Contesting London Bridewell, 1576–1580

Paul Griffiths

The opening of a new prison or hospital was not always a welcome event in Tudor London and not just because of the sky-high mortality rates that put countless patients in coffins. A brand new building changed physical and mental landscapes in the city, sometimes forever; its uses needed to be recognized and assimilated. People inside hospitals are familiar figures by now. The trials and tribulations of inmates, nurses, and doctors are the property of a burgeoning historiography. Less well noticed, however, are impressions of institutions like these in the minds of Londoners of all classes.[1] Just as ''state-of-the-art'' medicine could soothe or irritate, so these opinions were naggingly unpredictable to governors. Yet little else might be expected from people whose first port of call when ill symptoms flickered was frequently a ''wise woman'' or some ''irregular'' healer, or for whom prisons were daunting, intrusive presences. In such predicaments, a prize civic possession could become a figure of fear and fun. Not long after London Bridewell (the main focus of this essay) first opened its doors in the mid-1550s, stories of near-death thrashings, maggot-laced food, and penny-pinching governors within its walls circulated in talk on the streets outside.

The middle of the sixteenth century was a time of institutional flux

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[1] Compare Mary Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Cambridge, 1991), chap. 8; Colin Jones, *Charity and Bienfaisance: The Treatment of the Poor in the Montpellier Region, 1740–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), chap. 6.

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in London. The fate of the monasteries seesawed, and in a short seven-year span (1546–53) five hospitals opened up for the first time in the city or were reopened on a brand new footing. Orphans and street children were ferried to Christs, the insane were locked up in Bethlem, the sick were sent to St. Bartholomew's or St. Thomas's, while Bridewell Hospital's particular province was to put a stop to the heavy flows of vagrants and the rising tides of crime and vice.[2] Quite quickly these hospitals became key planks of policy and police in the quickly growing city as well as pillars of civic prestige. They also became deeply sunk in mentalities, affecting senses of morality and place. Before long they were landmarks in the mental maps that helped people pinpoint senses of place or direction in London, and a part of the vocabulary of insult that could sting feelings. Mary Badham called Ann Luck ''a Bridewell whore'' as they washed clothes in 1602; while Mary Sadd called Margaret Eddis ''base whore and a hospital whore.''[3]

My principal purpose in what follows is to piece together contemporary perceptions of London Bridewell by looking at some times when people put feelings about this place in words, including a long-running saga in the Star Chamber that stretched from 1576 to 1580, which has left behind a small hill of documentation. Bridewell was not the only hospital in London to be lampooned and lambasted on the streets. Heads turned on New Fish Street in 1552 when a woman walking from the bridge ''develyshlye'' shouted in a ''lamentable'' and ''very lowde and shrylle voyce'': ''Alas that ever she was born for her two children were taken from her'' by Christs governors, and now one of them was ''murdered and the other [was] almoste ded.'' In the same year, ''privie backbityng'' by ''busybodies'' mocked St. Bartholomew's: what has happened since it first opened, they asked, the ''poor and afflicted'' still

[2] A recent survey of the early history of these hospitals is Paul Slack, ''Hospitals, Workhouses, and the Relief of the Poor in Early Modern London,'' in *Health Care and Poor Relief in Protestant Europe, 1500–1700,* ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London, 1997), pp. 234–51. See also Christopher Thomas Daly, ''The Hospitals of London: Administration, Refoundation and Benefaction, c. 1500–1572'' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1994). The most complete history of Bridewell is still E. G. O'Donoghue, *Bridewell Hospital, Palace, Prison, and School: From the Death of Elizabeth to Modern Times* (London, 1929). See also Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991), chap. 6; A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London, 1985), pp. 164–69; Joanna Innes, ''Prisons for the Poor: English Bridewells, 1555–1800,'' in *Labour, Law, and Crime: A Historical Perspective,* ed. Francis Snyder and Douglas Hay (London, 1987), pp. 42–122, esp. pp. 49–61. I will more fully examine Bridewell's first century in my forthcoming book, ''Lost Londons: Crime, Control, and Change in the Capital City, 1545–1660.''

[3] Guildhall Library, London (GL) MS 9057/1, fol. 12.

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swarm up and down, blocking the streets, soiling the air, and draining money like a drip-feed?[4]

We can only read and count the bad-tempered words written down on paper that have survived to this day. But if this measurement matters then right from the start Bridewell was by far the most controversial of the mid-century foundations and the regular recipient of the ''hottest'' invective. It is true that this number falls in the next century, a sign maybe that Bridewell caused less fuss as time passed. Yet like the other hospitals, the decades after 1550 were the stormiest ones, when minds were not yet made up and flashpoints were more numerous. Bridewell's governors were called ''men of much worship and wisdom'' in the Hospital's rules (1557); far from it, a barber's wife shrieked in 1560, they are ''murtherers.'' Another woman ''shamefully'' called the governors a bench of crooked ''bawds'' who pooled pickings from whores. Bishop Ridley called the hospitals ''truly religious houses.'' Bridewell's founder Edward VI was called a ''godly'' prince and a true pilgrim. A thief who snatched a hat and cloak from a man on the street was said to ''curse this hospitall and the founder thereof.'' At Bridewell ''beggarly harlots are ponysshed and the riche eskape,'' a fishmonger snapped in 1560.[5]

Tempers could boil because for some Bridewell was an overmighty intrusion into everyday life, running an eye over the most intimate personal matters and dishing out penalties for immorality, and not always fairly it seemed. In few other places was personal conduct so hotly or so frequently contested, a quarrel that was nicely summed up in 1577 when William Aldersley greeted drinkers in a Cheapside pub by saying, ''I woulde Bridewell weare downe and the stewes up agayne,'' or in 1575 when a bunch of ''whores'' plotted to hang themselves so that Bridewell would be ''put down.''[6] Publicity spilling like this was bad press and a sore point: a woman was ''well whipped'' for ''rayling most unhonestlye and slaunderouslye upon this house [Bridewell] and [its] governors openly in the hearyng of fyve hundred persons.'' Worse still, a preacher blasted Bridewell at the city's most public site, Pauls Cross:

[4] Corporation of London Record Office (CLRO) Letterbook R, fol. 227v; St. Bartholomew Hospital Archives (BHA), ''The Ordre of the Hospitall of St. Bartholomewes in West Smythfield in London'' (1552), fol. Av.

[5] These remarks from the Bridewell Ordinances (1557) and the Declaration by London's Citizens (1553) are quoted in *The Thirty-Second Report of the Charity Commissioners of England and Wales,* Per Acts 38 Geo.3.c.91 and Geo.3.c.81, pt. VI, 1840 (219), xix (*Charity Commissioners Report*), pp. 390, 389; *John Howes' MS., 1582,* ed. William Lempriere (London, 1904), p. 56; Bridewell Hospital Courtbook (BHC) 1, fols. 87v, 38; 2, fol. 76; 8, fol. 212v; 1, fol. 51r–v.

[6] BHC 3, fol. 192; 2, fol. 110.

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his ''rashe and slanderous declaracon'' gave an exaggerated blow-by-blow account of the savage ''beatynge of an apprentice'' there.[7] Perceptions like these blended allegations of corruption and unfair handling with a deep unease about interventions to straighten morals. Only Bedlam among the other hospitals could rival Bridewell as a source for caricature in literary script. Dramatists and balladeers poked fun at Bridewell, but they also imagined it as a bleak place packed to the brim with vagrants and whores.[8] Mortified by the malicious glee of loose gossip, prisoners and their friends spoke of the shame of Bridewell. John Lilburne's wife was bundled into a cell with ''common sluts and whores whose society is a hell upon earth to one that fears the Lord.'' Another woman mourned for the fate of her soul ''in this loathsome place accompanied with vile persons.'' While the friends of a ''gentlewoman of good berth'' hatched a rescue plan to free her from Bridewell, ''perceaving and thincking bothe for theire owne reputacon and hers to avoyde the shame and infamie of so open and reproachfull a disgrace.''[9]

Bridewell was called a prison as well as a hospital by contemporaries, though this word jumble should not muddle its status as a ''revolutionary,'' ''new,'' and pioneering penal venture.''[10] It was chartered by the crown in 1553, and it very soon became a key weapon in the drive to contain what was felt to be a rising tide of crime from getting rapidly out of control. It became the main lockup in London for vice crimes, rootless vagrants, street crime, domestic disorders, and other ''petty'' antisocial acts. But Bridewell was not just a prison. It also had a courtroom that was tucked away behind its high walls away from the public view, and its governors were formally constituted as a court to hear cases. They were handed sweeping ''power and aucthoretie'' under their charter to ''searche, enquyre, and seke owt'' in London and its sprawling northern suburbs ''all ydell ruffians and taverne haunters, vagabonds, beggars, and all persons of yll name and fame,'' and to drag them to Bridewell (the Hospital charter lists these powers one by one). After capture prisoners were put on trial in the Bridewell court, and if found guilty as charged they were dealt with ''as shall seem good'' to the governors' ''discre-

[7] BHC 1, fol. 17v; CLRO Repertories of the Court of Aldermen (Rep.) 14, fols. 14, 24v, 29v.

[8] There is a useful survey of representations of Bridewell and Bedlam in William C. Carroll, *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996), chap. 3.

[9] House of Lords Main Papers (HOL MP), 21/12/1640; Public Record Office (PRO) State Papers Domestic 16/451/106; CLRO Remembrancer Books 1, fol. 153.

[10] Beier, *Masterless Men,* p. 164; Innes, ''Prisons for the Poor,'' pp. 42, 53.

