

Étienne Helmer

**Mendier  
peut-être**

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## To Beg, Perchance

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This book considers the beggar as a figure and the practice of begging as a critical lifestyle.

Exiled, reviled, victim of prejudice and violence, the beggar as a figure often embodies the antithesis of his accomplished fellows who, through work and participation in the reciprocal games of society and the economy, enjoy goods and rights in a community of their peers. Whence this division of roles between legitimacy and its counterpart, an object of disgust? Is the beggar not simply the "man without," reduced to his needs and lack, as designated by a long tradition that has raised up as an anthropological model man the social creature and "political animal"—that is, the sovereign citizen? This book examines and interrogates this schism in livelihoods.

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