prophecies of Elizabeth Barton (1506-1534)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997), pp. 136-63; Alan Neame, *The Holy Maid of Kent. The life of Elizabeth Barton* (London, 1971).
[36] In 1792, at the age of forty-two, Southcott said that God had chosen her to announce the Second Coming and in 1814 claimed to be appointed the mother of a second Messiah who was to be called Shiloh. James K. Hopkins, *A Woman to Deliver Her People. Joanna Southcott and English millenarianism in an era of revolution* (Austin, 1982), p. xix.
[37] Michael, Keevak, *The Pretended Formosan. George Psalmanazar's eighteenth-century hoax* (Detroit, 2004); Frederic J. Foley, *The Great Formosan Impostor* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1968). For further literature, see chapter 5.
[38] Mary Jo Kietzman, *The Self-Fashioning of an English Woman. Mary Carleton's lives* (Aldershot, 2004).
[39] Stroev, *Adventuriers*.

impostors, who live their role, is not very helpful; also problematic is his view that impostures serve to realise the utopian dreams of the peasants.

Clive Cheesman and Jonathan Williams take a fresh approach to the subject and more away from the case study by investigating material culture such as coins, stamps and heraldic devices as a proof of status. Their book looks at examples of pretender sovereigns, phantom countries, rebel states, and royal impostors, spanning the period from Antiquity to the twentieth century. Moreover, they illustrate the features and fictions inherent in the construction, legitimisation and maintenance of nations or dynasties.[40] Another historiographical gap is filled by a recent publication by Valentin Groebner, who traces various means of identification – predecessors of the modern passport – in medieval and early modern Europe.[41] According to him, the modern impostor emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, occurring parallel to the development of identification documents, and clearly differs from the medieval impostor, figures such as Perkin Warbeck and Count Baldwin; this new type of impostor either pretended to be a real existing person who was held dead, or invented a new 'biography' which he or she proved by means of documents.[42]

Interest in imposture is thus certainly no novelty and the amount of ink already spilled on the subject might give the impression that not much more is needed. However, the phenomenon of imposture in the early modern period is one ripe for examination in a *longue-durée* perspective. Impostures of several kinds had been occurring long before this period, and our interest in changing identities and deception, I suggest, is transhistorical and transcultural. Moreover, societies are always in flux,[43] and even where

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[40] Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*.

[41] Valentin Groebner, *Der Schein der Person.Steckbrief, Ausweis und Kontrolle im Europa des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2004). The title is misleading since the book covers mainly Florence and parts of central Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[42] Groebner, *Schein*, pp. 152-53.

[43] In the 1920s, Pitirim A. Sorokin rightly claimed in his work on social mobility that, in fact, there were no static societies at all, and that permanent and universal factors caused vertical mobility

there are more or less rigid social boundaries and strict behavioural codes, impostor-like behaviour is probably pursued. However, this contradicts two recent publications. In her study of Perkin Warbeck, Wroe argues that at that time 'the words "imposture" and "impostor" were not yet in use, and no single word summed up that notion'.[44] The argument implies a quasi-linear development of the phenomenon, from non-existence of the concept of imposture before 1500 to the appearance of the modern impostor. Kietzman, on the other hand, appears to assume that imposture was characteristic of the late-seventeenth century and that some factors, such as tightened criminal justice, might prevent imposture.[45] Although recurrent themes have to be taken into consideration, I do not consider imposture as something stable, but approach the phenomenon as something which is continually reconstituted and negotiated afresh. With regard to Wroe's assertion, I suggest that we should speak of a changing terminology rather than a new phenomenon.[46]

While avoiding teleological explanations, I nevertheless assume that several historical developments, among others the demonological concerns from the fifteenth century onwards, the Reformation, the encounter with the New World, the revival of Ancient sceptics in the sixteenth century, can be said to have fostered a climate of social dislocation in which the unusual and abnormal in the physical world was paid more attention, and the language of deception and fraud became an important element. Intellectuals such as Castiglione, Montaigne, and Spenser were captivated by masking and the artful fashioning of personal identities, the idea of 'fashioning' thus goes back to

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and therefore a continuous process of social re-adjustment. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility* (New York, 1927), pp. 139-46.

[44] Wroe, *Perkin*, p. 326.

[45] She states that '[a]s social semantics shifted and the criminal code was buttressed with massive statutory additions in the eighteenth century, it was no longer possible to live as Mary Carleton lived by deploying fictions on the social stage'. Kietzman, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 280.

[46] In addition, we must also not be dazzled by the sudden increase of written documentation in this period.

them.[47] However, rather than following these developments through intellectual debates, this thesis investigates experiences within English popular cultures.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One is an analysis of the phenomenon and its variety, exploring to whom and why the labels 'impostor' and 'imposture' were applied. In other words, it tries to establish the boundaries between usual and unusual forms of pretences, and why certain incidents have come down to us. This part identifies the various motives, and shows how these people were not always deliberate frauds, but either believed in their role, or were instigated by some pressure group with a specific political or religious goal. It will be seen that the modern notion of impostor – someone, who, like Arnauld du Tilh, pretends to be a person, who either still exists or has disappeared – is rare. By setting the individual stories into categories, Part One also attempts to explain growth and decline, changes and continuities of particular themes, features or types of impostures. Among others it addresses the following questions. Which factors constitute a person's identity and which, in the case of an imposture, were considered bogus? What are the reasons for the rise or decline of certain types of impostures? Do social, political, religious and cultural changes account for new and changing opportunities for bogus identity? What are the effects of institutional changes such as bureaucratisation and professionalisation? What performative strategies enabled her/him temporary success? Did strategies of impostors change over the period? Was their purpose simply financial gain (either in a rakish sense or as mere survival strategy)? Can impostures be compared to rituals of inversion which have often been linked to popular rebellion?[48] Could some impostures be seen as rebellious acts undermining conventional ideas of order, hierarchy and authority, or as forms of social protest, or do they reflect increasing interest in religious and political matters?

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[47] Greenblatt, *Self-fashioning*, pp. 1-2; Davis, 'Lame', p. 589.
[48] See Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans* (New York, 1979).

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Chapter 1 contains five sections whose common theme is deception for financial purposes.[49] The first section starts with false beggars and argues that descriptions of false beggars and vagabonds from the late Middle Ages indicate a change in perception of the phenomenon, and (re-)introduces motifs – among others especially the 'wickedness' behind imposture – which can be found throughout the early modern period.[50] It is followed by a brief exploration of cunning men and women which illustrates, for instance, that these people were often labelled impostors, not because their claims were held irrational and superstitious, but because they had misused belief and trust in the real power of other practitioners. A further section delves into the uncertain grounds of marriage, which provided a fertile context for impostures, and looks at bigamists and their strategies of inveigling their future bride or groom. Bogus officials and people forging a document, both with financial purposes, are considered in two other sections.

Chapter 2, on quacks, charlatans and mountebanks, argues that 'medical imposture' displays conflicts which arose over professionalisation and institutionalisation either between regular and irregular doctors, or among the latter. But the chapter also explores the performative strategies of so-called quacks which enabled them to become consultants to people of all social strata.

Chapter 3 is devoted to religious impostors. While the theme has a long tradition reaching back to the Bible, it will be shown that it intensified as a result of the Reformation and was prevalent throughout the period. In the religious context, the labels 'impostor' and 'imposture' had a clearly ideological connotation. We need to distinguish those people who deliberately perpetrated a fraud from others who genuinely believed in their own religious powers and role but were rejected by most contemporaries.

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[49] Apart from the fact that deception for financial purposes can be found in all other categories, it is impossible to press all impostors in this chapter into one single category. It is for this reason that the chapter has no title.

[50] This contradicts Natalie Z. Davis who at one point argues that 'on the whole in the sixteenth century, the category for framing imposture was the prodigious and marvelous rather than the wicked'. Natalie Z. Davis, 'From Prodigious to Heinous. Simon Goulart and the reframing of imposture', in André Burguière, Joseph Goy and Jeanne Marie Tits-Dieuaide (eds), *L'Histoire grande ouverte. Hommages à Emmanuel Le Roy-Ladurie* (Paris, 1997), pp. 274-83, at p. 275.

Chapter 4, on political impostors, concentrates on the well-known topic of people who assumed the identity of a royal personage in order to achieve either a personal goal or that of a political faction. It tries to understand them in the various circumstances of a vacuum of power, such as political crises or succession crises, which provided fertile ground for their claims.

The early eighteenth-century case of George Psalmanazar, the pretended Formosan, prompted me to inquire whether this was an isolated case, or if other instances of ethnic imposture existed in early modern England. Hence, chapter 5 investigates people who claimed to be of a different ethnicity.

Chapter 6 is concerned with pretended gentlemen, who defrauded their contemporaries and indulged in a luxurious lifestyle. It pays particular attention to literary representations, and argues that they reflect a shift in meaning of the concept of gentility that created uncertainties over gentility itself, and who could be considered to qualify. However, the cases also shed light on new perceptions of the individual, social structures and values, and the importance of property and consumerism within the socio-economic context of the period between the late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries.

The theme of the pretended gentleman is further explored in Part Two, which tries to make up for the inevitably sketchy reconstruction of many individuals' lives in Part One. Chapter 7 provides a detailed analysis of William Fuller (1670-1733), who during his lifetime assumed several different elite roles. He is one of the earliest impostors whose authorship of an autobiography can be confirmed as authentic. It links the themes of imposture and autobiographical writing. The approach in this chapter is based on the assumption that, as with imposture in general, the impulse for autobiographical writing lies not in a wholly autonomous decision, but in various stimuli from the socio-cultural context. The chapter comprises several sections. The first three chronologically explore Fuller's story, his background, his service for two kings and his downfall. The following sections focus on his role as an outsider, and how, as part of his self-fashioning strategy, he depicted the Other. Chapter 8 concludes the discussion of

autobiography and imposture with a brief comparison of some aspects of the writings of

Fuller, Mary Carleton and George Psalmanazar.

'But what *Volumes* might be made, should an *Historian* undertake to describe the

Arts and *Tricks* of our *Modern Impostors*, who to arrive at their *Ambitious Ends*, far out-

do the villanies related in this book', remarked Rocoles plaintively.[51] Indeed, the subject

of imposture is so vast and multifaceted that, inevitably, not every aspect can be covered

in this thesis. While the chapters in Part One contain brief surveys of each topic, some

further major aspects, omitted in this thesis, need at least to be pointed out here. For

several reasons, among them the extensive historiography on the topic, aspects of what

may be called 'gender impostures' such as cross-dressing or even castrati are not taken

into account.[52] I will also not deal with institutionalised and collective events and forms

of inversions and disguise such as charivari, carnival, stage acting, or masquerades as

explored by Terry Castle.[53] Marvels and perplexing phenomena such as Mary Toft's

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[51] Rocoles, *History*, sig. A3r.

[52] Among others, see Joseph Harris, *Hidden Agendas. Cross-dressing in seventeenth-century France* (Tübingen, 2005); Alfred F. Young, *Masquerade. The life and times of Deborah Simpson, continental soldier* (New York, 2004); Bernard Capp, 'Playgoers, Players and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern London. The Bridewell evidence', *The Seventeenth Century*, 2 (2003), pp. 159-71; Fraser Easton, 'Gender's Two Bodies. Women warriors, female husbands and plebeian life', *P&P*, 180 (2003), pp. 131-74; David Cressy, *Travesties and Transgression in Tudor and Stuart England. Tales of discord and dissension* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 92-115; Mary Elizabeth Perry, 'From Convent to Battlefield. Cross-dressing and gendering the self in the New World of imperial Spain', in Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson (eds), *Queer Iberia. Sexualities, cultures, and crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (London, 1999), pp. 394-419; Matthew Stephens, *Hannah Snell. The secret life of a female marine, 1723-92* (London, 1997); Gary Kates, *Monsieur D'Eon Is a Woman. A tale of political intrigue and sexual masquerade* (New York, 1995); Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, 'Sexual Identities in Early Modern England. The marriage of two women in 1680', *Gender and History*, 7 (1995), pp. 362-77; Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests. Cross-dressing and cultural anxiety* (London, 1992); Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The Tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 1989); Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids. Women who cross-dressed in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness* (London, 1989).
On castrati, see Roger Freitas, 'The Eroticism of Emasculation. Confronting the Baroque body of the castrato', *Journal of Musicology*, 20 (2003), pp. 196-249; idem, 'Un Atto d'ingegno. A castrato in the seventeenth century' (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1998).

[53] Capp, 'Playgoers'; John Spurr, *England in the 1670s. The masquerading age* (Oxford, 2000); Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations. The performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge, 1996); idem, 'Nobody's Perfect; Or, Why Did the English Stage Take Men for Women?', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 88 (1989), pp. 7-30; Jean E. Howard, 'Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988), pp.

claim in 1726 that she had given birth to rabbits,[54] and strange apparitions such as ghosts

in the form of dead relatives were also often regarded as impostures, but though similar

incidents are occasionally mentioned in the thesis, they are not explored in detail. And for

obvious reasons, forgeries in art and literature are also excluded.[55]

418-40; Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization. The carnivalesque in eighteenth-century English culture and fiction* (London, 1986).

[54] See Denise Todd, *Imagining Monsters. Miscreations of the self in eighteenth-century England* (Chicago, 1995); Lisa Cody, 'The Doctor's in Labour; Or a New Whim Wham from Guildford', *Gender and History*, 4 (1992), pp. 175-96.

[55] Nick Groom, *Forger's Shadow. How forgery changed the course of literature* (London, 2002); Michael Keevak, *Sexual Shakespeare. Forgery, authorship, portraiture* (Detroit, 2001); Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters. Ethnic impersonators and American identities* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Paul Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 1999); Radnóti Sándor, *The Fake. Forgery and its place in art* (Oxford, 1999); Alice Beckett, *Fakes. Forgery and the art world* (London, 1995); Karl Corino (ed.), *Gefälscht! Betrug in Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Musik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990); Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics. Creativity and duplicity in Western scholarship* (Princeton, 1990); Stuart James Fleming, *Authenticity in Art. The scientific detection of forgery* (London, 1975); John Whitehead, *This Solemn Mockery. The art of literary forgery* (London, 1973); Philip W. Sergeant, *Liars and Fakers* (London, 1925), pp. 237-93.

PART I

IDENTIFYING IMPOSTORS IN EARLY MODERN

ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

1. COUNTERFEIT BEGGARS

While imposture is a transhistorical phenomenon, in the English context a change in the

phenomenon had been taking place from the late Middle Ages. This can be observed in

many ways, including how beggars were perceived and represented, and it is with false

beggars that we will begin our investigation.[1] The problem of the poor and the image of

the fraudulent beggar go back to at least the thirteenth century, but as poverty became a

major social issue in the sixteenth century across Europe, it became far more high-

profile.[2] Valentin Groebner has shown that the use of physical descriptions to identify

criminals became increasingly common from the fourteenth century.[3] The emergence of

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[1] There is an interesting linguistic link between impostor and beggar in German. According to Grimm's *Wörterbuch*, the German word 'Hochstapler' is related to the *Rotwelsch* 'stabuler' meaning 'Brotsammler', 'Bettler'. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 16 Vols. (Leipzig, 1854-1960), Vol. IV, Part II, p. 1633.

[2] E.g. William Langland, *The Vision of Pierce Ploughman* (1362; London, 1550), Part VI; 23 Edward III, c. 7; 12 Richard II, c. 7; Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), pp. 22-3. See also Bronislaw Geremek, *La pietà e la forca. Storia della miseria e della carità in Europa* (Rome, 1986), ch. 1; Frantisek Graus, 'Randgruppen der städtischen Gesellschaft im späten Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung*, 4 (1981), pp. 385-437; Robert Jütte, *Abbild und soziale Wirklichkeit des Bettler- und Gaunertums zu Beginn der Neuzeit. Sozial-, mentalitäts- und sprachgeschichtliche Studien zum Liber Vagatorum (1510)* (Vienna, 1988).

[3] See Valentin Groebner, *Der Schein der Person. Steckbrief, Ausweis und Kontrolle im Europa des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2004), pp. 54-5.

rogue literature in Elizabethan England provided stereotypes to reinforce social order, and suggests a new interest in the unmasking of criminals. The exposure of their strategies in popular literature and prints focused attention on body expressions, dress, demeanour, gestures and other attributes that defined the identity of a beggar or vagrant; it may thus, especially with regard to the earlier reports, point to a sharpened awareness of a wide range of identity features. It is striking that the discourse of fraudulent beggars flags up a number of themes, many of which will play a significant role throughout our exploration of early modern impostors. There is, first, an understanding of deception as primarily a wicked (or destructive) phenomenon. Second, attempts to categorise and classify human beings, connected to a desire to detect fraud and deception and aiming to reinforce social boundaries. Third, suspicion of geographically and socially mobile people. Fourth, the rise of written documents serving as evidence of identity and credentials. Fifth, the misuse of fundamental social principles, such as the system of trust, to make financial gains. And sixth, the importance of performative strategies concerning appearance, language and behaviour.

The false beggar, including the vagrant, may thus serve as a metaphor for social and geographical mobility, but also for what Natalie Davis meant by the 'heinous'.[4] Caveats against vagrants were abundant. The main official concern was the spread of seditious rumours,[5] but there were many other issues at stake. According to the broader sixteenth-century stereotype, 'the undeserving pauper was typically rootless, masterless and homeless', and his behaviour 'disorderly and criminal'.[6] Thomas More warned against fraudulent beggars and their tricks in his *Utopia* (1516), as did preachers such as

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[4] Natalie Z. Davis, 'From prodigious to heinous. Simon Goulart and the reframing of imposture', in André Burguière, Joseph Goy and David E. Wellbury (eds), *L 'Histoire grande ouverte. Hommages à Emmanuel Le Roy-Ladurie* (Paris, 1997), pp. 274-83. While Davis regarded the beginning of the seventeenth century as a transition period from the 'prodigious to the heinous', I suggest that the discourse of heinous deception should be located much earlier, in England in the mid-sixteenth, in Germany even in the late fifteenth century.
[5] On rumours and seditious news, see Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), ch. 7, esp. pp. 345-46.
[6] Slack, *Poverty*, p. 91.

Hugh Latimer.[7] A central issue in the parliamentary debate that eventually led to the Act of 1572 was the definition of the word 'vagabond', a definition which encompassed a wide range of people.[8] The false beggar was a central motif of many illustrations from the late Middle Ages throughout the early modern period reflecting both fear and fascination.[9] Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* (*Narrenschiff*) and the *Liber Vagatorum*, published in 1494 and 1510 respectively, are probably the most influential early examples.[10] One part of the *Liber Vagatorum* is mainly concerned with the unmasking of the counterfeit beggar. The work found an imitation in John Awdeley's *Fraternity of Vagabonds*, published in 1561.[11] A few years later in 1566, Thomas Harman's *A Caveat for Common Cursitors* was published with great success. Harman, with an explicitly ideological purpose, aimed to reveal the beggars' tricks of trade. Other writers such as

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[7] See, for example, Hugh Latimer's *Fourth sermon made upon the Lordes Prayer* (1552), cited in Charles J.R. Turner, *A History of Vagrants and Vagrancy, and Beggars and Begging* (London, 1887), p. 592.

[8] 14 Elizabeth I, c. 5. It includes: '1. proctors or procurators; 2. persons "using subtyll craftye unlawful games" and "fayninge themselves to have knowledge in Phisnomye, Palmestrye, and other abused Scyences"; 3. all able-bodied persons not having either "land or maister" who cannot give a satisfactory account of their means of livelihood; 4. all "fencers, Bearewardes, Comon Players in Enterludes and minstrels" not belonging to a Baron or other honourable person of greater degree and all "Juglers, Pedlars, Tynkers and Petye Chapmen" unless the bearwards, tinkers etc. were licensed by two justices of the peace; 5. common labourers, able to work, who refuse to work for the customary wages; 6. all counterfeiters of passes and all who use them knowing to be counterfeit; 7. all scholars of Oxford and Cambridge who beg without being licensed; 8. all shipmen not properly licensed; 9. all liberated prisoners who beg without a license, and lastly 10. all persons declared vagabonds by the clauses of the Act which concern the impotent poor.' E.M. Leonard, *The Early History of Poor Relief* (Cambridge 1900; London, 1965), pp. 69-70.
See also the categories of rogues and vagabonds in: William Sheppard, *The Offices and Duties of Constables, Borsholders, Tything-men, Treasurers of the Countystock, Overseers of the Poore, and other lay-Ministers. Whereunto are adjoyned the severeall Offices of Church-Ministers and Churchwardens* (London, 1641), pp. 88-96; [Robert Gardiner], *The Compleat Constable. Directing all constables, headboroughs, tithingmen, churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors of the highways, and scavangers, in the duty of their several offices, according to the power allowed by them by the laws and statutes: continued to this present time, 1700* (2nd edn, London, 1700), pp. 31-3.

[9] See Slack, *Poverty*; Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The micro-politics of poor relief in rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004); Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994).

[10] See also Jütte, *Abbild*; Frank W. Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery* (New York, 1907).

[11] The character of Cock-Lorel, who appears on the title-page, is related to Brant's *Narrenschiff* and to Alexander Barclay's adaptation *The Shyp of Folys of the Worlde* (London 1509). Apart from Robert Copland, author of *The Hye Way to the Spyttell House* (1536), Awdeley is the first Tudor author to write on vagabonds. Arthur F. Kinney, *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars. A new gallery of Tudor and early Stuart rogue literature* (Amherst, Mass., 1990), p. 88.

Robert Greene, Thomas Dekker and Samuel Rid followed; and much later, in 1665, Richard Head published *The English Rogue*.

The literature's main theme is the depiction of beggars and vagabonds as a threat to the divine order, organised in clandestine brotherhoods, and as an 'anti-society',[12] deliberately rejecting the established order in their quest for lawless freedom. The representations of beggars and vagabonds reveal the dualistic worldview and dichotomous way of thinking characteristic of the early modern period.[13] In addition, they may also be considered in the context of increasing contact with new worlds. As Linda Woodbridge suggested, comparison can thus be made with overseas explorations. As early explorers faced strange natives across the seas, people such as the Kentish Justice of the Peace, Thomas Harman, discovered their 'anti-world' at home.[14] Elizabethan writers of rogue literature conceived of beggars as inverted images of themselves – an anti-culture or anti-society, organized by rank and gradation, and with patterns and modes of behaviour in stark contrast to their own. Harman held it his 'bounden duty' to acquaint his dedicatee, Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, as well as the general reader, with

> the abominable, wicked, and detestable behavior of all these rowsey [sic], ragged rabblement of rakehells that under the pretense of great misery, diseases, and other innumerable calamities which they feign through great hypocrisy do win and gain great alms in all places where they wilily wander.[15]

But then he went on to describe a series of false beggars, many of them tropes which remained relevant throughout the period: the Abraham-men 'be those that feign

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[12] The terms 'anti-society' and 'subculture' are misleading. See also Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), p. 47.

[13] See Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *P&P*, 87 (1980), pp. 98-127; idem, *Thinking with Demons*, chs. 3-5; Michael T. Ryan, 'Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 23 (1981), pp. 519-38; Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions. The wonder of the New World* (Chicago, 1991).

[14] Linda Woodbridge, 'Impostors, Monsters, and Spies. What rogue literature can tell us about early modern subjectivity', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 9 (2002), p. 1.

[15] Thomas Harman, *Caveat for Common Cursitors* (1566), Prologue, in Kinney (ed.), *Rogues*, pp. 109-53, at p. 109.

themselves to have been mad, and have been kept either in Bedlam or in some other prison a good time'; the Fresh-Water Mariners or Whipjacks pretended that 'their ships were drowned ... [and] counterfeit great losses on the sea ... [and] run about the country with a counterfeit license, feigning either shipwreck, or spoiled by Pirates'; the Dummerers, who only speak under threat of extreme punishment, 'but will gape, and, with a marvelous force, will hold down their tongues doubled, groaning for your charity and holding up their hands full piteously, so that with their deep dissimulation they get very much'; the Jarkman, who fabricates counterfeit passes and licenses, and the Patrico, the priest or hedge-priest; and the Walking-mort, a woman who pretends to be a widow. In more detail, he also warns of the Counterfeit-Crank who pretends to have the falling sickness. Counterfeit-Cranks, Harman noted, were:

> young knaves and young harlots that deeply dissemble the falling
> sickness; For the Crank in their language is the "falling evil". I have seen
> [s]ome of these with fair writings testimonial, with the names and seals of
> some men of worship in Shropshire, and in other Shires far off that I have
> well known, and have taken the same from them. Many of these do go
> without writings, and will go half naked, and look most piteously. ... and
> never go without a piece of white soap about them, which ... they will
> privily convey the same into their mouth and so work the same there that
> they will foam as it were a Boar, and marvelously for a time torment
> themselves; and thus deceive they the common people, and gain much.[16]

The immediacy and detail of the descriptions are striking. Yet in discussing Harman's rogue literature, it is important to consider whose perceptions these texts are reflecting. Was self-stigmatisation really that advantageous? There is no doubt that some of the poor, either through necessity or choice, gave up the 'struggle for life' and became

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[16] Harman, *Caveat*, pp. 128-29.

vagabonds, and disbanded soldiers were especially prone to violent acts.[17] However, it is doubtful whether they were such a threat to society as writers such as Harman supposed. As sources of historical evidence, such literary accounts remain suspect. They were the work of professional writers eager to market their products. Their anecdotes, plots and characters were often stereotyped, exaggerated and plagiarised.[18]

Counterfeit beggars do appear in judicial records, and not surprisingly, many of the anxieties revealed in such texts did exist, especially in years of disastrous crop failures such as in the mid-1590s.[19] The case of Peter Francys, a labourer, who was indicted for seditious words after he spoke in public of an uprising of the poor, reflects some of these concerns. Being asked, 'what can poore men do against riche men?' he replied, 'what can riche men do against poore men yf poore men rise and hold toguither?'[20] In the event there was no uprising of the poor, and fears focused mainly on vagabonds as potential trouble-makers. Anxieties about a well-organised anti-society with a secret language were not really justified since vagrants made up a very small proportion of the population and structures of communication between them were obviously limited.[21] Vagabonds were not a fixed group of people as many vagrants moved in and out of employment, or were

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[17] See William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment. The coming of a revolution in an English county* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), pp. 50-4; Peter Clark, 'A Crisis Contained? The condition of English towns in the 1590s', in idem (ed.), *The European Crisis of the 1590s. Essays in comparative history* (London, 1985), pp. 44-66, at pp. 52, 55.

[18] Albert L. Beier, *Masterless Men. The vagrancy problem in England 1560-1640* (London, 1985), pp. 123-26; idem, 'Anti-Language or Jargon? Canting in the English underworld in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds), *Languages and Jargon. Contributions to a social history of language* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 64-101, at p. 70; idem, 'Poverty and progress in early modern England', in idem, David Cannadine and James M. Rosenheim (eds), *The First Modern Society. Essays in English history in honour of Lawrence Stone* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 201-39. See also Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (London, 1972); idem, *English Towns in Transition 1500-1700* (London, 1976).

[19] A 'Proclamation 779' of 1596 warns of counterfeit beggars and their fraudulent practices as well as the danger of big assemblies to commit robberies. See *Tudor Royal Proclamations, Vol. III, 1588-1603*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (New Haven, 1969), pp. 160-62.

[20] In July 1594 he allegedly declared: 'Corne wilbe deare, and rather then I will storve I wilbe one of them that shall rise and gather a companie of eight skore or nyne skore toguither and will go and fetche yt owt wher yt is to be had. I can bringe them wher corne inoughe is to be had, and yf wee were such a companie gathered toguither, who cann withstand us?' Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 427. For the rumours of an uprising of the poor in Essex, see Hunt, *Puritan Moment*; John Walter, 'A "Rising of the People?" – The Oxfordshire rising of 1596', *P&P*, 107 (1985), pp. 90-143.

[21] See William Harrison, *Elizabethan England*, ed. Tothrop Withington (London, n.d.), p. 107; E.R.O., Q/SR 76/57, both cited in Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, p. 51; Beier, 'Anti-Language', pp. 93-7.

itinerant labourers. Even though the professional beggar or rogue as described by Harman and other Elizabethan writers did occur, 'references to [them] outside literary contexts are rather rare'.[22] Counterfeit beggars would only appear in the Assize Courts in very particular circumstances. A beggar feigning physical disability would normally be whipped by the parish constable, and only those with forged documents or involved in other crimes might be tried at the Assizes. Yet, although the Assize evidence does not allow us to conclude that the problem of vagrancy existed in Harman's terms, vagabonds played a significant role in criminality.[23] Violence by disbanded soldiers was feared, but people can also be found begging under the pretence of being a discharged soldier with forged letters and licences.[24]

It is obvious that the primary motivation of counterfeit beggars was survival, but what were their strategies of deception? These strategies often corresponded to measures to identify beggars, in particular licences and badges but also to the image imposed on them. Paradoxically, orders that aimed at reinforcing and clarifying social order, such as laws governing dress, enabled deception by giving exact instructions.[25] Apart from minor attributes ascribed to the stereotypical beggar,[26] they deceived by means of their body and forged licences. Fraudulent beggars made deliberate use of their bodies in pretending a handicap, displaying an allegedly defective body-part or by feigned movements such as limping, trembling, crawling or bawling. This draws our attention to the whole issue of

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[22] Slack, *Poverty*, pp. 92, 96.
One of the rare cases heard at the Old Bailey is that of John Tilly, who was indicted in 1727 for 'going about as a Vagabond with a Tin Box, under sham Pretence of Begging for the Whitechapel Prisoners'; he was fined three Nobles. *OBP* (17 May 2005), December 1727, trial of John Tilly (t17271206-68).
[23] Slack, *Poverty*, p. 101; James A. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England. A county study* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 164-65.
[24] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. II, pp. 143, 160, 164. See also 39 Elizabeth I, c. 17 'An Act against lewd and wandering persons, pretending themselves to be Soldiers and Mariners' (1597).
[25] See Martin Dinges, 'Von der „Lesbarkeit der Welt" zum universalierten Wandel durch individuelle Strategien. Die soziale Funktion der Kleidung in der höfischen Gesellschaft', *Saeculum*, 44 (1993), pp. 90-112, at p. 98.
[26] For the use of stereotypes in images, see the collection of (though mainly German) woodcuts and prints in Christoph Sachße, Florian Tenstedt (eds), *Bettler, Gauner und Proleten. Armut und Armenfürsorge in der deutschen Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998).

appearance, including clothes and gestures, which played a vital part but are seldom described in the sources. Harman, for example, accused one Jennings of swallowing soap to pretend the falling sickness.[27] Two centuries later, in 1752, *The London Evening-Post* reported:

> Yesterday about Two a'Clock, a lusty fellow, with a Crutch, went into the Sun tavern in St. Paul's Church yard, and begg'd Charity of a gentleman who stood in the Yard; saying his Arm (which had a Bandage round it) was lately broke; but the Person he apply'd to being Mr. Wentworth the Surgeon, he, upon Observation, believed the fellow to be an Impostor, and insisted on seing his Arm, and accordingly so he proved; on which he was carried before the Sitting Alderman, who committed him to Bridewell, with Orders that the Keeper might see he made use of all his Limbs.[28]

And only a few weeks later, the newspaper offered a similar account of three men, 'who pretended themselves Sailors, the one as dumb, another as having lost the Use of his Hand, and the third as lame in his Foot' and begged for relief from churchwardens, with a pass 'sign'd with the Names of Sir Harry Hicks and the present Lord-mayor of London', with which they had 'obtained Charity from several parishes in London'. The forgery was detected and, while one of them escaped, his fellows were committed to Bridewell.[29] More unusual is the case of a woman, who not only pretended injuries but actually harmed herself to that purpose. The woman, about twenty-nine years old, described as 'tall and well made, with dark hair, round visage, swarthy complexion, hasle eyes' was taken by the parish officers, 'stript and almost naked' and pretended to have been abused. She told the judges that she had been rambling the south of England but 'that her wounds were made by her own consent, to excite compassion, by an accomplice'. To impose on charitable people 'she had practised the most desperate methods' such as convulsions,

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[27] Harman, *Caveat*, p. 129.
[28] *The London Evening-Post*, Number 3791, 4-6 February 1752.
[29] *The London Evening-Post*, Number 3800, 25-27 February 1752.

hanging herself, 'pretending to be ravish'd', and even counterfeiting an abortion, 'all with

a view of obtaining charity, or gaining an opportunity of committing theft'. She was

deluded and in great distress, and perhaps depressed by her second marriage, her former

husband having died in an accident eight years previously.[30]

Far more commonly found in legal records are the use of counterfeit letters and

licences. In 1574 one Ellis Jones was convicted of begging under colour of forged letters-

patent.[31] In June 1596 the Kent assize court records provide a case reminiscent of

Harman's warning about counterfeit letters. One William Hull, a man 'living by a roguish

trade of life', was accused of using a forged licence, apparently signed by some of the

most important ministers and courtiers, namely, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Charles

Howard, Earl of Nottingham, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, Thomas Sackville, Baron

Buckhurst, William Brooke, Lord Cobham, Sir Thomas Henege and Sir John Woolley, to

beg and cheat the 'queen's subjects' out of money. He was pilloried and then whipped.[32]

Hull presumably hoped no one would dare challenge such eminent figures, but it was a

very dangerous strategy for it was inherently unlikely that such great men would provide

a licence to beg, and their signatures would be well known. In 1598, Thomas Bramson

and John Knight were also indicted for begging with a counterfeit licence allegedly

signed by several JPs, but were acquitted.[33] In 1602 one John Goodell was indicted as a

vagrant soldier and for forging a testimonial. He had 'failed to return to his birthplace and

to find employment ... and was arrested as a vagrant'; later he 'forged a testimonial under

the hand of Robert Ryder, naval captain at Ostend'. Goodell was found guilty on the first

count but there is, as often, no information about his sentence.[34] In 1642 Jeremy Maheugh

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[30] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 22 (1752), p. 88.
[31] Cockburn, *CAR. Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 117.
[32] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 394.
[33] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 425.
[34] Cockburn, *CAR. Sussex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 412.

of Milton near Gravesend, a labourer, was indicted for begging at his home village 'with a forged certificate ... alleging loss by fire'; he confessed and was whipped.[35]

How far can these false beggars be categorised as impostors? One could say that they were committing 'social impostures' and assuming a status which allowed them some privileges. Beggars did not take on the specific identity of someone else but the identity of a different social category. They changed those features which identified the specific type of person they embodied; they were altering their identities, though not necessarily assuming a totally different one. Fraudulent beggars adapted the image that society imposed on them. A beggar's licence, clothes or even physical conditions such as illness or handicap were basic constituents of the identity of a beggar and revealed his or her place in society. From the authorities' point of view they were symbols of a kind of privileged status, whereas for the real poor they were a stigma. In contrast to most other impostors, the false beggar, by pretending to be lame, blind, leprous, or by forging a badge or licence, was downgrading himself. The deception is a downward imposture, a typical 'self-stigmatisation',[36] a phenomenon still common today in benefit frauds. However, as Robert Jütte has noted, many other outsiders such as Jews, prostitutes, beggars and lepers tried to avoid stigma-symbols, a strategy called stigma management.[37]

Depictions of beggars and vagrants, such as Harman's, (re-)introduced a hostile element into the discourse of imposture. It is perhaps no coincidence that the words 'impostor' and 'impostures' were introduced in the sixteenth century from Latin into many European languages. The tensions that arose in the sixteenth century created an intensified discourse of 'the Other'; although benefit fraud continues to be a heated issue today, the beggar impostor was probably never more prominent than in this period, and at the same time it helped shape many of the foundations for the concept of the professional

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[35] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Charles I*, p. 427.

[36] See Robert Jütte, 'Stigma-Symbole. Kleidung als identitätstiftendes Merkmal bei spätmittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Randgruppen (Juden, Dirnen, Aussätzige, Bettler)', *Saeculum*, 44 (1993), pp. 65-89, at p. 77.

[37] Jütte, 'Stigma-Symbole', p. 86. See Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963).

impostor. In an age that was deeply concerned with stability and social order it becomes obvious why (false) beggars aroused both fear and fascination: geographical mobility was associated with social mobility; and (false) beggars did not only invade someone else's territory and challenge resources, they shifted roles and identities. As Woodbridge has plausibly noted, the 'psychic disturbances occasioned by this instability were ... projected onto the most visibly untethered, vagrants'.[38] The image of the threatening and ominous poor can be found in both the popular anxiety-ridden pamphlet and the sermon. The former displayed a world turned upside down, a counterpart to the widely held ideal of harmonious and peaceful relations within community, family, and the whole society.[39] This world-view, based on a polarised binary classification, implies ordered physical and social universes, which, at the same time, were severely threatened by disorder. 'Sermons, wall-paintings, religious drama and ceremonies, chapbooks, miracle stories and much else contributed to this tendency towards polarization between good and evil.'[40] The representation of beggars and vagabonds resulted in an ambiguous reception, which also had a positive side. Their rejection, conscious or unconscious, of the established social order and undermining of hierarchies was often regarded as a deliberate quest for freedom, and it is perhaps exactly this apparent freedom that fascinated and at the same time scared their contemporaries.[41] Richard Brome's *A Jovial Crew* (1636/41), John Gay's *Beggars Opera* (1728), and the romanticised stories of Jenny Voss (1684) and Bampfylde Moore Carew (1745 and 1750), to name just a few, reflect a continuing

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[38] See also Woodbridge, 'Impostors', p. 1.

[39] Peter Lake and Michael Questier came to a similar conclusion by analysing early modern murder pamphlets. See Peter Lake, with Michael Questier. *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat. Protestants, papists and players in post-Reformation England* (London, 2002), esp. pp. 55-58, 336. See also Peter Lake, 'Deeds against Nature. Cheap print, Protestantism and murder in early seventeenth-century England', in idem and Kevin Sharpe (eds), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, 1993), pp. 257-83.

Robin Briggs states that confessional divisions played a marginal role in the persecution of witches. Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours. The social and cultural context of European witchcraft* (Harmondsworth, 1998), p. 100.

[40] Briggs, *Witches*, p. 103.

[41] For the idea of freedom outside the law, see Christopher Hill, *Liberty against the Law. Some seventeenth-century controversies* (London, 1996), esp. Parts I-II.

fascination with a life outside established society in popular literature.[42] As we will see,

this combination of revulsion and fascination was a common response to impostors – and

to certain types of criminals – in general.

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[42]Both Voss and Carew were said to have run away as adolescents to join a group of gypsies; Carew eventually was made their king. See also *The German Princess Revived or, The London Jilt* (1684); Barbara White, 'Voss, Jane (*d*. 1684)', *DNB*; *The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde-Moore Carew, The Noted Devonshire Stroller and Dog-Stealer; As related by Himself, during his Passage to the Plantations in America* (Exeter, 1745); [Richard Goadby?], *An Apology For The Life of Bampfylde-Moore Carew, (Son of the Rev. Mr. Carew, of Bickley). Commonly known throughout the West of England, by the Title of King of Beggars; and Dog Merchant-General* (London, 1750); John Ashton, 'Carew, Bampfylde Moore (1693-1759)', rev. Heather Shore, *DNB*.

2. BOGUS CUNNING FOLK – PEOPLE CLAIMING OCCULT KNOWLEDGE

In the sixteenth century the definition of a vagabond was very broad, and it remained broad throughout the period. The second category of vagabonds in the parliamentary debate of 1572 is of persons using 'subtyll craftye unlawful games' and 'fayninge themselves to have knowledge in Phisnomye, Palmestrye, and other abused Scyences',[43] that is, people claiming to have occult knowledge and power. Again, the problem of a threat to established order is apparent; this theme, which will also be discovered in discourses of both religious and medical impostures, plays a vital role throughout the period. But why should we include such offenders here? Cunning women and men could be seen as impostors in two senses. Some of their contemporaries dismissed all such alleged occult power as fraudulent. Others, however, accepted occult powers, but thought these individuals did not really possess them. In that case, like the counterfeit beggars, they were claiming a false 'social identity' by taking on a defining feature of people who often held a position of some significance within the community. Occult knowledge was thus not suspect in itself, but widely approved.

Cunning folk were primarily consulted about health, marriage, lost or stolen goods and animals, and other issues that caused distress, which made them competitors to other professional groups, especially doctors or the clergy;[44] Puritan writers such as William Perkins were especially hostile. Such matters were frequently of concern to the authorities. However, cunning folk often enjoyed respect and popularity among ordinary people, and as they were also consulted about possible witchcraft they were not often brought to court.[45] Invoking spirits was widely used to solve various problems, though

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[43] Leonard, *Early History*, pp. 69-70.

[44] For tales of buried treasures, the power to recover stolen goods, and magic as a means to secure a career, see Geoffrey Elton, *Policy and Police. The enforcement of the Reformation in the age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 47-56. For the variety of tasks, see William Lilly, *William Lilly's History of his Life and Times, From the year 1602 to 1684. Written by himself* (London, 1715), pp. 36-7.

[45] See Thomas, *Religion*, ch. 8; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. A regional and comparative study* (London, 1970), ch. 8.

conjurors, sorcerers, healers and witches might also be feared as agents of Satan. One Joan Haddon, a spinster, for instance, was indicted for cozening money by witchcraft in 1560. She was found not guilty of witchcraft, but 'guilty for the rest', and was ordered to stand in the pillory.[46] Joan Haddon was thus not convicted of black magic but of pretending to skills in white magic by which she obtained money. A similar case is that of the treasure-finder Robert Wallys, indicted for cozening in 1573. '[H]e falsely pretended that by invoking evil spirits he could obtain the secret removal elsewhere of a treasure of gold and silver, and by these means fraudulently obtained sums of money from several people'. Though recorded as a tailor, Wallys was also considered a 'sturdy vagabond' who could 'give no account of how he earned his living'; he was therefore found guilty as a vagabond and 'bound in service to Mr Mede'.[47] In 1588 William Bennet and Edward Mason, both yeomen, were indicted for invoking spirits to help obtain great sums of money. Bennet had already gained money from many people by spells and enchantments and by invoking spirits earlier in the year. Both were tried but acquitted.[48] Robert Browninge, labourer, indicted in 1598 for the same offence was found guilty and pilloried.[49] In these cases people were accused of using sorcery, but apparently this aspect played a minor role, and most of them were acquitted. Although the alleged use of occult knowledge had triggered legal action, the aspect of cheating people out of money appears to have been the main concern.[50]

Similar cases occurred elsewhere. Simon Reade, a London doctor, was indicted for invoking three 'wicked spirits' to assist in identifying the thief who had stolen £37 10s. from one Toby Mathewe. Although Reade was found guilty, he was remanded after judgement.[51] In 1655 the famous astrologer William Lilly was accused by 'a half-witted

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[46] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 16.
[47] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 114. See §3 of 14 Elizabeth I, c. 5 above.
[48] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 315.
[49] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 484.
[50] Of 503 indictments for offences under the Witchcraft Statutes, 28 cases of invocation of evil spirits were tried at the Essex Assizes between 1560-1680. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, pp. 25, 28.
[51] Cockburn, *CAR. Surrey Indictments James I*, p. 21.

woman' of having given judgment regarding the recovery of stolen goods.[52] One John

Hickes, a tobacco-pipe maker, claimed to be able to identify those who had stolen two

gallons of 'Northdown ale'; he was also found guilty and pilloried.[53]

People claiming occult knowledge and using it as a livelihood illustrate a

common aspect of imposture throughout the period. Supernatural activity was a crucial

factor in triggering legal action as it was often considered a threat to the whole

community. Unlike false beggars, the accused were rarely assuming different identity

features, but claimed to possess supernatural or healing powers. Accusations seem to

have come from dissatisfied clients, who considered them fraudulent impostors. Whereas

some local magistrates might have seen them simply as frauds, godly magistrates

regarded them as wicked and in league with the devil, like black witches. However, many

cunning folk and astrologers such as Simon Forman and Lilly genuinely believed in their

powers, and so were not impostors in their own eyes. It is noteworthy that both of them

drew on both popular and 'elite' intellectual traditions; Lilly attempted to raise spirits and

find treasures, but he also read the *Transactions* of the Royal Society.[54] This was no

contradiction, and astrology and alchemy were highly respected and not in themselves

dubious. From Lilly's autobiography we learn that some cunning men and astrologers

acted in good faith, while others believed in their science but practised dishonestly to gain

extra money; we know that others, such as Laurence Clarkson, practised deliberate

deception and later confessed their fraud.[55] Most intriguing for the borderlines between

reality and fantasy, reason and irrationality, madness and belief, is the story of Goodwin

Wharton, a minor political figure, who, under the tutelage of a cunning woman who

became his lover, lived a private life of bizarre and pathological fantasy. His

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[52] Lilly, *History*, p. 73.

[53] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments 1649-1659*, p. 252.
For invocation of evil spirits in Surrey, see also Cockburn, *CAR. Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 129-30.

[54] Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press. English almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979), p. 212.

[55] For fraudulent cunning folk, see Lilly, *History*, pp. 29-31, 100; Laurence Clarkson, *The Lost Sheep Found: Or, The Prodigal returned to his Fathers house, after many a sad and weary Journey through many Religious Countreys* (London, 1660), p. 32.

autobiography tells us of alchemical experiments, trips to find buried treasures and

meetings with fairy queens, who, he obsessively believed, were strongly attracted to him;

it is remarkable that Wharton never fell under supervision of doctors or magistrates.[56]

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[56] Joan Kent Clark, *Goodwin Wharton* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 49-63, 216. See, BL, Add. MS 20006-7; Roy Porter, 'The Diary of a Madman, Seventeenth-Century Style. Goodwin Wharton, MP and communer with the fairy world', *Psychological Medicine*, 16 (1986), pp. 503-13; idem, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles. A history of madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London, 1987), pp. 247-60.

3. BIGAMISTS

While some disheartened spouses consulted a cunning man or woman, others tried different means to solve their predicament, and simply absconded to try their luck elsewhere. In some sense, bigamists can be said to form another category of impostors. A comprehensive bigamist-imposture would involve a change of identity, when one spouse leaves home, moves to a new area, takes on another name, and remarries, pretending to be single or widowed. The negative image of marriage and relationships we get from the case studies in Lawrence Stone's *Uncertain Unions* should not lead us to jump to similar conclusions about bigamist-imposture.[57] As will be shown, the paradigm above is seldom found. Most bigamy cases resemble the partial imposture of the false beggars, in the sense that bigamists changed important aspects of their identity, i.e. their marital status and personal circumstances such as wealth, while not assuming a wholly new identity.

The definition of marriage and the various ways it could be contracted present several problems, and it was often difficult to prove that a person was consciously committing bigamy.[58] The Church of England did not permit re-marriage after divorce. Only judicial separation was possible, and even that was hard to obtain. Remarriage was impossible except for a handful of the very rich, from the end of the seventeenth century, by private Act of Parliament. Among the lower ranks of society, separation often happened either by mutual consent or by desertion. After the Reformation an annulment of the marriage was allowed 'on the three grounds of a pre-contract to someone else, consanguinity within the Levitical degrees, or male impotence over a period of three years'. Someone who had not heard from his or her spouse for seven years was also

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[57] Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions. Marriage in England, 1660-1753* (New York, 1992).
[58] See J.S. Cockburn, 'Early Modern Assize Records as Historical Evidence', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5 (1975), pp. 215-31. For a useful introduction, see Stone, *Uncertain Unions*, pp. 3-32.

allowed to remarry, 'on the assumption that the missing spouse was dead'.[59] Before the marriage act of 1753, also known as Lord Hardwicke's Act, a free exchange of vows – the verbal spousals – between a couple could create a valid marriage. Even in ecclesiastical law, the spousals before witnesses were regarded as an 'irrevocable commitment which could never be broken, and which nullified a later church wedding to someone else'.[60] A parliamentary committee identified bigamy in 1597 as one of the 'evils associated with clandestine marriage and the poorly regulated issue of marriage licences'. The bigamy act in 1604 made it a felony to marry again during the lifetime of the first spouse 'unless the husband or wife had been absent for seven years, the parties to the first marriage had been under age, or the couple had been lawfully 'divorced' in an ecclesiastical court'.[61] In the early modern period bigamous marriages were 'both easy and common', at least in the lower social strata. The risk of being caught after desertion was low.[62] Yet it is difficult to say how effectively bigamy cases were dealt with after the bigamy act of 1604. As both Martin Ingram and James Sharpe point out, studies of criminal records 'suggest that bigamy prosecutions were quite rare in early Stuart England and that the offence was not a matter of urgent concern to either judges or jurors';[63] the Assize Court Records reveal that the death penalty was usually reduced by benefit of clergy to burning in the hand, and very few were hanged.[64] However, bigamy was probably of greater concern than Ingram and Sharpe suggest; a random look at the Old Bailey records after 1670 and the Middlesex sessions disclose numerous cases. The clerk of Knightsbridge Chapel, who, at the Old Bailey in 1692, had to prove one Daniel

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[59] Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 37-8. See also Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987).
[60] Stone, *Family*, p. 32.
[61] Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 149-50. For clandestine marriages, see also the case studies in Stone, *Uncertain Unions*, pp. 105-274.
[62] Stone, *Family*, pp. 40, 519-20; idem, *Uncertain Unions*, p. 232.
[63] Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 180. See also James A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (2nd edn, London, 1999), pp. 54, 79; idem, *Crime. A county study*, pp. 67-68. Stone, *Family*, pp. 519-20.
[64] For example, John Reader, a chair-maker, was found guilty, but proved unable to read and was sentenced to be hanged; yet, according to Sharpe, only William Foster, the West Bergholt tailor, is definitely known to have been executed. Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments James I*, pp. 191, 258; Sharpe, *Crime. A county study*, p. 67.

Conduit's former marriage, 'withal said, that it was usual for people to come there and personate others, and to make sham marriages'.[65]

Social factors also have to be taken into consideration. People of all social ranks, especially in sixteenth-century England, were highly mobile, 'both socially and geographically'.[66] Work might keep husbands temporarily away; soldiers might be absent for months or years without any guarantee of coming home. It was not unusual for couples to live in different places and to occupy different positions, but mobility could undermine ties of kinship, property or business. Moreover, communication structures were poor; it was difficult to track people down in an age without any police force or effective communication media. In addition, there were problems of identification. If the person 'was unknown in the area where the second marriage took place, the chances of detection were slight'.[67] As J.S. Cockburn pointed out, forenames as well as surnames were very fluid. Studying court records one often comes across a considerable number of aliases; one person could have several names as in the case of Richard Engars *alias* William Arnold *alias* Longe Will *alias* William Knight who escaped from gaol with Henry Newton alias Nicholas Upton.[68] One 'Robert Strudwick' was indicted for grand larceny in 1590 at the East Grinstead Assizes (Sussex). Five years later he appeared before the Croydon Assizes (Surrey) and was hanged as 'William Tyler'. Furthermore there were 'underworld aliases' such as 'Dick of London', 'Long Will', 'Black Nan' or 'William with the Wry Mouth'.[69] On the other hand, people could also assume false

[65] *OBP* (23 May 2005), January 1692, trial of Daniel Conduit (t16920115-18).
[66] See Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism. The family, property and social transition* (Oxford, 1978), p. 163; Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London, 1983), pp. 41-4, 50.
[67] Sharpe, *Crime. A county study*, p. 68.
[68] Cockburn, *CAR. Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 266, 270.
[69] Cockburn, *CAR. Sussex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 232; idem, *CAR. Surrey Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 417. See also idem, 'Introduction', in *CAR. Home Circuit Indictments. Elizabeth and James I*, p. 77.

names in court, like the man who acted as surety in someone else's name to get his friend released on bail. He was sentenced to death, though later reprieved.[70]

Most women, if they did not hear from their husbands for a long time, assumed they were dead, and married again. Yet, in spite of the obstacles mentioned, people could sometimes be tracked down. Ingram reports the early seventeenth-century ecclesiastical court case of Elizabeth Ambrose, of Ely, who one day in 1612 heard a stranger calling her husband by another name; the incident provoked much gossip and rumour, whereupon her husband left the village. Ambrose made some inquiries and found out that he was married to another wife living in Yorkshire.[71] The wife of James Harper, a carpenter from Ashford, Kent, who had run off to London, changed his name, and remarried bigamously, managed to track him down in the metropolis, whereupon 'over a fraught breakfast at the Red Lion in Stratford-at-Bow one morning in 1595 the two women asserted their rival claims over him'.[72] Yet there were also more pathetic incidents, as an earlier case before the Salisbury consistory court in 1585 suggests. Bridget Selbye and John Werret had apparently married in good faith twenty-four years previously, lived together for seven years and had four children. But Werret eventually abandoned her, and after hearing nothing of him for many years, Bridget assumed he was dead and married John Selbye. However, two and a half years later Werret re-appeared, 'whereupon John and Bridget immediately separated "for that they knew their said marriage to be unlawful"'.[73] In another case, a man from Whitechapel, named John, was indicted for bigamy at the Old Bailey, but this may well have been a blackmail device by a jealous lover since only the current wife was present. In court the latter 'briskly beckned her hand to her Husband, as he stood at the Bar, and cryed out aloud, Come John, come away with me'.[74] The threat of being accused of a felony obviously compelled people to keep former relations secret

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[70] This seems to be have been a rare crime of which only two cases exist in the *OBP*. *OBP* (23 May 2005), January 1677, trial of 'man' (t16770117-3); April 1677, trial of 'man' (t16770425-5).
[71] Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 177.
[72] Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet. Women, family, and neighbourhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 41.
[73] Wiltshire Record Office, B/DB 9, f. 148, quoted in Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 177-78.
[74] *OBP* (23 May 2005), June 1676, trial of 'fellow' (t16760628-7).

from their community, or pretend they were widows or widowers. In 1718, Bridget Potter, alias Hamlet, alias Ward 'pass'd for a Widow' so that Edward Ward could 'visit her in a way of Courtship' after her first husband James Hamlet stayed away from home.[75] When a married man remarried a widow one might often suspect that he had married her for financial reasons. Overall, however, most bigamy cases contain sparse information about the actual circumstances and motives of those involved, let alone information from which imposture could be proved. In the case of Daniel Conduit, mentioned above, there was not enough evidence for his first marriage, so he was found not guilty. Maybe his alleged first wife, as it seems, a friend, was jealous of Conduit's marriage which had bestowed on him some fortune. Perhaps both of them were in pursuit of money.[76]

Cases which involve a substantial change of a person's identity, such as taking on a new name and profession, or claiming a higher social status, are found only occasionally. Exceptional is the case of a man indicted at the Old Bailey in 1676 for having four wives, and 'charged by common Fame with having Seventeen Wives'. According to the proceedings, the unidentified man 'made it his business to ramble up and down most parts of England pretending himself a person of quality, and assuming the names of good families, and that he had a considerable Estate per Annum', though in reality he was only a shoemaker. Wherever he heard of any 'rich maid, or wealthy widow at their own disposal, he would formally make Love to them, wherein being of handsome taking presence, and Master of a voluble insinuating tongue, he commonly succeeded to engage their easie affections'. He would stay with them for a while and take 'possession of their more beloved Estate', but then 'march off in Triumph with what ready mony and other portable things of value he could get'. He was sentenced to be hanged, but, as we will see further below, was probably reprieved.[77] In 1699, one John Payden stood trial for bigamy. He had married two women, and tried to marry several other rich ones, using

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[75] *OBP* (23 May 2005), January 1718, trial of Bridget Potter (t17180110-8).
[76] *OBP*, January 1692, Daniel Conduit (t16920115-18).
[77] *OBP* (23 May 2005), May 1676, trial of 'person' (t16760510-1).

false identities. He had an accomplice who told the victims that Payden was an Esquire with a large estate near Norwich. According to one evidence he also came up with the obscure claim that he was a seventh son of a seventh son, and known as 'the Never-born or (Unborn) Doctor'.[78] An intriguing case heard at the Old Bailey in 1746, and described as 'an Offence of the most uncommon Kind, as well as of a most wicked and dangerous Tendency', involved both unlawful marriage and impersonation, and provides information on the offenders' motivation and their methods. George Taylor and Mary Robinson were tried for staging a sham marriage, 'not at the Fleet, or any such scandalous Place' but at the Parish Church of St. Andrews, Holborn, in order to inherit the estate of Richard Holland, a wealthy bachelor, 'with a Design to distress and injure' him. Although quickly exposed, their scheme was well organised. Taylor and Robinson had planned it several months earlier in a tavern, and they had a number of confederates. It appears that the two principals were friends, and that Mary Robinson, who still was a servant of Holland and had been living at his house, wanted revenge on him for reasons unknown. She therefore pretended to be a widow, and 'dress'd herself in white Sattin, which is in general looked upon to be the proper Habit for a Bride'. George Taylor, who was to impersonate Holland, was provided 'with proper and decent Cloaths to personate a Gentleman'; for that purpose they had stolen from Holland's wardrobe his coat, a 'ruffled Shirt, Neckcloth and Wig'. Their confession that they had never intended to consummate the marriage was seen as a clear indication of their 'wicked Intentions'. They were both found guilty, fined and imprisoned, Taylor for six month and Robinson for two years.[79]

Another colourful case of polygamy is that of Hugh alias John Coleman, alias John Davis, alias Hugh Roberts, who in 1718 lured at least one of his many wives, Susanna Payn, into marriage by pretending to be 'a Master Carpenter in great Business'. According to Payn, he had regularly turned up at the Three Tuns Tavern, where Payn was a cook. He appears to have put great efforts into his performance for he was joined by

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[78] *OBP* (23 May 2005), December 1699, trial of John Payden, alias Thomas Lock (t16991213-39).
[79] *OBP* (23 May 2005), October 1746, trial of George Taylor and Mary Robinson (t17461015-20).

several accomplices, some posing as his workmen, to whom he 'made a Show of paying

them Wages, and who used to talk about Business', and others, who posed as customers.

He promised Payn a wedding in St. Paul's, but instead pressed her into a clandestine

marriage in the King's Arms Tavern in Ludgate Hill, celebrated by an obscure Fleet

parson.[80] When apprehended, Coleman allegedly acknowledged 'he had had an Hundred

Wives, and were he at Liberty he would have an Hundred more'; other rumours

maintained he had fourteen wives who were all 'Cook-Maids'. The evidence brought

forward by the three wives attending the trial was not enough, whereupon the judges,

convinced of Coleman's 'Villany in marrying of Women and getting what they had and

then leaving them', advised them to come again with more substantial proofs, while

Coleman remained secured.[81] Three years later, 'Robert Booth, alias Browne, alias

Buckley, alias Bowyer, alias Bromley, alias Bartue, alias Brooks, alias Bruce, alias

Butler, alias Bartey, alias Thomas Bartlet, late of London Labourer, was indicted for a

Felony in Marrying Elizabeth Elliot' while his other wife, Hannah Blackham, was still

alive. Both marriages were fully proved, and he was burnt in the hand. But apparently, he

had another '17 or 18 Wives now living' of whom five were present at the trial.

Considering the 'Heinousness of his Crimes', the court 'gave leave to all Persons whom

he has Cheated in this manner, to Charge him with Actions for all Money and Goods had

and received by such fraudulent Practices'.[82] Whereas money was the motive in Booth's

case, Coleman's primary motivation seems unlikely to have been financial profit as he

kept marrying cook-maids who would have little money or property. Maybe he was

simply a compulsive womaniser or a fantasist addicted to creating and living in new

splendid identities. Similarly, Thomas Underthrop, tried for bigamy in 1681, claimed a

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[80] See also John S. Burn, *The Fleet Registers. Comprising the history of Fleet marriages, and some account of the parsons and marriage-house keepers, with extracts from the registers* (London, 1833). For the story of the Reverend John Vyse, who in 1718 still acted as a Fleet parson, see Stone, *Uncertain Unions*, pp. 105-12.
[81] *OBP* (23 May 2005), February 1718, trial of Hugh alias John Coleman (t17180227-43).
[82] *OBP* (23 May 2005), April 1721, trial of Robert Booth (t17210419-63).

wealthy status as he told the Wiltshire woman whom he courted that he was a top lawyer with a great estate in London.[83]

Many of the cases mentioned earlier manifest what we might summarise as strategies to escape unfortunate relationships and survive in economically tough circumstances; this concerned in particular the lower sorts, whose everyday choices were limited. However, despite coming from a lower social background, the polygamists of 1676 and 1721 hint at a different aspect: deliberate deception for financial profit. Undoubtedly, they reflect one early modern stereotype of marriage, '[e]veryone ... chasing everyone, in hot pursuit of money, sex, and power' – a stereotype which Stone, too enthusiastically, took for a generalised image of marriage in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a 'sinister age'.[84] Social status plays a crucial role. Some cases (1676, 1681 and 1718) illustrate very well how impostors inveigled women by claiming property, sober reputation and high social standing, and thus inspired their victims' hope of elevated status, wealth and riches – an escape from the dreary reality. Contemporaries were almost obsessed with the dream of instant wealth through marriage to an heiress. It was a central theme in Restoration plays, with rakish heroes playing all sorts of tricks to conquer a rich bride. The 1676 case shows an ordinary man playing the same game, an incident, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 6, which found its way into popular literature.

Hopes and fantasies of an elevated and more prosperous life – though taking a rather different turn – reached an apogee in the notorious case of Mary Carleton, the pretended German Princess. Her story found its way into numerous pamphlets, some published around 1663, others after her execution in 1673.[85] As she has been the subject

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[83] *OBP* (23 May 2005), January 1681, trial of Thomas Underthrop (u16810117-15).
[84] Stone, *Uncertain Unions*, ch. 13, at p. 134.
[85] For what is held to be her own writing, see Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately Stiled the German Princess, truely Stated: With an Historical Relation of Her Birth, Education, and Fortunes; In An Appeal To His Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert* (London, 1663); *The Memoires of Mary Carleton: Commonly stiled the German Princess. Being A*

of a recent monograph, I will not explore her case in detail.[86] Our interest here lies not so

much in her self-fashioning, but rather the way she 'trappaned' John Carleton, a young

lawyer's clerk, into marriage. Her pretence far exceeded those of Coleman and the

unknown gentleman-impostor: Carleton turned up at the Exchange Tavern pretending to

be a scion of a German aristocrat family, Maria von Wolway from Cologne. Her whole

appearance, stories of her past, and again, the use of letters allegedly from the continent

as proof of her wealth and origin, made the innholder couple as well as the Carleton

family believe in her claim, and furthered hopes of a prosperous match. Mary was soon

married to John Carleton, who, intoxicated by his good fortune, felt socially obliged to

keep up with the standards of the rich and, at least for while, pursued an extravagant life

style. However, the non-appearance of the promised wealth from the continent soon

aroused suspicion. The Carletons began to investigate Mary's origins, and eventually

concluded that she was neither German nor of aristocratic background, but the daughter

of a Canterbury fiddler, and already married to one Thomas Steadman, a shoemaker of

the same town.[87] In 1663, Carleton was charged with bigamy, but in a well-attended trial

at the Old Bailey, she performed a spirited defence and was acquitted.[88]

Narrative of her Life and Death Interwoven with many strange and pleasant Passages, from the time of her Birth to her Execution at Tyburn, being the 22th. of January 1672/3. With Her Behaviour in Prison, Her last Speech, Burial & Epitaph (London, 1673).

[86] Until recently, Carleton has not received the attention she deserved, especially from historians, however, she has been the subject of several works, mainly by literary scholars: Ernest Bernbaum, *The Mary Carleton Narratives. A missing chapter in the history of the English novel* (Cambridge, 1914); Janet Todd, 'Marketing the Self. Mary Carleton, Miss F. and Susannah Gunning', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 217 (1983), pp. 95-106; Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds et al. (eds), *Her Own Life. Autobiographical writings by seventeenth-century Englishwomen* (London, 1989); Mihoko Suzuki, 'The Case of Mary Carleton. Representing the female subject, 1663-73', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 12 (1993), pp. 61-84; Mary Jo Kietzman, 'Publicizing Private History. Mary Carleton's case in court and in print', in Paula R. Backscheider and Timothy Dykstal (eds), *Prose Studies. History, theory, criticism*, Special Issue, 18 (1995), pp. 105-33; idem, *The Self-Fashioning of an Early Modern Englishwoman. Mary Carleton's lives* (Aldershot, 2004).

[87] According to the anonymous pamphlet *The Lawyer's Clarke*, Mary was married more than once. *The Lawyer's Clarke Trappan'd by the Crafty Whore of Canterbury. Or, A True Relation of the whole Life of Mary Mauders, the Daughter of Thomas Mauders, a Fidler in Canterbury* (London, 1663). In *Ultimum Vale*, John Carleton asserts Mary was married to Thomas Steadman and one Mr. Day. John Carleton, *Ultimum Vale of John Carleton, of the Middle Temple London, Gent. being a True Description of the Passages of that Grand Impostor, Late a Pretended German-Lady* (London, 1663), pp. 34-5.

[88] See *State Trials*, Vol. 6, pp. 274-83.

Wealth and riches undoubtedly fascinated contemporaries, yet it was more than material incentives that fostered relationships, including bigamous ones.[89] While most sources cited above refer to the popular motifs of wealth and social origin, they hardly mention emotional components such as affection or passion, which were part of the ritualised forms of courtship and which may have played a significant role.[90] We remember the nameless polygamist was said to have 'succeeded to engage their easie affections'.[91] John Carleton, as he insists in his pamphlet, was 'overpowered, either by [his] nature, will, or affection'; he seems to have been mesmerised by Mary's passionate performance, as he later wrote in his own defence:

> I am confident her seeming excellent parts, variety of tongues, sweet disposition, and indifferent comely feature, noble presence and modest carriage, accompanyed with so many protestations and arguments of unfained and real high affection, and then seeming great trouble at her spirits, and amorous words were able to conquer and enthral any other heart, though as free and careful as mine.[92]

The lawyer's clerk was not the only one whom Carleton captivated by her temperament and eloquence. Samuel Pepys, for instance, was likewise impressed by her 'spirit and wit' and pleased she was acquitted.[93] She also convinced the jury at the bigamy trial; her power of invention and performance saved her, at least for a time, from the gallows.

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[89] The view that early modern relations were affectionless and impersonal has been much revised. See, for example, Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 3; Linda A. Pollack, *Forgotten Children. Parent-child relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge, 1983); Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 78-9; Alan Macfarlane, 'The Informal Social Control of Marriage in Seventeenth Century England', in Vivian C. Fox and Martin H. Quitt (eds), *Loving, Parenting and Dying. The family cycle in England and America, past and present* (New York, 1980), pp. 110-20, at p. 113.

[90] For courtship behaviour, see Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 225-30. Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost. Further Explored* (3rd edn, London, 1983), pp. 101-4; Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1996); Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint. Rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000).

[91] *OBP*, May 1676, 'person' (t16760510-1).

[92] Carleton, *Ultimum Vale*, p. 10.

[93] *Pepys Diary*, Vol. IV, p. 177.

Bigamy reveals some of the features in early modern society that provided a fertile ground for imposture. It has been mentioned that bigamy cases were often characterised by migration (often long-distance) and problems caused by limited communication. It was a fluid society, in which it was easy and not unusual to move to another place and change one's name. Personal names, especially in the lower strata of society, appear not to have been fixed, even though they were basic constituents of what can be said to make up early modern identity. Laws governing marriage were loosely defined, and there was no efficient institutional apparatus to maintain control.

4. BOGUS OFFICIALS

State formation, and with it centralising tendencies, increased governance and litigation, is one of the crucial processes of the early modern period.[94] Sixteenth-century England witnessed unprecedented administrative changes. The growth of central government aiming to exert its authority over the provinces led to fundamental changes within communities, but its relative success was due not only to pressure from central government but to local co-operation. The most positive and enthusiastic assessment of the success of this process has been subsumed under the general theory of modernisation. Yet historians have hinted at problems of the reluctant realisation and speed of these developments.[95]

We might draw attention to another vital aspect which relativises the extent of the bureaucratization process in early modern England: the problem of the clear roles and identification of officials, as well as their role within communities. The extant court rolls for the Middlesex County Sessions covering the period from Edward VI to James II, and the Calendars of Assize Records, reveal a number of cases of people who claimed bogus authorisation or pretended to be figures of authority, either as state or parish officials. In a recent study of the Westminster Quarter Sessions between 1685 and 1720, Jennine Hurl-Eamon stated that 'before 1685, almost no London impostors chose to act as parish officials', which is 'in direct contrast to the 1685-1720 material, where many of the "official" acts of the impostors were in keeping with those of local officials'. She argued that the impostors reveal an 'increasing perception of anonymity in urban government,

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[94] The results and effectiveness of this process have been the subject of many historiographical debates. See Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), esp. ch. 1; Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. ch. 2.

[95] As Wrightson stated, 'the notion of order embodied in the stacks of regulative statutes passed by Tudor and Stuart parliaments should not be identified too readily with that implicit in the norms and attitudes which governed social behaviour in the village community'. Keith Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order. Justices, constables and jurymen in seventeenth-century England', in John Brewer and John Styles (eds), *An Ungovernable People. The English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980), pp. 21-46, at p. 22. See also Anthony Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces. The government of Stuart England* (New Haven, 1986).

and the changing behavior of law enforcement officers' in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[96]

That concern about bogus officials occurred much earlier is illustrated by a proclamation 'ordering punishment of persons with forged credentials' issued by Elizabeth I in 1596. It was aimed at people who took 'upon them to be messengers of her majesty's chamber and for that purpose [wear] boxes or escutcheons of arms' and with forged warrants containing the names of lords, privy counsellors, or ecclesiastical commissioners extorted money from people.[97] The Middlesex Session Rolls Calendars reveal cases from 1571 onwards, with a slight increase in the second half of the seventeenth century. The numbers are small, though the rolls of course record only a proportion of the crimes actually committed. The court records considered here are not sufficiently consistent to give an adequate picture of the number of bogus officials over the whole period, and Jeaffreson's Calendar prints only a very small proportion of the total material. Even so, it is clear that bogus officials were a problem much earlier than Hurl-Eamon has suggested.

Anonymity, an important aspect in Hurl-Eamon's argument, is certainly a factor which made identification difficult, but it existed much earlier. London experienced a sharp population increase in the later sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries, and then slowed down.[98] Social relations might also have been less tense in late seventeenth than in the late sixteenth century. Although offices were increasingly in the hands of richer citizens by the beginning of the eighteenth century, this does not necessarily explain their anonymity. Already by the late sixteenth century, wards were too big for residents to recognise all their fellow-inhabitants. Many people did not know

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[96] Without paying full attention to the recognizances before 1685, Hurl-Eamon found 10 records of men impersonating officials in Middlesex County Records, of which, 'all but one describe con artists who impersonated officials above the parish level'. Jennine Hurl-Eamon, 'The Westminster Impostors. Impersonating law enforcement in early eighteenth-century London', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38 (2005), pp. 461-83, at p. 462.
[97] 'Proclamation 779', in *Tudor Royal Proclamations Vol. III*, ed. Hughes and Larkin, pp. 159-60.
[98] Slack, *Poverty*, p. 44; Roger Finlay and Beatrice Shearer, 'Population Growth and Suburban Expansion', in idem and A.L. Beier (eds), *London 1500-1700. The making of the metropolis* (London, 1986), pp. 37-59, at pp. 38-9; Clark and Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, p. 63.

the identity of parish and ward officials, who in any case changed every year. Another problem concerns the physical identification of officials. Constables could not necessarily be recognised by any uniform, and other members of the watch would be dressed like any other citizen. Apart from coats, staves, spears, pikes, lanterns, bells and clappers, few other descriptions of costume appear. *The humble petition of Robert Wilkins abt Miscariages of Watching* laments that the watches had neither uniforms nor a password which made it impossible to differentiate between the watches of different wards and gangs of criminals that roamed the city in the dark 'armed with halberds and lanthorns similar to the watchmen's and when challenged claimed to be a watch from another part of the City'.[99] How fluid the boundary could be between a bunch of riotous and drunken fellows and constables is illustrated by an incident in 1571 when a group of men described as yeomen and tailors living in Charterhouse Lane (Clerkenwell), 'assembled riotously' with 'eight unknown disturbers of the peace'. Armed with 'clubs, knives, daggers and other weapons' they set off, 'exercised and took upon themselves the office of the constables of St. John's Strete, without the knowledge of the said constable, and made watches at Clerkenwell, and ... made arrests of suspected persons, and then wilfully permitted the same suspected persons to escape'.[100]

Arrests were not merely a matter for constables. Many occurred through the aid of members of the community who first detained the offenders and then handed them over to the authorities. Royal proclamations, for instance, for the arrest of prominent offenders commanded citizens to bring them before the JP, often promising lucrative rewards.[101] A proclamation of 1586 for the arrest of the Babington conspirators ordered

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[99] Donald Rumbelow, *I Spy Blue. The police and crime in the City of London from Elizabeth 1 to Victoria* (London, 1971), pp. 25, 55.

[100] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. 1, p. 68.

[101] E.g. Proclamations 403, 'Offering Reward for Wyatt's Arrest' (1554); 404 'Ordering Deportation of Seditious Aliens' (1554). See also Proclamations 580, 703, 804 in *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Hughes and Larkin, Vols. II and III.
A proclamation of 1685 offered a reward of £5000 for the arrest of the Duke of Monmouth. *Collection of Proclamations*, BL, 21.h.2, f. 195.

that 'portraits of their faces ... shall be in open places of the city of London'.[102] Another in

1690, ordering the arrest of robbers and highwaymen, listed the names of the suspects –

though not a description of their appearance – and offered a reward; it ordered that watch

be kept, and that JPs distribute the proclamation to innkeepers, pawn brokers, goldsmiths

and jewellers.[103] According to William Sheppard's *Offices and Duties* citizens were

bound to assist constables in apprehending offenders, or were allowed to arrest someone

and take him before a JP.[104] To recognise a person intending to make an arrest as an

official could therefore be difficult. As Sheppard stated, a 'Constable or the like officer

giveth sufficient notice what he is, when he saith to the party *I arrest you in the Kings*

name, &c. for this is an arrest in Law'. Even if the arrested person did not 'know [him] to

be an officer' they had to obey; on the other hand, if the officer had no lawful warrant the

victim could accuse him of false imprisonment.[105] In the case above, it was probably a

combination of anonymity and force that enabled the rioters to make arrests; and it is

striking that all four lived in the area.

It is thus necessary to ask about the definitions and organisation of these official

roles, a problem that is not unique to the early modern period. Despite the fact that many

of the duties of officials were described and based on common law or parliamentary

legislation,[106] cases of impersonation reveal weaknesses and flexibility as well as a lack of

information and awareness of the exact scope of such regulations, on the part of the

officials as well as the people. At the core lies the problem of who actually held what

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[102] 'Proclamation 683', in *Tudor Royal Proclamations, Vol. II*, ed. Hughes and Larkin, p. 526.
[103] *Collection of Proclamations*, BL, 21.h.3, f. 114. See also ff. 78, 136.
[104] Sheppard, *Offices*, pp. 165-66, 55; [Gardiner], *Compleat Constable*, p. 28. See also Cynthia B. Herrup, *The Common Peace. Participation and the criminal law in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987), esp. ch. 4; Mark Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic. Officeholding in early modern England', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 153-94, esp. pp. 156, 162; Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution. City government and national politics, 1625-43* (Oxford, 1961), ch. 2.
[105] Sheppard, *Offices*, p. 79.
[106] For example, William Lambard, *Eirenarcha: Or of The Office of the Peace, in two Bookes* (London, 1582); Sheppard, *Offices*; [Edmund Wingate], *The Exact Constable with his Original & Power in the Offices of the Churchwardens* (2nd edn, London, 1660); [Gardiner], *Compleat Constable*; Richard Burn, *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer*, 2 Vols. (London, 1755).

responsibility. This includes a series of issues ranging from work mentality, behavioural codes and literacy to power structures and governance.

Donald Rumbelow has pointed out the weaknesses of the sixteenth-century London watch owing to a lack of supervision from the Aldermen, beadles and constables as well as the choice of 'generally the oldest and most decrepit in need of work' as watchmen.[107] Accusations of 'negligent, drunken and disorderly constables' can frequently be found in sessions files and earlier historians often used them to portray constables as uneducated, inexperienced agents lacking status within communities.[108] Recent research has challenged such views, and suggested the social respect, eagerness and efficiency of many petty constables. As Joan Kent noted, the 'social characteristics of constables varied from village to village',[109] and the same can be said of London parish officials.[110] While positions such as JP were prestigious, others such as petty constable or watchman were frequently despised, because they demanded time and money, and such officers were often exposed to the hostility of their neighbours.[111] Moreover, a local official who lived in the area he had to 'police', had to find a difficult balance between governmental demands and those of the community.[112]

Accusations about negligent officials frequently attest to the instability of magisterial authority.[113] Supervision by the authorities was very limited. Some officials were negligent, others were corrupt and abused their authority.[114] Between 1656 and 1659, Robert Hadsoll, a yeoman of Sittingbourne, assaulted and falsely imprisoned three people, each for a couple of hours to extort money from them. However, it appears that

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[107] Rumbelow, *I Spy Blue*, p. 34.
[108] See, for example, Cockburn, *CAR. Sussex Indictments, James I*, p. 54; idem, *CAR. Kent Indictments, 1649-1659*, pp. 89, 139-42, 174, 312.
[109] Joan Kent, *The English Village Constable, 1580-1642. A social and administrative study* (Oxford, 1986), chs. 4-7, at p. 81; Herrup, *Common Peace*, esp. ch. 5. Sharpe, *Crime. A county study*, pp. 35-6, Goldie, 'Unacknowledged Republic', pp. 163-64.
[110] Elaine A. Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies. The night watch and police reform in metropolitan London, 1720-1830* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 8.
[111] Wrightson, 'Two Concepts', pp. 26, 29; Goldie, 'Unacknowledged Republic', pp. 170-71.
[112] Sharpe, 'Policing', pp. 1-25; Kent, *Village Constable*, ch. 7.
[113] Wrightson, 'Two Concepts', p. 29.
[114] In London, the system was improved in the 1730s. See Reynolds, *Before the Bobbies*, pp. 25-7, 66-7.

Hadsoll was indeed bailiff for the Hundred of Milton in 1658 and 1659 and for the Lathe of Scray in 1656 and 1657; he was thus not an impostor, but simply misusing his authority.[115] By contrast, George Grimes was accused in 1658 of having taken 'upon him to be a parson [sic] imployed by the State to take and apprehend thieves'; he was charged with not only having 'taken thieves, but also for money received of them hath let them goe and set them again at liberty', sometimes for as much as twenty pounds.[116] Four years later, one Thomas Simons, a tailor, was bound over 'for falsely pretending himself to be a deputy marshall'. He too was accused of apprehending 'debauched persons and unjustly forcing them to give unto him certain money' only to let them off again 'without the knowledge of any of his Majesty's Justices of Peace'. The charge was brought by Gilbert Thomas, the (genuine) Provost Marshall of Middlesex.[117] Whereas Hadsoll seems to have simply abused his authority, both Grimes and Simons acted as bogus officials.

The intention behind such activities is sometimes quite obvious. In 1651 John Browne and Thomas Bradford, both of Holborn, burst into the house of Richard Baylie of Clerkenwell, not far from their own dwellings, one claiming to be a bailiff. Constables were allowed to break open a house if they suspected a felon;[118] but these two men clearly intended to rob the house. They pointed loaded pistols at Baylie, 'arrested' and took him away, and while everyone was out of the house, the accomplice of the bogus bailiff stole some of Baylie's goods.[119] Material or financial gain was involved in most cases. Pretending to be an official was an alternative to threatening victims, and promised more success in getting away undetected than 'simply' being a robber or highwayman. At the same time it hints at corruption among officials and widespread fears among the

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[115] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments 1649-1659*, pp. 328, 330, 232, 248, 266, 300, 315. 'One' Robert Hadsoll, bailiff for the same administrative units appears also for the years 1662, 1663, and 1669 in idem, *CAR, Kent, Charles II, 1660-1675*, pp. 50, 83, 193. The Lathe of Scray had 17 divisions, among them Milton Hundred. See Frederick A. Youngs, *A Guide to Local Administrative Units, Vol. 1 Southern England* (London, 1979), p. 632.
[116] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 273.
[117] LMA, MJ/SR 1260/275.
[118] See Sheppard, *Offices*, pp. 54-5. Whereas according to Sheppard this could happen even without warrant, five decades later, Gardiner noted that a warrant of a justice was necessary. [Gardiner], *Compleat Constable*, p. 66.
[119] LMA, MJ/SR 1076/110 and 111.

population. From the surviving records it is often difficult to find out the exact role that people really had.

Hurl-Eamon has argued that due to a much more flexible understanding of the authority of officials, people who falsely arrested innocent citizens 'may not have been perceived (and may not have perceived themselves) as impersonating law officers'.[120] We can see the authority of minor officials as an unstable and fluid category. Offenders were generally accused of disturbance of the peace rather than impersonation, an offence that did not exist *per se*. However, it is clear that the act of impersonation was perceived as such, by authorities, victims and impersonators alike.

It was not only petty constables, bailiffs and watchmen who were impersonated, but, as the Proclamation of 1596 makes clear, sometimes also their social superiors, royal officials such as messengers and JPs. In 1576, one Walter Hudson was taken with a counterfeit seal of the admirality.[121] In 1591, John Smyth alias Thomas Browne, alias John Norburie pretended to be a messenger of her Majesty's Chamber, five years later, the Privy Council issued a warrant for the arrest of 'one Maddox, a Groome of the Chamber' who gave himself out to be a messenger of the Chamber.[122] The claim of one Blount, who, in 1596, went about with a 'deputacion of a comission concerninge the execution of a stattute for the wearinge of wollen cappes',[123] might be considered as a result of the economic struggle of the 1590s. As N.B. Harte noted, '[b]etween 1571 and 1597 it was obligatory for the non-gentry to wear an English-made cap of knitted wool on

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[120] Hurl-Eamon, 'Westminster Impostors', p. 463.