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tion.''[11] So far as I know, Bridewell was the only such institution in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England that could police, prosecute, and punish in this way without reference to an external monitoring authority, like a justice of the peace. In this respect it was an innovation, coupling police and penal functions within a single all-purpose institution. Bridewell was a heavy-handed disciplinary structure, training young people to be upright citizens, as well as putting its inmates to back-breaking, character-building work. On top of this, a regular routine of religious instruction from hand-picked ministers made sure that moralities were always open to the possibility of change through solid work, sound religion, and sharp correction. Not long after it opened, London Bridewell became a blueprint for other labor prisons up and down the land and across the Channel in mainland Europe.[12]

Business at London Bridewell zoomed upward as social pressures in the city multiplied, and soon after it first opened its court was meeting twice weekly and, in crunch times, as often as three times in seven days.[13] This was a very busy court. In plague-free years it could notch up over 100 sessions in a single year. No other court anywhere in the land met as often as this, and no other one had higher caseloads. Bridewell prosecuted and punished many thousands of suspects. It was new, very visible, much visited, apparently arbitrary, and openly debated across the city. And Bridewell was an ambiguous place, a not insignificant aspect of its foundation that doubtless affected perceptions. It was a royal palace in its first colors, but it was soon to become a city prison for more than three centuries. It was a civic ornament and first line of defense against petty crime, but it was located just outside the city walls and sandwiched between the smelly Fleet River and Salisbury House, the home of the earl of Dorset, who grumbled about prisoners peeping into his nice gardens. Bridewell reminded people of problems, as it contained the rootless poor who were thought to be a prime cause of escalating social tensions.

Over time, its fuzzy legal status emerged as the biggest bone of contention in questions about Bridewell. From its first day Bridewell's

[11] Quotations from the Bridewell charter and related relevant documents can be consulted in *Charity Commissioners Report,* pt. 1, pp. 390, 389, 394–95; *John Howes' MS., 1582,* pp. 56–60; Francis Bacon, ''A Brief Discourse upon the Commission of Bridewell,'' in *The Works of Francis Bacon,* ed. J. Spedding et al., 14 vols. (London, 1857–74), 7:512; GL MSS 6, fol. 6v; 9384, ''A Brief Treatise . . . on the Validity . . . of the Charter of Bridewell.''

[12] The development of this wave of incarceration across western Europe is described in Pieter Spierenburg, *The Prison Experience: Disciplinary Institutions and Their Inmates in Early Modern Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J., and London, 1991).

[13] BHC 1, fol. 158v.

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place in the city's tangled legal jurisdictions stirred squabbles. Mindful of their priorities, the ecclesiastical authorities frowned on Bridewell's trespass on their centuries-old right to police morality. A London bishop apparently called Bridewell ''a rude and unreverent place'' that was a loose cannon in the hands of ''undiscrete'' men ''of filthy bawdry.'' Bridewell's powers openly to punish offenders in busy public spots also caused rows and were later limited.[14] The heart of the matter was that Bridewell's charter was never endorsed by a parliamentary act and that in this tricky respect it lacked legitimacy, even though the charter was stamped with a royal seal. Worse still, suspects were dragged there on ''slight cause'' without the legal comfort of a justice's warrant.[15] So Bridewell was a soft target for those preoccupied with the nitty gritty of legal procedure. And it was not just a thorny issue for seasoned legal observers with a classroom training. ''The charter of the house was not worthe iid, no it was nothing worthe,'' William Guy sneered in 1577. ''This house has no aucthoritie to sende'' for me or my wife, James Fareclowe bragged in 1579, after his wife had been summoned to the court for ''lewde behavior'' and lodging ''ruffians'' on a daily basis.[16]

The city rulers were unsettled by this vulnerability. On several occasions in Bridewell's first century they took steps both to spell out Bridewell's precise powers and to boost its defenses against legal eagles, a public relations exercise that was a flop. In 1577 London's recorder was asked with the help of legal counsel to run through Bridewell's charter to show what the governors ''maye doe by force of the letters patent graunted by Kinge Edwarde the sixth.'' A list was put together in 1579 of ''things in their power to do.'' In the same year, a panel of the Bridewell governors was ''ordered'' to work together to draft ''a bill'' to be ''exhibited to the Parliament for the ratification of the charters of the hospitals.'' The resulting bill sank very quickly in parliament, it did not even reach a first reading.[17] But little seems to have been settled by this parliamentary lobby over the next two decades, and doubts about Bridewell's rocky legal status never disappeared.[18] In 1600 the governors put a series of questions to the lord chief justice, Popham, to try and tidy up their jurisdictional mess: could they sign warrants to raid suspect places; were

[14] BHC 3, fol. 412; 2, fol. 221; CLRO Reps. 13ii, fol. 463v; 14, fol. 372v; Letterbook S, fol. 107v; *John Howes' MS, 1582,* p. 72.

[15] Charity Commissioners Report, p. 400.

[16] BHC 3, fols. 183v, 405v; see also BHC 3, fols. 196, 294, 321r–v.

[17] CLRO Rep. 19, fols. 170r–v, 193; Journals of Common Council (Jour.) 20(2), fol. 501v; BHC 3, fol. 428; Geoffrey Elton, *The Parliament of England, 1559–1581* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 78–79. See also London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), H1/ST/A1/3, fol. 207v; GL MS 12,806/2, fol. 249.

[18] CLRO Rep. 20(2), fol. 259.

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their discretionary powers within the scope of the law; could they ''in discreccon either ponish offenders by body or by money''; lastly, could they ''take bonds of evill offenders for their appearance and also for their good behaviour?'' The chief justices's answers seem to have done little to soothe the anxieties of the governors, as in the next year a second bill ''for confirmacon of the charter'' was drafted after another meeting with him. This one managed to stumble through its first reading, but it fell at the next hurdle, and it too never became law.[19] Three years after this, Bridewell's clerk tipped off the governors about a number of ''doubts'' that he had spotted in the charter that were ''fitt to be reformed.'' The result of this, following a speedily convened Court of Aldermen, was that another parliamentary lobby soon gathered steam in 1604. Bridewell's treasurer and clerk were instructed by the rest of the governors to ''travaile to councell learned with our charter and by all good meanes labour to have an act of parliament for confirmacon of the charter.'' A third draft bill was tabled before the Parliament, but once again the final result was nothing.[20] The last bid to put the London hospitals on a statutory footing in Bridewell's first century was in 1647. But even in a world turned upside down by revolution, the outcome was the continuation of the status quo.[21]

With flimsy legal roots that were every now and then contested, Bridewell could do little else than breed brooding unease. What else might be expected from a court that was so secret; that met behind locked doors inside its own high walls and punished those who scattered its ''secrets'' to others outside its inner circle, including a nosey Bridewell beadle who sneaked into the court to listen one day?[22] In this chilly climate, where not even the moderating touch of the jury could reach, curiosity set imaginations racing. Just what did those walls hide? Unlike the people on the streets, we can see the Bridewell courtbooks, and they show us that the governors struggled with these issues too; they spent a great deal of time and effort seeking to keep their examination process above board, and cases heard before their court could stand or fall on

[19] Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives and Museum (BRHA), BHC 4, fols. 196v, 274; CLRO Rep. 25, fols. 312, 324; *The Journals of All the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth Collected by Sir Simonds D'Ewes,* rev. P. Bowes (1682; facsimile copy, Shannon, 1973), p. 648; T. E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I,* vol. 3, *1593–1601* (London, 1995), pp. 354, 421; David Dean, *Law-Making and Society in Late Elizabethan England: The Parliament of England, 1584–1601* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 250.

[20] BRHA BHC 4, fols. 440v, 441v, 460.

[21] CLRO Jour. 40, fols. 206, 211. See also BHA Governors' Journal 4, fols. 313v–14.

[22] BHC 8, fol. 20.

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questions of proof. The rule of law was never absent from Bridewell. Nonetheless, stories of cruelty and malpractice circulated, and with each new one it was less easy to pick out fact from fantasy. A beggar tried to squeeze sympathy from passers-by with ''great lamentacon and cryinge, seyinge he hath been whipped at Bridewell for askeinge for the heavenlie fathers sake.'' Twelve ''honest'' people said that a painter's wife ''vilely slaundered'' Bridewell, ''sayeing she hathe bene here whipped untyll she might borne her fynger in her flesh.''[23] Like oil on an ocean, this dark image spread to cover most of Bridewell's chief tasks, even the sand it dredged from the river for street repairs was called ''nought.''[24] Charges of fee fiddling, smelly bedding, and rotten food were common. A vagrant told his parents that the ''breade and victualls'' was ''fitt for doggs.'' ''I almost starved there,'' the pimp Henry Boyer told Ann Ellis when the pair met by chance along Warwick Lane in 1577.

No less numerous were charges of heavy-handed pressure once suspects were inside the prison to wring confessions out of them and other tainted procedures. Boyer told Ellis that he confessed lies at Bridewell to please the governors out of ''feare of famyshenge.'' ''I think it will come to the quene to ende it,'' he mused. Nor was it uncommon to hear claims that the governors lined their pockets with bribes. A bricklayer found himself in deep water for saying that if he gave the governors ''iis for a brybe he shoulde not have bene any more trobled.''[25] A stream of ''ill,'' ''slaunderous,'' ''scoffinge,'' ''uncivil,'' and ''sawcy and premptory'' words mocked Bridewell, though on paper it flowed most freely before the turn of the seventeenth century.[26] This is to say nothing about the prisoner plots, jibes, refusals to work, bungled and skilled escapes, or the endless bickering that made life in the cells and workrooms a round-the-clock worry. These peevish views of the Bridewell process seem rather less quirky (and subjective) when we examine them against similar charges that were sometimes filed by one Bridewell officer against another.[27] All in all, Bridewell was much discussed in lofty legal

[23] BHC 2, fol. 72; 1, fol. 95.

[24] BHC 3, fols. 293v, 294.

[25] BHC 5, fol. 420; 3, fols. 214, 257. See also CLRO Rep. 19, fol. 338; BHC 1, fol. 38; 3, fols. 173, 176, 214; 5, fols. 108v, 116; 7, fol. 35v; 8, fols. 23, 92v; 9, fols. 189–90; BRHA BHC 4, fols. 331v, 391; HOL MP, 21/12/140.

[26] For some other cases, see BHC 1, fol. 11; 2, fols. 145v, 189, 191v–92; 3, fols. 173, 176, 184v, 189, 218, 328, 331, 331v, 345v, 396; 5, fols. 162v, 324, 380v; 6, fols. 120v, 126v, 149, 236, 287v, 419; 7, fols. 42, 121v; 8, fols. 45, 169v, 212; BRHA BHC 4, fol. 127.

[27] Allegations of wrongdoing and corruption within Bridewell will be more fully examined in my ''Lost Londons.''

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arenas and low-grade alehouses, and a jumble of opinions formed. But one thing seems certain, and that is that some people were scared stiff of Bridewell and that it became a black word to bully by. One pimp boasted that ''there was never a whore in England but if she kicked against him he woulde cause her to be brought to Bridewell.''[28]

Individual governors were sometimes singled out by words and threats from people who had crossed their paths, like former inmates with a grudge. John Smith who, it was said, kept noisy and ''bawdie rule'' in his house ''drewe his dagger'' when challenged by a governor in 1578. While a vagrant threatened to cut the Bridewell's treasurer's throat and hammered on his door at midnight waking up the neighbors, ''having in his hand a dangerous truncheon of crabtree.''[29] No single governor was at the receiving end of the abuse mentioned in the records as much as treasurer Robert Winch in the years after 1576. This is a point of no little significance for what follows, as Winch was a leading protagonist in a long-running contest over the integrity of the Bridewell process that was settled finally in 1580, in the highest court of the land, the Star Chamber. In 1577, John Richardson was prosecuted for ''vyolently'' punching Winch as he sat ''quyettly'' at ''his dore in Chepesyde.'' In 1578, a woman called governor Clark a ''turkey cocks nose'' and treasurer Winch a ''turke'' and ''a ten pence.'' George Greene filed sureties in the same year after he was caught taunting Winch and joking at the treasurer's expense, while a weaver was locked up in Bridewell for jeering at Winch, though he claimed that the ''slaunderous words'' ''came from a whore's mouth'' and not from his own. Although Robert Winch took his place in the Bridewell Court alongside known puritans, he may not have been a lily-white character himself. The pimp William Mekens boasted that ''he could go to Mr. Winche and fetche 3 or 4 crownes of Mr. Winche when he had nede.'' Another pimp, Henry Boyer, told an Islington parson that Winch ''unhonestlye ryfled twoe cutpurses which were brought to Bridewell''; one of them lost thirty shillings, and the other one was short of seven pounds. A Bridewell clerk's servant claimed that Winch coaxed ''many sums of money and clothes'' from gentlemen and merchants to keep them safe and sound from prosecution. The eldest son of the queen's cousin, Lord Hundson, also lashed out at the treasurer. ''The world will judge'' him ''to be one of the worst members that can live in a commonwealth,'' he snapped,

[28] BHC 3, fol. 187v. Examples of other threats and fears include BHC 3, fols. 67, 187v, 327v, 357, 389v, 400; 5, fol. 421.

[29] BHC 3, fol. 299; 7, fol. 39. See also BHC 1, fol. 55v; 2, fols. 52v, 147v, 221, 256v; 3, fols. 196, 347v; 6, fol. 279v; 7, fol. 126v; 8, fols. 94v, 343.

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such was the extent of the treasurer's ''cloked faultes.''[30] It is hard to tell whether these denunciations and quips were part of a plan or whether they were one-off outbursts. At any rate, they accelerated at much the same time as the case that is the centerpoint of this essay was being contested at the Star Chamber, the Bridewell Court, and on London's streets. Winch and Bridewell's rusty legal operations were shoved under a spotlight, and it may be that Winch, as treasurer with the main voice in the day-by-day running of the court and prison, became the prime focus for this brewing discontent.

Robert Winch had much mud slung in his face in these years when the number of anti-Bridewell jibes also peaked. This was no accident, as it all occurred at a time in the mid-1570s when the Bridewell governors with an observable godly core were plotting a tough crackdown on the city's prostitutes and, notably for what follows, their clients.[31] Several bigwigs and a number of citizens were caught in this net and, just like Bridewell, this moral combat was not welcomed throughout the city. In some eyes the governors were nothing but busy moral bees, snooping around personal moralities, swooping on houses and pubs, and trampling on the hallowed rights of citizens. Morality, always a public matter at this or any other time, now sparked an electric storm in the city. It was in the eye of this storm, in early 1577, that the goldsmith Anthony Bate filed his Star Chamber complaint against treasurer Winch and the rest of the Bridewell governors, quizzing the entire Bridewell process. Over the next three years, a dizzying flurry of charges was hotly contested before the top ministers of the land. Put to the test in this way was Bridewell's tainted charter, its fishy policing and courtroom tactics, its crooked officers who took bribes at the drop of a hat, and the citizens' wounded feelings at this high point in the drive to purge morals in the city. For the root cause of the Star Chamber case was a charge filed against Bate at the Bridewell court alleging that he was a serial ''whoremonger'' and maybe even the capital city's most notorious ''whoremonger''; a man, it was said, who had had sex with at least nineteen prostitutes. The pimp Richard Rolles called Bate ''the vilest and rankest whoremonger.'' Despite these claims, however, the goldsmith scripted his Star Chamber case in such a way as to put himself forward as a shining civic knight in armor, a champion of the lost or bruised rights of the citizens, a tireless crusader against the corruption that lurked in all corners of Bridewell, and, most pointedly, as a wounded citizen.

[30] CLRO Rep. 19, fol. 211v; BHC 3, fols. 321r–v, 347v; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* pp. 253–54; BHC 3, fols. 187v, 242v–43; PRO Star Chamber 5/B/108/33 (STAC), Giles Cannon/examination; CLRO Remembrancer Books 1, fols. 37r–v.

[31] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* chap. 6.

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Bate's case touched many raw nerves. It would have left a mark on the city and Bridewell even without the measures that it almost certainly encouraged to try and make Bridewell's legal status more secure and beyond reproach. It is likely that a case like this, exposing so many cracks before so many different audiences, was a trigger for the long line of actions, including the 1577 move to verify the powers of the Bridewell governors; the fifty-three-clause Common Council Act (1579) that spelled out Bridewell's powers in textbook detail; the Parliamentary lobby for a confirmation Act in the same year; the testing of ''the valydytye of ye [Bridewell] charter'' across the river in Southwark in 1581; the tightening of committal procedure at Bridewell by justices' warrant in 1582; John Howe's first ever history of the London hospitals, which ''putt in wrighting certaine abuses in ye governmente of the poore in this present tyme'' (1582);[32] and, last, the short treatise *On the Validity of the Charter of Bridewell,* that argued that ''in matter, sence and meaning'' Bridewell's charter was deeply ''repugnant'' to the ''great charter of England'' (Magna Carta), in that it allowed arrest and prosecution without a justice's warrant, and before a closed court.[33] These last criticisms were recycled word for word by Francis Bacon in the next century, and also in a 1643 treatise on *The Knowne Good Old Lawes of England.*[34] The Bate case and the issues it provoked were not the only grounds for seeking the legal safe harbor of a parliamentary sanction. Smooth access to the hospitals' bequests, legacies, and rightful possessions was another constant worry for their governors.[35] Nevertheless, the case and its repercussions were extremely blunt reminders of Bridewell's shadowy legal standing.

Bate's Bill

The Star Chamber case started like this. Anthony Bate filed his bill of complaint there in Shrovetide 1577, two months after he was dressed down in the Bridewell Court. Bate's bill survives, as well as the statements of thirty-seven witnesses who were examined one after another by the Star Chamber and its bureaucracy. By happy chance, the records of the Bridewell court that cover its operations in the years of the Bate

[32] John Howes' MS, 1582, p. v.

[33] CLRO Jour. 20, fols. 499–503v; Rep. 20, fol. 235; BHC 3, fol. 428; GL MSS 12,806/2, fol. 297v; 9384, fols. 5, 6v.

[34] Bacon, ''A Brief Discourse upon the Commission of Bridewell,'' p. 7; British Library (BL) Thomason Tracts E38 (12), ''Brief Collections Out of Magna Charta: Or, the Knowne Good Old Lawes of England'' (1643).

[35] Though in this case Parliament had passed legislation in 1572 for ''confirmation of the gifts made to the poor'' in the hospitals. See LMA, H1/ST/A1/3, fols. 82, 84, 86.

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case are with us too, and we can cross between these two sources to fill gaps and to check rival versions of the same stories.[36] Like the great majority of Star Chamber hearings, however, the Bate case is a narrative maze muddled by rival claims to truth and startling twists and turns of plot. The people pulled into its wide compass belonged to all rungs of London's social ladder, from a titled aristocrat to a smutty pimp. In Bate's case, London's seedy side overlapped with the apparently ''decent'' world of its freemen citizenry, though these borders were never stable and they were always blurred.[37] A star-studded cast of London's leading prostitutes, pimps, and bawdy-house keepers gave evidence on both sides of the case.[38] As we will shortly see, Bate was able through crafty plotting, bully-boy tactics, and the pull of money and other gifts to persuade a number of leading lights in the vice world to back him up in several judicial arenas. Some of them were pressured to give completely different versions of events (and of Bate) in different legal venues; and a number of them switched sides and turned their stories into something else, claiming that their previous testimonies were not their own words but were squeezed out of them by pressure or self-defense. Less wobbly in their loyalties was a bunch of well-heeled, mostly middle-aged citizens, goldsmiths like Anthony Bate, who took his side, witnessing at the Star Chamber, plotting in pubs, pressuring witnesses, and even tampering with the ''last dying words'' of a doomed felon on the gallows in another county.[39] In Bate's case, some citizens started a small

[36] A series of articles by T. G. Barnes provides the best discussion of Star Chamber records as historical sources and the circumstances in which they were produced. See his ''Due Process and Slow Process in the Late Elizabethan and Early-Stuart Star Chamber,'' *American Journal of Legal History* 6 (1962): 221–49, ''The Archives and the Archival Problems of the Elizabethan and Early Stuart Star Chamber,'' in *Prisca Munimenta: Studies in Archival and Administrative History Presented to A. E. J. Hollaender,* ed. Felicity Ranger (London, 1973), ''Star Chamber and the Sophistication of the Criminal Law,'' *Criminal Law Review* (1977), pp. 316–26, and ''Star Chamber Litigants and Their Counsel, 1596–1641,'' in *Legal Records and the Historian,* ed. J. H. Baker (London, 1978), pp. 7–28. More recent studies include Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), chap. 3; and Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000), chap. 6.