[121] *APC, 1575-77*, Vol. IX, p. 130.

[122] *APC, 1590-91*, Vol. XX, p. 242; *APC, 1596-97*, Vol. XXVI, p. 120. Especially the *APC* of the 1590s reveal a number of pretended messengers, who exacted money with counterfeited warrants. According to Groebner, false messengers often occurred in the Middle Ages. Valentin Groebner, 'Describing the Person, Reading the Signs in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe. Identity papers, vested figures, and the limits of identification, 1400-1600', in Jane Caplan and John Torpey (eds), *Documenting Individual Identity. The development of state practices in the modern world* (Princeton, 2001), pp. 15-27, at p. 17.

[123] *APC, 1596-97*, Vol. XXVI, p. 73.

Sundays and holy days', in order to improve the trade.[124] It is possible that Blount

suffered from the severe decline of the textile industry, and thus wanted to boost it by his

own means. The primary motivation behind most of the following cases was also

financial. As early as in 1538, one John Pratte, a servant of Ralph Salter of Harpley came

to the house of the Carmelite Friars of Norwich, pretending to be the Lord Privy Seal's

(Cromwell's) servant with a commission to suppress the house. Since he could not

produce the commission, the prior brought him before the mayoralty court, where Pratte

confessed to the imposture; he had simply hoped to extort money from the prior. He was

sentenced to stand at the pillory, with a paper reading "For false feygning to be the

kynge's commyssioner"; his ears were nailed to the pillory and then cut off.[125] In 1609

Robert Jones, servant to Percy Richardson, a London merchant tailor, was accused of

riotous behaviour, and 'takinge uppon him to be a maiestrate of ye peace and executing

the office of a maiestrate uppon Elizabeth Hall'.[126] A month later, Charles Levet, servant

of Ottewell Worseley, a merchant tailor, and most likely an accomplice of Robert Jones,

was accused of the same offence.[127]

It is surprising that often the agents came from not far away, even from a

neighbouring village. One Richard Mase, of Challock, four or five miles north of

Ashford, pretended to be a purveyor to the Queen. He was indicted for cozening in June

1577 at Ashford, when 'under pretext of collecting provisions for the queen', he took

victuals from several people, but, probably because he had returned the goods, he was

acquitted.[128] John Bentley, a yeoman of East Malling near Maidstone, and John

Copstacke, 'mylner' of Marwood, probably in South Kent, were also indicted for

'cozening'; in 1584, at East Malling they used forged letters and Queen's Bench warrants

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[124] N.B. Harte, 'State Control of Dress and Social Change in Pre-Industrial England', in D.C. Coleman and A.H. John (eds), *Trade, Government and Economy in Pre-Industrial England. Essays presented to F.J. Fisher* (London, 1976), pp. 132-65, at p. 138. On the economic decline of the 1590s, see Clark, 'Crisis Contained?', esp. p. 49.
[125] *VCH of the County of Norfolk* (London, 1906), Vol. II, p. 432.
[126] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. II, p. 37.
[127] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. II, p. 39.
[128] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 154.

to defraud John Payler of five shillings. Both were found guilty and set in the stocks.[129]

John Bentley was a local man, literate and of the middling sort, who had cheated another resident out of money by pretending to be a high constable, although it may have been Copstacke who impersonated the constable. As in most cases we lack further information that might reveal the relationship between the three parties, but it is likely that the victim was chosen deliberately, and that the whole fraud arose through some dispute between Bentley and Payler. As noted earlier, it was also not uncommon for people to claim to be authorised to issue begging licences, which had to be signed by the constable as well as by another officer such as a justice, headborough or tithingman, or the minister of the parish. In 1590, one William Hudson was indicted for forging a pass 'under the seals of Sir Owen Hopton, John Machan and Richard Yonge', the latter being the assize clerk, and offering it to Agnes Robynson of a village nearby;[130] Hudson, described as 'yeoman', was literate enough to forge a piece of paper to the extent that it resembled an 'official' document.

The question of how and why such offenders chose their victims can seldom be answered. While it would have been easy to make out someone in need such as Robynson, other fraudulent activities needed planning and knowledge; information about the wealth or 'weak spots' of certain inhabitants would probably be obtained through gossip and observation. Most references are sparse and give no background information. In 1623 Thomas Williams pretended to be a sworn messenger of the High Commission Court, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, 'by pretence whereof he hath forced diverse of his Majesties leige people to compound with him and cosened them of their moneys'.[131] However, some fraud was clearly directed at carefully chosen victims, like the scheme of the yeomen Cornelius Crouch and William Leader. In 1677 they both went to the house of William Freeman and told one of the servants they were letter-carriers in the service of

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[129] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 221-22.
[130] Cockburn, *CAR Hertfordshire Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 76. One R. Younge occurs as an assize clerk. See ibid., pp. 162, 173, 174.
[131] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. II, p. 166.

Henry Earl of Arlington, the post-master general. They delivered 'nine false and counterfeit letters marked with a marke resembling the marke of the Post Office', claimed that the letters had arrived from overseas and required a delivery fee of thirty-six shillings and six pence, which was paid by the servant. Both 'rogues' confessed, and they were fined forty shillings.[132] In 1681 Edward Wilkinson, a labourer 'of ill name and fame', introduced himself to one Musgrave Bibby as an officer of the Court of the Bishop of London, and handed him a false writing which required Bibby to appear within three days before the bishop at the Prerogative Court at Doctors Commons 'to answer on oath to certain matters'. Wilkinson then required £39 15s 6d and 'promised in consideration of the payment' to halt the further prosecution.[133] Six years later, one Richard Miller, a wigmaker, was tried at the Old Bailey for 'counterfieting [sic] himself to be a Cleark, belonging to Doctor Commons [and] sending Processes to people in his own Name'.[134]

Hurl-Eamon has also noted a relatively high number of cases involving press warrants for military service.[135] Press officers were hated and feared throughout the period, and there was, not surprisingly, a lot of resistance to them. From the case of Edward Harwood, for instance, we learn that people often tried to save others from military service. Harwood was caught in the company of tumultuous seamen who had rescued from the press several seamen bound for service of the Commonwealth.[136] False press officers frequently threatened or even injured their victims, and then extorted money for their release. In 1640, George Smith had to appear in court to answer 'for aiding and assisting of one William Hawkes and others, being a consenter with them to

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[132] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV, p. 78. For a similar cheat, see *OBP*, October 1687, trial of William Leaver (t1687014-33).

[133] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV, pp. 156-57.

[134] *OBP* (24 May 2005), January 1687, trial of Richard Miller (t16870114-33).

[135] Of the twenty-nine impersonations of law officers, at least five were press officers. Hurl-Eamon, 'Westminster Impostors', p. 465. For an older work on pressgangs, see J.R. Hutchinson, *The Press-Gang Afloat and Ashore* (London, 1913).

[136] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 224. Clive Emsley, *The English Police. A political and social history* (London, 1991); Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998). See also the references to complaints in the Westminster recognizances in Hurl-Eamon, 'Westminster Impostors', pp. 465, 479(n).

the presseing of men with a counterfeit warrant, makeing themselves to be constables and officers'.[137] In 1667, John Flower and Thomas Crooke were both assaulted and imprisoned by Robert Heburne and Morgain Thomas, both labourers who pretended to be press masters. Five years later, John Morris wounded one person and pressed several others only to discharge them for a reward.[138]

Another and far more widespread form of making money by pressing people into service was to force people on board a ship, sometimes to serve the Commonwealth at sea, but more often to sell them as slaves overseas, a concern also discussed in ballads. *The Trappan'd Maiden, Or, the Distressed Damsel* (1695) exposes the kidnapping of young people of both sexes and warns of being spirited away by 'spirits' to the Colonies, to be sold for their own profit and gain.[139] *The Trappan'd Welshman, sold to Virginia* tells how a Welshman 'met a Handsom Lass, with whom he was Enamoured', and under the pretence of showing him the ships, 'carried him aboard a *Virginia* Man and Sold him, having first got the Welsh-mans Gold'.[140]

The boundary between press officers, false press officers and kidnappers was fluid; moreover, masters often simply sold their servants to merchants or proprietors of plantations. The Middlesex session rolls for the period of 1625-1689 contain numerous cases of (suspected) 'spirits' who lured away children or apprentices in order to transport and sell them as slaves in Virginia, Jamaica or Barbados.[141] In 1655 Philip Beard, for example, assaulted and beat Judith Danie, and tried to impress her for Jamaica with a

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[137] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 169.
[138] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV, pp. 2, 35.
[139] In rhyming verses the pamphlet tells the story of a maiden, who, weary of her burdensome life at home, was lured away by the promise of a better life in Virginia, but found nothing else than a life of woe. The pamphlet ascribes to the maid a measure of choice in leaving home; in practice, many people were spirited away against their will. See Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vols. III and IV.
As early as the mid-seventeenth century the noun 'trepan' was used to mean a 'person who entraps or decoys others into actions which may be to his advantage and to their ruin or loss'. Its meaning might cover any form of deception, but according to a note in the *MCR*, this was 'a new way [of cheating] called the Trepan' by which people were lured by the trepan into a situation ruinous to the former but advantageous to the latter. George Grimes, the pretended thief-taker we already met, was accused of having 'trepanned one Captain Hicks' to release him for twenty pounds. *OED*. Note also the verb with the same/related meaning. Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, pp. 221, 273.
[140] *Pepy's Ballads*, Vol. IV, p. 31.
[141] See Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vols. III and IV.

pretended warrant and then discharged her for the sum of twelve pence.[142] Beard did not

send his victims away, but exacted money from them. England had seized Jamaica that

year and authorities were eager to collect unemployed men and young women to send to

the new colony; Beard made use of the uncertainty of official regulations and documents

as well as fear. As literacy levels were relatively low, many of the victims may not have

been able to read or identify a warrant. However, many 'spirits' did not claim any official

authority at all, and cannot be considered impostors. They got their victims drunk, lured

youngsters on board by false pretences, or simply overpowered them.

While many of the examples above do not reveal the exact means by which the

impersonation was staged, some involved the use of threat or force, while others

employed more elaborate devices, notably the forging of official documents. While in

most cases of false constables, press officers or letter-carriers, the actual performance of

the agent probably played a crucial role, the person's social status and role was essentially

validated by a written document. Such documents did not necessarily represent someone

as an official; thus forgers might claim relation to someone prominent and secure power

or economic gain through this supposed connection. In 1631 the yeoman William

Mendlove 'fabricated and caused to be written' a letter in the name of Henry, first

Viscount Falkland to license John Bill, a London butcher, and his servants to buy and

provide him with meat during Lent and to sell it near West Smithfield, and 'to drive, kill,

dresse and sell the same without any ... hindrances or molestacions'. Bill was sentenced

to stand upon the pillory, with a paper affixed to his head showing his offence, and to put

in sureties for his good behaviour before being delivered.[143]

Two similar incidents concerning orders of the Lord Protector occurred in 1657.

James Fletcher, Jervas Jones and Thomas Gibson, all gentlemen, forged an order with the

signatures of John Thurloe and Henry Lawrence, the president of the Council of State,

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[142] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 248

[143] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, pp. 37-8. Mendlove was perhaps still at large. For Henry, Viscount Falkland, see Sean Kelsey, 'Cary, Henry, first Viscount Falkland (*c*.1575-1633)', *DNB*.

and a seal of wax, appointing Fletcher surveyor-general for the customs and excise in Ireland.[144] In October 1657, John Routh, a gentleman, fabricated a counterfeit document, 'in the forme of an order in the name of the Lord Protector and directed to the Farmours in Commission for collectinge the excise of Beere Ale &c. in the citty of London and countyes of Middlesex and Surrey'. It ordered immediate payment of £250 to himself, Captaine John Routh. He also forged the Lord Protector's signet and Privy Seal and another spurious paper 'in the forme of a letter in the name of John Stone' directed to the Commissioners of Excise, which ran as follows:

> Gentlemen, By a messenger with an expresse from his Highnes and the Councell I now received order to accept of the above warrant from you for the payment of the above somme. I therefore order you to pay it out of the remainder of ... months rent, and I will strike itt off the talley with the 8,000£. you lodged this day. Make present payment, His Highness being displeased at this gentleman's stay. Bringe this warrant and the acquittance with your remaining rent to your freind and servant John Stone.[145]

Both James Fletcher and John Routh confessed their guilt, but the extent to which the agents had managed to carry out their plans, and the sentence they received, are both unknown. The people involved in these cases possessed enough knowledge to enable the forgery of such official documents; they were all described as yeomen or gentlemen, and thus of the middling sort or above, on whose members the successful realisation of state (and local) governance depended.[146] Such forgeries suggest that people were aware of the symbols likely to be used in official documents, or perhaps only of certain features such as seals, even if they might be unsure how to verify their authenticity. One George Booth went further and forged himself, or caused to be made, a document entitled "An Act in

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[144] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, pp. 261-62. For Lawrence and Thurloe, see also Timothy Venning, 'Lawrence, Henry, appointed Lord Lawrence under the protectorate (1600-1664)', *DNB*; idem, 'Thurloe, John (*bap.* 1616, *d.* 1668)', *DNB*.

[145] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 265.
In 1665 the government issued a proclamation 'For the Prevention of Frauds and Abuses in the Payments of Excise for Beer and Ale'. *Collection of Proclamations, 1664-85*. BL, 21.h.2, f. 27.

[146] See Herrup, *Common Peace*.

the names of the Keepers of the Libertyes of England by order of Parliament", intended to gather money for the relief of victims of a great fire in Cumberland, which had allegedly 'consumed four hundred and twelve dwelling-houses' and cost 'the lives of fifty-and-seven men, women and children and four other women lying in childbirth with their young infants newly borne' at Kerswicke (Keswick) in Cumberland, an incident probably hardly known in London.[147]

It is difficult to arrive at any general explanation for this category of imposture, especially with regard to an increase in the phenomenon. Instead we should pay attention to the ambiguities inherent in any situation. The cases do however reveal some suggestive aspects of early modern officialdom. First of all, central and local bureaucracies were slow to evolve and only half-developed; even leading royal ministers had staff working for them on a largely private basis.[148] At the local level, parish officers such as constables were essentially ordinary householders, serving unpaid and for usually only one year. There existed no clear visual identification such as uniforms, which made impersonation relatively easy. Thus the boundaries of 'officialdom' were far more blurred than today. As will be seen in the case of William Fuller, who passed himself off as a government official and sold offices, most officials were not subject to strict regulations, and though the latter existed they were handled very flexibly. Instruments such as warrants, letters, proclamations or seals, through which the impostors presented themselves as officials, were hardly verifiable by the people but their symbolism was respected. This illustrates the importance but also the uncertainty of written documents serving as identification features and credentials, and perhaps their relative 'novelty' in the consciousness of contemporaries. It is possible that people were less aware that such documents could be forged – yet we should bear in mind that the forgery of documents was nothing peculiar to the early modern period.

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[147] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, p. 217.
[148] See G.E. Aylmer, *The King's Servants. The civil service of Charles I, 1625-42* (2nd edn, London, 1974), pp. 77-81.

In the previous section we have seen that some people tried to impersonate officials by means of a forged document, usually to exact money. There are also many cases of temporary imposture, with the primary intention of gaining money or property by forging letters, bonds, bills or even a will in the name of real personages. Rather than the individual, a document verifying or substituting for that individual lies at the core of this imposture. Writing skills were still far from universal and important documents were often written down by scriveners. Thus personal handwriting, for instance, – and in some cases even signatures – played a different role in establishing the authenticity of a letter. This sort of fraud aroused concern as early as the reign of Henry VIII, leading in 1541 to 'An Act concerning counterfeit Letters or privy Tokens to receive Money or Good in other Mens Names'.[149] In 1607, Thomas Holford, a labourer, forged letters purporting to be from Catherine Daunocke to obtain £6 13s. 4d. from Margery Heyton, her sister, and the wife of Francis Heyton, Esquire.[150] How the Heytons exposed the fraud is not known. While this seems to have concerned a private matter, similar methods of deceit were applied in business activities. In 1652, Edward Double, a labourer of Leeds (Kent), being "an evil-disposed person and not minding to get his living by truth", forged a letter allegedly from one Thomas Colez, a fuller of Dover, to another fuller of Leeds, William Danne, with which he managed to obtain from Danne 5 1/4 yards of broadcloth worth fifty-two shillings.[151]

Earlier, in 1612, Thomas Gunvyll, scrivener, and John Allen, labourer, of West Thurrock, were both indicted for cozening. Gunvyll, whose profession called for advanced writing skills, forged a letter in the name of Sir John Lucey, instructing one Thomas Petchey, a yeoman of West Thurrock to pay £36 10s. to a London merchant

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[149] 33 Henry VIII, c. 1.
[150] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments James I*, p. 45.
[151] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments 1649-1659*, p. 139.

named Robert Johnson on 30 October in the parish church. Petchey followed the instructions, and on the appointed day, Gunvyll and Allen, masquerading as Johnson's servants, came to the church and received the money from him. The whole fraud was exposed, and Gunvyll and Allen were both found guilty and pilloried, with a paper on their heads reading 'for getting money by a counterfeit letter'. Both were then to be imprisoned until they reimbursed Petchey the £36 10s;[152] Gunvyll, however, made his escape a few days later.[153] The relation of the four parties involved is unclear, but they must have known each other to some extent. Petchey at least must have been acquainted with Johnson, whose reputation as a London merchant he considered virtuous; Gunvyll and Allen were well informed about the probably secure business relation between Petchey and Johnson, a relation based on mutual honesty, trust and reliability. In following the instructions in the letter, Petchey was placing his trust in the writing and the signature it bore, and in the authority of such a written document. Even though the position of Sir John Lucey is unclear, as a figure of high social standing, he functioned as a mediator of trust, but he too seems to have been a victim of identity theft for his signature had been forged.

Early modern financial practices might appear insecure to the modern reader, but overall they worked reasonably well. These cases hint both at ways of trading by means of mutual trust and the increasing trade networks that required new means by which such trust could be secured. But they illustrate too the fragility of business practices, which involved both primitive means of communication and the problem of how to ensure the security of a deal. The more detailed explorations of William Morrell, William Stroud and William Fuller, below, will show how similar problems persisted throughout the period. The fact that Petchey had faith in the pretended servants illustrates that trust was not simply confined to one person but involved the whole household and, as Lucey's

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[152] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments James I*, pp. 115-16.
[153] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments James I*, p. 127.

involvement shows, could extend further to a person's whole social network. The letter symbolised Johnson's reputation which covered that of his servants.

Another case involving the use of a letter and the pretended character of a servant to obtain clothes and money occurred in London in August 1638. One Margaret Michener, a London widow, wrote, in the name of Christian Oxnerd of Goldinglane (Middlesex) 'a deceitful and counterfeit letter' whose content was fully recorded:

> Sister, I remember my love very kindly unto you hopeing of your good health as I am att this present, And I give you great thankes for my wastcoate that you sent mee, And I desire you to send either a couple of smockes ready made or els as much Lockram as will make two very good and also a paire of stockinges of a good civill colour wosted I referre it to you, And also I desire you to send me vs. in money and an apron to weare every day such a one as you shall thincke fitt, for a gowne I shall need none yet, for I shall have a morninge gowne. My Lady Smith's daughter at Hammersmith is dead. The messenger is a safe woman, you need not to feare to send by her; my linnen is not good enough, itt is found fault with, itt is too course because I lye with my ladyes daughter. I will, god willing, bee with you on Bartholomewe Daye, Soe for this time I rest Your loveing sister – Christian – August the 8th 1638.

After delivering the letter to Anne Oxnerd she gained possession of a waistcoat, stockings, a holland apron, a smock and some money, but then all was discovered; Michener was found guilty and sentenced to be whipped.[154] Sixty years later, one Mary Smith got herself taken in and looked after by a widow in London by producing a 'Sham-Letter' purporting to be written by the widow's relations, asking her to care for Smith.

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[154] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. III, pp. 69-70. For a similar case, see *OBP*, December 1689, trial of Rowland Smith (t16891211-24).

Smith stayed for one night, and then absconded with some goods; she too was found guilty and whipped.[155]

In all of these cases, a letter was considered proof of both authority and identity. It was used as a means to change one's identity and to obtain money or other goods from private persons or merchants. Unfortunately, we seldom have further information about these people and the stories behind their cheats. But it is clear that the impostors had managed to provide themselves with details of the history of the people they wanted to cheat. Moreover, in the absence of face-to-face contact between the victim and the prime offender, the impostor's performance was unimportant; contact existed only by means of letters and intermediaries.

Although forged wills were no novelty in the period, the Old Bailey proceedings of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reveal an increased number of temporary impostures through the use of fraudulent wills. A well-documented and sensational example is the case of William Morrell explored in more detail below. In December 1691 Morrell took lodging at a London baker's, but soon afterwards he fell sick and drew up a will in the name of Humphrey Wickham, a well-off and well-known Oxfordshire gentleman.[156] Far more common was for women to forge wills in order to receive the wages of their missing husbands. Mary Freeman of Aldgate, widow, was bound over to the Middlesex Sessions in 1653 'for attesting herselfe to be the wife of a Souldier lately slaine at sea and produceing a counterfeite certificate under ye hands of a pretended Ministers Clerke in Gloucestershire to iustifye her said false attestation'.[157] The Old Bailey proceedings of the first half of the eighteenth century contain a number of similar deceptions. An aftermath of the British intervention in the war of Spanish Succession, they involved mainly the wives of mariners. Provision for the widows and

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[155] *OBP* (23 May 2005), October 1699, trial of Mary Smith (t16991011-6).
[156] See chapter 6.
[157] LMA, MJ/SR/1115/70.

orphans of soldiers and sailors had been established by Queen Anne in 1706,[158] but insufficient procedures for the identification of genuine claimants as well as registration of casualties facilitated misuse of benefit. In December 1714, John Jones and Mary Hopgood were both sentenced to stand three times in the pillory. She was charged for 'personating and he for counselling and perswading her to personate Elizabeth', widow of Henry Car, a mariner, by which means they defrauded George Veale of the sum of £39 14s.[159] Frances Wetheridge, alias Green, forged a warrant and employed Ann Grant to impersonate the widow of John Murray to receive £10 9s. of the 'late Queen's Bounty-Money for Widows', whose Husbands were slain in the Service of the Crown.[160] Sarah Ambrose too was found guilty of forging a will in order to receive the wages of Humphry Bishop, a mariner.[161] Men, for their part, sometimes tried to obtain wages dishonestly by assuming the identity of a sailor. One Humphry Iveson pretended to be Benjamin Yeomans and sold two pay tickets worth twenty pounds to Arthur Beach. When Beach travelled down to Plymouth to claim the wages, the rightful owner of the tickets was found; Iveson was fined twenty pounds and imprisoned.[162] In 1749, James Rankin, by contrast, went himself and claimed to be John Sample with the intention of receiving the wages of fourteen pounds in wages due to Sample for service on board the 'Shirley Man of War'.[163] We can only speculate about the relationship between the impersonators and impersonated; they might have been neighbours, friends or relatives, and despair or merely the prospect of easy money drew the former to a temporary imposture. Personal information, with input from someone close to the person being impersonated, was essential. Iveson said he had found the pay tickets, but more likely he had stolen them.

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[158] *An Act for the Amendment of the Law, and the better Advancement of Justice.* See *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, Vol. 3, 1695-1706* (1742).
[159] *OBP* (23 May 2005), December 1714, trial of John Jones and Mary Hopgood (t17141209-17).
[160] *OBP* (23 May 2005), February 1716, trial of Frances Wetheridge (t17160222-11).
[161] *OBP* (23 May 2005), November 1716, trial of Sarah Ambrose (t17161105-92). See also *OBP*, January 1717, trial of Elizabeth Boreman (t17170111-22); February 1717, trial of William and Elizabeth Watson (t17170227-56); April 1727, trial of Eleanor Cavernor (t17270412-49); August 1727, trial of Margaret Swift (t17270830-43).
[162] *OBP* (23 May 2005), October 1699, trial of Humphry Iveson (t16991011-49).
[163] *OBP* (23 May 2005), July 1749, trial of James Rankin (t17490705-89).

Others might indeed have found letters or other papers from which they obtained the necessary information. We seldom get to know how such frauds were exposed, in Iveson's case it was because the rightful owner was known. But we might assume that such identity frauds happened more often than documented. In the absence of formal identification documents or any other credentials, deceptions could be brief and quite easy, and had only to be staged before a few officials.

Forged documents, or fraud for financial purposes in general, as well as the issue of bodily performance, introduced in the context of the false beggar, will frequently reappear throughout the following chapters. Conflicts, which arose over professionalisation and institutionalisation, as we have seen in the context of bogus officials, lie also at the bottom of another problematic prevalent throughout the early modern period: medical imposture. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

QUACKS, CHARLATANS AND MOUNTEBANKS – NOTORIOUS MEDICAL

IMPOSTORS?

According to contemporary accounts quacks swarmed throughout the country.[1] It is not

surprising that itinerant practitioners selling herbal mixtures, quintessences, stones and

amulets, merged in the mind of the authorities with vagrants, those, for instance,

described in the Elizabethan Act of 1572 as 'fayninge themselves to have knowledge in

Phisnomye, Palmestrye, and other abused Scyences', or the 'Juglers, Pedlars, Tynkers

and Petye Chapmen'.[2] But concern over ignorant practitioners was exposed much earlier

in an Act passed in 1512;[3] at a time when London was faced with a crisis in public health,

some had already felt need for regulation. This chapter will focus on two main questions:

Who was considered an impostor and by whom? What were the performative strategies

of medical impostors? In one sense, false beggars who simulated a disease, could also be

considered medical impostors as they assumed the role of the patient, but this dimension

will not be considered here. The chapter will argue that many of those labelled medical

impostors were perceived as a threat to both 'regular' and 'irregular practitioners',[4] and to

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[1] The theme not only occurs in literature but as we will see also in advertisements by quacks. See *A Collection of 231 Advertisements etc. chiefly relating to quack medicines* (1665-1715). BL, 551.32, e.g. ff. 11, 37, 118, 140, 142; Roy Porter, *Quacks. Fakers & charlatans in English medicine* (Stroud, 2000), ch. 1.

[2] 14 Elizabeth I, c. 5.

[3] 3 Henry VIII, c. 11. See also George Clark, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1964), Vol. I, p. 54.

[4] In the seventeenth century licensed healers were physicians, surgeons and midwives. Physicians were licensed by bishops, universities and the Royal College of Physicians of London (RCP); sometimes they became members of provincial medical guilds. Surgeons were licensed by bishops and universities, midwives by bishops. I have adopted the terminology 'regular and irregular practitioners' from Margaret Pelling, who points out that licenses were exemptions. Lucinda McCray Beier, *Sufferers & Healers. The experience of illness in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1987), pp. 8-50, at p. 9; Margaret Pelling, *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London. Patronage, physicians and irregular practitioners, 1550-1640* (Oxford, 2004), p. 10.

the College of Physicians of London, but were not necessarily impostors in the narrow sense. To comprehend both the role of those labelled impostors and the label itself, it is important to take into consideration those who applied these labels as well as the people 'deceived', i.e. those seeking medical advice. We will also find that medical imposture was not confined to the interrelationships between these three groups, but was something that could be perceived as a threat to the religious and social order, or the body politic.

What was a medical impostor? Among the several expressions used in the early modern period, 'quack', 'quacksalver', 'charlatan', 'mountebank' or 'empirick' were the most common; here, 'medical impostor' will subsume these expressions. Initially 'quack' seems to have been a collective term to cover all kinds of cheats related to medical and similar contexts, such as astrology; in the eighteenth century the term was also applied more widely with reference to politics and religion.[5] In addition to describing a person practising unscientific, 'irrational' methods of healing, 'quack' could refer to someone pretending to possess great knowledge of any subject. 'Impostor' and 'quack' were frequently used synonymously. The words 'charlatan', 'quacksalver' and 'quack', first recorded in 1605, 1579 and 1659 respectively, had also a similar meaning, namely 'an empiric who pretends to possess wonderful secrets, especially in the healing art, an empiric or impostor in medicine'.[6] 'Mountebank' and 'Cheap Jack' referred to quacks

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[5] John Wesley (1703-91) and the Methodists were condemned as religious quacks, and 'Wilkite rabble-rousing as political quackery', while the caricaturist James Gillray portrayed Charles James Fox (1749-1806) as the 'Westminster Mountebank'. The physician James Makittrik Adair (1728-1802) mentioned in his *Essays on Fashionable Disorders* (1790) regal quacks such as 'Massinello, Oliver Cromwell, and the late Pretender to the British throne'. Tobias Smollett (1721-71) wrote in *Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1762) that 'we have quacks in religion, quacks in physic, quacks in law, quacks in politics, quacks in patriotism, quacks in government'. Roy Porter, *Health for Sale. Quackery in England 1660-1850* (Manchester, 1989), p. 12; James M. Adair, *Essays on Fashionable Disorders* (London, 1790), p. 75; Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (London, 1762), Vol. I, ch. 10, pp. 201-2.

[6] *OED*. In his dictionary, Samuel Johnson defined the quack as a 'vain boastful pretender to physick; one who proclaims his own medical abilities in publick places'. Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. II (London, 1755). 'Quacksalver' means an 'ignorant person who pretends to knowledge of medicine or of wonderful remedies'. 'Quack' means an 'ignorant pretender to medical or surgical skill; one who boasts to have a knowledge of wonderful remedies; and empiric or impostor in medicine'. *OED*. For charlatans, see also David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester, 1998), esp. pp. 96-124; idem, '"Charlatans, Mountebanks and other similar People". The regulation and role of itinerant practitioners in early modern Italy', *Social History*, 20 (1995),

who touted their skills in the street or on stage, especially itinerant vendors of medicines. In a more extended sense, 'mountebank' was also applied in the political context.[7] Ultimately, these were pejorative terms for an unlicensed healer, often considered ignorant, unlearned and unscrupulous, and thus carry a strong implication of fraud, an image which is also reflected in contemporary literature. *The Character of a Quack-Astrologer* (1673) illustrates that supernatural power, science and criminal activities were intermingled in the perception of the quack. In one passage the quack-astrologer is likened to a gypsy, wizard, conjurer, cheat or 'three-penny prophet', to 'Doctor Faustus in swadling Clouts', and later, to the thief.[8] The meaning of the word 'quack' was thus much extended. Roy Porter is probably right in pointing out that 'those who denounced medical quackery often contended (partly to establish guilt by association) that it was but one symptom of a grand conspiracy of chicanery and delusion'.[9]

But who, then, was considered a medical impostor, and by whom? We will see that the term 'quack' was used to describe someone claiming medical skills or university degrees to gain the status of a licensed physician. It could also refer to someone using techniques and forms of knowledge which were disapproved of as 'superstitious', but which the individual genuinely believed in. It will be seen that there is often a link between these two groups, and that many of those labelled impostors belonged to the category of those Margaret Pelling recently subsumed under 'irregulars'.[10]

Hence, not all labelled quacks or charlatans conformed to the stereotypes outlined above. As evidence from medical advertisements shows, quacks often used these

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pp. 297-314; Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Sur quelques figures de Charlatans à la Renaissance. Apparence et réalité du charlatanism', in Marie Thérèse Jones-Davies (ed.), *Devins et Charlatans au temps de la Renaissance* (Paris, 1979), pp. 35-58.

[7] *OED*, 'quack 2', 'mountebank'. The Earl of Rochester wrote in his handbill: 'the Politician is, & must be a Mountebank in State Affairs, and the Mountebank no doubt, (if he thrives) is an errant Politician in Physick'. *A Collection of 185 Advertisements chiefly relating to quack medicines. The Greater part English, the rest French, German and Italian 1660-1716.* BL, C.112.f.9, f. 41, p. 4; also in Thomas Alcock, *The Famous Pathologist or The Noble Mountebank (1687)*, ed. Vivian De Sola Pinto (Nottingham, 1961), p. 34.

[8] [William Ramesey ?], *The Character of a Quack-Astrologer: Or The Spurious Prognosticator Anatomiz'd* (London, 1673), sig. A1r-v, B3r. For another stereotypical description of a quack, see Ned Ward, *The London Spy*, ed. Paul Hayland (East Lansing, Michigan, 1993), pp. 103-6.

[9] Porter, *Health*, p. 12; idem, *Quacks*, ch. 1.

[10] Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 10.

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stereotypes to denounce others, as obviously all were keen to distance themselves from 'the quack'.[11] But more serious denunciations came from regular practitioners and learned physicians, who often sought to take legal action. It is to the latter that we shall now turn.

So-called quacks might be simply outsiders who were prosecuted because they had infringed the monopoly of the Royal College of Physicians of London. Charles Goodall's strongly apologetic *Historical Account of the College's Proceedings* (1684) provides a rich, though tendentious source to illuminate the conflict between so-called quacks and regular physicians and surgeons, and between magical healing and the new medicine of the day.[12] Goodall was a zealous advocate of the Royal College of Physicians, deeply convinced that those he had to deal with were not only 'a sort of men not of Academical, but Mechanick education', but also 'either actually engaged in the late Rebellion, or bred upon some mean and contemptible trades, [and] never taught the duty they owe to God or their Sovereign', their country and its laws.[13] According to his account, the medical marketplace was full of impostors. The typical irregular practitioner pursued by the College was male, although female practitioners pursued by the College comprise 15.4 per cent of the irregulars. Some of the accused were in fact well-educated men, often from good families. Some were called ignorant and accused of killing rather than curing their patients, others were accused of forging licences. The College used many

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[11] See the handbill entitled 'A Caution to the Unwary' by Edward Grey. *A Collection of 231 Advertisements*, f. 121. See also ff. 11, 37, 38, 118, 142.

[12] Apart from biographies of fellows, *The Historical Account* describes prosecutions of empirics and uneducated physicians, extracted from the College's records. For Goodall, see Harold J. Cook, 'Goodall, Charles, (c. 1642-1712)', *DNB*.
A more detailed account is provided by the College's *Annals*, as well as by the law courts. Goodall made a selection of irregulars whose cases were most relevant in terms of the definition and establishment of the College. For a more recent approach, see the works by Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster. Pelling's *Medical Conflicts* focuses on those 714 irregular practitioners summoned before the College. Charles Webster brought to light new perspectives. Charles Webster, 'Medicine as Social History. Changing ideas on doctors and patients in the age of Shakespeare', in Lloyd G. Stevenson (ed.), *Celebration of Medical History* (Baltimore, 1982), pp. 103-26, esp. pp. 116-17.

[13] Charles Goodall, *The Royal College of Physicians of London Founded and Established by Law; As appears by Letters Patents, Acts of Parliament, adjudged Cases, &c. and an Historical Account of the College's proceedings against Empiricks and unlicensed Practisers in every Princes Reign from their first Incorporation to the Murther of the Royal Martyr, King Charles I.* (London, 1684), sig. A4r.

contemporary stereotypes to describe irregulars.[14] Founded in 1518, it endeavoured to control the practice of medicine within the city of London and a seven-mile radius around the metropolis.[15] It had a very small and select number of members, limited to Englishmen with university education, and was empowered to fine, imprison and bar from practice any person without licence or whose standards of competence and conduct were insufficient; women were not eligible. However, even in the sixteenth century the College's influence in London as well as in the countryside was limited, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had lost the ability to regulate and control the medical milieu.[16]

Without doubt, there were some ignorant practitioners, like one John Hogsflesh, a surgeon 'accused by several for giving Physick, having no skill nor authority so to doe'. Allegedly he gave one patient 'physick for the Pox', who subsequently died of that 'physick with his mouth full of Ulcers'; another who had swallowed his medicines was said to have 'vomited so vehemently, that his sight and hearing failed him for a time'. The College censors condemned Hogsflesh to prison and fined him ten pounds.[17] On the other hand, the mathematician Thomas Hood was temporarily forbidden to practise medicine despite having acquired a BA, an MA, a medical licence, and an MD from Cambridge.[18] Since the majority of healers in seventeenth-century England practised without authorisation, those summoned were mostly unlicensed healers with, sometimes, decent medical skills, often combining astrology and magical healing with humanistic

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[14] See Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, chs. 5 and 6. Especially in the 1610s and 20s, 'Puritan', like 'papist' became part of the negative stereotype as the College was keen to track down dissidents. Ibid., pp. 325-27.

[15] After the Act of Parliament in 1523, which gave the charter statutory authority, the RCP tried to extend its monopoly over the whole country in order to take the licensing of physicians out of the hands of the bishops and to gain the exclusive right of licensing. However, the RCP never developed the administrative apparatus necessary to enforce its power outside London. Beier, *Sufferers*, p. 12.

[16] Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, 'Medical Practitioners', in Charles Webster (ed.), *Health, Medicine and the Mortality in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 165-235, at p. 168; Harold J. Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (Ithaca, 1986).

[17] Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 446. For further examples, see Clark, *History*, Vol. I, pp. 102, 114-18, 142, 194-96, 215-17, 262-63, 335-36; Vol. II, pp. 432, 511, 515.

[18] He was granted a conditional licence on 5 August 1597. Clark, *History*, Vol. I, pp. 165-66, 208-10. See also Pelling and Webster, *Medical Practitioners*, p. 185.

medical knowledge. The College regarded them as rivals and their practice as superstitious, whereas, for the most part, these practitioners believed in what they were doing. Among the accused were prominent figures such as Simon Forman, denounced as a 'pretended Astrologer and great Impostor'.[19] Despite having only a limited formal education, Forman was a knowledgeable practitioner with a good reputation,[20] who also wrote several works from his own experiences. Whereas one George Hacker, indicted in 1600, had simply forged his licence and 'defrauded the queen's subjects', Forman was initially imprisoned merely for not having secured a licence to practise, after which he was increasingly under surveillance.[21] Goodall recounts a conflict between the College and Forman that lasted for seventeen years, with repeated imprisonment and fines. Forman's alleged confessions include the common charges of illiteracy, ignorance, and the use of magic and astrology resulting in the death of a patient. Examined by a board of physicians on the principles of astronomy as well as the 'Elements of Physick', Forman supposedly 'confessed that he had never read any Author in Physick but one *Cockis* an obscure english writer, and of no reputation', and that he only practised by his skill in astrology. According to Goodall, he answered 'so absurdly and ridiculously, that it caused great mirth and sport amongst the Auditors'.[22]

Better known men, such as the medical writers or practitioners Robert Recorde, Sir Thomas Elyot, John Dee and Timothie Bright, were probably too well-qualified and

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[19] Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 337.

[20] According to Lilly, Forman took 'his degree of doctor beyond seas'. William Lilly, *William Lilly's History of his Life and Times, From the year 1602 to 1684. Written by himself* (London, 1715), pp. 18-9. Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman, astrologer, alchemist, and physician* (Oxford, 2005), Part I. For a view of Forman as a notorious and exotic character, see Alfred L. Rowse, *Simon Forman. Sex and society in Shakespeare's age* (London, 1974).

[21] He was found guilty, whipped and sent back to his place of settlement. Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 493-94. Judith Cook, *Dr Simon Forman. A most notorious physician* (London, 2001), pp. 23-4. Barbara Howard Traister, *The Notorious Astrological Physician of London. Works and days of Simon Forman* (Chicago, 2001), p. 47.

[22] This was a book by John Cockys of Oxford, consisting of lectures on medical practice, that existed only in manuscript form. Cook, *Simon Forman*, pp. 21,76; Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 337. On Forman's education and reading, see Kassell, *Medicine*, esp. pp. 25-37.

well-connected to be prevented from practising.[23] But many other practitioners had links to powerful people too. John Lambe, 'commonly called Doctor Lambe', was famous for his skill in astrology as well as for his relation to the Duke of Buckingham, for which he was hated.[24] A pamphlet describes him as 'an Impostour, whom the credulous ignorance of the common people had raysed to that Fame', who after professing 'Physick' in the country turned to 'other mysteries' such as fortune-telling, finding lost goods and devices to 'shew to young people the faces of their Husbands or wiues the escapes and faults of their Husbands, and to husbands of their wiues'.[25] He was well known throughout London, and both feared and admired for 'his great skill in hidden Arts of Magick and Astrology', especially by 'some Ladies of Quality'.[26] He first came to the notion of the College in 1619 when he 'was making money by crystal-gazing and other frauds mainly among City ladies'.[27] Lambe also had a record of convictions for sorcery, but was protected by the Duke. Six months after having been imprisoned and examined by the College, Lambe was battered to death in the street.[28] Roger Powel, active in the early seventeenth century and denounced as another 'very eminent and famous Impostor', was committed to prison and fined, but through his connections to the Earl of Derby he was saved from total exclusion from medical practice on condition of promising not to

[23] Pelling and Webster, *Medical Practitioners*, pp. 182-83. On patronage influencing decisions of the College, see Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, esp. pp. 242-43, 315-22.

[24] Buckingham consulted Lambe in 1622 concerning his brother's insanity and became a regular client. When he was attacked in Parliament in 1628, ballads circulated insisting on Lambe's influence over the Duke. Many people declared that Buckingham was responsible for the failure of Denbigh's expedition to La Rochelle, and Lambe was 'popularly regarded as the instigator of [Buckingham's] nefarious designs'. Buckingham helped Lambe to escape when he was sentenced to death for murder by magic and poisoning. Samuel R. Gardiner, *History of England. From the accession of James I. to the outbreak of the Civil War 1603-1642*, 10 Vols. (London, 1883-84), Vol. VI, pp. 318-19. For the popular belief in Lambe's supernatural powers, see also John Rushworth, *Historical Collections. Beginning the Sixteenth Year of King James anno 1618. And ending the fifth year of King Charles, anno 1629. Digested in order of time* (London, 1682), p. 391.

[25] *A Briefe Description of The notoriovs Life of Iohn Lambe, otherwise called Doctor Lambe. Together with his Ignominious Death* (Amsterdam [London], 1628), p. 2. See also [Martin Parker], *The Tragedy of Doctor Lambe, the great suposed coniurer, who was wounded to death by saylers and other lads on Friday the 14. of Iune, 1628, and dyed in the Poultry Counter, neere Cheapside, on the Saturday following. To the tune of Gallant come away* (London, 1628).

[26] Goodall, *Royal College*, pp. 397-98.

[27] Clark, *History*, Vol. 1, p. 259; Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 397.

[28] *CSDP, 1628-1629*, pp. 94, 169, 172; Clark, *History*, Vol. I, p. 259. See also *Briefe Description of The notoriovs Life of Iohn Lambe*.

'practise Physick in London or within 7 miles'.[29] Among the many migrants attracted by the growing metropolis and regarded as intruders, impostors, or even conspirators,[30] were some medical practitioners from the continent, sometimes protected by persons of quality, like the Neapolitan Dr. Bartholomew Jaquinto, who in the 1620s cured the Earl of Manchester. Harboured by the Venetian ambassador he was tolerated for three years, but then notwithstanding accused of malpractice. A decade later, Gaspar Tomand of Zürich, a friend of Richard Napier, simply presented the excuse of having been ignorant of the law about licences and claimed that he treated only his own countrymen. Prescriptions found, however, suggested his treatment of divers persons of quality, and he lay under suspicion of being a clergyman, not a physician.[31]

It is difficult to detect among these people the 'real' impostor. Forged documents and pretended skills seem to be the issues at debate. People such as Thomas Frankland (1633-90), who appears a more obvious impostor, had 'only' forged his documents, but he probably performed adequately within his community. He passed as M.D. in London with forged testimonials, asserting when asked for details of his education by members of either Oxford or Cambridge University that he had taken his degree at the other. Ironically, Frankland had even been a censor and a fellow of the College of Physicians for six years before the fraud was detected.[32] False names play no significant role, although self-fashioning was of great importance as practitioners often Latinised (or in the case of foreigners Anglicised) their names to make their identity sound more sophisticated.[33]

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[29] Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 333.
[30] Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 165-69.
[31] Clark, *History*, Vol. I, p. 262. For the case of Mr. Merry, who was imprisoned by the College, but then protected by the secretary of state, the Earl of Sunderland, in March 1687, see ibid., p. 336.
[32] Clark, *History*, Vol. I, p. 338. See also G.H. Martin, 'Frankland, Thomas (1632/3-1690)', *DNB*.
[33] See Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, pp. 137-38. On self-fashioning through handbills, see further below.

From a scientific point of view, there is no sense in distinguishing the quack from the 'regular' doctor.[34] Astrological practice formed part of the belief system of typical Stuart practitioners from Richard Foster to William Lilly; Nicholas Culpeper (1616-54), 'produced a series of books on astrological, herbal and Paracelsian medicine, as well as the first English translation of the London College of Physicians' Latin dispensary'.[35] Yet practitioners who employed astrological or magical techniques had a patently uneasy position, trapped between licensed practitioners, church and state. They were attacked for practising without licence, for using written or spoken charms, and were sometimes charged with witchcraft.[36] It is clear that the 'official' science of the age sought to define and defend itself by 'conjuring up wild images of dangerous outsiders, deviants, delinquents, and monsters';[37] as the author of *The Character of a Quack-Astrologer* claimed, 'all the wrinkles on his Necromantick brow represent the 12 signs, & all the Monsters on the celestial Globe are drawn to the life in his countenance'.[38] If we were to believe Goodall's account, Forman, Lambe and Powel were all ignorant and fraudulent practitioners. The bias of his account is clear, and recent research provides a portrait that also proves it to be tendentious.[39] The College, which was rankled by Forman's success, attacked him for nearly two decades. Despite the assaults, he established himself as an industrious and successful physician and astrologer, who attained both his financial and social ambitions. Lambe and Powel too had a good reputation, with members of the élite among their clients. Not all unlicensed practitioners were unlearned and ignorant of medical knowledge and languages. In spite of laying claims to miraculous powers,

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[34] Porter, *Health*, pp. 6, 15.

[35] Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power. Astrology in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 23; Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press. English almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979), pp. 180, 204-14.

[36] Although midwives belonged to the licensed healers they were frequently attacked for ignorance and immorality and associated with witchcraft. Beier, *Sufferers*, pp. 16-18, 24. On midwives see also Hilary Marland, *The Art of Midwifery. Early modern midwives in Europe* (London, 1993); Ann Giardina Hess, 'Community Case Studies of Midwives from England and New England, c. 1650-1720' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1994); *The Midwifes Book. Or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered, by Jane Sharp*, ed. Elaine Hobby (Oxford, 1999); Doreen Evenden, *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 2000).

[37] Porter, *Health*, p. 10.

[38] *The Character of a Quack-Astrologer*, sig. B1r.

[39] See Traister, *Astrological Physician*; Cook, *Simon Forman*; Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*.

wonder-cures and encyclopaedic knowledge, some enjoyed the patronage of popes, kings, princes and the learned as well as the approval of large crowds of common people. Thus the discussion of medical imposture uncovers a rather isolated, fragile and weak College.[40] The cases reveal suspicion over the use of astrology and magic, and illustrate a dispute over what constituted legitimate medical knowledge and practice. However, members of all social strata believed in astrology and magic power. We should bear in mind that 'therapeutic magic was part of a serious intellectual framework in the early modern period, its rationale articulated most cogently by the Italian philosopher and physician, Marcilio Ficino'.[41]

What were the performative strategies of quacks? Not all impostures were as deliberate as that of John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, rake, poet and nobleman, who in his temporary assumed role as the Italian doctor Alexander Bendo seems to have combined all the features of the stereotypical quack.[42] Although Rochester was different from the quacks that roamed the country, he provides a perfect example to sketch some of the elements of the process of deception. Rochester's mind was as complex as his actions. He was a mysterious character, preoccupied with his own identity and sexuality, who often dressed up as other people, male and female – sometimes 'as a Porter, or as a Beggar; sometimes to follow some mean Amours ... at other times, meerly for diversion'.[43] After being banned from court in 1673, he took refuge in the disguise of a city merchant, enjoying the company and lavish entertainments of prosperous 'cits'. Even heaven he wished to enter in disguise, as he wrote on his deathbed to his doctor Thomas Pierce in July 1680: 'Pray for me Doctor ... Take heaven by force, and let me enter with

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[40] See Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*.
[41] Traister, *Astrological Physician*, p. 100.
[42] For Rochester, see James William Johnson, *A Profane Wit. The life of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* (Rochester, N.Y., 2004); Jeremy Lamb, *So Idle a Rogue. The life and death of Lord Rochester* (London, 1993).
[43] Gilbert Burnet, *Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Rochester. Written by his own direction on his deathbed* (London, 1680), pp. 27-8.

you as it were in disguise'.[44] Rochester, readmitted to the court in 1676, later became

involved in a riotous accident, after which he was suspected of murder.[45] He fled into a

series of disguises, of which his masquerade as a quack was perhaps the most elaborate.

If we are to believe the doctor's assistant and family friend, Thomas Alcock, who a

decade later recorded the episode for Anne Wilmot Baynton, Rochester's daughter, the

Earl took his escapade as an Italian mountebank *ad absurdum*.[46] But what performative

strategies were crucial to triumph as a stranger among a number of different sorts of

practitioners and to convince the public of one's skills? The interdependence between

performer and 'audience' plays here a crucial role. I would suggest that the ways quacks

achieved reputation and credit, in particular their reliance on credible witnesses,

resembles the processes of gaining credibility (later) applied in empirical natural

philosophy. The performance of a quack involved the establishment of matter of fact, i.e.

'the outcome of the process of having an empirical experience'. The three technologies

(literary, material and social) essential for the production and validation of matters of

fact, put forward by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer on the basis of Boyle's

experimental philosophy,[47] may also apply in this context.

First of all, we shall abandon the still widely held assumption of enormously

gullible early modern people. We should recall the context, in which only a small number

of licensed physicians were available, and only for a tiny minority; in which for most

people, the primary means of healing, often involving extreme remedial actions, were

therefore either self-medication, cunning men, or unlicensed physicians; in which

personal ill-health and experience of disease and death within one's close surroundings

undoubtedly induced a state of anxiety; and in which for many a contemporary,

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[44] Johnson, *Profane Wit*, pp. 183, 339; John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *The Letters of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (London, 1980), p. 246.

[45] Johnson, *Profane Wit*, pp. 250-51.

[46] Alcock, *Famous Pathologist*. Gilbert Burnet mentions the episode very briefly. He claims to have obtained the information from Rochester himself, who 'lay his thoughts open without any Disguise'. Burnet, *Some Passages*, pp. 26-7, quote from p. 31.

[47] Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump. Hobbes, Boyle and the experimental life* (Princeton, 1985).

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regardless of social background, 'magic' provided a deeper psychological dimension than other medical options being established. As collections of advertisements and handbills of the period between 1660 and 1716 illustrate, demand for medical cures as well as the offer of various medical practices on the medical market were both extensive. From an economic point of view, publicity was thus crucial, and as Porter showed for the long eighteenth century, quackery 'promoted itself through the spoken and printed word'.[48] It is plausible that the publication and circulation of numerous medical works and to some extent, though unsuited for scientific investigation, almanacs may have contributed to create a set of conventions for what Schaffer and Shapin, for a different scientific level, have termed an 'experimental community'. To some extent this also applies to what they call 'literary technology' and 'social technology';[49] as Barbara Shapiro argued, '[s]omething akin to Boyle's "virtual witnessing" was shared by several, if not all, early modern "discourses of fact"'.[50] Like many quacks, who had their helpers, a boy announcing his arrival or a medical assistant, Rochester had a group of assistants to promote his business. Carpenters built a stage, while 'sonorous Hawkers' dispersed his handbills in the streets to gain the eye and ear of clients.[51] It was important not only to stand out among other medical practitioners, but also to convince as a 'saviour figure' in a vile world, a common strategy in advertisements.[52] One quack styling himself the 'High-German Doctor' claimed in his handbill testimonies from '3 Emperors and 9 Kings, as also from 7 Dukes and electoral Princes, as the Romish, Turkish, and Japanese Emperors; [and] can show his testimonies in 36 Languages, which no other Doctor can

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[48] Porter, *Quacks*, p. 87.

[49] 'Literary technology' means the publication of results for the use of those people who are not direct witnesses, whereas 'social technology' refers to the conventions experimental philosophers should use in dealing with each other. Schaffer and Shapin, *Leviathan*, pp. 77, 25. On almanacs, see Capp, *Astrology*, ch. 6.

[50] Shapiro argues that the 'concept of matters of fact' was established before it was adopted in natural philosophy. Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact. England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, 2000), p. 142.

[51] Alcock, *Famous Pathologist*, p. 27.

[52] *A Collection of 231 Advertisements*, ff. 37, 38, 118, 142.

show'.[53] In order to distinguish himself from 'this bastard race of Quacks, and Cheats', Rochester denounced all other doctors, apothecaries and astrologers as cheats and boasted himself in his sophisticated advertising bill as an honest man in a world 'where Virtue is so frequently exactly Counterfeited'. To distinguish between 'the False Physician, Astrologer &c and the true', he added, was a matter of experience and judgment; the 'first calls himself learned Doctor, sends forth his Bills, gives Physick, and Council, tells, and foretells, the other is bound to do just as much'.[54]

Apparel and bodily performance also played a crucial role in establishing authority. Rochester's masquerade was certainly ironic for the doctor's body was ravaged by the effects of syphilis, and he himself had long given up any hope in the power of established physicians. He set up his business in Tower Street, as

> the noble Doctor Alexand[e]r Bendo, in an old overgrown green Gown ...
> lyned through with exotick furrs of divers colours, an antique Cap, a great
> Reverend Beard, and a Magnificent false Medal sett round with glittering
> Pearl, rubies, and Diamonds of the same Cognation, hung about his Neck
> in a Massy Gold like Chaine of Princes mettle.[55]

Striding around in this bizarre apparel would certainly attract many a curious eye, and thus help to prepare the next stage of his performance, the direct encounter with an audience or with patients in his laboratory. A grave and confident voice, and the use of (pseudo-) medical jargon that included citations of writers, if possible in Latin or some other foreign language, the ability to capture the emotions and needs of the audience, formed the elements of the psychology of persuasion. The appeal of the exotic, obvious in Rochester's apparel, may have been significant, an aspect which also becomes evident from medical advertisements; many quacks advertising through handbills in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries claimed to have travelled through various

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[53] *A Collection of 185 Advertisements*, f. 77.
[54] *A Collection of 185 Advertisements*, f. 41, pp. 1-2; Alcock, *Famous Pathologist*, p. 34. Rochester's handbill was also a more subtle critique of everyday deception and hypocrisy in politics.
[55] Alcock, *Famous Pathologist*, p. 30.

places in Europe and 'beyond seas', to have cured kings or to possess medicines from abroad.[56] But so was the use of all kinds of eye-catching objects and instruments, in Shapin and Schaffer's words the 'material technology'.[57] Yet we ought to be cautious in reducing the quack's activities to a carnivalesque performance. The success of a practitioner also hinged on the relationship between physician and patient, which necessitated a high level of trust and compliance.[58] Although the quack differed from the regular practitioner in that he was speaking – in his open-air 'laboratory' – to an impersonal crowd, the latter would not remain passive throughout, but take an active role in explicitly participating in the experiment. While remedies were mixed and cures often performed on stage, spectators would stand in amazement or shout out, so conferring some sort of acceptance among themselves.[59] Assistants would do their own part in stimulating the mass dynamic of approval. As intimated above, the relationship and dynamic between performer and spectator resembles to some extent the situation in the laboratory of the experimental philosopher. Eye-witnesses were indispensable to assure the success of an empirical experience necessary for the proof of a claim. Boyle regarded the assurance of the 'relevant community' as vital as the actual performance of the experiment in order to yield matters of fact.[60] According to Boyle, witnessing was a collective act; '[i]n natural philosophy, as in criminal law, the reliability of testimony depended upon its multiplicity'.[61] Rochester slightly differed from the stereotypical charlatan performing on stage in that he also received his clients in 'his Laboratory', where he not only treated them, but could also top up trust (and fool them) by mixing his

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[56] *Collection of 231 Advertisements*, e.g. ff. 9, 11, 28, 34, 45, 50, 112, 156, 208; *A Collection of 185 Advertisements*, e.g. ff. 2, 7, 27, 30, 51, 67.

[57] Applied to Boyle's experiment, a 'material technology [was] embedded in the construction and operation of the air-pump'. Schaffer and Shapin, *Leviathan*, p. 25.

[58] Lauren Kassel has explored this crucial issue on the basis of Simon Forman's casebook. Lauren Kassel, 'How to Read Simon Forman's Casebooks. Medicine, astrology and gender in Elizabethan London', *Social History of Medicine*, 12 (1999), pp. 3-18, at p. 11.

[59] This refers to the patient too. The idea of patient's passivity has lost validity. See Webster, 'Medicine as Social History', p. 113. Kassel, 'Forman's Casebooks'. Pelling explores the patient's activity in terms of patronage complainants. Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, ch. 7.

[60] Schaffer and Shapin, *Leviathan*, p. 55.

[61] Schaffer and Shapin, *Leviathan*, p. 56.

remedies, which, according to Alcock were mainly soot, dust and dirt, in front of the

patients' eyes. He even offered a laboratory that respected the privacy of his patients;

temporarily cross-dressing, he impersonated his wife to treat female clients.[62]

The culture of quackery might appear a pseudo-scientific culture, which in many

cases might not have had much to do with the gentlemanly values of trust. However, and

as Barbara Shapiro has rightly argued on the basis of other aspects,[63] the ways credibility

was gained preceded the process of establishing facts, a process ascribed specifically to

natural philosophers by Schaffer and Shapin. Both experiments depended heavily on

eyewitnesses, and, although the quack utilised the miraculous, he was as keen to avoid

the impression of fiction and the imaginary as adherents of other discourses of fact. Of

course, a quack's performance differed from the immediate result of an experiment in that

the healing of the patient was only later confirmed; the patients of the notorious oculist

John Chevalier Taylor were instructed to keep bandaging on for several days, and thus

only realised that treatment had failed when he was already well away.[64] But in addition

to the three technologies involved, we may point to a number of factors with a more

psychological dimension that facilitated credibility, such as the appearance and rhetoric

of the quack as well as the delicate condition of the patient who anxiously sought healing.

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[62] Alcock, *Famous Pathologist*, p. 27.

[63] See Shapiro, *Culture*.

[64] John Taylor (1703-1772) was from a family with a medical background for several generations. He was well educated with MD degrees from Basel, Liège and Cologne, and visited most European courts treating among others Bach and Händel. He styled himself 'chevalier' and 'ophtalmiator pontifical, imperial and royal', and travelled around in coaches, accompanied by a number of liveried servants. Despite his failures, he undoubtedly possessed medical knowledge. See Roy Porter, 'Taylor, John (1703-1772)', *DNB*. See also John (Chevalier) Taylor, *The History of the Travels and Adventures of the Chevalier John Taylor, Ophtalmiater*, 3 Vols. (London, 1761); John Taylor [jr.], *The Life and extraordinary History of the Chevalier John Taylor*, 2 Vols. (London, 1761); [Anonymous], *The English Impostor detected; or, the History of the Life and Fumigation of the Renown'd Mr. J— T—, Oculist*. Dublin 1732; G. Coats, 'The Chevalier Taylor', in Robert Rutson James (ed.), *Studies in the History of Ophtalmology in England Prior to the Year 1800* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 132-219; David M. Jackson, 'Bach, Handel and the Chevalier Taylor', *Medical History*, 12 (1968), pp. 385-93; William. B. Ober, 'Bach, Handel and Chevalier Taylor', *New York State Journal of Medicine*, 69 (1969), pp. 1797-809. For further references see Porter, *Health*, pp. 66-8, 86-90.

In a world where new medical knowledge was intermingled with obscure healing techniques, miracles too were not unthinkable; for some Catholics and sectarians they were a fundamental part of the belief system. But as Eamon Duffy pointed out, 'the concept of miracle was theologically, socially, politically, intellectually uncomfortable';[65] the possibility of miracles presented a crucial issue of debate during the seventeenth century. The political and religious allusions of the word 'quack' should open up our horizons to consider at least some quacks within a much broader context. Like the vagrant, a quack might sometimes be perceived as destabilising the religious, political, and social order, and his activities as overtly seditious acts. So-called impostors can yield an insight into the conflict over supernatural power, evident in the cases of so called 'strokers'. John Aubrey, for instance, wrote of several people who allegedly possessed the power to heal the king's evil and claimed to be a seventh son whose power was a widespread belief. Apparently, such healing power belonged not only to kings but, according to 'our English Chronicles', to children such as one born in Kent, 'that at Two Years old Cured all Diseases'; the duke of Monmouth was also 'confidently reported' to have possessed the power to cure.[66] Touching was a common ritual among ordinary healers, which caused some to be suspected of witchcraft and magic, yet the ability to heal by touch had long been claimed for saints and the king. Tudor and Stuart monarchs actively employed the rite, and it was only after the Glorious Revolution that it declined; although the exiled Stuarts continued to perform the rite abroad, Queen Anne was the last English sovereign to perform the cure.[67] Several cases illustrate not only people challenging the exclusively royal power to heal scrofula, but also a clash of different belief systems. Whereas the authorities regarded such claims as seditious, superstitious and 'impostures', most of these practitioners presumably believed in their own claims,

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[65] Eamon Duffy, 'Valentine Greatrakes, The Irish Stroker. Miracle science, and orthodoxy in Restoration England', in Keith Robbins (ed.), *Religion and Humanism. Papers read at the eighteenth summer meeting and the nineteenth winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 251-73, at p. 256.
[66] John Aubrey, *Miscellanies* (London, 1697), pp. 97-102.
[67] Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch. Sacred monarchy and scrofula in England and France* (London, 1973), pp. 208-13, 219-23; Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 236, 228; Porter, *Quacks*, p. 67.

and were not deliberate impostors. As a brief case study, we will look at the story of James Leverett. A Chelsea gardener, sixty years old, as he told the College in 1637, he claimed to be a seventh son and so able to cure by touch alone the king's evil, dropsy fevers, agues, internal diseases, and external sores.[68] Leverett's claim was regarded as a blasphemous attack on the monarch's prerogative, while from the point of view of regular doctors it was an intrusive claim that cast doubt on their own knowledge and status. According to Goodall, more than a dozen people, mostly women, were allegedly cured by Leverett's touch, but he failed to prove his ability when examined; one patient claimed to have been benumbed in his hand and 'amazed in his head' for five hours after an examination session in the College.[69] William Clowes, the King's surgeon, stated that Leverett 'slighteth his Majesty's sacred gift of healing (by his blessed hand) that Disease commonly called the King's Evil', that he allured 'many Lords and Ladies' to buy the sheets he had slept in by claiming they were a 'special remedy for many Diseases (especially the rising Mother)', and deluded the sick with false hopes.[70] That the powers of seventh sons were held to be theoretically possible becomes evident from the fact that the College took efforts to track the claimant's origins, whereupon it proved that he was only the fourth son.[71] Even though his assertion to be a seventh son was an invention, Leverett presumably believed in his own powers, and so was not consciously an impostor. The claim reveals a further element in the long line of potential credentials –

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[68] The mythology of the 'seventh son' as someone who is preordained by his birthright to be endowed with special powers and gifts can be found in many major philosophies and cultures and is still disseminated. See, for example, P. K. Mitra, *Mundari Folk Tales* (London, 1956); Bloch, *Royal Touch*, ch. 4; Eugen Weber, 'Religion and Superstition in Nineteenth-Century France', *HJ*, 31 (1988), pp. 399-423, esp. p. 422. According to Thomas, cases are not recorded before the sixteenth, and in England rarely before the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. By 1700 a number of such healers had become known. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 237. For Leverett, see also Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 448; Geoffrey Keynes (ed.), *The Life of William Harvey* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 263-69.
The royal touch, however, was not regarded as something magical, and was included among the religious teachings of the Church in England; the healing ceremony was included in the Prayer Book.
[69] Goodall, *Royal College*, pp. 448, 453.
[70] Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 456.
[71] According to the register of St. Clement, Eastcheap, Leverett was only the fourth son of one Samuel Leverett, a butcher married to Agnes Whitaker on 13 February 1576, and was baptised on the 19 September 1585. Goodall, *Royal College*, p. 459.

here, myth mingles with the fact that birthright or family origins were indeed important legitimising factors. As we will see repeatedly, one's family origin was a crucial element to legitimise one's identity. James Middleton, in 1587, had bluntly declared himself to be a member of the Stuart dynasty, sprung from a line of Scottish kings and therefore vested with the power to heal the King's evil.[72] Although mythological belief is involved, the invention of family history might nevertheless hint at a struggle against rigid social structures that served to block upward mobility.

Of course, there were some who took advantage of popular belief, like Boisgaudre, a French prisoner for debt in the King's Bench, who in 1632 claimed to be able to cure the king's evil by reason of being a seventh son, and daily received a considerable number of visitors; he was probably trying to earn his release by exploiting a widespread belief.[73] Very different, a few years later, was the case of Richard Gilbert, whose healing power was proclaimed by his grandmother, received considerable attention and found its way into print.[74] People of all backgrounds made their pilgrimage to him, but unlike Boisgaudre, Gilbert did not charge any fees, accepting only 'fruit, sugar, points, garters, scarves and such like trifles'. Like Leverett, Gilbert presumably believed in his healing power. The bishop who reported the case concluded that the family did not use 'any imposture or deceit, but had been merely carried away by a simple credulity, which made them a little vainglorious'.[75]

All these cases occurred before 1649, which does not support the hypothesis that the execution of Charles I created an 'undoubted vacuum' of the rite, which opened the way for rival healers, frequently belonging to one of the interregnum sects.[76] Moreover, it

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[72] Thomas, *Religion*, p. 239.

[73] *CSPD, 1631-1633*, pp. xi-xiii, 252, 347-8; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 238.

[74] Thomas Lupton, *A Thousand Notable Things* (London, 1631). The book argued that the power of healing by touch was a natural gift possessed by such children and by kings. *CSPD, 1637*, p. 549.

[75] *CSPD, 1637*, pp. xl-xlii, 450, 548-49. See also the cases of one Hort, a blacksmith, (1638) and Christopher Barton of Shoreditch (1639). *CSPD, 1638-1639*, pp. 63, 68; Pelling, *Medical Conflicts*, p. 217.

[76] These are not the only cases. A blacksmith in Cromhall, Gloucestershire, claimed to have performed some successful cures in 1648. Another healer operated at Newgate in London. In

seems that the claims took on a stronger political dimension after the Restoration, during the period in which the Royal Society was founded. The best known was Valentine Greatrakes (1629-83), popularly known as Greatrakes the (Irish) Stroker.[77] What was the basis of his success? First, he claimed that God had directly endowed him with healing powers. He explained that he 'was moved by an impulse, which, sleeping or waking, in public or private, always dictated: "I have given thee the gift of curing the King's Evil"'.[78] Second, his healing power was viewed as successful, and Greatrakes gained many prominent supporters; some said that he achieved great success in curing cases which even the King had failed to cure.[79] Eventually, his healing power was both proclaimed and attacked in a flood of pamphlets;[80] it sparked off a lively debate among philosophers, scientist and physicians.[81] Boyle, for instance, denied neither the possibility of Greatrakes' healing power, nor the power of 'stroking' or miracles in general. This attitude makes sense in the context of his mechanical philosophy, whose underlying

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Yorkshire Dr. Robert Ashton claimed healing power and carried out monthly ceremonies. Of the sectarians, the most notable was George Fox, who was said to have cured the king's evil by touch. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 235, 239.

[77] The case is best explored by Duffy, 'Valentine Greatrakes', pp. 251-73. See also Michael McKeon, *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England. The case of Dryden's 'Annus Mirabilis'* (London, 1975), pp. 208-15; Peter Elmer, 'Greatrakes, Valentine (1629-1683)', *DNB*; Alan Marshall, 'To Make a Martyr. The Popish Plot and Protestant propaganda', *History Today*, 47 (1997), pp. 39-45; idem, 'The Westminster Magistrate and the Irish Stroker. Sir Edmund Godfrey and Valentine Greatrakes, Some unpublished correspondence', *HJ*, 40 (1997), pp. 499-505; Nicholas H. Steneck, 'Greatrakes the Stroker. The Interpretation of the Historians', *Isis*, 73 (1982), pp. 160-77; Barbara Beigun Kaplan, 'Greatrakes the Stroker. The interpretation of his contemporaries', *Isis*, 73 (1982), pp. 178-85; Bloch, *Royal Touch*, p. 216.

[78] The letter (from the ARS) is quoted in Raymond Crawfurd, *The King's Evil* (Oxford, 1911), pp. 120-21.

[79] See the letter by Daniel Coxe (1640-1730) to Boyle dated 5 March 1666 in which he communicates both the successes and failures of Greatrix's healing. *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio and Lawrence M. Principe, 6 Vols. (London, 2001), Vol. III, pp. 82-90.

[80] Among others, *Wonders No Miracles; or, Mr. Valentine Greatrakes Gift of Healing examined, Upon occasion of a Sad Effect of his Stroking, March the 7. 1665. at one Mr. Cressets house in Charter-House-Yard. In a Letter to a Reverend Divine, living near that place.* [By David Lloyd] (London, 1666); *Rub for Rub: Or, An Answer to a Physicians Pamphlet, styled, The Stroker Stroked* (London, 1666); and what is believed to be his own: [Valentin Greatrakes], *A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine Greatrak's, And divers of the Strange Cures By him lately Performed. Written by himself in a Letter Addressed to the Honourable Robert Boyle Esq. Whereunto are annexed the Testimonials of several Eminent and Worthy Persons of the chief matters of Fact therein Related* (London, 1666).

[81] See for instance the correspondence between Beale, Oldenbourg and Boyle as well as the debate between Stubbe and Boyle: *Boyle Correspondence*, ed. Hunter et al., Vol. II, pp. 506n, 548-49, Vol. III, pp. 94-107; Peter R. Anstey, *The Philosophy of Robert Boyle* (London, 2000), pp. 175, 179.

social ideology, as Margaret Jacob states, also endeavoured 'to secure and legitimize church and state against the threats posed by radicals, enthusiasts, and atheists and also to reform this established order';[82] the episode illustrates not only the controversies among natural philosophers, but also the extent to which 'scientific' debates were closely attached to political and religious interests.

Greatrakes's own motives are difficult to discern. It is plausible that he believed in his divine impulse to cure, but it may also be that he sought a combination of prestige, power and authority, economic advancement or sexual gratification. Abraham de la Pryme reported that a gentleman who had allegedly spoken to Greatrakes thought him a 'strang conceited fellow, believing strang things of devils, spirits, and witches', and that 'he fancyd him himself to be an impostor'.[83] So were Greatrakes's activities deliberate deceptions? As Thomas argues, it is probable that at one level his healing was a 'veiled sectarian protest against the Restoration and the miraculous powers claimed by Charles II'. In spite of the fact that he declared himself loyal to the Anglican Church, Greatrakes had been associated with the Cromwellian régime in Ireland.[84] What proved ultimately decisive for his fate was not the issue of belief or disbelief in miracles as such, but the fact that he was challenging a royal prerogative: the king's touch. Greatrakes' career abruptly ended after he failed to perform a cure before Charles II and his court, and he returned to Ireland.[85]

A deliberate attack on the king was certainly intended by Thomas Roswell, a nonconformist minister in Rotherhithe, Surrey, in 1684. Rosewell did not lay claim to healing powers, but rejected the king's power of healing by touch. In a sermon he complained that people would flock to 'the king, upon pretence of healing the king's-evil, which he ... could not do', whereas they should better listen to him and his fellow-

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[82] Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1729* (Ithaca, 1976), p. 25; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons. The idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), p. 300.
[83] *The Diary of Abraham de la Pryme, the Yorkshire Antiquary*, ed. Charles Jackson (Surtees Society, Vol. LIV, Durham, 1870), p. 90.
[84] Thomas, *Religion*, p. 241.
[85] See also ibid., pp. 240-42, 247-48.

preachers, who with their prayers would 'heal the dolours and griefs of the people'. He declared that the people already 'have had two wicked Kings ... who have permitted Popery to enter in under their noses'.[86] He was condemned as a 'false traitor' and sentenced to death, but by the intercession of Sir John Talbot, Charles II revoked the sentence; Roswell was discharged and returned to his community.[87]

This brief survey has not revealed many 'real' impostors, despite contemporary claims that quacks swarmed the country. The discourse of medical impostors is closely related to the problem of 'scientific' knowledge. I refer here to the humanistic medical knowledge of the day, represented by the Royal College of Physicians of London. The foundation of the College in 1518 might be considered as the beginning of a more intensified quarrel between licensed and unlicensed healers. Although medical knowledge did improve over the period, it was limited and medical practice was in some respects not very different from what was condemned as quackery. Physicians and surgeons often dismissed unlicensed practitioners as impostors, in the sense of people who deceive others. Of course, there were those who claimed medical knowledge and university degrees without having either, and simply took advantage of an unstable system of beliefs, norms and values and of the weaknesses of the institutional structures. Yet, it has been shown that a number of those prosecuted as quacks were simply practitioners without a licence, and are thus better classified as outsiders, in that they did not conform to the standards or rules of the College. They were a threat to regular practitioners, both in economic and scientific respects. In particular itinerant practitioners, who healed and sold their medicine in public, were viewed with suspicion because of their dubious social

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[86] *State Trials*, Vol. X, pp. 147-307, at p. 150. *CSPD, 1684-85*, pp. 171, 180, 184, 187, 221-26; Samuel Rosewell, *The Arraignment and Tryal of the late Reverend Mr. Thomas Rosewell, For High-Treason* (London, 1718), p. 6.

[87] *State Trials*, Vol. X, pp. 147-307. Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses*, 4 Vols. (London, 1814), Vol. IV, pp. 351-52. See also Jim Benedict, 'Rosewell, Thomas (1630-1692)', *DNB*; Crawfurd, *King's Evil*, p. 120; Samuel Rosewell, *An Account of the Life and Death of the late Reverend Mr. Thomas Rosewell, Minister of the Gospel at Rotherhith, in Surry* (London, 1718). Sheila Seymour (UCL, Holloway) is currently writing her dissertation on Rosewell.

origins. The fact that quacks frequently used astrological methods and were thus associated with occult or supernatural power added to their outsider position, and could in some cases take on political dimensions. If we are to believe Marc Bloch, the royal miracle was used as an instrument to maintain political stability. It was associated with the maintenance of monarchy as well as the efforts of the élite 'to eliminate the supernatural and the arbitrary from the world order, and at the same time to work out a purely rational conception of political institutions'.[88] However, the fact that the great bulk of people still believed in wonder-working power, even when the cure – whether of the quacksalver or not – did not actually heal, helps to explain the context. At least until the late seventeenth century, supernatural power held out the possibility of healing in a world that was highly insecure, and it corresponded to contemporary fears and expectations. While some used 'superstitious' belief to achieve political goals, others took advantage of it to get their living. With regard to the latter's motivation, it is hard to say to what extent their acts were merely opportunist. But it seems highly probably that the majority largely believed in what they were doing.

It should be clear that the language employed by contemporaries in describing medical imposture opens up a new aspect of the subject. The word 'impostor' has become a label far wider than its original narrow sense, and increasingly applied to someone of a different belief – a theme which will be explored in the next chapter. The label hints at attempts to set and negotiate the intellectual boundaries between natural and preternatural phenomena, reflecting the uncertainties among natural philosophers within a fierce struggle about knowledge and truth.

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[88] Bloch, *Royal Touch*, pp. 217, 238.

'GOD IS NOT MAN'S IMAGINATION!' PROPHETS, VISIONARIES AND

FANATICS, POSSESSED AND EXORCISTS – ALL RELIGIOUS

IMPOSTORS?

The occurrence of religious individuals who claimed spiritual power and thought

themselves prophets, exorcists or healers is not a peculiarity of the early modern period,

but rather a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon.[1] Plato, for instance, writes in

The Republic of '[m]endicant priests and soothsayers', and Origen in *Contra Celsum* of

'sorcerers who profess to do wonderful miracles'.[2] The Bible warns of diverse false

prophets as well as mediating the image of Jesus as a successful exorcist.[3] From St.

Gregory of Tours we learn about a 'freelance preacher', who at the end of the sixth

century roamed several regions of France and declared himself to be Christ, claiming

supernatural power of healing and prophecy; according to the papal legate St. Boniface,

Clemens and Adelbert, another two false prophets in Germany about the year 743, also

aroused the deep concern of the Church.[4] The movements of Wyclif and Hus in the

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[1] See Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building. Selected papers*, ed. Samuel N. Eisenstadt (Chicago, 1968), ch. 7.

[2] Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist. A contribution to the study of the historical Jesus* (Tübingen, 1993), p. 27. On *Orpheotelestai* ('hedge-priests') in Scythia, see Walter Burkert, 'Craft Versus Sect. The problem of Orphics and Pythagoreans', in Ben F. Meyer and Ed P. Sanders (eds), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Vol. III. Self-definition in the Graeco-Roman world* (Philadelphia, 1982), pp. 1-23, esp. pp. 4-9.

[3] 'There will rise up false Christs and false prophets and they shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect.' Mark, 5:1-20; 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.' Matthew, 8:28-34. For similar warnings, see I John, 4:5; II Peter, 2:1. For Jesus as exorcist, see Mark, 1:21-28; Matthew, 17:14-18.

[4] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages* (rev. edn, New York, 1970), pp. 41-4; Albert Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, 5 Vols. (Leipzig, 1900-20), Vol. I, pp. 554-60; Carl Joseph von Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, 6 Vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1873-90), Vol. III, §§ 363-367, esp. pp. 514, 534.

fifteenth century provided fertile ground for so-called imposture, as when in 1417, the Lollard martyr Sir John Oldcastle, suffering for his belief, identified himself with Christ and claimed he would rise again three days after his death, a link quite common in the context of martyrology.[5] Moreover, false pilgrims and pardoners, as well as forged relics and miracles, were familiar pre-Reformation phenomena,[6] along with the hypocritical priest, who became a powerful *topos*.[7] Religious fraud was obviously an issue long before the period considered here. The Church dismissed many claims as fraudulent, though a few were accepted. It is apparent that the discourse of religious imposture leads us into the vast field of religious dispute, the struggle for power and authority, knowledge and truth.

This chapter is built around the following questions: Who was considered a religious impostor? Why did contemporaries, among them authorities, use this concept to label people? Was religious imposture more prevalent in the early modern period than in others, and if so, why? The bulk of impostors can be divided into a category of people who deliberately perpetrated a fraud, a larger category who believed in their own religious powers and role but were rejected by some contemporaries, and a category of people who functioned as puppets. Early modern authorities were thus prone to apply the label generally, however, 'impostor' appears to have been a label applied mainly to 'enthusiasts' – those who believed that 'Christ or the Holy Spirit was directly and

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[5] See John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (London, 1965); James Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England. An historical survey*, 4 Vols. (London, 1908), Vol. I, pp. 94-8.

[6] See Peter Marshall, 'Forgery and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII', *P&P*, 178 (2003), pp. 39-73, esp. pp. 46-8; idem, 'Deceptive Appearances. Ghosts and reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England', in Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (eds), *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 188-208; Alfred Hiatt, *Making of Medieval Forgeries* (London, 2003); Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History. Ademar of Chabannes, 989-1034* (Cambridge, 1988); Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of relics in the central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1990); idem, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints. Its rise and function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981).

[7] See Richard A. Cosgrove, 'English Anticlericalism. A programmatic assessment', in Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (eds), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 569–81. An important document for the development of this *topos* is John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs* (London, 1563), soon abridged to the *Book of Martyrs*.

pentecostally present and active in the elect and empowered them to act in church or state'.[8] A religious impostor bears resemblance to and is frequently labelled a heretic. Both have chosen and persist in a particular belief, and they have isolated from the overall (orthodox) truth a partial truth; they claim a spiritual truth which transcends reason and common sense. In its intellectual function in a process of self-definition and defence, the label 'impostor' also bears some similarities to 'atheist'.[9] Yet almost none of those labelled impostor intended to devalue or reject religion, or deny the existence of God.[10] As will be seen, the priesthood as an active mediator between God, the source of spiritual power, and the laity will frequently be at the centre of attention as impostors disputed the priests' prestige and authority.[11] Another intriguing dimension will be brought to light: the association of imposture with theatricality, a point that has already been made by sixteenth-century sceptics such as Reginald Scot and his disciple Samuel Harsnet, who unmasked enthusiasm as fraudulent acting or as a result of mental delusion, and was later elaborated by rationalists in the Enlightenment.[12]

But before we explore impostures in more detail, let us briefly look at some aspects of the broader historical context. There are some historical factors which may

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[8] J.G.A. Pocock, 'Within the Margins. The definitions of orthodoxy', in Robert D. Lund (ed.), *The Margins of Orthodoxy. Heterodox writing and cultural response, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 33-52, at p. 41.

[9] 'Atheist' in a non-intellectual sense. Michael Hunter argues that the word was used in a 'rather broad and loose sense' to mean godlessness, indicating various attitudes of what was considered irreligion, but often conflating them. Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of "Atheism" in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, 35 (1985), pp. 135-57, at pp. 138, 142, 146.

[10] The Ranter Laurence Clarkson, whom we met in Chapter Two, and allegedly one of William Franklin's followers believed that there was no god but nature: Thomas, *Religion*, p. 203.

[11] For the changing role of the clergy, see Ian Green, '"Reformed Pastors" and *Bons Curés*. The changing role of the parish clergy in early modern Europe', in William J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds), *The Ministry. Clerical and lay* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 249-86.

[12] See Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); Samuel Harsnet, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, to withdraw the harts of her Maiesties Subjects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils. Practised by Edmunds, alias Weston, a Jesuit and diuers Romish Priests his wicked associates* (London, 1603).