[37] See Paul Griffiths, ''Overlapping Circles: Imagining Criminal Communities in London, 1545–1645,'' in *Communities in Early Modern Britain: Networks, Place, Rhetoric,* ed. Alexandra Shepard and Philip Withington (Manchester, 2000), pp. 115–33.

[38] There is more background information on the leading prostitutes, pimps, and keepers in this case in Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* chap. 6; and Paul Griffiths, ''The Structure of Prostitution in Elizabethan London,'' *Continuity and Change* 8, no. 1 (1993): 39–63.

[39] This bunch included the goldsmiths Patrick Brew, Thomas Hartop, and Edward Wilkes; the barber surgeon James Markedaye; the printer Robert Greenwood; the ''gent'' William Gunter; William Herbert of the Middle Temple; and William Guy of St. Andrew, Holborn. I must thank Maggie Pelling for information about Markedaye, who is included in ''The Bibliographical Index of Medical Practitioners, 1500–1720,'' which can be consulted at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, University of Oxford. We

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war with Bridewell, a place that was the property of all of London's citizens. The city was washing its dirty laundry in public. The crosscurrents of opinion about morality, Bridewell, legal process, and citizenship were running themes throughout the case. Bate and his friends were frequently described eating, supping, talking, playing, and whoring in the capital's bawdy houses, and pouring scorn on the Bridewell authorities.[40]

Bate's bill of complaint was like many others that were lodged at the Star Chamber. His clean social credentials were listed one after another, followed by a sympathy-squeezing tale of his long suffering at the hands of a spiteful adversary, in this case, Robert Winch and the rest of the Bridewell governors.[41] Bate reminded the queen's ministers that he was a spotless ''citizen and goldsmyth of London.'' As such, Bridewell belonged to him as much as any other citizen. Bate observed that it was a royal gift to the ''maior, coialtie, and citizens'' of London, who alone named its governors, and for whose benefit it prosecuted and punished ''ruffyans, sluggards, ryotters, vagabonds,'' ''valyant beggars,'' and ''men and women of ill name and fame.'' Up to this point the bill followed the letter of Bridewell's charter, plucking words and phrases from it and adapting their meaning to suit Bate's purpose. But it then changed course. It was quite right that every suspect person should be dragged to Bridewell and put on trial there, Bate insisted, ''unles'' they ''make sufficient declaracon of theire honest and good conversacon'' and ''yeld an accompt howe they lyve and by what busines'' they happened to be in a ''suspect'' place. But even when a suspect was able to supply such a sound ''accompt,'' Bate continued, this was no guarantee of fair treatment because Bridewell had now been turned against the very citizens it was intended to serve. Later on in the case, Robert Winch denied that ''manye cytyzens'' had been ''called in question of there reporte, fame and credit'' since his ''election'' as treasurer ''uppon mere suspition of ther incontinencye or uppon willfull accusacion of dissolute persons.'' He also fended off allegations that he ''compelled manye of good creditt to compounde''; that in so doing he siphoned their money and their reputation; and that he ''wynked at open, knowen and confessed adulteryes, malefactors, and felonies'' at exactly the same time as he ''afflicted godlie and vertuous cytyzens.''[42] It matters a great deal whether or not these allegations were true or false, though it matters even more that they could

know the ages of six of these men from the head of their Star Chamber depositions: four of them were aged between forty and forty-seven, one was thirty-six, and the youngest was twenty-seven years old.

[40] BHC 3, fols. 240–41v, 242v–43, 246.

[41] PRO STAC5/B/21/3, Anthony Bate, bill of complaint.

[42] PRO STAC5/B/53/40, Robert Winch, interrogatories.

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be believed and be so energetically contested both on the streets and inside courtrooms.

Bate's bill then switches attention to the case-narrative and the particular role played in it by Winch, leading the investigations of the Bridewell bench and prying into Bate's life in the most unseemly ways. Bate claimed that Winch (Bridewell's ''speciall officer'') ''allured'' the pimp and ''symple person'' Richard Rolles to his house in December 1576 where the two of them ''confederated'' to wickedly ''slaunder'' him by ''falselie'' accusing him of ''whoredom'' with Thomasine Breame, ''an infamous woman,'' and already a very familiar face at Bridewell, who was given ten or twenty shillings by Bate for sex. Two days before Christmas, Rolles spun this ''invented'' tale before the Bridewell governors, a not impartial body, Bate pointed out, who beforehand had been ''untruelie incensed'' against him by their treasurer.[43] Rolles said that a month before Christmas Bate dropped in at the house of the ''comon bawd'' Thomas Wise in the Whitefriars, where he ''had the use'' of Elizabeth Cowper's ''bodie'' and greedily gobbled up a roasted hen. A week later, Bate was back at Wise's bawdy house, disappearing upstairs for three hours with Breame and a bottle of wine. Wise was summoned to appear at the Bridewell Court shortly after this to confirm the truth of the pimp's story. At first, he said that he did not see Bate in Christmas week, but he later revealed that Winch, ''partlie by threats and partlie by promyse of rewards,'' put great pressure on him to change his story. Wise claimed that after day-and-night questioning and no small amount of coercion, he cracked and ''promysed'' the treasurer ''that he would saie whatsoever he would have hym saie.'' Their damaging ''fictions'' were safely written down by the clerk in the Bridewell book to be used against Bate and his cronies. Rolles and Wise were then rushed before the mayor to ''affirme'' that what they had said was ''true in every parte.'' In the next sad scene, Wise, gripped by remorse, dragged his bruised body from friend to friend, making ''lamentacon unto them with weepinge eyes that he was compelled to accuse'' his friend Anthony Bate ''of matters [that] he never knewe.'' Bridewell appears in this narrative as a danger to the citizens rather than the reassurance it should have been. It menaces them when it should have been soothing their concerns about soaring crime, and it treats the rule of law like an awkward irrelevance. The treasurer was the number-one target among the governors. Later on in the case, Bate and a friend urged a pimp to lay the blame for dreaming up a false charge on ''Mr Winche onely'' and not ''upon anye of the

[43] Rolles's Bridewell examination can be followed in BHC 3, fols. 132r–v, 133r–v. Bate's payment to Breame is mentioned there.

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other governors.''[44] But there should be no doubt at all that it is Bridewell that is being contested, and not just its treasurer.

Why did Anthony Bate declare war on London Bridewell in winter 1576/77? And why did he run the risk of having his character looked into and turned over in close detail; a probe that was to drift on for three very long years? He was, after all, public news and a topic for gossips. William Aldersley bumped into William Gold along the streets in April 1577 and ''asked him what newes he had hearde of Anthony Bate?''[45] And Bate's moral character may have been brittle and not able to stand up to exposure in a couple of courts at once. One snag is that the Bridewell courtbooks only survive in broken sequence, and we know next to nothing about his history at Bridewell up to 1574. Bate entered sureties at Bridewell in 1560 on behalf of ''a comon harlot,'' a sign of things to come.[46] But we do not know if a string of previous prosecutions was jotted down in those missing records, which are now forever beyond our reach. The Star Chamber bill may have come at the end of a long-running spat between Bate and Bridewell. There is doubt, then, about Bate's criminal past and also about his choice of legal venues in 1577. It was not a light matter to pick the Star Chamber to prosecute a case. It was costly to bring a case there, and if the case was lost bodily mutilation was one of the potential penalties. Fines were also steep. What could Bate have picked from? He could have chosen to sue for slander at the church courts, but he was dealing here with rather more than a simple slanderous slur. As we will shortly see, Bate was feeling very touchy about his public self at this particular time, and the cut and thrust of politics inside his Goldsmiths' guild was one background to the case. He was seeking to whitewash his character. In order to do this, however, he took the risky decision to question not just the charges pinned against him at Bridewell, but all of the steps by which he ended up in front of the governors on that December day. In this respect, the Star Chamber was better suited to his need to build a case against Bridewell with his small army of witnesses. Bate may also possibly have hoped to get more fair and equal treatment there than in the moral high ground of the religious tribunals. Last but by no means least, he may have wanted to score as big a point as possible in the highest court of the land, despite the ever-present danger that it would go badly wrong. Another murky motive involves the reasons that produced the cluster of citizens who were prepared to support Bate through thick and thin. A handful of these men

[44] BHC 3, fol. 243.
[45] Ibid., fol. 192.
[46] BHC 1, fol. 103.

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were fellow goldsmiths and perhaps long-standing friends. It is also possible that murmuring against the City by Bate and his allies was another driving force behind the bill, even though there is no trace of this in the surviving records. Is it possible that Bate's was a test case against Bridewell, spurred on by a group of men who put vice before virtue? Should we forget that Bate and treasurer Winch were near neighbors along Cheapside? It is not far-fetched to imagine that there might have been a personal edge to the case, that some niggling neighborly row was a seeding ground for the later Star Chamber feud.

Like the lives of nearly all of his compatriots, most of Bate's life is hidden forever. We can sketch a miniature biography of him from the Goldsmiths' Company records, however, and we even know what he looked like, or at least what he seemed like to a Bridewell witness. Anne Jervis, Thomasine Breame's maid and another prostitute, gave a thumbnail sketch of Bate to the governors. She said that he was ''a thick sett man with very stronge gret leggs,'' ''a gret guttey fellowe full sett'' with a ''reasonable store of gray heare'' on his head and a ''handsome and longe'' beard. He looked, she said, like ''an awncyent cytyzen'' (an extremely meaningful comment in the circumstances). Bate also liked to decorate himself with sparkling jewelry from head to toe like a Christmas tree. His hat blazed with a ''gret [gold] broche'' and his fingers glittered with rings, two ''with blewishe stones'' on one hand, and ''three jemers of golde together'' on the other one.[47]

Anthony Bate was roughly forty-six years old when he brought his case against Bridewell, as he finished his apprenticeship in 1554, one year after Bridewell was chartered.[48] He pops up now and then in the Goldsmiths' Company minute books, usually when he was in trouble of some sort. He was summoned to the company court in 1555, 1556, 1558, and 1559 to settle his debts.[49] Bate was also prickly about verbal damage, as when he clashed with Nicholas Bartholomew, a fellow goldsmith, in 1563 over ''unseemely words,'' and who was fined by the company for ''slaunderynge'' him. Three months later he quarreled with Bartholomew's brother, who claimed that Bate cut ''the buckett rope of the welle within Bachelors Alleye,'' though the pair patched things up and left the court with the guild wardens ''good exhortacons of brotherly love and frendshippe'' ringing in their ears.[50] Bate was on the right side of the

[47] BHC 3, fol. 215v.

[48] Goldsmith Company Library (GCL) company minute book I, fol. 199. I am assuming that Bate would have been about twenty-four years old at the close of his apprenticeship.

[49] Ibid., fols. 236, 252; GCL company minute book K, fols. 61, 74.

[50] GCL company minute book K, fols. 212, 218.

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company court in 1565 and 1566 when he acted as a peacemaker to calm squabbles that had flared up between guild ''brothers.'' His fraternal face was on show again in the following year, when he served with seven other ''seemely yonge men'' in the grand Midsummer Watch that was such a key moment in the city's ritual year.[51] By now, Bate had moved home to a rather more up-market location. He was now living at ''The Black Boye'' in Cheapside, London's first street and prize promenade. But money matters kept nagging, and he was sued in 1568, 1569, 1571, and 1573 to recoup long-standing unpaid debts, and he was himself out of pocket in 1571 and 1573.[52] Ever sensitive to knocks to his pride, he was nursing a bruised ego three years before he filed his Star Chamber bill when he was one of several ''yonge men of the yeomanrie'' who were ''chosen into ye newe livery.'' This stepping stone to higher status mattered in a society that placed so much value on pecking orders and grading character. But things did not run smoothly for Bate, and his promotion was blocked. In the margin of the company minute book the clerk has written, ''John Watson placed in ye roome of Anthony Bate,'' and next to this, ''Bate left out as appeareth 9 Junni.'' On that day Bate climbed up and then tumbled down the company ladder for, it was noted, ''certen good consyderacons.'' Three days later, the wardens ''licensed Thomas Maye to take ye lawe of Anthony Bate for ye recovery of suche debts as Bate oweth him.'' Spiraling debts and a lack of trust may have caused Bate's public slide from grace and favor.[53] In 1575 he was once again quibbling with a leading warden and, still stung by his recent run of bad luck, he refused to ''serve as a bachelor'' at the lord mayor's feast in 1576 when the company had one of its own members elected into the City's highest office. Bate was dumped in prison when he refused to pay his fine.[54]

So, Anthony Bate was licking his wounds at the time when he was planning his Star Chamber contest. He had a checkered history at the points of intersection between credit and the perception of character, not the least of which concerned sexual conduct.[55] His credit was leaking and his status was stationary, younger men were leap-frogging over him

[51] Ibid., fols. 293, 304, 358.

[52] Ibid., fols. 462, 425, 432; GCL company minute book L, fols. 59, 139, 140, 62, 151, 83.

[53] GCL company minute book L, fols. 147, 150.

[54] Ibid., fols. 223, 279, 280.

[55] The broader context of this is discussed by Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), chaps. 6 and 7; and by Alexandra Shepard, ''Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580–1640,'' *Past and Present,* no. 167 (2000): 75–106.

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into the upper circles of the livery. Bate had not yet made the sort of steady progress up the company ladder imagined by Steve Rappaport in his rosy picture of social mobility in sixteenth-century London that functions like clockwork. This must have been a lingering sore.[56] He was still a ''young man'' in the representation of status by age-titles that was run-of-the-mill practice in the work guilds, even though he was at least forty-six years old in 1576. This company tussle and Bate's sense of his languishing self seem to be essential spurs to the case that followed. It must also have occurred to him that his shrinking moral capital might be totally drained by the charge that he paid money for sex with a prostitute, an allegation that would be a cue to examine his past behavior. Just because Bate trotted in and out of bawdy houses like they were second homes does not mean that he lacked a sense of the shame that might follow once shabby actions like these were made public, in a livery company, for example. In caricature and in the words of women wounded by sharing cells with ''comon'' whores, Bridewell's shame was sexual. The shame of whoremongering, or at least its capacity to muddy character in arenas where respectability mattered so much, may have been too great to contemplate for Bate, straight after his humbling stint in the livery that lasted as long as the life of a caterpillar.[57]

This brief life of Bate reveals a man with rather a lot to lose. But this was a must-win case for Bridewell (and the City) too, as it touched many raw nerves. At this precise time, in the late 1570s, they were being exposed to investigation in high places elsewhere, like Parliament and the Star Chamber, and less prosaically on the streets of London. The mayor and aldermen tapped their connections with the privy councilors in a bid to help Bridewell to put its case.[58] It would be a crippling blow to civic pride and policy if the case were lost, and Bate's damaging slurs remained on the record for future generations to see. A key line of attack in Bate's case was to chip away at the integrity of ''holy'' Bridewell bit by bit, blending scaremongering with serious legal points like the ones mentioned in the treatise *On the Validity of the Charter of Bridewell.* Even the lightest whisper of corruption ruffled feathers at Bridewell. Time after time, the Bate case pinpointed ironies and irregularities in Bridewell's process. Asked to tame vice by the citizens for the good of the city, it was claimed that more than one governor grabbed opportuni-

[56] Steve Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London* (Cambridge, 1989).

[57] See Bernard Capp, ''The Double Standard Revisited: Plebeian Women and Male Sexual Reputation in Early Modern England,'' *Past and Present,* no. 162 (1999): 70–100.

[58] CLRO Reps. 19, fol. 397; 20, fol. 38v.

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ties to meet ''lewd women.'' Several pimps, prostitutes, and keepers even testified at the Star Chamber that it was treasurer Winch who set the ''rankest'' example. The pimp Henry Boyer scattered stories that the treasurer made regular return trips to ''lewd women.'' Agnes Williams (who was later charged with being a ''harlot'') claimed that Winch lodged Thomasine Breame at a house along Pater Noster Row and that he ''showed lewd women great favor in Bridewell,'' letting them go in and out of the prison ''at liberty.'' Another prostitute, Jane Robinson, added that it seemed that Breame ruled the roost at Bridewell; she had a green light to come and go ''when she listed,'' ''accusing who she pleased.'' Joanne Higgins, who ran Worcester House, a well-known bawdy house, commented sourly that Breame lived snugly along Pater Noster Row, ''pleasantly going at her pleasure.''[59] Whether or not Bate planned it, the Bridewell process was called into question time after time. Winch was asked at the Star Chamber why he questioned Richard Rolles at his own house ''privately'' without sending for any of the ''graver sort'' of governors. Boyer was not alone in blasting the dodgy methods that were used to squeeze confessions. He was stuck in Bridewell for five days, he said, with just ''thyn porredge and black breade as a dogge would skarse eat,'' and only ''bare earth'' to fall asleep on. If that was not bad enough, the governors threatened him that he would be ''whipped at a cart's arse'' with forty lashes each Saturday until he supplied the right answers to their prepared questions.[60]

There was clearly much at stake for both sides in this Star Chamber contest. We need now to return to the case narrative and follow it through to its finish in the Star Chamber and Bridewell records. We left Bate at the end of his Star Chamber bill inside Thomas Wise's bawdy house with Thomasine Breame in Christmas week 1576. This was not the couple's first meeting, however, as six months earlier Anne Jervis (Breame's maid) claimed that her mistress met up with Bate at Wise's house where they were left ''alone prevely together.'' Just as he did after Richard Rolle's later testimony, Bate lodged a quick rebuttal: none of this ever happened, he flatly declared.[61] At this point, the Bridewell Court was hunting for more incriminating ''filth'' to seal the case against Bate. On Christmas Eve 1576 Jane Fuller, ''an arrant bawde'' who, it was said at Bridewell, was ''able to spoyle a great nomber,'' was questioned there. She revealed a meeting with Bate at ''The Sun'' in Cripplegate where

[59] BHC 3, fols. 242v–43; PRO STAC5/B/108/33, Agnes Williams, Jane Robinson, Joanne Higgins, examinations.

[60] PRO STAC5/B53/40, Robert Winch, interrogatories; B/108/33, Henry Boyer, examination.

[61] BHC 3, fols. 27v, 32v, 133.

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the pair drank ''a pynte or quarte of wyne'' and later walked to Fuller's house, where Bate had sex with Alice Furres (a lodger there), ''whome he called countrywoman.'' Fuller roasted ''a brest of mutton'' afterward.[62] A month after this the case was turned upside down when Thomas Wise, still smarting from his rough handling at Bridewell (and perhaps after a chat with Bate that has left no record), informed a justice of the peace ''that he hath belyed Anthony Bate'' and ''forsworne hymself at Bridewell.'' From this point on the case has no pattern, only its unpredictability as it suddenly swerves down unexpected paths. A week after Thomas Wise's 360 degree turn, Anne Smith (another prostitute) was giving the Bridewell Court more ammunition. She said that Bate ''had the carnal use of her body'' at one Elliott's house and ''gave her a ringe of golde worthe about x shillings.''[63]

At this point, as different perceptions of him were gathering shape in several venues, Bate filed his bill at the Star Chamber with its sanitized and cleansing self-depiction. But at the same time he was following less legal routes to make his case solid. Behind the scenes he was bargaining with Richard Rolles and Thomas Wise. Between them they devised a plan to whitewash Bate's character, though it was not without risks for the pimp and the keeper. It was agreed that Bate would launch a suit against the two for spreading smutty stories about him that left his once good reputation in tatters. Once the pair were locked up in the Gatehouse prison, Bate promised that he would settle their fees and seek their quick release, playing the part of the generous victim who did not bear grudges. He also paid them for their time, trouble, and danger. Rolles whispered to a friend that ''he hoped to get 100li by it and to have a daily friend of Bate.'' The same friend asked him ''why he slaundered Bate at Bridewell'' in December. I was ''kept [there] v dayes,'' he answered, and ''threatened to be whipped,'' and ''therefore I did.'' William Gunter (''gent''), Bate's accomplice, bragged ''that he had gotten Rolles out of Newgate and he woulde get him out of the Gatehouse.''[64]

Bate was also putting pressure on Thomasine Breame to say that her damaging testimony against him at Bridewell was a pack of lies put in her mouth by Winch's threats. He dropped into her house in Stratford Bow to talk about her ''examinacons of him at Bridewell and tolde hir what trouble he had in the matter.'' ''Hold'' your ''peace,'' he warned her. Another pimp, Henry Boyer, who was called ''a doyer for mens wyves in London,'' was also cautioned not to ''open the truth of the

[62] Ibid., fols. 101v, 132r–v, 133.
[63] Ibid., fols. 169, 171v.
[64] Ibid., fols. 186, 190v–91, 207, 241v.