In ecclesiastical history, the Latin term 'enthusiastica' designes a sect of heretics of the fourth century, who pretended to special revelations. *OED*, 'enthusiast'. Enthusiasm involves visions, trances, ranting in tongues, possession by spirits and convulsions. On theatricality, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley, 1988), ch. 4; Roy Porter, 'The Rage of Party. A glorious revolution in English psychiatry?', *Medical History*, 27 (1983), pp. 35-50.

lead us to speculate that religious imposture received more attention in the early modern period than in any other. 'God is not man's imagination': these are Tyndale's words and addressed to Catholics. They remind us, as Stephen Greenblatt has noted, of a powerful moment when the idea that a 'theological system was a fictional construction' has not only become a possibility, but an issue of conflict.[13] The Reformation bolstered the division of humanity into the true Church and the false *churches*, as never before. It brought epistemological issues and both secular and religious concerns of authenticity to the fore, a process fundamental in shaping human thinking in general. The dichotomy of Protestantism and Catholicism is of major importance, though the post-Reformation period witnessed a proliferation of rival beliefs, sects and churches, and the fragmentation of Protestantism is as old as the Reformation. Yet from the 1530s the antithesis of papist and Protestant dominates religious dispute, throughout our period, and it has a vital share in the formation of a popular Protestant and 'national' consciousness. John Strype's report of a Jesuit who in 1568 pretended himself a Puritan, in order 'to overthrow the reformed religion planted in England', is only one of numerous examples.[14] In the same category we can place two pamphlets in 1654 which report the exposure of Thomas Ramsey, a false Jew, sent by the Pope and 'by a speciall providence of God found out ... to be an Impostour and emissary of Rome'.[15] For the godly, the Civil War was a war for the true Reformation, the defeat of the Romish Antichrist. But fears of a Catholic restoration, and of real or imaginary conspiracies were pervasive throughout the

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[13] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 113.

[14] John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion, and other various occurrences in the Church of England, during the Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign*, 4 Vols. (Oxford, 1824), Vol. II, Part II, pp. 272-73.

[15] *A False Jew; Or, A wonderful Discovery of a Scot, Baptized at London for a Christian, Circumcised at Rome to act a Jew, rebaptized at Hexham for a Believer, but found out at Newcastle to be a Cheat* (London, 1653; reprinted 1654); *The Converted Jew: Or, The Substance of the Declaration and Confession which was made in the Publick Meeting House at Hexham* ([London, 1653?]). See also *CSPD, 1653-54*, p. 428; Michael Mullett, 'Ramsay, Thomas (fl. 1647-1653)', *DNB*; Roger Howell, *Newcastle upon Tyne and the Puritan Revolution. A study of the civil war in North England* (Oxford, 1967); David S. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden, 1988); idem, 'Tillam, Thomas (fl. 1638-1668)', *DNB*.

seventeenth century.[16] By the 1670s, 'popery' had become a term with a wide range of connotations, and it was used by various groups to denounce the political and religious threats of their opponents.[17]

The fragmentation of Christianity created a climate of instability, distrust, defamation and spiritual anxieties, which frequently took on violent dimensions in the form of persecutions or war, though religious violence in England was not on the scale experienced on the continent.[18] The tensions resulted in a new exegesis of Biblical texts, above all of the prophetic texts, and sparked off millenarian expectations, embodied in a tide of prophecies, predictions and fantasies of renewal.[19] This climate also produced intense feelings about one's own true or false relationship to God. With the vernacular Bible, a powerful instrument was seized from the priest's hand, making the ultimate source of religious knowledge accessible to (almost) anyone. Greenblatt, among others, reminds us of the 'magical power of the Word';[20] although, as will be seen, many held the spirit above the letter of the Bible. The fact that the Reformation opened up a direct link between God and the individual, the possibility of direct divine inspiration, is of major importance in this context. This climate changed not only the relationship between the individual and God, but also between interior and exterior, and gave more scope to self-expression.

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[16] See Dan Beaver, 'Conscience and Context. The Popish Plot and politics of ritual, 1678-1682', *HJ*, 34 (1991), pp. 297-327; John Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London, 1972); *The Counter-Plot or the close Conspiracy of Atheism opened, and, so, defeated* (London, 1680); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 344, 353-82.

[17] John Spurr, *England in the 1670s. The masquerading age* (Oxford, 2000), ch. 8, esp. pp. 226-27.

[18] See, for example, Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'Archbishop Cranmer. Concord and tolerance in a changing Church', in Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 199-215; Norah Carlin, 'Toleration for Catholics in the Puritan Revolution', in ibid., pp. 216-30; Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From Persecution to Toleration. The Glorious Revolution and religion in England* (Oxford, 1991); Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995); Christopher W. Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge, 1994); Anthony Milton, 'A Qualified Intolerance. The limits and ambiguities of early Stuart anti-Catholicism', in Arthur F. Marotti (ed.), *Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Early Modern English Texts* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 65-115.

[19] See Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men. A study in seventeenth-century English millenarianism* (London, 1972), ch. 2.

[20] See Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, ch. 2, p. 97.

What were the criteria that made someone a religious impostor? The fact that religion played a role in almost every aspect of life is not necessarily sufficient reason to establish and justify a category of religious impostors. The issue of religious imposture can hardly be explored without touching upon the complex religious, political, social and even medical disputes about true faith, good and evil, miracle and magic, true knowledge and power. With regard to the previous and following chapters, it is clear that strict categorical divisions are not always appropriate. We must also differentiate impostors from people who were forced to conform to an established church to avoid the frequently drastic measures taken against religious opponents. As Perez Zagorin has illustrated, this situation led believers to resort to diverse strategies of evasion and dissimulation;[21] a prominent example is the Family of Love whose leading authority, Hendrik Niclaes, openly defended a policy of simulation, or Nicodemism.[22] It has also been suggested that by the time Jews were allowed back into England in 1655, about twenty-seven families were already secretly living in the country.[23] Moreover, not every miracle-worker should be regarded as a religious impostor. Despite the obvious biblical allusion, the category will not include people such as the mid-seventeenth-century miracle forger, Floram Marchand, who attracted a large number of spectators by claiming to be able to turn water into wine, 'and at his vomit render not onely the tincture but the strength and smell of

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[21] Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying. Dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), esp. ch. 7. See also Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism* (Aldershot, 1996), ch. 4; Alexandra Walsham, 'England's Nicodemites. Crypto-Catholicism and religious pluralism in the post-Reformation context', in Keith Cameron, Mark Greengrass and Penny Roberts (eds), *The Adventure of Religious Pluralism in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 289-304; Gillian Weiss, 'Commerce, Conversion and French Religious Identity in the Early-Modern-Mediterranean', in ibid., pp. 275-88; Carlo Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo – Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa dell '500* (Turin, 1970); Rita Belladonna, 'Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Religious Dissimulation. Bartolomeo Carli Piccolomini's *Trattati Nove Della Prudenza*', in Joseph C. McLelland (ed.), *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Italian Reform* (Waterloo, Ont., 1980), pp. 29-41.

[22] The *Epistle sent unto two daughters of Warwick* was first printed in Amsterdam in 1608, but circulated in manuscript form from the late 1570s. Alastair Hamilton, *The Family of Love* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 125. See also Marsh, *Family of Love*. The term 'Nicodemism' was introduced by Calvin in his attack on Protestants who disguised their inner conviction and outwardly conformed to Catholic rites. It refers to the biblical figure of Nicodemus, a Pharisee who hid his faith in Jesus.

[23] See Lucien Wolf, 'The Jewry of the Restoration', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 5 (1902-05), p. 5, cited in Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes. A paradigm of otherness in English popular culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore, 1995), p. 45.

severall wines'.[24] Of course, there were deliberate frauds. In April 1605, one Richard Haydock, a physician of New College, Oxford, preached sermons while pretending to be asleep, and gained a huge reputation. He practised 'physick' during the day and preached at night in bed. He was summoned to the court where he again performed his ploy, but was discovered and confessed.[25] The King made him also confess the reason for his trickery, and was told that Haydock regarded himself as 'a buried man in the *university*, being of a *low condition*'. Haydock was pardoned and after he had recanted in public, he was offered a position as a minister, which he declined, living instead as 'a physician of good repute at Salisbury'.[26] Haydock was neither motivated by religious passion nor dreams of money or power but by a longing for the compensation of status, fame and celebrity. In the 1650s one Thomas West, who went by several names, cheated people out of money and goods while pretending to be a godly minister.[27] Ultimately, most impostors were labelled as such because of decisions taken by the so-called orthodox authorities. They were deemed impostors because they had falsely claimed titles, gifts or powers that were still recognised by many. The following discussion will focus on cases which featured a religious message, and will differentiate between people who deliberately perpetrated a fraud and the larger group who sincerely (if misguidedly) believed in their mission and were perceived as impostors by contemporaries. Although the chapter will deal with both groups, only deliberate frauds should be regarded as religious impostors by a strict definition.

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[24] *The Falacie Of the great Water-Drinker Discovered. Fully representing what are the Ingredients that provoke him to so wonderful a Vomit, and by what Art one Glass seemeth to be of one colour, and another of another; and what he doth when he taketh the Rose-water and the Angelica-water* ([London], 1650), sig. A2r.

[25] John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman E. McClure, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia, 1939), Vol. I, p. 206.

[26] Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain, Being the Life and Reign of King James The First, Relating To What passed from his first Access to the Crown, till his Death* (London, 1653), p. 111; Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses. An exact History of All The Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford*, ed. Philip Bliss, 4 Vols. (London, 1813-20), Vol. I, p. 257.

[27] *Mercurius Politicus*, 296, 7-14 February 1655, pp. 5953-954. Among others, West also went under the name 'Walters', possibly that of a reputed Oxfordshire family. See chapter 6.

1. PROPHETS, VISIONARIES AND FANATICS

One common characteristic of religious impostors is the appropriation of a biblical character such as Christ or one of the prophets. As biblical characters were believed to be historical figures, those who claimed to be Christ, the Virgin Mary or a prophet and took on names such as John the Baptist, Enoch or Elijah belong clearly to this category. A second criterion would be the claim of divine inspiration. Some individuals uttered prophecies, performed miracles or claimed other divine gifts, acting as healers and guides. Here the line is blurred between them and some medical and political impostors; the fact that many descriptions of the lame and possessed tell of the inability of physicians to heal them draws our attention not only to miraculous power but to the conflict between 'orthodox' and 'unorthodox' religion, and unofficial and official medicine, between those who sought medical explanation and help and those who preferred supernatural.[28] Peter Martyr Vermigli, the exiled Zwinglian scholar, for instance, clearly distinguished the prophet from the doctor or teacher. Although doctors are 'instructed in the gifts of God, to teaching, persuading, & comforting ... they get those things by exercise, instruction, studie, and labour'. The prophet, however, is 'taught by no other means than by the onelie reuelation of God'.[29] According to Max Weber, the prophet differs from the priest in that the latter 'lays claim to authority by virtue of his service in a sacred tradition, while the prophet's claim is based on personal revelation and charisma'; the prophet, like the magician and sorcerer, employs his power by virtue of his or her own personal gifts, but the prophet differs from the magician in claiming 'definite revelations', and that 'the core of his mission is doctrine or commandment, not magic'. As the prophet claims power through divine inspiration, and the magician by knowing a

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[28] The previous chapter has illustrated how problematic similar dichotomies are. Likewise, the structure of orthodox and unorthodox does oversimplify the context of religious imposture. J.G.A. Pocock argues that the Anglican Church tolerated opinions which were able to undermine central elements of orthodoxy: Pocock, 'Within the Margins', pp. 33-52.

[29] Peter Martyr, *The Common Places of the most famous and renowned Diuine Doctor Peter Martyr, diuided into foure principall parts: with a large addition of manie theologicall and necessarie discourses, some neuer extant before* (London, 1583), p. 18.

particular spell, the two might be technically distinct. In practice, however, the division

between the prophet and magician was blurred 'for the magician is frequently a

knowledgeable expert in divination'.[30] Thus the topic of religious imposture reveals also

the tension between the official priest and lay 'claimant' of spiritual truth. It is evident,

however, that the power over magic is at the heart of the battle between 'orthodox and

unorthodox'; religion and magic remain intertwined.

The period saw widespread expectations of the imminent Second Coming and

Last Judgement, with signs and wonders to herald them. The Bible also predicted false

prophets and pseudo-messiahs who were to be expected immediately prior to the Second

Coming.[31] Many contemporaries were thus expecting prophets and miraculous signs, and

prepared to judge some as genuine and others as false. That placed a heavy burden on

those trying to distinguish truth from falsehood. Though after 1559 Protestant reformers

branded false prophets 'a mark of the church of Antichrist' and 'powerful symbols of the

spiritual corruption and doctrinal deformity of their Catholic opponents', they 'were

topics which hovered on the borderline of theological respectability and which Reformed

ministers and laypeople approached with varying degrees of cautious ambivalence'.[32]

And among some Protestant clerics the appearance of genuine prophets was still a

possibility. Peter Martyr Vermigli declared cautiously, 'perhaps there be some now a

daies in the church, yet I thinke there be not manie', and more firmly, 'it is not to be

denied, but that there be still prophets in the church, although not so famous as in times

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[30] Weber, *On Charisma*, p. 254.

[31] For example, Matthew, 7:15 reads 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves', and in Mark, 13:22 (or Matthew 24:5-26) one is warned that 'there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect'. Similar notions can be found also the New Testament such as in 1 Timothy 4:1-5. 1 Thessalonians 4 describes the Coming of the Messiah a different event without wonders, false Christs and false prophets.

[32] Daniel P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits. Possession and exorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries* (London, 1985), p. 67; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 182, 218.

past'.[33] Although early modern piety was sympathetic to prophets, the problem was how to distinguish between fraud, symptoms of disease, Satan's wiles, and the 'true' divine.

Early modern England witnessed numerous false Christs and dubious persons who claimed to be some figure foreshadowed in the Bible.[34] Several prophecies were circulating and contemporaries of all backgrounds believed in them. In times of insecurity and disorientation they could offer a compelling explanation; they often predicted disaster for the perpetrators of change, and gave hope of the return of the old order. Among the early prophets and visionaries the most celebrated case, though of a highly political nature, is Elizabeth Barton, the holy maid of Kent or 'the false nonne', who announced several prophecies but later confessed they were fraudulent.[35] Barton aroused attention when she had a severe illness at the age of about sixteen, whereupon she predicted the imminent death of a child; she also had a vision of heaven, hell and purgatory, and even recognised souls in their afterlife. Later, lying before the virgin's statue, she had another prophetic fit whereupon she was miraculously cured of her disease. The description of her fit contains some of the elements that appear in many similar reports: a 'wonderfully disfigured' face, tongue hanging out, 'her eyes being in a manner plucked out', a voice speaking from within her belly, 'speaking sweetly of heaven and terribly of hell'.[36] After her cure she became a nun in a Benedictine convent where her revelations continued. She was visited by a number of clerics and members of the court, among them Katherine of Aragon and Gertrude Blount, Marchioness of Exeter, who consulted her about the fate of her unborn child, and for eight years she enjoyed a growing reputation as a 'revered local

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[33] Martyr, *Common Places*, pp. 18, 24. See also Walsham, *Providence*, ch. 4.

[34] Among others, Thomas, *Religion*; Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 203-4; Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 32-3.

[35] *Letters & Papers, 1534*, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 28; *Letters & Papers, 1533*, Vol. VI, Part I, p. 418. Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), ch. 2; Marshall, 'Forgery and Miracles'; Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God. Women prophets in late medieval and early modern England* (Cambridge, 1997), ch. 3; idem, 'Reconstructing the Word. The political prophecies of Elizabeth Barton (1506-1534)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997), pp. 136-63; Sharon L. Jansen, *Dangerous Talk and Strange Behaviour. Women and popular resistance to the reforms of Henry VIII* (New York, 1996), chs. 3 and 4. From a different angle, Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck. A cultural history of ventriloquism* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 116-19, 121.

[36] See Henry Jenkyns, *Remains of Thomas Cranmer D.D., Archbishop of Canterbury*, 4 Vols. (Oxford, 1833), letter lxxxiv, Vol. I, pp. 79-84; *Letters & Papers, 1533*, Vol. VI, Part II, p. 624.

oracle'.[37] When in 1527 Henry announced his intended divorce from Katherine, Barton's prognostications acquired a more threatening political colour. She told the King that he had endangered his soul and would live not six months, and that God would devastate the realm with a plague if he wedded Anne Boleyn.[38] She claimed to receive messages from an angel, that she could overhear Henry's private conversations, and that the devil conversed with Anne. Similar announcements continued during the years when the King's agents were negotiating his divorce and remarriage with the Pope. It is likely that by this time she had become a political instrument, and that many of the revelations and messages were not her own, but those of Katherine's supporters and opponents of a divorce.

To regard Barton either as a true mystic and prophetess,[39] or reduce her to a mere fraud would miss the dynamics and development of the episode. Instead we should pay attention to the 'inputs' from various sides that fashioned this young woman. It was not a plot planned from the outset, and Barton's revelations were not simply welcomed by theologians and lawyers who disputed the divorce and remarriage. It was a fusion of belief in miracles and supernatural powers and political stratagem and scheming that facilitated her success. Undoubtedly, she was gifted and had some miraculous appeal. As Diane Watts noted, she found inspiration in examples of earlier female saints and drew on popular political prophecy.[40] That she spoke for many contemporaries who abhorred Henry's marriage plans also explains the growth of a network of patronage which included some prominent figures. About her own impulse we can only speculate, but it is plausible that, especially at the beginning, she believed in her visions and later in her mission – and was then strengthened and encouraged by those who meant to use her as a political tool, but were possibly themselves affected by her power. As a young and allegedly simple woman, she represented a form of mysticism often present in early

[37] Carolly Erickson, *Bloody Mary. The life of Mary Tudor* (London, 1995), p. 108; Watt, *Secretaries*, p. 72.
[38] *Letters & Papers, 1533*, Vol. VI, Part II, pp. 588, 624; Jenkyns, *Remains*, p. 82.
[39] Alan Neame, *The Holy Maid of Kent. The life of Elizabeth Barton* (London, 1971).
[40] Watts, *Secretaries*, ch. 3.

modern society, and her alleged supernatural powers disconcerted many contemporaries, even the King. Surprisingly, he remained tolerant for quite a long time. However, in 1533, her assertion that Henry had forfeited his right to rule and that in God's eyes he was no longer king, as well as her prophecy of a rebellion against him and a disgraceful death, were regarded as treasonable acts which threatened the union between the monarch and his people, and led to her execution.[41]

Barton was not the only visionary woman to express hopes and fears that were closely tied to contemporary political issues. As Sharon Jansen has pointed out, female visionaries occur regularly in the early sixteenth century.[42] Moreover, many prophecies foretelling future events were uttered. Whereas a vision was a supernatural or mystical insight, a revelation, presented to the visionary in a state of physical weakness (e.g. fasting, illness) or in sleep, a prophecy was 'an elusively vague or ambiguous piece of prose or verse, resting on no clearly defined foundation, either magical or religious', and often 'attributed to some historical or mythical personage'.[43] In 1533, Mistress Amadas, the wife of the former master of Henry's jewel house, began to spread ominous declarations such as that 'the King's grace is called in her book of prophecies the Mouldwarp, and is cursed with God's own mouth', and that the Scots would conquer the realm.[44] Like Barton, she spoke against Henry's second marriage to Anne Boleyn. It seemed an attack 'motivated at least in part by her own personal experiences', but unlike Barton she escaped with her life, perhaps because her social network presented no danger for the King.[45] Prophets and oracles were also multiplying outside court circles. William

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[41] The Treason Act of 1534, had made it treasonable to call the King a heretic, an infidel, a tyrant, or a usurper (26 Henry VIII, c. 13). *The Statutes at Large, Vol. II. 24 Henry VIII-32 Charles II* (London, 1758), pp. 37-8; *English Historical Documents, Vol. V, 1485-1558*, ed. C.H. Williams (London, 1996), p. 477. See also John G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), p. 210.

[42] See Jansen, *Dangerous Talk*, esp. pp. 61-3. However, Diane Watt speculates that due to Barton's execution for treason in 1534, and the 'iconoclastic fervour of the Reformation, women's prophecy did not have an overtly political dimension throughout the rest of the sixteenth century'. Watt, *Secretaries*, p. 11.

[43] Thomas, *Religion*, ch. 13, at pp. 461-62.

[44] *Letters & Papers, 1533*, Vol. VI, Part I, pp. 399-400.

[45] Jansen argues that Amadas' network was secure enough to prevent her from further threats to the King. Jansen, *Dangerous Talk*, pp. 68-9, 74.

Glover, of Sir Henry Wyatt's household, was receiving several urgent messages from a 'messenger of Christ' for Queen Anne throughout 1533 which he delivered to various ecclesiastics in her service.[46] One unusual series of prophecies featured a mysterious voice heard in the city wall in Aldersgate, uttering seditious and blasphemous things in 1554. The voice, sometimes called 'the whyte byrde or the byrde that spake in the wall', attracted great crowds and puzzled Londoners for several months.[47] Accomplices explained the words to spectators and claimed it was an angel's voice and the work of the Holy Ghost. The words were against the match of Queen Mary with Philip of Spain, against the mass and confession, and 'other Popish worship newly introduced'.[48] However, the 'byrde' turned out to be a young girl, Elizabeth Crofts, who by means of a whistle blew through a hole in the wall. Whereas Barton believed in her visions, it is clear that this was a deliberate deceit. But again, the girl was not acting on her own. She admitted that among others she was directed by a priest of the parish, and that one John Drake, a servant, 'gaue her a whistle, and by theyr develish pretence feyned her to speake divers thinges'.[49] She warned people to beware of heresies, and declared that she had been promised 'many goodly thynges'.[50] She was imprisoned, but released 'after Dr. Scrye [probably the Protestant preacher John Scory] resorted to her divers tymes to examine her'.[51]

Elisha Hall, who in 1562 called himself 'Ely the carpenter's son' and pretended to receive revelations from God, did not assume the name of minister, preacher, or any

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[46] *Letters & Papers, 1533,* Vol. VI, Part II, p. 655.

[47] Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, From A.D. 1485 To 1559,* ed. William D. Hamilton (London, 1877), p. 117.

[48] John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials, Relating Chiefly to Religion, and the Reformation of it, and the Emergencies of the Church of England, under Henry VIII. King Edward VI. and Queen Mary I.* (Oxford, 1822), p. 153. See also Wriothesley, *Chronicle,* pp. 117-18; *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London,* ed. John G. Nichols (Camden Society, old ser., Vol. LIII, London, 1852), p. 90; Henry Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant taylor of London,* ed. John G. Nichols (Camden Society, old ser., Vol. XLII, London, 1848), p. 66; Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England,* ed. Nicholas Pocock, 7 Vols. (Oxford, 1865), Vol. II, p. 439, Vol. V, p. 611.

[49] Wriothesley, *Chronicle,* Vol. II, pp. 117-18; John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London, 1592), pp. 1058-59; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989), p. 548.

[50] Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials,* p. 214; Machyn, *Diary,* p. 66.

[51] Wriothesley, *Chronicle,* p. 118. Of her accomplices, only a weaver of Golden Lane was punished by standing on the pillory. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials,* p. 214.

particular prophet, but claimed to be a 'messenger sent from God to the queen, and to all princes', imitating the prophet Elijah. Like many other 'pseudo-prophets', he admitted that he was not well-educated and had not read much of the Bible. Yet he allegedly wrote two books (which are no longer in existence) and declared he had his knowledge and vocation by revelation, but we do not know what his message from God was. He wore a distinct dress of camel hair, and neither ate fish or meat nor drank any wine. Suspected of being a tool of Papists he was interrogated about issues such as mass, transubstantiation, and purgatory, but he refused to answer and referred to the book he wanted to deliver to the Queen; Hall was pilloried and sent to Bridewell where he died in 1565.[52] William Hacket, an 'illiterate maltmaker from Nottinghamshire' and penniless ex-serving man, announced in 1591 that he was the Messiah who had come to judge the world. He can neither be considered an autonomous agent nor simply dismissed as mad.[53] While Hall probably had no great overt support, Hacket found enough followers from the Puritan camp to become a threat to the authorities. Alexandra Walsham has shown that the whole conspiracy emerged from within the radical Puritan movement, and that Hacket as well as his accomplices were fervent Puritans. Apart from acts of political iconoclasm and threatening apocalyptic messages, his followers were spellbound by his intense devotion and the manner of his preaching.[54] Both Hall and Hacket were probably genuine believers in their own claims. The two cases show that religious prophecies were used by, or appealed to, both sides in the religious struggle – the Reformers and the Catholics.

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[52] According to John Strype, Hall wrote a book of *Obedience* and one entitled *The Visions of Elizeus Hall in metre.* Strype, *Annals of the Reformation*, pp. 433-35. Strype is possibly confusing Elisha Hall with John Hall of Richmond, who wrote *Of Government and Obedience* (London, 1654). See also Thomas Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica*, ed. David Wilkins (London, 1748), p. 372; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 157.

[53] Alexandra Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket". Prophecy, sorcery, insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan movement', *HJ*, 41 (1998), pp. 27-66, at pp. 27-8.

[54] Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket"', p. 37. See also, for example, [Richard Cosin] *Conspiracie for Pretended Reformation: viz. Presbyteriall Discipline. A Treatise discouering the late designement and courses held for aduancement thereof, by William Hacket Yeoman, Edmund Coppinger, and Henry Arthington Gent. out of others depositions and their owne letters, writings & confessions vpon examination* (London, 1592); Richard Bancroft, *Davngerovs Positions and Proceedings, published and practised within this Iland of Brytaine, vnder pretence of Reformation, and for the Presbiteriall Discipline* (London, 1593).

The period immediately before the Civil War witnessed a series of false Messiahs, prophets and prophetesses armed with supernatural powers and ordained directly by God.[55] With increasing religious pluralism, they have to be considered within the context of the emerging sects of the time, which, like the continental Anabaptists earlier,[56] sometimes pursued radical social and political goals. It is thus not surprising that we find so-called impostors in almost every religious movement. Edward Wightman, of Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, was an Anabaptist and Arian who claimed to be 'the Prophet spoken of in the eighteenth of *Deuteronomy*' (18.15-22), and that, as in St John's Gospel (16.7-9), 'God hath ordained and sent him ... to perform his part in the work of the Salvation of the world ... as Christ was ordained and sent to save the world, and by his death to deliver it from sin, and to reconcile it to God'.[57] In his *Basilikon Doron* (1603), James I had denounced the Anabaptists as a 'vile sect', and Wightman was one of the many who fell a victim to his persecution. Only a month after the Arian Bartholomew Legate (1575?-1612) had been burnt as a heretic at West Smithfield, in April 1612, Wightman, 'another fanaticall fellow condemned for blasphemous heresies', was tried at Lichfield, and became the last Englishman to be burned for heresy.[58] John Wilkinson, the Seeker – an offshoot of the Mennonite Baptists – announced himself as a new apostle sent by God in 1623.[59] John Traske, the Jacobean Judaist and founder of a growing movement that was violently suppressed, thought himself 'a second Elias, sent to discover Antichrist'. Believing himself able to do miracles, he offered to cure King James of his gout. Edward Norice considered him an example of religious 'Impostors and

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[55] For the period between the 1630s and 1670s, Keith Thomas noted some three hundred female sectarian preachers and prophetesses. See Keith Thomas, 'Women and Civil War Sects', *P&P*, 13 (1958), pp. 42-62, at p. 42.

[56] See for example, Anthony Arthur, *The Taylor-King. The rise and fall of the Anabaptist kingdom in Munster* (London, 2000); Cohn, *Pursuit*, ch. 13.

[57] *A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legatt and Thomas Withman, the one in West-Smithfield, London, the other at Lichfield, in the Year, 1611* (London, 1651), p. 8. See also Thomas, *Religion*, p. 160.

[58] Chamberlain, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 343; Edmond Jessop, *A Discovery of the Errors of the English Anabaptists* (London, 1623), p. 77; Stephen Wright, 'Wightman, Edward (*bap.* 1580?, *d.* 1612)', *DNB*; David R. Como, 'Legate, Bartholomew (*d.* 1612)', *DNB*. See also their trial for heresy in *State Trials*, Vol. II, pp. 727-42.

[59] Jessop, *Discovery*, p. 77.

Seducers' who in 'this time of light, hath taken upon him to dictate ... his Gospel grounds

... pretending that they containe in them a more perfect discovery of the Gospel of Christ

than ever was made before.[60] Moreover, a separatist claimed to be one of the apostles in

1628.[61] In London, John Bull and Richard Farnham, two weavers, announced in 1636 that

they were the witnesses spoken of in Revelation 11.3, 'and that even if executed they

would rise again on the third day and reign as king and high priest in Jerusalem'; both of

them died of the plague in prison.[62]

The breakdown of censorship in 1640 set off an eruption of published prophecies.

Many believed that the millennium was coming, and millenarian enthusiasm 'gripped

large numbers of perfectly sane supporters of Parliament in the 1640s'.[63] Cromwell

himself was fuelled by millennial hopes, and many others were convinced that the

atrocities of the war would bring forth the Kingdom of the Saints, reigned over by Christ.

Of the many prophets appearing during this period, Arise Evans, a Welsh tailor, was

certainly not alone in thinking that Scripture foretold the English Revolution.[64] Evans

managed to meet the King and other influential courtiers, delivered several petitions,

denounced the Queen and appealed to Charles to oppose popery. When Elias Ashmole

asked Evans when the parliament would end, the Welsh prophet answered 'the tyme was

short & it was even at the dore'.[65] While Evans seems to have been acting alone, others

gathered followers around them. We know from Humphrey Ellis, a Southampton

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[60] Edward Norice, *The New Gospel, not the True Gospel. A Discovery of the Life and Death, Doctrine, and Doings of Mr. Iohn Traske, and the effects of all, in his Followers* (London, 1638), pp. 6-8, 11. See also David R. Como, 'The Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of England, and the Kingdom of Traske. John Traske and the persistence of radical Puritanism in early Stuart England', in Muriel McClendon and Joseph P. Ward (eds), *Protestant Identities. Religion, society and self-fashioning in post-Reformation England* (Stanford, 1999), pp. 63-84.
[61] Thomas, *Religion*, p. 160.
[62] Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, p. 33; Walsham, *Providence*, p. 205.
[63] Christopher Hill, 'Arise Evans. Welshman in London', in idem, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 59-60.
[64] He believed that Revelation 8 and 11 put in plain words the English Civil War and that chapters 8 and 9 of Amos foreshadowed the events after the beginning of the Long Parliament. Evans briefly belonged to a Fifth Monarchist congregation, but later turned into a royalist propagandist. Hill, 'Arise Evans', pp. 48-9; Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, p. 42.
[65] *Elias Ashmole (1617-1692). His Autobiographical and Historical Notes, his Correspondence, and Other Contemporary Sources Relating to His Life*, ed. Conrad H. Josten, 5 Vols. (Oxford, 1966), Vol. II, p. 642.

minister, that in the late 1640s the so-called Ranter William Franklin declared himself to be God and Christ, while Mary Gadbury followed him and became his concubine, convinced she was the Virgin Mary, the 'Bride', the 'Lamb's wife' or the 'Spouse of Christ'. In Southampton, the couple had great success and were soon surrounded by disciples assuming particular roles such as John the Baptist, the destroying angel or the healing angel. Franklin was married and had three children, but had left his family for Mary Gadbury. Until 1646, he had a good reputation in London among his neighbours and even the 'godly', but then became seriously ill. It was after his recovery that he began to proclaim 'that he was God' and denied the Scriptures. At their trial, Franklin and Gadbury both recanted and were imprisoned under the suspicion of bigamy; Gadbury was soon released, while Franklin was to be kept until he could provide sureties for good behaviour.[66] Not much later, John Robins claimed to be God and his wife Joan to be pregnant with Christ.[67] One of their followers, Joshua Garment, who after Robins' abjuration claimed to be a prophet in his own right, had visions in which he saw Robins 'riding upon wings of the wind in great glory', and in which he was ordained to be 'the Prophet of the Lord, sent to proclaim the coming of the Lord'.[68] The anarchic and unbridled behaviour of the Ranters scandalised the godly. The Robins and their followers were arrested 'for behaving themselves very rudely and uncivilly, ... casting themselves upon the ground, and singing & using strange postures'.[69] Moreover, the belief that, as the

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[66] See Humphrey Ellis, *Pseudochristus; Or, A true and faithful Relation of the Grand Impostures, Horrid Blasphemies, Abominable Practices, Gross Deceits; Lately spread abroad and acted in the County of Southampton by William Franklin and Mary Gadbury, and their Companions* (1650), at pp. 16, 7. See also Jerome Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality and Anarchy. The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Ohio, 1987), pp. 161-66; Cohn, *Pursuit*, pp. 298-301.

[67] [G.H.], *The Declaration of John Robins, the false prophet, otherwise called the Shakers God, and Joshua Beck and John King, the two false Disciples* (London, 1651). See also Friedman, *Blasphemy*, pp. 156-60.

[68] [Joshua Garment], *The Hebrews Deliverance at hand. Declared by me Joshuah Garment in Clarken-well New Prison* (London, 1651), pp. 4, 7. The text was published only a few months after Robins' abjuration. Friedman, *Blasphemy*, p. 159.

[69] *Ranters of both Sexes, Male and Female: Being thirteen or more, taken and imprisoned in the Gate-house at Westminster, and in the New-prison at Clerken Well. Wherein John Robins doth declare himself to be the great God of Heaven, and the great Deliverer and that his wife is with childe with Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World* (London, 1651), p. 3; *Perfect Passages of Every Daies intelligence from the Parliaments Army under the Command of his Excellency the Lord General Cromwel* (London, 1651), pp. 322, 325. See also *All the Proceedings at the Sessions of*

Latter Days approached, the Jews would be converted and restored to the Holy Land, was part of the millenarian climate. Thomas Tany, formerly called Thomas Totney, a London goldsmith, claimed descent from Henry VII and Aaron, high Priest of the Jews. Like Robins, his task was to deliver the Jews. Tany was thus a product of his time. He was a productive writer and 'created an entire intellectual system with its own languages, phrases, concepts, grammars through which he would express' the revelations he received.[70] But he was clearly deluded. In print, he demanded the crowns of England, France, Naples, Rome and Jerusalem, and proclaimed that he was to lead the Jews back to Israel. 'In 1655, inspired by a vision to kill all the Members of Parliament, he attacked the House single-handed, wearing an ancient costume and armed with a rusty sword. The doorkeeper was wounded, and Tany was sent to prison.'[71]

James Nayler (1618-60), a charismatic quaker leader, became even more notorious for imitating Christ. This reached a climax in 1656, when he rode into Bristol on a donkey, recalling Christ's entry into Jerusalem. His entourage included several pseudo-apostles, 'one whereof [was] a yong man, whose head was bare, leading his horse by the bridle' and two Magdalens, and on their way they were singing 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabbath'.[72] Quakers believed that both female and male individuals had Christ's spirit within them and were able to receive prophetic inspiration like biblical characters. They were often accused of religious pride, but were convinced that total abolition of the self was a premise to be perfect, and that prophecy was a divine gift.[73]

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the Peace holden at Westminster, on the 20. day of Iune, 1651. against Thomas Tydford, Elizabeth Sorrell the Elder, Margaret Dunlape, Anne Burley, Frances Bedwell, Elizabeth Sorrell the Yonger, and Thomas Kearby (London, 1651).

[70] Friedman, Blasphemy, pp. 161-90. See also Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, Vol. II, p. 200; Ariel Hessayon, '"Gold tried in the fire". The prophet Theauraujohn Tany and the puritan revolution' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996); idem, 'Totney, Thomas (bap. 1608, d. 1659?)', DNB.

[71] [Thomas Tany], Hear O Earth (London, 1654); idem, Theavrauiohn high priest to the Ievves (London, 1652), pp. 1-2; Capp, Fifth Monarchy Men, p. 43.

[72] John Deacon, The Grand Impostor Examined: Or, The Life, Tryal, and Examination of James Nayler, the Seduced and Seducing Quaker with the Manner of his Riding into Bristol (London, 1656), sig. B1r-B2r. See also Leopold Damrosch, The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus. James Nayler and the Puritan crackdown on the free spirit (Cambridge, Mass., 1996); idem, 'Nayler, James (1618-1660)', DNB.

[73] On Quakerism and charismatic leadership, see Damrosch, Sorrows, pp. 115-20.

Nayler undoubtedly possessed characteristics of a leader, and he (and his admirers) were convinced that he had more of Christ's spirit than did other Quakers. He captivated his audience by his emotional preaching, so vital a feature for prophets, and his compelling appearance. Some stated that Nayler's 'hair both colour and manner of wearing it, as also the fashion of his beard and feature and person', resembled the possibly fictitious Roman description of Christ by Publius Lentulus; in assuming the gestures, words, worship, honour, and miraculous powers of the Saviour he gained many enthusiastic followers.[74] It is therefore not surprising that his words and behaviour led many, including many MPs, to believe he harboured messianic ideas. The House of Commons, already concerned about the 'great growth' of the Quakers, spent several weeks discussing the case in 1656. It was concluded that in setting himself up 'in Christ's place' and claiming to be the Saviour by assuming the title of the 'King of Israel' and 'Jesus', Nayler was guilty of 'horrid blasphemy'; it was resolved that he was 'a grand Impostor and seducer of the people'.[75] The Quaker prophets of the post-Civil War period perceived their community as 'a movement of antistructure, energized not by laws or fixed programs but by charismatic preaching and a theology of universal love'.[76] And in response, they were accused of repudiating the government, rejecting both magistracy and ministry, and seeking to 'trample it under their feet'.[77] The anti-enthusiast Henry More despised them

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[74] *A True Narrative of The Examination, Tryall, and Sufferings of James Nayler in the Cities of London and Westminster, and his deportment under them* ([London], 1657), pp. 6-7.
Publius Lentulus is considered a fictitious person, said to have been governor of Judea before Pontius. For the history of the letter, containing the description of Christ he sent to the Roman Senate, see Joseph Ziegler, 'Text and Context. On the rise of physiognomic thought in the later Middle Ages', in Yitzak Hen (ed.), *De Sion exhibit et verbum domini de Hierusalem. Essays on medieval law. liturgy and literature in honour of Amnon Linder* (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 159-82, esp. pp. 171-72. A woodcut illustration to 'Lentulus' Letter' can be found in Joseph Koerner, *The Moment of Self Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago, 1993), p. 117.
[75] *True Narrative of The Examination*, pp. 18-9, 22-8, 30. The Blasphemy Act of 1650 fit the case. Nayler was severely punished on 27 December 1656, his tongue bored through and his forehead marked. In Bristol, where he committed the blasphemy, he was 'to ride to the horses tale through the Citty and after to be whipt'. *Diary of Thomas Burton, Esq. Member in the Parliaments of Oliver and Richard Cromwell*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 4 Vols. (London, 1828), Vol. I, pp. 24-37, 38-45, 265-66. See also Norman Penney (ed.), *Extracts from State Papers Relating to Friends, 1654 to 1672* (London, 1913), pp. 21-6; *True Narrative of The Examination*, pp. 37-42.
[76] Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women. Ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 3.
[77] *Diary of Thomas Burton*, p. 26.

for their 'uncouth religiosity', passion and prophecies, 'and was afraid of what they might

do had they sufficient popular support'.[78] Among the radical movements, the Quakers

were the least controllable, and presented a particularly serious challenge to religious

authority. It is hardly surprising that Nayler was considered a potential messianic

revolutionary leader and thus a major threat to the social order. By riding into Bristol he

had blasphemously imitated Christ's entry into Jerusalem; it has also been suggested that

Nayler's entry alluded to the King's parades into cities and towns which were present in

everyone's memory.[79] Nayler's rival, George Fox, repudiated his claims. However, he too

saw himself as an instrument of God, and claimed to have performed 150 healing

miracles.[80] In 1649, for example, he healed a sick man who had been given up by

physicians. Later, he was again 'moved of the Lord' and healed a man's lame arm,

restored a Baptist woman to health, and mended a man's broken neck. It has been shown

that healing by touch was not unique to kings, and was a common practice of cunning

men and women. Fox also claimed to have healed by touch a friend's daughter of

scrofula. In addition, he told his followers how to recognise their true Saviour and how to

'discover all the *false Shepherds* and *Teachers* they had been under'.[81] Unlike Nayler,

most pseudo-messiahs mentioned above were relatively leniently punished. Nayler was

not considered a fraud like Franklin, but the leader of a growing and alarming

movement.[82]

Another of the Revolution sects, the Muggletonians, was also distinguished by its

prophetic claims. It was founded by two self-styled prophets, John Reeve and Lodowick

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[78] Daniel C. Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concern of Dr. Henry More. Religious meaning and the psychology of delusion* (Leiden, 1997), p. 178.
[79] When on 23 May 1618, the Stadtholder Maurice entered Amsterdam, 'a welcoming placard greeted him as the new Messiah; *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Dei'*. Archibald H.W. Harrison, *Arminianism* (London, 1937), cited in Penney, *Extracts*, p. 77.
[80] See *George Fox's 'Book of Miracles'*, ed. Henry J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1948).
[81] George Fox, *A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry, of that Ancient, Eminent and Fearful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox* (London, 1694), pp. 30, 103, 371, 407, 106.
[82] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1972), p. 201. See also *Narrative of The Examination, Tryall, and Sufferings of James Nayler* (London, 1657).

Muggleton, who declared themselves the 'two last Witnesses of God that ever should be upon the Earth', and claimed 'absolute and irrevocable power to save and damn whom they pleas'd'. Reeve died in 1658, while Muggleton was sentenced in 1677 to stand in the pillory, his books to be burnt, and to pay £500.[83] Although their number greatly diminished, pseudo-prophets continued to appear throughout the eighteenth-century and well beyond. John Lacy (1664-1730), formerly a member of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, became inspired by the Camisards and turned into a prophet himself.[84] In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Joanna Southcott headed a movement that resembled seventeenth-century millenarianism; she believed herself to be the Bride of Christ, and, at the age of sixty-four, about to deliver the second messiah, which she failed to perform. She died the same month.[85]

Many of these visionaries uttered their prophecies after prolonged fasting and in a state of physical weakness, a fact which fascinated not only clerics but also physicians.[86] Moreover, a number of women prophets emerged during these years, some of them associated with millenarian groups such as the Fifth Monarchists. By taking on 'male' roles as preachers, prophets and pamphleteers they (temporarily) challenged the nature of religious and political authority, and some won considerable respect.[87] All were

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[83] *OBP* (28 October 2005), January 1677, trial of Lodowick Muggleton (t16770117-1 and t16770117-2). See Christopher Hill, Barry Reay and William Lamont, *The World of the Muggletonians* (London, 1983); William Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy* (London, 1996), ch. 3; E.P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast. William Blake and the moral law* (Cambridge, 1993), esp. ch. 6 and appendix 1.

[84] Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets. The history of a millenarian group in eighteenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1980). See also *The Honest Quaker. Or, the forgeries and impostures Of the Pretended French Prophets and their Abettors expos'd; In a Letter from a Quaker to his friend, Giving an Account of a Sham-Miracle Perform'd by John L-y Esq; on the body of Elizabeth Gray, on the 17th of August last* (London, 1707).

[85] James K. Hopkins, *A Woman to Deliver Her People. Joanna Southcott and English millenarianism in an era of revolution* (Austin, 1982); John F.C. Harrison, *The Second Coming. Popular millenarianism, 1780-1850* (London, 1979).

[86] See Jane Shaw, 'Religious Experience and the Formation of the Early Enlightenment Self', in Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London, 1997), pp. 61-71. In April 1704, the Royal Society discussed a case of a girl from Stratton (Cornwall), who pretended to fast. It was probably the same case that had already been discussed and aroused suspicion in February. ARS, JBC/10, 'Journal Book, 1702-14', pp. 60, 71-2.

[87] Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 173-74; Ann Marie McEntee, '"The [Un]Civill-Sisterhood of Oranges and Lemons". Female petitioners and demonstrators, 1642-53', in James Holstun (ed.), *Pamphlet Wars. Prose in the English Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 92-111; Rachel Trubowitz,

convinced that urgent social, political and ecclesiastical reforms would further the Coming of Christ. In 1647 Sarah Wight was believed to have fasted for fifty-three days, once even for seventy-five days, 'without one crum of bread or meat, and with so little drink', only feeding on Jesus Christ.[88] Another case of fasting was that of twelve-year old Martha Hatfield. Her uncle, the Sheffield Congregational minister James Fisher, himself accused of preaching the ideas of the Fifth Monarchists, published a tract entitled *The Wise Virgin* which tells the story of the child's disease, her recovery and prophecies in 1652.[89] The relationship between the child, the author and the community's expectations in the process of styling her a female saint seem to be significant. We may speculate that Fisher himself was in search of a new prophet to meet his congregation's zealous expectations. The state of being on the edge between heaven and earth was a popular theme, and Hatfield's weakness certainly helped to establish the image of a child-prophetess. She was partly detached from the concerns and corruption of the physical world, a state which some visionaries achieved through fasting. Children often appear in dream visions, and were identified with the innocent and pure Christ-child. Martha's weakness, which had already been manifested by her premature birth, provided a characteristic qualification, which fitted her for the position of a sacred authority; Fisher's story fits perfectly into this traditional pattern. Godly children were not unusual in the mid-seventeenth century, however, compared to other female prophets of the time such as

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'Female Preachers and Male Wives. Gender and authority in Civil War England', in ibid., pp. 112-33.

However, many Protestants considered prophecy as a 'feminine activity' regardless of the sex of the prophet. Phillis Mack, 'Women as Prophets During the English Civil War', *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982), pp. 19-45, at p. 24.

[88] Henry Jessey, *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced. By the Spirit of Grace, in an Empty Nothing Creature, viz. M^{ris} Sarah Wight.* (London, 1647), pp. 21, 55-7, 90-1, 116, 131, quotation from p. 56. See also Barbara Ritter Dailey, 'The Visitation of Sarah Wight. Holy carnival and the revolution of the saints in Civil War London', *Church History*, 55 (1986), pp. 438-55.

[89] Nigel Smith, 'A Child Prophet. Martha Hatfield as *The Wise Virgin*', in Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (eds), *Children and Their Books. A celebration of the work of Iona and Peter Opie* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 79-93; James Fisher, *The Wise Virgin. Or, A wonderfull Narration of the hand of God, wherein his Severity and goodness hath appeared in afflicting a Childe of eleven years of age, when stricken dumb, deaf and blinde through the prevalency of her disease: yet upon her wonderfull recovery was heard at severall time to utter many glorious truths concerning Christ, Faith, and other Subjects* (London, 1653).

Anne Trapnel, Elinor Channel, Elizabeth Poole, or Dame Eleanor Davies who also took on a much more active role, both Hatfield and Wight were very young.[90]

The social profile of these women prophets varies. While Elinor Channel and Elizabeth Poole were of the poorer sort, Anna Trapnel was the daughter of a Hackney shipwright, and became a linchpin in the Fifth Monarchists movement. Dame Eleanor Davies was of aristocratic origin and married.[91] Such women clearly caused confusion. As the case of Davies illustrates, the authorities were often prepared to listen. On the one hand many a contemporary was glad to have his millenarian expectations justified through 'a divine vessel', but on the other many questioned the prophet's alleged divine gift, and Phyllis Mack has suggested that women's prophetic activities reinforced existing negative female stereotypes. This general confusion was reflected in the accusation of Trapnel, whom the authorities were rather reluctant to imprison, and Davies, whom they were uncertain whether to regard as lunatic or criminal.[92] Yet as Mack has noted, apart from the case of Davies, who was 'the most socially elevated and personally idiosyncratic of all female prophets', the female prophets' quasi-autonomous room for agency was

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[90] Elizabeth Poole, *An Alarum of vvar, given to the Army, and to their High Court of Iustice (so called) revealed by the will of God in a vision to E. Poole* (London, 1649); *A Prophesie touching the death of King Charles* (London, 1649); *A Vision. wherein is manifested the disease and cure of the kingdome. Being in summe of what was delivered to the Generall Councel of the Army, Decemb. 29. 1648* (London, 1649). See also Katharine Gillespie, *Domesticity and Dissent in the Seventeenth Century. English women writers and the public sphere* (Cambridge, 2004), ch. 3; Marcus Nevitt, 'Elizabeth Poole Writes the Regicide', *Women's Writing*, 9 (2002), pp. 233-48; Manfred Brod, 'Politics and Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England. The case of Elizabeth Poole', *Albion*, 31 (1999), pp. 391-412; Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 78-9, 99-100; Trubowitz, 'Female Preachers'.

[91] Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London, 1993), pp. 106-7. For Anne Trapnel, see for example [Anna Trapnel], *The Cry of a Stone. Or A Relation of Something spoken in Whitehall, by Anna Trapnel, being in the Visions of God. Relating to the Governors, Army, Churches, Ministry, Universities: And the whole Nation* (London, 1654); *Strange and wonderful nevves from Vvhitehall: Or, The mighty visions proceeding from Mistris Anna Trapnel, to divers collonels, ladies, and gentlewomen, concerning the government of the commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland; and her revelations touching his Highness, the Lord Protector, and the army* (London, 1654); Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, esp. pp. 102-3, 266. For Eleanor Davis, see Watt, *Secretaries*, ch. 5; Betty S. Travitsky, 'The Possibilities of Prose', in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 234-66, esp. pp. 248-50; Esther S. Cope (ed.), *Prophetic Writings of Lady Eleanor Davies* (Cambridge, 1995); Mack, *Visionary Women*, esp. pp. 93-100; Tom Hayes, 'Diggers, Ranters, and Women Prophets. The discourse of madness and the Cartesian *Cogito* in seventeenth-century England', *Clio*, 26 (1996), pp. 29-50; Esther S. Cope, '"Dame Eleanor Davies Never soe Mad a Ladie"?', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 50 (1987), pp. 133-44.

[92] Mack, *Visionary Women*, pp. 94, 79; idem, 'Women as Prophets', pp. 37-8.

limited. They usually belonged to a 'congregation that was supervised by male ministers'. Although they could express themselves in print, in publishing their prophecies they depended on male publishers who 'bracketed their texts by salutations that affirmed their piety and respectability, inserted supporting biblical citations, and added substantive arguments'. The mute and less literate Elinor Channel, for instance, had her prophecies turned into to a Royalist polemic by her editor Arise Evans.[93] However, visions undoubtedly gave, for some particular women, an opportunity to find a public voice and to articulate their social and religious concerns.[94]

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[93] Mack, *Visionary Women*, p. 97; Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Printed Writings', in Mary Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1985).

[94] Katharine Gillespie argues that visionaries such as Anna Trapnel, Elizabeth Poole, Sarah Wight, Anne Wentworth, Mary Cary envisioned political principles of toleration, privacy, or separation of church and state before male thinkers such as Locke and Hobbes: Gillespie, *Domesticity*.
For female political consciousness seen as cultural and political emancipation, see McEntee, '"[Un]Civill-Sisterhood"'.

2. POSSESSED AND EXORCISTS

Assessment becomes more difficult with possessed children, who claimed – or, often someone else did for them – some powerful gift or divine inspiration. Although we will focus on fraudulent aspects of the phenomenon, possession cannot be explained away simply as fraud, theatricality or psycho-pathological incident. Possession was a common feature of early modern everyday life, and many understood it in the context of eschatological expectations.[95] However, there was no agreement over the nature of the condition and several causes were suggested. Sir Thomas Browne stated that "the devil doth really possess some men; the spirit of melancholy others; the spirit of delusion others".[96] Possessed individuals frequently occurred together with false exorcists, or others who claimed miraculous healing gifts. Exorcism had long been controversial, particularly since the mid-sixteenth century, and it created tensions in a wide range of contexts. Catholics and above all the Jesuits seized the opportunity to take on roles as exorcists, while Protestants denounced their methods as popish superstition and promoted exorcism by long sessions of prayer and fasting.[97] But apart from struggles between denominations and religious orders, exorcism could also strain relations between clergy and laity, and between the church hierarchy and clerical practitioners. Exorcism was an important means of propaganda, and could bestow great power and prestige to anyone claiming this spiritual gift. The *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1600), in which Samuel Harsnet exposed the artifice and theatricality of exorcists, was, as Greenblatt stated, 'a weapon ... to eliminate competing religious authorities by wiping out pockets of rivalrous charisma'. Harsnet wrote: 'It hath been alwaies the ill fortune of this

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[95] Most important on the intellectual debate on possession and exorcism is Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons. The idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), chs. 26-28; on possession and eschatology, esp. pp. 403-34.
[96] Thomas Browne, *Religio medici*, in *Works*, ed. Simon Wilkin, 4 Vols. (London, 1835), Vol. II, p. 44, cited in Clark, *Thinking*, p. 390.
[97] Michael MacDonald (ed.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London. Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover case* (London, 1991), p. xx. For exorcism and possession in the European context, see Clark, *Thinking*, chs. 26-28.

holy order of *Exorcists*, that the professors of it haue been reputed errand luglers and Impostors, yea sometimes, by the greatest protectors of theyr owne religion'.[98] Reginald Scot too called attention to fraudulent acting and highlighted the methods of deception, among them the 'cunning manipulation of popular superstitions; the exploitation of grief, fear and credulity; the skillful handling of illusionistic devices developed for the stage; the blending of spectacle and commentary; the deliberate arousal of anxiety coupled with the promise to allay it'.[99]

The descriptions of possession display certain stereotypes and patterns, which were well established by the later sixteenth century. However, the fact that many of these tracts were anonymous makes it difficult to draw exact conclusions about the intentions and ideological positions of their authors.[100] Agents, whether they were possessed children or religious 'fanatics', frequently acted under the influence of instigators who pursued religious, political, economic goals of their own, or simply wanted to further a family feud as in the case of Anne Gunter.[101] In a London case in 1574, Agnes Briggs and Rachel Pindar 'admitted to simulating possession, and of having falsely accused a woman named Joan Thornton of bewitching them'.[102] That feigned possession could be driven by financial interest is evident in the case of Elizabeth Saunders, which shows that the phenomenon was sufficiently familiar to be exploited as a commercial enterprise. Saunders, a yeoman's wife, confessed in 1621 to having instructed a young married woman named Katherine Malpas how to simulate possession, in "expectation & hope that much money would be given unto her ... by such persons as should come to see her in pity and commiseration".[103] The plan to provoke pity through a bodily performance

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[98] Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 96; Harsnet, *Declaration*, p. 8.

[99] Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 100. See Scot, *Discoverie*.

[100] J. A. Sharpe, 'Disruption in the Well-Ordered Household. Age, authority, and possessed young people', in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (London, 1996), pp. 187-212, at p. 192. See also Clark, *Thinking*, pp. 398-99.

[101] In 1604, Anne Gunter simulated bewitchment. She was instigated by her father who wanted to advance a feud that had begun in 1598 at a football match. See James Sharpe, *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter* (London, 1999).

[102] Sharpe, 'Disruption', p. 193. See also Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 216-17.

[103] NA, STAC 8/4/10, cited in Sharpe, 'Disruption', p. 193.

recalls similar strategies adopted by fraudulent beggars. It is not clear whether the case also involved fraudulent exorcism. Saunders appears to have been familiar with the behavioural pattern of possession, and made use of those who believed in exorcism and took pity on the possessed; she, and probably also Malpas, stood above the 'superstitious' belief in possession and exorcism.

The well-known case of the Puritan exorcist, John Darrel (1562-1602), and his associate George More, in the 1590s, is a good example of how children were incited to act as possessed. Darrel was one among many who claimed that his access to sacred power proved him a representative of the true faith. The three demoniacs, Katherine Wright, Thomas Darling, a boy aged thirteen, and William Sommers, eventually confessed their frauds. According to them, they had been taught by Darrel how to simulate the symptoms of possession.[104] Darrel was condemned as a 'counterfeyte' and pronounced an impostor; along with George More he was suspended from the ministry and committed to the Gatehouse.[105]

In spite of growing scepticism, similar incidents still aroused great publicity a century later. The case of Richard Dugdale, the 'Surey demoniack', exorcised by a nonconformist minister, John Carrington, in 1697, caused a flood of pamphlets and became a battleground over the belief in miracles and demonic possession.[106] Several

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[104] Walker, *Unclean Spirit*, p. 52. See also Samuel Harsnet, *A Discovery of the Fravdvlent practices of Iohn Darrell Bachelor of Artes, in his proceedings concerning the Pretended Possession and Dispossession of William Somers at Nottingham: of Thomas Darling, the boy of Burton at Caldwall: and of Katherine Wright at Mansfield, & Whittington: and of his dealings with one Mary Couper at Nottingham, detecting in some sort the deceitful trade in these latter dayes of casting out Deuils* (London, 1599), pp. 304, 310.

[105] Harsnet, *Discovery*, p. 9. Abraham Hartwel, who translated into English Michel Marescot's *Discourse véritable*, the possession case of Martha Brossier in France, was convinced that Sommers was not possessed but 'a meere Imposture and Cousenage': Abraham Hartwel, *A True Discourse, vpon the Matter of Martha Brossier of Romorantin, pretended to be possessed by a Deuill* (London, 1599), sig. A2v; Michel Marescot, *Discourse véritable sur le faict de Marthe Brossier de Romorantin, prétendu démoniaque* (Paris, 1599). See also Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, esp. pp. 101-6.

[106] A number of pamphlets were published, some defending his claim of demonic possession. Thomas Jollie (1629-1703), an ejected minister of Altham, declared his belief in the miraculous nature of Dugdale's possession. [Thomas Jollie], *The Surey demoniack: Or, An account of Satans strange and dreadful actings, in and about the body of Richard Dugdale of Surey, near Whalley in Lancashire; and how he was dispossesst by Gods blessing on the fastings and prayers of divers ministers and people. The matter of fact attested by the oaths of several credible persons, before*

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witnesses asserted that they had seen Dugdale foretelling events, speaking strange languages of which he was ignorant, and other alleged signs of possession such as the vomiting of a 'Hair-Button' or a 'Curtain-Ring'.[107] With the help of other nonconforming divines, Thomas Jollie tried to cure Dugdale by exorcism, using prayer and fasting. Among the sceptics was the Anglican minister Zachary Taylor, who accused the 'P. Priests' of having been 'at the bottom of this Intrigue', and denounced Dugdale as an impostor.[108] The case displays the differing approaches of those who believed in the supernatural character of mental illness and those who explained it in naturalistic terms. The authority of exorcists declined during the seventeenth century, partly as a result of the pluralisation of religious beliefs, which also provoked a deeper suspicion 'towards the kind of enthusiasm and therapeutic practices previously associated with sainthood, but now increasingly identified as superstitious'.[109] However, belief in magic remained strong, and many still believed in demonology, and black and white magic, throughout

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some of His Majesties justices of the peace in the said county (London, 1697); T[homas] J[ollie], A Vindication of the Surey Demoniack as no Impostor: Or, A Reply to a certain Pamphlet Publish'd by Mr. Zach. Taylor, called the Surrey Impostor (London, 1698).

John Carrington, The Lancashire Levite rebuk'd, or, A farther vindication of the dissenters from popery, superstition, ignorance and knavery unjustly charged on them by Mr. Zachary Taylor in his two books about the Surey demoniak in a letter to himself (London, 1698); idem, The Lancashire Levite rebuk'd, or, A farther vindication of the dissenters from popery, superstition, ignorance and knavery unjustly charged on them, by Mr. Zachary Taylor, in his two books about the Surey demoniak in a second letter to himself (London, 1698); idem, The Lancashire Levite rebuk'd, or, A vindication of the dissenters from popery, superstition, ignorance and knavery, unjustly charged on them by Mr. Zachary Taylor, in his book, entituled, The Surey Impostor. In a letter to himself. By an impartial hand. With an abstract of the Surey demoniack (London, 1698). For the debates the case produced and differing approaches, see David Harley, 'Mental Illness, Magical Medicine and the Devil in Northern England, 1650-1700', in Roger French and Andrew Wear (eds), The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 131-44.
[107] Jollie, Vindication, p. 57.
[108] For example, Zachary Taylor, The Surey Impostor: Being An Answer to a late fanatical Pamphlet, Entituled The Surey Demoniack (London, 1697), p. 61; for the witnesses' accounts, see pp. 49-71. See also idem, Popery, superstition, ignorance, and knavery, confess'd, and fully proved on the Surey dissenters, from the second letter of an apostate friend, to Zach. Taylor. To which is added, a Refutation of Mr. T. Jollie's Vindication of the devil in Dugdale; Or, The Surey demoniack (London, 1699); idem, Popery, superstition, ignorance, and knavery, very unjustly by a letter in the general pretended, but as far as was charg'd, very fully proved upon the dissenters that were concerned in the Surey imposture by Zach. Taylor (London, 1698); idem, Popery, superstition, ignorance, and knavery, very unjustly by a letter in the general pretended, but as far as was charg'd, very fully proved upon the dissenters that were concerned in the Surey imposture by Zach. Taylor (London, 1699).
[109] Robin Briggs, Witches and Neighbours. The social and cultural context of European witchcraft (Harmondsworth, 1998), p. 202; MacDonald, Witchcraft, pp. xix-xxvi.

the seventeenth century, not only because contemporary science offered no better explanations, but also because the whole concept was socially functional.[110]

In none of the categories of impostures are the social profiles of impostors so diverse as in the religious, and none reveals such a high number of women and children. People labelled religious impostors occurred throughout our period, with a clear peak in the mid-seventeenth century, some of them deliberate frauds, others genuinely believing in their own assumed roles. Millenarian expectations made people in all social strata susceptible to claims of self-styled prophets whose messages often implied an active contemplation of everyday fears. Most of the prophets clearly believed that they had been charged with special prophetic missions. Although they often claimed to be illiterate, many of them had fairly decent knowledge of the Scriptures and possessed writing skills. They claimed God's real presence in their 'word', which gained more power within a community of listeners, and was sanctioned by the individual conscience that defined the scope for action. The reaction to pseudo-prophets depended very much on their messages, behaviour and the scale of any movement. People such as Elisha Hall or John Robins and his wife were deluded visionaries who to some extent acted independently and were viewed as relatively harmless. Robins and his associates later made abjurations. Tany, a provocative and radical figure who also gained some followers, was considered insane, and his claims were not taken very seriously by the authorities. Hacket, by contrast, a charismatic figure who gained some support among London Puritans was treated very differently. His outspoken and violent ideas posed an obvious threat which brought his prophetic career to a very rapid end. The pseudo-Messiahs William Franklin and Mary Gadbury, associated with the Ranters, attracted a large group of followers, and by establishing some sort of structure achieved some temporary success. The 'anarchic' views and behaviour of Ranters scandalized the godly and was met with hostility by the

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[110] Michael MacDonald notes that 'throughout the eighteenth century belief in witchcraft and demons could drive men mad'. Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 199-216, quotation from p. 11.

authorities. Franklin and his main supporters were all accused of blasphemy. Franklin and Gadbury recanted, and both were found guilty of bigamy. It is at least possible that Franklin was merely a cheat seeking celebrity and fame.

Personality or charisma was obviously part of the appeal of any religious impostor, and they probably have a more crucial role than in any other category.[111] Their importance in this context also derives from the fact that the interaction between leader and follower was far more intense on an emotional level, and the 'charmed group' of followers was often bigger. However, equally important was the impostor's message. Despite many variations, the messages often resonated with the religious, social and political concerns of part of the population and help explain the impostor's success. Moreover, the appeal of seventeenth-century religious impostors cannot be reduced to religious factors alone, but may also reflect popular political consciousness and concerns.[112] Some religious groups, such as the Ranters and Quakers, held very radical social and moral views, and the belief that Christ was in all believers and could thus free individuals from sin clearly appealed to some contemporaries. Nayler, Fox, Muggleton founded movements, the Quakers and Muggletonians, which put down lasting roots. Naylor was encouraged to preach by Fox (at least at the beginning), idolised by women and styled 'the lamb of God' in print by Thomas Simmonds. His rhetoric was powerful and compelling and even his appearance allegedly matched the image contemporaries had of Christ. In this case it was a fusion of charismatic personality and message that appealed to his followers and led to a growing and organised movement. The authorities considered Nayler a dangerous threat, as both a blasphemer and the leader of a potentially revolutionary movement, and his punishment was severe. Anne Trapnel, who was linked

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[111] Here, charisma is understood in a sense more specifically attributed to religious leaders. According to Max Weber, the term designs 'a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities'. These qualities are considered of divine origin and therefore not accessible to the ordinary person, whereas the designated individual is treated as a leader: Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, ed. Talcott Parsons (London, 1947), p. 329.

[112] See Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey (eds), *Parliament at Work. Parliamentary committees, political power and public access in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 2002).

to the Fifth Monarchists, was also feared, but it may be because she was a woman and more a visionary than a leader that she was spared any extreme punishment.

To label these people insane or irrational would be anachronistic – at least before 1800 – and it would be equally problematic to consider the phenomenon within dichotomous structures such as orthodox/ unorthodox, authority/ resistance, authority/ individual. There is, however, a change in perception, which also becomes evident from the clear decline in the number of false prophets in the eighteenth century. As Roy Porter showed, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century religious enthusiasm was no longer considered imposture but 'a medical condition akin to fits'.[113] Early opponents of religious enthusiasm had already seen its causes in melancholy – but not in the sense of divine inspiration and genius – and during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries it was increasingly regarded as madness. According to the physician Nicholas Robinson, for example, the 'Ravings of *Nayler, Fox,* and *Muckleston* [sic], who certainly deserv'd no Punishment for what they did or said ... was nothing but the Effect of mere Madness, and arose from the stronger Impulses of a warm Brain', while the 'fantastick Agitations of our modern *French* Prophets, and other late Visionaries, were nothing else but strong convulsive Fits'.[114] '[V]isions and inspirations of radical Dissenters were insane delusions based on false perceptions and diseased imaginings'; correspondingly, many critics of enthusiasm also attacked beliefs in witchcraft and demons, and contended that such victims were mentally ill.[115] By the late seventeenth century, there was a tendency to bring a more 'rational' approach to religion, one compatible with natural laws and this served to marginalise the miraculous even more.

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[113] Porter, 'Rage of Party', p. 40.
[114] Robinson, however, did not deny the revelations described in the Bible, but stated that they always had 'some special, outward, visible Assurances, to second their internal Motions'. Nicholas Robinson, *A New System of the Spleen, Vapours, and Hypochondriack Melancholy. Wherein all the Decays of the Nerves, and Lownesses of the Spirits, are mechanically Accounted for* (London, 1729), pp. 247-48. See also Porter, 'Rage of Party', p. 40.
[115] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, p. 170; Fouke, *Enthusiastical Concern*; Porter, 'Rage of Party'.

It has become evident that the discussion of religious imposture has to be seen within the wider context of battles between denominations over truth and authority, and the fear of heresies which might have a disastrous impact upon the morals, welfare, supremacy and unity of the country. Millenarian expectations were prevalent among many radical religious movements, while many contemporaries were convinced that armies of atheists were seeking to overthrow the state. These are crucial factors which helped make religious imposture a prevalent feature of the early modern period. Of course, we cannot be sufficiently confident that the post-Reformation era actually witnessed an extension of this age-old phenomenon; there is simply no statistical evidence that would allow a comparison. We have to bear in mind that this might be merely a function of the greater availability of source material in the age of print and of an increasingly bureaucratic Church and State. Different religions may always have led to disputes and wars over dogmas and doctrines, and the motif of religious imposture has its own tradition. *De tribus impostoribus*, which argued that the three founders of monotheistic religion (Christ, Moses and Mohammed) were all impostors,[116] may symbolically stand for the intellectual confrontation.[117] This contention is an explicit expression of the radical attack of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, whose adherents were convinced of the corruption of Christianity and sought to support their argument with a historical perspective. Scepticism had grown about the possibility

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[116] Winfried Schröder has recently summarised its history in a critical edition of both the Latin original and the German text. *Anonymous [Johann Joachim Müller]. De imposturis religionum (De tribus impostoribus). Von den Betrügereyen der Religionen. Dokumente*, ed. Winfried Schröder (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1999), p. 548. See also Justin Champion, 'Legislators, Impostors, and the Politic Origins of Religion. English theories of "imposture" from Stubbe to Toland', in Silvia Berti, Françoise Charles-Daubert, Richard Popkin (eds), *Heterodoxy, Spinozism, and Free Thought in Early-Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Dordrecht, 1996), pp. 333-56; Silvia Berti, 'The First Edition of the *Traité des trois imposteurs* and its Debt to Spinoza's *Ethics*', in Michael Hunter and David Wootton (eds), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 182-220; Hunter, 'Problem of "Atheism"', p. 145.

[117] Despite the fact that the book probably did not exist until the 1680s, (the idea of) it had been communicating a great fascination for several centuries, and many writers were strongly suspected of being the author of the text. Rumours about the existence of the book had been going round since the late Middle Ages, but the peak falls into the early Enlightenment period. Schröder (ed.), *Anonymous*, pp. 7-8.

of any epistemological certainty.[118] As we have seen, the language of 'religious imposture' had reflected the struggle between denominations since the Reformation, and it was again a significant rhetoric tool in the debates over probability and certainty, over the meaning of credulity and incredulity in the late seventeenth century.

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[118] Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge. From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 197-212, at p. 210; Justin A. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken. The Church of England and its enemies, 1660-1770* (Cambridge, 1992). See also Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth. Civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago, 1994), p. 190; John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion. The age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).

CHAPTER 4

'THE UNFORTUNATE WHOSE KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD'[1] –

POLITICAL IMPOSTURES

The theme of political imposture involves a wide spectrum of different aspects and ranges

from the famous story of Perkin Warbeck to intriguing adventures of spies and informers;

even Cicero's and Machiavelli's advocacy of dissimulation, and politicians' concealment

of true interests may fit into this context.[2] The Earl of Rochester, under his alias of

Alexander Bendo, called the politician 'a Mountebank in State Affairs', and commented

that, 'fain to supply some higher ability he pretends to, with Craft, he draws great

companies to him by undertaking strange things which can never be effected'.[3] Clive

Cheesman and Jonathan Williams have illustrated the variety as well as continuity of

pretenders and claimants in the western world, from antiquity to modernity, and noted

how perceptions and reactions both changed over time. The phenomenon was not specific

to the early modern period, and took a very wide range of forms.[4] However, we must

clearly distinguish political impostors from those who claimed the role of 'king' in a

much wider range of contexts. As we have seen, pseudo-prophets often proclaimed

themselves king, such as William Hacket, or Thomas Tany, who claimed the crowns of

England, France, Naples, Rome and Jerusalem; even James Nayler, the Quaker leader

called himself 'King of Israel', though he did not have political ambitions. None of these,

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[1] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 25 (1755), p. 210, on the case of Baron Theodore von Neuhoff.
Theodore von Neuhoff (1694-1756) ruled briefly as king of Corsica in 1736, but then fled to
London where he dwelled in expensive rooms as Baron Stein and took pleasure in London high
society. See Aylmer Vallance, *The Summer King. Variations by an adventurer on an eighteenth-
century air* (London, 1956).
[2] For instance, both Ronald Hutton and John Spurr use the notion of 'masquerade' to refer to
Charles II's politics. See Ronald Hutton, *Charles the Second. King of England, Scotland and
Ireland* (Oxford, 1989); John Spurr, *England in the 1670s. The masquerading age* (Oxford, 2000).
[3] *A Collection of 185 Advertisements*, item 41, pp. 3-4.
[4] Clive Cheesman and Jonathan Williams, *Rebels, Pretenders & Impostors* (London, 2002).

however, impersonated royal figures. The mock king, a figure who occurs in many different contexts and cannot be reduced to a single typology, is another phenomenon that has to be distinguished from political imposture. Well-known examples are the king of beggars, king of gypsies, king of thieves, and closely related, mock-mayors and lords presiding over carnivals and festivities, commonly known as 'Lords of Misrule'.[5] It is also worth mentioning that names indicating high lay positions such as King, Prince, Duke, Count, Earl were possibly bestowed as nicknames, or possibly on the tenants, servants, or retainers of such great men. From genealogy we know that the surnames such as 'King' were 'well established and widely distributed by about 1300', but they can surely not all have been descendants of kings.[6] A more direct form of political imposture comprises individuals claiming to be relatives of important political figures. For example, in 1607, one Bartolomeo Borghese, accompanied by an equipage containing footmen and horses, presented himself in Paris, claiming to be the illegitimate son of Pope Paul V. He turned out to be a distiller from Siena, who had already been 'poursuivi' in Rome in 1603 for alchemy and charlatanism. He maintained his claim to the end, and was burnt at the stake in November 1608.[7] Spies, men who were temporarily authorised and forced to hide their real identity, open up another dimension. The sources also reveal a large number of informers seeking fame through some fictitious political revelation. Many were taken seriously, and when detected, they were often denounced as impostors. Their claims frequently served a political agenda, either to gain political influence for themselves or for a political party. In order to lend their political allegations more weight, they might

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[5] According to Ronald Hutton, Edward VI's reign was the 'golden age of the Lord of Misrule'. Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England. The ritual year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 90; Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in Early Modern England 1550-1750* (London, 1998), p. 134; Sandra Billington, *The Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford, 1991), esp. Part I; Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), ch. 4; idem, 'The Reasons of Misrule. Youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth-century France', *P&P*, 50 (1971), pp. 41-75; Yves-Marie Bercé, *Fête et révolte. Des mentalités populaire du XVI* au *XVIII* siècle (Paris, 1994), pp. 16-9, 24-31.

[6] Richard A. McKinley, *A History of British Surnames* (London, 1990), pp. 135-36.

[7] Yves-Marie Bercé, *Le roi caché. Sauveurs et imposteurs. Mythes politiques populaires dans l'Europe moderne* (Paris, 1990), pp. 374-75.

additionally have claimed a false identity, or *vice-versa*. Examples include Titus Oates and Fuller, who is explored intensively in Part II.

This chapter can obviously not explore every aspect of political imposture. In what follows, I will mainly be concerned with those who claimed royal authority in order to achieve either a personal goal or that of a political faction. They were either genuine members of the royal dynasty or ordinary men or women who claimed to be the real heir to the throne and therefore challenged the legitimacy of the current ruler. The former are often labelled pretenders or claimants. The latter, who without any dynastic justification pretended they were some royal personage such as a king, prince, queen or princess may be categorised as royal impostors.[8] According to the *OED*, 'pretender' means broadly one 'who puts forth a claim, or who aspires to or aims at something; a claimant, candidate, or aspirant; now one who makes baseless pretensions'; the term came into common use at the end of the sixteenth century. The important meaning for us, however, is 'a claimant to a throne or the office of a ruler', which was 'originally used in a neutral sense, but now always applied to a claimant who is held to have no just title'.[9] In fact, someone really could be the Prince or Duke of X, but a 'pretender' merely in the sense of claiming that his birth gives him a better justification to the throne than the monarch. Henry Tudor would have been given that label if he had lost the battle at Bosworth in 1485 and not seized the throne. He was a genuine nobleman with some (weak) claim to the throne. As Cheesman and Williams note, '[f]rom 1340 until 1801, the kings of England and Great Britain held out an initially serious but increasingly meaningless claim to be rightful kings of France, indicating the fact in their titulature and their heraldry'.[10] However, the

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[8] A further, though not synonymous term belonging to this group would be usurper. Usurpation is often linked with imposture. See the section on 'Usurper kings' in Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, pp. 62-72.

[9] The word has two other subordinated meanings which relate in some way to our topic. First, 'one who aspires to the hand of a woman in marriage; a suitor, a wooer'. Second, '[o]ne who pretends or lays claim to something; one who makes a profession, show, or assertion, esp. without adequate grounds, falsely, or with intent to deceive; a dissembler, deceiver, charlatan, hypocrite'. *OED*.

[10] Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, p. 73. See also Lesley Coote, 'A Language of Power. Prophecy and public affairs in later medieval England', in Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (eds),

paradigm of pretendership is provided by the exiled Stuarts, who claimed their hereditary right to the throne for over one hundred years.[11] The meaning of the word 'pretender' as a claimant to a throne seems to have fully developed in the late seventeenth century, in the context of the ejection of James II. Prince James Edward, the son of James II, and known as the Old Pretender, and his son Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, are paradigms of this sort. The case of the Stuarts is explicit, and the word 'pretenderism' – or 'Jacobitism' – was designed for exactly their cause.[12] Cheesman and Williams rightly note that pretendership was well known even in the ancient and medieval world. Their concept of pretendership implies that pretenders have to belong to a broadly defined royal family.[13] Not anyone could be a pretender. In particular in 'strictly' dynastic states, in which sovereignty descends by 'a fixed convention within a particular family or kinship group, pretenders had to belong to what they call the "charmed group"'.[14] Kingdoms less attached to royal dynasties are prone to troubles deriving from a vacuum of power. The English monarchy, for instance, has seen a series of dynasties, each in some way related genealogically to its predecessor.[15] The distinction made by Cheesman and Williams is

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Prophecy. The power of inspired language in history 1300-2000 (Phoenix Mill, 1997), pp. 17-30, p. 24.

[11] See Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, pp. 74-84. See also Jonathan C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832. Religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 105-23.

[12] According to the *OED*, the word 'pretenderism' referring to the Jacobite cause first occurs in 1710.

[13] Maureen Perrie notes that pretender can be used 'for any claimant to a throne'. According to her, Russian provides a narrower term. 'The phenomenon of pretence or royal imposture means *samozvanstvo* or *samozvancestvo*. A pretender (*samozvanets*) is literally a "self-styled" (*samozvannyi*) tsar or tsarevitch, that is, someone who has falsely adopted a royal title and identity. *Samozvanets* is therefore a narrower term than the English word "pretender", which can be used for any claimant to a throne (the broader Russian equivalent is *pretendent*). "Impostor" is perhaps the more correct translation, but I shall follow established custom and practice in using "pretender" along with "impostor" as English equivalents of *samozvanets*.' Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and Popular Monarchism in Early Modern Russia* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2002), p. 1n. See also Boris A. Uspenskij, 'Tsar and Pretender. *Samozvancestvo* or royal imposture in Russia as a cultural-historical phenomenon', in idem and Juri M. Lotman, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor, 1984), pp. 259-92.

[14] Cheesman and Williams consider the Ottoman Empire 'a paradigm of a dynastic state'. The ruling sultan has to belong to the descendants of Osman (1258-1326). Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, p. 9.

[15] Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, pp. 9-10. For pretenders during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, see also Carole Levin, 'Queens and Claimants. Political insecurity in sixteenth-century England', in Janet Sharestanian (ed.), *Gender, Ideology, and Action. Historical perspectives of*

certainly useful for a narrow view of dynastic matters. But the expression 'royal impostor' may have a wider reference to include an ordinary person who assumes a royal identity in order to lay claim to a throne, having not even come from a noble background.

Why, then, was royal imposture a common and significant phenomenon in this period, and who were these trouble-makers? Despite the difficulty in pressing individuals into categories, four different types of royal impostors may facilitate our exploration. First, people who sincerely believed in their status as royal heir; second, puppets, people forced or seduced to act the part of a pretender; third, people, whose claim was not justified but a conscious and deliberate deceit; fourth, though not impostors in the narrow sense, political dissidents disseminating claims to undermine the legitimacy of the monarch. While we should try to understand the motivation behind such claims, it is equally important to consider those who believed them, and why authorities were anxious to expose them. In the English context several factors facilitated the appearance of pretenders and royal impostors: dynastic disputes; uncertainty over the fate of young members of the royal family; Catholic/Protestant rivalries; the new and controversial sixteenth-century phenomenon of female monarchs; and widespread ignorance over the physical appearance of royal figures.

Before exploring these themes, it is useful to mention briefly two significant aspects: myth and prophecy. The myth of the return of a king from a former age, a long and widespread tradition, plays a vital role. Myths could have an important stabilising function, which competing dynasties might invoke to underpin their rule. Legends, such as the ancient Britons as descendants of Brutus, reached back to the twelfth century. The return of King Arthur, for instance, was predicted in all Celtic countries; the myth was exploited by both factions during the Wars of the Roses, and became a cult with the Tudors.[16] The myth of the sleeping hero recurred throughout the early modern period and

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women's public lives (New York, 1986), pp. 41-66. Jeremy Potter deals with several English pretenders. Jeremy Potter, *Pretenders* (London, 1986).
[16] See Sharon L. Jansen, 'Prophecy, Propaganda, and Henry VIII. Arthurian tradition in the sixteenth century', in Valerie M. Lagorio and Mildred L. Day (eds), *King Arthur Through the*

well into modern times.[17] Yves-Marie Bercé has argued that many people expected the reappearance of the Russian Dimitri and Sebastian, King of Portugal, and really believed in those who claimed such identities.[18] As he has shown, the theme of the sleeping hero and his 'second terrestrial mission' is undoubtedly connected with the Christian imagination of the last days of the world, interrupted only by the Last Judgement and the reign of Christ.[19] It is the popular millenarian dream of a hidden hero-king who will defeat evil, and bring a rule of peace, justice and prosperity.

Closely related is prophecy.[20] Prophecy was a powerful means, for instance, to legitimise Elizabeth's female rule,[21] but prophetic statements about Elizabeth's death were also uttered during the years of Mary Stuart's challenge to her reign. Events such as the Spanish threat in the 1580s,[22] and, especially, the troubles of the Queen's last years provoked many prophecies of both protest and support. However, already in Henry VIII's reign, prophecies had become a serious problem for the government. Thomas Cromwell sought to limit the spread of prophetic tales and rumours of a political nature. The 1534 Act made it treason for anyone publicly to say or even to hold the opinion that the King

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Ages, 2 Vols. (New York, 1990), Vol. I, pp. 275-91; Carole Levin, 'Most Christian King, Most British King. The image of Arthur in Tudor propaganda', *The McNeese Review*, 23 (1990-94), pp. 80-90.

[17] Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 496-97.

[18] In an early article Yves-Marie Bercé has examined several pretenders to the throne in England, France and Portugal, who claimed royal power in response to the expectations of the masses. Yves-Marie Bercé, 'Les rois d'imposture aux XVIe siècle', *L'histoire*, 14 (1979), pp. 6-13. The theme is fully explored in *Le roi caché*. For the false Dimitris, see Perrie, *Pretenders*.

[19] Bercé, *Roi caché*, p. 312.

[20] Thomas defines prophecy as 'an elusively vague or ambiguous piece of prose or verse, resting on no clearly defined foundation, either magical or religious'. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 461. For political prophecies, see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium. Revolutionary millenarians and mystical anarchists of the Middle Ages* (rev. edn, New York, 1970); Thomas, *Religion*, ch. 13; Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press. English almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979), esp. ch. 3; Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power. Astrology in early modern England* (Cambridge, 1989); Taithe and Thornton (eds), *Prophecy*. See also the case study on Elizabeth Poole: Manfred Brod, 'Politics and Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England. The case of Elizabeth Poole', *Albion*, 31 (1999), pp. 391-412.

[21] Anne McLaren, 'Prophecy and Providentialism in the Reign of Elizabeth I', in Taithe and Thornton (eds), *Prophecy*, pp. 31-50.

[22] In February 1588, Bernardino de Mendoza mentioned in a letter to the King the superstition of the English. The old prophecy about the soldiers who are to dominate England and will come with snow on the crests of their helmets was rumoured since it was the time of the year when it snows in England. *Span. Cal. Eliz., 1587-1603*, Vol. IV, p. 215. See also Bernard Capp, 'The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic Thought', in Constantinos A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Manchester, 1994), pp. 93-119, at p. 97.

has no right to be king of this realm, and in 1542, an Act of Parliament made prophecies a felony without benefit of clergy or sanctuary; it was renewed in 1563.[23] As Geoffrey Elton observed, 'the people's credulity was a burden to King and government'.[24] Prophecies could provoke social and political unrest, and presented the government with serious problems. People uttering prophetical words were regarded as a threat to both state and church, and to the established order – ultimately, they were perceived as tools of Satan. Many scholars have noted the link between prophecy, superstition and crisis.[25] But as stated above, similar prophecies were also applied by kings and queens to legitimise their own rule, they 'were felt to provide a sanction both for resistance to establish authority and for the consolidation of a new regime'.[26] To reduce the problem of prophecies to 'the people's credulity' is too easy an explanation. The early modern status of prophecy was ambiguous, though it was certainly an important component in every-day life. The organisation of power within communities has always followed strict patterns. Tradition – or, as Eric Hobsbawm has illustrated, invented tradition – provides stability.[27] James I used the Brutus legend to help establish his rule, and the uncertain succession after Elizabeth's death. The personal union of Scotland and England in 1603 was therefore 'represented as the prophecy's true meaning', and allowed the Stuarts to call themselves Kings of Great Britain.[28] Although the Stuarts used this myth for their own advantage, it was 'normally associated with popular resistance movements' and appealed to those who awaited deliverance from their oppression and suffering. Unlike

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[23] 26 Henry VIII, c. 13; 33 Henry VIII, c. 14; 3 and 4 Edward VI, c. 15; 1&2 Philip and Mary, c. 10; 5 Elizabeth I, c. 15. See *The Statutes at Large, Vol. II. 24 Henry VIII-32 Charles II* (London, 1758), pp. 37-8, 132, 238, 289-90, 358; *English Historical Documents, Vol. V, 1485-1558*, ed. C.H. Williams (London, 1996), pp. 477-83.

[24] Geoffrey Elton, *Policy and Police. The enforcement of the Reformation in the age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 82; idem, 'The Law of Treason in the Early Reformation', *HJ*, 11 (1968), pp. 211-36.

[25] Mary Elizabeth Brooks, *A King for Portugal. The madrigal conspiracy, 1594-95* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1964), esp. p. 38. See also Thomas, *Religion*; Bercé, *Roi caché*; Perrie, *Pretenders*.

[26] Thomas, *Religion*, p. 493; Howard Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples. Prophecy, poetry, and power in Renaissance England* (Stanford, 1990), chs. 4 and 5.

[27] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction. Inventing Traditions', in idem and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 1-14.

[28] Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 493-96; Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples*, pp. 105-33. For the power of political prophecy in the popular imagination, see Elton, *Policy*, esp. ch. 2.

medieval Flanders or Germany, where pseudo-Fredericks managed to inspire mass-movements,[29] England has never known movements on such a large scale. But as mentioned in the previous chapter, political prophecy also played a significant part during the political upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century.[30]

Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck are the classic royal impostors in English history, along with Thomas Ward of Trumpington, who claimed to be Richard II, deposed in 1399 and probably murdered a year later.[31] The cases of Simnel and Warbeck have been extensively covered in the recent historiography. Simnel intended to overthrow Henry VII using the pretence of being Edward, Earl of Warwick, the rightful heir, whose disappearance had for many been a mystery. In dynastic terms, he was a pretender, but as he was not related to the royal family at all, he was definitely an impostor. His patrons knew he was a fraud, but many contemporaries believed he was Edward and hence the rightful heir to the throne.[32] The same can be said of Perkin Warbeck. In the 1490s, Warbeck triggered a real crisis in Henry VII's reign by impersonating Richard, Duke of York for six to eight years, and was eventually executed in 1499. Born in Tournai (France), his imposture was probably instigated at first by members of the Irish mercantile classes, but it soon gained international support.[33] During the period

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[29] See Cohn, *Pursuit*, pp. 112-17.
In the 1220s Countess Joanna ruled Flanders under the domination of the French. While people were dissatisfied with her rule, rumours began to circulate that Joanna's father, Count Baldwin, killed on a Crusade twenty years earlier, was not dead. Many people believed in the Counterfeit Baldwin; after a battle Joanna fled and Counterfeit Baldwin was crowned. It was only after seven months that he was exposed as an impostor. Ibid., pp. 89-107.

[30] See Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men. A study in seventeenth-century English millenarianism* (London, 1972); Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples*.

[31] Trumpington was sponsored by the Scottish court and maintained as an alternative strategy to the more conventional methods of interference with English affairs for at least twelve years. Seditious rumours about Richard continued well after his death in 1419. Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne. Usurpation and the language of legitimisation, 1399-1422* (London, 1998), esp. ch. 4. See also Simon Walker, 'Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV', *P&P*, 166 (2000), pp. 31-65, esp. pp. 39-40, 44.

[32] Edward, Earl of Warwick, the eleven-year-old son of George, Duke of Clarence, had been disinherited and held prisoner by Richard III and died as the last heir of the house of Plantagenet in 1499. See Michael Bennett, *Lambert Simnel and the Battle of Stoke* (Gloucester, 1987).

[33] Warbeck had been courtier to King João II, and was received by Charles VIII, Maximilian, the Holy Roman Emperor, Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy and sister of Edward IV, and James III.

considered here there were also several minor cases where ordinary people claimed to be a royal personage, without achieving the fame or significance of Simnel or Warbeck. In 1499, in the same year as Warbeck's death, another youth called Ralph Wulford or Wilford impersonated the Earl of Warwick. An Augustinian friar had instructed him in the role and took him into Kent where he tried to gain support from the pulpit. It is not clear whether the friar and Wilford received much backing, or whether the incident was part of another (larger) Yorkist attempt to overthrow Henry VII. The two were quickly apprehended, Wilford was executed, while the friar was imprisoned for life.[34] Wilford, Simnel and Warbeck were clearly instigated and supported by political pressure groups. It remains unclear to what extent they genuinely believed in their roles; one critic has suggested that Warbeck's was 'a case of dissimulation', but that in time he came to believe in his royal status.[35]

Dynastic disputes and uncertainty about the fate of the two young princes in the Tower (1483), as well as that of the Earl of Warwick, encouraged rumours and impostures. The same was true in the case of Edward VI, whose premature death triggered a series of impersonators. Edward VI is the best English example of a sleeping hero. He was seen as a deliverer who would follow his father Henry, and prophecies

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See Anne Wroe, *Perkin. A story of deception* (London, 2003); Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499* (Dover, 1994). See also James Gairdner's allegations on his origins, which rely on both Warbeck's confession and sources from Tournai archives. James Gairdner, *History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third. To which is added the story of Perkin Warbeck* (London, 1878), pp. 333-90, esp. pp. 338-39. That he might have been an illegitimate scion of the house of York was suggested by Francis Bacon a hundred years after the episode in his *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh*, ed. Roger Lockyer (London, 1971), p. 131, and later by John Duncan Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors* (Oxford, 1952), p. 120. Diana Kleyn has even claimed that Perkin Warbeck was really the Duke of York, whereas Anthony J. Pollard has concluded that the real Richard, Duke of York, and Edward V were probably dead by September 1483. Diana M. Kleyn, *Richard of England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 134; Anthony J. Pollard, *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower* (Stroud, 1991), ch. 5, esp. p. 135.
[34] S.J. Gunn, 'Wilford, Ralph (c. 1479-1499)', *DNB*. See also *Some Farther Proofs, Whereby it Appears that the Pretender is Truly James the Third* (2nd edn, London, 1745), p. 83. The pamphlet contains *The Lives of Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, and Ralph Wilford, three different Pretenders to King Henry VIIth's Crown.*
[35] Arthurson, *Perkin Warbeck*, p. 44.

about his birth appeared even before he was born.[36] Rumours about the dynasty had surfaced as early as in the 1520s, in the context of the fall of the Duke of Buckingham, but spread in the 1530s with the rise of religious, political and social controversies. The accession of the Catholic Mary presented a new set of issues which prompted the appearance of Edward impersonators.[37] There was unease about a female monarch, for it was widely held that any state governed by a woman was inherently weak and unnatural, and this was exacerbated by the suspected influence of the Catholic Philip of Spain. Her reign was much feared by the Protestant minority, and it was rumoured that she was responsible for Edward's death.[38] When rumours spread in London of the sterility of Queen Mary and the court's attempt to find a substitute, some people began to hope for the return of a king. During Mary's reign, the prophecy of the mysterious 'dead man' who would deliver England was a miraculously resurrected Edward VI.[39]

The 'Edward impersonators' display the full range of royal imposture: those who simply spread rumours; those who believed in their royal identity; those who functioned as puppets, and deliberate deceits. In November 1553, five months after Edward's death, three men, Robert Taylor, Edmond Cole (or Coles), a London gentleman and mercer, and Thomas Wood, a servant, all claimed that Edward was still alive; none of them, however, impersonated the king. Cole and Wood owed money to the government, and it may be that they sought to embarrass and undermine the Queen, whom they perceived as

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[36] For example, the prophecies of Richard Swann in 1538 and John Ryan in 1539, which both contained references to Edward's 'unnatural birth', elements of which can be found in Geoffrey's prophecy of Merlin. However, Edward was not born by Caesarean section, as was rumoured. Elton, *Policy*, pp. 57-63, esp. p. 59. Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1991), pp. 52-4; Antonia Fraser, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (London, 1993), pp. 341-42; Jennifer Loach, *Edward VI*, ed. George Bernard and Penry Williams (New Haven, 1999), pp. 4-5

[37] Note that the same prejudice was at work in the events preceding the Warbeck/Simnel impostures, namely that on Richard III's death, or even when he had murdered the princes in the Tower, the true heir was Elizabeth of York, and that she should have been Queen regnant when she married Henry Tudor.

[38] According to Machyn, this was the current report in London. Henry Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant taylor of London*, ed. John G. Nichols (London 1848), p. 35.

[39] See Sharon L. Jansen, '"The Marvels of Merlin" and the Authority of Tradition', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 8 (1986), pp. 35-73.

responsible for their hardship, rather than genuinely believing in the return of the king.[40]

On 12 January 1554 Robert Robothom, 'of the Warderobb of the Robes' and a member of the royal household, was committed to the Fleet prison for the same 'lewde talk'. The next day Johan Wheler, a fisherman's wife of Poplar, was committed to the Tower for 'hir devellishe sayeng that King Edward was still lyving,' and her husband Thomas was sent for the same offence to the Marshalsea.[41] In 1587, one William Frauncis, a smith of Hatfield Broad Oak in Essex, was indicted for seditious words. Earlier that year, 'being asked what newes was at London', he replied that Edward was alive and that he knew the man who carried the King 'in a red mantell into Germany in a shipp called the Harry'. When told that the king had been buried where all kings were buried, he answered that there was a 'pece of leade buryed that was hollowe but ther was nothing in it and that it was but a monement'. He was found guilty, though later discharged.[42] In 1588, Francis Nevell, who had served in the Low Countries before returning to England, proclaimed in an alehouse at Bedford that Edward VI was still alive and living either in Spain or France.[43]

Just before the turn of the century, in 1599, one Thomas Vaugham, a 'vagrant' Welshman, said that the king was still alive and a substitute child had been put to death. According to the Vice-Chancellor, Vaugham was 'a very simple person, a common wanderer against the law'. Like the 1540s, the 1590s were years of dearth. Vaugham's longing for a deliverer and his disappointment in the Queen are apparent. He claimed that 'this king had saved the lives of the commons in England, Wales, and Ireland with his corn and provisions, and was at that moment himself in Ireland'.[44] His allegations implied that Elizabeth did not care enough for the people, but they alluded also to rumours that

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[40] *APC, 1552-54*, Vol. IV, pp. 363, 364, 367, 391-92. Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King. Elizabeth I and the politics of sex and power* (Philadelphia, 1994), p. 97; Margaret E. Cornford, 'A Legend Concerning Edward VI', *English Historical Review*, 23 (1908), pp. 286-90.
[41] *APC, 1552-54*, Vol. IV, pp. 384, 390.
[42] Cockburn, *CAR, Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 290, 294; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 499.
[43] *CSPD, 1581-90*, pp. 469-70.
[44] *HMC 9, Hatfield*, Part IX (London, 1902), pp. 167, 173.

she had borne and killed illicit children.[45] All of these rumour-mongers said publicly that Edward was still alive. Their stories were gossip, which in James C. Scott's words 'is perhaps the most familiar and elementary form of disguised popular aggression',[46] yet it seems that these people had simply repeated what had come to their ears in some alehouse, inn or market place.

But in May 1555, only ten days after the rumour 'that the Quen('s) grace was delevered of a prynce', a youth appeared in London claiming to be Edward VI.[47] William Featherstone, alias William Constable, the son of a Dorset miller, and servant for eight years to Sir Peter Mewtas, a gentleman of the privy chamber under Henry VIII and Edward, was committed to the Marshalsea, and eleven days later he was whipped and ridiculed through the city, clothed as a buffoon, and banished.[48] A year later, in February 1556, Featherstone returned to London, and again proclaimed himself to be Edward VI. This time he was condemned to death at the Guildhall for sedition, having 'caused letters to be cast abrode that king Edwarde VI. was alyve. And to some he shewed himselfe to be King Edward, so that manye persons, both men and women, were troubled by him'. Early in March, he 'was drawne from the Tower of London to Tyborne and there hanged, headed, and quartered, and after his head sett on London bridge'.[49] Featherstone's persistence in his claim is striking, but we will never be able to discover his motivation. It is possible that he had been encouraged and made to believe in his role by Mewtas, who had joined Northumberland's attempt to block Mary's succession and was thus imprisoned in 1553 and again in 1555.

Featherstone was only one of a series of 'Edward impersonators'. In July 1578, one Robert Bloys or Blosse, alias Mantell, a London yeoman, was imprisoned for the

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[45] Levin, *Heart*, p. 83.

[46] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance. Hidden transcripts* (Yale, 1990), p. 142.

[47] Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 86-7.

[48] Wriothesley, *Chronicle*, Vol. II, p. 129. In mid-May 1555, during Featherstone's first claim, two Essex men were reported to have said that Edward was still living. *APC, 1554-1556*, Vol. V, pp. 122, 126. For Mewtas, see D.M Ogier, 'Mewtas, Sir Peter (*d.* 1562)', *DNB*.

[49] Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, From A.D. 1485 To 1559*, ed. William D. Hamilton (London, 1877), pp. 133-34.

seditious claim that King Edward was still alive, and that he himself was Edward.[50] He

managed to escape from Colchester gaol, but was recaptured in 1581. He was again

convicted of impersonating the King and executed. Apparently, the idea that Edward was

alive had been given to him by an Oxford scholar. The Attorney-General held it not

treason merely to say that Edward was alive. The Council, however, declared that his

escape and thus his presence in the country had given occasion to others to spread

seditious libels to the disturbance of the realm's peace. Bloys too suffered the brutal ritual

of a traitor's death.[51] The wish for a male ruler seems to have been central in the case of

Edward Burges, vicar of Wivenhoe. In July 1586, he declared "that he was King Henryes

sunne and that the Queene was his syster both by father and mother". He was indicted for

seditious words, but his fate is unknown.[52] In many cases, as here, there is no evidence of

serious political ambitions. The unstable socio-economic conditions of the time may well

have strengthened a longing to have a male ruler once more, a symbol of normality. And

some individuals may have been driven by personal distress to invent a new identity as a

last resort, whether as fraud or fantasy. In July 1599, a period of abject poverty, Edward

Tedder, a labourer from Kent, was prosecuted by the authorities as a seditious rabble-

rouser. He not only claimed the throne, but appears to have blamed the Queen for his

current hardships. Indicted for treason, he was found guilty and hanged for compassing

Elizabeth's death, after publicly declaring, 'I scorn to be called Roage for I come of to

highe a bloode to be a roague for I am kynge of the Realme. I was borne in White hall

and that is my house and I will have itt yf I lyve'.[53]

A clearly religious motivation is evident in the case of Gervase Smith, parson of

Polstead, Suffolk, who in 1606 also pretended to be Edward VI. Like Elizabeth, James I

[50] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 175; *CSPD, 1581-90*, pp. 308, 309.

[51] Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 498-99. See also John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion, and other various occurrences in the Church of England, during the first twelve years of Queen Elizabeth's happy reign*, 4 Vols. (Oxford, 1824), Vol. II, Part I, pp. 355-56, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 503-5; Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. A regional and comparative study* (London, 1970), p. 78. For the alleged connection between Mantell and Elizabeth Vessie, see Cornford, 'A Legend', pp. 288-89.

[52] Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 287.

[53] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 449.

had disappointed the hopes of radical Protestants. Smith, a Protestant fanatic, had been very dissatisfied with James as the 'subject of apocalyptic hopes', for the King had failed to restore the true faith and to put all Catholics to death.[54] Apparently, Smith was well known for his obsession with prophetic tales, and had once shown a book stating that King Sebastian of Portugal was still alive. Smith's prophecies included the restoration of the true faith, and he believed in Edward as a 'Puritan hero'.[55]

'Edward impersonators' may have been prompted by several causes. Apart from the untimely death of the boy-king creating fertile ground for rumour and the anticipation of his return, there were socio-economic problems and ideological issues involving both gender and religion. There was certainly deep unease over female monarchs. As some of the cases illustrate, especially in years of crisis such as the 1580s and 1590s, with wars, heavy taxation and economic hardship, people might well think that life would be better under a king. Under Mary, claims might be triggered by religious issues, which applied less to Elizabeth's reign as she and Edward were both Protestants. However, as in Smith's case, radical Protestants might think that Elizabeth had been a disappointment, whereas Edward was seen as a 'young Josiah'. Hence, impersonations and claims were also frequently connected with rivalries between Catholics and Protestants, an antagonism which existed from the 1530s. Most of the claims were essentially harmless, but in a period of political and religious tensions and uncertainties, it is not surprising that the authorities saw any claim or rumour as a potential threat.

We can therefore find impostures linked to the religious upheavals triggered by the Reformation as early as the 1530s. After Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn and

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[54] See Capp, 'Political Dimension', pp. 102-3.
[55] The book might be *The True Historie of the late and lamentable aduentures of Don Sebastian King of Portguall* (London, 1602) or *A Continuation of the Lamentable and Admirable Adventures of Dom Sebastian King of Portugale. With a declaration of all his time employed since the battell in Africke against the Infidels 1578* (London, 1603). It is an assertion that Marco Tulio Catizone, who was also held an impostor and imprisoned in Venice, was indeed the king. He first appeared in 1598 and was executed in 1603. See also Brooks, *King for Portugal*, esp. pp. 45-9, and Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 500-1.

the first session of the 1534 parliament, the mayor of Hereford reported to Cromwell concerning one Robert Stoper, alias Pewterer. Stoper had declared that he himself was the rightful king of England, that he was the eldest son and heir of the late Earl of Wiltshire, Henry Stafford, and brother of Edward, the third Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham had royal blood from his descent from two sons of Edward III, and was executed for treason in 1521; Stafford had died in 1523 without children.[56] After Stafford's death the earldom of Wiltshire became extinct, but was given to Thomas Boleyn, father of the future queen, in 1529. After the divorce, the Boleyn family followed her fall, and Thomas lost important offices. It may be that Stoper wanted to lay claim to the earldom, but it was highly unlikely that he would succeed. He was probably resentful of Henry's divorce and his break with Rome, for he had told the mayor, 'I trust to see the queen Katharine's banner spread again, and she shall be queen of England in her old place, by the grace of God'.[57] Katharine of Aragon was of course a symbol of traditional Catholic devotion.

Disillusionment among Catholic women is central to two subsequent cases. In 1533, after Henry VIII had repudiated Katharine of Aragon and Mary, who disappeared from public view, one Mary Baynton, a Yorkshire girl of eighteen, gave herself out to be the King's daughter Mary, now forced to beg for her living.[58] It is too easy to explain Baynton away as a 'disturbed Yorkshire woman'.[59] Instead we should consider her in the wider context of the dramatic changes England was undergoing in the 1530s. It is plausible that public expressions of opposition against the new order and personal grievances had unsettled her mind and led her to spread these tales. Fifty years later, the

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[56] Henry Stafford, Earl of Wiltshire (c. 1479-1523) was the second son of Henry Stafford, the second Duke of Buckingham (b.1455), who was married to Elizabeth Woodville, the sister of Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville. In 1483, his father had been executed for treason by Richard III. See *DNB*.

[57] *Letters & Papers, 1534*, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 306. The case is also mentioned in Jansen, *Political Protest*, p. 35.

[58] She came up with the story that the French queen, her alleged aunt and godmother had told her, 'Niece Mary, I am right sorry for you, for I see here that your fortune is very hard. Ye must go a-begging once in your life, either in your youth or in your age'. *Letters & Papers, 1533*, Vol. VI, p. 494. See also Carole Levin, 'Mary Baynton and Anne Burnell. Madness and rhetoric in two Tudor family romances', in idem and Patricia A. Sullivan (eds), *Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women* (New York, 1995), pp. 173-87, at p. 175; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 426.

[59] Jansen, *Political Protest*, p. 35.

execution of Mary Queen of Scots in February 1587 coincided with another Catholic claim. The case of Anne Burnell, a butcher's daughter of Eastcheap, is well documented in contemporary sources, and provides an illuminating case of mental delusion.[60] Her husband Edward Burnell, an Irishman – or, according to Charles Nicholl, a 'wealthy Nottinghamshire Catholic and step-brother of the poet Barnaby Googe' – had been imprisoned for some time. Anne was told by an old woman, who she said was 'the witch of Norrall', that she was a 'spaniards birde', while in August 1587 one Thomas Watson, possibly the Catholic poet Thomas Watson (1557?-1592), assured her that she was the daughter of Philip II and Mary.[61] As mentioned above, prophecies were sometimes used by monarchs and peers to glorify their origins. Burnell resorted to the same means. The claim that she 'had on her bodye the marks of the Armes of England' greatly concerned her interrogators. If true, it could be seen as a divine mark corroborating her claim – or as the mark of the devil. The allusion to witchcraft reveals the contemporary assumption of a relationship between delusion and imposture, and the belief that supernatural powers could have a strong influence on identity. As long as the meaning and use of emblems in royal heraldry were 'sanctioned' by the Queen and her peers, it is not surprising that Anne's assertion troubled the authorities, and it must not *a priori* be understood as madness or folly. However, in 1592, after lengthy examinations, the Privy Council declared "that her Allegacion of the Armes of Englande and Spayne to be seene on her backe, is false and proceedinge of some lewde and imposterouse pr[e]tence".[62] Anne Burnell and a female witness, who claimed to have seen the sign on her back, received public punishment in December 1592. According to Stow's chronicle,

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[60] Mark Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe in London* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), pp. 145-57. See also Thomas, *Religion*, p. 506; Levin, *Heart*, pp. 105-11, 116, 118. Similar thoughts are also presented in idem, 'Mary Baynton and Anne Burnell', pp. 173-87.

[61] Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe*, pp. 149, 158-59. Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning. The murder of Christopher Marlowe* (London, 2002), pp. 219-22, at p. 219.

[62] GL, *Journal 23*, f. 153, cited in Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 156. The claim of the birthmark is also known from Russian pretenders, where it occurred well into the nineteenth century. See Uspenskij, 'Tsar and Pretender', pp. 264-65.

a certayne Gentlewoman by the Counsells commaundement was whipped

through the Citty of london for affirming herselfe to bee the daughter of

Phillip K of spayne, as she had beene perswaded by some accompted

southsayers, after prooued liers, for shee was knowne to bee a butchers

daughter in East Cheape.[63]

Apart from her claim to royal parentage, Anne Burnell never asserted any political

position. Her story illustrates the despair and fantasy of a woman, whose social and

psychological distress had most likely led her to the false claim.[64] James Dalton, who led

her examination and also had her living at his home for observation, was convinced that

'she hath bin much deluded' and explained her behaviour by the difficult situation she

was in. He assumed that while her husband was a prisoner in the Queen's Bench, 'it

seemeth she hath bin practized to be drawen to supersticion & such like vanity'. He

noticed her being 'much enclined to melancholye & to haue phantasticall imaginacions',

and concluded:

> it seemeth that her wittes be troubled & through greate misery & penury &
>
> a late flighteinge vpon the late trouble of her husbande & herselfe are
>
> greatelye decayed: she is weake & taketh no rest a nightes: And this is all
>
> that i can as yet enforme your honours of her.[65]

In July 1607, a year after the 'Edward impersonator' Gervase Smith, another

impostor appeared. Sir William Waad wrote to the first Earl of Salisbury that a 'lewd

fellow', one Bartholomew Helson, had been going around the town, claiming to be Mary

Tudor's son and often gathering people around him.[66] He claimed that he had been

'stolen' or kidnapped from Hampton Court, whereupon Waad concluded that he revealed

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[63] Stow, *Annals of England* (1615), p. 764, cited in Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 157.

[64] Before her imposture, in June 1586, she complained to the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench that her husband had been defrauded by private enemies, and made a plea for the judges to reconsider their action. *APC, 1586-87*, Vol. XIV, p. 151. Her husband died in 1587. Levin, *Heart*, pp. 110, 200, n45.

[65] Cited in Eccles, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 153. James Dalton, was a loyal Protestant, treasurer of Lincoln's Inn and MP. Levin, *Heart*, pp. 105-6.

[66] Sir William Waad (1546-1623) was a clerk of the Privy Council who had gained a reputation as chief persecutor of Catholics. See Gary M. Bell, 'Waad, Sir William (1546-1623)', *DNB*.

'more seditious disposition than any kind of lunacy that I could perceive'. Although there is no direct evidence it may be that the government suspected a Catholic connection. Waad was afraid of greater turmoil. He thought him a fellow 'of a malicious, knavish humour' rather than a lunatic, though he had heard rumours that Helson was 'possessed with that humour'. Eventually, he committed him to Bridewell, and, when they grew weary of him, he left it to them whether to keep him or to send him to Bedlam.[67]

By contrast, the case of William Cartwright in 1575 appears to have been a result of mental delusion and disillusionment among Puritans. Cartwright, who claimed that he was the rightful heir and had been debarred from succeeding to the crown by Elizabeth, was apparently the brother of the Puritan controversialist, Thomas Cartwright. It is possible that his claim was linked to the radical Puritans, who believed that the Queen had betrayed the Gospel.[68] William Hacket, who in 1591 announced himself as the new messiah, and also claimed an imperial identity as king of Europe, was certainly linked to radical Puritans.[69] It is not surprising that his manifesto was taken seriously at a time when the government had decided to suppress the Puritan movement, and Elizabeth took such prophecies personally since they disputed her female rule by foretelling her own deposition.[70]

Not enough evidence survives to understand fully the action of a youth who rushed naked into St. James's Palace in November 1612 claiming to be the ghost of Prince Henry, who had died the evening before. The youth was a clerk in one of the court's offices, and it is likely that the event was instigated by some courtiers, though the motivation behind such an act is obscure. Ghosts were associated with troubled souls,

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[67] HMC, Hatfield, Part XIX, p. 177; Thomas, Religion, p. 506.
[68] Levin, Heart, p. 91; Correspondence of Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, ed. John Bruce and Thomas T. Perowne (Parker Society, Vol. XXXIII, Cambridge, 1853), pp. 469-70; John Strype, The Life and Acts of Matthew Parker. The First Archbishop of Canterbury in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (London, 1711), ch. 41, p. 476; Andrew F.S. Pearson, Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism 1535-1603 (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 393, 483. See also Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (London, 1967).
[69] See Alexandra Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket". Prophecy, sorcery, insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan movement', HJ, 41 (1998), pp. 27-66.
[70] Levin, Heart, p. 111; McLaren, 'Prophecy and Providentialism', p. 40.

such as the victims of murder, and it is possible that the incident was intended to fan rumours that Prince Henry – the great hope of radical Protestants – had been secretly poisoned. Hence, as in the case of Gervase Smith, the imposture makes sense in the context of contemporary Puritan hopes in Prince Henry as a strong Protestant monarch, who was expected to fulfil the wish of a 'crusade against Rome'.[71] Overall, however, similar impersonations decreased under the early Stuarts, possibly because there was now a male ruler.

The political, religious and social problems of the 1580s were intense, culminating in the fear of a Spanish invasion. The succession issue preoccupied the population and took on new dimensions since Elizabeth remained unmarried, and consequently had no direct successor. In this context rumours that the Queen had borne illegitimate children, and that she was Leicester's mistress, are not altogether surprising.[72] The following episode differs from similar tales only in terms of its details and documentation. The main source is an account by Sir Francis Englefield, a former member of Queen Mary's household and a Catholic exile, who had fled in 1559 and became Philip II's English secretary. In 1587, a young Englishman in his mid-twenties, who called himself Arthur, was detained by the Spaniards near the French frontier. He was described as 'noble' and 'spirited' and spoke French and Italian.[73] Suspected to be a

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[71] *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman E. McClure, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia, 1939), Vol. I, pp. 391-92. For political hopes on a godly prince, see Capp, 'Political Dimension', pp. 102-3. On ghosts, see Peter Marshall, 'Deceptive Appearances. Ghosts and reformers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England', in Helen Parish and William G. Naphy (eds), *Religion and Superstition in Reformation Europe* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 188-208.

[72] In 1574, Antonio de Guaras, a Spanish merchant and agent, spread the gossip of a plan for marrying one of the sons of the Earl of Hertford and Lady Catherine Grey 'to a daughter of Leicester and the Queen of England, who, it is said, is kept hidden, although there are bishops to witness that she is legitimate'. *Span. Cal. Eliz. 1568-1579*, Vol. II, p. 491. See also Martin Hume, *The Courtships of Queen Elizabeth. A history of the various negotiations for her marriage* (rev. edn, London, 1904), p. 346. For another rumour, see for example, Cockburn, *CAR. Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 195.

[73] *CSP, Venetian, 1581-1591*, Vol. VIII, pp. 267, 288.
Allegedly, Arthur has also written memoirs which were translated into Spanish by Englefield on 17 June 1587. Frederick Chamberlin, *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth* (London, 1921), p. 170, see also pp. 169, 187, 188, 193, 200, 212, 309-18; *Span. Cal. Eliz., 1587-1603*, Vol. IV, p. 111.

spy, he was brought before Englefield, to whom he revealed his story. Arthur claimed to be the offspring of Elizabeth and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. A miller's wife – maybe a *topos* – had suckled the child, before it was brought up by Robert Southern, who was later given a post as the keeper of one of the Queen's houses by John Ashley, husband of Catharine Ashley (governess to the Queen in her youth).[74] Arthur was taught Latin, Italian and French, music, arms and dancing. At the age of about fourteen or fifteen, 'being desirous of seeing strange lands', he stole some money and fled to Wales, hoping to escape to Spain. He was brought back, and after another attempt to go abroad, Robert Southern confided to him on his deathbed that he was actually the son of the Earl of Leicester and the Queen. Arthur, afraid of Ashley's reaction when he found the secret had been revealed, fled to France.[75] When the Spaniards caught him later, he pretended to be a devout Catholic on a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Monserrat in Catalonia. He presented a highly crafted story about attempts to betray the English cause in the Netherlands, and conspiracies with eminent personages in Germany and Italy.

Both his appearance and his name, 'Arthur', were significant. The case, as Charles Bowie Millican noted, also points towards Elizabeth's 'association' with the Arthur myth; numerous genealogies had placed her in the line from Arthur and Cadwalader to Owen Tudor and Henry VII. Leicester himself had been honoured with a grandiose reception, and compared with 'Arthur of Britaine', when he entered The Hague in December 1585.[76] The tale recalls strongly the familiar *topos* of the heir raised in obscurity. That he *was* the child of Elizabeth and Leicester is most unlikely. If we are to believe Englefield's account, he would have been born in the early 1560s, at a time when

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[74] Robert Southern was one of the deputy-keepers of Enfield Chase. *HMC 9, Hatfield*, Vol. II, p. 139, cited in Hume, *Courtships*, p. 139.

[75] *Span. Cal. Eliz., 1587-1603*, Vol. IV, pp. 101-4, at p. 102. A similar story is told by one B.C., an English spy on the preparation of the Armada, who wrote to the government from Madrid on May 28 1588. *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History*, ed. Henry Ellis, 2nd Series, 4 Vols. (London, 1827), Vol. III, pp. 135-36.

[76] *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 Vols. (London, 1808), Vol. IV, p. 645; Edmund Spenser, *The Fairie Queene*, ed. John Upton, 2 Vols. (London, 1758), Vol. II, p. 332, both cited in Charles Bowie Millican, *Spenser and the Table Round. A study in the contemporaneous background for Spenser's use of the Arthurian legend* (London, 1932), pp. 38-40. On Arthur Dudley, see also Levin, *Heart*, pp. 81-2.

the Queen was seriously ill. It is also doubtful that he believed in his own claims to royal

blood. Englefield tended to accept the story as true, but was suspicious about Arthur's

Catholicism. He thought Arthur an unwitting victim of the Queen's policies.[77] The

historian Martin Hume believed that Arthur was 'no common impostor, but must have

been well coached by persons who were intimately acquainted with high political

personages'. He concluded from Englefield's account that Arthur was a spy, instructed to

tell a well-prepared story to gain access to eminent people should he be captured.[78]

Arthur's fairly detailed knowledge of royal matters might support this hypothesis, though

there is no direct evidence to confirm it. Yet it seems unlikely that he was a simple

adventurer who happened to possess detailed knowledge of Southern and his town,

Evesham,[79] and was well-informed on royal matters. Clearly, once caught and accused of

spying, he hoped that his fanciful story would help him out. It secured him a place in

history, though perhaps not his life; he appears to have been kept in custody in Spain. His

real identity, like his fate, remains unknown; nor do we know by whom and for what

purpose he might have been manipulated.

In the same context of a possible invasion of England, this time from the north,

we can place the case of James Middleton, arrested in December 1587 and held as a

Scottish spy. He declared himself to be a Stuart, sprung from a line of Scottish kings. To

substantiate his allegations he claimed to be endowed with a special power to heal the

falling sickness, and he declared that the Scots would invade England with the assistance

of 50,000 Spanish soldiers.[80]

The gender issue had undoubtedly encouraged 'Edward impersonators' and other

impostures during the reign of Mary and Elizabeth, but Catholic/Protestant rivalries

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[77] *Span. Cal. Eliz., 1587-1603*, Vol. IV, pp. 105-6.
[78] Hume, *Courtships*, pp. 344, 346.
[79] E.A.B. Barnard explores Arthur's background in Evesham, in particular, Robert Southern's social and economic situation. However, he reaches no conclusions about Arthur's real identity. Ettwell A. B. Barnard, *Evesham and a Reputed Son of Queen Elizabeth* ([Evesham], 1926).
[80] *CSPD, 1581-90*, pp. 446, 456; SP 12/206/54-53 (ii); SP 12/208/2.). For the power of curing scrofula, see chapter 2. Middleton is also mentioned in Thomas, *Religion*, p. 239.

continued to trigger plots, conspiracies and impostures in the seventeenth century, culminating in the allegedly fraudulent birth of the Prince of Wales in 1688. The number of pretenders and royal impostors decreased in the seventeenth century, and the Civil War saw a shift from dynastic disputes to millenarian expectations and the desire for a heavenly king. Yet there were still some royal impostors. Tany, the visionary we met in the previous chapter, claimed to be the Earl of Essex and heir to Charles I's throne, and four years later in June 1654 he claimed the crown of France. He also proclaimed the return of the Jews to the Holy Land, and attacked MPs in the parliament house. He was an epileptic, deranged, and a religious fanatic, yet his fantasy, even his claim to the French crown, was not completely absurd;[81] as noted, English kings and queens claimed the French crown from the fourteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Far more significant is an episode in 1648, during the Kentish rebellion, when one Cornelius Evans turned up at an inn at Sandwich and gave himself out as the Prince of Wales.[82] The fact that he was received by the mayor, lodged at one of the aldermen's houses, and got money, clothes and other presents from the 'well-to-do people of the county' might be evidence that many people believed in his claim. He was provided with servants and officers, who carried him around town, while Evans himself offered titles and offices to some of them.[83] The Committee of the Militia of London soon smelt a rat and sent a warning to Sandwich 'that this person is an impostor', and that his design was to incite an uprising or even be part of a larger offensive 'from foreign parts'.[84] Evans' claims as well as his physiognomic appearance were seriously debated. But did contemporaries actually recognise royals? We might assume that they had certain

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[81] Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, p. 43; Ariel Hessayon, 'Totney, Thomas (*bap.* 1608, *d.* 1659?), *DNB*.
[82] See *CSPD, 1648-49*, pp. 72-3, 349; *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, 262 (23-30 May 1648); Claude François Achard, *Dictionnaire de la Provence et du Comté-Venaissin* (Marseille, 1786), Vol. III, p. 268; Louis M. Chaudon and François A. Delandine, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Historique*, 13 Vols. (Lyon, 1804), Vol. IV, p. 600; Stephen Wight, 'Evans, Cornelius (*f.* 1648)', *DNB*; Thomas, *Religion*, p. 426. For the revolt of 1648, see Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy. The fleet and the English revolution, 1648-1660* (Oxford, 1989), ch. 2, p. 20.
[83] *A Letter from Kent: Of the Rising at Rochester* (London, 1648), pp. 4-6.
[84] *CSPD, 1648-49*, p. 72.

(stereotypical) ideas of how a royal person looked; they were aware of certain attributes and symbols. However, only a few of them might have actually seen a royal in their life. A proclamation for the apprehending of the Duke of Monmouth and some of his close followers, issued in June 1683, contained no description of their persons; another proclamation of 1685 promised the reward of £5000 for 'the said James Duke of Monmouth, either dead or alive'.[85] Unfortunately, we have few details about Evans' entry into Sandwich. The episode of 1648 is nevertheless one of the few of which we have evidence that the impostor's appearance was compared to that of the real prince.[86] According to the *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, he had arrived in black clothes 'hardly worth three pence' and with a 'shirt as black, or blacker then his clothes'. He was described as being of 'a middle stature [with] his under lip ... bigger then his upper lip'. Contemporaries also noted that he 'speaketh English not perfectly, and in another Dialect than it is usually pronounced by Englishmen'. It struck the examiners that his hair was 'rather flaxen than brown' and 'his complexion fair though somewhat tanned', whereas the actual Prince was of a 'black complexion and very black hair'.[87] Whereas the examiners obviously possessed knowledge of the real prince's look, in an age without photographs and where the ways of communicating information concerning individuals were scarce, unreliable and inefficient, the population of Sandwich could hardly be aware of the appearance. Eventually, a courtier sent by the Queen and the real Prince of Wales denounced him as an impostor. When Evans was brought to London and examined by both Houses of Parliament, he said he was the son of a poor Welshman, but born in Marseilles. Apparently he was a notorious person, and well known in London, 'especially at some of the common gaols'.[88] He was committed to Newgate, but soon escaped – and

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[85] *Collection of Proclamations*, BL, 74/1851.c.9, f. 195; *Collection of Proclamations*, BL 21.h.2, f. 227.
[86] Jerome de Groot has identified clothing, attire and outward features such as hair and beard as important indexes of 'allegiance and identity' during the Civil War period. Jerome de Groot, *Royalist Identities* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 101-16.
[87] *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, 262 (23-30 May 1648), p. 955; *Letter from Kent*, p. 6; *CSPD, 1648-49*, p. 73.
[88] *CSPD, 1648-49*, p. 349.

disappeared from the records. Apart from the fact that in Sandwich Evans was accompanied by two butchers, it is uncertain whether he initially acted alone, though he was clearly aware that his role was fraudulent. But his appearance and the support he received in Sandwich were no coincidence, when (even moderate) royalists 'were not without a certain sentimental attachment to the king'. Evans said that he 'had heard that that County with others adjoyning to it, had declared their affections to settle him and his Father in their Rights'. It was one spark in a chain of events, which culminated in the royalist rising in Kent that prompted the second Civil War. The real Prince of Wales turned up off Kent a few weeks later, with the revolted fleet, but decided that it would be too risky by then to go ashore.[89]

The issues of religion and legitimacy, as well as the theme of the sleeping hero, reached a peak with the Duke of Monmouth's claim to the throne in 1685. James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, was the eldest son of Charles II by his Welsh mistress Lucy Walter. Hence he was of royal blood, and he claimed that Charles II and his mother had secretly married, making him thus the legitimate heir to the throne. As a handsome young man, a firm Protestant with a military reputation, he was a very popular figure when the nation was apprehensive of what a Catholic king (James II) would bring. As such he seems to have been an ideal tool for Lord Shaftesbury and various radical Whig groups in and after the Exclusion Crisis (1679-81), which followed the revelation of the Popish Plot (1678). Although many moderate Whigs turned away from him, Monmouth enjoyed the reputation of a popular hero.[90] Even before the Popish Plot there were prophecies predicting turmoil and that Charles's son would be the saviour. Robin Clifton has argued that Monmouth gained support especially among young men. On Monmouth's south-western tour in 1680 he was royally received by 'a procession of gentry on horseback and

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[89] Alan Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 253, 270; *Letter from Kent*, p. 5.

[90] According to David Ogg, he was 'the only Stuart who understood the common man'. David Ogg, *England in the Reigns of James II and William III* (Oxford, 1955), p. 148. See also Ivan Roots (ed.), *The Monmouth Rising* (Exeter, 1986).

commoners on foot' who accompanied him into town, and he even touched once for the king's evil.[91] After his rebellion and execution, rumours spread that he had in fact escaped and would return, which triggered a number of impersonators. According to one pamphlet, the adventurer and plotter Thomas Dangerfield at some stage also claimed to be the Duke of Monmouth.[92] In Lyme Regis a man was arrested for saying that Monmouth still lived, and that someone else had replaced him on the scaffold. In 1686, Charles Floyd was accused at the New Sarum Assizes of claiming to be the Duke of Monmouth, and later, one 'John Smith was whipped from Newgate to Tyburn for impersonating the dead rebel'.[93] Even two years after Monmouth's execution, one Thomas Savage, a labourer and 'illdisposed and seditious man' of Hampstead, proclaimed that he was the Duke and rightful heir to the Crown, 'and that he would make good all losses that had befallen the subjects of the King of England'.[94] Monmouth had turned into a sleeping hero.

It is perhaps not surprising that a few years later the themes of pretendership, illegitimacy and fraudulent birth formed a vital part of William III's propaganda to counter the accusation of having himself unjustly seized the English throne.[95] William's *Declaration* stated:

> there are Great and Violent Presumptions, Inducing us to Beleeve, that
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> those Evill Councellours, in order to the carrying on of their ill designes,
>
> ... have published that the Queen hath brought forth a Son: tho there have
>
> appeared both during the Queens pretended Bignes, and in the manner in
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> which the Birth was managed, so many just and Visible grounds of
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> suspition [sic], that not only wee our selves, but all the good subjects of

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[91] Robin Clifton, *The Last Popular Rebellion. The western rising of 1685* (London, 1984), pp. 109, 266, 127; Tim Harris, *Revolution. The great crisis of the British monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), p. 79.

[92] *Duke of Dangerfield Declaring How He Represented The D. of Mon--- in the Country* (London, 1685). For Dangerfield, see Part II.

[93] Clifton, *Popular Rebellion*, pp. 228-29.

[94] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV, p. 311.

[95] See Harris, *Revolution*, esp. pp. 269-72, 279-80; Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996).

those Kingdomes, doe Vehemently suspect, that the pretended Prince of

Wales was not born by the Queen.[96]

The claim of a counterfeit baby prince had already occurred in 1682 when Charles II was

hoping for a male successor.[97] Five years later, rumours about a fraudulent prince had

been going round long before the birth, and the claim was a major element in the

invitation to William to come to England to secure the 'rightful' succession and true

religion. In his propaganda campaign, William himself made use of it.

The stories of Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck were frequently rehearsed in

the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the issue of pretenders was particularly

prominent during James II's reign and later Jacobite claims to the English throne.[98] The

claims of the Old and Young Pretenders remained a significant factor in British politics in

the first half of the eighteenth century, with major rebellions in 1715 and 1745. But after

the last Jacobite rising in 1745, the threat from impostors and pretenders rapidly faded.

Although they were designed to conquer England, 1715 and 1745 were Scottish affairs –

and Prince Michael of Albany, who claims today to be the legitimate heir of the Young

Pretender poses no visible threat to the present monarchy or government.[99]

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[96] *Declaration of His Highness William Henry, Prince of Orange, of the Reasons Inducing Him to Appear in Armes in the Kingdom of England for Preserving of the Protestant Religion and for Restoring the Lawes and Liberties of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (The Hague, 1688), p. 7.
[97] See *The Observator*, 23 August 1682. For rumours and gossip around the birth of the Prince, see Tobias Hug, 'Ein Thronfolger aus der Wärmepfanne? Gerüchte einer Verschwörung rund um die Geburt des Prinzen von Wales (1688)', *Traverse*, 3 (2004), pp. 47-56.
[98] Thomas Gainsford, *The True and Wonderfull History of Perkin Warbeck, Proclaiming himselfe Richard the fourth* (London, 1618) and Francis Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (London, 1622) provided the principal sources for John Ford's play *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck.* (London, 1634). John Ford, *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck. A Strange Truth* (1634), ed. Peter Ure (London, 1968), Introduction, p. xxxv. John Asgill, *The Pretender's Declaration Abstracted from two Anonymous Pamphlets: The One Intitled, Jus Sacrum; And the Other, Memoirs of the Chevalier St. George* (London, 1713); Thomas Burnett, *Some New Proofs, by which it appears that the Pretender is truly James the Third* (London, 1713). A new edition appeared in 1745 entitled *Some Farther Proofs, Whereby it Appears that the Pretender is Truly James the Third* (2nd edn, London, 1745); it contains *The Lives of Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, and Ralph Wilford, three different Pretenders to King Henry VIIth's Crown*. Roger Manley, *The Russian Impostor; Or, The History of Muskovie, under the Usurpation of Boris and the Impostor of Demetrius, late Emperor of Muskovy* (London, 1674); Jean Baptiste de Rocoles, *The History of infamous Impostors or, The Lives & Actions of Several Notorious Counterfeits. Who from the Abject, and Meanest of the People, have Usurped the Titles of Emperours, Kings and Princes* (London, 1683).
[99] Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, p. 132. For the 1745 rising, see Jeremy Black, *Culloden and the '45* (Stroud, 1990).

Although the circumstances in which royal imposture might occur varied considerably, it predictably tended to appear most often in times of crisis. However trivial the claims might appear, they all reflect mistrust in the existing ruler and her/his integrity and legitimacy. Yet in most cases there is no monocausal explanation. Dynastic disputes were obviously a central factor. Henry Tudor's seizure of the throne created a situation in which impostors might flourish. The mid-Tudor period saw comparable opportunities, as did the end of the Tudor dynasty, but thereafter there was no major succession crisis until the 1680s. In the second half of the sixteenth century, during Mary's and Elizabeth's reigns, unease about a female monarch was a further significant cause. However, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, rivalries between denominations were of major importance, and religious issues were part of almost every claim. In the popular mind, socio-economic hardships were often linked to a half-hearted monarch and could further fuel general distrust and hope for a saviour. In the absence of a monarch, the Interregnum perhaps understandably witnessed renewed desire for strong royal leadership. Millenarian hopes and expectations fostered the arrival of a millenarian king. The previous chapter has described a number of pseudo-prophets during this period who did not have political ambitions, but often assumed royal characteristics; for many people they acted to some extent as substitute leaders. Despite the fact that all early modern pretenders and impostors manifest discontent with the reigning monarch, they were not anti-monarchical. Their actions were intended to underpin traditional order and hierarchy and thus implied the expectation of good kingship. The religious, political and social uncertainties of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries fostered hopes and expectations of the return of a golden age, frequently through the appearance of a just male saviour. The *topos* – probably best known from Oedipus – of the heir who is 'brought up in obscurity and quite frequently in ignorance of his true status lies at the root of many of

the stories told by or about impostors,[100] and reflects the expectations of both narrators and eager listeners; the many Edward impersonators are classic examples. Also Arthur, the alleged child of Elizabeth and Leicester, made use of similar *topoi*.

Generally, there were claims on two different levels, but it is evident that the more serious schemes were rarely the autonomous actions of self-willed individuals determined to challenge the monarch. First, there were pretenders genuinely related to the dynasty, and impostors who had invented a royal identity but were supported by influential patrons and groups, both aiming at political power. Second, there were ordinary men and women from outside the charmed circle of those related to the royal family seeking power, whose claims and prophecies display a range of desires and hopes. Most of the royal impostors surveyed in this chapter had no noble background but came from the middle or lower levels of society, ranging from vagrant and labourer to clergymen and gentlemen. Anne Burnell, a butcher's daughter, had an allegedly wealthy husband; William Cartwright was perhaps linked to the radical Puritan movement of his brother Thomas; Featherstone was a miller's son, but had lived in the household of an influential figure. Their claims posed little or no threat, and few of them had serious political ambitions. In most cases, such people won few supporters. Yet their insistent claims may also reflect an increasingly widespread interest in political matters – a public political life of their own, perhaps. The authorities always feared that such claims were spread for political purposes. Eager to root out any threat, however slight, they tried most of these obscure impostors for seditious words or behaviour; and, as the case of Featherstone shows, they were ready to execute anyone who persisted in his claims. The case of Cornelius Evans, who seems to have stemmed from a criminal milieu, is particularly striking, for his claim may have sprung from his own initiative. In a context where many were eager to see the monarch restored, Evans secured support from the local authorities and population alike. To make headway, an impostor needed much more

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[100] Cheesman and Williams, *Rebels*, p. 96.

than self-belief. He or she had to acquire skills of leadership and organization as well as obtain knowledge of the royal household, or attract backers who could provide them; and ultimately, impostors could only flourish in an environment that was expecting such a figure.

We can suggest several reasons for the decline of royal impostors at the end of the period considered here. On the one hand, the more sceptical and 'rational' intellectual climate is partially responsible. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a significant change of perception in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, when people with similar claims were increasingly considered as mentally ill, and often confined to Bedlam. When Richard Steele (allegedly) visited the institution in the early 1700s, he found people who believed themselves to be aristocrats, royalties or gods and also a man who claimed to be the Duke of Monmouth.[101] On the other there are institutional, political and religious changes. The monarchy itself was less critical as power began to shift to Parliament. The antagonism between Catholicism and Protestantism prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries became less important as an issue of national turmoil in the Georgian era; and Jacobitism was tainted with its Catholic association. And the state itself, with a standing army and militia, had grown much stronger than before, which left little scope for any individual to challenge it.

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[101] Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, 127 (31 January 1710), ed. Donald F. Bond, 3 Vols. (Oxford, 1987), Vol. II, p. 244. Similar claims can also be found in: Ned Ward, *The London Spy*, ed. Paul Hayland (East Lansing, Michigan, 1993), p. 55; Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (London, 1771), pp. 59-60. See also Roy Porter, 'The Rage of Party. A glorious revolution in English psychiatry?', *Medical History*, 27 (1983), pp. 35-50, at p. 37. The story of Madam La Frülen, 'the lady of the Haystack', could be seen in a similar context. The Lady, said to be attractive and accustomed to good society, yet mentally distracted, appeared in 1776 near Bristol and lived in a haystack for four years, before she was kept in an asylum. But unlike Caraboo, or the people mentioned by Steele, she did not make any claims, or deliberately deceive to create the mystery that she was Mademoiselle La Frülen, the daughter of Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria. There is no evidence for it. See G. H. Wilson, *The Eccentric Mirror*, 4 Vols. (London, 1807), Vol. III, Part XXII, pp. 1-36; E. Warner, 'Lady of the Haystack', *Notes and Queries*, s7-IV, (1887), p. 469.

CHAPTER 5

ETHNIC IMPOSTORS

In 1703, a young man appeared in London, claiming to be a native of Formosa, and presented to the Royal Society an entire cultural and geographical description of a remote civilisation. How was it possible to succeed in pretending to be of a different ethnicity and engage members of the Society and the wider public for a considerable time? A category of 'ethnic impostors' might come as a surprise, for there was hardly a clear concept of ethnicity in the early modern period. However, the illuminating case of the fake Formosan justifies a brief excursion. We have hitherto discussed a number of categories of what Greenblatt considered the 'threatening Other', but we have not yet touched upon the theme of 'racial' difference.[1] The term 'ethnicity' is problematic. Its meaning is still not clearly defined, but it generally refers to societal groups, whose members share a sense of collective identity, which may be marked by several factors such as a sense of a mutual cultural and traditional background, religious faith, nationality, a language, or racial origin. In early modern English, however, the adjective 'ethnic' had a clear religious connotation and simply referred to someone who was not Christian or Jew, but a gentile, heathen or pagan.[2] Ethnic differentiation and the problem of its origin as well as, for example, pigmentation had occupied scholars since Antiquity, yet interest in it was limited. It was difference in religion and language rather than in the human beings themselves that concerned contemporaries most, and on which antipathy towards another 'ethnic' group was based. Moreover, the word 'race', as Margaret

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[1] In his categories of the threatening 'Other', Greenblatt mentions the 'savage', but does not explicitly include the category of race. Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 9. On the early modern notion of 'race', see below.
[2] See *OED*, 'ethnic'.

Hodgen has noted, 'held little meaning ... [and] carried a zoological connotation properly applicable only to animals', and the modern concept of 'race' was hardly articulated.[3]

Ethnic impostors obviously differ from actors disguised as Persians, Chinese, Turks or 'blackamoors' in masquerades, fashionable in eighteenth-century London,[4] and on stage, as well as from people pretending to be kings or princes of their country of origin, like royal slaves, a phenomenon of which we possess a little evidence from the eighteenth century.[5] People who assumed foreign names, or immigrants who anglicised their surnames, if they had any, could open up another dimension of ethnic imposture. For instance, we have noted that quacks sought to achieve the image of someone coming from far away through 'exotic' names. Another example is Daniel Foe, who added the prefix 'De' to his name, and thus made it sound noble and French – and less 'hostile'. Hence to add a foreign feature to one's identity could indeed bring some advantage and social prestige, yet it is not appropriate to consider it as ethnic imposture.

This chapter focuses on people who claimed to be of a different ethnicity. How were they perceived? What made them succeed? Which features of ethnicity played the most crucial role? The celebrated case of George Psalmanazar, the pretended Formosan, will form a substantial part of the following discussion, but first, we shall explore whether similar incidents occurred in early modern England. In general, we possess only fragmented evidence of this phenomenon. Stereotypical and overall negative attitudes towards foreign peoples, a lack of authentic knowledge and the obstacle of physiognomy may be the main reasons which prevented this 'pretence' from becoming a common

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[3] See Margaret Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 113, 211, 214; 'Constructing Race. Differentiating peoples in the early modern world', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54:1 (1997). See also Leo Spitzer, 'Ratio > Race', in idem, *Essays in Historical Semantics* (New York, 1948), pp. 147-69.
In this sense, Thomas Ramsey, the pretended Jew of Hexham mentioned in Chapter 3, would fit into the category, as Jews were clearly regarded as different, but the story has to be understood within the political-religious context of the mid-seventeenth-century.
[4] Foreign and exotic dresses were most popular in masquerades. Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization. The carnivalesque in eighteenth-century English culture and fiction* (London, 1986), pp. 60-2.
[5] For actors disguised as 'blackamoors', see Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2005), ch. 7.

enterprise. Considering early modern prejudices towards the 'Other', and the primary incentive of imposture, i.e. status enhancement, ethnic imposture may be dismissed as likely to mean downward imposture, and thus unlikely to prove lucrative. Although knowledge about foreign regions and peoples as well as cultural exchange became increasingly common, racial differences seem to have occupied people more often from the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I would suggest that a shift in perception of the far-away 'Other' was therefore necessary to make ethnic imposture a worthwhile enterprise. Striking cases also occur in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A well-known example is the young Englishwoman, Mary Baker, a deluded fantasist, who in 1817 passed herself off as Princess Caraboo from Javasu, near Sumatra. She was well received by a magistrate's family in the Bristol area, and marvelled at by Oxford scholars who attempted to decipher her language.[6] Rather different examples are the nineteenth-century American slave autobiographies written by white abolitionists whose intention was to raise social awareness of slavery.[7] As the case of Psalmanazar will show, autobiographical writing is obviously a space where it is relatively easy to fashion one's identity, and victimisation frequently an expedient stratagem. Ultimately, however, as will be seen, perhaps the most famous early modern ethnic imposture, that of Psalmanazar, had its roots in scientific, religious and political disputes, and the heated discussion it provoked engaged with the impostor's appearance only peripherally.

Contemporary perception and cultural reasoning were based on the production of analogies and differences. The encounter with new worlds had a great impact on self-

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[6] See John Matthew Gutch (ed.), *Caraboo. A Narrative of a Singular Imposition, Practised upon the Benevolence of a Lady Residing in the Vicinity of the City of Bristol, By a young Woman of the Name of Mary Willcocks, alias Baker, alias Bakerstendht, alias Caraboo, Princess of Javasu* (London, 1817). Among others, see also John Wells, *Princess Caraboo. Her true story* (London, 1994); Jennifer Raison and Michael Goldie, *The Servant Girl Princess Caraboo. The real story of the grand hoax* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 1994).
[7] See Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters. Ethnic impersonators and American identities* (London, 2000), esp. ch. 1.

fashioning and 'nation formation',[8] as well as intensifying reflection on the 'Other'. Not only does the process of defining the 'Other' provide some evidence of how people attempted, for instance, to demonstrate the supremacy of the Christian world, it also indicates a growing awareness of racial differences. The dualistic conception of black and white was deeply embedded in Christian culture and present long before the English met people whose skin was darker than their own. Yet there is evidence that during the early modern period people became not only more concerned over distinct group identities, but also conscious of racial differences.[9] Skin colour played a vital part in this differentiation. As Kate Lowe points out, 'in the intensely status-conscious and hierarchical societies of fifteenth-century Europe, powerful stereotypical representations of the "other" (the Jew, the Moor, the African) were already elaborately crafted from classical and medieval sources'.[10] Although late sixteenth-century reports were not free of preconceptions, ancient assumptions were questioned, and descriptions became more ethnographic and reliable.[11]

From the mid-1550s, encounters with black people in London were probably fairly common. Many had been taken aboard in West Africa and brought to England to be used as slaves, servants, interpreters, prostitutes or court entertainers.[12] In the sixteenth century, however, it is difficult to assess popular attitudes to the few Africans living in England. Our own assumptions rely on travel narratives, and we do not know how extensively they were read. At the beginning of our period, the impact of the discoveries made relatively little impression on ordinary folk, but people were certainly aware of colours and also had prejudices. In popular imagination hostility and distrust were

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[8] See Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood. The Elizabethan writing of England* (Chicago, 1992).

[9] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power. The history of black people in Britain* (London, 1984), p. 135; Jean Devisse and Michel Mollat, *The Image of the Black in Western Art. From the early Christian era to the "Age of Discovery"*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), Vol. II, pp. 255-58.

[10] Kate Lowe, 'The Black Presence in Renaissance Europe', in idem and T.F. Earle (eds), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 1-14, at p. 10.

[11] Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, 'Before *Othello*. Elizabethan representations of sub-Saharan Africans', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997), pp. 19-44, at p. 24.

[12] James Walvin, *The Black Presence. A documentary history of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (London, 1971), p. 61; Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 8.

underpinned through the association of black with barbarity, monstrosity and the devil.[13] Despite natural variations of skin colours, a 'so-called black skin colour was almost universally condemned'.[14] By the turn of the century, the number of Africans must have grown, and concerns were being voiced that sound familiar to the modern reader. In 1596, the Privy Council proposed that all blacks 'should be sent forth of the lande'.[15] Five years later, the Privy Council drafted a proclamation concerning the same issue. Referring to 'these hard times of dearth' the queen was 'highly discontented to understand the great number of Negroes and blackamoors which ... are carried into this realm', that they consumed the relief of the Queen's own subjects, and were mainly 'infidels having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel'.[16] Considering these negative attitudes, it could hardly be appealing to pretend to be black. Apart from the very few black entertainers employed at court, they were mainly slaves. They were 'perceived differently to other ethnic or religious minority groups in Europe, such as Jews or Muslims or gypsies or Amerindians, because none of these groups was assigned slave status as a group'.[17]

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[13] E.g. [George Best], *A True Discourse of the Late Voyage of Discoverie* (London, 1578), pp. 28-31; Richard Hakluyt, *The Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London, 1589), e.g. pp. 94, 102, 132.

[14] Kate Lowe, 'The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe', in idem and Earle (eds), *Black Africans*, pp. 17-47, at p. 20; Vaughan and Mason Vaughan, 'Before *Othello*', pp. 27-9. See also Benjamin Baude, 'The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997), pp. 103-42.

[15] The open letter to the Lord Mayor refers to ten blacks who had been brought to England by Sir Thomas Baskerville. A few days later, the Privy Council issued an open warrant to allow a merchant 'to take up suche blackamores as he shall finde within the realme with the consent of their masters'. *APC, 1596-97*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 16-7, 21.

[16] Proclamation 804. 'Licensing Caspar van Senden to Deport Negroes' [draft] (1601), cited in *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 Vols. (New Haven, 1969), Vol. III, p. 221. The deal never came about.

[17] Lowe, 'Stereotyping', p. 21.

1. COUNTERFEIT EGYPTIANS

While we know of no cases of pretended Africans in the period considered here, so-called pretended gypsies appear to be an indication of what may be regarded as early traces of ethnic imposture. An explicit notion of changing awareness of different (ethnic) group identities, and perhaps a trace of ethnic imposture can be found in sixteenth-century statutes referring to gypsies. The Tudors drafted and passed several acts concerning gypsies.[18] In 1562, an Act tried to clarify the position of gypsies, and stressed the issue of counterfeit Egyptians. The Act branded any person who remained for a month in the company of gypsies and imitated their apparel, speech, or other behaviour, as a felon.[19] Likewise the Poor Law passed in 1596 mentions 'all tynkers wandering abroade ... and all such p[er]sons, not being Fellons, wandering and p[re]tending themselves to be Egipcyans or wandering in the Habite Forme or Attyre of counterfayte Egipcians'.[20] The evolution of 'travellers' in Britain is little known, but they were not a homogeneous ethnic group. It is likely that destitute people or outlaws mingled with groups of travellers, especially during years of crisis;[21] this may have been merely for practical reasons, to survive, and obtain shelter, food or protection, but could also have been to take advantage of their reputation as fortune-tellers, and so gain clients for themselves. In *The Art of Ivgling or Legerdemaine* (1614), Samuel Rid wrote that 'many of our English loyterers ioined with them [the gypsies] and in time learned their craft and cosening ... [and] purchased themselves great credit among the country people, and got much by Palmistry and telling of fortunes'.[22] In 1566, George Salomon, Henry Bastian, and John

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[18] E.g. 22 Henry VIII, c. 10; 1 and 2 Philip and Mary, c. 4; 5 Elizabeth I, c. 20; 39 Elizabeth I, c. 20.

[19] *An Act for further Punishment of Vagabonds calling themselves Egyptians* (1562). 5 Elizabeth I, c. 20.

[20] 39 Elizabeth I, c. 4, cited in Henry T. Crofton, 'Annals of the English Gipsies under the Tudors', in idem, *The English Gypsies under the Tudors* (1880; Blackwell, 2001), pp. 1-23, at p. 11.

[21] William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment. The coming of revolution in an English county* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p. 53.

[22] [Samuel Rid], *The Art of Ivgling or Legerdemaine. Wherein is Deciphered, all the conueyances of Legerdemaine and Iugling, how they are effected, and wherein they chiefly consist* (London,

Charles, all 'yeomen', were indicted as 'Egyptians', having 'feloniously consorted with about 40 persons called "Egyptians", contrary to the statute 5 Eliz. I. c. 20', but were all acquitted. Three years later, however, Nicholas and David Fawe, also described as 'yeomen', were found guilty of 'consorting with Egyptians' and sentenced to hang.[23] In July 1608, William Poole, labourer, George Portingalle, farrier, and Elizabeth and Honor Johnson, both spinsters, were indicted 'for disguising themselves as 'Egyptians' and impersonating 'Egyptians for a month and more prior to 26 June 1608'; they too were found guilty and sentenced to hang.[24] In 1695, at the Old Bailey, two youngsters named Peter Lawman and Francis Buckley were tried for calling themselves Egyptians; Buckley had been arrested in a barn 'with two Egyptian Women sitting upon him'.[25] Samuel Rid reports of one Giles Hather, who 'together with his whore Kit Calot' stiled himself the 'King of Egiptians, and she the Queene, riding about the country uncontrouled'.[26] In 1700, one Jacob Rewbrey, who was nicknamed 'King of Gypsies', was indicted at the Old Bailey for robbing one Rebecca Sellers,[27] while in the mid-eighteenth century Bampfylde Moore-Carew was called the king of a gypsy group. A later case, tried in the Worcestershire Quarter Sessions in 1777, featured 'a vagrant pretending to be deaf & dumb' and passing under the name of Thomas Monroe. He admitted that his real name was William Moore, 'with a wife and children in Bromsgrove', and that 'he was sometimes with gypsies & gamblers & that he had dealt in crockery ware travelling with a gang of asses'.[28]

Evidence of people calling themselves, or consorting with 'Egyptians' is relatively rare. It is also uncertain how far gypsies were perceived as an ethnic 'Other' in

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1614), sig. Bv. See also Christopher Hill, *Liberty against the Law. Some seventeenth-century controversies* (London, 1996), p. 132.
[23] Cockburn, *CAR, Essex Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 47; idem, *CAR, Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 88.
[24] Cockburn, *CAR, Essex Indictments James I*, p. 46.
[25] *OBP* (8 August 2005), August 1695, trial of Peter Lawman (t16950828-53); August 1695, trial of Francis Buckley (t16950828-54).
[26] Rid, *Art of Ivgling*, sig. Bv.
[27] *OBP* (8 August 2005), August 1700, trial of Jacob Rewbrey (t17000828-63).
[28] WRO, Quarter Sessions Rolls 1/1, file 1/1/470/29.

the popular mind. Concern over all sorts of travelling people and the circulation of dangerous rumours may have played a significant role in shaping Tudor legislation on 'Egyptians';[29] fear of the 'devilish beggar' prone to subversion and rebellion may have fused with fear of an ethnic 'Other'. Gypsies were said to speak a different language, 'the right Egiptian language',[30] and to be outsiders of the English church and community; moreover, the measures outlined in the statutes seem to convey that gypsies were perceived as a threat which was thought as coming from abroad. It is perhaps no coincidence that the term 'Egyptians', deriving from the real Egyptians, was associated with their purportedly superstitious religion. Johann Boemus (c.1485-1535) stated 'that the Egyptians "were the first that fained the names of twelve gods ... erected Altars, Idols, and Temples, and figured liuing creatures in stones"', and argues that they had it from the Ethiopians.[31] The association of gypsies with superstition and magic was deeply embedded in western thinking. The stereotype may be illustrated by Elizabeth Johnson, who in 1695, was indicted at the Old Bailey for 'pretending her self to be an Egyptian, and having familiarity with evil Spirits, and pretending by Magick Arts she could discover where Treasure was hid'.[32] In practice actions against gypsies were usually less drastic, and the Acts were little enforced as court records reveal very few references to gypsies.[33] The Acts themselves do not prove that people in significant numbers impersonated gypsies or joined their company. But apparently, for authorities it was an issue whether someone was an English-born gypsy. We might thus assume that the legislation aimed to facilitate the prosecution of such people.[34] As pointed out earlier,

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[29] See Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2002), ch. 7.

[30] Rid, *Art of Ivgling*, sig. Bv.

[31] Johann Boemus, *The Manners, Lawes and Customs of all Nations* (London, 1611), p. 18, cited in Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, p. 255.

[32] *OBP* (8 August 2005), July 1695, trial of Elizabeth Johnson (t16950703-8).

[33] One of the very few references concerns a constable, who in 1669 failed to arrest thirteen gypsies begging. Cockburn, *CAR, Kent Indictments, Charles II 1660-1675*, p. 216. See also Crofton, 'Annals of the English Gipsies', pp. 1-23; Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992), ch. 6. Hunt has not found more references to Egyptians, 'real or bogus' after 1627 in Essex. Hunt, *Puritan Moment*, pp. 53-4.

[34] Thompson mentions a case where gypsies were not expelled on the technical ground that they had not been "transported and conveyed into this Realm of *England*" but came from Scotland. According to Fraser, gypsies became increasingly keen to have their children baptised and

there is hardly any evidence of any 'anti-society' of vagrants with their own kings, dukes, earls and lords. Likewise, evidence of larger groups of gypsies, as well as references to the 'king of gypsies' and 'pretended gypsies', are scarce;[35] the latter expressions are, like the 'king of beggars', perhaps no more than a literary *topos*. Distinct from black Africans, gypsies were certainly another version of the 'Other'. That the category of gypsies did not exclusively mean travellers becomes clear, despite the wording of the 1562 legislation, from the categories of the 1572 Poor Law and the occasional actions taken against them. The label was easily blurred with the large and diverse group of wandering Englishmen and women, who may partially have pursued a gypsy life-style and for whom claiming the identity and sharing the company of gypsies could have been for economic and 'security' purposes; ultimately, of the large number of vagrants only a tiny minority were identified as gypsies. Although the 1562 Act explicitly mentions apparel and speech, it is difficult to say how (pretended) gypsies were accurately recognised. Apart from this there is no direct evidence that physical appearance or racial characteristics such as pigmentation were decisive factors; the key factor was more likely their vagrant and thus 'disorderly' life-style.

Ambiguous feelings of both fear and fascination were associated with gypsies. With regard to those who styled themselves 'king of gypsies' and so on, we may again refer to the fascination of exoticism and a life outside the conventional society, a common theme in popular literature.[36] The fact that, as in the case of Jacob Rewbrey, 'king of gypsies' and variations were used as nicknames presents another difficulty. Reasons for taking up such names are hard to discover. We cannot tell with certainty whether these names were adopted by the person himself (as Buckley and Lawman might have done), or conferred on him by his immediate associates (as was likely the case with Rewbrey

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registered. T.W. Thompson, 'Consorting with and Counterfeiting Egyptians', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 3rd Series, 2 (1923), pp. 81-93, at pp. 86-7; Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 133.

[35] For two of the few references to larger groups of travellers, see Cockburn, *Sussex Indictments Elizabeth I*, pp. 128, 168. See also A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men. The vagrancy problem in England 1560-1640* (London, 1985), pp. 58-62.

[36] See Chapter 1; Hill, *Liberty*, esp. pp. 131-41.

and Bampfylde), or given by outsiders. Regarding the first scenario, the assumed name may be a result of someone's carving out his or her own world. In 1652, Mary Neale, for instance, was found richly dressed in a bawdy house; she did not claim to be a gypsy, but the 'Queen of Morocco'. Little else is known about her, but she was probably an up-market prostitute, and the title was more likely a (wishful) nickname than an identifier of North-African origins; her mother, named Stuart, was said to be living in Moorfields.[37] Perhaps she had somewhere picked up Cervantes' *The Liberal Lover*, published in London in 1640, in which 'a woman in a Barbarie habite so well made and set forth, that the richest *Moore* in *Fez*, or *Morocco* was not able to compare therewith', is presented by a Jew to a judge to be sold in Tripolis:

> She came in, having her face covered with a scarfe of *Crimson Taffata* about the smalls of her legges (which discovered themselves) there appeared two golden chaines of pure burnisht gold; and on her armes, which likewise through a smocke of Cendall, or thinne *Taffata-Sarcenet*, were transparant, and shewed themselves to the searching curious eyes of the beholders; she ware two bracelets of gold, wherein were set scatteringly here and there, many fayre Pearles and precious Stones. In conclusion, the fashion of her clothes, and all other habiliments about her were such, that she presented her selfe before them, most richly and gorgeously attyred.[38]

Because there is so little detailed information about the scale of the performances of the individuals discussed above, it is questionable to label them 'impostors' in the narrow sense. We cannot discover how far Mary Neale carried her role as the Queen of Morocco; she may well have built on the 'enchanting' name by adopting an appropriate style of speech, manner and dress. Names themselves are of course an important feature of

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[37] LMA, MJ/SBB/111/33.
[38] Miguel de Cervantes, *Exemplarie Novells in Sixe Books* (London, 1640), pp. 133-35. Leonisa, an Italian woman, had been captured by pirates and got lost in a storm on the journey to Tripolis. She was bought by a Jew who sold her to the judge. Barbary means the Saracene countries along the north coast of Africa. *OED*.

identity, and were used to assert a different kind of selfhood. It is evident that (nick)names were sometimes meant to be prestigious in their specific socio-cultural context. They might function not only as signifier of an individual, specifying the person's character or physical appearance, but to convey honour and social status. Authorities might have regarded nicknames as subversive when they asserted the self as authority against 'orthodox' forms, conventions and institutions, and were linked to a local cultural context. It is interesting that Mary Neale stuck to the story before the authorities. Did she hope for some sympathy or clemency? It remains clear, however, that in specific socio-cultural contexts names such as 'Queen of Morocco' or 'King of Gypsies', which referred to an ethnic other, had an appeal which outweighed negative stereotypical connotations. And exotic names, as we have seen with quack doctors, might provide a promising marketing strategy to attract customers.

2. GEORGE PSALMANAZAR

In 1703, a young man calling himself George Psalmanazar (or Psalmaanasaar) appeared on the London stage. 'But of all the Deceivers by whom the world hath been cheated, there never, surely, was a more consummate master of his art, than George Psalmanazar!' exclaimed one author in the *Monthly Review* a year after the impostor's death on 3 August 1763.[39] Psalmanazar had indeed secured his place in history as one of the most intriguing impostors of early eighteenth-century England. Claiming to be a native Formosan, seduced by a Jesuit who wanted to take him to France and convert him, he presented a wholly invented historical and geographical description of his alleged native country, including its language and alphabet, to members of the Royal Society and the public. Psalmanazar has been of interest to scholars of many disciplines, from anthropologists and linguists to historians and literary scholars, and three biographical studies have emerged.[40] For a long time readings have reduced him to an impostor in the narrow sense of a deviant, 'having a natural turn to fraud and imposture' or even a 'professional cannibal'.[41] A few authors have dealt with him in the context of literary forgery. In the *General Biography*, for example, he is called 'an extraordinary literary impostor' and his contemporary Horace Walpole wrote on 17 February 1777 to William Mason: 'Psalmanazar alone seems to have surpassed the genius of Chatterton', the eighteenth-century impostor-poet.[42] Yet Psalmanazar's literary forgery, that is his

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[39] *Monthly Review*, 31 (November 1764), p. 365.

[40] Michael Keevak, *The Pretended Formosan. George Psalmanazar's eighteenth-century hoax* (Detroit, 2004); Frederick J. Foley, S.J., *The Great Formosan Impostor* (St. Louis, Missouri, 1968) is probably the most comprehensive work. Richard M. Swiderski, *The False Formosan. George Psalmanazar and the eighteenth-century experiment of identity* (San Francisco, 1991). Although Swiderski makes some good points, the book is often inaccurate. For an analysis of Psalmanazar's Formosan, see Thomas A. Reisner, 'Graphic Affinities. Statistical approaches to Psalmanazar's Pseudo-Formosan', *Langues et linguistiques*, 20 (1994), pp. 81-107.

[41] John Aikin, et al., *General Biography; or, Lives, Critical and Historical, of the most eminent Persons of all Ages, Countries, Conditions and Professions, arranged according to alphabetical order*, 10 Vols. (London, 1813), Vol. VIII, pp. 371-73, at p. 371; Daniel Eilon, 'Gulliver's Fellow-Traveller Psalmanaazaar', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8 (1985), pp.173-78, at p. 173.

[42] Aikin, *General Biography*; *The Correspondence of Horace Walpole and the Rev. William Mason*, ed. John Mitford, 2 Vols. (London, 1851), Vol. I, p. 266; Isaac, D'Israeli, *A Second Series*

invention of a whole cultural system, forms an integral part of his imposture, and was one of the devices which enabled him to succeed. The following account will pull together various threads of former research, by looking at his career in the round and placing him within a particular context, and highlighting the fact that imposture has to be seen as multifaceted socio-cultural interaction. His case is complex and many questions still remain unanswered, but it is apparent that Psalmanazar was neither 'born' an impostor nor was his transgression merely self-motivated. For a better comprehension we also need to look beyond his person, and, for instance, the fact that there was a lack of reliable knowledge about the region he pretended to be from. As Michael Keevak rightly states, his imposture was 'not simply one in which Eurocentrism, bigotry, or intolerance managed to protect him from being unmasked'. But was his choice of the Formosan identity, as Keevak states, really 'almost arbitrary'?[43] His success was the result of a number of factors: his personal intellectual abilities and social skills; the personal aspirations of his patrons and those involved in the affair; a fusion of contemporary expectations, interest in and lack of knowledge of Formosa on the part of his patrons, the Royal Society, as well as the literary market and the wider public; confidence in the integrity of a colleague as a precondition of scientific culture; and the religious-political context and the role of Formosa as a missionary, scientific and economic target. Although it is not intended to rehearse his career here, we will briefly look at some key aspects of Psalmanazar's story.

Little is known about Psalmanazar's life before his appearance in London, and for most of the information we depend on his *Memoirs*.[44] From the years of his imposture

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of Curiosities of Literature, 3 Vols. (London, 1824), Vol. III, pp. 64-72; James A. Farrer, *Literary Forgeries* (London, 1907), pp. 82-97; John Whitehead, *This Solemn Mockery. The art of literary forgery* (London, 1973), pp. 36-43; C.D. Blanton, 'Impostures. Robert Browning and the poetics of forgery', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 35 (2002), pp. 1-25; Jack Lynch, 'Samuel Johnson's Love of Truth and Literary Fraud', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42 (2002), pp. 601-18.

[43] Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, pp. 12, 15.