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matter'' to anyone. A few days after this, William Gunter was treating Thomasine Breame to food and wine at ''The Three Swans'' near Bishopgate, and pressuring her to say ''that surely'' she had ''mystaken the man [she had sex with at Wise's bawdy house] and that Bate was not the man.'' If you stick to this story, he told her, Bate is ''undone.''[65] Another one of Bate's friends, William Herbert (of the Middle Temple), bumped into Anne Smith (the prostitute who presented further damaging evidence against Bate) at the Exchange in May 1577 and asked to speak a few words with her, though she managed to slip away from him in the buzzing swarm of merchants. Herbert did not give up the chase. The next day his ''man'' talked her into meeting up with Anthony Bate at ''The Bull's Head'' in Cheapside. Bate greeted Smith in a ''laughinge mood'': ''goode Anne,'' he cheerfully declared, ''you are welcome.'' He soon changed his tune, however. Watch out, he advised her, in pretended concern, there is ''a warrant made out of Bridewell'' for you for the time when we had ''supper'' together, and ''you were best gett you into the countrie or ells you will be taken.'' Upon hearing that she was to marry shortly, Bate tried to win her silence and absence with a gift—a wedding ring. Jane Fuller also urged Smith to ''say nothinge of Bate.'' This seemed to do the trick, as Smith promised that she would not say a word, even if she was hanged. Just in case Smith was locked up at Bridewell at the beck and call of the treasurer, Bate's friends hatched a plot to free her. A complaint would be filed for an imaginary debt, and Smith would be removed ''by writ'' from Bridewell to the debtor's prison on the south side of the river. Bate's friends would rescue her from the boat as she crossed the Thames. Too many people knew about Bate's ''bawdy'' past for his peace of mind, and there were too many stories to cover up. Henry Boyer told the Bridewell governors that Bate ''willed him to gette out of towne'' at ''about the beginninge of the suite between Bate and Mr. Winch in the Starre Chamber'' and slipped twenty shillings into his pocket to keep him quiet and send him on his way.[66]

There were damaging words written down on paper too, the ones that we can read today in the pages of the Bridewell courtbooks. Bate was itching to see them to make his case watertight. To this end, his friend Thomas Preston met up with Giles Cannon, the Bridewell clerk's assistant, and begged him ''to geve him notes of such things as are in the book of Bridewell'' that ''mighte helpe Bate against the governors,'' tempting him with promises that ''he shold not lacke any money'' if he copied the entries out of the courtbooks. But Cannon was uneasy. It

[65] Ibid., fols. 215v, 243r–v, 298r–v.
[66] Ibid., fols. 220, 222v, 221v, 246v.

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seemed too chancy, though Preston would not give up: ''write it out,'' he urged, ''and he wold gett it to be written out agayne and his handwryting should be torne and not knowen to be done by him,'' once his first copies had been ripped up. This was, however, not enough of a guarantee for the under-clerk. So the ''arraund bawd'' William Mekens was also sent to him with gifts and pledges about his safety from any follow-up actions. Mekens offered Cannon twenty angels if he would copy the damaging depositions of ''dyvers names written in a paper.'' Not long after this, Cannon himself was standing before the Bridewell governors claiming that their treasurer netted bribes from brothel haunting merchants.[67]

Up to now piling pressure on pimps and prostitutes who had had past dealings with Bate resulted in awkward contradictions and sudden shifts that made it difficult for the Bridewell Court to construct a clear-cut case against the goldsmith. Bate's attempts to cover up his tracks also caused confusion and clutter. Gagging ''symple'' Richard Rolles had always been one of his top priorities, as the pimp seemed to be both slippery and a loudmouth. But now, let loose from the Gatehouse where he was at least under lock and key, Rolles was potentially an even bigger danger. He was currently locked up in Hertford prison after being picked up for stealing a horse. The odds were very high that he would swing from the gallows.[68] This was not the worst outcome for Bate except for one nagging doubt: on the gallows Rolles would get the opportunity to speak his ''last dying words,'' words of worth, and a last chance for him to clean his slate. Never before would his words have meant more than this or be listened to so carefully by a hushed crowd. Worse still, there was a good chance that these last words might be put in print, published in cheap pamphlet form and circulated to many thousands of readers.[69] To put his mind at ease, Bate and eight of his friends traveled to Hertford on horseback for Rolles's trial in July 1577, where they lodged at an alehouse close to the prison. Later, when Rolles was just one more gallows corpse, the landlord told the Bridewell governors that he chatted with Anthony Bate, William Guy, and Thomas Hartop (another one of

[67] Ibid., fols. 207v, 280v.

[68] Rolles was put on trial at Hertford Assizes on 15 July 1577, and he is described as a ''yeoman'' of Hertford. He was charged with stealing a brown bay mare (worth £7) on 18 May 1577 in Hertford and was sentenced to hang at the Assizes. See J. S. Cockburn, ed., *Calendar of Assize Records: Hertfordshire Indictments: Elizabeth I* (London, 1975), pp. 133, 134, 138.

[69] See J. A. Sharpe, '' 'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England,'' *Past and Present,* no. 107 (1985): 144–67; V. A. C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People, 1770–1868* (Oxford, 1994), chaps. 1–3.

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Bate's friends and another goldsmith) ''at the sises'' and revealed that ''on the day before Rowles was arrayned'' he heard Guy mutter ''that he should have Richard Rowles clear Anthony Bate and accuse Mr Winch.'' Troubled, and ''perceavinge unhonest and evill dealings in Bate,'' the alehouse keeper ''desired the vicker of the towne that was ordinarye at the sises that he should examen Richard Rowles before his death. But what he did,'' he added, ''he knoweth not.'' Clearly he suspected that Bate and his gang might meddle with Rowles's last words and spin them to their advantage. So much so, that he asked the prison-ordinary to get the truth from the pimp's mouth before it was warped by Bate.[70]

Bate's friends visited Rolles daily in his death cell, and they walked by his side to the ''fatal tree'' to listen to his last words with the rest of the crowd. It was later claimed that they tried to script the pimp's gallows speech by promising to leave no stone unturned to win him a last-minute pardon. William Guy admitted that Bate asked him ''to go to the gate'' of the prison to talk with Rolles and ''understand what he would say [from the gallows] in the case between him and Winch.'' Rolles's answers did little to comfort Bate and the others. He said that he would ''openly declare his conscience'' in the last few minutes of his life.[71] An important line in the questions put to Bate at the Star Chamber was that he tampered with Rolles's dying speech. One by one, Bate's friends were asked who among them persuaded Rolles ''that he should not fear to die but for better credit of Bate's cause and defamation of Winch go to the place of execution and make his speech for purgation of Bate,'' and seek his forgiveness in the hope of a pardon that they never even tried to obtain.[72] In the end, Rolles did toe the line on the gallows. William Gunter described his final minutes: on the walk to the gallows Rolles mumbled about the ''injuries'' he had caused Bate and, as he climbed the ladder to the noose, ''after godly prayers,'' he cried out in a ''loud voice,'' Bate ''forgive me, I have slandered'' thee. The alehouse keeper backed this up, telling the Bridewell governors that Rolles exonerated Bate on the gallows.[73] Just to make sure that this happened, it was also claimed that Bate's friends urged Rolles to sprint through his final speech and that they put a few pounds in the hangman's pocket to cut short his time at the gallows. They were later asked, ''what space'' was Rolles given ''to utter his conscience and last words?'' Trea-

[70] BHC 3, fol. 231.

[71] PRO STAC5/B/11/18, William Gunter, interrogatories; William Herbert, Robert Greenwood, James Markadaye, William Hartop, examination.

[72] PRO STAC5/B/11/18, William Gunter, William Guy, Thomas Hartop, Edward Wilkes, Robert Greenwood, James Markadaye, William Hartop, interrogatories.

[73] BHC 3, fol. 231; PRO STAC5/B/103/33, William Gunter, articles.

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surer Winch repeated what he had heard from various sources, stating that it was ''determined that when Richard Rolles had said all he could at the gallows that suddenly the ladder should be turned and so he should die without further speech.''[74]

Back in London, after the attempted gallows gagging, evidence continued to mount against Bate, who was fast becoming the talk of the town. In April 1577, the prostitute Marie Donnolly had said at Bridewell that three pimps, Jasper Wrey, Thomas Wise, and Thomas Mekens, spoke often about Bate at Gilbert East's bawdy house, a house where such ''abhomynablenes'' happened as ''is not mete to be spoken.'' Donnolly also said that Wise's wife ''had to deale'' with Bate. Another one of Wise's lodgers reported that ''she [had] heard Wise and his wiffe sondrye tymes talke of Mr. Bate'' at dinner and supper and ''other many tymes'' as ''ther very frende.'' In another ironic slant on appearances in this muddled case, when Wises's lodger caught sight of Bate for the first time, she ''supposed'' that he was a Bridewell governor, such was his grand appearance. But she was later walked to Bate's Cheapside shop by an officer to point him out and to confirm his identity as a ''whoremonger.''[75] In autumn 1577, Henry Boyer was questioned at Bridewell. He admitted ''bringing'' Anne Smith to Bate at Elliot's house where the couple stayed for the night in the same room. The next morning Bate gave Boyer two shillings for him ''and the rest to goe to breakfast.''[76]

It was not just Anthony Bate who had to wipe away some damaging stains. The Bridewell Court was also anxious to keep up good public relations. Word had spread that a little while before he met his end on the gallows, Rolles had reeled off a string of allegations about Bridewell's ''crooked ways'' to the earls of Leicester and Worcester, two high-ranking gentlemen with known sympathies for the vice industry. In previous court actions, Leicester had taken the side of prostitutes. Worcester received rents for Worcester House—one of London's busiest brothels, that was run by Mistress Higgins under the earl's protective cover—and he had once taken legal action to stop its closure by magistrates. Henry Boyer handed Leicester ''a bill,'' complaining ''that he was by force, terror and rigoure compelled at Bridewell to slaunder himself'' and incriminate Bate. Like so many others in this narrative web, however, he changed his story not long after. A few months later, standing before the Bridewell governors, Boyer admitted that Bate had put these words

[74] PRO STAC5/B/11/18, William Gunter, articles; William Gunter, William Guy, Thomas Hartop, Edward Wilkes, Robert Greenwood, James Markadaye, William Hartop, interrogatories.