[44] George Psalmanazar, *Memoirs of ****. Commonly known by the Name of George Psalmanazar; A Reputed Native of Formosa. Written by himself In order to be published after his Death. An Account of his Education, Travels, Adventures, Connections, Literary Productions, and pretended*

we have mainly his *Description* (1704),[45] his *Memoirs*, however, were written around

1728, more than twenty years after his fraud had been exposed, and were intended to be

published after his death. His real name remains unknown,[46] and he also concealed

particulars about his origins, allegedly to protect his family and its reputation.[47] There has

been a lot of speculation about his religious origins. It is possible that he was born into a

Roman Catholic family around 1679/80, in southern France.[48] His father, allegedly 'of an

ancient, but decayed family', was obliged to live 'near five hundred miles' away,

somewhere in Germany, and consequently his mother 'was left to live and breed

[Psalmanazar] up upon her small fortune'.[49] No siblings are mentioned. Despite this

impoverished situation, his mother enabled him to have a decent schooling. His *Memoirs*

offer some insight into his education, which was, he states, a crucial factor in his future

life. While he praises his mother's care, he stresses the 'mismanagement' of his Catholic

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Conversion from Heathenism to Christianity; which last proved the Occasion of his being brought over into this Kingdom, and passing for a Proselyte, and a Member of the Church of England (London, 1764).
For speculation about his place of birth, see James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson. Together with Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides and Johnson's Diary of a Journey into North Wales*, ed. George B. Hill, 6 Vols. (Oxford, 1964), Vol. III, p. 447; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (1764), pp. 503-5, 507, 573-74.
[45] George Psalmanaazaar, *An Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa, An Island Subject to the Emperor of Japan. Giving an Account of the Religion, Customs, Manners, &c. of the Inhabitants, Together with a Relation of what happen'd to the Author in his Travels; particularly his Conferences with the Jesuits, and others, in several parts of Europe. Also the History and Reasons of his Conversion to Christianity, with his Objections against it, (in defence of Paganism) and their Answers. To which is prefix'd, A preface in Vindication of himself from the Reflections of a Jesuit lately come from China, with an Account of what passed between them. By George Psalmanaazaar, a Native of the said Island, now in London* (London, 1704). The book went through two editions and was translated into French, German, and Dutch.
A Dialogue between a Japonese and a Formosan, About some Points of the Religion of the Time (London, [1707]); Isaack D'Amalvi, *L'Eclercisseur Eclercy; Or, An Answer to a Book Entituled "Eclercissements sur ce que; &c. "* (London, [1707]).
[46] It was upon his arrival in London when he allegedly changed his invented name Salmanazar to Psalmanazar, 'to make it somewhat different from that mentioned in the book of Kings'. Salmanazar after the Assyrian King Shalmaneser (2 Kings 17:3). Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 169.
[47] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 70. It is not known how long it took him to write the *Memoirs*.
[48] He was born in either 1679 or 1680. According to Frank Lestringant, he may have been a 'defiant Huguenot who fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes'; later, he was also suspected of being a disguised Jew. *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, Vol. III, p. 447; Foley, *Formosan Impostor*, pp. 6-7. Frank Lestringant, 'Travels in Eucharistia. Formosa and Ireland from George Psalmanaazaar to Jonathan Swift', *Yale French Studies*, 86 (1994), pp. 109-25, at p. 118; idem, 'Huguenots en Utopie: Ou le genre utopique et la reforme', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, 146 (2000), pp. 253-306, esp. pp. 299-302; Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 115. For the suspicion of him being a wandering Jew, see *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), pp. 369-70.
[49] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 71.

tutors, through whose teaching 'such a wrong foundation was laid, and so strong a bias given me to vanity and self-conceit, as proved the unhappy source of all my sad miscarriages since'.[50] Despite the tendentiousness of such arguments, he displays some awareness of how character might be shaped by one's surroundings, education, and above all individual tutors, but also blames his own pride. It was 'the' city, never identified, where he was supposed to study theology, that led him into a life of youthful vanity and pride. 'I may fairly date the completion of my ruin from the time of my coming to this populous place, on more accounts than one: for first, the city was a noble, great one, full of gentry and nobility, of coaches, and all kinds of grandeur, all which did greatly affect me'.[51] Fascinated by and admiring those socially above him, he became negligent in his scholarly duties, ascribing this, later in his *Memoirs*, to his tutors' lack of control.[52]. Eventually, God's mercy enabled him 'to retrospect with shame and remorse on a life so basely spent', and 'Divine Providence did think fit to drive [him] to the writing'.[53]

His first impostures seem to have been for merely practical reasons, as when he decided to return to his mother but had no money. He stole a pilgrim's staff and cloak from a chapel and went on his way, begging and relying on the Latin he had learned from the Jesuits, pretending to be 'a young student in theology of Irish extract [who] had left the country for the sake of religion', then going on a pilgrimage to Rome.[54] This behaviour should not be interpreted as clear proof of his inclination to imposture; to impersonate a mendicant or pilgrim, or simply to pretend piety, was a relatively easy way to get money and accommodation during a journey. Later, money became a bigger problem, and as for so many hopeless and masterless men, the army provided a last resort. In Cologne, he enlisted in a regiment in Dutch pay under the Duke of

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[50] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 72. He was allegedly first taught by Franciscan friars, then at a Jesuit, and finally at a Dominican college.
[51] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 98-9.
[52] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 99-102.
[53] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 65, 68. Religion, both as a tool for mental guidance and political matter, plays a vital role throughout the *Memoirs*. In the preface he discusses religion in general but the true meaning of the Church of England in particular.
[54] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 116-19.

Mecklenburg, and he passed himself off as a Japanese pagan, called Salmanazar, eager to convert to Christianity. The regiment was soon ordered into Holland, which at that time was trying to recapture the former Spanish territories from the French. At Sluis his performance as a pretended pagan and his bizarre religious views attracted the attention of 'Brigadier Lauder, a Scottish gentleman', colonel of a regiment and the town governor.[55] Through him Psalmanazar eventually became acquainted with the Reverend Alexander Innes, an Anglican clergyman attached to Lauder's Scottish regiment – a dubious character, who became a fraudster himself, but about whom little is known.[56] Another important player at Sluis was Isaac d'Amalvi, a Huguenot pastor, and a leading participant in the debates over Psalmanazar's religious views.[57]

But why, while still on the continent, he passed himself off as Japanese is difficult to determine. Psalmanazar explains that he had felt unsafe, and was thinking of 'some more cunning, safe, and effectual way of travelling', and that the impersonation of an Irish student had not brought the benefits he had expected.[58] It seems that he was inspired by his studies with the Jesuits. He had some knowledge of their missions in China and their ultimate aim to convert the inhabitants to Catholicism. Public knowledge of Asia was still limited, and, as he wrote, the 'idea they [the Jesuits] had given us of them was indeed too general and imperfect', and 'all the notion they had given us of it [Formosa], was only from their maps and comments upon them, for they made use of geographical books'. He was aware that the Formosans were 'so little known by the generality of Europeans, that were only looked upon, in the lump, to be Antipodes to

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[55] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 169, 177.

[56] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 147. Innes plagiarised *Aretologia, Or, A Modest Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue* (Westminster, 1728), written by Archibald Campbell; in 1734 it was published in London under Campbell's name. *ESTC*; *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), p. 446; Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Vol. I, pp. 359-60; Foley, *Formosan Impostor*, pp. 11-5.

[57] See Isaac D'Amalvi, *Eclaircissemens, nécessaires pour bien entendre ce que le Sr N.F.D.B.R. dit être arrivé à l'Ecluse en Flandres par rapport à la conversion de M' George Psalmanaazaar, Japonais, dans son livre intitulé de l'isle Formosa* (The Hague, 1706); idem, *L'Eclercisseur Eclercy*.

[58] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 134.

them in almost every respect, as religion, manners, dress, &c.'.[59] However, there is also

another possibility. He might have come across, and even gained the idea for his

imposture from Louis Le Comte's *Memoirs and Observations*, which contains not only a

detailed description of China including its language(s), but also the story of a young

French lady, who claimed to be Chinese in the mid-1690s. The two stories bear some

striking similarities. The lady told Le Comte that she was 'born in the Emperor's Palace,

brought up at Court, and Daughter to Prince Coronné', and was then captured by Dutch

pirates and liberated by a 'French privateer' who brought her to France. Like

Psalmanazar, she pretended to be a victim and a pagan eager to convert. However,

examined by Le Comte, a Jesuit who had travelled to China, she was soon exposed as an

impostor.[60]

Innes also unmasked Psalmanazar, by making him translate twice the same text.

But he was fascinated by him and also became aware of how he could make use of the

youngster to pursue his own professional career;[61] it is possible that he was trying to

avoid being sent to Portugal with a military commission.[62] In the presence of George

Lauder, the brigadier, he baptised Psalmanazar.[63] Having arranged an invitation from

Henry Compton, the Bishop of London, Innes then brought him to England, where

Psalmanazar was to act as a convert from heathenism.

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[59] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 135-38. Basil Guy notes a delay of 'Western knowledge and appreciation of the true China'. Basil Guy, 'Ad majorem Societatis gloriam. Jesuit perspectives on Chinese mores in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries', in Roy Porter and George S. Rousseau (eds), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 66-85, at pp. 66-7.
For the image of China in European literature, see Andrew L. March, *The Idea of China. Myth and geographic thought* (New York, 1974).
[60] Louis Le Comte, *Mémoirs and Observations. Made in a late Journey Through the Empire of China, And Published in Several Letters* (London, 1697), pp. 129-34. The book was published in Paris entitled *Nouveaux mémoires sur l'état present de la Chine* (Paris, 1696). The incident is also mentioned in *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des beaux Arts* (April, 1705), p. 588.
[61] Mary B. Campbell's assertion that Innes believed Psalmanazar is possibly wrong. And Richard Aldington doubts Psalmanazar's claim that Innes was the instigator, though Innes certainly benefited from the episode; he was later appointed chaplain to an expeditionary force. Mary B. Campbell, *Wonder and Science. Imagining worlds in early modern Europe* (Ithaca, 1999), p. 313; Richard Aldington, *Frauds* (London, 1957), pp. 33-52.
[62] The *CSPD* contains the entry for 1 September 1703: 'Alexander Innes, chaplain general of the forces sent or to be sent into Portugal. In form of a military commission'. *CSPD, 1703-1704*, p. 269.
[63] Lauder acted as godfather, and Psalmanazar adopted the Christian name George in honour of the governor. Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 177; D'Amalvi, *Eclaircissemens*, p. 17.

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Innes and Compton were largely responsible for Psalmanazar's introduction to the religious, scientific and literary society of London in summer 1703.[64] It is evident that Psalmanazar relied heavily on the patronage and sympathy of several aristocratic figures and members of the Royal Society, such as Sir Hans Sloane, Thomas Herbert, eighth Earl of Pembroke (1656-1733), Henry Compton himself, and Samuel Reynolds of Balliol College, Oxford.[65] Why was Compton interested in Psalmanazar? His sympathy for a converted pagan manifests the religious as well as political dimension of the whole imposture. The Bishop's earlier eagerness in denouncing Roman Catholics as well as his weakened position after James II's accession are well known; he is also reported to have been eager to promote the interest of the English church overseas. Whether he fully believed in the imposture, or simply took advantage of it as a political-religious manoeuvre is difficult to say.[66] But he may have been impressed by Innes, who had apparently converted a savage to the Christian faith. Psalmanazar symbolised a sort of religious triumph, superiority over both savage religion and the Jesuits.[67] Innes and Compton were probably his two main patrons; though there were certainly others, he mentions few by name.[68] What were the reasons for their curiosity in this mysterious Formosan? Sloane was interested in a wide range of subjects and kept up a lively

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[64] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 169. Percy G. Adams notes Innes's influence on Psalmanazar's *Description*. Percy G. Adams, *Travellers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (Berkeley, 1962), pp. 101, 230.

[65] For some of the letters from Psalmanazar to people such as Reynolds, Birch, and Richardson, see Foley, *Formosan Impostor*, pp. 86-106.

[66] In 1685, Henry Compton was removed from the Privy Council and deprived of the office of the dean of the Royal Chapel until William III's accession. He distanced himself from the Whigs and allied with the Tory and high-church party. The appointment of Tillotson to the primacy in 1691, and Tenison's succession to Tillotson in 1695, disappointed him. Queen Anne showed Compton more favour. She made him lord almoner, and in 1704/5 he became commissioner of trades and plantations. He supported the bill against occasional conformity. See Edward Carpenter, *The Protestant Bishop. Being the life of Henry Compton, 1632-1713, Bishop of London* (London, 1956); Andrew M. Coleby, 'Compton, Henry (1631/2-1713)', *DNB*.

[67] Note *The Jesuit's Intrigues. With the private Instructions of that Society to their Emissaries* (London, 1669) which he translated from the French, and printed with the intention 'to make the Roman Catholic Church appear in as odious a light as possible'. Carpenter, *Protestant Bishop*, pp. 60-1.

[68] Despite his interests in science, especially botany, Compton was never a member of the RS. The *Description* and *Enquiry into the Objections against George Psalmanaazaar* and *George Psalmanaazaar's Answer to Mons. D'Amalvy of Sluice* (London, [1707]) are both dedicated to Henry Compton. Psalmanazar also presented the Bishop with a catechism translated into Formosan.

correspondence with scientists, travellers and missionaries all over the world; and as secretary of the society from 1693 to 1713 he was also expected to stimulate scientific interest among the fellows.[69] It might have been at one of Sloane's weekly dinner parties, designed to entertain his friends, colleagues and fellows, and to introduce new guests to prominent personages in an informal setting, that Psalmanazar became acquainted with the Earl of Pembroke, whose favour he then enjoyed until the publication of his *Description* in Spring 1704. Pembroke then broke with Psalmanazar, denouncing him as an impostor, allegedly because he had claimed in the *Description* that the Formosans taught Greek in school. However, later, when the reformed Psalmanazar was employed as a hack writer for the *Universal History*, Pembroke became a benefactor once more, providing expenses and reference books.[70]

The *Description* met with a very mixed response. Some English Roman Catholics suspected that Psalmanazar was a tool of the High Church, manipulated to mock the Roman Church.[71] Jesuit missionaries who had actually been to Formosa, such as the French Jean de Fontaney, who had travelled to China on the orders of Louis XIV, was to challenge the pretended Formosan three times face to face. Fontaney became suspicious of Psalmanazar's claims, and declared him an impostor at their first meeting before the Royal Society, but could not provide conclusive proof.[72] Members of the Royal Society were also split about him. While the Earl of Pembroke was in favour of Psalmanazar, other prominent members, such as Edmond Halley, Richard Mead and John Woodward, a

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[69] Arthur MacGregor, 'The Life, Character and Career of Sir Hans Sloane', in idem (ed.), *Sir Hans Sloane. Collector, scientist, antiquary, founding father of the British Museum* (London, 1994), pp. 11-44, at p. 19. For Sloane and the Royal Society, see also E. St. John Brooks, *Sir Hans Sloane. The great collector and his circle* (London, 1954), esp. ch. 7.

[70] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 289-91; idem, *Description*, p. 290.

[71] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 203.

[72] The meeting was on 2 February 1704, and apparently not announced in advance to Psalmanazar, who was taken by surprise. The main argument was that Psalmanazar claimed Formosa was under Japanese jurisdiction while Fontenay said it was under the Emperor of China. Psalmanazar, *Description*, pp. vii-x; *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, ed. H.W. Turnbull, J. F. Scott, A. Rupert Hall et al., 7 Vols. (Cambridge, 1959-77), Vol. IV, pp. 412, 425.

fierce critic of Sloane, were sceptical about the reports, but, as the *Monthly Review* noted, some thought it was merely because of their 'disregard for Christianity'.[73]

Why was Psalmanazar not exposed? Did he really become an 'instant celebrity'?[74] Little information survives of his examination, and individual opinions are also scarce. The 'Journal Book' of the Royal Society records the first meeting with Psalmanazar in August 1703, mentioning his intention to publish a description of Formosa, and that he looked like 'a young Dutch Man',[75] but it contains only a very brief note of the February meeting at which the debate with Fontaney allegedly took place.[76] In February 1704, Sloane wrote to John Locke that the Society had 'been here very much diverted by Mr. Fonteney a Jesuit from China and one who says he comes from Formosa and is a Japonese. I could make you very merry with what I have heard from them'.[77] Locke, however, was more interested in his weather observations, and having them published in the *Transactions*.[78] Sloane and Fontaney kept up a regular correspondence between 1704 and 1708, but only one letter refers to Psalmanazar. In August 1704, Fontaney reported to Sloane that at the Jesuit College in Avignon no one knew a Formosan. There was one Father Rhodes, who allegedly had lured Psalmanazar away from Formosa, but he had never known a Formosan youth or travelled to the island, though he had been at the College for twenty years.[79] The correspondence illustrates the mutual friendship and interest in the region.[80] It is therefore difficult to assess the scale of

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[73] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 196; *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), p. 447; Brooks, *Sir Hans Sloane*, pp. 108-9.

[74] Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 6.

[75] ARS, JBC/10, 'Journal Book, 1702-14', p. 46.

[76] The note only mentions the presence of Fontaney, Psalmanazar and some others. More words were spent on someone pretending to live without food, a suspected cheat, and on the male opossum and its penis. ARS, JBC/10, 'Journal Book, 1702-14', p. 60.

[77] John Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. Esmond S. de Beer, 8 Vols. (Oxford, 1976-89), Vol. VIII, p. 216, cited in Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, pp. 36-7.

[78] BL, Sloane 4039, ff. 243, 259; 4059, ff. 282, 284.

[79] The suspected Jesuit, Mathieu de Rhodes, claimed that he had never left the 'Province de Lion depuis mon entrée à la Companie qui fut l'an 1655' and that he never knew 'un jeune homme qui se dit natif de l'Isle Formosa'. The Jesuits also defensively outruled any other members called de Rhodes, in case Psalmanazar claimed there were others of the same name in the Orient mission. *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences & des beaux Arts* (Trevoux, 1705), pp. 594-95, 596-97.

[80] BL, Sloane 4039, f. 334, 'Letter from Jan de Fontaney to Sloane, 1 August 1704'. The rest of the correspondence refers to a planned journey by French missionaries to Formosa, who were

excitement within the Royal Society. It was probably safer for the Society to let the impostor 'pass' and discourage rumours about the episode. A full public exposure of the encounter would certainly have been an embarrassment for the Society. However, the matter was not dropped altogether. In April 1704, Halley presented a 'very Exact Chart of China and Formosa drawn in the Year 1667 which [was] altogether incompatible' with Psalmanazar's account, and in June 1705, letters were read from one Mr. Griffith, who had been in Formosa, and contradicted the 'Account lately given of it by Mr. George Psalmaanasaar'.[81]

For the *Description*, Psalmanazar made use of Varenius's account,[82] and he also knew Candidus's description of Formosa,[83] which, according to him, was 'stuffed with such monstrous absurdities and contradictions ... that I might the more easily make whatever I should say of it, to pass current with the generality of the world'.[84] However, religious politics is clearly a central theme of the whole imposture. The importance of religion is manifested in Psalmanazar's *Description*, a 'supposedly objective portrayal of a theocratic and cannibalistic society', whose aim was to criticise 'the strong-arm missionary tactics of the Jesuits'; no fewer than 108 pages are devoted to his alleged

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instructed by Fontaney and meant to return with new knowledge and objects from the region for Sloane's cabinet of curiosities.

[81] ARS, JBC/10, 'Journal Book, 1702-14', pp. 73, 109.

[82] Bernardus Varenius, *Descriptio regni Japoniae cum quibusquam affinis, materiae ex variis auctoribus collectae et in ordinem redactae per B.V.* (Amstelodami [Amsterdam], 1649).

[83] It was first published in English in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, some now first printed from original manuscripts*, ed. Churchill Awnsham and John Churchill (London, 1704), pp. 526-39.

[84] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 216-17. Arnoldus Montanus, *Atlas Japannensis, being remarkable addresses by way of embassy for the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Emperor of Japan, containing a description of their religions, laws, and customs* (London, 1670). Montanus got most of his information from Georgius Candidius, *Kurtze Beschreibung der Insel Formosa gestelt durch Georgium Candidium diener des Göttlichen Worts alda* (1649), contained in Bernhardus Varenius, *Descriptio regni Japoniae et Siam* (Amsterdam, 1673). See also Robert A. Day, 'Psalmanazar's "Formosa" and the British Reader (including Samuel Johnson)', in Porter and Rousseau (eds), *Exoticism*, pp. 197-221, at p. 207; Takau Shimada, 'Possible Sources for Psalmanazar's Description of Formosa', *Notes and Queries*, 30 (1983), pp. 514-16; Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, ch. 1.

conversion.[85] But it is also apparent in the *Memoirs*, in which he discusses religion in general, and the Church of England in particular, and as has been noted, he blames the Jesuits for his transgressions. Psalmanazar describes how he was allegedly deceived by the Jesuits and how they tried to convert him in Avignon. Psalmanazar cunningly resisted the Jesuits' vile tricks and escaped.[86] It was thus the Anglican Church which had rescued him from all the previous errors of both his native paganism and the Roman Catholic Church. Psalmanazar's writings were primarily for a pious audience of clerics and of scientists, in particular those interested in his report of the Formosan island, but they were also addressed to a wider public interested in the exotic east. In his memoirs he wrote that 'the booksellers were so earnest for my dispatching it [the *Description*] out of hand, whilst the town was hot in expectation of it'.[87] The *Description*, as Frank Lestringant suggests, 'engages the reader on the subject of the religion, all under the guise of a geographical allegory'.[88] Psalmanazar impressed, shocked and alienated with his reports of religious sacrifices and ceremonies, such as the ritual of trampling on a crucifix.[89] The *Description* fit perfectly the contemporary logic of cultural reading. As was characteristic of accounts of other cultures, the text emphasises 'differences of the unknown' by describing it as monstrous and grotesque, a great deal of which would have 'echoed Christian perceptions of paganism'.[90] Psalmanazar presented himself as a simple savage, who had rejected Catholicism and resisted the temptations of the Jesuits. Furthermore, as

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[85] Frank Lestringant has argued that the *Description* was partially a 'belated echo' of the controversy of transubstantiation. Lestringant, 'Travels in Eucharistia', pp. 109-10. Stewart has also pointed out the importance of religion. Susan Stewart, 'Antipodal Expectations. Notes on the Formosan "Ethnography" of George Psalmanazar', in George W. Stocking (ed.), *Romantic Motives. Essays on anthropological sensibility* (Madison, Wisc., 1989), pp. 44-73, at p. 55.
[86] According to Psalmanazar, the Jesuits tried to convince him with arguments, bribes, and threatened him with inquisition, but did not succeed. Psalmanazar, *Description*, pp. 8-25.
[87] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 217. The claim that he had written the book within two months is probably false. At the meeting of the Royal Society on 11 August 1703, he had already announced to publish an account of the island. ARS, JBC/10, 'Journal Book, 1702-14', p. 46.
[88] Lestringant, 'Travels in Eucharistia', p. 112.
[89] The motif occurs again by Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, at the end of Gulliver's third voyage. It may derive from *Description* (1705), p. 170. Psalmanazar, *Description*, pp. 167-77; Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Part III, ch. 11, pp. 279-81. See Stewart, 'Antipodal Expectations', pp. 60-1; Elizabeth R. Napier, 'Swift's "Trampling upon the Crucifix". A parallel', *Notes and Queries*, 26 (1979), pp. 544-48; idem, 'Swift, Kaempfner, and Psalmanaazaar. Further remarks on "Trampling upon the Crucifix"', *Notes and Queries*, 28 (1981), p. 226.
[90] Stewart, *Antipodal Expectations*, p. 60.

a savage he was thought to be unspoilt by civilisation. It is plausible that Compton recognised in him a useful tool for further missionary conquests. Later, he sent Psalmanazar to Oxford to study, or as some state, to teach future missionaries. While there, Psalmanazar pretended to be an industrious scholar working all night, even claiming to suffer from gout as a result of his hard work.[91]

From the beginning there was scepticism about his claims, but Psalmanazar cunningly managed to turn some of the accusations into advantages. Susan Stewart rightly points out that Psalmanazar's literary imposture – his description of otherness – was 'typical of a period in which the claims of writing – the claims of authorship, originality, genius, and documentation – were in tremendous flux'.[92] Psalmanazar, to a certain extent and for a certain period, succeeded in maintaining his claims of authorship and originality. This concept also applies to a scientific community, whose members' status was legitimized to some extent through a patronage network. That was partially the door through which Psalmanazar gained access to the Royal Society. If only for a short period, he achieved the status of a scholar by presenting a written ethnographical work and challenging scientists in debates. In the beginning, and despite suspicions, Psalmanazar's position was also eased through the underlying principle of a scientific community: confidence in the integrity of one's colleagues.[93] The editor of, or a writer in the *Monthly Review* lamented years later that even in 'this ... enlighten'd age ... among a sensible and discerning people', Psalmanazar had been able to perpetrate his fraud, 'imposing even on the learned themselves: so that it may be truly said, not only the multitude were duped, but the Knowing ones were taken in'.[94] Psalmanazar's oral and written accounts of a remote island, its inhabitants and their religion, customs and habits,

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[91] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 224-25. The claim that Psalmanazar taught at Oxford is not proven, and registers of Christ Church show no sign of his residence there. Foley, *Formosan Impostor*, pp. 35-7.
[92] Stewart, 'Antipodal Expectations', pp. 44-73.
[93] See also Rodney Needham, *Exemplars* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 75.
[94] *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), p. 365.

and above all a detailed description of its language provided him access to a community that was curious about the sophistication of social and political systems of far-away countries. It was the combination of interest in, but at the same time a relative lack of knowledge about Formosa which facilitated the imposture. The unexpected appearance of a young stranger from a distant land, bringing with him vast knowledge about a barely known region, made him an attraction.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a mythical image of China had been created. However, people were not only interested in stories about curiosities of the far-away region. With the arrival of tea, Oriental textiles and porcelain there also existed a sincere material interest; a European vision of Chinese material culture was being developed.[95] Many thinkers of the Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment period were interested in eastern philosophy, in the conduct of the state, its education, and in all kinds of ways sought to hold it up as a mirror in which to examine the philosophical and institutional inadequacies of Europe, as a model with which to instigate moral and political reform, and as a tool with which to strip Christianity of its pretensions to uniqueness.[96] But very few had actually been to the East. Psalmanazar surprised contemporaries not only with his new knowledge but by his appearance. Public curiosity about the unknown habits and customs of remote nations facilitated belief in his imposture. He was young, intelligent, and eloquent; all this evoked the image of a genius. The *London Gazette* of 17-20 April 1704 accredited his account by announcing the publication of the *Description*. Moreover, on a different level, Psalmanazar's identity as a

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[95] William W. Appleton, *A Cycle of Cathay. The Chinese vogue in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (New York, 1951), ch. 6; John J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment. The encounter between Asian and western thought* (London, 1997), esp. pp. 37-53; Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie. The vision of Cathay* (London, 1961), pp. 50-3; Maxine Berg, 'In Pursuit of Luxury. Global History and British consumer goods in the eighteenth century', *P&P*, 182 (2004), pp. 85-142. See also Thomas Jeffery, *Collection of Dresses of Different Nations, Ancient and Modern*, 4 Vols. (London, 1757-72).

[96] Thinkers include Montaigne, Malebranche, Bayle, Wolff, Leibniz, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvetius, Quesnay, and Adam Smith. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, p. 42.

'noble savage' matched the contemporary yearning to believe in an ideal, utopian society, which was linked to the quest for knowledge.[97]

As an outsider, Psalmanazar triggered a scientific debate about religious, historical, geographical and linguistic matters, which outweighed the fact that he did not look like a native Formosan. However, to the modern reader it is striking that he was not unmasked because of his 'physiognomy'. At that time, people were becoming increasingly interested in the way people from other regions looked, in bodily features such as stature, colour of skin, eyes or hair. Contemporaries were also aware of the role climate and environment played 'in creating difference'.[98] The Royal Society questioned him about his fair skin, whereupon Psalmanazar replied that Formosan nobles remained 'in cool shades' or 'apartments under ground, and scarce ever feel the least degree of the reigning heat'.[99] But despite scepticism about the colour of his hair, eyes, and skin,[100] his physical appearance seems not to have been of primary importance. Contemporary reference books on other peoples did not mention appearance; the factors that mattered were religion, behaviour, costume, diet, and morality.[101] Psalmanazar made clever use of these aspects. His behaviour, often a staged performance of purportedly native habits, gestures and manners thus left a greater impression. Not much is known about his dress, which he described as plain; one author of the *Monthly Review* maintained (though referring to the impostor's later years) that he had 'a venerable long beard, and a singular garb; besides which he had other peculiarities about him, all calculated to keep up the appearance of a most mysterious secrecy', which prompted the suggestion that he was the

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[97] Frank Lestringant notes the relationship with the utopian genre throughout the history of the French Reformed, and considers Psalmanazar's descriptions a 'satirical counter-utopia'. Lestringant, 'Huguenots en Utopie', p. 304.
[98] George S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, 'Introduction. Approaching enlightenment exoticism', in idem (eds), *Exoticism*, pp. 1-22, at p. 10.
[99] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 197.
[100] [Psalmanazar?], *Enquiry into the Objections*, pp. 48-53.
[101] For example, the *Atlas Japannensis*, the *Cosmographie*, and the *Great Historical Dictionary*. Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 52.

'famous *wandering Jew*'.[102] Earlier, while still in the army, he had imitated Formosan prayers and chanting, and further to convince his audience, he introduced the habit of eating raw meat, roots and herbs.[103]

When Psalmanazar returned from Oxford in 1705, his major patron, Innes, had decamped from the capital. Sloane's correspondence with Fontaney gives the impression that he was more interested in Oriental objects than the Formosan, and Griffith's letters had contradicted his account of Formosa. Psalmanazar's career as the pretended Formosan now steadily declined. In 1706, D'Amalvi, the Walloon minister, condemned Psalmanazar as a fraud.[104] In a review of *Recueil des Voyages*, a collection of voyages relating to the Dutch East Indian Company, the editors asserted that they had 'a Relation of the Isle of Formosa which is very considerable, and may serve to confront a fabulous Relation which has lately been publish'd of that Island'.[105] Psalmanazar went on writing defences, but his credit had almost disappeared by 1717.[106] He depended on the continuing support of credulous benefactors, and, according to his *Memoirs*, the maintenance of his imposture eventually became a burden. Around 1728 he decided to change his life, stimulated by pious works such as William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1729).[107] He went on (hack) writing, in particular for Samuel Palmer's *The General History of Printing* (London, 1732) and the *Universal History*, to

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[102] *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), pp. 369-70; Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, ch. 4, esp. p. 115. See also the discussion in Swiderski, *False Formosan*, p. 251. Keevak's argument that Psalmanazar took on the identity of a Jew is probably exaggerated.

[103] This possibly inspired Jonathan Swift and found its way into *A Modest Proposal* (1729). He mentions 'the famous Salmanaazor' and the idea of selling the meat of criminals as a 'Prime dainty', which he most likely got from Psalmanazar's 1705 edition of the *Description*. Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 172-73, 194, 263; Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal, for Preventing the Children of Poor Ireland, from Being a Burden on Their Parents or Country, and for Making them beneficial to the Publick* (Dublin, 1729). Psalmanazar, *Description* (1705), p. 112. See also Day, 'Psalmanazar's "Formosa"', p. 198.

[104] D'Amalvi, *Eclaircissemens nécessaires*.

[105] *History of the Works of the Learned. Or, An Impartial Account of Books Lately Printed in all Parts of Europe, Vol. VIII* (London, September 1706), p. 516, cited in Foley, *Formosan Impostor*, p. 24.

[106] [Psalmanazar], *Enquiry into the Objections*. See, for example, the mock advertisement in *The Spectator* on 16 March 1711.

[107] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 258. The *ESTC* lists 1729 as the year of publication.

which he contributed several parts.[108] His first written apology for his imposture appeared in his contribution on Formosa in Emanuel Bowen's *A Complete System of Geography* (1747), where he also blames those who had made use of his 'youthful Vanity' and instigated him to the fraud.[109] The time had now come to make a public apology and to tell the world that the greatest part of the *Description* was 'fabulous', since the persons responsible had died. He also announced a full confession to be published after his death, 'when there will be less Reason to suspect him of having disguised or palliated the Truth'.[110] In 1752 he made his will. Apparently, Psalmanazar completely repented his fraud, which may have helped him to retain some respect and reputation. In his later years, until his death on 3 May 1763, he enjoyed the friendship of Samuel Johnson.[111] Johnson, who detested the literary forgeries of Chatterton, Percy and Macpherson, fully believed in the reformed Psalmanazar and his probity; as Keevak suggests, he was impressed by Psalmanazar's disciplined way of life and 'perceived in him a certain kind of *regularity* that perfectly characterizes the way that Psalmanazar had proceeded all along'.[112]

What is striking in this case, compared to other early modern impostures, is the extent to which language was perceived and used to shape identity.[113] Apart from Psalmanazar's linguistic skills, which enabled him to invent a linguistic system that

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[108] Psalmanazar devotes the final part of his *Memoirs* mainly to his writings. *Memoirs*, pp. 260-364.

[109] It remarks that we would have known much more '[i]f the Account we had formerly given us of it [Formosa] by a pretended Native of it, called *Psalmanaazaar*, had had any Truth in it. But that Author who is still in *England*, hath long since ingenuously owned the contrary, tho' not in so publick a manner, as he might perhaps have done.' *A Complete System of Geography. Being a Description of All Countries, Islands, Cities, Chief Towns, Harbours, Lakes, and Rivers, Mountains, Mines, & of the Known World*, 2 Vols. (London, 1747), Vol. II, p. 251.

[110] *Complete System of Geography*, Vol. II, p. 251

[111] See also James L. Clifford, *Young Samuel Johnson* (London, 1955), pp. 227-30; Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Dr. Johnson by Mrs Thrale. The 'Anecdotes' of Mrs Piozzi in their Original Form*, ed. Richard Ingram (London, 1984), p. 117.

[112] Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 102. For Psalmanazar's way of life, see Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 199-200.

[113] Keevak has considered language 'the center and indeed the origin of the forgery'. Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 96.

matched contemporary expectations,[114] he recognised the value of language as a means of self-definition and self-fashioning. Moreover, this raises questions about the general awareness of linguistic differences in early modern England. We rarely read in sources that an impostor was unmasked because of an outlandish accent.[115] Cornelius Evans, the pretended Prince of Wales, was said to speak English imperfectly, and we have encountered a few people who allegedly imitated gypsy language. Spoken language was a central issue in Psalmanazar's case; it was one of Fontaney's main arguments that the false Formosan spoke 'the languages of Europe without any Asiatic accent'. Mead judged him to be of 'either German or Dutch extract', and from the *Monthly Review* we learn that he spoke French 'with a purity beyond what is usual when attained only by grammar, or travel, but with a dash of the Gascoine dialect'.[116]

Despite the fact that ethnic impostures still occur today, Psalmanazar's hoax would not have succeeded later, when the English had established themselves in the East, and more cultural exchange was going on. Eventually it was the acquisition of information about Formosa that helped to unmask his imposture. Moreover, by the end of the eighteenth century generalised descriptions of 'racial' appearance and character had become a feature of travel literature and descriptions. Travel to far away regions had not only found its way into literature, but had infiltrated the imaginations of ordinary men and women.[117] Though few yet criticised slavery, regarded as essential to the commercial

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[114] It has been suggested that Psalmanazar may have been acquainted with the work of ideal language planners such as John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester and a founder of the Royal Society, who wrote *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (1668), or that he got the ideas from Veira's or Foigny's imaginary voyages. See James R. Knowlson, 'George Psalmanaazaar. The fake Formosan', *History Today*, 15 (1965), pp. 871-76, at p. 876; Needham, *Exemplars*, pp. 104-5.

[115] As Davis has noted, language had also not been an issue at the trial of Arnauld du Tilh. Davis, 'Lame', p. 578.

[116] *Mémoires pour l'Histoire* (1705), pp. 587-97, at p. 598, and Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 198, both cited in Keevak, *Pretended Formosan*, p. 97; *Monthly Review*, 31 (1764), p. 370.

[117] For example, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) or Smollet's *Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771). See Gregory Claeys (ed.), *Utopias of the British Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1994); idem (ed.), *Restoration and Augustan Utopias* (Syracus, N.Y., 2000); Charles Kerby-Miller, *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Discoveries of*

economy, a romanticised account of an African prince betrayed into American slavery had provided the central theme of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko, or the History of the Royal Slave* (1688), an early attack on colonial slavery and degradation and an assertion of human dignity. Yet racial differentiation became problematised. As Geoffrey Symcox has pointed out, the 'cult of the Noble Savage, with all its political overtones, was thus fully formed by the beginning of the eighteenth century'.[118] In the same year that Psalmanazar appeared in London, a black African named Gannibal, claiming to be an Abyssinian prince, had been sold in Constantinople; later, under the patronage of the Russian Tsar, Gannibal, also known as the 'Negro of Peter the Great', became the first black intellectual in Europe.[119] Psalmanazar was not the only one to play with these ideas and possibilities. We have briefly mentioned the 'fausse Princess de la Chine' who appeared in Paris in the mid-1690s.[120] In the year Psalmanazar's *Memoirs* were published, 1764, the *Gentleman's Magazine* tells of 'a famous molatto man' who called himself king Kadgo and was committed to Newgate. He had hired several 'livery servants', took 'genteel lodgings' and obtained 'rich clothes from taylors'. When arrested, he had 'two footmen to attend him, [and ...] a crown upon his head composed of rich gold lace', which he had stolen from a tailor.[121] In the same year, a person pretending to be the Prince of Angola appeared in Paris, and was committed to prison as an impostor. He was probably a black African of low birth, and there is no direct evidence to support his claim. When examined, he turned out to have been 'valet to an Irish merchant, and to have contracted debts to the amount

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Martinus Scriblerus (Oxford, 1988); Brian Dolan, *Exploring European Frontiers. British travellers in the age of the Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2000).

[118] Geoffrey Symcox, 'The Wild Man's Return. The enclosed vision of Rousseau's *Discourses*', in Maximilian E. Novak and Edward Dudley (eds), *The Wild Man Within. An image in western thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism* (Pittsburg, 1972), pp. 223-47, at p. 230. See also Urs Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict. Encounters between European and non-European cultures, 1492-1800* (Oxford, 1989); Karl-Heinz Kohl, *Entzauberter Blick. Das Bild vom Guten Wilden und die Erfahrung der Zivilisation* (Berlin, 1981); Ernest H. P. Baudet, *Paradise on Earth. Some thoughts on European images of non-European man* (New Haven, 1965); Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1934).

[119] See Hugh Barnes, *Gannibal. The moor of Petersburg* (London, 2005), a historical novel based on fact. There are only Russian academic accounts. See, for example, Anastasia M. Bessonova, *Praded Pushkin Gannibal i ego potamki* (St Petersburg, 2003).

[120] *Mémoires pour l'Histoire* (1705), p. 588.

[121] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (1764), p. 543.

of 100,000 livres to support his dignity'.[122] Despite the fact that such impostures were rare, it is perhaps no coincidence that their number appears to have increased in an age when a growing literary market was enabling a wider readership to devour curious reports from foreign regions. This stimulated the desire for adventure as well as for knowledge of the 'Other' and unknown. It furthered awareness and interest in new ethnicities, their habits and manners. It has become clear that exotic appearance could also be used to gain power. When Baron Theodore Neuhoff first appeared in Corsica in 1736, claiming to be the rightful king, he used exoticism to lend his assertion more weight and dignity. It was reported that he 'wore a scarlet Oriental caftan, down to his heels, and was shod in bright yellow Moorish slippers'.[123]

It is difficult to know how all these people sought to fulfil their wishes through their impostures. In the case of some individuals, fantasy probably merged with real life, but for others, as in some other categories, a thirst for fame and celebrity may have been the decisive factors. Psalmanazar may have begun his fraud just to get by financially. Later it is clear that he was wholly dependent on patrons and could not expect to win riches through his claims, but he could still achieve public interest, attention, respect, celebrity and fame. Characteristic of some of the episodes considered in this chapter is the invention of imaginary, radically distant and unfamiliar contexts for impostures, and the fact that for both the impostor and his dupes the appeal of the exotic and marvellous outbalanced the threat of the 'Other'. The cultural climate of the time, which made many people eager for stories from exotic regions and pre-disposed to believe them, facilitated these impostures. Lack of knowledge was certainly one reason for the temporary success

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[122] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (1764), p. 394. The case was also reported in Russia, where it was told that the man had enormous debts and had deceived several people in Copenhagen and Hamburg. In 1780, one Joseph Abaïssi, apparently a false prince of Palestine, was expelled from Russia. Alexandre Stroev, *Les aventuriers des Lumières* (Paris, 1997), p. 230.
[123] Aylmer Vallance, *The Summer King. Variations by an adventurer on eighteenth-century air* (London, 1956), p. 2. See also *The History of Theodore I., King of Corsica* (London, 1743); *Mémoires de Rostini*, ed. Pierre and Louis Lucciana (Bastia, 1882). [124] See Donald B. Smith, *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance. The glorious impostor* (Red Deer, Alta, 1999).

of ethnic impostures, but it cannot serve as a full explanation. For even in modern times, when people have considered themselves as living in an enlightened age, similar episodes have continued, right up to the twentieth century; famous examples include Princess Caraboo, Chief Buffalo Long Lacre,[124] the pretended Indian, Henri Louis Grin alias Louis de Rougemont (1847-1923),[125] and Binjamin Wilkomirski, the false Holocaust survivor.[126]

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[125] Rougemont invented a whole Robinson-like life, but was finally exposed as a Swiss butler and entrepreneur. See *The Adventures of Louis de Rougemont. As Told by Himself* (London, 1899). The narrative of his alleged adventures was serialised in the *Wild World Magazine* in the 1890s. *Grien on Rougemont; Or, The Story of a Modern Robinson Crusoe. As told in the Pages of the 'Daily Chronicle'* (London, 1898); Geoffrey Maslen, *The Most Amazing Story a Man Ever Lived to Tell* (London, 1977); Frank Clune, *The Greatest Liar on Earth* (Melbourne, 1945).
[126] See Daniel Ganzfried, *...alias Wilkomirski. Die Holocaust Travestie. Enthüllung und Dokumentation eines literarischen Skandals* (Berlin, 2002); Blake Eskin, *A Life in Pieces. The making of Binjamin Wilkomirski* (London, 2001); Stefan Mächler, *The Wilkomirski Affair. A study in biographical truth* (New York, 2000).

CHAPTER 6

GENTLEMAN IMPOSTORS

This chapter sets out to explore what we may call gentleman impostors. It is divided into

two sections. The first relates to the demographic fact that family lines were often

interrupted and died out through a lack of male heirs, which, especially with wealthy

families, offered good opportunities for claimants to step in. The second section adopts a

slightly different approach, highlighting the aspect of individuals attempting to realise a

noble life in order to make up for their imaginary or lost world. It will first briefly touch

upon the case of Elizabeth Thornborough, a harmless woman, who attracted the attention

of magistrates by claiming that she belonged to a prestigious aristocratic world. It will

then focus on the story of William Morrell, an opportunist, who posed as a remarkable

personage in order to gain fortune and fame. The case also illustrates the relationship

between real incidents and the transformation of a real person and his story into a largely

fictitious biography that was responding to contemporary issues under debate; it can be

placed within the context of shifts in the concept of gentility over this period, which

created uncertainties as to what gentility meant, and who could be considered to qualify.

The chapter will then explore the case of William Stroud, who also used imposture to

achieve a luxurious life-style, investigating the impostor phenomenon within the socio-

economic context of the mid-eighteenth century.

Earlier we encountered characters such as Arthur Dudley, who claimed to be the

offspring of Elizabeth and Leicester. Nearly a century later the Duke of Monmouth,

Charles II's illegitimate son, saw himself as the legitimate heir to the crown. These

episodes occurred within the context of political insecurity. Rather different are cases

which derived from the ruptures of family lines, especially of wealthy and propertied gentry families. It is to this issue that we will now turn.

1. JAMES PERCY AND HENRY DACRE OF UNTHANK

Conservative moralists had long been engaged in defending the nobility, basing their arguments on a very traditional ideal. In terms of contemporary demographic and socio-economic realities, however, their desire to defend a supposedly ancient tradition of gentility was often based on mere illusion. '[O]n average', states J.A. Sharpe, 'a peerage or gentry family died out in the direct male line every three generations', so that newcomers had to be recruited, either by inheritance through distant male relatives or females and the absorption of their husbands.[1] Like the rest of society, the nobility was not protected from the demographic crisis in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which threatened the primogenitural principle and had a major effect on the transfer of property.[2]

One exemplary case, involving prolonged disputations, was centred on James Percy in the last third of the seventeenth century. Lasting nearly twenty years, it illustrates the situation in which a person might lay claim to title and property after the death of the last male heir.[3] When Jocelyn Percy, the eleventh Earl of Northumberland, died in Turin on 21 May 1670, he left behind, apart from his pregnant wife, only a three-year old daughter, Elizabeth, who succeeded to the honours and estates of the house of

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[1] J.A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England. A social history 1550-1760* (London, 1987), p. 153; Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), p. 397.

[2] Stone and Fawtier Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 100-3.

[3] The case is best documented in George L. Craik, *The Romance of the Peerage or Curiosities of Family History*, 4 Vols. (London, 1849), Vol. III, pp. 286-321; Gerald Brenan, *A History of the House of Percy from the Earliest Times Down to Present Century*, ed. William A. Lindsay, 2 Vols. (London, 1902), Vol. II, pp. 304-72. See also *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Petitioner* [London, 1690?] which contains several leaves probably published at intervals; Victor Stator, 'Percy, James (1619-c.1690)', *DNB*.

Percy and later became Duchess of Somerset, but no male heir.[4] In February 1672, after

the Earl's widow had given birth to a dead child, James Percy presented a petition to the

House of Lords proclaiming himself the nearest male representative of the House, and

thus the rightful heir to the earldom. James Percy was apparently a trunk-maker from

Dublin, about fifty years of age, married or a widower, and with one daughter and three

sons.[5] Given the fact that family documentation was incomplete – in part due to the

interruption of the herald's office during the Civil War – it was a theoretically possible

claim, though highly controversial and impossible to prove, and the number of years it

occupied the courts manifests the many uncertainties. In February 1673, a counsel on

behalf of Elizabeth, Countess Dowager of Northumberland, accused James Percy of

being an impostor, whereupon the House of Lords dismissed Percy's petition claiming

the peerage.[6] A year later, Percy sued John Clarke in the King's Bench for having called

him an impostor. The judge, Sir Matthew Hale, declared – sarcastically – to the court that

the claimant had proved himself a true Percy, but 'had taken his descent a little too low'

and should appear again better prepared, with a newly invented scheme of descent to

prove his noble blood.[7] In 1676 Percy brought a third action against John Blackeston, the

agent of the Countess Dowager of Northumberland, whom he charged, as he had Clarke,

with scandal and defamation. Meanwhile he had adopted a new scheme of descent. When

the case was tried in 1677, Percy appeared with fourteen counsel and no fewer than sixty-

five witnesses, allegedly from all over the country. Again the trial was put off until 1679,

when the result was once more unsuccessful, apparently on technical grounds. Percy

maintained his claim and continued to trouble Parliament with petitions. By 1689

Parliament had become impatient and annoyed. On 24 May it resolved '[t]hat there

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[4] Charles Seymour, the sixth Duke of Somerset, became the third husband of Lady Elizabeth.
Their marriage was celebrated on 30 May 1682 at Montague House. Robert O. Bucholz,
'Seymour, Charles, sixth duke of Somerset (1662-1748)', *DNB*. See also Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p.
191.
[5] *Narrative of the Proceedings*; Craik, *Romance*, p. 288; Edward de Barrington, *The Annals of the
House of Percy. From the Conquest to the opening of the nineteenth century*, 2 Vols. (London,
1887), Vol. II, p. 485; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p. 140.
[6] *LJ*, Vol. XII, p. 578.
[7] *CSPD, 1677*, p. 68.

should be no Countenance given' to another petition, but the 11 June was appointed for a

judgment 'against the said *James Percy*, concerning the imposture'.[8] On that day the

House concluded 'that the Pretentions of the said *James Percy* to the earldom of

Northumberland are groundless, false and scandalous', and a final verdict was delivered

> that the said *James Percy* shall be brought before the Four Courts of
>
> *Westminster Hall*, wearing a Paper upon his Breast, in which these
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> Words shall be written, The false and impudent Pretender to the Earldom
>
> of Northumberland.[9]

It is not clear what happened to him immediately after the punishment; according to

Luttrell, Percy was discharged after the public humiliation. The sentence destroyed

Percy's credit, and if we are to believe Anthony Wood, he spent his last days in the

King's-Bench prison and died on 27 September 1693.[10]

James Percy was by no means wholly disreputable. It seems that he was a literate

tradesman with a stable income that was apparently enough to support him during most

of these years. He had a family, three sons who were all merchants, and one of whom

later became Lord Mayor of Dublin.[11] It would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that

he deliberately invented his 'family romance' and was thus an impostor in the narrow

sense of the word. His claim, stretching over a period of nearly twenty years, was not an

unreasonable and baseless fabrication. It was founded on the traditional and strict

understanding of inheritance through the male line. According to George Craik, it can be

even assumed that the 'Irish Percies were regarded as connexions of the noble English

house'.[12] That Percy spent a substantial amount of money and time to pursue his

endeavour is evidence that he sincerely believed in his claim. His main goal was to prove

his place in the family tree of the Percies. Yet he did not have access to vital information

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[8] *LJ*, Vol. XIV, p. 224.

[9] *LJ*, Vol. XIV, p. 240; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p. 546.

[10] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p. 546; Wood, *Life*, Vol. III, p. 431.

[11] Barrington, *Annals*, p. 485; Craik, *Romance*, p. 320.

[12] Craik, *Romance*, p. 298; *The Case of James Percy, Claymant to the Earldom of Northumberland*, reprinted in Egerton Brydges, *Restituta: Or, Titles, Extracts, and Characters of Old Books in English Literature Revived*, 4 Vols. (London, 1815), Vol. III, pp. 519-28, at p. 527.

– if this existed – so he was never able to assemble enough evidence to create a convincing family history. Parliament therefore labelled him a pretender.[13] It is striking that it took two decades to reach this decision and that his claim was not dismissed from the beginning. His lack of social capital was undoubtedly a disadvantage in the quarrel against such powerful nobles as the Duke of Somerset, so that in the end his lawsuits were often encumbered by what were considered to be technical obstacles. While determined to provide all necessary evidence to establish his kinship, he was convinced that ultimately providence would reveal the truth. He explained that 'God did foresee the troubles', and sought to strengthen his claim with the assertion that he was born with a '*Mold* like a *half-Moon* upon [his] Body'. The *Calendar of State Paper* reads: 'It is true he was born with a mole like a half moon, therefore no brand but a crescent, which belongs to the Percy's arms'.[14] In the 1580s, Anne Burnell, who declared herself the daughter of Philip II and Queen Mary, had claimed she 'had on her bodye the marks of the Armes of England' that clearly proved her royal origins. At the time Burnell was taken very seriously and her body was examined. It is, however, not clear who believed Percy's claim, and to what extent it bothered the House.[15]

We find a more aggressive, indeed ruthless assertion of aristocratic lineage in the case of one Henry Dacre of Unthank. After the death of James Dacre in 1716, the last male descendant of the first Sir Thomas Dacre (1606-1674), Henry claimed to be a descendant of William, Sir Thomas's younger son, and proceeded to misappropriate the Lanercost estate in Cumberland. According to Henry's own later account, he had been encouraged by one Ann Dacre, a Newcastle widow, and a Mr. Colville, a wealthy man also from Newcastle. The terror he created among the estate tenants, and the difficulty in disproving his claims, enabled Henry, his brother and their mother to hold on to their new possessions for several years. In a remote part of the country, such as Cumberland,

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[13] One notes that 'impostor' and 'pretender' were used interchangeably. However, 'pretender', that is, one who puts forth baseless pretensions, is here probably more accurate as Percy did not assume a new name.
[14] *Narrative of the Proceedings*, p. 16; *CSPD, 1677*, p. 68.
[15] *CSPD, 1677*, p. 68.

physical force counted for more than legal proof. They evicted any who did not come to terms with their demands, sued them for debt, or impounded their cattle, until, with the help of the Earl of Carlisle, the title was investigated and proved false. 'Henry Dacre' was shown to be in fact a member of an Unthank family. Eventually, in 1724, Henry formally admitted his imposture, and he and his family were evicted from the estate, whereupon the Earl of Carlisle established himself as the crown's lessee at Lanercost.[16]

2. ELIZABETH THORNBOROUGH, WILLIAM MORRELL AND WILLIAM STROUD

In an earlier chapter we encountered the notorious Mary Carleton, who claimed to be of German noble background and inveigled a young lawyer's clerk into marriage. An equally extraordinary case had surfaced in 1652, when one Elizabeth Thornborough was examined in Shrewsbury and presented the magistrates with an astonishing tale of her glamorous (and largely imaginary) world. She declared herself to be the wife of Sir Benjamin Thornborough, who, as she said, was the grandson and heir of John Thornborough, Bishop of Worcester. She came up with a number of extravagant claims: that her husband was physician to Queen Christina of Sweden, who had given him a title and rich jewels for curing her; that she had been to Sweden twice; that she possessed medical and occult skills and used to earn £500 a day when practising medicine in London; that she was employed by the government to consult with the astrologer William Lilly to find out what would happen when Charles II invaded in 1651 (and that she, not Lilly, had been proved correct in her predictions); that she possessed several chambers in London such as at Somerset House, Durham House, and on the Bankside; and that she was an intimate friend of a Duchess and several other aristocrats. Elizabeth herself produced jewels which according to her were worth £7000, yet she had come to

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[16] Henry Summerson and Stuart Harrison, *Lanercost Priory, Cumbria* (Kendal, 2000), pp. 56-7; Henry Summerson, 'Dacre family (*per.* 1542-1716)', *DNB*.

Shrewsbury in the carrier's wagon, with only five pounds left in her pockets, and was living off her old father, Thomas Newall.[17] Her true story is obscure. John Thornborough, who became Bishop of Worcester in 1617, had befriended Simon Forman and published an astrological work *Lithotheorikos* in 1621. His second son was Sir Benjamin, who had died before him.[18] Her references to the enigmatic Queen, Christina of Sweden, who at this time was contemplating abdication and was turning away from Protestantism, also remain mysterious.[19] That Sir Benjamin had been one of many foreigners who had flocked to the Swedish court and had been ennobled appears unlikely as he had probably died by 1641, when Christina was still a minor and not yet playing much part in politics. What lay behind Elizabeth's claims? There is no direct evidence that she had invented her story for financial purposes. The most striking feature is the aristocratic world she invented for herself. Whereas other impostors clearly invented stories to obtain (rich) partners, she may have been a fantasist who simply enjoyed escaping into an alternative world where she could imagine herself wealthy, famous and important, and might persuade naïve people to believe her claims.

Elements of fantasy are involved in almost any case of imposture, where the agent is attempting to escape the confines of conventional life. However, the desire to live a glittering life, as the following impostures illustrate, might have driven some individuals to use more opportunistic schemes. Although a claim to inheritance based on a specific lineage was not important in the following cases, inheritance, property and wealth remain central themes. Moreover, the contemporary representations of the impostures emphasise another significant aspect: both claims were based on manners and

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[17] Shropshire Archives, SA/3365/2244, ff. 78, 79.

[18] See Brett Usher, 'Thornborough, John (1551?-1641)', *DNB*. In 1658, Lilly received 'a gold chain and medal, worth about fifty pounds' for his astrological services from the Swedish King. He does not mention Elizabeth Thornborough. William Lilly, *William Lilly's History of his Life and Times, From the year 1602 to 1684. Written by himself* (London, 1715), p. 74. See also Folke Dahl, *King Charles Gustavus of Sweden and the English Astrologers William Lilly & John Gadbury* (Uppsala, 1937). On Forman and Thornborough, see Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London. Simon Forman, astrologer, alchemist, and physician* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 25, 31.

[19] Veronica Buckley, *Christina Queen of Sweden* (London, 2004), pp. 210, 104-5.

behaviour, or life-style in general. The impostures of William Morrell deserve extensive attention, and will be explored from several angles.[20] The episode caused a remarkable sensation in the 1690s, and found its way into several ballads and semi-fictitious biographies. In addition, it is one of the few cases involving more elaborate impersonations of real persons. The story may have been as follows. In December 1691, William Morrell, described as a man 'not over-well Clad' and between fifty and sixty years old, was lingering around the Arundel Buildings in the Strand. Being asked by Mr. Cullen, a baker, what he wanted, the gentleman replied he needed a lodging. The baker, won over by the man's appearance, courteously invited him into his house. Later in the conversation the stranger casually remarked that he was a well-off country gentleman, named Humphrey Wickham of Swalcliffe near Oxford, a person of worth and honour. He explained that he was in town to 'avoid the payment of 500*l*. which he stood engaged for by bond, in behalf of a Person that was run away, and had left him to pay that Money'. The baker and his wife, who happened to come from Oxfordshire herself, found it flattering that they had the opportunity to accommodate such a person in their house.[21] His 'affability and good Language' impressed the Cullens, and thus imposed upon, they supplied all his wants, and treated him with great respect. However, on 28 December the gentleman fell ill, and drew up his will, and he passed away on 3 January.[22] It was a grandiose will in which he bequeathed most of his estate and holdings to his kinsman William Wickham, great sums to the baker, the baker's son and sister, and minor possessions to various others. The will was signed, sealed, published and declared in the presence of witnesses.[23] Preparations were made for a solemn and sumptuous funeral, and a coffin worth ten pounds was provided by the baker. A letter was then sent to the

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[20] The story of William Morrell has been outlined in Tobias Hug, 'An Early Modern Impostor', *The Center & Clark Newsletter*, 42 (2003), pp. 5-6.

[21] *Diego Redivivus: Or the Last Will and Testament of the Pretended Humphrey Wickham, Esq. Alias William Morrell, alias Bowyer, &c. With a Full Relation of his Notorious Cheats and Impostures: Who dyed at Mr. Cullins House, the Third of this Instant January, in the Parish of St. Clement Danes, &c.* (London, 1692), p. 1. The author was possibly the publisher Abel Roper.

[22] *Diego Redivivus*, pp. 2, 4.

[23] The original of the will does not survive.

executor, William Wickham. But in response, a gentleman from Oxford appeared and informed the baker that Mr. Wickham's stated Christian name was incorrect. As a result, the corpse was examined and declared to be that of a man who had previously been convicted for having six wives and imprisoned in Newgate. William Morrell, the real name of the pretended squire, was buried the next day, on 13 January 1692, in a coffin worth only four shillings, and with only a watchman in attendance.[24]

The episode caused a furore in London, and over the following weeks several publications appeared on the London literary market. On 12 January 1692, the bookseller Abel Roper entered the pamphlet *Diego redivivus* in the Stationers' Register.[25] Eleven days later, John Dunton asked in the *Athenian Mercury*, whether 'the late Impostor Mr. Wickham, alias Morris', realised he would die soon when he made the will and received the Sacrament, 'or whether God Almighty did not in Justice take him away for jesting with Death, altho Poverty or any other design might prompt him to such an unheard of Adventure'.[26] According to Spiro Peterson, four different pieces appeared between January and March 1692, probably in the following order: a broadside ballad entitled *The Pretended Country Squire*, the pamphlet *The Notorious Impostor* (Part I), 'William Morrell's Epitaph' in *The Gentleman's Journal*, and *The Second Part of the Notorious Impostor*.[27] In addition, two further ballads were published, possibly in the weeks

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[24] *Diego Redivivus*, pp. 5-10; [Elkanah Settle?], *The Notorious Impostor, Or the History of the Life of William Morrell, alias Bowyer, Sometime of Banbury, Chirurgeon. Who lately personated Humphrey Wickham of Swackly, in the County of Oxon, Esquire, at a Bakers House in the Strand, where he Died the third of Jan. 1691/2. Together with an Authentick Copy of his Will, taken out of the Prerogative Court, and the Manner of his funeral in St. Clements Church-yard.* (London, 1692), p. 36.

[25] *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of the Stationers, 1640-1708 A.D.*, ed. George E. Briscoe Eyre, 3 Vols. (London, 1914), Vol. III, p. 397.

[26] *The Athenian Mercury*, Vol. V, 16 (1691). The Athenian Mercury 'became a significant platform for discussing personal relationships, and other gender-related issues'. Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England. The cultural world of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 29.

[27] The *Term Catalogues* advertise *The Notorious Impostor* and *The Second Part of The Notorious Impostor* in the February 1692 edition. Edward Arber, *The Term Catalogues, 1668-1709 A.D. A Contemporary Bibliography of English Literature in the Reigns of Charles II, James II, William and Mary, and Anne*, 3 Vols. (London, 1903-05), Vol. II, p. 392; Spiro Peterson, 'William Morrell and Late Seventeenth-Century Fiction', *Philological Quarterly*, 42 (1963), pp. 200-6, at p. 201.

following the incident.[28] In 1694 Elkanah Settle published *The Compleat Memoirs*, a consolidated version of *The Notorious Impostor* Parts I and II.[29] Given all these publications, it is clear that the episode created a considerable stir in the capital.

Apart from these literary sources, few archival sources survive to document the impostor's existence. One reliable piece of information concerns his burial. From the register of the London parish of St. Clement Danes we learn that one William Morrell, alias Bowier, was 'buried poor' on 12 January 1692.[30] Apart from this entry, Morrell has left hardly any trace. Patchy records, the diversity of name spelling, and above all the uncertainty of Morrell's real name at birth have made searches in local archives unsuccessful. Bowyer, Bowier or Boyer and Morrell or Morris were common names, not only in Oxfordshire, and those bearing a similar name were numerous.[31] But since there is no other information concerning the presumed William Morrell/Bowyer, we cannot say whether he was related to contemporaries of the same (or similar) names in any way. Nothing reliable is known about the origins and whereabouts of the man who had claimed to be Humphrey Wickham of Swalcliffe before his impressive imposture in death.

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[28] *The Baker's Lamentation For the great Loss of The Pretended Worshipful Esquire Wickham* and *The Bakers Lamentation, Containing his Sorrowful Moan, for his late Misfortune which he met with in the loss of his Legacies, left by the pretended Squire Wickham.* Pepys *Ballads*, Vol. V, pp. 393-95.

[29] Peterson, 'William Morrell', p. 201.
The *ESTC* assigns both parts of *The Notorious Impostor* to Elkanah Settle. However, only *The Compleat Memoirs* provides clear evidence of Settle's authorship: The Dedication is signed 'E. Settle'. It therefore remains not absolutely certain whether Settle really wrote Parts I and II or whether he adapted someone else's work. Elkanah Settle, *The Compleat Memoirs of the Life of that Notorious Impostor Will. Morrell, alias Bowyer, alias Wickham, &c. Who died at Mr. Cullen's the Bakers in the Strand, Jan 3. 1691/2. With considerable additions never before published. Licensed, April 14. 1694* (London, 1694).

[30] Westminster Archives, m/f 4, Parish Register St. Clement Danes. In *The Notorious Impostor* Morrell was buried on 13 January. See *The Notorious Impostor*, p. 36.

[31] The *Baptism and Burial Register of Banbury* does not list Morrell or any similar names, and the name Bowyer does not occur before 1697. *Baptism and Burial Register of Banbury, Part 2 1653-1723*, ed. Jeremy S.W. Gibson (Banbury Historical Society, Vol. IX, Oxford, 1969). One William Morrell, vintner, was a mayor of Oxford in the late 1670s. See Wood, *Life*, Vol. II, p. 391. Another, who could also be Morrell's father, appears in the *Oxfordshire Protestation Returns for 1641-2* in the parish of Kidlington. *Oxfordshire Protestation Returns for 1641-2*, ed. Christopher A. Dobson (Oxfordshire Record Series, Vol. XXXVI, Oxford, 1955), p. 84. The hearth tax returns for the year 1665 mention the households of one widow Bowyer in the parish of All Saints, Oxford which was taxed at four hearths, and of one William Morrall in the parish of St. Martin's, Oxford taxed at nine hearths. *Hearth Tax Returns, Oxfordshire, 1665*, ed. Maureen M. B. Weinstock (Oxfordshire Record Series, Vol. XXI, Oxford, 1940), pp. 91, 94.

We must therefore rely on the evidence supplied in the published narratives. We may assume that Morrell came from a modest background. According to *The Compleat Memoirs* he started out as 'a Journeyman Shoemaker ... at Worcester', who, after some travels, returns home to Banbury from the sea 'with the true Privilege of a Traveller'.[32] It is possible that he joined the navy and obtained some medical knowledge on board a ship, yet surgeons were also common characters in 'books of knight errantry'.[33] He became a 'Practitioner [of surgery] of good Credit in *Banbury*, where his Industry honestly got him ... near two Hundred a Year, with which he maintained himself, his Wife and Family very handsomely, till about eighteen Years ago he began to be very lazy'. He neglected his profession, whereupon his trade decreased, and then, 'much addicted to hanker after the Conversation of the Gentry thereabouts', he 'screwed himself into the Society of the best Quality'.[34]

According to *The Compleat Memoirs*, from the time Morrell's business went downwards, he started masquerading and then claimed noble origin throughout the story. He first impersonated the brother of one Sir William Walters, a well-known local person, and probably tenant of a large farm called 'The Wyke' (Wick) within the parish of Headington near Oxford from 1685.[35] At a local market he claimed to be temporarily

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[32] Settle, *Compleat Memoirs*, p. 2.
'Privilege of a Traveller' – this phrase was used to hint that travellers often exaggerated or even invented their adventures, assuming that the readership was most likely not able to challenge them. Morrell's trickery and the allegation that he was a shoemaker may allude to the stereotype of the 'Wandering Jew', who was sometimes represented as one of the same profession. See Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes. A paradigm of Otherness in English popular culture, 1660-1830* (Baltimore, 1995), p. 60; *The Wandering Jew, or the Shoemaker of Jerusalem* ([London], 1700?). Another allusion is that Morrell was allegedly circumcised. Settle, *Compleat Memoirs*, pp. 70-1.
[33] Francis Kirkman describes the fascination of being a 'Chirurgion' which he had gained from reading romances. Francis Kirkman, *The Unlucky Citizen. Experimentally Described in the various misfortunes of an unlucky Londoner* (London, 1673), p. 12.
[34] Settle, *Compleat Memoirs*, p. 1; [idem?], *Notorious Impostor*, pp. 1-2.
[35] *VHC, History of Oxfordshire, Vol. X* (London, 1972), p. 159. The house of Baron Sir William Walter's of Saresden, father of the protagonist William Walter, was taxed at twenty-four and was one of the few houses taxed at over twenty hearths. Early in November 1689, Walter's house was 'burnt down, with all the furniture', the house was rebuilt in 1693. We lack any information that would prove a relation between the two incidents. Moreover, Thomas West, the false minister of Stratford mentioned in Chapter 3, who also went under the name of Walters, pretended to be a member of this reputed family. *Hearth Tax Returns, Oxfordshire, 1665*, pp. 160, 253. Wood, *Life,*

cash-poor, and was given several head of cattle on credit. He then feigned the 'true lover' who insisted on the unimportance of wealth and social status, and wooed a 'poor country lass'. Her father agreed to a marriage, only to see his daughter quickly cheated and abandoned. Morrell told his father-in-law that Sir William Walters might be displeased that his younger brother had married without his permission and beneath their station, and that he was in danger of being disinherited. The father-in-law agreed to lend him a cart and horses so that he could retrieve his possessions before his brother could take this step. But Morrell alias Walters then drove off with cart and horses, never to be seen or heard from again. Later, he allegedly impersonated 'a Rich *Norfolk* Gentleman ... of [£]500 a Year' to marry another woman, and later in *The Compleat Memoirs* 'a Doctor of Physick', possessing an 'infallible Remedy' for the gout. Finally, after numerous other pranks, cheats and seductions, he ended up in London, fell ill and made a will in the name of Humphrey Wickham, again a local Oxfordshire personage.[36] Despite the many fictitious elements, it is plausible that the narratives do in some way relate to actual events. From references to his exploits, profession and membership of the Crispin fraternity, we might presume that the nameless 'person charged by common Fame with having Seventeen Wives' in 1676, whom we encountered earlier, was indeed Morrell; it would then be true that he had roamed the country passing himself off as a gentleman and enticing maids and rich widows into marriage.[37] The Morrell narratives should therefore not be dismissed outright as fictitious. Another similar example, from the same area, is a broadside by Francis Shenton – meant 'to prevent the like' cheats – about one Robert Bullock who claimed to be a wealthy man and pretended he was setting up home in Oxford with his bride. He rented a house, had lots of new bedding and furniture supplied but then vanished without paying the bills, apparently taking away most of the material in

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Vol. III, pp. 246, 313; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p. 602; *Mercurius Politicus*, 296, 7-14 February 1655, pp. 5953-4.
[36] For the Wykeham family and the manor of Swalcliffe, see *VHC, Oxfordshire, Vol. V* (London, 1972), p. 230. [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, pp. 22; idem, *Compleat Memoirs*, p. 52.
[37] *OBP* (23 May 2005), May 1676, trial of 'person', (t16760510-1); Settle, *Compleat Memoirs*, pp. 76, 2.

a carrier's wagon. If it had not been for Anthony Wood, who identified all the victims on his copy, we would not know that the story referred to a fraud committed in November 1663, the same month the ballad was published.[38]

Morrell – like Robert Bullock – is therefore one of the many figures who were transformed by professional writers into semi-fictitious characters in popular literature, and as such, along with many similar figures, became part of the social imagination.[39] We should be conscious, of course, that such literary representations of the social world were seldom neutral. As in most writings about criminals, the character's individuality, compressed or expanded, might well be distorted. The pamphlets reflect both the interests of those who created them and those for whom they were created. The narratives respond to the expectations and needs of the readership, as well as reflecting current social issues. Hence, it is crucial to place the texts in relation to the author as well as to the readership, and also to consider them in an even broader context. It is thus to the literary context that we will now briefly turn.

The similarities between the different ballads and narratives concerning Morrell's imposture are evident. *Diego Redivivus* is the most immediate and straightforward of the narratives, for it is limited to the final imposture and includes Morrell's will. The ballads were probably dependent on its material. *The Pretended Country Squire* and *The Bakers Lamentation Containing his Sorrowful Moan* both recount the incident, the former in a little more detail, whereas *The Baker's Lamentation For the great Loss* is a brief and more satirical account that mocks the baker's gullibility. *The Notorious Impostor*, by contrast, has a chronological form and uses, like many contemporary life narratives, literary means such as letters and, of course, the last will and testament, to claim historicity. As with most similar texts, its author does not need to say anything about his sources of information in order to convince his readers that he knew Morrell's whole life

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[38] [Francis Shenton], *A True Relation of a Notorious Cheater one Robert Bullock, Lately done in Oxford, to prevent the like. To the tune of,* And for my Offence I shall die, or, For the losse of my goods ([1663]).

[39] On criminal biography, see Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account. The forms and functions of criminal biography in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987).

story. A certain degree of authenticity was assumed. It begins with earlier episodes of Morrell's life, describing it as 'little else than a continued Scene of Masquerade'.[40] Emphasis is put on the exploits that preceded the final imposture, and the will itself is markedly cut down. Unlike the ballads and *Diego Redivivus*, which have the immediacy of a news-story, it recalls the picaresque narrative.[41] Published two years later, *The Compleat Memoirs* is even more embellished. Like most revivals, it tries to attract a readership by boasting on its title-page of 'Considerable Additions never before Published'. Consisting of episodes taken from *The Notorious Impostor* parts one and two – frequently word-for-word – the material is newly arranged and brought into a chronological form, and with the additional exploits that round it off, it comes much closer to the picaresque than its precursors. Apart from that, it is hard to detect any differences in tone and content that would hint at a major change of perception.

The picaresque elements are conspicuous. With regard to the protagonist's character, the use of previous literary motifs is evident. The character was clearly made to conform to a pre-existing type – the *picaro* – as certain features of his life were emphasized, played down, or suppressed, and appropriate 'facts' invented. The Dedication of *The Notorious Impostor* announces 'the life of our English Guzman'. Later, in the narrative, it reads: 'he Equips himself with a Sturdy Young Country-Fellow, a *Ralpho* to our *Hudibras*, and takes a Knight-Errantry', and elsewhere he is called 'our Don John' and 'Don Quixote';[42] also the title *Diego Redivivus*, i.e. James Revived, alludes to previous picaresques.[43] In many respects, Morrell could be described as another Meriton Latroon, a character who found his way into Richard Head's *The English Rogue*

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[40] [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, A2r.

[41] On the breadth of the genre and theories of picaresque fiction, see Maximillian E. Novak, 'Freedom, Libertinism, and the Picaresque', in Harold E. Pagliaro (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, Vol. 3. Racism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cleveland, 1973), pp. 35-48.

[42] [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, pp. 3, 21; idem, *Compleat Memoirs*, pp. 3, 21, 71.

[43] James Mabbe had used the pseudonym 'Don Diego Puede-Ser' in *The Rogue: Or the Life of Guzman de Alfarache* (London, 1622), his translation of Mateo Alemán's *Vita del Picaro Guzman*; George Fidge's more recent biography *The English Gusman* (1652) of the legendary Captain James Hind, executed and quartered in 1652, and *The English Guzman: Or Captain Hiltons Memoirs* (London, 1683).

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(1665), a precursor of Tobias Smollett's Count Fathom, or, regarding the character's promiscuity, an early Casanova who conquers women either to get away with material profit, or to enjoy rakish lust for sexual variety.[44] Similarly, the trick of pretending to be sick and drawing up a will in order to gain someone's trust occurs in Head's *The English Rogue*; and in James Mabbe's *The Rogue* one might remember the witty episode of Pantalon, the beggar, who made the Duke of Florence his heir and bequeathed him his pack-saddle full of coins.[45] Morrell also resembles the hero in Elkanah Settle's earlier biography, *The Life and Death of Major Clancie, the Grandest Cheat of This Age* (1680), who begins as a servant and page, but then goes on masquerading as a gentleman and impersonates several personages such as the Marquis of Ormonde and a nephew of the Bishop of London.

Furthermore, the narratives also appear to be a satire on the common themes of courtesy literature, such as the insistence on the unimportance of wealth and social station, or the value of goodness;[46] a parody of common values which usually threw an idealized light on the Restoration: trust, honour, honesty, truth, troth, faith, service and friendship. Libertinism is frequently condemned. Deceit in sexual matters is equated with financial fraud; for instance, in Thomas D'Urfey's comedies *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692) as well as in his *The Richmond Heiress* (1693) 'heiress-hunting is paralleled with the mania for speculation in stocks'. False upstarts, or impoverished gentlemen recovering their fortunes by a rich marriage as in John Wilson's *The Cheats* (1663), are recurrent topics too. The degeneration of the gentry, as Derek Hughes has

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[44] Frank Chandler's claim that Morrell was a precursor of Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) has to be treated with caution. Among others it could also have been the case of William Stroud in January 1752 that had inspired Smollett. Frank W. Chandler, *The Literature of Roguery* (New York, 1907), p. 144.

[45] Richard Head, *The English Rogue* (London, 1665; London, 1671), Part II, ch. 30, pp. 271-74; James Mabbe, *The Rogue: Or The Life of Guzman De Alfarache* (London, 1622), Part I, Book III, ch. 5, pp. 211-13.
Wills and testaments were common themes of popular literature. See, for example, *The Last Will and Testament of James Hynd, High-Way Lawyer. Now sick to Death, in his Chamber in Newgate* (London, 1651).

[46] See John E. Mason, *Gentlefolk in the Making. Studies in the history of English courtesy literature and related topics from 1531 to 1774* (Philadelphia, 1935), p. 292.

pointed out, was a common theme in Restoration drama which was 'generally more associated with a desire to revivify the old order than to change it'.[47] The same can be said of ballads. Readers found pleasure in hearing 'scandalous tales of aristocratic immorality'. However, this barely 'undermined the values of an ordered, hierarchical society', and was 'a world turned upside down only temporarily'; overall such texts backed traditional views of social order and urged moral reformation.[48] Like many other Restoration dramatists, Elkanah Settle was interested in problems of authority and legitimacy. Coming from an uneducated family, his life was characterized by a rapid social rise followed by a dramatic fall.[49] The author's engagement with the theme of social ascent – and imposture – is striking. Apart from the narratives on Morrell,[50] and Major Clancie's rambles and pranks, he published a dramatised political allegory and fierce attack on Rome entitled *The Female Prelate: Being The History and Life and Death of Pope Joan*; earlier, in 1671, *Cambyses King of Persia* was published in which the king turns out to be an impostor.[51] If we are to believe William Fuller, Settle had probably described Fuller's career in one of the anonymously written pamphlets.[52]

According to Hughes, Settle's views on social degree were generally conservative. 'He is one of the few dramatists of the period to focus on the threat to established order of the unambiguous outsider.'[53] *The Female Prelate* was warmly welcomed by the Whigs when presented at the Theatre Royal. However, Settle's attacks

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[47] Derek Hughes, *English Drama, 1660-1700* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 339, 21, 55-6.
[48] Bernard Capp, 'Popular Literature', in Barry Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1985), pp. 198-243, at p. 231.
[49] See Frank C. Brown, *Elkanah Settle. His life and works* (Chicago, 1910); *DNB*.
[50] I.e. [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor* (1692); idem, *The Second part of the Notorious Impostor* (1692); idem, *Compleat Memoirs* (1694). On Settle's authorship see above.
[51] Elkanah Settle, *The Life and Death of Major Clancie, The Grandest Cheat of this Age* (London, 1680); idem, *The Female Prelate: Being The History and Life and Death of Pope Joan. A Tragedy. As it is Acted at The Theatre Royal* (London, 1680); idem, *Cambyses King of Persia, A Tragedy* (London, 1671). See also Craig M. Rustici, 'Gender, Disguise, and Usurpation: "The Female Prelate" and the Popish Successor', *Modern Philology*, 98 (2000), pp. 271-98.
[52] Fuller also mentions Settle's alleged bogus marriage. The pamphlet Fuller refers to is probably *The Life of Wm Fuller, The Pretended Evidence Now a Prisoner in the King's-Bench* (London, 1692). See William Fuller, *The Life of William Fuller, Gent.* (London, 1701), Preface, and Part II of the thesis.
[53] For example, Joanna Anglica in the *Female Prelate* and Celestina in *The Ambitious Slave*. Hughes, *English Drama*, p. 86.

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on Catholics in the context of the Exclusion Crisis provoked counter-attacks. The rumour that Settle's marriage to Mary Warner on 28 February 1674, performed in the parish church of St. Andrew's, Holborn,[54] was itself a bogus affair in order to cheat an uncle out of a small estate seems rather ironic, but is most likely to have been the result of a political dispute.[55] Not only do these few remarks about Settle show the author's concern with imposture, they also supply evidence that it was common to label an enemy as an impostor; 'imposture' could also be the subject of slander, an aspect to which we will come back below.

But how do William Morrell and his exploits relate to the social world of the seventeenth century? First, we have to differentiate between the semi-fictitious adventures described in Settle's narratives and Morrell's forged testament. At a macro-historical level, the Morrell narratives reflect the contemporary preoccupation with the 'problems of order and degree', in a society that was characterized by rapidly changing social and economic structures, and by challenges to the actual and symbolic order, which all undermined an ideal hierarchy.[56] Social mobility was recognized as a structural feature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English society, a society which was at the same time committed to social stratification and stability. According to Susan Amussen, after the Restoration the 'general outlines of social order were clearer', while Sharpe suggests

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[54] Brown, *Elkanah Settle*, p. 16. See also the reference in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (1850), p. 367.
[55] The antiquary William Oldys added to his copy of Langbaine's *Account of the English Dramatick Poets* the following: 'Remember the story I have from Mr. Reily of his contrivance to marry a boy in Woman's Clothes at St Andrews church in Holborn, who passed for a fortune to his rich uncle, or other Relations, who would make no provision for him, till he was married, and established in some regular course, whereby he might make profit: but it brought it him into trouble at D[octor] Commons.' According to Brown, Westminster Hall records from 1673 to 1678 do not mention a similar incident. Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets. Or, Some Observations and remarks on the Lives and Writings of all those that have Publish'd either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, Or Opera's in the English Tongue*, 2 Vols. (London, 1691), Vol. II, p. 441; Brown, *Elkanah Settle*, p. 16.
[56] Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (London, 1982), p. 18; Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society. Gender and class in early modern England* (Oxford, 1988), ch. 5.

that the eighteenth century brought increasing stabilization of the social hierarchy at almost all levels.[57]

From the sixteenth century, town élites had sought to acquaint themselves with the gentry, whose members often became political patrons or MPs, and thus gained growing influence. At the same time professional men, civil servants, lawyers, doctors, apothecaries and clergy became more and more prominent in many larger towns, and by the late seventeenth century they formed the so-called 'pseudo-gentry' class. Urban rulers began to adopt titles of 'master' and 'gentleman', and frequently imitated the habits and tastes of the country gentry. New titles were introduced, such as 'baronet' in 1611, and by the end of the seventeenth century, this process, which has been called 'social flotation of gentility', had progressed to such an extent that landed gentlemen increasingly preferred the higher label 'esquire' to set themselves apart from those whom they considered mere claimants to the gentleman's rank. The 'pseudo-gentry' that arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries posed a challenge to conventional ideas of social status, in particular that of the gentry.[58]

Elizabethan writers had already acknowledged the challenge posed to the traditional criteria for identifying a gentleman.[59] The Morrell narratives, as well as other Restoration literature, reflect the debate on social mobility and gentlemanly virtues already discussed by authors such as Richard Brathwait (1630), Henry Peacham (1622), Francis Markham (1625) or John Selden in his *Titles of Honor* (1614) and *Table Talk* (1689) earlier in the century. Upward social mobility was frequently considered a moral and social problem with a detrimental impact on gentlemanly virtues. As mentioned

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[57] Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 151; Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, pp. 350-52.

[58] Keith Wrightson, 'Estates, Degrees, and Sorts. Changing perceptions of society in Tudor and Stuart England', in Penelope J. Corfield (ed.), *Language, History and Class* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 30-52, at pp. 39-40; Alan Everitt, *Change in the Provinces. The seventeenth century* (Department of English Local History Occasional Papers, second series, 1, Leicester, 1969), pp. 43-6.

[59] See, for example, William Harrison, *An Historical Description of the Island of Britain* (London, 1577), esp. p. 105r. Anna Bryson has suggested that during the sixteenth century the English nobility and gentry sought for 'new sources of cultural authority and prestige'. Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing codes of conduct in early modern England* (Oxford, 1998), esp. chs. 2-3, at p. 280.

above, the degeneracy of the gentry as well as ambivalence about the origins of nobility were common topics. The notion of a gentleman contained some difficulties and was redefined in the theoretical writings, and continuously renegotiated in the practice of everyday life. John Selden found it hard to define a gentleman and concluded:

> The King cannot make a Gentleman of Blood ... nor God Almighty, but
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> he can make a Gentleman by Creation. If you ask which is the better of
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> these two, Civilly, the Gentleman of Blood, Morally, the Gentleman by
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> Creation may be the better; for the other may be a Debauch'd man, this a
>
> Person of worth.[60]

The passage displays the 'new' competitive situation in which newcomers, sometimes seen as upstarts, began to challenge the previously well-established status of gentlemen by blood. Writers widely agreed that 'virtue is the one quality necessary for nobility, and that he who transmits a glorious inheritance by his worthy actions is more to be respected than he whose baseness of conduct degrades an ancient family'.[61] The Swiss writer, Guy Miège, author of *The Present State of Great Britain* (1691), concluded that 'the title of Gentleman is commonly given in England to all that distinguish themselves from the common people by a genteel dress and carriage, good education, learning, or an independent station'.[62] The status of gentleman, as Keith Wrightson states, 'had become, in effect, no more than a recognition of relative wealth displayed in an appropriate manner'. Gentlemen still enjoyed high esteem, 'but they were measured on the same scale. Gentility was now, quite literally, a matter not of estate but of degree'.[63] However, social upstarts were still regarded with suspicion. Earlier in the century, Peacham, after defining nobility, closes his first chapter of *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622) with

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[60] John Selden, *Table-Talk: Being The Discourses of John Selden Esq; Or His Sence of Various Matters of Weight and High Consequence Relating especially to Religion and State* (London, 1689), p. 21. According to J.E. Mason, ambivalence about the origins of nobility remains a feature of courtesy literature from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Mason, *Gentlefolk*, p. 293.

[61] Mason, *Gentlefolk*, pp. 293-94. See also Bryson, *Courtesy*, pp. 234-35.

[62] Guy Miège, 'Present State of Great Britain. An eighteenth-century self-portrait', in Daniel A. Baugh (ed.), *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England. The foundations of stability* (New York, 1975), p. 47, cited in Wrightson, 'Estates', p. 40.

[63] Wrightson, 'Estates', p. 40.

resentment against those attempting to cheat or buy their way into the ranks of the nobility. The Morrell narratives reveal the ambiguity characteristic of contemporary popular literature. On the one hand, they reflect social mobility and fluidity as contemporary issues, and the fortune-hunter as a social type. As with Restoration stage heroes, he is both condemned and admired for his cheek, quick wit and enterprise. On the other, the narratives also suggest hostility towards social upstarts claiming high birth and status, as well as nostalgia for vanishing gentlemanly values, as noted by moral writers. Like Shenton's ballad, they warn against impostors trying to cheat and to climb the social ladder, while simultaneously reaffirming the socio-cultural boundaries. In this respect, the impostor functions as a literary device – as another metaphor for a world turned upside down. By unmasking Morrell's imposture the social order is reaffirmed. We find this ambiguity common to many Restoration texts, a combination of disapproval and admiration, not only admiration for the hero's audacity but also – and most importantly – for his apparent autonomy. This dichotomy might even evoke an uncertainty towards gentlemanly values themselves, challenging Peacham's insistence that: 'We ought to giue credit to a Noble or Gentleman, before any of the inferior sort. He must not be arrested, or pleaded against upon cosenage'.[64]

Changing social structures, and social mobility in general, had a vital impact upon social relations and behaviour. The theme of trust lies at the very core of the narratives. Trust was also the core element in negotiating relations in everyday life, and both lending and borrowing were part of the reciprocal obligations of neighbourliness. Early modern England considered those of higher status as worthier and better. Wealth and property embodied integrity. One's reputation was the decisive factor, and the amount of credit one possessed in a community 'described both honesty and solvency' – wealth and virtue were joint-attributes.[65] Credit, as the contemporary Nicholas Barbon noted, 'is a Value raised by Opinion, it buys Goods as Mony doe's'. He distinguished two

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[64] Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London, 1622).
[65] Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 152.

sorts of credit, one grounded upon ability (to pay back within a short time), the other upon honesty (enabling the debtor to pay back at a later stage).[66]

The exchange and, above all, accumulation of material goods is a further vital issue and was, indeed, of major concern to the early modern English men and women.[67] Marriage and death, the two key moments in life when property changes hands, dominate the Morrell narratives. Since social status was determined largely by wealth, the accumulation of wealth generally meant also an increase in one's reputation. Property was therefore a central component of decisions about marriage.[68] The accumulation of wealth could be the result of serial marriages because of early mortality; in the narratives, of course, serial marriages are not the result of early death but of a greed that is frequently embodied in sexual obsession *ad absurdum*. As pointed out earlier, clandestine marriage was itself an issue under debate throughout the seventeenth century, receiving particular attention from societies for the reformation of manners. Historians remind us of the demographic evidence showing that in the late seventeenth century a large number of people remained unmarried, and that there was increasing concern about clandestine marriages.[69] It is at least plausible that Morrell's serial marriages in Settle's narratives allude to these concerns and anxieties.

[66] Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London, 1690), pp. 27-8. The *OBP* contain numerous trials that reveal this concept of credit. See also the case of Stroud discussed further below.
[67] See, for example, John Locke's theory on property in his *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1698), ch. 5 of *Second Treatise of Government*.
[68] Concern for the maintenance of family property, for instance, occurs in a scene where Morrell allegedly tries to avoid a mismatch by his sister, to whose marriage he has to agree according to the will and testament of his late father, which was a common practice.
[69] For example, William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties. Eight Treatises* (London, 1622), p. 205. See Edward A. Wrigley and Roger S. Schofield, *A Population History of England, 1540-1871. A reconstruction* (London, 1981), pp. 257-65; David R. Weir, 'Rather Never Than Late. Celibacy and age at marriage in English cohort fertility', *Journal of Family History*, 9 (1984), pp. 340-54; John R. Gillis, 'Clandestine and common law marriage in England, 1650-1850', in John Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and Settlements. Law and human relations in the west* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 261-86; Jeremy Bolton, 'Itching after Private Marryings? Marriage customs in seventeenth-century London', *The London Journal*, 16 (1991), pp. 15-29; R. B. Outhwaite (ed.) *Marriage and Society. Studies in the social history of marriage* (London, 1981); idem, *Clandestine Marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London, 1995), pp. 54-73. On clandestine marriage, though in late fifteenth-century France, see Beatrice Gottlieb, 'The Meaning of Clandestine Marriage', in Robert Wheaton and Tamara K. Hareven (eds), *Family and Sexuality in French History* (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 49-83.

Property was a powerful factor in defining individuality, and the idea of modern individualism developed in part through metaphors of property.[70] Possession of large amounts of money and property, rich clothes, horses and coaches, in short, the life-style of great men and women, are features of the narratives and manifest the fascination of contemporaries. The 'ability to consume conspicuously' was regarded as one of the distinctive attributes of the better sort.[71] As Craig Muldrew states, the 'social meaning of money and the morality of its use was an enormously popular trope in early modern fiction'.[72] The Morrell narratives display this fascination and the desire to be part of the richer sector of society – the 'narcissistic pleasure in fictitious spending' and the 'antisocial effects of such individualistic freedom on the mutual duties of trust and neighbourliness' are central to the meaning.[73] Assuming that all his reported tricks actually happened – and Morrell was the man tried for bigamy in 1676 – the antisocial effects are obvious; the harm inflicted on the impostor's victims and all its chain reactions on a communal level can easily be imagined.

But how should we interpret Morrell pretending to be Humphrey Wickham and forging a last will and testament? How could he succeed in deceiving a baker, at least for a fortnight? What strategies were necessary in order to be perceived and accepted as the gentleman he pretended to be? As mentioned above, individual position and reputation were based on the credit gained from a fellow individual. How much credit the latter would give depended on his judgment of the former's representation. In Settle's accounts,

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[70] See, for example, Crawford B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962); Alan Macfarlane, *The Origins of English Individualism. The family, property and social transition* (Oxford, 1978) and most importantly, Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present* (London, 1997).
[71] Sharpe, *Early Modern England*, p. 167.
[72] Craig Muldrew, '"Hard Food For Midas". Cash and its social value in early modern England', *P&P*, 170 (2001), pp. 78-120, at p. 113.
[73] Muldrew, '"Hard Food for Midas"', p. 113.

Morrell is shown telling prospective victims that he was a well-off gentleman.[74] Gentility

depended to a great extent on wealth. At the outset, gullible country folk (another *topos*)

seem to have been carried away by his wealth. It appears that they were simply flattered

by the mere fact of being honoured by a social superior. But there must have been many

other factors involving both physical appearance and behaviour, including clothing,

gestures, language, expression, possibly even gender and age – factors whose position

and relevance is sometimes difficult to reconstruct. There were certain characteristics

generally found among gentlemen as a social group; despite internal differentiation

within this group, the term 'gentleman' implied a particular social position, shared

interests and values.[75] In addition to behavioural attributes, Morrell clearly possessed

information and personal details about the Wickham family. Where did he obtain them?

According to *Diego Redivivus* Morrell 'had been two Months a Guest at Mr. *Wickham*'s,

and thereby so acquainted with his Family as enabled him to personate the Cheat so

artificially';[76] Henri Misson de Valbourg, who included the sensational story in his travel

writings, described him as a 'good likely Sort of a Man, that had been many Years

Footman to a rich Gentleman at *Banbury* in *Oxfordshire*, call'd Mr. *Wickham*'.[77]

Unfortunately, such reports cannot be confirmed. But we can at least assume that Morrell

was familiar with gentlemanly modes of behaviour and that he also may have believed in

the social reality evoked by his appearance.

What else explains the widespread acceptance of Morrell's imposture? What is

the meaning of the will? It is probably significant that Morrell was impersonating not

someone of comparable social standing, but a person who was of much higher status, and

still living. His abuse of hospitality and above all his boldness in making a counterfeit

will may well have fascinated his contemporaries. As we have seen, forging wills or other

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[74] The label 'squire' should probably not be overstated. We do not know whether Morrell really used it when he introduced himself or whether it was the pamphleteer's invention; if Morrell did, its ambiguity probably further 'confused' the baker's family.
[75] Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 23.
[76] *Diego Redivivus*, p. 5. See also [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, p. 2.
[77] Henri Misson de Valbourg, *M. Misson's Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England* (London, 1719), pp. 93-4.

documents to obtain money was no novelty. The *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* from the

1670s to the 1790s show a remarkable rise in cases of forgery from the 1690s onwards.[78]

As stated earlier, there are also numerous cases of forged wills, mostly involving

deceased seamen. Many forgers were attempting to secure outstanding wages or

provisions by pretending to be the widow or a close relative of the testator. For instance,

in May 1692, the Morrell sensation had hardly died down when Christopher Billop,

Thomas Billop and Thomas Farmer forged three certificates in the names of Thomas

Fowler, Thomas Tiplady and William Whitson. They also forged three letters of attorney,

in the names of Humphry Humble, William Watkins, and Lawrence Ley, though after a

lengthy trial, they were acquitted.[79] One John Barry experienced a different fate, being

executed in 1746 for forging a will; from a broadside we learn that 'the Malefactor's

Wife put the Pen in the *dead* Man's Hand, *and guided the same herself*.[80] In all these

cases, the motive was obviously financial gain. By contrast, Morrell's fraud involved no

personal gain and must have had some other explanation. The baker's hospitality had

been shamelessly misused, and what should have been a reward for his trust turned out to

be a mere fraud. Since Morrell was about to die, his motivation could hardly have been

financial gain.

What, then, may it have been? In the early modern period, wills and other

documents came to function increasingly as features of identity and therefore frequently

occur in the context of crime. A random look at advertisements in *The London Gazette* of

the 1670s reveals not only stolen horses, but also lost or stolen letters and bundles of

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[78] A statistical search of the *OBP* produced the following result: Of a total number of 732 forgery cases, the 1670s display 2, the 1680's 3, the 1690's 43, another remarkable increase occurs in the 1750 with 98 cases. *OBP* (11 November 2004).

[79] *OBP* (10 November 2004), February 1696, trial of Christopher Billop (t16960227-1). See also *OBP*, August 1727, trial of Margaret Swift (t17270830-43); April 1691, trial of Christian Grey (t16910422-33); April 1727, trial of Eleanor Cavernor (t17270412-49). More notorious cases were printed.

[80] *A Short narrative of the Behaviour, &c. of John Barry, ... who was executed May 16th, 1746 at St. Michael's Hill gallows, for causing and procuring to be falsely made, forged and counterfeited, the last Will and Testament of James Barry, who died at his House, in order to secure unto himself his Prize-Money, amounting to at least 1500 l.* [London, 1746].

papers that might provide the finder or thief with a tool for some forgery or fraud.[81]

Earlier on we have seen many cases in which people tried to get money, or even clothes

by means of letters or other written documents that appeared to identify them as figures

of authority. Any letter, by indicating literacy, could carry a certain degree of weight or

represent, as Mary Jo Kietzman notes, 'a self-conscious epistolary performance'.[82] Yet

the fact that the role of wills goes far beyond financial matters induces us to ask about

their function and symbolism. Wills provide useful information about the socio-cultural

milieu of the testator, social affairs, hierarchical relations, his/her role within a

community, and the way the kinship network worked.[83] Although they hardly prove 'the

range of any testator's network of "effective" kin', they provide 'evidence of the range of

kinsfolk within which the most important ties of obligation and sentiment were

maintained'.[84] However, as Amussen notes, wills are 'not always precise', and some

testators might 'claim a higher status in their will than they were accorded by their

neighbours'.[85] Apart from the funeral ceremony, which is 'the last tribute of a deferential

society to the dignity of a title', a will thus seems to be a last opportunity to shine and

demonstrate one's importance as a 'good Patron and Friend'.[86]

In the Morrell narratives the motif of proving one's identity and social capital by

means of a will occurs twice. At an earlier stage Morrell wanted to prove his pretended

identity as a Norfolk aristocrat and demonstrated his alleged wealth by pretending to be

ill and drawing up a will.[87] Morrell's forged will, as given in *Diego Redivivus*, lists a

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[81] See *The London Gazette.*
[82] Mary Jo Kietzman, *The Self-Fashioning of an Early Modern Englishwoman. Mary Carleton's lives* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 183. See also Natascha Würzbach (ed.), *The Novel in Letters. Epistolary fiction in the early English novel, 1678-1740* (London, 1969); Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters and the Novel* (New York, 1980).
[83] See Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds), *"When Death Do Us Part". Understanding and interpreting the probate records of early modern England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 38-71; Amussen, *Ordered Society*, pp. 76-94.
[84] Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village. Terling, 1525-1700* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1995), p. 193.
[85] Amussen, *Ordered Society*, p. 78.
[86] Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), p. 572; *Diego Redivivus*, p. 3.
[87] [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, pp. 21-3.

large number of people to whom he bequeaths great sums. It thus reflects two crucial elements that constitute early modern identity: property and social capital. The will is his last chance to reinvent his life as a success, overcoming, at least in fantasy, his inability to accumulate real wealth or sustain lasting personal relationships.

It is not known whether Morrell was already ill when he arrived at the baker's house. Perhaps he was simply seeking free accommodation for a few days or weeks. It is possible that he hoped to recover from his illness. In that case the bogus identity would help him persuade the baker to look after him during a lengthy illness. If he was expecting to die, the false identity including the will might secure him a good funeral. Certainly, the will maintained his cover until death, but we should not underestimate the importance of the immediate rewards: respect and admiration. This is obviously a crucial motive for most impostors. Connected to this is the aspiration of becoming a legend in one's own lifetime – and even more so after death. Contemporaries were well aware of this. The epitaph which appeared in the *Gentleman's Journal* contains lines addressing: 'All you that dare be Rogues, and tripple Trees defie: | Arch-Villains, for whom they were made, | Infamous whilst you live, exalted when you die, | Who seek a Glory that may never fade'. The idea of the living myth – as well as the uniqueness of Morrell's act – is expressed further below: 'I am the Sage who did improve your Art, | And of Imposture a new System start, | *Columbus*-like I a new World descry'd, | Of Roguery before untry'd'.[88] Even though the public may not have paid the impostor much attention in his lifetime, those he fooled had a remarkable admiration for him which allowed him to regard himself as the mythical character of his own making. Narratives enliven our lives and guarantee memory. They extend life beyond the point of death. This thought might have made his last moments of life more tolerable. Morrell may have thought that his imposture was now guaranteed to succeed: he would either die and be buried as Humphrey Wickham, or be exposed and yet achieve renown as a celebrated rogue.

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[88] *The Gentleman's Journal: Or, The Monthly Miscellany. By Way of Letter to a Gentleman in the Country.* February 1692, p. 7.

Finally, the fact that Morrell impersonated a real historical figure should draw our attention to the relationship between the two identities. As Adam Fox has pointed out, reciprocal relations between the lower and middling sort and their landlords, masters or other 'figures in authority' were not always harmonious, and libels frequently served as 'an effective way in which people might jeer at, and so assault and wound their betters'.[89] Along with 'scoffing at the person of another in rhyme or prose ... setting up horns at his gate', the use of someone else's name − 'by the personating him' − was defined in William Hudson's *Treatise of the Court of Star Chamber* as libel.[90] In spite of having no evidence of earlier tensions between Morrell and Wickham we might speculate that the imposture was intended to defame or ridicule the Oxfordshire squire and so affect his social credit.[91] We may remember that according to *Diego Redivivus* Morrell had once been a 'Guest at Mr. *Wickham*'s'; another source noted he was a footman to the squire.[92] Morrell did not create libels, and Settle's narratives were by no means a defamation of Wickham.[93] Yet Morrell's exploits, as he must have anticipated, created a considerable sensation, and the popular press helped spread the story − even if it was after his death. Moreover, Humphrey Wickham could have been sensitive to anything casting a black shadow over the social reputation and honour of his family. The man whose identity Morrell borrowed for his notorious will belonged to a well-known gentry family that had

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[89] Adam Fox, 'Ballads, Libels and Popular Ridicule in Jacobean England', *P&P*, 145 (1994), pp. 47-83, at p.77;

[90] William Hudson, 'A Treatise on the Court of Star-Chamber', in *Collectanea Juridica. Consisting of Tracts relative to the Law and Constitution of England*, 2 Vols. (London, 1792), Vol. II, p. 100, cited in Fox, 'Ballads', p. 56.
Note the difference between libel and slander, i.e. written and spoken defamation. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a formative period for the development of defamation law. See William Holdsworth, *The History of the English Law*, 17 Vols. (2nd edn, London, 1937), Vol. VIII.
A famous slander case involving impersonation was the Dymoke case handled by the Star Chamber in the early seventeenth century. Members of the Dymoke family ridiculed Henry, Earl of Lincoln, in a play performed during the May games at South Kyme, Lincolnshire, in August 1601. See Norreys J. O'Conor, *Godes Peace and the Queenes. Vicissitudes of a house, 1539-1615* (London, 1937), pp. 108-26. I would like to thank Adam Fox for this hint.

[91] See also the case of George Taylor and Mary Robinson, who with their imposture intended to 'distress and injure' Richard Holland. *OBP* (23 May 2005), October 1746, trial of George Taylor and Mary Robinson (t17461015-20). See Chapter I, p. 39.

[92] *Diego Redivivus*, p. 5; [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor*, p. 2; Misson, *Memoirs*, pp. 93-4.

[93] [Settle?], *Notorious Impostor* is dedicated to Humphrey Wickham.

tried, unsuccessfully, to claim the privileges of even higher status. Twice, in 1570 and 1635, they had claimed the legal right, through kinship with the founder, to enter Winchester and New College, Oxford. They had based their argument on their alleged relation to William Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, who had founded New College in 1379 and had proudly adopted for the College's motto the proverb '[m]anners maketh man'. Both claims had been rejected.[94] It is very unlikely, though, that this was still an issue in Morrell's time or that the impostor was intending to expose the doubtful nature of the Wickhams' own pretensions.

What about the baker? Again, we have no evidence of any earlier encounter between the two. Their acquaintance might have been entirely fortuitous. Any gullible person would have served Morrell's purpose. According to *Diego Redivivus* it was the baker who approached him in the street. In the broadside *The Pretended Country Squire* Cullen is called a 'Collector of the Poor'.[95] And indeed, in the accounts of churchwardens and overseers of the parish of St. Clement Danes, one Thomas Cullen is mentioned as an overseer of the poor between 1690 and 1692.[96] This adds a further hint of irony to the whole story.

As with most early modern cases it has been impossible to say anything certain about the impostor's motivation. Unlike Percy or Dacre, Morrell, at least in his final fraud, was not claiming a particular place in a family line or attempting to gain possession of a large fortune. It is possible that he simply sought to 'cheat a poor baker of a fortnight lodging and bread' – a last resort instead of wasting away in the streets of London. It is also clear that Morrell differs from other impostors whose deeds were politically or religiously motivated, who were often incited by others, and mainly acted in collusion with a group of supporters. Apart from the page, who, according to the narratives assisted

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[94] C.E. Long, 'Descent of the Family of Wickham of Swalcliffe, CO. Oxon, and their kindred to the Founder of New College', in F. Madden, Bulkeley Bandinel et al. (eds), *Collectanea Topographica & Genealogica*, 8 Vols. (London, 1835), Vol. II, pp. 225-26; Mason, *Gentlefolk*, p. 7. This claim was not uncommon. See Thomas F. Kirby, *Annals of Winchester College* (London, 1892), ch. 6. I am thankful to Jason Peacey for this hint.
[95] *Pepys Ballads*, Vol. V, p. 393. See also *Diego Redivivus*, p. 2.
[96] WA, B31 M/f 180, Churchwardens' and overseers' accounts.

him in a few pranks, but could well be only a literary device, Morrell seems to have acted independently. It is at least possible that grievances related to some deeper conflict with Wickham or Cullen drove him to the imposture. In that case his final deed could have been in some sense a public as well as private act, a gesture of protest against a representative of the landed élite, or of ridicule directed against the poor relief system with Cullen as its local representative. On a macro-historical level Morrell's imposture manifests the problem of social mobility and order, on the micro-level it displays an individual's struggle to cope with individual and social expectations. The two are closely interrelated in trying to understand Morrell's accomplishment, and the impostor phenomenon in general.

The later case of William Stroud gives us an opportunity to explore the connection between socio-economic decline and imposture as a means of compensation. Apart from newspapers, there are two main sources for his story: a six-penny pamphlet entitled *The Life of the famous William Stroud*, published in 1752, and the *Genuine Memoirs*, allegedly written by Stroud himself and published probably in the same year. Stroud appeared in London where he defrauded several people and craftsmen in order to pursue the lavish lifestyle of a gentleman. From the moment he was detected, newspapers followed and reported the story. An entry in the *Gentleman's Magazine* on 9 January 1752 reads as follows: 'Was tried before the bench of justices at *Westminster-Hall*, one *Stroud*, (formerly a man of fortune) for personating various characters and names, and defrauding numbers of people, in order to support his extravagances'.[97] The same day, *The London Evening-Post* reported that Stroud

> had taken in a Taylor for a Suit of Velvet Cloaths trimm'd with Gold; a
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> Jeweller for upwards of 100*l.* in Rings and gold Watches, which he
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> pawn'd; a Coatchmaker for a Chaise; a carver and a Cabinet-maker, for

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[97] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 22 (1752), pp. 40-1.

Household Furniture; a Hosier, a Shoe-maker, a Hatter, and one of

almost every Branch of Business, to the amount of 500*l*.[98]

According to the newspaper, he appeared in the character of a gentleman, attended by

liveried servants, at other times 'in the Character of a Gentleman's Steward', and 'there is

scarcely any Character he did not personate, in order to defraud as appear'd by the

Evidence in Court'. Stroud was judged a rogue and a vagabond and sentenced to six

months' labour in Bridewell during which he was to be six times whipped in public.[99]

Even though *The Life* stands in the tradition of semi-fictitious biographies, it

gives us an idea of Stroud's career and strategies, and, most importantly, how deviants

like him were expected to behave. In *The Life* he is described as 'the Son of a Gardiner',

whose father had 'all his Life possessed a fair Reputation and was much respected by his

Neighbours'. Stroud inherited a decent fortune with which he set up his own, honest and

respectable business of a haberdasher, and he eventually married 'a Woman of reputable

Relations'. He thus appears to have established a stable social and economic position

until, '[w]hether by extravagance of living, by Losses in Business, or by fraudulent

Designs, it cannot be justly determined', it all began to disintegrate. His business went

bankrupt, and Stroud subsequently drew many other tradesmen into his affairs,

especially, as the pamphleteer noted, 'the younger Sort, who were more easily induced to

credit his Appearance, and to trust his Honour'.[100] Like Morrell, Stroud is said to have

gone travelling prior to his series of deviant actions and masquerades, allegedly to

France, where he 'improved himself in Politeness and genteel Behaviour' but learnt 'too

much Politeness, ever to think of Industry again' – an ironic allusion to gentle education

and probably a deliberate slur on France.[101] It was through his genteel behaviour and

appearance, sometimes over a glass of wine or port, that he deluded and manipulated

people, and, under the pretence of being temporarily cash-poor, obtained credit. On one

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[98] *The London Evening-Post*, 3780, 9-11 January 1752.
[99] *The London Evening-Post*, 3781, 11-14 January 1752. See also *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 22 (1752), pp. 40-1.
[100] *The Life of the famous William Stroud, &c.* (London, 1752), pp. 1-2.
[101] *Life of Stroud*, pp. 2, 3.

occasion he lodged under the name of William Metcalf, Esquire,[102] a man soon to be a

Parliamentary candidate and a wealthy member of the country gentry, at the house of a

German tailor, where he convinced his landlord of his genteel status and probably

supplied an imaginative family history. He also encouraged his host to fashion him a suit

with which he might impress the people.[103] To obtain money, he then persuaded a

jeweller to deliver some wares to a grandiose building, which he called his lodgings. The

jeweller left them there, whereupon Stroud promptly took them to a pawnbroker. To

obtain horse and carriage he then pretended to be a gentleman's domestic, and hired a

coach in his master's name. Down in Portsmouth, Exeter, Lyme and Chard, he assumed

the characters of 'Dr. R-----', [Rock], Reverend William Laroche and Reverend Thomas

Strickland, in whose various names he ordered goods from several London tradesmen.[104]

The text goes on to describe further masquerades, and, like most criminal biographies, it

seems more like a warning for tradesmen than Stroud's actual life story.

Stroud's *Genuine Memoirs* have to be understood as an apologetic text, probably

written during his confinement in Tothill-fields Bridewell, but we should be cautious

about its authenticity. Alterations by publishers for commercial reasons were quite

common, and Stroud was certainly anxious to reduce his punishment. Stroud dreaded his

corporal punishment. In court he told the judges that he had broken his back early in

childhood, which rendered it so weak that he could not endure a whipping, a plea that was

rejected.[105] He also pleaded that such a punishment 'would spoil his Character, and render

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[102] It is likely that this alludes to Lascelles Metcalf, a London merchant and owner of the manor of
Stokke, in Great Bedwyn. His election for Great Bedwyn in 1746 was unopposed. In Parliament
he supported the Administration and was known as 'Old Whig'. At the 1747 election, he was
seated by the House of Commons together with William Sloper jun. However, Stroud perhaps
only claimed to be a brother or kinsman of Lascelles Metcalf, stealing a family identity rather than
that of a specific person. For Lascelles Metcalfe, see Romney Sedgwick (ed.), *History of
Parliament. The House of Commons, 1709-1754*, 2 Vols. (London, 1970), Vol. II, pp. 253-54.
[103] *Life of Stroud*, p. 7.
[104] *The London Evening-Post*, 3781, 11-14 January 1752; *Life of Stroud*, pp. 9-10. The newspaper
also announced the third edition of *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Bampfylde-Moore Carew, The
King of the Beggars*.
[105] *The London Evening-Post*, 3781, 11-14 January 1752.

him so infamous, that he could never get an honest livelihood'.[106] If we are to believe this claim we could argue that in some sense he had tried to overcome his stigma – a deformed back – through his impostures. Not only had he concealed it by wearing rich clothes to appear normal, but the rich clothes had exaggerated his social status; they both diverted attention from his stigma and furnished him with social credit. As has been pointed out, '[c]ostuming and masking efforts serve to negotiate a more positive public image and aid in neutralizing the social stigma of ... disability'.[107] Stroud was ashamed, and unlike other criminals, he certainly felt guilt and remorse. As *The London Evening-Post* reported, he attempted to hang himself in prison.[108]

Some passages at the beginning of his *Genuine Memoirs* suggest an element of social criticism. Stroud stresses the tough, competitive economic conditions and accuses creditors of deliberately hurting small tradesmen. He therefore blames economic conditions for the debts which had resulted in his prison sentence. According to the *Genuine Memoirs*, it was partly the prison sentence which deprived him of everything needed to reintegrate him into society and business, and partly the malign influence of one Richard Plaistowe, who had led him astray earlier on, possibly around 1747; prison does not reform, Stroud insisted, but prevents any kind of rehabilitation.[109] In 1748 Plaistowe had stood trial at the Old Bailey for defrauding a merchant by forging a promissory note; *The London Evening-Post* calls him Stroud's 'Friend and Accomplice'.[110] Stroud tried to blame Plaistowe and described him as a conman leading a scandalous life. Allegedly, Stroud met him by chance in St. James's Park after he (Stroud) had been released from his first prison sentence, 'dress'd very gay, in a Suit of

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[106] *Life of Stroud*, p. 17. Stroud was eventually whipped six times in the period to June. See *The London Evening-Post*, Numbers 3783, 3823, 3836, 3851, 3852, 3860.

[107] Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the management of spoiled identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963); Bryant, Clifton D., 'Deviant People. Handling themselves. Editorial comment', in idem (ed.), *Deviant Behaviour. Readings in the sociology of norm violations* (New York, 1990), pp. 415-23, at p. 419.

[108] *The London Evening-Post*, 3786, 23-25 January 1752.

[109] [William Stroud], *Genuine Memoirs of the Life and Transactions of William Stroud* (London, [1752]), p. 4.

[110] *OBP* (26 May 2004), October 1748, trial of Richard Plaistowe (t17481012-7); *The London Evening-Post*, 3860, 14-16 July 1752.

rich lac'd Cloaths'.[111] Stroud visited the gallant at his lodgings, where he found him 'attended with no less than two Livery Servants, and in very genteel Lodgings', adding that he was 'greatly surprized at his Appearance, and Manner of Living; as any one might well be, that was as ignorant as I was at that Time'.[112] Thomas Kinton, a witness in the Plaistowe trial, was no less convinced by Plaistowe's genteel behaviour and 'thought he was a gentleman' when he first saw him at his house.[113] Stroud endeavours to erase his own guilt by making himself appear a naive and innocent accomplice, whereas Plaistowe is described as living extravagantly and drawing him into criminal actions.

Percy, Morrell, and Stroud did not come from the very bottom level of society. They had allegedly enjoyed a good upbringing by honest parents, received a decent education, and had been following, at least for some part of their life, a respectable profession. Their impostures – or in Percy's case, claim – occurred at a similar stage in life. All three were apparently married and in employment. Percy had children and is said to have been fifty-one when he started his claim, and in his seventies when he was tried. Morrell is assumed to have had a family too and to have been between fifty and sixty years old. Yet they acted independently and outside any wider kinship group that might have saved them from insecurity and perhaps averted their undertaking. The secular tone of their stories, in particular of Stroud's narrative, is noticeable. Morrell and Stroud have a salient point in common in that they had both experienced a professional fall and then attempted to make up for it. Stroud's deviant phase probably stretched over a period of about six or seven years. Morrell's last imposture happened within a few weeks of his death, but if our speculations are true, his exploits lasted over almost two decades. Morrell and Stroud took on the names of people still probably alive, with whom they might have had some quarrel earlier on: Humphrey Wickham and William Metcalfe (the latter we have assumed to be linked to the London merchant and MP Lascelles Metcalfe).

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[111] [Stroud], *Genuine Memoirs*, pp. 7-8.
[112] [Stroud], *Genuine Memoirs*, p. 8.
[113] *OBP*, October 1748, Richard Plaistowe (t17481012-7).

To interpret their impostures as retaliation or some form of social protest seems plausible. Whereas Percy certainly claimed genteel origins, this was not the main issue in the two other cases. Morrell and Stroud both point towards what has long been seen as the spread of aspects of gentility into the middling sorts. Yet their stories are parodies of what had been the decisive feature distinguishing the nobility from the rest of society – a luxurious life-style without (manual) work. This is what Morrell and Stroud sought. Moreover, the importance of the label 'gentleman', separating the honourable from those who are not, has become clear in both cases. Kinston's statement in the Plaistowe trial perfectly illustrates this connotation: 'I thought he was a gentleman' – meaning that he believed Plaistowe to be honest and trustworthy.[114]

As in the Morrell narratives, the theme of trust, in particular trade and trust, is significant in *The Life*. Stroud defrauded numerous tradesmen in order to obtain a whole range of luxury goods ranging from clothes and furniture to jewellery; as Nicholas Barbon stated, the '[t]rades that are imploy'd to express the Pomp of Life, are Infinite'.[115] This happened not only within the bustling capital but also elsewhere in the country, perhaps reflecting a growing level of trade networks and commercial interaction. Trust lies at the very heart of any business. A trustworthy appearance is paramount in business from the very moment buyer and seller first meet. But in an economy in which money was much less ready to hand, and which still depended to a great extent on credit, trust was almost the sole existing security measure. Stroud goes to a jeweller, who, under circumstances of competition, is happy to receive a client eager to buy. He engages him in conversation, probably telling him very personal things about his family and prospective marriage, marvelling at the treasures and flattering the jeweller's talents. He gains the jeweller's sympathy and trust. He chooses rings and watches, and requests the jeweller to deliver them to his house, giving him the address of an impressive house he

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[114] *OBP*, October 1748, Richard Plaistowe (t17481012-7).
[115] Barbon, *Discourse of Trade*, p. 35.

claims to be renting. A few days later, the jeweller arrives there and, Stroud not being at home, he delivers the precious goods, without seeing any money.

It is striking that apart from the themes of trust and business, luxury goods such as coaches, apparel, or jewellery, are important features in the stories; the goods reflect both physical mobility (coach) and social mobility (apparel, jewellery). Whereas we have primarily related the narratives about William Morrell to a growing concern for, and engagement with, property, inheritance and general values of gentility, it makes sense to consider Stroud's, and also Robert Bullock's, case in the wider context of the commercialisation of society.[116] The theme of an excessive and debauched life-style can be found in all three stories, and Settle, who weaved an incident into fiction, stressed its moral implications. It is worth asking whether Settle's narratives mark one stage in a wider shift of contemporary preferences reflected in (popular) literature. Joyce Appleby noted that the 'idea of man as a consuming animal with boundless appetites, capable of driving the economy to new levels of prosperity, arrived with the economic literature of the 1690s'.[117] However, authors such as Bernard de Mandeville, who argued that even highwaymen served the nation's economy by spending what they have stolen, as well as the 'cynical justification of the benefits which accrued from vice', were refuted.[118] In Settle's ambiguous narratives the 'animal with boundless appetites' is still perceived as a threat to the moral framework of society and therefore fits perfectly into contemporary moralists' opinion. While they lack any link to national wealth, they exemplify the connection between wealth and social mobility, and the threat this posed to social order. As Appleby further explains,

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[116] Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and John H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society. The commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), ch. 1.

[117] Joyce Appleby, 'Ideology and Theory. The tension between political and economic liberalism in seventeenth-century England', *The American Historical Review*, 81 (1976), pp. 499-515, at p. 509.

For a similar discussion on Defoe's *Robinson*, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1957), ch. 3.

[118] See McKendrick et al., *Birth of a Consumer Society*, pp. 16-9; Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (London, 1714), esp. pp.8-9.

the idea of self-improvement through spending implied genuine social mobility. The assertion that the "meaner sort" could and should emulate their betters suggested that class distinctions were based on little more than purchasing power. The moral implications of growth through popular spending were even more suspect. Unlike the work ethic which called upon powerful longings for self-discipline and purposeful activity, the ethic of consumption ... offered nothing more than a calculating hedonism.[119]

Consumption at all social levels serving the nation's wealth became accepted only towards the end of the eighteenth century. Whereas philosophers like Bernard Mandeville or David Hume declared that the rational hedonism of *homo economicus* could benefit both individual and society, the stories of Morrell and Stroud, in spite of many differences, serve both to illustrate and to warn against this calculating hedonism.

As a moralistic warning – beware of rogues and cheats – the stories of Morrell and Stroud are straightforward. What were the two agents trying to say? Perhaps, Morrell and especially Stroud wanted to demonstrate that even the disadvantaged could survive in a harsh environment. Their deeds look both ruthless and desperate. Stroud's excuses contain an element of social criticism but in real life he was simply a failure, who had tried to climb back by fraud and excused himself by pleading that he was 'more sinned against than sinning'. Whereas Morrell was impersonating a wealthy landlord, Stroud directs his criticism at ruthless creditors and tradesmen in a highly competitive market. His story might have appealed to other struggling tradesmen, but may have resonated too with people in the lower echelons of society.

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[119] Appleby, 'Ideology and Theory', p. 515.

PART II

IMPOSTURE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 7

THE SELF-REPRESENTATION AND SELF-PERCEPTION OF WILLIAM FULLER (1670-1733)

William Fuller was born in 1670 in Kent of Robert Fuller, a Protestant, and Catherine, a Catholic. He was brought up a Catholic, enjoyed a decent education, and at the age of sixteen was bound apprentice to a Protestant London skinner, but he left the Skinners' Company soon after. Through a Catholic relative of his mother he was introduced to the Marquess of Powis, whom he served as a page, and then entered the household of the Earl of Melfort.[1] Fuller followed the court of James II into exile to France, where he allegedly became page of honour to the Queen, Mary of Modena, and was made a messenger for the Stuarts. However, in autumn 1689, he was caught in England, whereupon he was forced to change sides and became a double agent. He thus provided services for William III's government. Fuller ran into debt and was imprisoned several times. In 1691 he claimed to possess firm evidence of a Jacobite plot; he was heard in the House of

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[1] John Drummond, Earl of Melfort, obtained the favour of James during the exclusion crisis and converted to Catholicism in 1685. He lived at Whitehall from 1684 until the end of 1688 as a close adviser of James II. In exile, he became his principal secretary of state, and an important figure at the court at St Germain. After 1692, his influence decreased and several factions began to intrigue against him. The French agent Abbé Renaudot even accused him of being a double agent. Notwithstanding he remained admired by James II and Mary of Modena. Edward Corp, 'Drummond, John, styled first Earl of Melfort and Jacobite first duke of Melfort (1649-1714)', *DNB*.

Commons but when he failed to provide the witnesses he had promised, the House declared him 'a notorious Impostor, a Cheat, and a false Accuser'.[2] After some years in prison he managed to settle his debts and lived for some time in Canterbury, but he soon fell into debt again. Around 1696 he turned to the issue for which he became most famous and to which he returned over and over until his death: the birth of the Prince of Wales in 1688. In numerous narratives he claimed that the Prince was not the real child of James II, but had been smuggled into the Queen's bedchamber in a warming-pan. In 1702, he was again declared an impostor and fined a thousand marks, a fine which he could never pay. He therefore remained imprisoned for most of the rest of his life, with short spells of freedom during which he pursued other impostures. He died, still a prisoner for debt, in Newgate in 1733.

The reconstruction of Fuller's life is tricky. In addition to numerous pamphlets two autobiographies were published in 1701 and 1703.[3] In the *The Life* he states in a dedication to the Earl of Romney that he will 'not go about to justifie [his] Faults, but rather confess and forsake them'. But he also wanted to refute the writings by Richard Kingston and Elkanah Settle against him.[4] *The Whole Life*, published in 1703, is on a much larger scale. Since he intended never to write again, Fuller wanted to explain in detail how he came to deceive 'the World', and to 'do right to all Mankind'.[5] Both narratives were addressed to a broad readership, and they have a clearly apologetic tone.

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[2] *CJ*, Vol. X, p. 693.

[3] William Fuller, *The Life of William Fuller, Gent. Being a Full and True Account of his Birth, Education, Employs, and Intrigues, both of Publick and Private Concerns; his Reconciliation to the Church of England, and the Occasion of his coming into the Service of the present Government* (London, 1701); idem, *The Whole Life of Mr. William Fuller; Being an Impartial Account of his Birth, Education, Relations, and Introduction Into the service of the Late King James and his Queen* (London, 1703).

[4] Fuller, *Life*, Dedication and Preface to the Reader. The writings are: *The Life of William Fuller, The Late Pretended Evidence Now a Prisoner in the King's-Bench* (London, 1692), probably by Elkanah Settle or Abel Roper; *The Life of Wm. Fuller, alias Fullee, alias Fowler, alias Ellison, &c. By Original, a Butcher's Son; by Education, a Coney-Wool-Cutter; by Inclination, an Evidence; by vote of Parliament an Impostor; by Title of his own making, a Colonel; and by his own Demerits, now a Prisoner at large belonging to the Fleet* (London, 1701), probably by Richard Kingston and Elkanah Settle.

[5] Fuller, *Whole Life*, Preface.

However, shortly before he died in 1733, he penned another account, an unpublished manuscript.[6] Unfortunately, some parts are missing, especially the beginning where autobiographers usually state the purpose of their writing, social origin and upbringing. Fuller probably intended to publish this version of his autobiography too.[7] The manuscript is dated 13 April 1732, and on the basis of references to dates given in the text, we can assume that he did not start writing much earlier.[8] Fuller states that 'it will be the last account' and declares 'in the Great presence of the almighty tremendous God before the holly angels in Heaven and to all men on earth that every thing ... in this narrative is true'.[9] The confessional character of this work is of great interest, as are the details it gives about his social network and the ways he deluded people. Indeed, the autograph manuscript is valuable evidence for his actions and also allows a comparison with the autobiographies he had published three decades earlier.

These writings are so-called 'ego-documents', or sources that tell us something about someone's self-perception.[10] They are another means of self-fashioning, and as I suggest in Fuller's case, another way to support his impostures. However, the sense of self, rooted in a personal past, and the ways it is put down in writing, arise out of various

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[6] William Fuller, Autograph MS, The James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborne Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Osborn Shelves fc 66. Campbell's biography on Fuller does not mention the manuscript. A reference to it can be found in a footnote in Stephen Parks, *John Dunton and the English Book Trade. A study of his career with a checklist of his publications* (London, 1976), p. 75.

[7] Some parts contain typographic characteristics common to contemporary book style. For example, names and places are underlined to indicate Italics. The assumption is further supported by a letter to William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1730, whom he asked to publish another account. SP 36/19, ff. 97-101.

[8] He mentions his trial which appeared 'in the first part of my life twenty-nine years ago', i.e. in *The Whole Life* in 1703. Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 66.

[9] Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 101.

[10] Originally, the term 'egodocument' derives from the Dutch author and historian Jacques Presser (1899-1970), who meant texts in which someone intentionally, or unintentionally, reveals or conceals him or her self, his or her thoughts, feelings and actions. Rudolf Dekker, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Egodocuments and History. Autobiographical writing in its social context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum, 2002), pp. 7-20, at pp. 7-8. See also Jakob Presser, *Uit het werk van dr. J. Presser* (Amsterdam, 1969); Winfried Schulze, 'Das Wagnis der Individualisierung', in Thomas Cramer (ed.), *Wege in die Neuzeit* (Munich, 1988), pp. 270-86; Kaspar von Greyerz, 'Spuren eines vormodernen Individualismus in englischen Selbstzeugnissen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts', in Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 131-45; idem, *Vorsehungsglaube und Kosmologie. Studien zu englischen Selbstzeugnissen* (Göttingen, 1990).

social interactions and are closely related to the present in which it is recalled. In what follows I endeavour to analyse how Fuller represented himself and his surroundings and thus link the themes of autobiography and imposture. In the attempt to explain his impostures, two themes will be central: First, his sense of the mismatch between his own poverty and noble kin. Second, his double or 'poly-identity' in religious, and then social and political terms. How far was he influenced or compelled by his socio-cultural surroundings? How did he give experience and his shifting identities literary form?

In *The Whole Life* William Fuller states that he was born on 20 September 1670 in

'Milton next Sittingborn' in Kent, and the parish register records his baptism on 25

September: 'William, Son of Rob' et Catharine Fuller'.[11] In *The Life* he calls himself the

son of Robert Fuller, a scion of an ancient family, and in *The Whole Life* his father has

become the second son of the renowned preacher Thomas Fuller (1608-1661). The

origins of William Fuller's father remain unidentified. We possess no evidence that he

was, as Fuller states, born in Oxford in 1634, a Protestant, lived for a short period in

London where he married Fuller's mother, a Catholic, and that thereupon they moved to

Milton, a small town of about 800 or 900 inhabitants.[12] Fuller rejects the claim of his

enemies that his father was a butcher and avers that he was a wealthy grazier with an

estate of £200 per year, who during the Dutch wars had supplied a substantial part of the

fleet, and was still due an outstanding sum of £8000.[13] Yet the register of the Skinners'

Company in London lists William Fuller as the 'Son of Robert Fuller ... of Milton near

Sittingbourne ... Butcher dec[ease]d'.[14] Apart from this there is an entry in the hearth tax

assessment for Kent in 1664 that one Robert Fuller of the Borough of Milton was taxed

on four hearths, slightly above the average number of hearths in chargeable dwellings.[15]

Robert Fuller died one or two years after William's birth.[16]

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[11] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2; CKS, P 253/1/1, Parish Register for Milton-next-Sittingbourne. For the parish see also Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent* (Canterbury, 1798), Vol. IV, pp. 163-92.

[12] Christopher W. Chalkin, *Seventeenth-Century Kent. A social and economic history* (London, 1965), p. 30.

[13] Butcher or grazier, this was a fairly common area of dispute in the period. Fuller's father was probably raising cattle on a considerable scale, and supplying the navy. 'Grazier' sounded much more high-status, but an enemy would often use the label butcher. Fuller does not specify which Dutch war it was, most likely the second from 1664-67.

[14] GL, MS 30719/2, f. 299r. Entry of 4 January 1686/7; Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2; idem, *Life*, p. 1.

[15] The hearth tax was introduced in 1662 and was levied twice a year until 1689 (14 Charles II, c. 10). In the Hundred of Milton, households of three or four hearths formed 25 to 30 percent of the properties. *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment Lady Day 1664*, ed. Duncan Harrington (British Record Society, London, 2000), pp. 260, xvi.

[16] According to the biography, published by Abel Roper in 1692, he died a prisoner in the King's Bench. *The Life of William Fuller*, p. 1. See also *The Life and Unaccountable Actions of William*

According to the biographical texts, his mother, Catharine Fuller, derived from a more eminent background than his father. Fuller asserts she was the eldest daughter of Charles Herbert, Esquire, of Montgomeryshire in Wales, a family that due to persecution in Cromwell's time had fled to London, and was 'Cousin-German' of William Herbert, first Marquess of Powis (1617-1696).[17] By contrast, another biography, probably a pirated version of the 1692 edition, claims his mother was the 'Daughter of one *Sandy*'s an ordinary Farmer who was too gay a Dame for a Butchers Wife'.[18] According to Fuller, she was married three times, but only two can be held as certain. Her first husband, 'a Gentleman of her own Name and Family', died fourteen months after the marriage. Fuller's parents were married in 1656 in London, but then, for unknown reasons, settled in Milton.[19] We learn from the baptism register of Milton that of the marriage of Robert Fuller and Catharine six children were born, one daughter and five sons, of whom William was the youngest; at least the first two of them must have died in early childhood, one of whom had also been named William.[20] One son and two daughters stem from his mother's third marriage with one Thomas Packman, the eldest son of Thomas and Elizabeth Packman and baptized on 1 November 1644. According to Fuller he was a yeoman, whom his mother married two years after Robert Fuller had died; nothing is said about his religious affiliation.[21] That his mother married soon after her husband's death is

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Fuller, Alias Esq; Fuller, alias Colonel, alias Sir William, alias William Baron Fuller, The Notorious English Cheat (London, [1718?]), p. 2.

[17] William Herbert (1626-1696) was a Jacobite courtier, and close adviser of James II. See Victor Stater, 'Herbert, William, styled first marquess of Powis and Jacobite first duke of Powis (*c.* 1626-1696)', *DNB*.

[18] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2; Fuller, *Life*, p. 2; *Life of William Fuller*, p. 1; *The Life and Unaccountable Actions*, p. 2. The Herberts were an influential family in Kent, who also held the Hundred of Milton. The relation to these two families could not be proved, and as Fuller does not mention any uncle in the manuscript, he is likely to be an invention. See also Campbell, *Impostor*, pp. 13-4.

[19] Fuller, *Whole* Life, p. 2; idem, *Life*, p. 2. The *Life* does only mention the marriages to Robert Fuller and Thomas Packman.

[20] Robert, baptized on 24 September 1659; William, baptized on 3 August 1662; Catharine, baptized on 15 May 1664; Robert, baptized on 15 September 1667; Edward, baptized on 20 January 1668/9; William, baptized on 25 September 1670. The burial register for the period between 1657 and 1694 does not exist. CKS, P 253/1/1.

[21] William Fuller's father must have died between 1670 and 1672, if we are to believe that 'Thomas son of Thomas & Catharine Packman', baptized on 3 September 1672, is Fuller's

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a hint of her attractiveness as a marriage partner as marriage chances varied significantly with wealth.[22]

Interestingly, apart from the six years older sister Catharine and another unnamed stepsister of the first marriage, who, according to his published autobiographies, after the death of Charles Herbert, perhaps around 1696, inherited the whole estate, none of Fuller's siblings are mentioned in any of the texts. Unfortunately, we are unable to prove how many of the children actually survived, though the autograph manuscript mentions his sister a few times.[23] According to *The Life* his father died when he was only six months old, whereupon he was appointed a guardian, one Cornelius Harflete (or Hartflete), a gentleman of Kent with an estate of £500 a year.[24] He had allegedly left to William and Catharine a 'competent Fortune'. Whereas in his published autobiographies Fuller represents himself as the only son eligible to inherit his parents' property, he states in the manuscript that his sister gave him financial support.[25] The early death of his parents — his mother allegedly died when he was about twelve — made him dependent on several people. After his father's death, his uncle and his guardian Cornelius Harflete contested the wardship since both, with regard to the boy's inheritance, were averse to his being brought up by his stepfather, Thomas Packman. He was put under the care of a nurse until he was seven and ready for boarding school in Maidstone and Canterbury. He claimed to have enjoyed a proper education fitting for a gentleman's — or rather a tradesman's — son. He wrote:

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stepbrother. The two stepsisters were Elizabeth, baptized on 21 April 1674 and Mary on 14 November 1677. CKS, P 253/1/1; Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2.

[22] Jack Goody, 'Inheritance, Property and Women. Some comparative considerations', in idem, Joan Thirsk and E.P. Thompson (eds), *Family and Inheritance. Rural society in western Europe 1200-1800* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 10-36, at p. 12.

[23] Fuller, Autograph MS, ff. 44, 49, 74, 92, 96.

[24] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2; idem, *Life*, p. 2.

The Harflete's were an old Kentish family of Anglo-Norman origin, and a well-known royalist family. Cornelius Hartflete (or Harflete or Harfleete) was the son and heir of John Hartflete of Fleete, gentleman, and Margaret daughter of Edw. Lawrence of Tutshams Hall, Kent. The hearth tax records state that Cornelius Harfleet, gentleman, of the neighbouring Borough of Bobbing in the Hundred of Milton was taxed on ten hearths in 1664. Edward Bysshe, *A Visitation of the County of Kent, 1663-1668*, ed. George J. Armytage (Harleian Society, Vol. LIV, London, 1906), p. 75; *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment*, p. 268; Alan Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion 1640-60* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 42, 177, 244, 250, 268, 275.

[25] Fuller, Autograph MS, ff. 44, 49, 74.

... I was instructed in all Learning, that my Age render'd me capable of,
tho' in the *Latin* I was but an indifferent Proficient, for that Study was
not agreeable to me. I took much delight in learning Arithmethick [sic],
Merchants Accounts, and Navigation; in the Knowledge of these, I may
modestly say, that hardly any Youth was better instructed than I was at
14 Years of Age.[26]

Later he prefers to emphasise his more genteel accomplishments. He thus prides himself
on his fame in Kent, and his presence at festivities and weddings and among the local
nobility: 'I was very famous in *Kent*, for my Dancing and Playing on some Instruments of
Musick, insomuch, that I was always courted at all Balls, and Weddings, where People of
Quality and Fashion were'. He disliked boys' sports and preferred to 'be conversant with
grave aged Persons, and those above [him]', suggesting that he was someone set apart
from childhood. The motif can also be found in the journal of George Fox, who wrote 'I
had a Gravity and stayedness of Mind and Spirit, not usual in *Children*'.[27] Despite its
ambiguity, Fuller's description reminds us of Castiglione's ideal of *sprezzatura* – a
broadly based superiority in many qualities. Courtiers, of course, rejected all academic
pedantry.

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[26] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 3.
[27] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 3. George Fox, *A Journal or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry, of that Ancient, Eminent and Fearful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox* (London, 1694), p. 2. For the 'concept of the child and early adolescent as an inherently sacred and psychic being', see also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 207-10.
Yet, dancing was a common pastime throughout all social strata. Josiah Langdale of Nafferton in Yorkshire states: 'Dancing took much with the young People of our Town. ... The Dancing Master was a Fiddler and Jugler, and after we broke up School every Night he went to play his Tricks. I did not learn many Dances before it became an exceeding Trouble to my Soul and Spirit... After some time my Playfellows would entice me to Feasts, where young men and women meet to be merry ... and such Like was I invited to, under a Pretence to improve our Dancing.' Josiah Langdale, 'Some Account of the Birth, Education and Religious Exercises and Visitations of God to that faithful Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ, Josiah Langdale' (died 1723), Friends House Library, MS Box 10/10, cited in Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories. Popular fiction and its readership in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1981; Cambridge, 1983), pp. 176-77.

After his mother died, around 1682, Fuller was allegedly left in the hands of his uncle and his stepfather.[28] At one point, his uncle being away, he was left under the sole control of his stepfather, whose treatment of him soon changed from tenderness to cruelty. When Fuller had reached the age of fourteen and was entitled to choose his own guardian, Harflete, 'now in danger of being called to an Account for a very large Sum of Money, that he had in his Hands 14 Years', was keen to get him away from the stepfather; with the help of one Major Kitchell Harflete lured him away to London, where he first tried to make him an apprentice to one Captain Bayly of Stepney, a wealthy seafarer.[29] But Fuller stayed only a short while; it is possible that he endangered the reputation of the house and that he was dismissed.[30] He was then brought to one Dr. Nichols, an apothecary in Stepney, but since Fuller did not like it there either – he disliked the smell of the shop – he ended up with James Hartley, a skinner in Shoe Lane.[31] The Skinners' Company employed mainly sons of gentlemen, yeomen and husbandmen, and some of the masters were prosperous and reputable citizens. The register of the Skinners' Company lists Fuller's admittance on 4 January 1687, but does not show when and why he left the company, and it lists no more presentments by Hartley that would indicate his need of a new apprentice.[32] Fuller himself stated later that he did not regard the craft as appropriate for him, and that his master was a Protestant and

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[28] Fuller, *Life*, pp. 2-3.

[29] Fuller, *Life*, pp. 2-3; idem, *Whole Life*, p. 4.
This might have been Benjamin Baily, of Stepney whose will was recorded in the Commissary Court of London. Baily died 'in ship "Samuel"' in 1694. GL, 9168/27 f. 98v. There exists also one Samuel Bayly of Stepney, a skinner. GL, MS 30719/2, ff. 300r / 305r/ 301v/ 309v, Skinners Company, 'Index'.
It is likely that Harfleet, Packman or even the Fullers were acquainted with some relatives of Baily of the same or neighbouring parishes in the Hundred of Milton. One Thomas Bayly of the Borough of Sittingbourne was taxed on seven hearths, Richard Bayly, of the same parish, was taxed on two hearths. One Henry Bayly of St. Augustines Borough, was taxed on five hearths. *Kent Hearth Tax Assessment*, pp. 265, 266, 271. For Kitchell, see also Bysshe, *Visitation*, p. 92.

[30] In 1686, one William Fuller, bachelor, of Stepney was admonished to a creditor, a mariner. It remains open whether this was 'our' Fuller, and whether suchlike misdemeanour could even have been the reason for his dismissal from the Baily's. GL, 9168/25 f. 24r.

[31] Hartley had been admitted to the freedom only on 7 September 1686, after having been apprentice to one Richard Stephens. GL, MS 30719/2, f. 306r, Skinners Company, 'Index'.

[32] Fuller, *Life*, pp. 4-5; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 4-5; *Life of William Fuller*, p. 1; Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds. Structures of life in sixteenth-century London* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 269, 307-8; GL, MS 30719/2, f. 299.

an immoral person. Not only does he attempt to differentiate himself clearly from what he considered the base craft of the Skinners, he also stresses his noble upbringing. His master Hartley, on the other hand 'was a most sottish drunken Fellow', who, as is emphasized in *The Whole Life*, also forced him to go to church, whereupon Fuller stole away to Somerset House to hear mass or secretly celebrated prayers in his room.[33]

The move to the court at Whitehall is described very briefly. According to Fuller, it was one Sir John Burroughs, a Catholic relation of Fuller's mother, who liberated him from the unfortunate situation at Hartley's and put him in touch with the influential family of Lord Powis.[34] Powis was keen to get Fuller away from the Protestant Hartley as well as from Harflete, and let the famous Jesuit, Lewis Sabran and one Father Emmanuel who belonged to the Spanish ambassador, take care of him.[35] Fuller gives little information about the religious instruction he received from them and only stated that they were 'very zealous to get [him] from the Tuition of Protestants'.[36] Sabran and Powis moved to Whitehall, where, as page to Lady Melfort, the second wife of John Drummond, first Earl of Melfort,[37] Fuller allegedly witnessed the birth of the Prince of Wales in 1688. In *The Whole Life* the Queen inquires after him. She is impressed by his pious behaviour, and after learning that he was 'a Gentleman's Son, and a Kinsman of my Lord Powis', she makes him her own page of honour in her exile in St Germain.[38]

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[33] Fuller, *Life*, p. 5; idem, *Whole Life*, p. 6.

[34] Burroughs cannot be identified. One John Burroughs, a piecebroker, left a will of 8 January 1693. GL, 9171/45, ff. 5r-v.
William Herbert (1617-96), first Marquess and Duke of Powis, was the leader of a moderate Roman-Catholic group during James II's reign. In 1687 he was created Marquess and ordered to remove those who were against the Penal Laws and Test Act. In June 1688 his wife was made governess of the newborn Prince of Wales. See Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. 1, pp. 25, 43, 45, 318, 345, 421, 443; *DNB*.

[35] Lewis Sabran, a French Jesuit, arrived in England at the accession of James II. On the birth of the Prince of Wales he became chaplain to the prince. 'Disguised as a gentleman, in the suite of the Polish ambassador', he tried to escape to the Continent, was caught and thrown into prison, but soon after released on the king's order. He later escaped to Dunkirk. Thompson Cooper, 'Sabran, Lewis (1652-1732)', rev. Geoffrey Holt. *DNB*.

[36] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 9; idem, *Life*, p. 5.

[37] Euphemia (1652/3 1743) was the daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, a lord of session. In 1680, she became the second wife of John Drummond, the first Earl of Melfort (1649-1714). See Edward Corp, 'Drummond, John, styled first Earl of Melfort and Jacobite first duke of Melfort (1649-1714)', *DNB*.

[38] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 11-2, 21; idem, *Life*, p. 7.

The importance that contemporaries ascribed to both family and youth and the effects of upbringing for the further development of life is significant. The idea that tendencies to criminal behaviour were inherited was widespread and adds to Fuller's urge to explain this phase of his life, a theme explored further below.[39] Throughout his writings Fuller emphasises his distinctive social background. At the beginning of the narratives, following autobiographical convention, he outlines his family history, property, and education.

Not only was his father an important figure of patriarchal authority within the family, in particular regarding the lineage through which family property is transmitted,[40] but also a somewhat idealised protector. Despite his father's early death – if we are to believe Fuller's enemies, as a debtor – and his fatal choice of a guardian who then overshadowed the child's early life, Fuller clings to the image of a benevolent father figure.[41] And, in spite of telling a story of disrupted inheritance, and of conflict between uncle, step-father, guardian and heir, Fuller attempts to legitimise his status, following social conventions, stressing ties of kin. His mother plays an equally important role. Through her he came into contact with a step-father, a stepbrother and stepsisters, who all represented potential rivals and would later challenge his inheritance – according to Fuller, his stepsister through his mother's first marriage was allegedly in possession of the estate. However, the mother is not represented as malevolent. On her deathbed she warned her son against his appointed guardian, Cornelius Harflete; as mentioned above, his uncle's influence was by then diminishing, and Fuller soon fell under the control of his guardian.

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[39] John C. Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (London, 1992), pp. 26, 28. The claim that Fuller's father died a debtor might therefore well be a contemporary *topos*.
[40] See Jack Goody, 'Introduction', in idem et al. (eds), *Family and Inheritance*, pp. 1-9.
[41] For similar findings of parent-child relationships described in (Dutch) children's autobiographies, see Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland. From the Golden Age to Romanticism* (Basingstoke, 2000), ch. 12, esp. p. 102.

After Fuller had left the Skinners, kinship was replaced by new contacts with powerful people at the court. People such as Lord Powis and the Queen have replaced the skinner Hartley at the centre of his social network. He clearly wanted to avoid the image of an apprentice of low social standing fallen into bad company, a theme common in criminal biographies.[42] Fuller's account is very ambivalent, but it reveals a significant turning point in the story. Quitting his master has to be considered an essential point at which he lost the security of conventional social institutions such as the family and the Skinners' Company. By breaking away from conventional networks, he created greater mobility and personal freedom which thus facilitated (or forced) his self-fashioning of a 'new' personage. Acquaintance with powerful people was a crucial part of Fuller's status legitimisation, though at the same time this emphasis could be interpreted as 'status inconsistency', reflecting his position as a social upstart. As noted earlier, for instance in the case of Morrell, alleged acquaintance with authoritative figures functioned as an important element in the process of credit acquisition.

Fuller's narrative is a story of deprivation, with, for instance, some classic patterns of misused wardship, the truth of which it is impossible to tell. There are many examples of misused wardship, a practice frequently criticised from the sixteenth century, and debated in the House of Commons. The theme had a long tradition reaching back to the Middle Ages, and dramatic examples found their way into popular literature and music. An orphan or young and unmarried son could trigger severe family quarrels and intrigues in which parties fought over the wardship of a child in order to marry him later to one of their own.[43] Mary Carleton claimed to have been an orphan too, and though her

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[42] See Philip Rawlings, *Drunks, Whores and Idle Apprentices. Criminal biographies of the eighteenth century* (London, 1992), p. 19; Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account. The forms and functions of criminal biography in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 29, 47.

[43] See, for example, Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* (1597), John Marston's *The Scourge of Villainie* (London, 1598) or George Wilkins *The Miseries of Inforst Marriage* (London, 1607). Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 600-4; Noël James Menuge, *Medieval English Wardship in Romance and Law* (Cambridge, 2001); Jack Goody et al. (eds),

father left her without guardian or trustee, people around her designed to get hold of her estate.[44] As Gillian Spraggs noted, dispossession is a common theme in 'outlaw literature'. In Richard Head's *The English Rogue* (1665) a youngster joining a gang of highwaymen is advised that if he ever should be brought before judges, to make them pity him or even receive a pardon, he should tell them that

> I was born a Gentleman, and well educated, but being a younger brother,
>
> I had not where withal allowed me for a subsistance, and rather then I
>
> would live beneath my birth, or disparage the stock from whence I came
>
> (here fetching a deep sigh, and looking very sadly) necessity
>
> constraining me to supply my wants, I fell into these wicked courses,
>
> which will made them think you are some misled young man whom
>
> temptations had drawn aside, and so cause them to take pity of your
>
> condition.[45]

The motif of dispossessed inheritance occurs frequently throughout Fuller's narratives. His childhood, as it has been roughly reconstructed from the sources, is characterised by his early orphaning and subjection to a stepfather, an uncle and a guardian, whose behaviour may have been unpredictable and arbitrary, and his break from the apprenticeship, facts which all suggest the absence of stable conventional social relationships. It is uncertain how much of this account is true, and not of primary importance whether Fuller was actually inspired by popular literature. But the theme was exaggerated to arouse pity in his readers, and it has to be understood in the context in which Fuller wrote, as a prisoner for debt. Its function can be regarded as both social criticism and an assertion of native genius.

Family and Inheritance. For the debate on primogeniture in England, see chapter 7 by Joan Thirsk, esp. pp. 187-89.

[44] Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately Stiled the German Princess, truely Stated: With an Historical Relation of Her Birth, Education, and Fortunes; In An Appeal To His Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert* (London, 1663), sig. B6v-B7r.

[45] Gillian Spraggs, *Outlaws and Highwaymen. The cult of the robber in England from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century* (London, 2001), pp. 7, 24-36, 38-9, 68. Richard Head, *The English Rogue* (London, 1665), Part I, p. 247.

Although the romance and picaresque novel do not provide clear models for his narrative, Fuller's account of his childhood recalls some characteristics of both hero and picaro.[46] *The Whole Life* contains an interesting passage in which Fuller describes how a gentlewoman gave him a book entitled *Dangerfield's Rambles*, which he apparently read eight times, and how 'one Evening, as [he] was walking in the garden, a Thought came into [his] Mind, that [he] should have almost the same Fate'. Was he blaming literature or has the whole passage to be interpreted in the context of providence?[47] In contrast to what Mary Jo Kietzman notes of Mary Carleton's writings, in Fuller's published texts, providence and situational constraints outweigh personal decisions, whereas Carleton's choices, 'the roles she rejects, and the personage she finally creates are driven by her own desire to believe an ideal self into existence and to test the strength of that personage against forces in the world that would annihilate it'.[48] Like a romance hero, Fuller is born into a (more or less) worthy family, but because of the loss of patrimony, is forced out of his stable social position. He then has to free himself from the physical constraint of his guardian, his family substitute, and then from his master. Instead of serving his apprenticeship, he escapes ordinary society to take on the task of 'guarding' the Queen and King, whereby he regains his lost status and indeed climbs the social ladder. As for Carleton, whose 'girlhood is spent strategizing ways to escape from a succession of

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[46] For a description of the two, see Barbara A. Babcock, '"Liberty's a Whore". Inversions, marginalia, and picaresque narrative', in idem (ed.), *The Reversible World. Symbolic inversion in art and society* (Ithaca, 1978), pp. 95-116. See also Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore, 2002), ch. 3.
Daniel Defoe's heroes such as Moll Flanders, Colonel Jacque or Captain Singleton are orphans, Robinson Crusoe and Roxana leave their families early.
[47] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 14. For Thomas Dangerfield see further below.
James Sharpe mentions an example of a late nineteenth-century criminal who blamed the reading of 'highwaymen's books' for 'his slide into delinquency'. *The Malefactor's Register* claimed that in *The Beggars Opera*, the character of Macheath, who is represented as a gentleman robber, 'has tended, beyond any piece of writing, to increase the number of thieves'. James Sharpe, *Dick Turpin. The myth of the English highwaymen* (London, 2005), p. 172. *The Malefactor's Register; or, the Newgate and Tyburn Calendar*, 5 Vols. (London, [1779], Vol. IV, p. 197, cited in Spraggs, *Outlaws*, p. 206.
On the other hand, we could also interpret Fuller's reference as his longing for adventure and independence. According to Rudolf Dekker's analysis of Dutch autobiographies, this was a common theme in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Dekker, *Childhood*, p. 101.
[48] Mary Jo Kietzman, *The Self-Fashioning of an Early Modern Englishwoman. Mary Carleton's lives* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 92.

increasingly tight confinements', or the rogues and rebels in Barbara Babcock's study, 'constraints provide spurs to imaginative invention'.[49] As Babcock states, the

exile-and-return pattern emphasizes the necessity for the hero to go

beyond the margins of society and there undergo a liminal experience to

find his sense of self and thus realize (often with the aid of mediating

figures) symbolic power through victory in his tasks.[50]

But unlike the picaro, who 'declines to climb the social ladder through the formula of hard work and reward', Fuller emphasizes his dangerous task, as we will see, which in spite of involving deception, was to the benefit of the royal couple, and indeed, of the whole nation.

Fate and constraint had already marked the story of his forefathers, as well as the moment when Fuller was 'unfortunate[ly] born'.[51] These are crucial themes throughout his autobiographical writings, and generally of early modern autobiographical texts, and not solely of marginalised people.[52] Authors frequently refer to the story of Job (Job, 3.1-3). John Dunton, for instance, wrote:

I have too often Arraign'd the Divine Providence that Nature ever

Travell'd with such an *Unhappy Birth*; it ... was almost a Relief to me to

cry out with *Job*, 3.3. *Let the Day perish wherein I was Born, and the*

Night in which it was said, there, is a Man-Child Conceiv'd.[53]

Fuller was called away, as if by providence, from a conventional profession which would not have been appropriate to his social standing. He had not only to run away from his master – perhaps he did – but to meet his 'relative', who then freed him from his

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[49] Kietzman, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 91.

[50] Babcock, "'Liberty's a Whore'", p. 101.

[51] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 2.

[52] For example Ralph Josselin. See Kaspar von Greyerz, *Vorsehungsglaube und Kosmologie. Studien zu englischen Selbstzeugnissen* (Göttingen, 1990), p. 105.

[53] John Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton Late Citizen of London; Written by Himself in Solitude. With an Idea of a New Life, Wherein is Shewn How he'd think, speak and Act, might he Live over his Days again: Intermix'd with the New Discoveries the Author has made in his Travels Abroad, and in his Private Conversation at Home. Together with the Lives and Characters of a Thousand persons now Living in London, &c.* (London, 1705), p. 5.

unfortunate life. Fuller thus justifies the course of his actions by a combination of providence, social origin and kin.

So far we have been trying to shed some light on Fuller's social background; we shall now focus on his description of his life at the court of the Stuarts.[54] The time he left his master has been identified as a crucial crossroad – in his writings as well as in reality. He left conventional institutions behind and delved into a world of anonymity – illusion and hope. His kin network was going to be more or less replaced by a new circle of powerful figures, a situation that reminds us of Sigmund Freud's notion of 'family romance'. His appointment as page of honour at St Germain is the apex of Fuller's career. In what follows it should become clear how he used elements and motifs from court society for his self-fashioning, to emphasize his desire for moral and chivalrous conduct, and all above to launder his own personality and conscience.

The last event in Fuller's career supported by archival evidence is his admittance into the Skinners' Company on 4 January 1687. Assuming that he remained with the Skinners for only a year, his sojourn at the Stuart court would have been a little more than two years – until, as we will see, he turned up as a witness at the trial of Matthew Crone in May 1690.[55] There is no evidence of his actions in this period, so that we depend wholly on his own words. Fuller thought himself predestined for the court, and stressed that this place alone brought him happiness and blessing. He had risen as if from the gutter to the court, where he found a substitute for his lost moral and emotional world. However, his account is an obviously stylised representation of himself, his supposed 'new family', and in addition, it offers a very idealised image of court society. As he tells us:

> In this Noble Family [Melfort's] I was very happy, as I was in My Lord
>
> Powis's; for as they lived in the greatest Splendor imaginable, so did

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[54] The analysis in this section depends mainly on his published autobiographies, since the manuscript contains only a few pages on his time with the Stuarts. It lacks an account, for example, of how he actually got to the court, and regarding the time there, Fuller states, he has nothing more to say. Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 22.

[55] For the trial of Matthew Crone, see *State Trials*, Vol. XII, pp. 1238-246.

their Virtue shine most bright by their noble and Modest Examples; for

in those great Families, no Swearing nor baseness was to be heard, nor

Drunkenness, nor other Vices to be seen, all the Servants were kept

strictly every Day to a religious Exercise, and it were well if all

Protestants did the same.[56]

According to his own account he belonged to the small group of confidants of the

royal couple. He describes himself as sharing the position of the French Comte de

Lauzun, who had won both the King's and the Queen's absolute favour and confidence,

or Ralph Sheldon, one of the King's equerries.[57] Like Lauzun and Sheldon, he was

allegedly among the group (of about fifty people) who accompanied the Queen and the

newborn Prince on their flight into exile in France, organised by the Comte de Lauzun

and François Riva.[58] He also tells us about King James's arrest with Edward Hales in a

boat near Faversham, on their attempt to leave England,[59] and how he met the King on the

way back to London and delivered letters from the Queen. He frequently repeats the deep

gratitude of the royal couple, and that he often had 'the Honour to kiss her Majesty's

Hands, and was thanked for [his] Care and faithful Service'.[60]

As briefly noted above, Fuller described himself as part of a greater divine plan.

But equal emphasis is given to his virtuous and moral behaviour. His piety, for instance,

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[56] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 10.

[57] For Antoine Nompar de Caumont, Duc de Lauzun (1633-1723), see Jean-Christian Petitfils, *Lauzun ou l'insolente séduction* (Paris, 1987).
Ralph Sheldon, offspring of a long-established Catholic family, was appointed equerry to James II in 1685. He joined the Stuarts in exile where he remained with them until his death in 1723. He had three other brothers who were all in James II's service. P. J. C. Elliot-Wright, 'Sheldon, Dominic (*b.* in or before 1633, *d.* 1721)', *DNB*; Campana De Cavelli, *Les dernièrs Stuarts à Saint-Germaine en Laye. Documents inédits et authentiques Puisés aux Archives publiques et privée*, 2 Vols. (London, 1871), Vol. II, p. 472.
According to Bishop Burnet, Neville Payne (1672-1710) was 'the most active and determined of all King James II's agents after the Revolution'. Bryan Bevan, *King William III. Prince of Orange, the first European* (London, 1997), p. 153.

[58] For accounts of the flight (in which Fuller is never mentioned), see Campana De Cavelli, *Les dernièrs Stuarts*, Vol. II, pp. 379-15; *Mémoires de Madame de La Fayette* (Paris, [n.d.]), pp. 312-22; Mary F. Sanders, *Lauzun. Courtier and Adventurer*, 2 Vols. (London, 1908), Vol. II, pp. 470-84 based on the accounts in Campana De Cavelli; Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 16-7; idem, *Life*, p. 8.

[59] See also the letter by Hoffmann to the emperor in, De Cavelli, *Les dernièrs Stuarts*, pp. 421-26, esp. pp. 423-24, 433-40.

[60] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 25.

had attracted the Queen's attention. Whereas at his former master's place he had to pray secretly, he could fully devote himself to religious practice at the court. The Queen, as Fuller tells us, was impressed by his daily prayers in the chapel. She said to Lady Sophia Bulkeley that 'she had observed [him] to be very devout at the Chappel ... that she hardly ever saw [him] turn [his]back to the Altar'. To Lord Powis she remarked that 'she was extreamly taken with the modest Behaviour of ... *Lady Melfort's* page, and since he [Fuller] had so near a Relation to his Lordship, she would gladly receive him into her Service'.[61]

When Fuller endeavours to avoid the negative image of male youth set out in numerous moral tracts, he puts emphasis on the more 'favourable image of youth' we can find in other texts that 'presented an image of valiant and heroic youth as moral exemplar'.[62] As Roger Chartier has suggested, authors are always dependent on textuality and context,[63] and we should remember that Fuller's published autobiographies were meant to appeal to a contemporary readership. Of course we lack any detailed information of his literary sources, but we can assume that he was familiar with a whole body of texts including ballads, chapbooks, almanacs, the Bible and so on, from which he might have drawn elements. Francis Kirkman, for instance, wrote how reading books of knight errantry pleased him 'beyond measure' adding that he 'had such a fond and idle Opinion, that [he] might in time prove to be some great Person';[64] Carleton claimed to have read history and romances 'and other Heroical Adblandiments' and later 'thought it high time to put all the Speculation and Theory into practice'.[65] A number of historians

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[61] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 11-2. Lady Sophia Bulkeley (1660-1718), was appointed as a lady of the bedchamber to Queen Mary in 1685, and attended her at the birth of the Prince of Wales (1688). She was one of the deponents who swore as to the truth of the birth in October, and followed with her children the Stuarts to St Germain. See Jennett Humphreys, 'Bulkeley [Stuart], Lady Sophia (*Fl.* 1660-1718)', rev. S. M. Wynne, *DNB*.

[62] Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority. Formative experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), p. 46.

[63] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books. Readers, authors, and libraries in Europe between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 28-9.

[64] Francis Kirkman, *The Unlucky Citizen. Experimentally Described in the various misfortunes of an unlucky Londoner* (London, 1673), pp. 11-3.

[65] Carleton, *Case*, sig. B12r-B12v.

have argued that ballads and chapbooks stimulated self-identification and provided vital elements that helped to create 'a sense of "apprentice culture" and identity'.[66] As Paul Griffiths noted,

> [b]allads and chapbooks related the memorable histories of courageous apprentices who joined the crusade against the Turk or the war against the French for "famous England", the greater glory of the monarch, and their city of London, earning battle honours and quick promotion through the ranks to captain.[67]

Fuller tried hard to erase all the negative characteristics, vices and sins which moralists attributed to youth, and to construct an image of a pious and civil young man. He thus offers the image of an immaculate, strong and active young male, which also formed 'standard subjects' of the last dying speeches at the gallows.[68] Not only was he a close witness of what went around the royal family, but he also earned honour as a messenger by delivering both personal letters and weighty political information. In several passages, he also attests his chivalrous conduct with regard to women. He had always admired the female sex, and women were fond of him – a claim perhaps designed also to counter the accusation of homosexuality by his enemies.[69] For instance, a desire to prove his knightly

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[66] Spufford, *Small Books*, pp. 55, 219-57; Bernard Capp, 'Popular Literature', in Barry Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1985), pp. 198-243; idem, 'English Youth Groups and "The Pinder of Wakefield"', in Paul Slack (ed.), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 212-18; Steven R. Smith, 'The London Apprentices as Seventeenth-Century Adolescents', in Slack (ed.), *Rebellion*, pp. 219-32; Sommerville, *Discovery*, p. 81; Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox. Merchants and craftsmen in Elizabethan popular literature* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 107-30, 161-213; Alexandra Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England c.1580-1640', *P&P*, 167 (2000), pp. 75-106.

[67] Griffiths, *Youth*, pp. 46-7.

[68] See Griffiths, *Youth*, ch. 1; J.A. Sharpe, '"Last Dying Speeches". Religion, ideology and public execution in seventeenth-century England', *P&P*, 107 (1985), pp. 144-67.

[69] *Life of Wm. Fuller, alias Fullee*, pp. 59-60. Fuller's connection to Titus Oates might offer only slim evidence. Oates, whose homosexuality was known, married a wealthy widow in 1693; maybe he had always been bisexual. John Kenyon speculates about a circle of homosexuals among the Roman Catholic community to which Oates gained access. See Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, pp. 301, 54-5; Paul Hammond, 'Titus Oates and "Sodomy"', in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Culture and Society in Britain, 1600-1800* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 85-101. More generally, see Caroline Bingham, 'Seventeenth-Century Attitudes Toward Deviant Sex', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 1 (1971), pp. 447-68; Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment. Attitudes to sex and sexuality in Britain since the Restoration*

virtues and superiority to Queen Mary's guards is obvious in his story of the fire in Whitehall. We remember that Fuller had switched allegiance in 1689. On 9 April 1691, only a few days after a short stay in prison for debt, Fuller was on the way to the Queen's supper at Whitehall, where he arrived in his chair attended by his footman.[70] In a state of utter confusion, in darkness, smoke and fire, the Queen and her ladies, who were in great despair some having 'all their Hair about their Ears, and in a strange Confusion', recognised Fuller, who to his astonishment realised that they had been left without the protection of a man. The Queen commanded him to find 'her Guards' (the Yeomen), whom he discovered 'running about, and enquiring for the Queen'.[71]

In addition to his religious zeal and chivalrous behaviour, Fuller depicts himself as clever, trustworthy, and with knowledge that made him an ideal messenger: 'I had a perfect knowledge of those Roads, and was known to most in the Country, and having been used to Travel, the Queen [Mary of Modena] adjudged me a proper Person'. As he writes in *The Life*, nobody else was fit for the task.[72] Fuller always promised to fulfil his duties, even at the risk of life. Through the success of his first mission into England, he was chosen 'to be one of those who were to be sent upon matters of intrigue', and was eventually made page of honour to the Queen.[73] Indeed, the enormous risk that spies ran should not be forgotten. In France, cases of espionage often ended in executions and in England there was also the 'possibility of judicial torture'.[74] Fuller claims to have enjoyed not only the support of the royals but also of the public, which was, given the fact he was

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(London, 1991), ch. 3; Alan Bray, 'The Body of the Friend. Continuity and change in masculine friendship in the seventeenth century', in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 65-84.

[70] The fire on 9 April 1691 is recorded in *The London Gazette*, 13 April 1691; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. I, p. 206; John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. Esmond S. de Beer, 6 Vols. (Oxford, 1955), Vol. V, p. 47.

[71] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 61.

[72] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 18; idem, *Life*, p. 8.

[73] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 21. This claim cannot be confirmed and Fuller does not mention it in the autograph manuscript.

[74] Pierre Burger, 'Spymaster to Louis XIV. A study of the papers of the Abbé Eusèbe Renaudot', in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy. Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 111-37, at p. 113. See also Alan Marshall, 'Irish Spies and Plotters in Seventeenth-Century Europe', *Irish Studies Review*, 9 (1994), pp.7-12, at pp. 8-9; idem, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994).

a secret agent, highly unlikely. His adversaries, he boasts on the other hand, never recognised him at all. Fuller, for example, did not hold back from visiting Jacobites such as Edward Hales in the Tower, and he ridicules the guards, who despite a warrant against him failed to identify him.[75] When, some time later, in 1689, he was apprehended, examined and searched, none of his secret messages was found:

> my Papers were too secure for him to find out, some being in Keys,
>
> others made up in the Moulds of my Buttons, and so covered with Silk or
>
> Silver, which I wore on my Cloaths, and some Letters I had sowed up in
>
> my Boots, within the Linings.[76]

His fame, as he prides himself, was not limited to the English exiles. In St Germain he was introduced as 'the young messenger' to the French king, who was more than contented with his activities, gave him presents and even asked him to become part of the royal 'Guard du Corps'. The French king provided him with passes and letters of recommendation that enabled him to travel freely across the country, and when France increased strict controls over foreign agents, he was one of the very few who were not affected by the measures at all.[77] Throughout the narratives Fuller stresses the dangerous tasks he had to fulfil. That he was often controlled underlines the potency of his opponents. Thus in the service of the Stuarts he represents himself as the young and clever hero, who surmounts his adversaries, and faces all dangers with bravery. And eventually Fuller was to make himself the focal point within a massively elaborate conspiracy.

The motif of Fuller as one of the elect has been briefly mentioned, but in reality his position depended simply on the King's and Queen's sympathy. It is surprising that he seems to have been sheltered from the complex competitive mechanisms of court society, of which Norbert Elias reminds us.[78] Although he surmounts potential rival agents such as

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[75] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 25.
[76] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 31.
[77] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 23,27; idem, *Life*, p. 16.
[78] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford, 1983), esp. ch. 5.