[75] BHC 3, fols. 193v, 280v, 196, 221, 220v, 246, 304.

[76] Ibid., fol. 241v.

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in his mouth through his usual blend of threats and gifts, and declared that Bate's ''lewdness'' was well known across the city. Boyer also confessed that he was ''procured'' by Mistress Higgins (at Bate's prompting) to complain ''slaunderously to my L[ord] of Worcesters honor,'' so that a ''slaunderous bill [could be] made'' to ''accuse Mr. Winche falsely and to saye that by reason of the terror of Mr. Winche'' he had testified that Bate ''had th'use of'' Thomasine Breame at Worcester House.[77]

Boyer had wrecked any chances that the earls would be credible witnesses for Bate's camp. The goldsmith was now fast running out of ideas, tricks, and witnesses who would stick to their stories. As his charge sheet grew more bulky with each passing month, his case was falling apart. In spring 1578, Thomasine Breame was once again the center of attention. The zigzaggery of her story is a neat signal of Bate's changing luck. At Bridewell in March of that year she declared that her Star Chamber deposition of twelve months earlier clearing Bate of any wrongdoing was in fact an ''utterly false and horrible slaunder to Mr. Winche.'' At the Star Chamber, Breame had claimed that she had ''bene abused by Mr. Winche, and that he had kept her at a house nere Paules.'' She also told the ministers that this false charge was prodded by Boyer's boast to her (in turn, spurred on by Bate) that ''he would put up a supplicacon to my Lord of Leicester and the Lords of the Councell against Mr. Winche.'' But two months after this, Breame was back at Bridewell, putting a quite different gloss on events and their motivations and placing the blame squarely back in the authorities' court. She now claimed that she was bullied into saying that she had had sex with Bate by a threat from a justice of the peace that ''she shoulde be laide in prison in Newgate a whole year'' if she did not toe the line. Alexander Nowell, the dean of St. Pauls Cathedral, also turned up in the court to let the doubtless baffled governors know that Breame had said that she wished to ''speake with him to unbourden her consciencs'' about ''her deposicons taken about Bate in the starre chamber.'' Maybe Bate's money or muscle had got her to change her story. Now Breame stood before the Bridewell Court saying that she had smeared Bate with a string of spiteful accusations that were the product of the authorities' nasty vendetta against the much maligned goldsmith.[78]

This was not to be Breame's last change of direction. Bridewell's matron came to the court in June 1578 to tell the governors that, struck by ''greiffe of conciencs,'' Breame now longed to set the record straight

[77] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* p. 232; CLRO Rep. 19, fol. 198; BHC 3, fols. 246, 296, 242.

[78] BHC 3, fols. 296, 308, 329r–v.

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once and for all. In this, her last extended testimony in the case, Breame revealed a cutthroat world of menace, craft, and double-dealing that helps us to understand the sudden shifts in testimony. She claimed that it was one of Bate's friends, William Smith of Shoreditch, who first badgered her to ''revoke the first othe made against Bate and threatened her many waies from the Lords of the Councell to Newegate to lye a year.'' He also tried to convince her that the Privy Council would take her side if anything did not go according to plan, telling her that the queen's ministers ''told Bate they woulde stande with him and that they woulde ende the matter.'' Breame was offered twenty shillings, ''grete frendshippe,'' as well as ''great threatenings'' by one of Bate's kinsman to win her to his side. She also revealed that while sitting in a Cripplegate alehouse she was served with a ''subpena'' to testify on Bate's behalf at the Star Chamber. Later at the same pub, Bate and three others threatened that she would be dumped in prison by a Privy Council order ''if she woulde not be ruled by them.'' If, on the other hand, she agreed to speak up for Bate, then Breame was reassured that a Council warrant would be a constant shield against the pesky Bridewell bench, ''whersoever she dwelt,'' and that the royal ministers were all on Bate's side. Bate would have been carted ''but for the councells warrant,'' she was told. More than this, the Privy Council joined in some of the street comedy, poking fun at the Bridewell governors when they were summoned to the Star Chamber. As they trooped in through the door, she was told, the lord chamberlain quipped, ''here are a sorte of verlets come to accuse an honest man,'' and ''I durst gadge myselfe and all my lande that Bate is an honester man than any of them which come agaynst him.'' ''And soe,'' Breame told the same panel of governors, she ''was deposed in the Starre Chamber,'' just as Bate and his friends ''required,'' whitewashing Bate and blackening Winch. That this was the true version of events in Breame's chapter of the story seemed to be confirmed a few days later when ''one of the quenes garde'' handed a letter to the governors listing the ''perswasions'' that were used to lure Breame into the Bate camp. Here was a final proof, it seemed, of a desperate plot to smash Bridewell's credibility and respectability.[79]

In 1579 the London aldermen, who had backed the Bridewell bench over the long course of the case, asked the privy council to bring it to a speedy close. It had dragged on for far too long and caused too many splits and scars in the city. The aldermen moaned that Bate's actions had sparked ''great troubles, threateninges, and daunger of assaultes to the

[79] Ibid., fols. 329r–v, 330.

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[Bridewell] governors.''[80] We will never know the scale of this hate campaign and just how many joined it, but we can identify a squabble about sex that let loose (or made uncomfortably public) a series of anxieties about morality, corruption, citizenship, and the rule of law. Some of these concerns were real enough and shared by others outside Bate's circle of friends. Yet the case was driven by malice and a last ditch attempt at self-preservation by Bate. It was now time to put a stop to this particular public mess and to seek other means to bolster Bridewell's position (and standing), like the fifty-three-clause Common Council Act that was passed in the same year (1579). The case spluttered on, however, into the next year. In February 1580, a committee of aldermen gathered ''to conferre of matters towchinge Bridewell,'' and a ''report'' was presented to the Star Chamber the next morning.[81] All of this hard work by the city rulers was amply rewarded when the Star Chamber finally reached its verdict: Bate got a drubbing in court and lost his case. When all was said and done, it had appeared too flimsy, riddled with troubling inconsistencies in the evidence of key witnesses. It seems certain that Bate was a serial ''whoremonger.'' Yet even at this low point in his fortunes he still had friends to turn to. Four men (whose names are new to us) were imprisoned in June 1580 ''for reskewinge of Anthony Bate goldsmythe,'' presumably as Bate was being carried through the streets to his own cell.[82]

The final scene was a humbling one. Bate was summoned to appear at the Court of Aldermen in September 1580, and, in front of Winch and the other Bridewell governors, he ''delyvered'' his pitiful ''submysson.'' ''Partely through my owne wilfulnesse and folly and partlye by the synyster persuacon of others,'' he said, ''I have unjustly charged Mr. Wynche and the governors,'' but at a high cost to myself as I am now utterly ''overthrown.'' ''I have many wayes greeved and offendyde famous and honorable'' Bridewell, Bate continued, ''for which I am veary sorye and most unfaynedlye with weepinge teares proceedinge withowt dysynclanacon from my veary harte most humblye and pytyfullye crave pardon for the same, beseechinge yow to be good unto me and suffer me to spend the rest of my yeares quyetlye in the labor and exercyse of my trade thearbye to gett my lyvinge withall even for the love of Jesus Chryste.'' Bate closed by promising that ''I shalbe bound to praye unto the almightye for the preservacon and mayntenaunce of yor worshipp and this honorable state longe to contynue.'' He was then taken back to

[80] BL Additional MS 48019, fol. 151.
[81] CLRO Rep. 20, fols. 38v, 40v.
[82] Ibid., fol. 88v.

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his cell but set free not long after and allowed to resume his life in Cheapside, making and selling goldsmith's wares in his shop.[83]

Significances

The Bate case is quite striking. There is no other case like it in the surviving manuscript sources, providing such a grandstand view of prostitution in mid-Elizabethan London and putting the Bridewell process under the microscope, now and then, freezing so many different perspectives on paper. It is a long-winded case, and so it has much lively movement and changing of minds, though we are not always sure why. It is sometimes hard to keep on top of the twists in the plot, but it still has a great deal to tell us, even if we do sometimes get lost. When all is said and done, however, I wonder how typical it is. Its bulk and complexity are enough to make it stand out, and it is remarkable simply for the amount of paper it produced on subjects that are seldom opened up like this. There are always two sides or more to a story, and we do not hear many nice things about Bridewell in this case. Yet countless Londoners must have supported or tolerated Bridewell, or at least for them it was almost a byword for security and a strategic necessity in a city that was stretched to bursting point by one vagrant wave after another. Huge in size and opened for the defense of the city, Bridewell reassured sections of London's citizens, though we do not often hear this being said. It was a symbol of civic action in tense and testing times when the city was tackling social problems on a new scale. Crucially, it was an embodiment of civic ethics. The city, after all, was proud of its new hospitals. They were nearly always included in lists of its prestigious landmarks, even though they bumbled through their first century, making mistakes and squeezing resources. That anti-Bridewell words were spoken should be no surprise. But it is of no less significance that they were reported to the authorities; that ''honest'' citizens, numbering as many as twelve in one case, seethed after hearing them broadcast in public and felt that it was their civic duty to turn these loudmouths in. And, strangely, some prisoners even seemed to like being locked up inside Bridewell, one of them so much that she refused point blank to leave her cell when she was discharged by the Bridewell court.[84]

Bridewell had always had a mixed relationship with London's citizens, even before it was first opened. It was launched in their name, but by a small ring of godly leaders who claimed to occupy the high moral

[83] Ibid., fols. 111v, 115v–16.
[84] BHC 5, fol. 68.