Matthew Crone and Rowland Tempest, we do not hear from Fuller that he had to compete for status with other courtiers; his ascent and his place appear very straightforward.[79] It is entirely plausible that Fuller was among the many minor and often dubious figures that followed James into exile, though we possess no evidence from official sources; in the autograph manuscript he reaffirmed that as a messenger he had travelled more than twenty times between France and England. At least, as will be shown below, we can prove that he was in William III's service.[80]

Fuller's time at court may be considered a vital phase in shaping his strategies of self-fashioning. On the one hand, the glamour and pomp of court made an obvious impression on him. He describes how he acquired rich clothes and footmen, and that he was invited to take part in all kinds of ceremonies and festivities and witnessed the pomp of Louis XIV. For instance, before James II's campaign in Ireland, a ceremony was held in the church of Nôtre-Dame in Paris, which was, as Fuller recounts, a most spectacular event.[81] The glorification of Louis XIV and his court might here also be seen as a glorification of the English king, and indeed also of himself, for he had the privilege to escort James 'in the King's leading Coach' and to observe the 'Nobility of France ... and the Ladies ...attired with Ornaments of Jewels and other riches beyond all Expressions'.[82] The admiration we can detect in his words does not hide Fuller's self-glorification, having accompanied the king in such strictly regulated royal rituals. With regard to the potential readership, his account addresses specific psychological expectations of contemporaries, in particular their fascination with glory. Courtly ceremonies were rarely public, and thus beyond the imagination of ordinary folks. But given the fact that kings were still widely held as semi-divine authorities, the glory that surrounded their pomp

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[79] Crone and Tempest were Jacobite spies. With Fuller's assistance, Crone was captured and tried. See below.
[80] Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 22; *Calendar of Treasury Books (CTB)*. See further below.
[81] Fuller means probably the mass on 27 February 1689, in which James II invested Lauzun with the Order of the Garter. See Sanders, *Lauzun*, pp. 492-93; Edwin and Marion Sharpe Grew, *The English Court in Exile. James II. at Saint-Germain* (London, 1911), pp. 145-46. In contrast, the war in Ireland, was 'bloody and long'. Tim Harris, *Revolution. The great crisis of the British monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), pp. 445-50, at p. 445.
[82] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 21, 25-6.

and rituals prompted both admiration and deep respect.[83] By making himself an active

player in this spectacle Fuller projects this magnificence back on himself.

However, apart from this glamorous side of court life there is also another,

perhaps more realistic, aspect concerning the exiled court of James II. In her analysis of

Mary Carleton, Kietzman suggests that the Restoration context of exiled royals, gentry

and even lower-class people 'was a de-differentiating experience: it blurred the line

dividing royalty from poverty, and loosened the absolutely determining effect class had

on the possible roles a person could perform', which might have inspired Carleton to

invent her new identity.[84] This may be a plausible explanation for Fuller too. Not only

does he regard his own family, back in the Restoration period, as a victim of deprivation,

but during the Glorious Revolution he witnessed a situation in which James's kingship

became meaningless.[85] William's invasion ruined Fuller's prospects. In Fuller's mind,

and in that of many other fervent Jacobites, James continued to be their king, and

although the pretentious life in St Germain was only a fading echo of lost kingship, they

kept dreaming of future prospects. As Fuller wrote later, 'I knew how great things I might

expect if King James was restored'.[86]

However, this explanation should not be overvalued. Again, thousands of

contemporaries went through similar experiences and yet the troubled times did not result

in a flood of impersonators; people like Carleton and Fuller were clearly exceptions. It

seems more reasonable to argue that micro-historical factors, such as the competitive and

perfidious milieu of spies and informers, and court society in general, might have had

some bearing on Fuller's behavioural strategies, which involved the frequent switching of

roles and identity. Ceremonies certainly served to underpin the kingdom's unity and

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[83] As Peter Burke points out, there was also a more cynical view of royal display which considered it as 'vanity, megalomania or narcissism'. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (London, 1992), p. 11.

[84] Kietzman, *Self-Fashioning*, pp. 108-9.

[85] A paradigmatic scene is when a furious mob insults King James on his attempted escape in disguise, and called him an "old rogue", an "ugly, leanjawed hatched-faced Jesuite" and a "popish dog". Harris, *Revolution*, p. 303. See also Fuller, *Life*, p. 8; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 18-20.

[86] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 39.

strength, but behind the scenes there was a different reality of intrigue and competition. Not only was it common to spy on others, for example, as Elton has shown, on religious nonconformists.[87] The Renaissance court may have cultivated civility, but it was also a milieu of rivalry and suspicion, where the success of one was most often at the expense of another.[88] In his analysis of the relationship between intelligence, sovereignty and individual in Renaissance England, John Michael Archer elaborates the ideas of Norbert Elias on the historical relationship between sovereignty and surveillance. He argues that 'the techniques of surveillance were firmly rooted in the court politics of the pre-Enlightenment state ruled by a personal sovereign' and were not primarily a creation of the modern state, as Michel Foucault suggested in *Discipline and Punish*. Court society fostered a contingent relationship between monarch and courtier as well as among courtiers which was based on the gathering and use of information.[89] The world of nobles mingled with an underworld of 'devil's nut-hooks', as base informers were called in *The Character of an Informer* (1675), who assembled in taverns and bawdyhouses and with whom Fuller must have been connected.[90] Secret services in the seventeenth century were relatively loosely organised institutions and rather an 'amateur business', with limited control over the many dubious and untrustworthy agents who tried hard to play themselves off against each other.[91] The court provided many opportunities to climb the social ladder, but the risk of failure was great, and great deeds were soon forgotten. Richard Kingston, for example, experienced a similar fate, and tried his hand at

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[87] Elton, *Policy and Police*, pp. 327-82.

[88] See also Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility. Changing Codes of conduct in early modern England* (Oxford, 1998), esp. pp. 36-8, 118-28, 199-206; Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege. The social tropes of Elizabethan courtesy literature* (Berkeley, 1984), esp. chs. 4 and 5.

[89] John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence. Spying and court culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford, 1993), p. 6.

[90] *The Character of an Informer. Wherein His Mischeivous Nature, and Leud Practices are Detected* (London, 1675), p. 1.

[91] Hugh Douglas, *Jacobite Spy Wars. Moles, rogues and treachery* (Phoenix Mill, 1999), p. 4. See also Geoffrey Elton, 'Informing for Profit. A sidelight on Tudor methods of law-enforcement', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 11 (1953-55), pp. 149-67; Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 165-73.

pamphleteering; among other texts, he produced a pamphlet on Fuller.[92] The reference in Fuller's narrative to the adventurer Thomas Dangerfield is thus not surprising. They had a lot in common. Fuller was probably not even in London, when in July 1685, after having been whipped and on the way back to the prison, Dangerfield was involved in a fight in which he instantly died.[93] Both were young men involved in espionage and plots, and both shifted between different factions and social milieux ranging from noble households to the London underworld. Dangerfield is most famous for inventing evidence of a conspiracy, which became known as the Meal-Tub plot and in which he turned against his former confidante Elizabeth Cellier,[94] but ended up in Newgate. Later he operated as a priest catcher and witness against several Catholics. After his pension was cut off in 1681 he travelled around the country and defrauded people by several means.[95] According to one pamphlet, he passed himself off as the Duke of Monmouth; he also claimed to possess the power to cure the king's evil, and pretended to knight what the pamphlet referred to the 'Scum of the Country', in return for money.[96]

Fraud and dissimulation, as Jeroen Duindam states, were the *pendants* to courtly ceremonies.[97] As well as one's official role, it was personal behaviour that determined prestige within court society and favour with the king and queen, a fact that is clearly reflected in Fuller's descriptions. However long he really stayed there, the way in which members of the court continuously weighed each other's expressions, gestures and utterances may well have left its traces, fostering techniques of observing people and, as

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[92] *Life of Wm. Fuller, alias Fullee*. See also W. A. J. Archbold, 'Kingston, Richard (*b. c.*1635, *d.*1710?)', rev. M. E. Clayton, *DNB*.

[93] Dangerfield was hit with a cane in his eye. For the trial of Robert Frances, who was executed for killing Dangerfield, see *OBP* (3 March 2005), July 1685, trial of Robert Frances (t16850716-9). Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV, p. 293.

[94] For Elizabeth Cellier, see Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon. Catholicism, gender, and seventeenth-century print culture* (Ithaca, 1999), esp. ch. 4. See also Cellier's most important tract: Elizabeth Cellier, *Malice Defeated: Or a Brief Relation of the Accusation and Deliverance of Elizabeth Cellier* (London, 1680).

[95] Jeaffreson, *MCR*, Vol. IV (London, 1892), pp. 92, 121. Alan Marshall, 'Dangerfield, Thomas (1654-1685)', *DNB*. See also idem, *Intelligence and Espionage*, pp. 210-15.

[96] *Duke of Dangerfield Declaring How He Represented The D. of Mon--- in the Country* (London, 1685).

[97] Jeroen Duindam, 'Norbert Elias und der frühneuzeitliche Hof. Versuch einer Kritik und Weiterführung', *Historische Anthropologie*, 6 (1998), pp. 370-87, at p. 380.

Elias remarks, a 'specific form of *self-observation*'.[98] During this period the young Fuller gained the experience, which enabled him later to dupe people, rival spies, politicians and ministers, and those who simply lent him money. Despite the fact that much more influential and politically experienced people stood behind him, it is obvious that he needed the ability to analyse and assess both (political) circumstances and individual characters to succeed. Finally, the exaggerated and distorted descriptions of Fuller's role at court reflect the general insecurities of both an agent's and a courtier's life as well as his own uncertain status. With regard to the conditions in which he wrote the narratives, it is perhaps not farfetched to suggest that he took refuge in the memory of the happy hours at court; perhaps, in many of his lines we may detect the feelings of lost happiness.

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[98] Elias, *Court Society*, p. 105.

3. THE DOWNFALL OF A HUMBLE SERVANT

Fuller regarded himself as a crucial player on the political stage under James II, but still more so under William III. As mentioned already, apart from his own claims, we have no direct evidence about his service for James and his Queen. We should therefore not take all descriptions of himself as a messenger for the Stuarts, and of his time at St Germain, at face value, but rather read his accounts with regard to the struggle in which he later became involved. We may note another turning point in his narratives at the moment he was, as he tells us, caught by William's men – at a time when he in fact entered into the King's service.[99] How can this turning point be explained? Was it easier to construct a plausible but invented story about a time he was unknown to many, than to provide a distorted story of incidents that were better known to a broader public? It was in the early 1690s that he became a public figure. Yet at this point it might also be appropriate to remind ourselves of the context in which the apologetic texts were written in 1701 and 1703 respectively, a situation in which the author desperately attempted to destroy his negative reputation and regain his social status. For now, we meet Fuller in his social decline though not yet at the nadir of his career. At the time he wrote his narratives, in terms of his social as well as emotional relations, his individual identity had become phantasmasized, unreal, and split. Since this period was in fact the real cause of writing his autobiographies, it needs to be explored and reconstructed in more detail.

It is much easier to describe Fuller's life from the early 1690s, and to compare his own written account with other sources. The 1690s were haunted by conspiracies, plots and intrigues. Socio-economic problems added to the general unrest and encouraged political developments, of which a high demand for informers who rummaged about the London underworld was one result.[100] William III made great efforts to improve his

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[99] Fuller, *Life*, p. 15; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 36-40.
[100] See Tim Wales, 'Thief-Takers and Their Clients in Later Stuart London', in Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (eds), *Londinopolis. Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 64-84, esp. pp. 70-2.

intelligence service, and put his close friend, William Bentinck, in charge of it.[101] And

indeed, through it, Fuller became suddenly a public figure, uncovered from the shadowy

underworld of spies. It is not clear how and when exactly he was apprehended by

William's secret service, but allegedly by the same men who had lured him away from

his stepfather to London, his former guardian Cornelius Harflete and his nephew Major

Kitchell, and it was probably in autumn 1689 or early 1690.[102] His arrest was followed by

interrogation and "brainwashing", executed by John Tillotson, then Dean of St. Paul's, a

strong admirer of William III and Mary and a stern anti-Catholic who was still convinced

that Catholics had deliberately burnt London in 1666. Like most spies who were caught,

Fuller had to choose between imprisonment and switching allegiance to the enemy. Fuller

was made to change sides, and work as a double agent, and compelled to convert to

Protestantism in order to do 'all ... to promote the safety of the present Government and

for the Protestant Religion'.[103] In May 1690, the Jacobite agents Matthew Crone and

Rowland Tempest were caught coming with letters from France. Crone was thought to be

an important figure communicating with James II and to be organising a rebellion. He

was sentenced to death but several times reprieved, in the hope he would deliver a full

confession. Crone was eventually freed and probably went to France, whereas his

companion, Tempest, went insane and died in prison.[104] The story about Crone is

mentioned in several of Fuller's published texts, but the most detailed account he wrote to

the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1730 and in the autograph manuscript.[105] Fuller claimed

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[101] Douglas, *Jacobite Spy Wars*, p. 7; See also John Macky's *Memoirs the Secret Services of John Macky, Esq.* (London, 1733).

[102] Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 22. See also Campbell, *Impostor*, pp. 51-52.

[103] Fuller, *Life*, p. 14-5; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 37-39. For Tillotson, see Isabel Rivers, 'Tillotson, John (1630-1694)', *DNB*. See also Marshall, *Intelligence*, pp. 126-27.

[104] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, pp. 53-4; idem *Diary*, pp. 72-3; John Dalrymple, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland. From the Dissolution of the last Parliament of Charles II. till the Capture of the French and Spanish Fleets at Vigo*, 3 Vols. (1790; Farnborough, 1970), Vol. III, Part II, Book V, p. 14; Henry Earl of Clarendon, *The Diary of Henry Earl of Clarendon. For Part of the Year 1687; The Years 1688, and 1689; and Part of the Year 1690* (Oxford, 1763), pp. 239-41, 245-48, 250; Thomas Ailesbury, *Memoirs of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury. Written by himself,* 2 Vols. (Roxburghe Club, London, 1890), Vol. I, pp. 281, 283. For the sworn statements of Crone, see *HMC*, 71, Finch, Vol. 3, pp. 329-45.

[105] SP 36/19, ff. 129-43, 'Archbishop of Canterbury to (Newcastle)'; Fuller, Autograph MS, ff. 23-40.

to have met Crone in February 1690 in St Germain, already as a double agent, where he had allegedly introduced him to Mary of Modena and taken care of him. They went together on missions, delivering letters both to Louis XIV and James II in Ireland. Later he assisted in catching Crone in the Ship Tavern in London, a scene that is vividly described in his narratives and illustrates the rivalry and mistrust among spies. As Crone testified, 'Mr. Fuller came to me when here in town and pretended to pay me the money in the City, and there he trepanned me so I was taken'. Crone's trial was postponed several times, partly because he had influential allies in the administration, and because the administration hoped for his cooperation. At one point, 'one of the king's witnesses', Fuller, was missing. Fuller's excuse was that he had narrowly survived a poison attempt by Jacobites which confined him to bed for several weeks; eventually, the trial took place on 6 June 1690, but Crone refused to make a confession. Finally, in May 1691, he received a pardon and was relieved from most of the fees. From now onwards Fuller was known as 'Evidence Fuller' or 'Fuller the Evidence', a label which was highly unflattering.[106]

According to Fuller's own account, he had received large amounts of money for his services in St Germain, a claim that cannot be proved.[107] However, the *Treasury Books* supply evidence that he received money from the Williamite government between 1690 and 1692. In July 1690, before he followed the King to Ireland, he received a 'royal bounty' of a hundred pounds and on 28 September 1690 a payment of ten pounds 'made by order of the Lords Justices of Ireland for the King's immediate service'.[108] Between

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[106] Clarendon, *Diary*, pp. 240-1, 250; Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 49-55, 57-8; idem, *Life*, pp. 20-24. See also Luttrell, *Diary*, pp. 72-3. In *The Poor Man's Plea*, Defoe states that '[t]he Name of an Evidence or Informer is so scandalous, ... [that it] is enough to denominate a Man unfit for Society; a Rogue and an Informer are synonimous in the Vulgar Acceptation'. [Daniel Defoe], *The Poor Man's Plea, In Relation to all the Proclamations, Declarations, Acts of Parliament, &c* (London, 1698), p. 20. See also Marshall, *Intelligence*, pp. 116-17.

[107] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 21, 28, 32, 33, 36, 42, 60. Before Parliament he also declared to have received money from several other people. We know from Narcissus Luttrell that he got money from the Parliament to get his two alleged witnesses Jones and Delavell. Luttrell, *Diary*, p. 60; idem, *HR*, p. 312.

[108] *CTB, 1702*, Vol. XVII, Part II, p. 579; See also *CSPD, 1690*, p. 46. *CTB, 1689-92*, Vol. IX, Part III, p. 968.

July 1690 and February 1692 he was given allowances on numerous occasions or was cleared of fees.[109] It is very likely that large sums encouraged the young Fuller to live more unstintingly with his head in the clouds. During that time he also took on the title of a colonel.[110] He admits that he 'lived in hopes of mighty things, and spent the Devil and all in following the Court; [he] gave rich Liveries, had several Servants, and followed all Fashions, and like others, run into Trades-mens debts'. Yet he also claims that he got into debt through heavy spending to fulfil his service for the King in Ireland, England and Holland.[111] In April 1691, shortly before the fire at Whitehall, he was arrested on his way to the court in Pall Mall; he was travelling in a chair and accompanied by two footmen. Since he could not pay his creditors the outstanding sum of £500, he was brought to King's Bench, but 'giving security to the Marshall, with twenty Guineas, [he] had [his] liberty immediately'.[112]

On 30 November 1691 the speaker of the House of Commons, Sir John Trevor, announced that he had received two letters from one William Fuller, a prisoner for debt in the King's Bench, in which Fuller declared 'he had great discoveries to make to this House in relation to the plot wherein Crone was concerned and in matters that relate to the safety of the King and his government'.[113] The *House of Commons Journal* contains a similar entry on 2 December 1691 '[t]hat one *Wm. Fuller*, a Prisoner in the *King's Bench*, hath Matters of great Moment, both in relation to their Majesties and the Nation, to discover'.[114] Apparently Fuller had sent two letters with similar content to Sir Francis Blake (register of fines in the court of common pleas in 1691) and Sir Charles Sedley (member for New Romney), and in a widespread atmosphere of uncertainty and fear, it

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[109] *CTB, 1702*, Vol. XVII, Part II, pp. 644, 645, 648, 649, 650.
[110] Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 44.
[111] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 60; idem, Autograph MS, ff. 42-4.
[112] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 61.
[113] Luttrell, *Diary*, pp. 53-4. See also the account of Fuller's statement and the debate of 9 December 1691 in *Debates of the House of Commons, From the Year 1667 to the Year 1694*, ed. Anchitell Grey, 10 Vols. (London, 1769), Vol. X, pp. 202-6.
[114] *CJ*, Vol. X, p. 571. See also p. 573.

was decided to summon the prisoner under the safeguard of the prison's marshal to the Bar of the House.[115]

On 9 December 1691 Fuller was admitted to present his information. It was a relatively comprehensive story, apparently prepared on paper and read aloud, about an imminent Jacobite conspiracy in which Lord Halifax and some other prominent noblemen were involved. He revealed that he had been a messenger for the exiled King James and Queen Mary, and that several letters he had been carrying exposed the Earls of Aylesbury, Feversham, Lichfield, Huntington, and the Lords Preston, Castlemain, Peterborough, and Arran to be involved in the planning of a massive invasion. He warned of spies in the Council and in the Secretary's office, 'whereby he had intelligence when there were any warrants out against him'. Fuller desired protection from the House and promised 'to forfeit [his] life' in order to deliver some of the original papers as well as two more witnesses who would prove his report.[116]

Despite the fact that Fuller provided weighty information about an immediate attempt and preparations to restore James, the story was confusing and not fully believed. It received mixed responses. James Chadwick, the son-in-law of John Tillotson, made the following statement: 'I presume to inform you, what I know of this Gentleman. He has made some believe that he knows something, but not so much as he pretends to'. Chadwick said that the King has been acquainted with these allegations too. Apparently Chadwick had already been trying to get in touch with Fuller in order to gain intelligence, 'but whenever he came to fixing time and place, he always shuffled, and pretended want of Papers', and 'he never kept his time ... I thought fit to tell you this, and I am afraid you will find him a very shuffling fellow'.[117] Another, Sir John Guise, was also cognisant of some information on Fuller's past, and remarked: 'I believ[e] you will find him a great rascal for I have that character of him from one Morisco. He has personated several

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[115] Luttrell, *Diary*, pp. 57, 486, 505.
[116] *CJ*, Vol. X, p. 580; Luttrell, *Diary*, p. 67; *Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. X, p. 203. For Preston's trial, see *State Trials*, Vol. XII, pp. 646-822.
[117] *Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. X, p. 203. See also Luttrell, *Diary*, p. 68.

persons beyond sea and cheated divers of great sums of money'.[118] Indeed, this last

statement is of vital importance as it hints at Fuller's pranks and impostures 'beyond sea',

of which, in fact, we know so little. But it bestows on his own descriptions of his

glamorous and lavish lifestyle some credibility.

When the House called him in again, he mentioned an address signed by several

Lords and gentlemen on behalf of James to Louis XIV asking him to restore the king with

their assistance.[119] He later informed the House of Commons that he had received

payments from the government for his services, and also from the Lords Nottingham and

Shrewsbury for his missions in Ireland and France, but that he had spent much more out

of his own pocket, the reason he was in prison. In *The Life* Fuller likewise claims that he

got into debt because he had spent a great amount of his own money on behalf of King

William's service, and that although he got money from the court, he was never fully

reimbursed.[120]

As the debate went on, his story created more uncertainty and disorientation.

Overall there was not much credit given to it, even though, as the Bishop of St David's

reported to the Earl of Huntingdon later in the year, 'he spoke with great applause and

more consistency than one of his age [i.e. 21] usually doth'.[121] Sir John Lowther pressed

to follow it up and clear the issue, while Sir Edward Hussey and Sir John Morton both

urged the House to address the King, to enable him to produce his two witnesses;

questions also arose of how his papers should be seized. Sedley argued that the fact that

Fuller had received great sums from the former Queen was evidence of her great trust in

him, which should be a reason for taking him under protection in order to fetch the

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[118] Luttrell, *Diary*, p. 68. Grey noted a more ambiguous statement: 'I have heard a scandalous report of this fellow – Mr *Crone* was condemned upon this man's Evidence.' *Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. X, p. 203.
[119] The signatories were the Archbishop of Canterbury (the late one), Duke of Beaufort, Duke of Northumberland, Marquess of Halifax, Earls of Mulgrave, Clarendon, Aylesbury, Winchilsea, Lichfield. Lords Weymouth, Dartmouth, Castlemaine, Arran, Dunsmore, Clifford, Middleton, Preston, Bishops of Durham and Ely, Sir Edward Hales, William Penn, Rowland Tempest, Sir John Fenwick, Sir James Smith. Luttrell, *Diary*, p. 68.
[120] Fuller, *Life*, p. 28.
[121] *HMC*, 78, Hastings, Vol. II, p. 222.

papers. Sir John Thompson was puzzled by Fuller's involvement on both sides, and could not be certain about his real position.[122] Eventually though the cause was adjourned.

There were several debates on Fuller's case in January 1692, mainly about his promise to produce the witnesses, who he claimed were still in France, later in the north of England. The case was taken seriously, and overall the House was eager to seize the witnesses.[123] Fuller required two passports and the protection of the House for him and the witnesses, which was finally granted with the consent of William; moreover he still received 30s a week from the government.[124] Meanwhile Fuller remained in the King's Bench, from where he tried to gain the support of important figures. In February he delivered a petition to the House, and wrote to the Speaker telling him that the witnesses were ready, whereupon he was again ordered to attend the House.[125] However, the day he was supposed to appear, the marshal of the prison reported that he had found Fuller seriously ill, which was confirmed by a group of Members ordered to question and examine the prisoner. Back in the House they presented the results of their inquiry, including some papers given by Fuller with the names of the witnesses and some other claims about plotters. But by then he had troubled the House too much and the time the House allowed him to produce his witnesses had elapsed. The following day, just before the adjournment of Parliament, on 24 February 1692, the House declared 'that William Fuller is a notorious Impostor, a Cheat, and a false Accuser', that he had 'scandalized their Majesties and their Government, abused this House and falsely accused several Persons of Honour and Quality'. It was resolved 'that an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, by such Members of this House as are of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council, to command his Attorney General to prosecute the said *Wm. Fuller* accordingly'.[126] Fuller's allowance was withdrawn and he lost all privileges in the King's

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[122] *Debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. X, pp. 205-6.
[123] *HMC*, 71, Finch, Vol. IV, p. 41.
[124] *CTB, 1702*, Vol. XVII, Part II, pp. 645, 649; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, 312.
[125] *CSPD, 1691-1692*, pp. 145-46.
[126] *CJ*, Vol. X, p. 693; Luttrell, *Diary*, pp. 103-4, 114-15, 189, 197, 199, 202-3, 204-5, 235; *HMC*, 71, Finch, Vol. IV, pp. 43-4.

Bench.[127] He remained confined to the King's Bench and relatively quiet until August 1692, when he endeavoured to obtain his release and 'petitioned the queen to hear him' still alleging that his witnesses were ready.[128] In November, nine months after he was condemned by the Commons, he made a last attempt in court and promised four witnesses and more than '500 letters and original papers in behalfe of king James'. But less than two weeks later he was tried at the King's Bench, and 'found guilty of being an impostor and cheat'.[129] He appeared again a week later to receive his sentence 'to stand in the pillory at Westminster and at the Exchange, and to pay 200 mark[s] to the king, and to stand committed till done'. Early in December, Fuller eventually stood twice in the pillory, at Westminster Hall and the Royal Exchange.[130]

According to his own account, Fuller was kept prisoner for two years.[131] He was soon transferred to the Fleet Prison where conditions for debtors were better. At the beginning he was kept at the 'common side' where prisoners were wholly dependent on public contributions, eventually he could change to the 'masters side' reserved for those who could provide for themselves.[132] Throughout this time he was allegedly supported by his uncle Charles Herbert, who in 1695 also agreed to pay his debts, a bail to release him, and a sum of £300 for his further subsistence. The fact that he tried to gain profit from revealing secret information is not extraordinary but rather symptomatic of the period, yet it was astonishing to claim that he could produce the witnesses he had promised in 1692. In April 1696 he wrote to Sir William Trumbull that two gentlemen had assured him the two former witnesses had come from France and were now in Kent. It seems that the case

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[127] *CSPD, 1691-1692*, pp. 193, 207.

[128] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, pp. 370, 381, 541. See also the letter to William Brockman, MP for Hythe between 1690-95. BL, Add. MS 42586, f. 194.

[129] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, pp. 613-14, 621.

[130] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, pp. 626-27, 632.

[131] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 69. According to Campbell, Fuller was imprisoned for more than two and a half years, but he does not give any reference to his source. Campbell, *Impostor*, p. 113.

[132] See Roger Lee Brown, *A History of the Fleet Prison London. The anatomy of the Fleet* (Lewiston, New York, 1996), pp. XVI-XVII; Donald Rumbelow, *The Tripple Tree. Newgate, Tyburn and Old Bailey* (London, 1982).

was not followed up; Shrewsbury, in spite of the interest in the two men, 'thought [it] not

fit to write him'.[133] Moreover, it appears that Fuller did not consider giving up his

prestigious life-style after he left prison. He writes that he lived in Canterbury,

'plentifully, and at ease' until he was arrested again for debts early in summer 1696, but

once more he was released on bail and allegedly got further financial aid from his uncle,

whereupon he could afford 'a Groom, three Horses, and a Footman, and lodged at

Ludgate-hill'.[134] Indeed, Fuller is almost obsessed with his alleged élite station. He

considers his impostures (though not explicitly) as a result of financial constraint by

explaining, as the following passage illustrates, that beggary would have been too low an

action for him:

> This continual Load of Misfortunes sunk me to the brink of Despair; and
>
> however my outward Temper appear'd, my Soule abhorred the Shifts I
>
> was forced to make use of to live. I have ten thousand times pray'd for
>
> Death, rather than to Live as I did: Work I could not, and it was hard to
>
> Beg, after I had served my Country faithfully, with the hazard of my life,
>
> the Loss of my Friends, Interest and Imploys; a Small Incouragement to
>
> others.[135]

Despite the fact that we do not have trustworthy information about Fuller's close

circle, it is most likely that he took up writing upon the advice of some Whigs. He

unquestionably hoped to improve his reputation by making some fresh claims.[136] In 1696

he published several pamphlets, which became famous even abroad. *A Brief Discovery of*

the Prince of Wales was translated the same year into Dutch and French, and later into

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[133] *HMC*, 75 Downshire, Vol. I, Part II, p. 653.
[134] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 70; idem, *Life*, p. 34.
[135] Fuller, *Life*, p. 39.
[136] In *The Sincere and Hearty Confession* (1704) he declares that after Crone's trial he was instigated by Titus Oates, Jer. White, Johnson, Wildman, John Arnold, Esq., William Killigrew, Thomas Deuce, John Tutchin, John Savil. Among others, he was also in touch with Aaron Smith, a Whig extremist, who acted as legal adviser, also to Titus Oates. William Fuller, *The Sincere and Hearty Confession of William Fuller* (London, 1704), pp. 13-4; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 68, 70-1.

German.[137] He later claimed that the stories of the pretended Prince of Wales[138] 'was

much approved by Mr. Richard Baldwin, John Dunton, and others Booksellers, who were

zealous for the Cause, and as fond of the Gain they reap'd thereby'; a claim he upheld

until his death, but which was denounced by Dunton as 'the most formal lie'.[139] The

allegation about the pretended prince was certainly welcomed by William III, who,

although he probably did consider the newborn prince authentic, endeavoured to strip

himself of the accusation of being a usurper.[140] On 26 October 1696 Fuller handed in

another petition to Parliament in which he claimed to possess evidence that the birth of

the Prince of Wales had been a fraud, and that he was the first to expose the Grandvall

plot, the attempt by the French officer Grandvall to kill William III in Flanders in July

1696.[141] Over and over again Fuller made use of public anxiety and the uncertain political

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[137] Fuller, *Confession*, pp. 17-8.
*Bondigh en beknopt verhael van d'uttvinding der waarachtige moeder van den pretensen Prins
van Wales* (1696);
*Discours succinct touchant la découverte de la véritable mère du prétendu prince de Galles,
connue sous le nom de Marie grey. Auquel on a ajouté une plus ampl découverte de la dernière
conspiration contre la personne de sa Majesté et contre le gouvernmente. Trad. de l'angl.*
(Londres, 1696);
*Deutlich- und nachdenklicher Beweiß, wer der rechte Vatter und Mutter des sogenannten Printz
Wallis sey.../ zusammen gefasst und auß denen Originalien, welche auffgefangen und an den jetzt
regierenden König überliefert worden, in englisch- und holländischer Sprach herauß gegeben
durch Wilhelm Fuller...nun aber ins Hochdeutsche übersetzt* (1700);
*Le Batard découvert, ou Plein et entière démonstration que le prétendu prince de galles était fils
de Mademoiselle Mary Grey ...,* (Londres, 1702).
The authenticity of the prince had already been theme of an earlier pamphlet: Sir John Wildman,
*Das bedrängte Engelland, vorgestellet in demjenigen ausführlichen Memorial, ... In welchem
umständlich des Königs in Engelland bissheriges Beginnen angeführet, auch weitläufig erwiesen
wird, Dass der Printz von Wallis ein Supposititius oder eingeschoben Kind, und Ihr. Hoh. Hoh. die
rechten Erben zu Crone* (1688).
[138] William Fuller, *A Brief Discovery of the true mother of the Pretended Prince of Wales*
(London, 1696); idem, *A Further Confirmation that Mary Grey was the true mother of the
pretended Prince of Wales* (London, 1696); idem, *Mr. William Fuller's Third Narrative* (London,
1696).
[139] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 132; idem, Autograph MS, ff. 53, 78; Dunton, *Life and Errors*, p. 181.
For Dunton's (and Baldwin's) participation in the publications, see Parks, *John Dunton*, pp. 184-
85, 187, 313-16.
[140] See also Tobias Hug, 'Ein Thronfolger aus der Wärmepfanne? Gerüchte einer Verschwörung
rund um die Geburt des Prinzen von Wales (1688)', *Traverse*, 3 (2004), pp. 47-56; Rachel J. Weil,
'The Politics of Legitimacy. Women and the warming-pan scandal', in Lois G. Schwoerer (ed.),
The Revolution of 1688-1689. Changing perspectives (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 65-82.
[141] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. IV, pp. 125, 131. Many others tried to profit from the uncertain political
situation. For example, in 1694, one Richard Cockley tried 'to raise a merit to himself' by
claiming to have information about an assassination plot against the King. *OBP* (23 May 2005),
May 1694, trial of Richard Cockley (t16940524-39). See also Bevan, *William III*, p. 138; Paul
Hopkins, 'Sham Plots and Real Plots in the 1690s', in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and
Conspiracy. Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 89-110, at pp. 100-1.

situation, in which William III struggled for unconditional support. The royal couple's position was not an easy one, and they had to make great efforts to legitimize their position. The unpopularity of William III had already led a small number of Whigs, among them Daniel Finch, Second Earl of Nottingham, Lord Shrewsbury and Lord Russell to become Jacobites, in the hope of gaining some concessions from James should he be restored.[142] In December 1696, when the failure of the Fenwick plot revealed connections between some ministers and Jacobites, *The Post Boy* announced that 'Mr. Fuller designs to publish a new book wherein are several matters relevant to Sir John Fenwick'. However, the House refused to hear Fuller this time. Fuller therefore published in 1697 *Mr. Fuller's Appeal to both Houses of Parliament, with Letters, relating to Sir John Fenwick and himself,* a book that says much more about Fuller's misfortunes than about Fenwick. He sent several letters to the Lords Portland and Albermarle, Lord Shrewsbury, William's Secretary of State, and the King himself to gain backing for his claim.[143] The whereabouts of Fuller until the beginning of the new century are uncertain. From Luttrell's entry of 3 August 1697 we learn that he was about to marry 'a widdow said to be worth 15,000*l*.', while Fuller claimed she was worth £20,000, but as the lady allegedly soon died of smallpox, the marriage did not take place.[144] According to the minutes of the proceedings of the Lords Justice of August 1696, Tillotson, now Archbishop of Canterbury, received a letter 'supposed to be from Fuller, of a discovery he has to make from Kent, which he will do, if notice be given in the *Gazette* that he has the protection of government, and if money be sent him for his charges. This was not fit to be "minded"'.[145] The revelations were never made. Fuller was increasingly under

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[142] For the 'Whiggish Jacobites', see Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 23-7; idem, 'Jacobitism and Country Principles in the Reign of William III', *HJ*, 30 (1987), pp. 289-310; James R. Jones, 'James II's Whig Collaborators', *HJ*, 7 (1960), pp. 65-73; Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites. Britain and Europe, 1688-1788* (Manchester, 1994), pp. 21-2.

[143] BL, Add. MS 40771, ff. 282, 302; Add. MS 40771, f. 283; *The Post Boy*, 1-3 December 1696. For the Fenwick Plot, see Bevan, *William III*, pp. 154-56; Szechi, *Jacobites*, pp. 59-65.

[144] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. IV, p. 261; Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 72.

[145] *CSPD, 1697*, p. 326.

pressure. In October he was 'severely cudgell'd' by 'one Mr. Hayes in the playhouse, on whom he had made some reflections', and who was possibly the supposed witness.[146]

In summer 1698 Fuller rambled in the north of England, where he apparently managed again to ingratiate himself with several local gentry. In August the Secretary of State, James Vernon, was informed from Newcastle that Fuller had been cheating several people out of great sums 'under pretence of being employed in the service of the government by directions of the duke of Shrewsbury and the Earl of Albermarle'. In a letter to Vernon, Fuller rejected these allegations as being his enemies' inventions. Yet he sent letters to Portland in which he wrote of 'commissions and business' he was entrusted with in Newcastle, of which nobody but himself knew anything.[147] His manuscript contains a colourful description of the affair. Fuller states that he attracted local gentlemen, who begged to have his company. The process by which he gained the confidence of the people he deluded displays a pattern. It usually started out with merry drinking in inns and taverns, where Fuller often paid, and had plenty of time to make his mark. In Newcastle, despite his deliberate caution, they allegedly took him for a government officer with 'some important private comission for the King', and invited him to their houses, where after a while he consigned to them that he was ordered to set up a commission for the king and could offer them well-paid jobs. He lodged at their houses where he was treated as a most honourable guest and he took part in the social life of the local élite. While he continuously borrowed money he wrote that he was 'extravagantly liberal' to the servants and even made donations to the poor. The business lasted for several weeks, with Fuller making regular visits to Newcastle and while away he kept them posted with information. Obviously, he had to come up with several excuses for the delay in the setting up of the commission, and, under the pretence of bureaucratic

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[146] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. IV, p. 291.
[147] *CSPD, 1698*, pp. 382, 385, 389; Letters to Portland: BL, Add. MS 40771, ff. 282, 302.

costs and some other excuses he had to borrow money to keep up the image of a gentleman and royal officer.[148]

All this time Fuller lived 'very profusely', as he claims, by the support of such relations, but also by defrauding people with counterfeit notes, as, for instance, in September 1700, when it was reported that he drew a bill of five pounds on one Mr. Lowndes payable to William Stephenson.[149] In *The Whole* Life he came up with a different story, writing that he had been in prison for a year because of a quarrel with his stepsister over the rightful inheritance of his uncle Herbert's estate; to prove his loyalty to Protestantism, Fuller claimed that he was disinherited because he had not converted to Catholicism.[150] Due to his recurrent financial problems he was continuously under pressure. His whole situation had become a vicious circle. He obsessively needed his extravagant lifestyle, not only psychologically, perhaps, but also to gain credit. His ostentatious behaviour served as a guarantor and enabled him to get access to and dupe local gentlemen to whom he had hitherto been unknown. Concerning his political situation, apart from being under pressure from publishers and politicians, he had to prove his loyalty to the government, especially after it was enacted in June 1698 that anyone who had been related to King James and his supporters since the Glorious Revolution would be treated as guilty of high treason.[151]

A further publication was intended to prove his loyalty. In *A Trip to Hampshire and Flanders* (1701), dedicated to the Lord Mayor of London, he attempted to unveil another series of Jesuit intrigues, to demonstrate his loyalty to the present government. Surprisingly, the awkward course of the affair of 1691-2, which brought him into prison, seems to have repeated itself after the turn of the century. On 10 November 1701, Fuller presented his latest book about the pretended prince to 'all the judges, in the courts of

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[148] Fuller, Autograph MS, ff. 59-64.
[149] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 71; *CTB*, Vol. XV, p. 119.
[150] His uncle allegedly died on 12 October 1699. Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 74.
[151] Campbell, *Impostor*, pp. 169, 205.

Westminster Hall' and soon after to the king; on 7 January 1702 he was questioned about the books. Luttrell noted:

> Yesterday the house of lords examined Fuller about his book relating to
>
> the pretended prince of Wales; denied several things therein, sayeing they
>
> were inserted without his knowledge, upon which the bookseller was
>
> called in, who delivered the original copy under Fullers own hand, which
>
> agreed with the printed book: he was also examined about Thomas Jones,
>
> esq., one of his witnesses, and has till Wensday to produce him.[152]

Fuller's statement was not much credited, though his examination continued. He was given some days to produce his witnesses, and an examination of his booksellers and publishers was ordered. When he appeared again on 20 January, his allegations were not believed and he was 'remanded close prisoner to the Fleet'.[153] However, the case was not dropped. Fuller was summoned several more times, but there was no conclusion until February when Parliament ran out of patience. On 5 May 1702, the House declared him 'a Cheat, a false Accuser, and an incorrigible Rogue'.[154] On 20 May, he was convicted at the Guildhall 'for a cheat and impostor',[155] and eventually, on 23 June sentenced in the Queen's Bench:

> to goe next Thursday with a paper on his head, signifying his crime, to
>
> all the courts in Westminster hall; on Fryday, to stand 2 hours in the
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> pillory at Charing Crosse, Saturday at Temple Barr, and Monday at the
>
> Royal Exchange; to be kept to hard labour and correction in Bridewell

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[152] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, pp. 108-10, 127. See also *The Parliamentary Diary of Sir Richard Cocks, 1698-1702*, ed. David Hayton (Oxford, 1996), p. 196; Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 79-87. The book is probably *A Plain Proof of the True Father and Mother of the Pretended Prince of Wales* (London, 1700) or *A Full Demonstration that the Pretended Prince of Wales was the son of Mrs. Mary Grey* (1702). See Campbell, *Impostor*, p. 188.

[153] *CJ*, Vol. XIII, pp. 699, 700-1; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, p. 132.

[154] *CJ*, Vol. XIII, pp. 703, 705, 712, 720, 730.

[155] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, pp. 133, 140, 141, 176; *State Trials*, Vol. XIV, pp. 517-36; *The Daily Courant*, 28, 21 May 1702.

till 2d day of next term; to pay 1000 marks fine, and remain in prison till

paid.[156]

Many newspapers followed the events and reported the sentence, and John Tutchin's *The Observator* even questioned its severity. A flood of pamphlets appeared in 1702-3, many claiming Fuller as the author, although their authorship is dubious.[157] At the pillory he was severely beaten by the spectators. As Luttrell noted, he was 'pelted by the mob with rotten eggs, dirt, &c.'. Fuller was confined to Bridewell, where he received '39 lashes' and was 'kept to hard labour', an experience which was given literary form in a pamphlet entitled *Mr. William Fuller's Trip to Bridewell* (1703).[158]

Even though Fuller then disappeared from the public stage for a while, he remained the subject of numerous further publications in the years following his trial.[159] In 1704 he published *The Sincere and Hearty Confession* in which he confessed that his most notorious claim, that Mary Grey was the real mother of the Prince of Wales, 'was utterly false' and that this 'abominable Untruth was invented by Tutchin, and others'. He then writes: 'I do again confess, before God and Man, that those Stories were mere inventions to get Money, and to carry on other worse Designs'. He claims that after the Crone trial he was induced by a number of people, among them Tutchin, Titus Oates, John Dunton, John Arnold, MP, and Sir John Savil, to accuse 'thirty Persons, of the greatest Quality, besides sixty odd Members of the House of Commons', of being involved in the planning of a French invasion.[160] In Queen's Bench prison he made several appeals praying for relief. In a letter, dated the 1 May 1704, sent from the

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[156] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, pp. 187, 191. See also *The Post Boy*, 23-25 June 1702. One mark is equivalent to two thirds of a pound, i.e. 13s 4d.

[157] *The Post Man: and the Historical Account, &c*, 23-25 June 1702; *The Post Boy*, 16-17 June 1702; *The Flying Post, or the Post Master*, 19-23 June 1702; *The English Post: With News Foreign and Domestick*, 22 June 1702; *The Daily Courant*, 57, 24 June 1702; *The London Gazette*, 3821, 22-25 June 1702; *The Observator*, 20, 27 June-1 July 1702; *The Observator*, 21, 1-4 July 1702.

[158] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, p. 189. See also Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 107-10.

[159] See Appendix.

[160] Fuller, *Sincere and Hearty Confession*, Preface, pp. 13-14; idem, *Whole Life*, pp. 104-5, 131.

Queen's Bench prison to Under Secretary John Ellis, he begged for mercy and leniency

on his side and promised 'never to concerne my Self in publick or any dishonest matters

againe but shall retier to spend the residue of my life with my friends in the Country',

living free of offence.[161] In a petition of April 1705 to the Queen he begged for

banishment or execution as he had been imprisoned for a fine he could not pay, and had

been cruelly treated by the gaolers.[162]

In spring 1705 Fuller was granted the liberty of the rules for a short while and

thus 'had the privilege of living outside the prison building and moving about London

under guard'.[163] In the same year *The Second Part of Mr. William Fuller's Last*

Confession and two years later *Truth and Triumph*, a reprint of the preface to the *Sincere*

and Hearty Confession were published. A further pamphlet entitled *The Truth at Last*

came probably out shortly after. When in 1708 Prince James tried to invade the north,

attacks on the Pretender became again a hot issue, as did Fuller's stories. A new edition

of his *A Plain Proof of the True Father and Mother of the Pretended Prince of Wales* was

published in 1708. Still in prison, he continued to write to the Secretary of State, Lord

Dartmouth, complaining about the denial of his basic rights and his miserable treatment

in the Queen's Bench, hoping this would shorten his punishment, without success.[164] In

1711, he claimed he was threatened to be 'basely murthered' and tried to come up with

new claims such as a plot of 'noble Roman catholics'.[165] In 1716 *The Tories Looking*

Glass was issued, of which Fuller later claimed to have been the author, and in the same

year *A Letter to the Rt. Honourable the Earl of Oxford in the Tower*, and *A Humble*

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[161] BL, Add. MS 28892, f. 77, 'Letter to Ellis from Queen's Bench, 1 May 1704'. See also the letter to the Earl of Nottingham, BL, Add. MS 29589, f. 429. Already in 1696 and 1701 Fuller had written Ellis numerous letters in which he mainly claimed to provide the two witnesses. See BL, Add. MS 28880, ff. 278, 328, 334-338; Add. MS 28886, ff. 263, 281 passim.

[162] SP 34/6/6, 'Fuller to Secretary Hedges from the Queen's Bench', 27 April 1705 and SP 34/6 6A 'Petition to the Queen', 27 April 1705.

[163] Campbell, *Impostor*, p. 227.

[164] SP 34/29/30A, 'Petition to Lord Dartmouth', 26 October 1710; SP 34/29/30B, 'Petition to the Queen', 1710; SP 34/32/73, 'Letter from Fuller to Dartmouth', 6 September 1712.

[165] SP 34/15/72, 'Fuller to Lord Dartmouth', 26 May 1711; SP 34/16/133 Fuller to Dartmouth', 28 November 1711; SP 34/17/4, Fuller to Dartmouth', 8 December 1711.

Appeal to the Impartial Judgement of All Parties in Great Britain; the latter reissued the following year entitled *Truth Brought to Light by Time*, repudiated his earlier confessions, which he ascribed to his enemies.[166]

By 1716 Fuller seems to have been living within the rules of the King's Bench, which allowed him regular day trips 'abroad'. According to the author of *The Life and Unaccountable Actions of William Fuller* the impostor ran away and stayed for a time at the Black Raven in Windsor, where he passed 'for a Person of no small Fortune, pretending he had a Place at Court';[167] in May he was committed to Newgate.[168] Some episodes of these years are also well documented in the proceedings of the Old Bailey, and confirmed in greater detail in Fuller's autograph manuscript, which gives us a vivid idea of how he gained the confidence of his victims, and maintained social and financial credit by repeated promises and excuses and by playing the role of a generous benefactor and patron.

In July 1717 he was supposed to be tried at the Old Bailey, but since the prosecutors failed to appear, the case was postponed and Fuller remained in Newgate until the next session.[169] On 11 September 1717, however, the trial revealed that passing as 'Lieutenant Governors of the Tower and Warden of the Mint', Fuller had cheated Richard Jones, who kept an alehouse in Grub Street,[170] of £18 5s. According to Fuller he used to frequent the place with one Mrs Hart, a well off and married lady, to whose son, John Hart, Fuller had promised a job in the Customs in exchange for money and lodging, and whom he allegedly introduced to the Duke of Shrewsbury for that purpose.[171] Fuller asked Jones 'how Trade went, and what he made by his Business' and told him that as he

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[166] I.e. *The Sincere and Hearty Confession* (London, 1704) and *Truth and Triumph, Or Mr. Fuller's New Declaration* (London, 1707).

[167] *Life and unaccountable Actions of William Fuller*, p. 189; Campbell, *Impostor*, p. 233.

[168] *The Weekly Journal. Or, British Gazeteer*, 25 May 1717, p. 739.

[169] *OBP* (18 June 2003), July 1717, trial of William Fuller (o17170717-1).

[170] Fuller, MS Autograph, f. 83.

[171] According to Fuller, her husband had been fined by the high sheriff of London. Yet he does not tell us whether Mr Hart was absent while Fuller lodged at the place and profited from Mrs. Harts and her son's 'favors'. Fuller, MS Autograph, ff. 74-5.

appeared to be 'an honest industrious Man he had a mind to be kind to him, and would help him to a Store-keeper's Place in the Tower', which would earn him sixty pounds a year for life. Yet there was a precondition for this job: 'that he must furnish him with Money for taking out a Deputation and such incident Charges'. Jones agreed and, 'being elevated at the hopes of his Preferment', gave him the money. But under the pretext of some obstacles Fuller came back several times and required more Money, whereupon Jones 'at last perceived he had been trick'd out of his Money'.[172]

At the trial, Fuller denied everything and claimed that 'he never made any such Pretences' and the money was lent him by Jones, 'and that he never had any Mony of him but what he took Notes of his Hand for the Payment of'. Jones was directed to several people to collect his money, only to find out that they did not exist. Yet, there was still a chance for Fuller to escape. Since the fraud was committed before the Act of Grace, he was entitled to a pardon, on the condition that he was obliged to pay the prosecutor his charges, which were about fifty shillings. However, Fuller 'pleaded he was so poor he had not 50 Farthings: Upon which the Court asked the Prosecutor if he would take his Word for the 50s. to which he replied, no, not for a crocked Pin'. The court then asked the prosecutor 'how he could suffer himself to be so imposed upon from time to time by him, whereupon he replied, 'because he thought he was bewitch'd. The Fact being plain the Jury found him [Fuller] Guilty of the Indictment'.[173]

Fuller was indicted a second time for cheating one Henry Parry of forty pounds, which was according to him, the 'principal cause for his long confinement'.[174] Again he made the prosecutor great promises. At that time, Fuller frequented the Tilt Yard Coffee House, located probably in or near the Tilt Yard in Whitehall.[175] Although a prisoner of the King's Bench, he acted as a liberal patron, paid large reckonings and enjoyed the

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[172] *OBP*, July 1717, William Fuller (o17170717-1). See also *The English rogue reviv'd. Or, the life of William Fuller, cheat-master-general of Great-Britain* (London, 1718); *The Life and Unaccountable Actions*, pp. 195-96.

[173] *OBP* (18 June 2003), September 1717, trial of William Fuller (t17170911-51).

[174] Fuller, MS Autograph, f. 83.

[175] See Bryant Lillywhite, *London Coffee Houses. A reference book of coffee houses of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (London, 1963), pp. 577-78.

company of a bunch of 'attendants' to whom he had promised to provide a job. He told

Parry, a waiter, that 'he was a pretty Fellow, and it was pity he should spend his Time in

filling out Dishes of Coffee, &c'. He revealed 'he had a great Place in the Treasury, and

was a Commissioner of the Customs, and would put him into a Land-Waiter's Place'. As

he had done with Richard Jones he 'wheedled him under this Expectation out of Money

at various Times to the Sum of 40*l*. [£40]' and then made similar excuses. As this

misdemeanour happened again within the limits of the Act of Grace Fuller was entitled a

pardon on the condition that he paid the prosecutor's costs, but since he could not pay,

the trial continued. Fuller once more denied every charge, and also claimed that Lord

Townsend, Mr. Walpole, and some other eminent people would speak in his favour.[176]

The court told him 'that was a very pernicious Contrivance indeed', and there was no

surprise that these people did not appear at the trial; the court asked him whether he had

some 'Persons of less Figure to speak in his Reputation, challenging him to find one in

the whole Court (which was then very full) to do it; but none appearing'. The jurors

found him guilty of both misdemeanours. Fuller was fined fifty pounds and sentenced to

two years in Newgate.[177]

Fuller repeatedly managed to get credit from people, and it was during a period of

probably more than a year that he deluded several by pretending to be a government

officer and promising his quarries official employment in exchange for lodging, money,

food, wine and company. As references to dates in the manuscript are relatively sparse, it

is not manifest when he exactly started with this scheme, perhaps around 1715. It is

evident, however, that he maintained his claims and socialised with his victims for a

considerable time; he gathered with them in taverns and coffee houses, sometimes he

lodged at their houses. It seems that he was never able to pay his debts, and therefore

remained in Newgate until his death, recorded on the 24 March 1733 – less than a year

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[176] In the manuscript, Fuller admits, that while in a private audience at Hampton Court his request
to Walpole, to support his petition and get him out of prison, was unsuccessful, he told his
'friends' the opposite, i.e. that he had all support and would soon get an employ at court. Fuller,
MS Autograph, ff. 80-2.
[177] *OBP*, September 1717, William Fuller (t17170911-51).

after completing the last account of his life.[178] He did not publish any more books but kept up his correspondence to important people. In June 1730, nearly sixty years old, he made a last attempt and wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury begging money and clothes, but then, more surprisingly, admitted that the Pretender was indeed the son of James II and his Queen. He wrote that he was imposed by powerful people to publish the story about the pretended Prince which was wrong, and begged to publish his confession. The Archbishop repudiated his attempts and refused any further correspondence.[179] Fuller's story of the Prince of Wales and the warming pan, however, lived on and was revived, for example, in 1745, when it found its way into a ballad entitled 'The Warming Pan'.[180]

It has been shown that so-called religious and political impostors – people whose claims and attributes appealed to wider and deeper popular concerns – depended on much broader support from parts of the population than, for instance, William Morrell, whose impostures only succeeded because probably no one knew him in the London parish in which he turned up. In this respect Fuller is very different and therefore a particularly interesting case. How can we explain that he still succeeded in duping people despite the public fiasco that had made him part of the news? How did he maintain or regain his credit? In his narratives Fuller is at pains to create a secure social environment, and if we are to believe him, he had an extremely diverse and widespread network of relations. Although much of what he claimed can be doubted, there is evidence that he was in touch, at least through writing, with a number of influential people in the government and church. Between 1702 and 1717, Fuller went in and out of prison repeatedly, though as a prisoner he frequently managed to live within the rules. It is amazing how, until 1717, he contrived to regain the vertical and horizontal associations he had lost, or, as Pierre

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[178] *The Registers of Christ Church, Newgate, 1536-1754*, ed. Willoughby A. Littledale (Harleian Society, Vol. XXI, London, 1895), p. 369. The entry reads: 'William Fuller, prisoner.'
[179] SP 36/19 ff. 97-101, 'Archbishop of Canterbury to Newcastle', 29 June 1730.
[180] See also the 'Grubstreet verse on the 10th of June' in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 2 (1732), p. 820.

Bourdieu put it, his social capital – that is 'social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'.[181] His social decline was not a steady process, and his downfall can be viewed as beginning not with his public condemnation as an impostor, but with his imprisonment in 1717. In terms of their relationship within their surroundings, impostors differ slightly from ordinary social climbers who, like impostors, may later face a sudden decline. A prosperous merchant, for instance, may experience a loss of social capital, which means primarily the loss of his creditors, which also correlates most likely with deficient finances. Whereas he loses his financial partners, the deprivation of other social relations is not inevitable. However, as most obvious in the case of William Morrell, an impostor must first get rid of his intimate relations and plunge into anonymity in order to start a successful career. Mary Carleton claimed to be the scion of a German noble family when in 1663 she enticed a young lawyer's clerk to marry her, but in fact any relatives or her origin were unknown. George Psalmanazar left his impoverished mother and went travelling. Moreover, the relations impostors establish afterwards and on which their fame is founded may rely therefore on misguided trust alone. As Morrell's affairs illustrate they last often only a relatively short time, after which the impostor may be compelled to leave the scene in order to save his face, whereas an ordinary person's social credit was based on a community's scrutiny over years.

It has been suggested that due to the complexity of London society early modern city-dwellers belonged 'to a variety of interlocking communities' which all contributed to shape their identity, and the 'formation of an individual's identity' involved a 'process of selectively giving and withholding allegiance'.[182] This is apparent in Fuller's case.

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[181] Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, 1986), pp. 241-58. See also Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling alone. The collapse and revival of American community* (New York, 2000), p. 19.

[182] Ian W. Archer, 'Social networks in Restoration London. The evidence from Samuel Pepys's diary', in Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England. Network, place, rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 76-94, at p. 76. Joseph P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities. Trade guilds, identity, and change in early modern London* (Stanford, 1997), p. 3.

However, as with most early modern individuals, it is difficult to assess Fuller's association with 'these' communities, or milieux, or the intensity of Fuller's relationships in general; nor can we be sure about the degree of his acquaintance with the people he mentions. Quite a few acted as his patrons, some were temporary friends who gave him financial support; some were female, and, perhaps even temporary love affairs. But overall, he clearly differs from Morrell, who at the time of his imposture was acting independently. A striking feature of Fuller's network is the wide social spectrum over which it must have stretched. This makes him an interesting mediator between varied cultures. If we are to believe his claims, he seems to have stemmed from parents of different religious and social backgrounds; whereas his mother's kin was of high standing, his father's seem to have been of rather low social status. Despite his rejection, he rose from a family of the middling sort in Kent to an apprentice of the Skinners' Company in the metropolis to the role of a secret agent at the court. Fuller mentions a couple of positive relations he had with women, interestingly mainly women much older than him: his own mother, Hartley's mother, the Queen and her ladies, the widow he was supposed to marry, and other occasional 'acquaintances'. He had an ambiguous relation with his sister with whom, as he claims in his published autobiographies, he quarrelled over inheritance, but who later agreed to support him.[183]

For a remarkably long time, he was allegedly supported by his uncle – a claim which is very dubious as he does not mention him at all in his final account. Until his last publication he was backed by publishers and politicians; where the provision for the remaining years came from is unclear. Despite his connections to eminent people, Fuller's social capital was largely based on relations to important figures of authority and the fictitious roles that enabled him to gain the attention of local élites. In reality,

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See Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability. Social relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991); Rappaport, *Worlds*.

[183] Interestingly, the manuscript tells us nothing about this quarrel, but mentions his sister's support several times. However, by the time of his trial in 1717 her support has probably ceased. He wrote that he had asked his sister for money, but does not tell whether he received money. Fuller, Autograph MS, ff. 44, 49, 74 and ff. 92, 96.

however, Fuller must have been quite a lonely figure without close long-term relationships. It is to his role within society that we turn in the next section.

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The final stages of Fuller's life were obviously not very agreeable. Apart from the unknown benefactors who provided him with maintenance, Fuller seems to have lacked all support. The public had lost interest in the once-notorious prisoner and no longer flocked to the prison to get a glimpse of him. No ladies shed tears in his cell as they allegedly did later for James Maclaine, dubbed a 'fashionable highwayman' by Horace Walpole. Instead of mourners following his cart to Tyburn, or a crowd listening attentively to his last dying speech, Fuller died a lonely prisoner at the age of sixty-three.[185] Three decades earlier, he had tried to establish in his autobiographies an image of himself as a free, well connected and powerful figure. Yet the days of the gentleman seemingly able to move mountains had passed. With regard to the role Fuller held in society it is more appropriate to speak of him as an outsider, and from quite an early stage of his life.

Following Howard Becker, the term 'outsider' refers here to someone 'judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside the circle of "normal" members of the group'.[186] Fuller's impostures are clearly linked with deviant acts; we remember that as early as in 1692 he was convicted an 'impostor and cheat'.[187] However, it would be wrong to consider him simply criminal or, as contemporaries commonly assumed of similar characters, a criminal *by nature*. It is thus crucial to consider the interrelationship between Fuller and society, a society that promoted certain values and goals. In this section I will analyse how Fuller created an image of what I will call 'the noble

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[184] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 108.

[185] *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, 48 Vols. (Oxford, 1937-83), Vol. 20, p. 168, cited in Spraggs, *Outlaws*, p. 189.

[186] Howard Becker points also to a second meaning of the term, in the sense that 'the rulebreaker may feel his judges are *outsiders*'. Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders. Studies in the sociology of deviance* (New York, 1991), pp. 2, 15.

[187] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. II, p. 621.

outsider'.[188] It is generally extremely difficult to establish anything reliable about the motivation of impostors. In Fuller's case, we have far more evidence than is usually available, but even here our exploration of his motives must be speculative. But before we analyse this role in more detail by exploring his self-fashioning strategies, we shall briefly glance at some concepts of deviance and outsiders.

Robert K. Merton endeavoured to analyse the social and cultural sources of deviant behaviour and to find out how social structures put pressure on individuals which eventually might lead them to non-conforming acts. Deviant behaviour, according to Merton, is thus the symptom of a divergence between culturally defined norms and goals and institutional means to reach them.[189] 'In one form of deviant behaviour', as he states elsewhere, 'men hold fast to the culturally emphasized goals while abandoning culturally approved ways of seeking them'.[190] The 'commission of a nonconforming act, an act that breaks some particular set of rules', wrote Howard Becker, is the beginning of a deviant career. It is difficult to say what Fuller's first nonconforming act was and when it happened. It is even possible that it was an 'unintended act of deviance' out of ignorance or lack of awareness, as might happen with members of some 'subculture'; in fact, as will be shown below, it was part of his strategy to claim that any acts of deviance were unintentional as he sought to create the image of a conventional or 'normal' person.[191]

But what of the causes? Emile Durkheim assumed that sudden social change might lead to the breakdown of the norms and rules which had helped to guide members of society.[192] The effect that the Revolution might have had on social structure and values

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[188] Bernd Roeck notes that outsiders are not necessarily negatively connoted; he thus applies the term 'positiver Aussenseiter' (positive outsider) to characters such as the saint or martyr. Bernd Roeck, *Aussenseiter, Randgruppen, Minderheiten* (Göttingen, 1993), pp. 10, 132-36.

[189] Robert K. Merton, 'Social Structure and Anomie', *American Social Review*, 3 (1938), pp. 672-82; idem, 'Continuities in the Theory of Social Structure and Anomie', in idem, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York, 1968), Part II, ch. 5, pp. 161-94.

[190] Idem, 'Anomie, Anomia and Social Interaction. Contexts of deviant behaviour', in Marshall B. Clinard (ed.), *Anomie and Deviant Behaviour. A discussion and critique* (London, 1964), pp. 213-42, at p. 218.

[191] Becker, *Outsiders*, p. 25.

[192] Emile Durkheim, *Suicide. A study in sociology* (London, 1970), esp. ch. 5, Parts II-III; idem, *Division of Labour in Society* (New York, 1997), Book III, chs. 1-3.

has been noted as one plausible explanation. However, it seems to me more appropriate to apply this idea to a micro-level by taking the relation between Fuller and his immediate social environment into consideration. We do not know what exactly happened between his brief apprenticeship and his role as a royal messenger, but we suggested a turning point after he left the Skinners' Company, which had provided a framework of moral guidance, rules and values. He then plunged into a new world in which he had to rely on his own initiative and to which he had to adapt quickly. We can assume that Fuller was therefore suddenly confronted with a variety of social milieux, each having its own social values, regulations and goals. This condition, according to Durkheim, could lead to a sort of disorientation and therefore a lack of social regulations and moral guidance which might result in stress situation or even deviant behaviour.[193] From what has previously been said about Fuller's family as well as the whole political situation, we might speculate that similar conditions reached back to his childhood and youth. However, it is questionable whether such an explanation is appropriate. Most people belonged to various milieux. Fuller's contemporaries had also lived through the Revolution, many had been orphaned in childhood, or had dropped out of apprenticeship, but not many became impostors or criminals.

Another approach is suggested by the work of Erwing Goffman, who has introduced the concept of 'stigma', defined as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting'. The attribute makes the bearer different from others in some unwanted way; 'sometimes it is also called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap'.[194] For Goffman the problem lies not in the attribute itself – for an attribute as such can either be discreditable or creditable – but rather in what is between the stigmatised person and the so-called 'normal' and existing stereotypes. As he stated, the term stigma suggests 'that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed'. Stigma becomes apparent from the

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Linda Woodbridge presents a similar argument that the 'psychic disturbances occasioned by this instability were ... projected onto the most visibly untethered, vagrants'. See Woodbridge, 'Impostors', p. 1.
[193] See Durkheim, *Suicide*, pp. 252-53; idem, *Division*, p. 298.
[194] Goffman, *Stigma*, pp. 2-3.

damaged relationship that is implied between the 'normal' and the possessor of the attribute. It disrupts normal interaction, as the stigmatised person is considered unable or reluctant to match the necessary and socially approved criteria. Possession of stigma is therefore a form of deviance,[195] and the bearer of it an outsider.

We could argue that the whole series of Fuller's impostures was part of a strategy to overcome stigma. What, then, was Fuller's stigma? Was it his deprived childhood? His early orphaning? Was it that he was evicted from the Skinners rather than having left deliberately? We will never find the real causes, but it is crucial to take the manipulative power of his social environment into account. Avoiding further psychological and sociological guesswork about early factors and their implications, it appears that the sense of being cheated of his proper status was the most likely origin. It is plausible that the public humiliation in 1692 might have strengthened and reinforced patterns already there, and his sense of himself as innocent victim of unjust circumstances. As we have seen, he was then labelled an impostor and cheat, he was punished in public, and broadsheets, pamphlets and a biography denounced him in print. What was the effect of 'this' stigma on the course of his later behaviour? It is with this that we shall continue our exploration of how he tried to cope with his situation and to repair his social identity. Even though there is a pattern running through Fuller's behavioural career, we might divide it into two phases. As a messenger in the service of kings, Fuller first tried to regain a social status he had allegedly lost. He regarded himself a figure of authority, overreached himself with his lifestyle, fell into debt and was thrown into prison. To gain liberty he came up with claims that turned out to be false and was voted an impostor and cheat. The second phase was to a certain extent a repetition of the first as he continued to pass as someone of higher social status. It comprises a series of pretences and false claims, but unlike the preceding phase it was acted out in public and Fuller was less bound to any social institution.

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[195] Goffman, *Stigma*, pp. 3-4; Gregory C. Elliott, Herbert L. Ziegler, Altman, Barbara M. et al., 'Understanding Stigma. Dimensions of deviance and coping', in Clifton D. Bryant (ed.), *Deviant Behaviour. Readings in the sociology of norm violations* (New York, 1990), pp. 423-43, at p. 427.

In Fuller's autobiographies, socially approved and long-established 'goals' and values typical of the early modern period become visible. Society prescribes specific means how to reach them, yet not all of them are obviously accessible for everyone. Fuller did not want to go without them, and devised his own strategies to reach them. Some of the goals he claimed to have achieved may contain a pinch of truth, whereas others were mere inventions and thus can be read as either serving a strategic purpose or the result of self-delusion. The attempt to describe a normal development is underlined by the use of conventional autobiographical patterns in his narratives such as the description of his birth, the social status of his family, his education, and religion. Becker speaks of a 'process of commitment through which the "normal" person becomes progressively involved in conventional institutions and behavior', by which he means 'the process through which several kinds of interest become bound up with carrying out certain lines of behavior to which they seem formally extraneous'.[196] In reality, Fuller left the Baily's, and perhaps even the apprenticeship, for reasons we are unable to identify, and, in spite of having proof of his literacy, we do not know to what extent he received the formal or private education he claims. In addition to his description of a normal development, Fuller applies in his texts various 'techniques for neutralizing the force of law-abiding values': he tries to shake off responsibility by representing himself as a victim of intrigue and crooks in disguise, and as unable to escape their claws. Here we observe another potential strategy of stigmatised individuals mentioned by Goffman. Fuller uses his stigma for his own benefit, 'as an excuse for ill success that has come his way for other reasons';[197] the motif of deprivation runs throughout the narratives. Furthermore, he seeks to minimise the harm he inflicted on his victims, especially the king and the nation, as well as pushing his case even harder towards the idea that his actions were not wrong in the light of the circumstances – to give the impression that they were 'at least not quite

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[196] Becker, *Outsiders*, p. 27.
[197] Goffman, *Stigma*, p. 10.

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improper'.[198] Fuller need not *a priori* have followed the deviant road, but he could have

acted partly in good faith, as he wants to make us believe. It is difficult to establish with

certainty the factors which encouraged his (political) actions, and whether he took what

Becker regards as the final step in a deviant career and moved into 'an organized deviant

group'.[199]

As Becker points out, being labelled as deviant has 'important consequences for

one's further social participation' and leads to a drastic change in the individual's public

identity. He suggests that deviants are denied 'ordinary means of carrying on the routines

of everyday life open to most people' which causes the deviant 'of necessity to develop

illegitimate routines'.[200] Of course, this is not in order to blame Fuller's deviant

performance on society, but nevertheless, the question arises as to what extent Fuller was

stigmatised after his punishment in 1692 and to what extent he felt pushed even harder to

pursue his claim to a higher social status. Punishment only theoretically purged criminals

of their crime. In reality they remained, depending of course on the nature of the crime,

stigmatized and cut off from society in a different way.[201] In spite of having been voted an

impostor in 1692, Fuller could re-enter society. This was in part because he had some

'support' from Whig politicians, for whom he was a convenient tool, but it reflects his

own determination too.

How does Fuller endeavour to repair his stigmatised person? How does he

explain his experience and re-construct his self-image? It has been shown in previous

sections how he passed himself off as a high-profile personage. This he had to justify in

his autobiographical writings and other texts. He exaggerates his social status, but does

not consider himself a social upstart, but rather as someone destined for a life at court –

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[198] Becker, *Outsiders*, pp. 28-9 follows Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza, 'Techniques of Neutralization. A theory of delinquency', *American Sociological Review*, 22 (1957), pp. 667-69.
[199] Becker, *Outsiders*, p. 37.
[200] Becker, *Outsiders*, pp. 32, 35.
[201] Certain punishments such as branding of some felons on the thumb and between 1699 and 1707 on the cheek, cutting off the tongue or ears are clear evidence that certain criminals were visually stigmatised. See John Beattie, 'London Crime and the Making of the "Bloody Code"', in Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock et al. (eds), *Stilling the Grumbling Hive. The response to social and economic problems in England 1689-1750* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 49-76, at pp. 56-7.

or, more generally, for a life as an eminent person in the service of the crown. Apart from the emphasis on his valour and talents which enabled him to fulfil his difficult tasks and also justified his extravagant lifestyle, his origins and actions are intimately linked, and the former often legitimise the latter.

We have noted a split in his narratives. The deeper he slides into the role of a criminal the more he tends to accentuate status symbols. Passages in which he describes his apparently impressive lifestyle multiply. In *The Life* the borrowing of money and debts become increasingly a vital element of the narrative while social relations seem vague. Several times he is arrested for debt and thrown into prison. Despite being in debt, Fuller employs servants and travels by coach, a fact emphasised much more in *The Whole Life* than in *The Life*.[202] In a remarkable passage worth quoting in full he represents himself as *bonvivant*, a generous patron, and a high-profile figure in charge of important state business:

> I gave rich Liveries, had several Servants, and followed all Fashions, and like others, run [sic] into Trades-mens debts: Every Birth-Day, or Ball-night, I had all new. I was a good Benefactor to the Play-House, and never misled an opportunity of being amongst the Ladies. I lodged afterwards at a Pastry Cook's in the *Pall Mall*, paid them some Money, and had some credit; then the King going for *Holland*, to the Congress at the *Hague*, I must go there also, and by reason every one made the best Appearance they well cou'd, I resolved not to be behind all, therefore takes up Fourteen hundred Pounds on my Estate, which was newly come into my Hands, and receiving about 300 Pounds more from the Privy Purse, I set up my Coach, and had livery Servants at abundance; I made me twelvs [sic] Sutes of Cloaths, and my Wastcoats were, the worst of them, of silver Stuffs, of about forty Shillings the Yard, so at the *Hague* I made no small figure.[203]

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[202] Fuller, *Life*, pp. 31, 37.
[203] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 60.

The passage describes the period in 1691-92 when he received payments from the government, which was certainly his most successful time. Yet the financial circumstances depicted are clearly overstated and are contradictory to the claim that he has been deprived of his inheritance. Hence, the 'estate' and inheritance he mentions are likely inventions, and the sum he received from the government probably exaggerated too. However, the passage displays the lifestyle of 'conspicuous consumption' which fascinated contemporaries and whose depiction was a vital factor in Fuller's impostures as it served 'a social function as a symbolic justification for the maintenance or acquisition' of his status. Lawrence Stone considered 'the moral obligations imposed upon a nobleman by society to live in a style commensurate with his dignity' as the main cause behind conspicuous expenditure.[204] The idea of abnormal expenditure found its way into popular literature and was applied to the rogue. As Spraggs points out, even in Elizabethan times, the 'stereotype of the spendthrift gentleman robber was an influential one'.[205] Although not a robber, Fuller makes good use of the motif of extravagant spending. Despite the fact that he sometimes admits his flamboyant life style, he regards rich clothes, servants, coaches and horses as natural and necessary attributes of his role. An appropriate marriage would have completed the picture, and saved him from further financial problems. According to *The Whole Life* he was about to marry, a 'young Lady worth 20000*l*. falling in Love with [him]',[206] but a further arrest spoilt his plans. This differs slightly from the story as reported by Luttrell, who heard on 3 August 1697 that 'Fuller the evidence is married to a widdow said to be worth £15,000'.[207] Fuller recounts that when he was just about to marry the rich lady, he settled near her and always 'kept a

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[204] For conspicuous expenditure, see Stone, *Crisis*, ch. 10, and for its causes, pp. 184-88. Quotes are from pp. 187, 547.

[205] Spraggs, *Outlaws*, p. 109. See also Hill, *Liberty*, p. 124.

[206] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 324; idem, *Life*, p. 37.

[207] Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. IV, p. 261.

We do not know whether this was all gossip, but as Fuller states, the marriage never happened. But Luttrell's story, wherever he got it from, reminds also of the fact that marriages of younger men with older widows were socially despised. Assuming Luttrell had the information from a newspaper, this begs the question whether the incident indicates an attempt to defame Fuller in public. See also Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and the "reform of popular culture" in Early Modern England', *P&P*, 105 (1984), pp. 79-113.

pretty Table and Retinue, and paid all my Trades-men generously and constantly. I had abundance of visitors, and treated all that came'. We see Fuller as a generous patron who justifies his status to himself, his neighbours and friends, and finally before God. This gives an idea of how he might have taken in his victims, whether in the 'Tilt Yard Coffee-house' or in some gentleman's house.

How extravagant his lifestyle really was, we will never know. He must have lived well beyond his means. Yet the extravagant lifestyle was inevitably part of his role as a courtier or gentleman, and essential to attract attention and impress. Debts, on the other hand, were common in all social strata and thus nothing exceptional as long as one could manage them. To Fuller they seem rather a peccadillo than a grave offence. Yet a pamphlet ironically mocked that he was the centre of public attention during one of his numerous sojourns in prison; that visitors flocked to see him, and provided him with wine and food, as they allegedly did when Dick Turpin passed his last days in gaol.[208] This idea of imprisonment as a minor interlude is also implied by the fact that he links within his texts passages of petty misdemeanours with those of heroic deeds; for instance, in the *Trip to Hampshire and Flanders* he gains his liberty and soon detects another Jesuit conspiracy.[209] This gives the impression that Fuller spent his time out of prison in saving king and country from disasters. Of course, he was kept incredibly busy – even though we do not learn much about the actual tasks he had to fulfil. A fundamental part of this ideal is also the aspect of military service and heroism. In the biography published in 1692 by Abel Roper, Fuller is contemptuously accused of having boasted that he had fought at the battle of Boyne and that William III had personally knighted him on the

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[208] A different tone, however, is set when he writes about his stay in Bridewell. See, Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 109-10, and idem, *Mr. William Fuller's Trip to Bridewell. With a true Account of his barbarous Usage in the Pillory. The Characters of several people, who came to see him beat Hemp, and discours'd with him. His repentance for Offences past. The discovery of the Whiggs that Employ'd him Together with his Reception in the Queen's Bench* (London, 1703). On Turpin, see Sharpe, *Dick Turpin*, pp. 5-6.
[209] Fuller, *Trip to Hampshire and Flanders*, pp. 14passim. Another example is the episode of the fire at Whitehall. Idem, *Whole Life*, p. 61.

battlefield.[210] In reality Fuller did not succeed in a military career. He claims that he was promised an employment in the guards, whereupon he took on the title of a colonel though he never received the position. Instead he passed himself off as a government officer and sold bogus offices.[211]

Lincoln Faller has pointed out that 'the writing and apparently reading of highwaymen's lives could have a certain kind of political significance'.[212] Fuller tried hard to establish the image of an honourable person, even a saviour, in order to strip away the image of a criminal and enemy of the state – as 'cheat', 'incorrigible rogue' or 'villain' – and the popular notion that all rogues were Tories:

> I have served my Country faithfully, with the hazard of my Life and loss
>
> of Friends; and in the Year 1690 it is evidently known, and allowed by
>
> all great and good Men, that by God's blessing I secured the Peace of
>
> this Nation, and prevented the design of the greatest Invasion ever
>
> intended from France.[213]

As the passage illustrates, his portrayal embodies another characteristic: he clearly regards himself as a hero. We have previously seen that he toys with innate heroic qualities: courage, strength, intellect. He attempts to appear as an honest, respectable, and entirely admirable young hero. Although this role emerges as absurdly exaggerated, with regard to his self-fashioning and self-justification, it has to be taken seriously. To come up with information about political intrigues and plots was not his only strategy to compensate for his damaged social and financial status. The importance of the connection between the representation of his personage in his autobiographical writings and contemporary expectations has already been indicated. As we have suggested of other

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[210] Fuller, *Life*, pp. 26-7; idem, *Whole Life*, p. 67; *Life of William Fuller*, p. 13; *The Life and Unaccountable Actions*, pp. 17-8.

[211] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 60; *CSPD, 1698*, p. 382; *OBP*, September 1717, William Fuller (t17170911-51).

[212] Lincoln B. Faller, 'King William, "K.J.", and James Whitney. The several lives and affiliations of a Jacobite robber', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 12 (1988), pp. 88-104, at p. 89; idem, *Turned to Account*, pp. 209-11.

[213] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 108.

impostors, Fuller's self-representation appealed to specific contemporary psychological desires. In many respects it does not only remind us of popular criminals, but also of popular heroes. Fuller's extravagant and rakish exploits share some elements of the literary stereotypes of both rogue and rake.[214] Fuller's familial circumstances and financial prospects, for instance, resemble those of a rogue, an image he tries hard to avoid. Fuller certainly claims to a certain extent individual power and autonomy, but his own narratives lack the sexual adventures characteristic of rogues and rakes, and while their course of life is characterised by randomness, Fuller emphasises his role as an important figure destined for a specific social role. As Harold Weber noted, rakes feature an 'elevated social position' and they 'court their antisocial pleasures as respected members of the community, [whereas] rogues remain wholly beyond the pale'.[215] For the latter, disguise is a necessary means to exist; disguise, it seems, was for Fuller a luxury, but the reality was more likely the opposite. Fuller wants to give the impression that his devices were rather rakish than roguish, and thus to emphasise his 'elevated social position'. Even more he appears to share with rakes that they deny 'their passion for disorder because they so completely enjoy the fruits of that order', and that 'rakes must live with a certain tension and social ambiguity which lead naturally to their use of disguise'.[216]

Like both rake and rogue, Fuller represents 'dreams of freedom and individual power to which few people are indifferent'. He pretends an economic independence that only the upper echelons of society enjoyed, and thus stressed his association and identification with the gentry. Spraggs noted, 'part of the mystique of robbery, and

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[214] For a comparison, see Harold Weber, 'Rakes, Rogues, and the Empire of Misrule', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 47 (1984), pp. 13-32; Maximillian E. Novak, 'Margery Pinchwife's "London Disease". Restoration comedy and the libertine offensive of the 1670's', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 10 (1977), pp. 1-24, at p. 15.
[215] Weber, 'Rakes', p. 17.
[216] Weber, 'Rakes', p. 25.

especially of highway robbery, was precisely its association with the gentry'.[217] Although Fuller's crimes were not robberies as such, this association is an obvious feature in his narratives. It is interesting not only with regard to contemporary expectations, but indeed to his self-delusion, as evidence of his later impostures has illustrated. Moreover, the reference to highwaymen seems appropriate because they (and other dubious characters) could often step on the political stage. It is not surprising that figures such as James Maclean, the highwayman who pretended to be gentlemen and robbed travellers, were sometimes linked with conspiracies. As Tim Wales points out, highwaymen were of real concern for the authorities from the 1660s. Like Fuller, James Whitney, for instance, tried in 1693 to save his life by claiming that he had information about a plot to assassinate William III.[218] Finally, we should not forget that crimes committed in noble apparel might receive more favourable treatment. Moralists, such as Peacham, advocated a more lenient penal system for nobility and gentry, and the law actually enshrined it in a number of ways. Characters like Fuller or the 'literary' gentleman highwaymen appear like an ironic response.[219]

Fuller had a few things in common with many of these stereotypes, whose dividing lines are often blurred. Yet all of them appealed to specific contemporary psychological desires. In his study of bandits Eric Hobsbawm suggested that there exists a transhistorical and transcultural phenomenon in descriptions of 'bandits as bringers of justice and social redistribution'.[220] As he stated, 'Robin Hood, the noble robber, is the

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[217] Spraggs, *Outlaws*, p. 9. For highwaymen in general, see James S. Cockburn, 'The Nature and Incidence of Crime in England, 1559-1625. A preliminary survey', in idem (ed.), *Crime in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), pp. 49-71; Beattie, 'London Crime', p. 52.

[218] Wales, 'Thief-Takers', pp. 71-2. See also Faller, 'King William'.

[219] Peacham, *Compleat Gentleman*, p. 14.
A glance at the proceedings of the Old Bailey, however, illustrates that most highway robberies were frequently relatively brutal acts of violence, and had nothing to do with the mainly literary character of the gentleman highwaymen. Many gentlemen highwaymen in fact belong to the late 1640s/50s, with ex-cavalier officers, now ruined and penniless, turning to crime, like Captain James Hind. The stereotype perhaps took off in that period, especially as popular royalism gave a certain glamour to these people. For Hind as royalist, see also Faller, *Turned to Account*, pp. 7-8, 10-11, 15, 20, 120-21, 136-38.

[220] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London, 2000), p. 21; idem, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Manchester, 1959), ch. 2. For explorations and defences of the concept of the 'social bandit', see idem, 'Social Banditry', in

most famous and universally popular type of bandit, the most common hero of ballad and song in theory, though scarcely in practice'.[221] Despite my reservations about Hobsbawm's concept of the social bandit as a whole, and the fact that it is hardly applicable to Fuller's case, it is worth noting some aspects of it.[222] Of course, Fuller is not the legendary James Hind, Dick Turpin or Robin Hood, who stole from the rich to distribute to the poor, but he also shares some characteristics with the stereotype of such popular figures. For instance, the motif that noble rebels and unlawful actions were accepted by the community, though not by the state, is a crucial part of his apologetic self-fashioning strategies, as his portrayal insists 'on the standard attributes of the morally approved citizen'.[223] Hobsbawm listed nine attributes which belong to the 'noble robber'. In Fuller's writings we can make out at least some of them: First, we have seen how Fuller describes himself as 'a victim of injustice', beginning with him being given an unscrupulous guardian and continuing with his fate as the victim of judicial error and unjust prosecution. Second, he considers himself as rectifying wrongs. Third, at several stages he regards himself as being 'admired, helped and supported by his people', probably meaning the general public, for instance, when he writes about his missions – yet his brutal treatment by the mob when in pillory demonstrates the opposite! Fourth, the fact that 'he is – at least in theory – invisible and invulnerable' applies again to his missions. However, we have seen that his description of his role as a messenger is also

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Henry A. Landsberger (ed.), *Rural Protest. Peasant movements and social change* (London, 1974), pp. 142-57; idem, 'Social Bandits. Reply', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14 (1972), pp. 503-5; idem, 'Distinctions between Socio-Political and Other Forms of Crime. Social criminality', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 25 (1972), pp. 5-6.

[221] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 46. On Robin Hood, see also Thomas Hahn, *Robin Hood in Popular Culture. Violence, transgression and justice* (London, 2000); Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood. A complete study of the English outlaw* (Oxford, 1994); J. C. Holt, 'The Origins and Audience of the Ballads of Robin Hood', *P&P*, 18 (1960), pp. 89-110; R. H. Hilton, 'The Origins of Robin Hood', *P&P*, 14 (1958), pp. 30-44.

[222] I agree with Gillian Spraggs that the phenomenon should not be limited to peasant societies only. For instance, most sources on which our views depend, were texts directed to a broad readership, and certainly not only to peasants; the characteristics of the heroes of these ballads, songs, biographies, and so on, were shaped according to political, economic and socio-cultural conditions, preoccupations and expectations. I therefore doubt that the attributes were historically constant; an aspect that also becomes evident from my analysis of impostors in the early modern period. See also Spraggs, *Outlaws*, esp. pp. 276-81.

[223] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 54.

ambiguous. On the one hand he represents himself as an ordinary man going in disguise, for instance as a sailor or servant, on the other, he is a popular hero – 'it was noised in *New Castle*, that *Fuller* was there'.[224] Fifth, 'he is not the enemy of the king ... who is the fount of justice, but only of the local gentry, clergy or other oppressors'. Like Long Meg, the Pinder of Wakefield, even Robin Hood and other outlaws, Fuller stresses his devotion and loyalty to the king and nation. He represents himself as a collaborator of the king and never doubts his authority. Instead he wants to make clear that the government was being undermined by intriguing aristocrats; hence, as for other outlaw characters, subversive members of the gentry and the political establishment are his enemies.[225] The latter representation as a sort of 'national' hero may also point towards an important connection between national identities – or better shared attitudes – and the formation of modern states. England at that time was certainly taking crucial steps in this direction as William was eager to establish his own legitimacy and to create a stable and unified kingdom. Fuller describes himself as a vital builder of the state. He wants his contemporaries to believe that he was riding high in the saddle, that he was an efficient officer who travelled between locations with exceeding speed transmitting important information, and in particular he wants to give the impression that he was operating not for selfish gain, but for the public good;[226] in Hobsbawm's terms he was 'invisible' and yet everywhere at all crisis points.

A striking feature of his narratives is therefore that they seem to be appealing – consciously or unconsciously – to a wide readership. As Linas Eriksonas has pointed out, the virtues of heroes may hold an important place in the theory of state formation; as described by neo-stoic philosophers they functioned as elements of a political morality on

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[224] Fuller, *Life*, p. 38.

[225] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, pp. 47-8; the numeration does not correspond with that of Hobsbawm. Capp, 'Popular Literature', p. 211.

[226] This mirrors the contemporary debate between those moral writers working within the civic humanist tradition and others who believed that economic individualism would benefit the nation, a tension we have already encountered in the case of William Morrell. For extracts of texts illustrating these tensions, see Stephen Copley (ed.), *Literature and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1984).

which modern states should be built.[227] Not applicable, however, is the redistribution of wealth, one of Hobsbawm's core elements; the opposite was the case as Fuller's fraudulent practices served only his own purpose. Further, killing is never a theme, not even duels. Moreover, despite all his efforts Fuller failed to return 'to his people as an honourable citizen and member of the community', and in contrast to the noble robber, who, as Hobsbawm states, 'never actually leaves the community', Fuller's community was to a certain extent only imaginary;[228] this applies both to his real and fictitious life. Finally, Hobsbawm considers social banditry a phenomenon of peasant societies, a statement which does not apply to Fuller's context either.[229]

Despite the fact that Fuller's story is intimately linked with politics he differs from the character of the political rebel. Fuller's role is rather that of the preserver of social values and order, which he proclaims throughout. We noted the many contradictions in his writings. Basically, he tries to put himself in the best light in any situation. This applies especially to his religious and political affiliation. Indeed, the Whigs seem to have made a play for the young Fuller once he had 'left' James's service. While under the Stuarts he was among those who wanted to turn the clock back, acting as a preserver of traditional values. Later, when under William III, he aimed at stability and order in cooperation with the King and suggests saving the country from insurgents and treacherous plotters – 'with the hazard of [his] Life and loss of [his] friends'.[230]

Fuller is impressive in several respects but above all because he managed to climb the social ladder, arguably – and if only briefly – to the top. Like John Taylor, the waterpoet, Fuller managed to mix with the élite at court and elsewhere throughout the country. As Capp pointed out, '[t]o most readers the world of their political masters was

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[227] See Linas Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities. Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Berlin, 2004).
[228] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 47.
[229] However, at some point, Hobsbawm declares that there 'is no record of actual social bandits after ... the early seventeenth century'. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 22.
[230] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 108.

infinitely remote'. This explains the fascination of 'the idea of direct personal contact on a more or less equal basis between monarchs and the poor'.[231] Moreover, there is the ambiguity of Fuller's identity, which Capp has detected in Taylor; and E.P. Thompson wrote of "alternating identities, one deferential, the other rebellious" – a description which applies to Fuller.[232] From the brief analysis above we may conclude that Fuller employed some relevant attributes which appealed to the specific contemporary reading public. We can easily imagine that they were also part of the tales with which he hoodwinked not only ordinary folks, but also the more refined. Deploying Hobsbawm's characterisation of the noble bandit or robber as well as Becker's idea of the outsider, we may label Fuller the 'noble outsider'.

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[231] Capp, 'Popular, Literature', p. 209. See also idem, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet, 1578-1653* (Oxford, 2002).

[232] Edward P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), p. 10, cited in Capp, *John Taylor*, p. 195.

In the preceding section we focused on the attributes and images Fuller attached to his person and which were part of the cultural repertoire. Behind all this lies the fundamental question of how contemporaries regarded themselves within the world, the community, the family, or to put it differently, how they defined themselves with regard to their opposites, the 'Other'. Thus describing the 'Other' is as much part of self-representation as adorning one's self. It is part of a constant process of redefining and negotiating one's position within the world. Greenblatt noted, '[s]elf-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile'.[233] In addition, I suggest, the perception of the ('alien, strange, or hostile') opposite depends to a large extent on the experience of one's own (mental, physical, economic) condition – or the stability provided by the surroundings one lives in. The process of creating stereotypes had an important role. The perception, representation and understanding of everyday life all make use of over-simplified models, needed to cope with the array of experiences. It is our task to decipher the use of these stereotypes that were often comprehended as fully adequate representations of the 'Other'.

The desire for stability and order might be considered an anthropological constant; things which threaten stability and order, on the other hand, arouse fear and hatred – 'visions of bad men', as Roy Porter put it, 'have a timeless quality'.[234] Stuart Clark, however, reminds us that in the early modern world, whose culture had long been characterized by elements of ritual inversion, a 'predisposition to see things in binary opposition was a distinctive aspect of prevailing mentality'.[235] Anna Bryson has argued that 'the formulations of good manners in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing

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[233] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.
[234] Roy Porter, *Quacks. Fakers & charlatans in English medicine* (Stroud, 2000), p. 16.
[235] See Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *P&P*, 87 (1980), pp. 98-127, p. 105. See also Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975), ch. 4.

show both a characteristic image or standard of the civil versus the bestial'.[236] This way of

depicting 'the Other' in a starkly contrary mode by the use of popular and often deeply-

rooted stereotypes is also inherent in Fuller's self-fashioning. It served to present him in a

positive light, or to neutralise his deviant acts. To employ a conventional moral tone is a

safe manoeuvre, especially in times of social and economic tensions in which the

authorities were increasingly concerned with the reformation of manners.[237] The impact

of religion on everyday life, especially the potential for conflict and the level of religious

division during the early modern period, not least around the time of the Glorious

Revolution, need not be set out in detail here. The fear of real or imaginary insurrections,

plots and conspiracies was an integral part of English life during the whole seventeenth

century.[238] Fuller's story was profoundly intertwined with this atmosphere of insecurity,

disorientation and suspicion, and it is therefore not surprising that religion plays a vital

role in his narratives. How pious he really was, is impossible to say. Interestingly, though

he was in touch with many an influential churchman, his own personal faith and religious

practice are described only peripherally, even in his final account; his religious

orientation was rather unstable, a condition we can assume was in some way related to his

personality. However, this assumption will not be of primary importance here. Instead,

we shall glance at the cultural stereotypes he attaches to others in his published

autobiographies – it needs to be said that this way of depiction is almost lacking in his

last account. The use of binary opposition is evident in the portrayal of his political and

religious opponents, and when he wants to separate himself from those associated with

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[236] Bryson, *Courtesy*, esp. ch. 3, at p. 106.

[237] See Robert B. Shoemaker, 'Reforming the City. The Reformation of Manners campaign in London, 1690-1738', in Lee Davison, Tim Hitchcock et al. (eds), *Grumbling Hive*, pp. 99-120; Beattie, 'London Crime', pp. 49-76; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England. The ritual year 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994), p. 240.

[238] See, for example, John Guy (ed.), *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997); Carol Z. Wiener, 'The Beleaguered Isle. A study of Elizabethan and early Jacobean anti-Catholicism', *P&P*, 51 (1971), pp. 27-62; Robin Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics during the English Revolution', *P&P*, 52 (1971), pp. 23-55; Brian Manning, 'The Outbreak of the English Civil War', in R. H. Parry, *The English Civil War and After, 1642-1658* (London, 1970), pp. 1-22, esp. pp. 4-7; Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power. Late Stuart and early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London, 1993); John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England, 1660–1688* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 67-90; Kenyon, *Popish Plot*; Hug, 'Thronfolger'.

similar milieux. Matthew Crone was betrayed, which almost resulted in his execution, and people like John Tutchin, John Savil or Titus Oates are denounced for having used Fuller as their tool.[239] The strategy is perhaps even more visible in his descriptions of everyday characters such as ministers and ordinary country folk, or simply when he writes of those 'below' him and derides their immoral and indecent behaviour. Since his narratives bear some of the features of a conversion narrative, and religion is a crucial underlying theme throughout, it is with common images of Protestantism and Catholicism and the way Fuller brings them into play that we shall start.

We remember that Fuller allegedly stemmed from parents of mixed Catholic and Protestant background, but 'was bred a *Roman* Catholic'. Until his service under William III, he was allegedly a devout Catholic. We remember that the Queen was very impressed by his piety, and that he used to perform private prayers in a ritualistic form as an apprentice with the Protestant Hartley, thus suggesting a long-term secret religious life.[240] In a noteworthy passage he describes how he celebrated Easter communion:

> To shew how zealous I was in that way, I shall relate a pleasant Passage: One *Easter-day*, Mr. *Hartly* would have me to go to Church at St. *Andrews Holborn*, but I would not, so I was left at home by my self in the Afternoon, and I resolved not to omit my Duty, as I thought, but gets [sic] a Curtain, and hangs it up, by reason the next Door was an Alehouse, and from a Drinking-room in the Yard, they could see into our House; but having prevented that, I set up my Crucifix, fetch'd down all my Pictures, and light up six Candles; but in the height of my Devotion, my Master being with Company the next Door, espied the Curtains being hung up, and wondering what I was doing, they came to the Door and knockt.[241]

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[239] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 2, 131-32; idem, *Sincere and Hearty Confession*, pp. 13-4; idem, Autograph MS, ff. 45-6.
[240] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 6.
[241] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 6-7.

Eventually, Fuller managed to cover things up and his secret religious life was not detected. The passage reveals a number of opposites, but most obviously he contrasts his Protestant master with his own firm Catholic stance. While his Protestant master joins company in the alehouse next door, Fuller devotes his time in his private chamber praying. In his text, alehouse culture is at variance with private devotion.[242] Alehouses had long been considered a threat to orderly society, and during William's reign they intensely annoyed 'puritan' sobriety.[243] Apart from blasphemy, lewdness, swearing and cursing, Sabbath-breaking was considered one of the principal vices in the 1690s.[244] Indeed, the account might remind us of the fact that apprentices who ended up in court often blamed their masters. John Gower, for instance, told the Ordinary of Newgate in 1684 that it was due to 'the Indulgence of his Master ... that he suffered them to mispend the Sabbath-days, which was the first step to Ruine'.[245] Contrary to this common plot of ordinary apprentices losing their way, Fuller proves his steadfastness, and shows his skill as leading a religious double life.

However, the playing with stereotypes is obvious. As soon as he is caught by William III, brainwashed and compelled to switch sides, he applies the clichés of the other party. Suddenly it is the Catholics' lewd behaviour that brings him into debt. During one of his journeys to Paris he travelled with some Catholic gentlemen whom he describes as 'unfortunate Companions, for they drank very hard, and thereby flung

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[242] However, alehouse culture was not necessarily at variance with private devotion, or at least with communal devotion and religious discussion. See, for example, Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities. English villagers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 231; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 194-96; Patrick Collinson, 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture', in Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 32-57, p. 55.

[243] On alehouses, see Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty (eds), *The World of the Tavern. Public houses in early modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2002), esp. Judith Hunter, 'English Inns, Taverns, Alehouses and Brandy Shops. The legislative framework, 1495-1797', pp. 65-82; Beat Kümin, "Run by the Poor for the Poor"? Social elites in the early modern public house', *Renaissance Journal*, 7 (2003), pp. 7-13; Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse. A social history 1200-1830* (London, 1983), pp. 186-87; Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouse, Order and Reformation in Rural England 1590-1660', in Stephen and Eileen Yeo (eds), *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914* (Brighton, 1981), pp. 1-27.

[244] Shoemaker, 'Reforming the City', p. 101. For the motif of sabbath-breaking in criminal biographies, see Faller, *Turned to Account*, pp. 27-9.

[245] *Ordinary of Newgate's Account*, 23 May 1684, cited in Rawlings, *Drunks*, p. 21.

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themselves and me in a Fever'. The whole party is accompanied by a Jesuit priest who was highly esteemed by the Queen. However, as Fuller tells us, this 'honest Father Grey was a true Toper as any of the Company'. Like any of his sort, he 'had no Money and the rest of the Company had spent all theirs', so that Fuller has to bear the whole charge. In the evenings they have 'a great deal of Diversion' with the friar, who is allegedly 'drunk constantly at Night, and would fain have engaged me debauch a Woman in our Company'.[246] And this friar had the confidence of the Queen! The story goes on: the Queen 'thought he was a Saint, tho' I knew, if Whoring, Swearing, Drinking, and lewd Discourse could make a Man a Devil, he was in as fair way to be one, as any Man that I ever met with in all my life'.[247] Again, there are many interpretations for this episode. To begin with, the *topos* of hypocritical clergy, engaged in any lewd and treacherous practices, goes back to the pre-Reformation period, and was still current in the eighteenth century. Charles Blount spoke of 'some old greasie bald-pated Abott, Monk or Friar', but from the middle of the sixteenth century it was applied to all Catholics.[248] Catholics were considered, as Arthur Dent put it, 'the most wicked men',[249] an opinion that experienced a strong revival at the end of the seventeenth century. It is difficult to conclude to what extent such accusations actually happened, and popular attitudes towards their clergymen were often ambiguous. Yet, the *topos* plays a crucial role in pamphlet literature and prints, which formed part of political propaganda, and helped to create an atmosphere of suspicion. But apart from exposing the wickedness of priests and naïvety of Jacobites, here embodied by the zealous Queen, the passage also appeals to a population which had

[246] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 46.
[247] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 47.
[248] See Richard A. Cosgrove, 'English Anticlericalism. A programmatic assessment', in Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (eds), *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 569–581; Spufford, *Small Books*, p. 220; Hug, 'Thronfolger', esp. p. 48. Charles Blount, *An Appeal from the Country to the City for the Preservation of his Majesties Person, Liberty, Prosperity, and the Protestant Religion* (London, 1679), p. 29. Hogarth applied the motif in prints such as *The Christening*, in *The Sleeping Congregation* in which a priest is depicted staring at a woman's breast during mass, or in the popular *The Gate of Calais or The Roast Beef of England* (1749).
[249] Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* (London, 1601), p. 17, cited in Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in Early Modern England 1550-1750* (London, 1998), p. 71. For anti-popery, see Alexandra Walsham, '"The fatall vesper". Providentialism and anti-popery in late Jacobean London', *P&P*, 144 (1994), pp. 36-87.

long been described as 'ignorant and ungodly', but whose self-consciousness was more elaborate; as Martin Ingram points out, 'by the 1680s, disgruntled parishioners were able to turn the tables by describing ministers as "uncivil" and "heathen"'.[250]

At first glance, Fuller's use of stereotypes appears far from straightforward in the sense of taking sides with one religious and political faction only. Overall, it seems, he wanted to arouse pity by alluding to the maltreatment that he experienced from both sides. For instance, at the height of the Glorious Revolution he was, together with a 'Company of several Gentlemen and Ladies', attacked by the 'hellish mob' with 'Dirt, turnip-tops, and all manner of Filth', just as he was later 'pelted off by the Jacobites and Hackney Scribblers' who were all ready to murder him.[251] This ambiguity might be surprising. On the one hand, it certainly illustrates his double role and his attempt to optimise his representation in every situation, and to develop the argument further, religious instability had an effect on his personality; this role left its traces and resulted in his unstable inner self. On the other, his open admission of his career as a Catholic puts more weight on his recantation, a crucial element of the conversion narrative.

The milieu which Fuller probably frequented was not far apart from what he loathes in his narratives. He despises the fact that he was often forced into the company of servants and the lower sort. Away from home at Captain Baily's, who 'had a fine house and lived very great', Fuller complains that he had to share the table with the servants, 'which [he] could hardly brook'.[252] Later in the Skinners' Company, neither his fellow apprentices nor the honour and pride of the guild could meet his standards. As he writes: 'I was bound at Skinner's-Hall; and tho' they did magnify the great Advantage and Reputation of the Trade, yet I liked it not'. He thought himself superior to a bunch 'of silly unpolished Fellows and Wenches' and too fine to bother with gruelling manual

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[250] Martin Ingram, 'From Reformation to Toleration. Popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690', in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995), pp. 95-123, at p. 122.

[251] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 22, 75, 78, 117.

[252] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 5.

work, '[p]ulling and cutting of Bever and Conny-skins'.[253] None of the trades, neither the seafarer's, the apothecaries' nor the skinners', was proper enough. Of course, as conservative moralists believed, manual work was never appropriate for someone of noble birth.[254] But such accounts refer also to the culture of apprentices more generally and are reminiscent of the many sins with which it was associated. London servants and apprentices – and not only they! – frequented alehouses, playhouses and brothels.[255] Hence, even the reference to Shoe Lane, where Hartley's shop was located, could be read as an allusion to the widespread debauched culture deplored in many moral texts. We learn from Samuel Pepys that, at least in his time, Shoe Lane was in an area famous for cockfights. Pepys, 'directed by sight of bills upon the walls', attended a fight in December 1663 and was astonished by the spectators he met: they ranged from Members of Parliament to the 'poorest prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen … all these fellows one with another in swearing, cursing, and betting'.[256] Fuller must have been familiar with alehouse and tavern culture – at least, as an informal source of information he had to hang around in shadowy places where plans were hatched; later, he mentions too that he took part in the drinking rituals of Jacobites.[257] Moreover, as an agent and informer, he inhabited a milieu which consisted in part of people who, like him, had crossed social barriers. As Paul Monod noted, 'Jacobite adventurers came from all walks of life. They ranged from patrician ex-army officers down on their luck to unemployed plebeian weavers looking for excitement.'[258]

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[253] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 6.
According to Rappaport, the skinner's were, at least in the sixteenth century, a wealthy company. Rappaport, *Worlds*, pp. 269, 307-8.
[254] '[T]ouching Mechanicall Arts and Artists, whoseuer labour for their liuelihood and gaine, haue no share at all in the Nobilities and Gentry'. Peacham, *Compleat Gentleman*, pp. 12-3.
[255] We remember that in his "genteel phase" in 1690-91, Fuller claimed to have been 'a good Benefactor to the Play-House, and never misled any opportunity of being amongst the Ladies'. Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 60.
[256] *Pepys Diary*, IV, pp. 427-28, also cited in Tobias Hug, '"You should go to *Hockley in the Hole*, and to *Marybone* child, to learn valour". On the social logic of animal baiting in early modern London', *Renaissance Journal*, 2 (2004), pp. 17-26, at pp. 20-1. As I showed in this article, fascination with animal fights was not restricted to the lower sorts, but could be found across social and gender barriers.
[257] See Paul Monod, *Jacobitism*, p. 104.
[258] Monod, *Jacobitism*, pp. 97-101, 339. See also Szechi, *Jacobitism*, p. 17.

There is also the common motif of the base manners of country people. Thus, on one of his trips to the north Fuller stopped in a small village and 'desired a Couple of Fowls for Supper' at the house of some country folk. By chance he observed the landlady's cooking and witnessed the woman 'cram her Mouth full of Salt and Water, which she gargled up and down her Throat and Mouth ..., then squirted the same through the Body of the Fowl, and this she put into the Dish for Sauce'.[259]

References to vulgar behaviour, body parts and dirt are still more striking in his *Trip to Bridewell*, an account of his punishment in the pillory and subsequent detention in the London house of correction, or, as a contemporary pamphlet put it, Fuller's 'new mansion-house'.[260] Extraordinary in this report is not so much the fact that Fuller differentiates himself from other criminals, but rather the means by which he exposes the base moral state of his fellow inmates. Since we are not only concerned with the question of how he separates himself from the lower sort, but also with the innate cultural meanings of the images he uses, we will briefly focus on the meanings of the body and subsequently of dirt and cleanliness. The body has long been used as a metaphor for society. Mary Douglas argued in *Purity and Danger* that the body can function as 'a model which can stand for any bounded system', and thus also as a mirror of society.[261] Perception of the body as a social construct shapes both perception of the body and that of society as such. Douglas identified purity as a central theme of every society, whereas dirt is perceived as disorder, as an offence to order. The idea of the body as 'a symbol of society' is essential to understand 'rituals concerning excreta'.[262]

In the religious context personal hygiene has a particularly significant role. Protestants believed that since their body was a gift from God it had to be kept clean. Hence, the condition of the body as well as one's appearance as a whole was linked to the

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[259] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 35.
[260] *Dialogue between William Fuller the Impostor, and E--- D--- the Whipmonger: on Friday the 23rd of July, at his new mansion-house, commonly called Bridewel, alias house of correction, &c with his sorrowful lamentation and complaint* (Dublin, 1702).
[261] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An analysis of concept of pollution and taboo* (London, 2001), p. 142. See also idem, *Natural Symbols. Explorations in cosmology* (London, 1996).
[262] Douglas, *Purity*, p. 142.

state of the soul; proper appearance, especially clothes, stood for moral integrity. As the Elizabethan Philip Stubbes stated:

> as the filthiness and pollution of my body is washed and made clean by
>
> the element of water; so is my body and soul purified and washed from
>
> the spots and blemishes of sin, by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.[263]

The Calvinist Joseph Hall described in his *Characters* (1608) the 'slothfull [man as] a standing poole; [who] can not chuse but gather corruption; he is decried ... by a drie and nastie hand, that still savors of the sheet; a beard uncut, unkembed; an eye and eare yellow with their excretions; a coat, shaken on, ragged, unbrush't; by linnen and face striving whether shall excell in uncleanlinesse'.[264] Throughout the period, dirtiness was connected to idleness, whereas civility was closely linked with Godliness. Dirt as a literary device to symbolise social distinction can also be found in popular literature, which is full of jokes about excrement and urine.[265] Again, Fuller uses a familiar *topos* to stand apart in what he experienced as a degrading and hostile environment. According to what Douglas called

> the rule of distance from physiological origin (or the purity rule) the more
>
> the social situation exerts pressure on persons involved in it, the more the
>
> social demand for conformity tends to be expressed by a demand of
>
> physical control. ... Thus social distance tends to be expressed in distance
>
> from physiological origins and vice versa.[266]

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[263] Philip Stubbes, 'A Perfect Pathway to Felicitie', in idem, *Anatomy of the Abuses in England*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (1877-79), p. 215, cited in Keith Thomas, 'Cleanliness and Godliness in Early Modern England', in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 56-83, at pp. 62-3.

[264] Joseph Hall, *Characters of Vertues and Vices* (London, 1608), p. 123, cited in Thomas, 'Cleanliness', pp. 79-80.

[265] In Head's *The English Rogue*, a character defecates in a barber's shop by way of an 'extravagant' gesture which the author probably regarded as witty. Spufford, *Small Books*, pp. 184-85. See also Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21. January 1977; Capp, 'Popular Literature', p. 217.

For a survey of books of jests, see F.P. Wilson, 'The English Jestbooks of the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 2 (1938-39), pp. 121-58.

[266] Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, pp. xxxii.

In his *Civilizing Process* Norbert Elias makes a similar argument by suggesting that the importance of outward (and as a consequence) inward cleanliness has to be seen in the wider

We remember that Fuller had previously been maltreated by the 'hellish mob'. At the pillory he was pelted with 'rotten and sound Eggs, Stones, and all manner of Dirt, Filth and Rubbish'. In Bridewell it is the criminals, all 'Boys, ... Thieves and Pick-pockets' staging a scene of dirt. He bewails that 'some of them sung Baudy Sungs [sic], some were cursing and swearing, some pissing, and in other indecent postures'. It might be that he was inspired by some passage of Head's *English Rogue*, or reminded of familiar images of hell he had taken up earlier in his youth, as the description goes on: 'In short, I thought Hell could not be worse, and my very soul was cast down, and I was ready to faint with the prospect of my Company, and the stink of this abominable Appartment'.[267] Fuller considers himself the guardian of moral values, even in prison, and puts himself above the prison authorities. He wrote:

> I am sorry I have cause to relate it, but true it is, that in Prayer time, when
> they were (some of them) on their Knees, they would Swear, and tell
> bawdy Stories, other would be pissing in the Place, and one Fellow
> easing his Body there in Sermon time, put his Excrement in another
> Prisoner's pocket.[268]

But even in prison Fuller's influence was great, and the 'Fellows show'd [him] more than usual respect, and when they began to talk and Swear, in their Discourse, in the time of Divine Worship, at [his] request they would keep silence'.[269]

The description of a urinating, farting, swearing and sleeping rabble might have struck a chord with contemporary moralists who lamented the moral state of the lower sort. It is also reminiscent of presentments in ecclesiastical courts which illustrate that 'virtually every kind of irreverent (and irrelevant) activity took place during divine

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context of social change. According to him, proper comportment became vital with the formation of a 'new' upper class. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1978-82), Vol. I. For a critical discussion of Elias's theory, see Bryson, *Courtesy*, pp. 96-106.

[267] Fuller, *Trip*, pp. 4, 8; Head, *English Rogue*, ch. 12, pp. 111-12.
[268] Fuller, *Trip*, p. 16.
[269] Fuller, *Trip*, p. 16.

worship'.[270] Many theologians feared the godly to be a 'tiny minority in an unregenerate world' and considered the lower sorts 'as the greatest enemies of true religion'. Richard Baxter, himself growing up in a poor rural surrounding where he experienced the hardship of husbandmen whose 'bodyes are allmost in constant wearyness and their minds in constant care of trouble', noted in what is considered his last treatise before he died in 1691 that '[i]f any would raise an army to extirpate knowledge and religion, the tinkers and sowgelders and crate-carriers and beggars and bargemen and all the rabble that cannot read ... will be the forewardest to come into such militia'.[271] The idea that 'this ignorant rabble', as Baxter called them, 'are everywhere the greatest enemies against Godly ministers and people', and ready to serve 'Papists or forreine enemies or Rebells' shines through in many of Fuller's texts.[272]

Cleanliness was surely a sign of respect and devotion to someone socially superior as well as an attribute of those of a higher social status.[273] In the early modern period it received increasing attention and served to illustrate the polarisation within contemporary society. Without doubt, Fuller's description evokes the image of the unruly and ungodly anti-society ready to subvert society. However, Fuller does not only reiterate the conventional stereotypes which reaffirm a standard perception of social order. If he separates himself from the rest of the inmates, including the wardens, with regard to outward cleanliness, he clearly wants to signal his inward purity, individual status and power. He tells us that during prayer time the inmates were more interested in him than the minister: 'But the Reader, I pray God to forgive him, was in a great rage, and said the People would look more at me than at him, or the Preacher'.[274] Fuller puts himself above the clergy; that is to say, above those who were supposed to set standards and achieve a

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[270] Barry Reay, 'Popular Religion', in idem (ed.), *Popular Culture*, pp. 91-128, at pp. 92-3, Thomas, *Religion*, p. 191.

[271] Richard Baxter, 'The Reverend Richard Baxter's Last Treatise', ed. Frederick J. Powicke, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 10 (1926), pp. 163-218, at pp. 171, 180, 182; the latter quotation is also cited in Thomas, *Religion*, p. 193.

[272] Baxter, 'Reverend', p. 182.

[273] See Elias, *Civilizing Process*, Vol. II; idem, *Court Society*.

[274] Fuller, *Trip*, 13.

level of purity and cleanliness, beyond the reach of ordinary folk.[275] As we have observed throughout his narratives, this portrayal was intended as evidence of his moral steadfastness. Yet Fuller's emphasis illustrates his urge to appear 'clean' at a time when he was probably in a physiologically and psychologically weak condition. With regard to the next chapter, we might therefore regard Fuller's report as a sort of purifying act. 'Eliminating it [i.e. dirt]', as Douglas states, 'is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment'.[276] Fuller did it not only for the reader; he was trying to resolve his own moral conflict and, once more, to overcome his stigmatized person.

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[275] See Thomas, 'Cleanliness', p. 83.
[276] Douglas, *Purity*, p. 2.

WILLIAM FULLER, MARY CARLETON AND GEORGE PSALMANAZAR –

A BRIEF COMPARISON

Literacy played an important role in shaping the individual's sense of self. Not only did it provide ideas, concepts or role models, it was also a means of creating one's self on paper. Direct evidence that impostors were actually literate exists only in a few cases, but it is clear that writing skills could enable them to invent more sophisticated pretences. Written documents such as begging licences, passes, letters, wills or bonds of exchange were frequently misused as soon as they had come to function as common proofs of identity. According to his writings, Fuller, for instance, often used passes to travel freely between France and England. It is possible that he (or someone else for him) forged them like he counterfeited bonds of exchange. However, writing skills could obviously also be used to raise one's voice in public. Among many others, characters such as the astrologer Simon Forman, the visionary Anna Trapnel or Mary Carleton demonstrated that they managed by means of their writings to express themselves on a much wider public stage. Of course, autobiographical writings provide an excellent source to explore the complex issue of self-expression, or in Greenblatt's phrase 'self-fashioning'. As James Amelang noted, '[a]utobiography locates itself at a crucial juncture, a crossroad where individuals, affirming, or challenging themselves through literary expression, meet with culture – that is, collective norms and constraints'.[1] One could argue that autobiographies are always to some extent an imposture, and thus ask how much of the original self remains intact, as

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[1] James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus. Artisan autobiography in early modern Europe* (Stanford, 1998), pp. 172-73.

the texts provide only a distorted view of the individual self – as Greenblatt pointedly

stated, 'self-fashioning always involves ... some loss of self'.[2]

Despite the existence of a number of rich autobiographical texts, not many

impostors of the period considered here engaged in writing or have left autobiographies.[3]

Carleton, Fuller and Psalmanazar, who each went down in history as an impostor, and

produced a narrative in which their own persona plays the central role, are almost unique

for the period.[4] They were outsiders who, by means of imposture, crossed social

boundaries, and Carleton and Fuller in particular bolstered their transformative strategy

through their writings. Within the context of individualism, they are not only salient cases

for their pretended identities, but because they also wrote down their own stories. How

should we consider the narratives of Carleton, Fuller and Psalmanazar in the context of

autobiographical writing and individualism? And what more might they tell us about the

self?

Recent scholarship has thrown much new light on research into autobiographical

writing. Among many aspects, the most important concern authorship and the ways

questions of the self are approached. First, as James Amelang demonstrates in his fine

study of popular autobiography, production of such texts was not limited to élite authors;

second, scholars of various disciplines have attempted to revise the notion of the self and

question in particular the narrative of modernisation, which has influenced research since

Jacob Burckhardt.[5] Yet, despite the fact that early modern writers drew on a wide range

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[2] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

[3] Paul Delany names authors, who could be most nearly compared to our 'category', as 'Déclassé Opportunists and Adventurers', and lists (only male) authors such as Simon Forman, William Lilly, Goodwin Wharton, Francis Markham, Thomas Raymond, Charles Croke, Adam Elliot, William Fuller, and Edward Barlow. Paul Delany, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1969), esp. pp. 133-42; Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity. English women's writing 1649-1688* (London, 1988); Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby et al. (eds), *Her Own Life. Autobiographical writings by seventeenth-century Englishwoman* (London, 1989).

[4] The main texts are: William Fuller, *The Life of William Fuller, Gent.* (London, 1701); idem, *The Whole Life of Mr. William Fuller* (London, 1703), idem, Autograph MS (1732); Mary Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton* (London, 1663); George Psalmanazar, *Memoirs of ****. Commonly known by the Name of George Psalmanazar* (London, 1764).

[5] That is, the idea of the ascent of the Western modern man with autobiographical writings as the immediate expression of what has been considered the modern self.

of texts such as, among others, fiction, biographies, spiritual autobiographies, saints' lives or chronicles that served as models and sources of inspiration, their texts are not to be reduced to an amalgam of imitated and repeated motifs. Amelang analysed west-European popular autobiographies for their literary importance, and concluded that writing was not only a matter of imitation and repetition, but that the texts often reveal a great deal of innovation and self-consciousness. The texts are clearly a result of both personal decision and cultural imperative; they respond to the experiences and expectations of cultural and political subjugation of artisans and other socially marginalised. As the examples of Carleton and Fuller illustrate, popular autobiographies can often be a defence of the individual self or even a form of resistance. It is a creative adaptation process in the sense of Chartier,[6] which, as we have seen, can also be observed on the level of agency. However, as Chartier noted, an author 'is not the unique master of the meaning of his text, and his intentions, which provided the impulse to produce the text, are not necessarily imposed on those who turn his text into a book'.[7]

Determination of authenticity is a problematic and often vain matter. With Carleton, Fuller and Psalmanazar, to prove that their published narratives were entirely written by them is hardly ever possible. We should pay attention to their histories, but factors which may have distorted the picture have to be taken into account.[8] Impulses from the outside world are evident. We should bear in mind that their texts were created because of commercial viability and public interest after an encounter with authority. They were known offenders and their notorious characters had already been debated in public, or in court, and through newspapers and biographies, before their autobiographies

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Most important, Roy Porter (ed.), *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the present* (London, 1997); Amelang, *Flight*. Still unavoidable, Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch* (1860); John Martin, 'Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence. The discovery of the individual in Renaissance Europe', *The American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), pp. 1309-42.

[6] Amelang, *Flight*, p. 249, on textual inspiration and influences, see esp. pp. 129-41; Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books. Readers, authors, and libraries in Europe between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries* (Stanford, 1994), ch. 2.

[7] Chartier, *Order*, p. 28.

[8] The most recent publication on Carleton, Kietzman's *Self-Fashioning* does not pose the question of the authenticity of Carleton's *Case*.

were published. It is therefore important to remember the function of criminals in popular literature and attitudes towards crime and sin in general.[9] Their texts can hardly be described as the results of wholly autonomous or private acts.[10] Fuller, for instance, was a notorious scribbler who also produced a remarkable number of political pamphlets. Many of them are repetitive, and their authorship is sometimes doubtful; as mentioned above, he himself claimed at a later point that he had been pressured to publish them and that some of them had been written by others in his name. Their history within the context of the literary market is complicated and often opaque, and it is impossible to say here, how much was actually written by him.[11] We encounter similar difficulties over his published autobiographies; at least his autograph manuscript provides evidence of his writings. I suggest that they were mainly written by himself, but, and here I would like to include Carleton's and Psalmanazar's texts, I do not exclude the possibility of outside influence. Despite the lack of evidence, we should be aware that apart from the stimuli previously outlined, publishers may well have modified the texts; alterations could have ranged from improvements in style to interpolated additions. Apart from the contemporary interest in biographies, we should not forget the role of pamphleteers, publishers and booksellers who operated within a very competitive literary market, which without doubt stimulated the production of texts. On the author's side, silence, unconscious or conscious omission, and exaggeration are not uncommon strategies in autobiographies; among many other factors such as memory, and the psychological and physiological condition of the author, on whose influence we may only speculate, they may distort self-representation.

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[9] This includes combined communal and official responses to crime, the meaning of prosecutions and confessions of criminals for the whole community as well as the belief that crime could be seen as the manifestation of God's providence, and, ultimately, that all people were sinners and thus able to commit crime. See, Cynthia B. Herrup, *The Common Peace. Participation and the criminal law in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987); Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account. The forms and functions of criminal biography in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 4. On Fuller as a noble outsider, see the section in chapter 7.

[10] I am not implying here that other writings *are* autonomous acts.

[11] For a useful approach to authorship and patronage, though in the Civil War period, see Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers. Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), esp. ch. 3.

These caveats in mind, we can still view the texts as early examples of popular autobiographies written by (people labelled) impostors, and not primarily by pamphleteers as was frequently the case with many other criminals whose stories found their way into criminal biography. It would be wrong to dismiss their value and treat them as mere fiction.[12] With caution, we may follow Jean Starobinski's suggestion that '[n]o matter how doubtful the facts related, the text will at least present an "authentic" image of the man who "held the pen"'.[13]

I have suggested that writing enabled Fuller again to cross social and cultural boundaries. Not only were his texts an extension of 'his' real politics, they also offered another opportunity to continue and underline his impostures. They might thus be considered a manifestation of his concrete behaviour;[14] much the same can be said of Carleton and possibly even of Psalmanazar. The question of Fuller's purposes in his act of writing remains nevertheless an interesting one, as they are, at least partially, responsible for the shape and presentation of the texts.[15] Overall, we have considered the narratives a response to the political events in which he was involved. In addition, we have learned to read them as a means of coming to terms with his surroundings and himself, as a means of engaging with his sense of the mismatch between his unfortunate situation and what he believed to be his noble social status. But does Fuller give any further explanations for his decision? Can we detect any of the themes or patterns characteristic of early modern autobiographical writing? Published autobiographies often

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[12] Critics such as McKeon, Todd, and Chalmers have reduced the value of Carleton's narrative (*The Case*) to 'insubstantial fiction' by interpreting Carleton's use of references to literary plots as 'constructed rather than constructing'. Mary Jo Kietzman, 'Publicizing Private History. Mary Carleton's case in court and in print', in Paula R. Backscheider and Timothy Dykstal (eds), *Prose Studies. History, Theory, Criticism*, 18 (1995), pp. 105-33, at p. 108.

[13] Jean Starobinski, 'The Style of Autobiography', in James Olney (ed.), *Autobiography. Essays theoretical and critical* (Princeton, 1980), p. 75, cited in Michael Mascuch, *Origins of the Individualist Self. Autobiography and self-identity in England, 1591-1791* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 23.

[14] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*, p. 4.

[15] Hans Rudolf Velten, *Das selbst geschriebene Leben. Eine Studie zur deutschen Autobiographie im 16. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 1995), p. 84.

contain sections preceding the actual life story, such as dedication and preface, which often provide some explanation of authorial purpose. With regard to what Fuller states in the prefaces, his intentions were relatively straightforward: he wanted to write an apology to the public and a defence of himself.[16] We remember that the first biography of him, probably written by Abel Roper or Elkanah Settle, was published in 1692, after his first conviction and punishment, and before he himself had written any text.[17] In 1701, the pamphleteer Richard Kingston, possibly in collaboration with Elkanah Settle, published *The Life of Wm. Fuller, alias Fullee, alias Fowler, alias Ellison, &c.*[18] Thus Fuller's self had already been debated in public. In *The Life* he refers to Kingston's text and the untruths therein. In the dedication to the Earl of Romney,[19] he wrote that since '[t]he Enemies of the present Government, having most basely traduced me with false and scandalous Reports; I am easily perswaded to write a true Narrative of My Life'; and in the preface can be read: 'They have try'd all shifts and arts to invalidate my Assertions, and have loaded my Character with such abominable untruths, that I cannot but take some notice of'. In *The Whole Life* too, he declared his intent to bring to light the 'Villany of those who impos'd upon' him and who 'artfully led [him] into the Snare'.[20] Unfortunately, the first pages of Fuller's autograph manuscript are missing, but as will be shown further below confession was a crucial factor.

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[16] On the apologetic element of autobiographies, see Velten, *Leben*, p. 79; Amelang, *Flight*, ch. 7.

[17] *The Life of William Fuller The Late Pretended Evidence Now A Prisoner in the King's Bench* (London, 1692).

[18] *The Life of Wm. Fuller, alias Fullee, alias Fowler, alias Ellison, &c. By Original, a Butcher's Son; by Education, a Coney-Wool-Cutter; by Inclination, an Evidence; by vote of Parliament an Impostor; by Title of his own making, a Colonel; and by his own Demerits, now a Prisoner at large belonging to the Fleet* (London, 1701).
Until 1695, Kingston had been an important government spy, who had collected information about Jacobites, and observed journeys and correspondence between Jacobites in France and England. He was awarded a government pension which fell in arrears, whereupon he impoverished, and then turned to pamphleteering to get a living. *DNB*, 'Kingston, Richard (*b. c.* 1635, *d.* 1710?); Paul Hopkins, 'Sham Plots and Real Plots in 1690s', in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy. Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 89-110, at pp. 92, 94.

[19] Henry Sidney, first Earl of Romney, whose influence and reputation are much disputed, was involved in William's invasion and then remained in his service until the king's death. It is possible that Fuller met him in Ireland or at The Hague. Like Fuller, Sidney was a youngest son, who had sought employment at the court. See David Hosford, 'Sidney, Henry, first earl of Romney (1641-1704), *DNB*.

[20] Fuller, *Life*, Dedication; Preface; idem, *Whole Life*, Preface.

Self-defence was, both for ordinary and prominent people, a common motive to write an autobiography. Pride, dignity, need for recognition, inclusion as a member of a community as well as (posthumous) reputation all played a vital role as motivational factors. Thomas Turner (1729-1793), a shopkeeper from East Hoathly, Sussex, wanted to set forth his own actions and the misdeeds of others, and Ambroise Paré (1510-1590), the French royal physician, in what is probably the 'best-known example of autobiography as self-defense', noted:

> Truly I had not put hand to the pen, to write on such a thing, were it not
>
> that some impudently injured, taxed, and more through particular hatred,
>
> disgraced me, than for zeal or love they bear to the public good.[21]

Mary Carleton clearly wanted to counter the 'diligent and forestalling slanders of [her] accusers', shortly after she was acquitted of bigamy in the Old Bailey on 4 June 1663. Psalmanazar too attempted to defend himself, though posthumously, against 'two editions of that scandalous romance remaining in England, besides the several versions it had abroad'.[22] Whereas Turner's work was possibly addressed to a smaller circle of people such as the family, 'the primary addressee of autobiographical literature at all social levels', Carleton's, Fuller's and Psalmanazar's writings hint at a public battle as they were clearly directed at a very broad audience – thanks to the medium of print. In this context, Amelang speaks of 'a sort of "discovery" of popular autobiography'.[23] It is of importance to see that their 'selves' were negotiated in public, and that the outcome was very much a result of this interactive process.

However, self-defence was seldom the only motivation. Fuller possibly wrote the autobiography of 1701 in prison, and certainly the edition of 1703 and the autograph manuscript of 1732. We remember that in February 1702 he was declared 'a Cheat, a false Accuser, and an incorrigible Rogue', and that, on 20 May 1702, he was convicted at

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[21] *The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765*, ed. David Vaisey (Oxford, 1984), pp. xxviii, 67-8, 83, and Ambroise Paré, *The Apologie and Treatise, Containing the Voyages made into Divers Places*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (New York, 1968), p. 3, cited in Amelang, *Flight*, pp. 176-77.
[22] Carleton, *Case*, sig. B2r; Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, p. 6.
[23] On author and audience, see Amelang, *Flight*, ch. 3, quotes from pp. 70, 69.

the Guildhall 'for a cheat and impostor', sent to Bridewell, fined a thousand marks and ordered to be kept prisoner until paid.[24] Without doubt, that was a harsh verdict. Stroud's fear of the punishment or Tempest's suicide in prison should remind us of the severity of such punishments. Fuller often complained about the miserable conditions and unjust treatment by prison gaolers.[25] Of course, assessing the real impact of imprisonment is literally an impossible task. But although Fuller was relatively scrupulous, and seemed to have not been much ashamed of his misdeeds, this aspect should not be underestimated. His self-awareness expressed in the narratives involved both shame and guilt. He too had to cope with a difficult personal condition – not only in terms of finances, but credit in the broad sense – and apart from his notorious claims, the narratives were an attempt to deal with shame and guilt in order to reconstruct his honour. On the one hand, they clearly functioned as an 'act of self-assertion',[26] as reinforcement of the self he believed himself to be. On the other we need to consider the limitations of such an act by arguing that it is the extreme situational conditions that force individuals to abandon their own 'self' and to take on prescribed roles. Interestingly, a similar line of argument can be found in his autograph manuscript. One possible explanation could be that he wanted to publish the writing, as one letter to the Archbishop suggests.[27]

Early modern morality can obviously not be detached from religion, and thus in the context of autobiographical writing we cannot evade the question of religion either. Early autobiographical writing has often (and often even exclusively) been linked to the

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[24] *CJ*, Vol. XIII, p. 730; Luttrell, *HR*, Vol. V, pp. 133, 140, 141, 176; *State Trials*, Vol. XIV, pp. 517-36; *The Daily Courant*, Number 28, 21 May, 1702.
[25] BL, Add. MS 28892, f. 77, 'Letter to Ellis from Queen's Bench, 1 May, 1704'; Add. MS 28893 f. 80, 'Letter to Ellis from Common Side Queen's Bench, 19 March, 1705'; Add. MS 28893 f. 107, 'Letter to Ellis from Common Side of the Queen's Bench, 12 April, 1705'; SP 34/6 6A, 'Petition to the Queen, 27 April, 1705'; SP 34/29/30A, 'Petition, 1710'; SP 34/29/30B, 'Petition to the Queen, 1710'.
[26] Velten, *Leben*, p. 85.
[27] SP 36/19/97.

Protestant practice of self-examination.[28] Protestant devotional literature emphasised that only divine grace could bring salvation, but that self-examination could allow control over past misdeeds and potential sins. Thus daily self-examination became the ideal of spiritual autobiography. Ralph Josselin's diary belongs among the finest examples that illustrate an aspect of this belief system. While contemporaries were asked to watch for providential signs, it was up to them to examine their own misdeeds. The right reaction to misfortune was therefore to detect one's moral misdeeds through self-examination. Yet this should happen not only by concentrating on one's own nature. In his advice book for spiritual autobiography, the Puritan John Beadle regarded it as Christian duty to contemplate also the exemplary end of notorious offenders,[29] which again illustrates the close relationship between agent and other 'sinners', and the importance of context for one's self-definition.

The three impostors were all well aware of contemporary moral values and norms, but their texts are very different. While Carleton considered religion a 'constraint' and left out characteristic motifs, in particular, confession and repentance, Fuller, though to a limited extent, and Psalmanazar made use of a stock of clichés.[30] Was this ingenuous? Was it his Catholic breeding, or the Protestant environment that stimulated Fuller's decision? Had religious faith an influence on him so that guilt and shame forced a confession out of him? As pointed out earlier, it is impossible to allocate him clearly within any denomination, but it is perhaps surprising that Fuller's published writings, created in a climate in which religion was a paramount force, display, with regard to motivational factors, a relative lack of this intensity. But despite their predominantly secular nature, the influence of spiritual autobiography, and the concepts of self-examination and confession are worth considering, if only briefly. As Paul Seaver has

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[28] However, autobiographical tradition cannot be attributed to occidental, Renaissance or even Protestant culture only, but is rather a transcultural and transhistorical phenomenon. See Peter Burke, 'Representations of the Self from Petrarch to Descartes', in Porter (ed.), *Rewriting*, pp. 17-28, at p. 28.

[29] John Beadle, *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian* (London, 1656), sig. B3v. See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 66.

[30] Carleton, *Case*, sig. B9r.

stated, we need not expect to find the complex ideologies of sophisticated moralists in autobiographies of lay authors.[31] Of course, Fuller stresses his devotion throughout, and the fact that his writings are apologies illustrates the centrality of guilt and repentance in early modern culture. A confession might be the acknowledgement of one's sins as well as the avowal of one's faith. Yet as Rousseau's confessions illustrate, they need not have a religious purpose, and may be simply the revelation of personal secrets. Although Fuller claims to have made confession several times, his published autobiographies contain only a few passages that display him contemplating his religious conscience by acts of daily self-examination. Rather than seeing his troubles as caused by his own wicked character, he perceives himself a victim of his own time and misfortunes, but within the framework of a divine plan. Fuller's narratives of life are not comparable to the famous diaries of the Puritans Nehemiah Wallington and Josselin; in fact, his texts do not possess anything of their introspective nature. In particular, their prefaces display only a few of the characteristics of spiritual autobiography.[32] As he stated in *The Whole Life*, he wanted to give an explanation which he had reached by self-examination and which neither Parliament nor any other authority managed to extort from him. He claims that he now realised the 'Follies' and 'Stupidity' he had committed, appeals to the general public, and pledges 'to do right to all Mankind' and to 'make all the satisfaction ... to those [he has] injur'd'.[33] It was not God's glory that brought about such changes. His confession was forced out of him by the loss of his social status, his punishment and his miserable condition, and not through a long agonizing process of doubts and temptations, eventually overcome through self-examination. The meaning of the individual confession as an 'independent' act, as postulated by Fuller, may be regarded as an important moment

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[31] Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World. A puritan artisan in seventeenth-century London* (London, 1985), p. 17. Bernard Capp observes the same for popular literature. Yet as Amelang notes popular autobiographers drew on similar sources to their élite contemporaries. See Bernard Capp, 'Popular Literature', in Barry Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1985), pp. 198-243, at p. 220; Amelang, *Flight*, p. 130.

[32] In his analysis of spiritual autobiographies, Dean Ebner described four phases of a conversion process. Dean Ebner, *Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century England* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 42-7.

[33] Fuller, *Whole Life*, Preface.

for it involved a 'new' individual experience, but we should not overrate it. As in Carleton's text, the characteristic features of the conversion narrative are missing – perhaps, as much as his real-life conversion. Especially in the main account he does not describe youthful vanity, breaking of the Sabbath or ignorance of religion, but claims a profession of godliness throughout; he does not blame self-deception for having hindered him following an honourable course of life, but rather the deceiving manoeuvres of fellow individuals. The motif of anxious struggle over excessive guilt is lacking. Only once does he allude to this characteristic spiritual confusion. He was in a severe state of unease when he served both kings and thus both denominations. Only God's grace could bring a solution. Fuller made a 'humble Contrition for [his] past sins' and constantly prayed to God to direct him in the right way. This is one of the few passages where he explicitly regard himself as a sinner and reveals his feelings of despair; he acknowledged his fear of his work as an agent and tries to escape this mental state of desolation by drowning his sorrows with drink.[34]

While the motif of repentance can be detected in Fuller's published writings; in the autograph manuscript it is limited to the very end, where he describes his daily religious activities in prison, the books he read, among them Tillotson's penitential sermons, the Prayer Book, and *The Whole Duty of Man*. He repents his misdeeds, expresses hope for God's justice and is certain that the Redeemer will free him from the consequences of sin and evil.[35] It is thus plausible that after many miserable years in prison he became more concerned about his salvation. Repentance had always been central in Christian tradition, with guilt as its driving force. It became an essential part of Protestantism and was the theme of many sermons, as well as being crucial in criminal biographies and the so-called 'Last Dying Speeches'. Repentance was held a precondition

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[34] Fuller, *Whole Life*, pp. 42, 44.
Overall, Fuller reveals virtually nothing about emotions. Yet, as Amelang rightly noted, '[a]voidance of "excessive" display of emotion – which would have been interpreted as questioning the wisdom of divine providence – may more properly be read as evidence of the effective discipline of sentiment, not of its absence'. Amelang, *Flight*, p. 246.
[35] Fuller, Autograph MS, f. 101.

for moral reformation and conversion, a fact that is clearly observed in Fuller's narratives.[36] *The Whole Duty of Man* stresses that:

> repentance is, in short, nothing but a turning from sin to God, the casting
>
> off of all our former evils, and instead thereof constantly practising all
>
> those Christian duties which God requires of us. And this is so necessary
>
> a duty, that without it we certainly perish – *"Except ye repent, ye shall*
>
> *all likewise perish"* (Luke, xiii. 5).[37]

After hearing a sermon in church, John Evelyn hoped for a pardon for all his errors and sins and prayed 'ô Lord my God, teach me then so to number my days, that I may thro thy infinit mercy, be hid from thy Wrath, thro forgiveness of all my sinns, for the sake of the L: Jesus my onely Saviour Amen'.[38] But the repentance of youths was also a common topic for moralists, as original sin and human depravity were often linked to youth.[39] Regret at youthful vanities features in a number of diaries and spiritual autobiographies. Ralph Josselin, for instance, was assaulted by the sins of 'his youthfull vanities, contemplative lusts, and the delights of my soule therin ... to this day'.[40] In the popular biography *Dangerfield's Rambles,* the only reference in Fuller's published autobiographies to any books, we read: 'Youth has generally its Extravagancies, and they ... are seduced by the temptations of Pleasure and bad Company in great Cities'.[41] While Carleton did not touch upon the theme, and affirms her desire to 'venture upon the Worlds alluring, promising vanities',[42] Fuller was ambivalent in dealing with this.

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[36] James Sharpe, '"Last Dying Speeches". Religion, ideology and public execution in seventeenth-century England', *P&P,* 107 (1985), pp. 144-67, at p. 154.

[37] [Richard Allestree], *The Works of the Author of the Whole Duty of Man,* Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1684), p. 48, cited in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 290-91.

[38] John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn,* ed. Esmond S. De Beer, 6 Vols. (Oxford, 1955), Vol. 5, p. 153. Entry for 10 September 1693. See also p. 192.

[39] John C. Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (London, 1992), pp. 26, 28; Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority. Formative experiences in England 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), esp. pp. 35-6, 43-4. See also Kaspar von Greyerz, *Vorsehungsglaube und Kosmologie. Studien zu englischen Selbstzeugnissen* (Göttingen, 1990), p. 102.

[40] *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683,* ed. Alan Macfarlane (British Academy, records of Social and Economic History, new series, 3, Oxford, 1976), p. 144.

[41] *Don Tomazo or the Juvenile Rambles of Thomas Dangerfield* (London, 1680), sig. A1.

[42] The word 'folly' with reference to her activities does not occur. Carleton, *Case,* sig. B9r.

Though he alludes to his youthful follies, overall, he stresses his firm stance. Perhaps, only his wretched life as a prisoner and the imminence of death evoked some sort of conversion.

Psalmanazar, whose *Memoirs* resemble a conversion narrative, addresses the theme too. He felt obliged to leave behind 'a faithful narrative of [his] education, and the fallies [sic] of [his] wretched youthful years' and refers to his 'youthful and unthinking vanity'; as previously mentioned, it was the city that led him astray.[43] He explained that 'the design of [him] leaving the following memoirs, is at once to undeceive the world with respect to that vile and romantic account [he] formerly gave of [him]self'. But for him divine providence was allegedly one of the 'chief motives that determined [him] to write'. Though his religious education 'did not prove sufficient' to prevent him from his impostures, 'it never failed to make [him] condemn [him]self'.[44] He refers to this process as 'reformation of the sinner's life', and, like Augustine or Rousseau before and after him, he stresses the presence and influence of a 'Divine Intercessor' to guarantee absolute truthfulness.[45] He claims to have gone through a hard struggle between sense and 'carnal mind', and as in the narratives of the Puritan John Bunyan, the Anglican Daniel Dyke, or the nonconformists Sarah Davy and Hannah Allen,[46] he writes of long periods of 'fluctuating and wretched uncertainty', until a 'lingering fit of illness did, in some measure, hurry [him]' to take the pen, driven 'by pain and sickness, by the fear of death, and of the divine displeasure'.[47] Similar testimonies are entirely absent in Carleton's text, contrarily, she derided her husband's advice for a 'speedy preparation of Repentance for

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[43] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, Preface, pp. 5, 12, 98-9.

[44] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, Preface, pp. 11-2.

[45] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, Preface, pp. 19-20, 26. For the importance of the motive of conversion in spiritual autobiography, see Greyerz, *Vorsehungslaube*, pp. 99-100.

[46] John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners: Or, A brief and faithful relation of the exceeding mercy of God in Christ, to his poor Servant John Bunyan* (London, 1666); Daniel Dyke, *The Mystery of Self-Deceiving. Or A Discourse and discovery of the Deceitfulness of Mans Heart* (London, 1615); Sarah Davy, *Heaven Realiz'd. Or, The Holy Pleasure of daily intimate Communion with God, exemplified on a blessed Soul (now in Heaven) (Mrs. Sarah Davy.)* ([London], 1670); Hannah Allen, *A Narrative of God's Gracious Dealings with that Choice Christian Mrs. Hannah Allen* (London, 1683).

[47] Psalmanazar, *Memoirs*, pp. 13, 14.

another world'.[48] As mentioned Fuller describes only one situation in which he was struck by religious melancholy, yet that was not what prompted his writing or a conversion.[49] Fuller's repentance may seem to be a contradiction to the rather conceited tone that pervades his narratives, but it is characteristic of his strategy to represent himself as both hero and victim. With regard to his future behaviour, such statements can hardly be seen as genuine, but rather seem to comply with literary stereotypes.

In *The Whole Life* Fuller's repentance is announced on the title page: 'his hearty Repentance' – a publicity feature, which had probably been added by the publisher. Traces of self-examination can be detected in sentences such as 'I have trac'd my own good and bad Footsteps'.[50] This leaves the impression that he perceived himself as an autonomous individual, capable of contemplating his role within a broader context. He thus refers to the features belonging to what John Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding* had considered key elements of personal identity: 'reason and reflection'.[51] Self-examination, and consequently repentance and amendment, seem to have been a personal matter for both Fuller and Psalmanazar; a duty, which should be fulfilled after one has noticed one's bad conduct. Of course, in both cases public opinion plays an important role by provoking the agent's awareness of his misdeeds, and demanding repentance. As Davis stated, the exploration of their self 'was made in conscious relation to the groups to which [they] belonged'.[52]

Confessional narratives of personal experiences may reflect a perhaps hitherto unknown personal authority and demonstrate the moral character of the author. Yet there is another dimension to this, one that draws our attention to what we might call early

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[48] Carleton, *Case*, sig. 2E3r.

[49] Fuller, *Whole Life*, p. 42. However, Kaspar von Greyerz and Michael MacDonald both warn that the fact that intensive introspection drove several puritans mad should not be generalised. Greyerz, *Vorsehungslaube*, p. 106; Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 177.

[50] Fuller, *Whole Life*, Preface.

[51] John Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 27, §9 (London, 1997).

[52] Natalie Z. Davis, 'Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France', in Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (eds), *Reconstructing Individualism. Autonomy, individuality, and the self in western thought* (Stanford, 1986), p. 53.

modern marketing strategies. Fuller and Psalmanazar make use of the popular cultural practice of the confession with the intention of providing it to the public. Again, we have to be cautious with our interpretation of their use of religious stereotypes, and the publishers may have played some role here. John Dunton, who published under several pseudonyms, 'was highly sensitive to the fleeting enthusiasms of the public'; for instance, he invented and published a number of 'Last Dying Speeches'.[53] We call to mind that Psalmanazar was also engaged as a hack writer in Grub Street. Fuller's autobiographical texts too have to be considered in this context. The books were not only meant to be an advertisement for himself but a commercial object. Any detail of a book, such as size, price, layout, ornamentation, a woodcut of the author, as well as the publisher, was intended to reflect features of the author's apparent identity.[54] The title page especially was visually important for it functioned as publicity by providing information about the author's social origin and status and the content of the text; it had to be trustworthy and manifest authenticity. In *The Life of William Fuller the Late Pretended Evidence*, a text that clearly stands in the tradition of criminal biography, the bookseller, Abel Roper, claims historicity and authenticity for the text, a fact that became increasingly important. He states that he had obtained 'the whole Contents from original Parties concern'd', and that he has 'gathered [his] Intelligence all from their [Fuller's 'Master, the Merchant

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[53] Other publications include the *Ladies Dictionary* (1694) and *Religio Bibliopolae* (1691).
Stephen Parks, *John Dunton and the English Book Trade. A study of his career with a checklist of his publications* (New York, 1976), p. 189; Dunton, *Life and Errors*, pp. 247-48. On Dunton and repentance, see Mascuch, *Origins*, ch. 6. According to Mascuch, Dunton is a good example to illustrate the influence of the book trade on the process of autobiographical writing and how his activities encouraged tendencies of secular writing. Ibid., pp. 136-37.
For the Athenian Mercury, see Helen Berry, *Gender, Society and Print Culture in Late-Stuart England. The cultural world of the Athenian Mercury* (Aldershot, 2003), esp. ch. 3.
The value of Dunton's writings have been overrated. For instance, J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels. The cultural contexts of eighteenth-century English fiction* (London, 1990), pp. 331-33. See also idem, 'The Insistent I', *Novel. A Forum on Fiction*, 13 (1979), pp. 19-37.
[54] Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning*; John Feather, 'The Power of Print. Word and image in eighteenth-century England', in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Culture and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 51-68.
Of course, this refers also to manuscripts. Good examples of the use of graphical details are perhaps Thomas Whythorne's *Autobiography* of 1576 and Kenelm Digby's *Loose Fantasies* (c. 1628). Jürgen Schlaeger, 'Parallel Explorations. Exploring the self in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', in Frédéric Regard (ed.), *Mapping the Self. Space, identity, discourse in British auto/biography* (Saint-Etienne, 2003), pp. 33-54, at pp. 40-1.

Tradesmen or others, all Cheated by him'] own Mouths'.[55] He also alludes to recent narratives of impostures, such as Guzman, Settle's Major Clancy and Morrell narratives, or the texts on Mary Carleton, but assures readers that Fuller's story would go beyond their adventures. A slightly different strategy had to be pursued with Fuller's autobiographies. Although they stand in the tradition of criminal biographies, they cannot be considered as such.[56] The title page of *The Life* announces the traditional patterns of autobiography such as birth, education, relations, adventures, and claims historicity; it reads: 'Written by his own hand, and the Truth referred to the knowledge of several Gentlemen, &c.'[57] Hence with some familiar features of autobiography 'he' hoped to advertise the authenticity as well as authority of his self. Social status and reputation were important factors. Dunton's *Life and Errors* sold poorly, because, as he later argued, it was announced under the name of a 'Poor Tradesman'.[58] We do not know how well any of the impostors' writings sold. In any case, Dunton's statement at least illustrates that the authors had to advertise themselves effectively, or had to be well promoted through the publisher, or, as was most likely the case with Fuller or Carleton, they had to possess already a certain public reputation which promised good sales. Moreover, the biography of a self-styled princess or a cheat enjoyed greater appeal for readers than that of an ill-reputed 'poor tradesman'. Hence, among other factors literary traditions and the early modern literary market played a vital role in shaping autobiographies, and both encouraged people such as Carleton, Fuller and Psalmanazar to contemplate their role in society and write down their stories. Autobiographical texts held a key function in a process which involved no radical change of mind, but rather reflects the interrelationship between self and culture, the way culture stimulated new perceptions of the self, and how, in return, these perceptions met public expectations.

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[55] *Life of William Fuller*, 'The Bookseller to the Reader'.
[56] I suggest that the narratives by Fuller and Carleton belong to the earliest criminal autobiographies.
[57] Fuller, *Life*, Titlepage; idem, *Whole Life*.
[58] John Dunton, *Dunton's Whipping-Post* (London, 1706), p. 1, cited in Parks, *John Dunton*, pp. 159-60.

But what can we conclude about the author's self? Recent studies, among them that of Michael Mascuch, have rightly stressed the importance of 'an original and coherent narrative' as an 'instrument for individualist thought'.[59] The importance of narratives as the 'medium for human agency', as well as their values as historical sources, can certainly not be denied. However, this line of argument is still trapped by the grand narrative of modernisation. With respect to many of the people explored or mentioned above, who did not leave any written documents at all, I suggest that writing should be seen as *one* medium among many others to articulate the self and bring it out into public space. Carleton's way of self-expression was certainly exceptional. Yet there were also other ways with which early modern women were able to negotiate their roles and positions, and managed to cross boundaries set by patriarchal norms.[60] The practice of writing has to be considered within the context of its socio-cultural meaning, and perhaps, we will then discover that it is only one of many other tools reflecting self-expression, though a sophisticated and superior one. Writing and publishing a book, in particular an autobiography, was certainly a means of status enhancement. This has become evident with Fuller and Carleton, as well as others. Whereas Psalmanazar made a complete change in his career and became a pious and honourable citizen, Carleton and Fuller did not. Carleton was hanged at Tyburn, Fuller died in prison half a century later. What is striking about them is that their narratives and real lives lack any sense of true repentance or conversion, and that both of them insist on asserting their self-fashioned identities.

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[59] However, Mascuch's view to 'locate the origins of the individualist self in early modern Britain', and to regard the late-eighteenth-century author and bookseller, James Lackington, the 'first modern autobiographical practitioner' is problematic. Mascuch, *Origins*, pp. 21, 24.

[60] See Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet. Women, family, and neighbourhood in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003); Laura Gowing *Domestic Dangers. Women, words, and sex in early modern London* (Oxford, 1996); Phillis Mack, *Visionary Women. Ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1992). On women petitioners, see Patricia Higgins, 'The Reactions of Women, with Special Reference to Women Petitioners', in Brian Manning (ed.), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973); Judith M Bennett and Amy M. Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800* (Philadelphia, 1999), esp. ch. 9. On women's spaces from a mere literary point of view, see Corinne S. Abate, *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2003).

Despite their desire for inclusion and justification both insist on their dignity and express a desire for autonomy and a place in history on their own terms.

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CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that the well-known impostors who have hitherto received scholarly attention form only the tip of the iceberg; sampling various kinds of archival sources has brought to light a vast body of additional and significant material. By exploring the nature of imposture in the early modern period, the thesis has demonstrated a different approach to the study of individualism and self-fashioning in the context of popular culture. Early modern English men and women regarded a wide range of activities as impostures. The term 'impostor' generally referred to someone who deliberately deceived, cheated or swindled; it was also used of anyone who assumed some feature of identity that was not his own, such as a title, name, profession, or knowledge, and thus passed himself off as something different from his 'true' identity. Such individuals claimed rights or status far beyond those of their true social position and, in extreme cases, even someone else's identity. Although people frequently assumed someone else's name, particularly for financial purposes, the impersonator or 'total' impostor, that is, one who, by means of an elaborate scheme, steals and adopts the identity of another specific individual, whether alive or dead, was fairly rare. Far more common was the 'partial' impostor, that is, someone who altered only certain characteristics of his identity.

However, it should have become clear that not all 'impostors' or even some of the groups considered in the thesis can legitimately be called impostors in the true sense. We have to differentiate perceptions and representations of impostures from deliberate acts, and thus avoid slipping into anachronism by accepting contemporary prejudices. The use of broad categories in this thesis has enabled us to establish the various forms of the phenomenon and some recurrent themes, though it has allowed only an outline picture of individual histories. Individual cases rarely conform to a single pattern, and often

overlap with other categories. Impostors were of all ages, genders, and social strata, though the most common was an adolescent male of lower or middling social background. The fact that women were generally underrepresented, except as religious impostors, raises important questions as to their means of (public) self-expression, and draws attention to a different aspect in the debate over female agency. As individuals, impostors were exceptional, yet in that they used the 'language' available in their time and place, they were only to a limited extent outsiders. For their part, the 'victims' of impostors ranged from peasants to monarchs, and included prestigious scientific institutions.

The *longue-durée* exploration of imposture has revealed both changes and enduring continuities. The scope and meaning of an imposture are closely related to its context. The exploration of the phenomenon in its broadest sense has yielded insights into the characteristics of socially defined and tolerated roles and the meanings of personal identity which is made up of several features, whose quantity and quality depend on time and space. We usually think of early modern society as clearly structured and ordered. Social hierarchy was manifested in dwellings, dress, language and gestures, in the way people addressed one another and other conventions of comportment, often made visible in processions or church seating; and many such behavioural norms found their way into formal regulations by the secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Impostors, however, expose fissures and weaknesses, step into vacuums, and break taboos, but they always make use of and adapt existing social components.

We have observed that representations of fraudulent beggars feature several themes which continued throughout the period, not only the significance of 'benefit fraud', but the use of means of deception such as forged documents and performative strategies based on appearance, language, gestures and emotions. These representations emphasised the negative facets of imposture, which involved the abuse of fundamental social principles such as trust, hospitality, or charity. Assuming a different feature of identity, such as a name, was not a crime *per se*. At the trial of Robert Taylor and Mary

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Robinson in 1746, the 'counsel' stated that the 'Common Law don't[sic] hinder any People from marrying together by any Name they please'.[1] Women pretending to be sailors' widows assumed false names to receive the provision due to widows and orphans; and some sailors, for their part, took on someone else's name to obtain outstanding wages due to a deceased shipmate. Like many quacks, treasure-finders or bogus officials, impostors often claimed to possess knowledge or talent with the clear intention of defrauding others. Fraud and material benefit were therefore often important motivating factors, but they were not always decisive. Other reasons for an impostor's encounter with the authorities might be slander, treason, or any other suspicious behaviour. However, while most cases are known to us from judicial sources, we should not see imposture only in a negative sense. Not all of those labelled impostors intended to defraud for the sake of personal advantage. A competent medical practitioner claiming to possess a licence was in a sense also helping his clients. Self-proclaimed prophets were not necessarily seeking material benefits either; many, probably most, acted in good faith, and doubtless believed their disciples would be blessed by following them. For others, imposture offered a way to overcome a stigma or make up some loss, or it enabled them to pursue some skill or even to satisfy sexual desire. We have also met individuals like Haydock, the sleeping preacher, Elizabeth Thornborough, the fantasist noblewoman, Morrell and Psalmanazar who did not obtain any obvious material benefits. In such cases psychological gratification probably outweighed material gain as the motivation behind their behaviour; many impostors may have sought fame of some kind. It is plausible that the literary marketplace, hungry for sensational characters, also helped stimulate some individuals to emulate popular heroes and achieve a similar celebrity status. This is an interesting aspect which has been only marginally considered in this thesis, and it would provide an intriguing subject for further research. So far there has been no history of fame in this period.

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[1] *OBP*, October 1746, George Taylor and Mary Robinson (t17461015-20). See Chapter 1, p. 39.

To what extent can we see impostures as acts of self-development and self-assertion? In breaking taboos and seeking some extraordinary achievement, individuals demonstrated their capacity for agency and subjectivity, yet they were still to some extent bound by their social context. Part of the fascination of impostors, stereotypically reflected in popular literature, is their assumed freedom and autonomy. But their choice of how to fashion themselves was always limited, especially if the impostor attempted to assume the identity of a specific person or to adopt a clearly defined social, political or religious role. It has been emphasized that self-fashioning is a socialization process. Similarly, impostors develop their roles according to social codes and the language of the social milieu into which they intrude; by using their social skills, knowledge, language, body; they fashion their roles according to the expectations and psychological needs of the people they must encounter. This process is more elaborate in long-term impostures, but may be relevant to short-term cases too. A bogus constable might 'simply' have shouted 'I arrest you in the king's name' or shown a forged warrant. Morrell or Fuller, however, took on several different roles, more elaborate and lasting for many years, during which they were able to impose on many different people. And impostors such as Perkin Warbeck acted a single, but very demanding part for an extended period.

With regard to outside influences and personal autonomy, we may broadly identify three types. First, there is the individualist, a 'loner' or independent agent whose imposture involves a complete transformation of identity, usually in pursuit of personal or material advantage. Regarding his autonomy, this type resembles popular heroes and literary characters such as the *picaro* or knight-errant. Like Morrell, he has broken with his former life and personal ties, in order to exploit the opportunities of mobility and anonymity. The second type sees himself as destined to be a leader, and endowed with special powers. He believes in his dignity and mission; his goals are less selfish, and any benefits, he believes, will accrue as much to his disciples as to himself. Third comes the 'puppet', someone seduced or forced by a more powerful individual or group to act a

specific part, often because his characteristics and talents are deemed to fit their particular purpose.

Even where we possess detailed evidence it is very difficult to make any firm judgement about the motives and inner drive of impostors. They are not necessarily dissimulators, or 'ritualists'.[2] While some were deliberate frauds, many appear to have sincerely believed in their role. A certain amount of inward conviction or 'commitment' might be necessary to act a part, but in any case, the boundary between 'acting' and 'living' is fluid. Bogus officials could be said to have 'acted' differently and with less inner commitment during their short-term exploits than Fuller, who firmly believed in his claim to high social status and whose impostures thus served to fulfil his inner convictions. The language of acting or theatricality has also been used in describing cases of exorcism, where children were sometimes especially 'trained', but as they were living in a milieu where belief in possession and exorcism remained widespread, we cannot exclude the possibility that they too might believe in their claims. This also applies to some extent to 'quacks', for their public performances were often based on the principle of 'scientific' eye-witnessing, and at least some of them were convinced that their claims and practices were genuine. Sadly, in most cases, we simply do not possess enough evidence to distinguish between sincerity and fraud.

Again, we should note that the labels 'impostor' and 'imposture' were widely employed in the cause of professional self-protection and self-definition, and for social stereotyping, especially in the medical and religious contexts. Many of the examples reflect a conflict between the convictions and behaviour of one specific socio-cultural group and the counter-beliefs of another. Self-proclaimed prophets deeply believed in their mission for the benefit of mankind and sometimes gained the support of a wide range of people. Though their motivation was rooted in idealistic enthusiasm and religious or political passion, they were generally labelled impostors by their opponents.

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[2] Following the sociologist Robert K. Merton, Mary Douglas has described the ritualist as someone 'who performs external gestures without inner commitment to the ideas and values being expressed'. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols. Explorations in cosmology* (London, 1996), p. 1.

Social stereotyping was not only important in religion and politics, for it was also prevalent in the medical context. But not all irregular practitioners conformed to the popular stereotype of the quack. Many were simply unlicensed outsiders. As in Simon Forman's case, clients from many social strata might have benefited from their services before a cure failed on a particular occasion, prompting the practitioner to be denounced as a fraud. The fact that the label often revealed more about those who used it than the stereotyped target is an crucial message for a 'history of stereotypes'. Similarly, the stereotype of the social upstart and the counter-stereotype of the true aristocrat served to help maintain belief in a legitimate aristocracy. While they hint at a political dimension, the nobility's determination to hold on to its social, political, economic and cultural predominance, they reflect too the aristocracy's wish and perhaps need to defend itself against accusations of immorality and extravagant consumption. Eventually, however, our wish to deconstruct these stereotypes by exploring individual cases has very often been frustrated by the limitations of the surviving sources. But though traditional stereotypes inevitably oversimplify the subject, they played a significant role in shaping identities and encouraging individual self-fashioning. Ultimately, an impostor was conforming to a stereotype which would facilitate 'entry' into the community he or she longed to join.

A major element in representations of the impostor in various contexts was the 'rebellious'. Many of the religious and royal impostures of the period were clearly perceived as threats to authority, which explains their determined prosecution. However, impostures were clearly distinct from the (more or less) institutionalised and collective rituals of inversion, which have been associated with popular political manifestations. It would be wrong to consider the widespread fascination with rituals of inversion as evidence of a 'mentality of imposture', or to deduce from the decreasing importance of the former at the end of the early modern period a decrease in the latter. Impostors might seek a role which would represent a 'world turned upside down' as regards their inner self, but not necessarily as far as their outward position is concerned. While certain

impostures did reflect the broader social, religious or political tension of the period, only a few can be interpreted as rebellious acts in the sense of posing a real and deliberate challenge to authority.

What conclusions can we draw regarding broader historical developments? By the end of the period considered here, royal and religious impostures had clearly faded, though they had not entirely disappeared. The sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century reveals a great deal of religious impostures, explained by some contemporaries as a fulfilment of biblical prophecies of false prophets to arise in the latter days. Although many were suspected to be in league with the devil, we have found no evidence of belief in the devil's power to manipulate human identity. Scepticism and new theories of cognition and visual experience during the 'Scientific Revolution' played a major role in resolving similar problems, though there was no clear shift from religious to more secular impostures. Religious impostors did not disappear, but they came to take on a different meaning. At the end of the eighteenth century, Joanna Southcott could still gain a large body of followers, but placing her alongside seventeenth-century prophets, it is less easy to see her as the natural product of a more general 'national' atmosphere.

Secular themes occur in impostures throughout the period. The connection between fraud and imposture is very evident in representations of false beggars. Bogus officials were also a persistent phenomenon, illustrating the weaknesses of bureaucratic structures and procedures. Moreover, individuals of humble social background claiming genteel status were a recurring type. From the sixteenth century, it was also a prominent theme in popular and moralistic literature, but there is no evidence of a sharp increase of such impostures. Similarly, claims to social status based on a life style of conspicuous consumption were increasingly common from the seventeenth century onwards; but while the pattern may be related to expanding trade and communication networks and economic practices, the themes of financial fraud and credit do occur earlier.

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Furthermore, it would be wrong to assume that a general decline in the phenomenon was a result of the rise of the modern state. Indeed, imposture may be seen as a metaphor to counter the story of 'success' which has dominated the historiography of this area. The rise of official documentation from the Reformation onwards – supplementing laws governing dress, and conduct books – may have sought to classify and constrain individual identities, but such attempts were only partially successful. Intensified efforts to define and constrain identity paradoxically created more opportunities to imitate and deceive. Impostors demonstrate that any means of identification is relative and can be overcome. Until the seventeenth century, for instance, laws governing dress may have prescribed a person's outward appearance, but within his own community a person was recognised and valued on the basis of different features. The same applies to other forms of representation or identification, not explored in this thesis, such as names or portraits. Although it could be shown that various components of identity were always involved, this raises important questions as to how early modern people recognised and identified each other. Do representations reveal any shift in the ways the appearance of impostors was described over the period? Although mentioned only briefly in this thesis, contemporary sources describe physical appearance and methods of deception, such as disguises, in far greater detail from the seventeenth century; good examples are newspapers such as the *London Gazette*, or the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey*. However, a change in representations does not necessarily prove a change in the practices of imposture, and this aspect requires further investigation. Moreover, Groebner has emphasised the significance of identification documents as characteristics of what he regards as the modern impostor in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[3] Without doubt, written documents became increasingly important, but they remained only one means by which a person could assume a different identity in a world which still operated on a primarily oral basis. The cases of Fuller and Stroud, for

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[3] Valentin Groebner, *Der Schein der Person. Steckbrief, Ausweis und Kontrolle im Europa des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 2004), pp. 152-56.

instance, show that 'performance' continued to play a crucial role. It was not by false documents that they deceived people, but through their 'pretentious' behaviour, their stories and fabricated biographies. Religious impostors convinced or alarmed contemporaries primarily on the strength of their personality and their message. And while some political impostors, such as Simnel or Warbeck, were groomed to play their assumed roles convincingly, others relied on the strength of their inner convictions. Edward Tedder asserted himself to be of as 'highe a bloode' as the Queen, and declared, 'I am kynge of the Realme. I was borne in White hall and that is my house and I will have itt yf I lyve'.[4] Such claims posed no real threat to the authorities, but anyone interested in imposture and fashioning of identity must also engage with such seemingly minor forms of self-expression.

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[4] Cockburn, *CAR. Kent Indictments Elizabeth I*, p. 449.

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