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ground. And it was not just Anthony Bate who moaned that Bridewell damaged the citizens' cause and their best interests. In a less than fraternal moment, the governors of Christs Hospital noted that Bridewell drained the city's purse and squandered resources on rag-tag riff-raff. They bragged that their hospital spent their money on citizens only, not like the other ones who mostly wasted money on ''foul persons, country people, and such like.''[85] Certainly, in the second half of the sixteenth century, London's rulers could never take it for granted that Bridewell was a blessing to the city, one that counted in all the different constituencies across the metropolis. There was probably more than a grain of truth in the gloomy depiction of Bridewell put forward by a considerable number of prostitutes, pimps, and brothel keepers. Even in the mouths of such slippery characters, stories of gross malpractice were potentially believable because similar claims had circulated at other times and because Bridewell's legal basis and its methods did have real weak spots. After all, Bridewell was now and then rocked by scandals of its own making: upsets caused by fee-fiddling porters, by the irregular admission and discharge of prisoners, by a clerk who cooked the books, and by matrons and stewards who skimped on rations to line their own pockets. Nor was treasurer Winch above suspicion. He seems to have had an uncanny ability to attract stinging criticisms from all walks of life, from both inside and outside Bridewell. Could Bate have been trying to clean up Bridewell? Unlikely, it seems. More likely is that he knew of weak spots in the Bridewell process, exploiting them to make his case, as well as appropriating languages of citizenship to make his case appear more like the cause of all well-meaning citizens, as opposed to the rearguard action of somebody desperate to keep his character clean at all costs.

Here I have just scratched the surface of the Bate case and its implications for metropolitan society and culture. A closer study would reveal more completely the knowledge, friendships, work-chances, strategies, and sociability that linked prostitutes, pimps, keepers, and others. But it would also reveal the limits of these links; the ways in which tables could be turned in a flash and how self-preservation was frequently the name of the game. A number of pimps and prostitutes willingly gave evidence against Bate. Meanwhile, Henry Boyer walked in fear after he turned against Bate at Bridewell, saying that ''he feareth that the gentlemen and such persons as he hath opened their lewd liffe will seke his death and kill him as he goeth in the streete except God defend him.'' Dorothy Wise mocked her husband for exposing Bate as a ''rank whoremaster,'' saying that ''she would not confess though they did rack her

[85] GL MS 12,806/3, fol. 40.

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and keep her in prison all her life.'' ''She would not betray her friend,'' she added as a last dig.[86] Solidarities like these could fall apart in the face of prolonged investigation and insider knowledge. In telling detail, this case shows just how much knowledge there was on both sides of the fence. It is rare to get this close to the information/surveillance culture that was spreading out across the growing city. The authorities tracked prostitutes and pimps, their faces were well known, criminal haunts were monitored, and criminal biographies of leading offenders were constructed. Treasurer Winch fetched prostitutes to his Cheapside house to walk them up the street to identify Anthony Bate. Pimps, keepers, and others knew Bridewell's officers by name and sight. The vagrant who battered on the treasurer's door late at night knew where he lived. We also see pimps and officers sitting down to eat breakfast together, buying beers, and meeting on the street and falling into conversation. Richard Rolles bumped into one of the Bridewell beadles, Michael Blower, ''at Pauls Gate before Christmas,'' and he asked him to give him some news about his sweetheart, the prostitute Jane Trosse, who was sick in a Bridewell cell.[87]

People were always falling on the wrong side of the law. Even a short list of the sort of men who were prosecuted as ''whoremongers'' at Bridewell resembles a cross-section of the metropolitan population. The names logged in the Bridewell books include the sons and servants of the upper classes, the staff of foreign embassies, lawyers, merchants, countless citizen traders and artisans, city government clerks, constables, the sons and servants of aldermen, and hundreds of apprentices.[88] In this respect, Bridewell was set on a collision course with these citizen pests right from the start. Bridewell was in many respects a deeply divisive institution and never more so than in the highly charged years after 1576 when it seemed to the governors that they were peering into a bottomless pit of immorality. By contrast, a pack of bawdy-haunting citizens deeply resented Bridewell's heavy-handed intrusion into their lives. The number of people who felt like this will never be known, but it was surely high, and it crossed class lines. Gentlemen rescued ''harlots'' from out of Bridewell and its officers' clutches, and several aristocrats gave their backing to prostitutes who clashed with the authorities.[89] A mind-set emerged out of this: that rounding up prostitutes and their clients was nothing more than an affront, a nuisance, and even a waste of time and

[86] BHC 3, fol. 241v; PRO STAC5/B/11/18, Marie Donnolly, examination.
[87] BHC 3, fol. 303v; PRO STAC5/B/11/18, Michael Blower, examination.
[88] Griffiths, ''Overlapping Circles,'' p. 126.
[89] CLRO Rep. 20, fols. 285v, 298v; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* pp. 231–33.

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resources. One year after Bate groveled before the Court of Aldermen, squirming as he said sorry, John Howes, a hospital governor, remarked that it seemed funny that Bridewell should devote so much time and energy to the ''careful and diligent searching oute of mens wyves and other gallant gyrles'' when the city was pestered with poor vagrants.[90] Was Bridewell doing its job properly? Perhaps there were more pressing problems than brothel sex? Was this the best use of resources when the city was struggling to cope with its acute growing pains? Howes was far from being an enemy of Bridewell. He wrote the first glowing history of the London hospitals in 1582, though it was not without critical comments, giving a rather cooler and shrewder analysis of Bridewell's work up to that date than Bate. But for different reasons, each of them wondered out loud about the gains from chasing after sex offenders.

Was it concern that the prosecution of sexual offenders was a highly delicate matter and that the real role of Bridewell was combatting vagrancy and other street crimes that caused the amount of sexual crime prosecuted at Bridewell to nosedive in the early seventeenth century? Weeks or even months could pass by without a single prostitute turning up in the records, and by this time their clients had disappeared completely from the courtroom. Only forty bawds were prosecuted there between 1618 and 1632; not one made an appearance between 1633 and 1657. A measly eight pimps were punished by the governors in the five decades after 1605, while not even one ''whoremonger'' is mentioned in the Bridewell courtbooks after 1609. This was a dramatic and sudden slump. As many as 104 clients of prostitutes were prosecuted at Bridewell in 1600–1601; ninety-seven prostitutes were punished there in 1559–60. The complexion of the crime brought to Bridewell was changing quickly in the seventeenth century. The numbers of sexual offences tumbled, but an even more telling index of the changing character of prosecutions (and strategies) was the fall in the proportion of Bridewell cases that were for sexual wrongdoing. In three sample years studied by Ian Archer (1559–60, 1576–77, and 1600–1601), no less than 45.68 percent of the total caseload were sex crimes (the high point was 60.25 percent in 1576–77). This figure plunged to just 4.80 percent of the 29,740 crimes that were brought to Bridewell between 1618 and 1657 and were jotted down in the courtbooks (the low point was 3.34 percent between 1648 and 1652). Illegitimacy cases barely ticked over between 1640 and 1660 with an annual average of little more than one, while the

[90] R. H. Tawney and E. Power, eds., *Tudor Economic Documents,* 3 vols. (London, 1924), 3:441.

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rate of fornication prosecutions was only double this tiny figure. Again, the change was swift: 243 people were prosecuted for fornication/adultery alone by the governors in 1600–1601. This was a question of priorities as much as moralities. And, perhaps significantly, the amount of vagrancy prosecuted at the Bridewell Court shoots up at exactly the same time as sexual crime suddenly falls (36.21 percent of offenders were vagrants in Archer's sample years, a figure that shot up to 67.60 percent between 1618 and 1657).[91] The number of anti-Bridewell words in the City and judicial records was falling at the same time. I wonder if this was as a result of a greater acceptance of Bridewell and its policing tasks by a larger number of Londoners. Attitudes toward Bridewell were never inevitable nor stable. Different aspects of its work were viewed in different ways. After 1600, Bridewell's first priority (as revealed by its caseloads) was to combat crime that was directly related to the speedy growth of the city, such as vagrancy, begging, nightwalking, theft, and shady people who could supply no ''accompt of living.'' All of the citizens could rally to this cause, and the apparent value of their Bridewell was more readily realized when it was used to control the environment, the streets, and the flocks of unwelcome vagrants hoping to strike it lucky in the city. Doubts about Bridewell's legal status lingered, but few people, if any at all, felt it worthwhile or necessary to contest the uses to which Bridewell was being put in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Finally, what happened to Anthony Bate after the rough and tumble of the Star Chamber case ended with his abject apology? There is little to learn about his later life in the goldsmiths' books. He ended up becoming a virtual stranger in his own company. Bate never did reach the high ground of the livery, and he remained a ''young man'' for the rest of his life. He also left lush Cheapside for ''a chamber'' in the lower-grade and less costly Bachelors Alley in 1592. His life had now turned full circle; he was back where he started in the mid-1550s, sharing wells and water with ''young men.'' Despite his pitiful plea before Winch and the aldermen to be left to live ''quyetlye'' for ''the love of Jesus Chryste,'' Bate's ''whoring days'' were not yet at an end. In 1599 the wardmote inquest of St. Dunstan-in-the-West charged Anthony Bate (goldsmith) with having sex with a prostitute; he was roughly sixty-nine years old at the time of this last recorded shenanigan. Bate was buried at St. Vedast

[91] The figures for the later periods are drawn from BHC 6–9. I have adapted figures presented by Ian Archer in *Pursuit of Stability,* p. 239, table 6.1. He does not produce figures for illegitimacy cases, though they were also being prosecuted at high levels in the Elizabethan period. I will provide complete figures for prosecuted crime at Bridewell between 1604–58 in ''Lost Londons.''

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Church, Foster Lane, on Cheapside's west edge on Christmas Day 1607.[92] He was a goldsmith, debtor, creditor, litigator, a young man from the cradle to the grave, a bully, and a shark. But it is perhaps as a ''whore-monger'' that Bate will best be remembered, and somebody who one day set in motion a train of events that challenged one of London's more controversial institutions, forcing it to think long and hard about the terms of its existence.

[92] GCL company minute books N, fol. 6; O, fol. 555; GL MS 3018/1, fol. 66v.

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